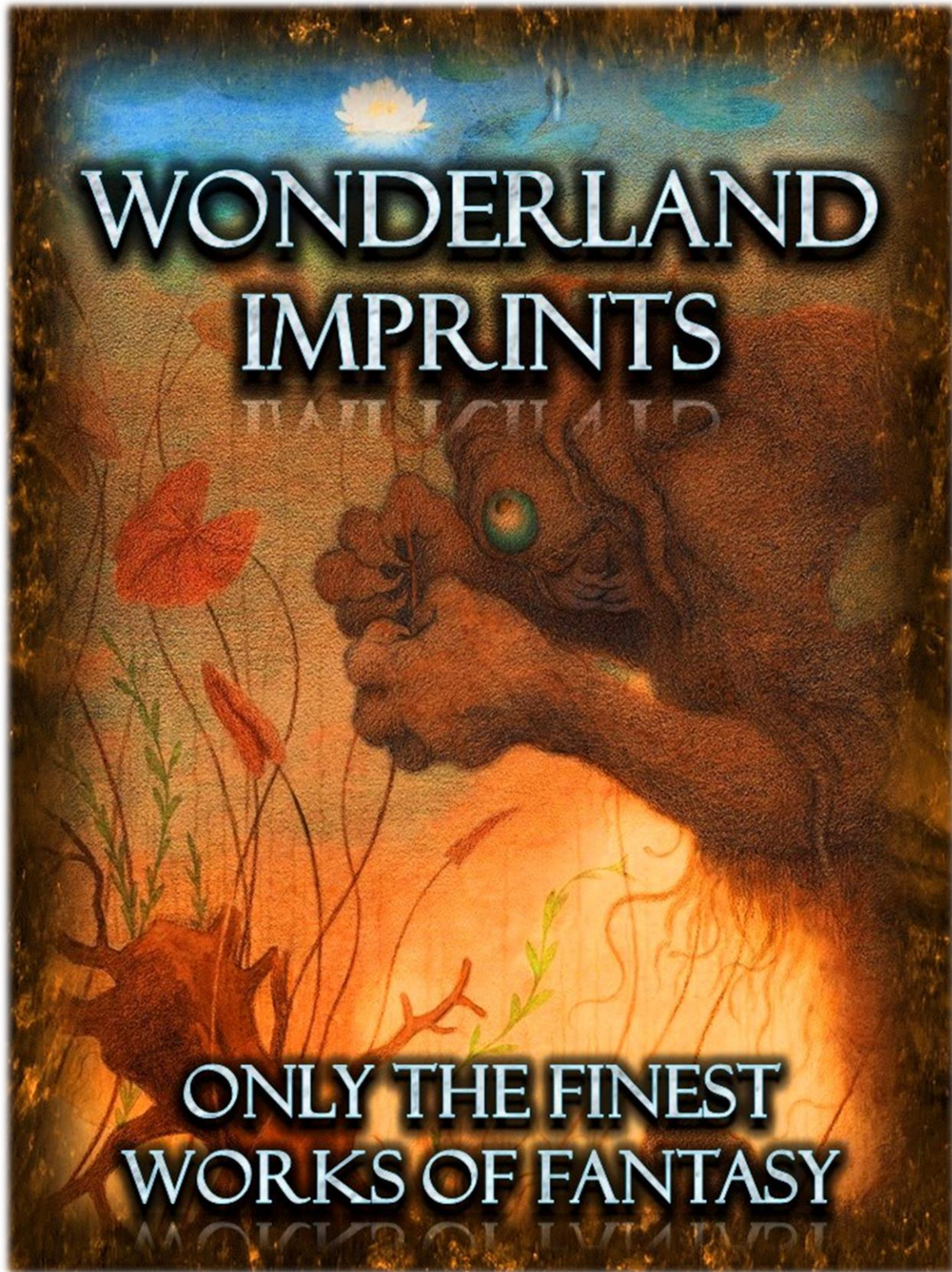


CASTLE OLDSKULL



BX1

OLDSKULL
SWORD & SORCERY
BOOK I





CASTLE OLDSKULL

SWORD & SORCERY
ADVENTURE GAME

SUPPLEMENT BX1

OLDSKULL

SWORD & SORCERY

BOOK I:

BASIC PLAYER CHARACTERS

BY

KENT DAVID KELLY
(DARKSERAPHIM)





CREDITS

DESIGN: Kent David Kelly

FOREFATHERS: The Castle Oldskull Sword & Sorcery Adventure Game is built upon the precepts set forth in an earlier game by Ernest Gary Gygax and David Lance Arneson. The works of Arneson and Gygax were inspired by many fine authors including Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert E. Howard, H. P. Lovecraft, Michael Moorcock, and J. R. R. Tolkien.

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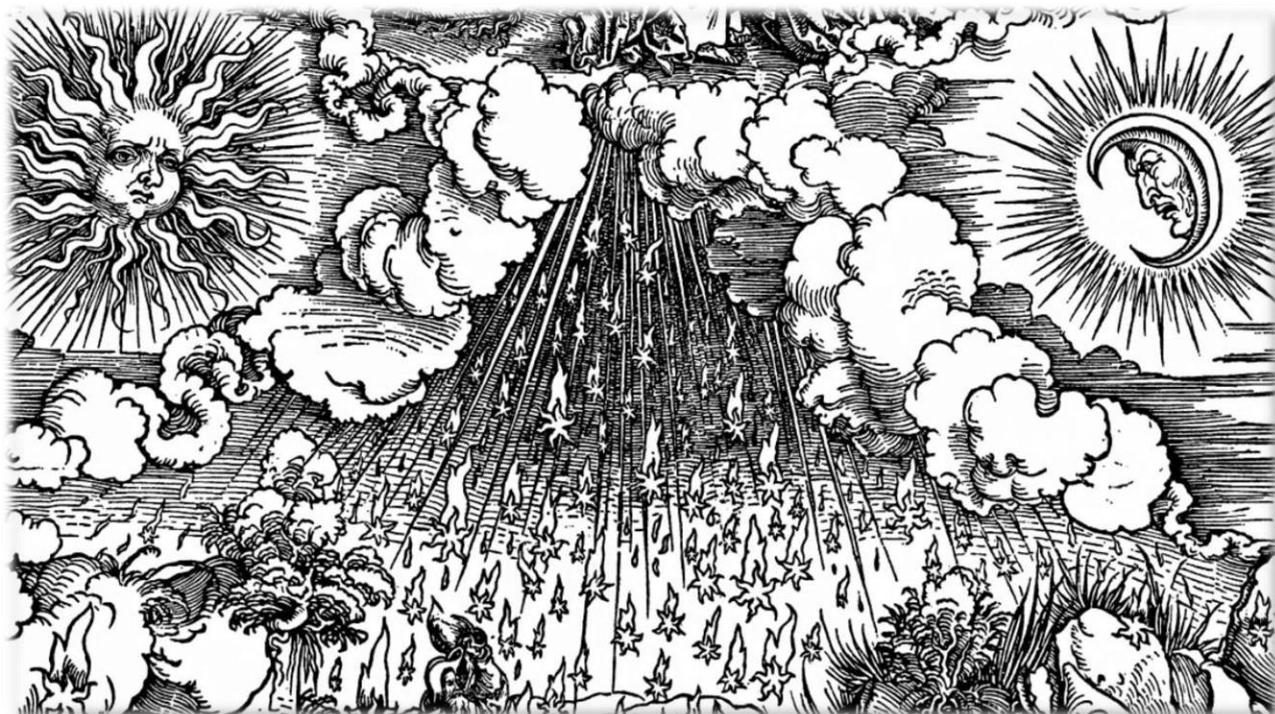




The Ultimate Proving Ground for Your Adventurous Imagination ...

The CASTLE OLDSKULL Sword and Sorcery (S&S) Adventure Game is an action-driven story engine, built to empower your imagination. Each of the adventures you envision and play out with your friends is like writing and reading a Sword and Sorcery pulp adventure tale. Led by a friendly Game Master (a judge and storyteller), the players take up the roles of dragon-slaying warriors, wizards, healers, and tomb robbers. Each dungeon delving character you imagine can be a deadly dwarf, arcane elf, stealthy halfling, or intrepid human, braving the perilous wilderness and journeying through the eerie netherworld, vanquishing monsters and Eldritch Horrors in the name of hard-won gold and glory.

CASTLE OLDSKULL is based on the industry's finest and foremost fantasy role-playing game, meticulously revised to preserve the spirit of the original Lake Geneva and Twin Cities campaigns of the 1970s. This comprehensive tome has been carefully designed to encompass all of the rules you will need to play a lifetime's worth of Sword and Sorcery adventures. Beginners and experts alike will find these rules to be easy to understand, and yet complex enough to empower many years of play. The CASTLE OLDSKULL game can be played by anyone who wishes to venture forth into a world of dark and epic fantasy. Your friends and family can be taught the game in an hour or less once you have mastered these rules on your own. And with hundreds of monsters and spells and treasures awaiting you in the future, no two adventures will ever be the same.





DESCRIPTION

After decades of development, Kent David Kelly and Wonderland Imprints are proud to offer you the CASTLE OLDSKULL fantasy role-playing game system. This first rules volume, OLDSKULL SWORD & SORCERY I: BASIC PLAYER CHARACTERS features all the rules new players and Game Masters require to orient themselves in the fantasy world. Here you will find rules, guidelines, and advice for creating newly-emboldened Player Characters in search of adventure in the unknown. The Castle Oldskull Sword & Sorcery Adventure Game is designed in modular fashion, allowing you to progress and expand your realms with bold new challenges, wrought in a world of limitless imagination. Additional volumes in this series detail character empowerment, level progression, dungeon adventuring, combat, Game Mastering, dungeon design, world design, and more.

If you are a new player, or a new Game Master, or you don't even know which is which yet and you want to find out what old school fantasy role-playing is all about, this is the book for you. And if you are a veteran player or GM, you will find that this book includes many useful features which you can use to create a new campaign or to add intricate details to your own existing world. Herein you will discover over 40 optional rules systems and tiers of complexity, bridging the Basic and Advanced rules in seamless fashion with your own customization decisions; detailed basic spell descriptions and rulings; balanced empowerment options for fighter and thieves; sacred weapons for clerics, by deity and alignment; clarified spell book rules for magic-users; comprehensive undead turning and binding rules; sanity rules which balance old school play and free will in a world threatened by Great Cthulhu and other Eldritch Horrors; three different cohesive saving throw systems, depending upon your complexity preference; detailed demi-human rules which separate and unify Basic and Advanced precepts; optional thieving skills for non-thieves; and in-depth alignment principles for both Basic (Lawful-Neutral-Chaotic) and Advanced alignment matrices.

As both a supplement for existing games and a standalone comprehensive system, the Castle Oldskull Sword & Sorcery Adventure Game bridges divides by unifying schools of thought, without further separating players into a hundred warring tribes. Choice within a universal framework is the key to system unity and customization. This is a true basic learning guide to generating characters for fantasy role-playing, with fully explained paths and game design choices which any player or GM can uniquely command as his or her own creation. Here you will find not just the rules and recommendations, but details revealing how to learn, how to gradually add complexity, reasons why systems are designed the way they are, and advice on how to play. There is much lore and treasure to be had here, for both players and GMs of varying philosophies, whether they embrace Original, B/X, BECMI, or Advanced gaming at the table.

This book is your first horizon to a greater unveiling world. Book two in this series features full details on weapons, armor, shields, equipment, encumbrance, movement, languages, skills, proficiencies, and character customization. Book three features full rules (and tactical advice) for all the basic tenets of dungeon adventuring: home bases, rumormongering, preparation, hiring men-at-arms, journeying to the dungeon, exploration, mapping, scouting, stealth, wandering monsters, searching, encounters, surprise, initiative, parleying, combat, and more. Future volumes will give Game Masters detailed advice on





running the game, generating dungeons, and creating an entire world for decades' worth of play along with family and friends.

Castle Oldskull is not an upstart “me too” basic clone, merely repeating the rules without any original guidance or insight or innovative rules in play. It is both a new game system and an established resource for existing fantasy role-playing-games, with seven years of publishing and thirty-seven years of play behind it. It is enhanced with descriptive text, clarifications, comprehensiveness, modularity, design insight, freedom of choice, and flexibility. You will decide what goes into your game, and what gets left out, and why. And whenever you need further and affordable design assistance, be assured that there are already more than 20 silver-, gold-, and platinum-medal Castle Oldskull supplements ready and able to lend you a hand ... with many more on the way.

So what are you waiting for? This book represents the premiere of OSR S&S B/X Evolved, your own Gateway to Adventure. Claim your kingdom from tyranny and dragons, and find your own true destiny in the dungeons which lie beneath. Your fated fortune, in the dark or the light, awaits!

Another proud release from Kent David Kelly and Wonderland Imprints, *Only the Finest Works of Fantasy*. (V1.0, 93,200 words, 345 pages.)



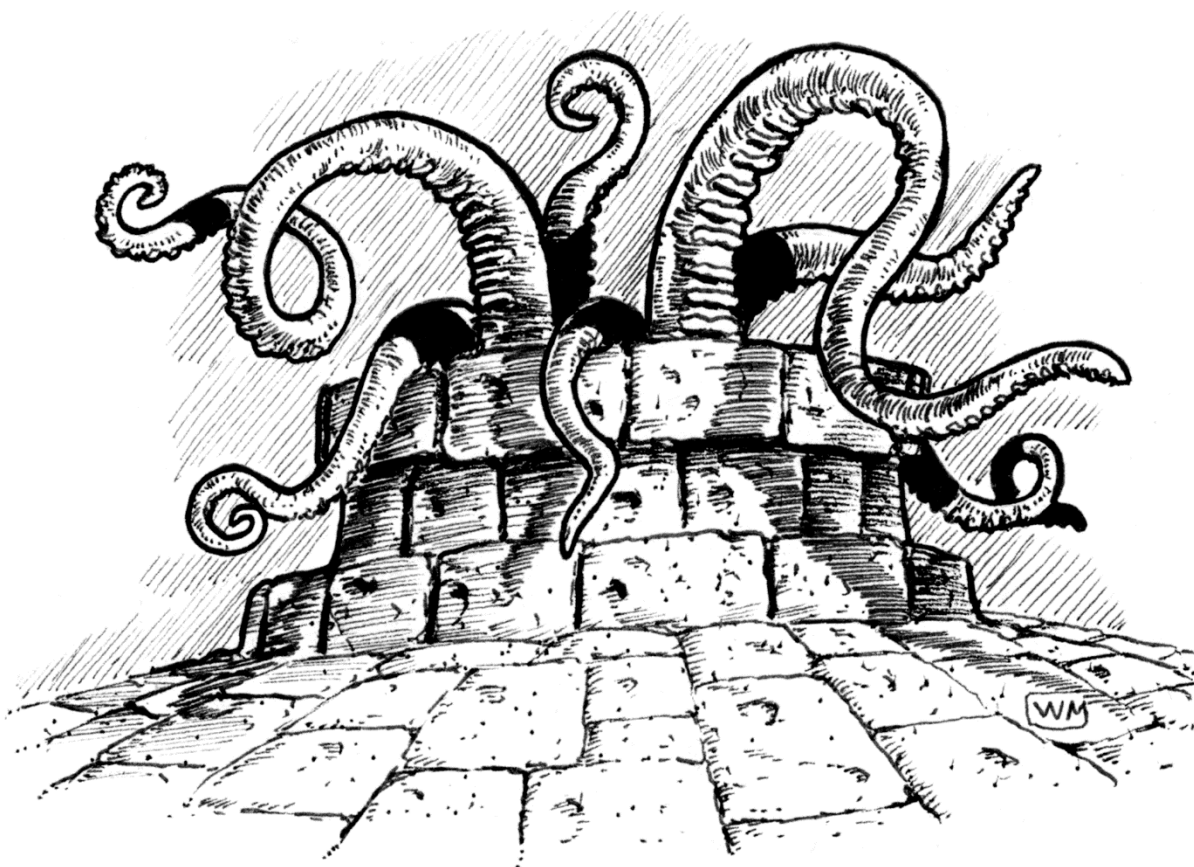


FOREWORD

I was freeing the imprisoned Golgothan princess from her bonds when the rising Eldritch Horror crept its ghastly tendrils over the abyssal threshold. Tentacles writhed, lifting the contorting mass as all three of the Abomination's fanged maws opened, and a babbling cacophony of hissing ululations echoed up through the foetid air.

Enormous bloodshot eyes rolled in a slimy, translucent sac. The gargantuan bulk rolled and tumbled, flopping its way across the cavern. It sloshed along the floor and wall, crushing stalagmites as it came. In a matter of moments the Thing had filled — and blocked — the singular exit from the Chaos Fane.

The princess cried out and clutched against me.





At times, I lose myself in the CASTLE OLDSKULL Sword and Sorcery Adventure Game. Playing the game is like reading a good Conan novel, or watching an 80s fantasy film in the middle of the night. The original Fantasy Role-Playing Game (released in 1974, having been play tested in Lake Geneva and the Twin Cities) was a monumental classic, which inspired or influenced virtually every fantasy franchise created in the last 40-odd years. Gary and Dave gave the world that first and greatest RPG, and the atmosphere of their shared creation inspires us to this day.

Throughout the 2010s as I wrote the many volumes of the CASTLE OLDSKULL gaming line, I dedicated every book I wrote to those masters who awakened my imagination back in 1981. The rules in this tome have been written and redeveloped to preserve the spirit of Gary and Dave's creation, no matter how far the original franchise might stray from its roots in the current age.

The CASTLE OLDSKULL game is not always easy to play, although it is easy to learn. Player skill, luck, teamwork, and creativity are all required to win the day. Characters controlled by the players are not immortal. Heroes perish, but many (as revenants) rise again ... and as the slain ones' allies, henchmen, and followers take up the swords of their fallen masters, the legacy of those first daring adventurers lives on. Vengeance is taken, oaths are sworn, and the battle begins anew.

In this game a gathering of old school-minded players, abiding by the rules and tenets set forth by the Game Master, play the part of daring slayers and treasure hunters who explore fantasy worlds filled with magic, horror, weirdness, wonder, decadence, and intrigue. Much of the game's charm is in its mystery. Until the game is fully delineated for the players by the Game Master, it has no hard and fast rules, only guidelines and suggestions. Anything can happen.

The players can make suggestions for the Game Master's consideration, and in pondering the wishes of the players the GM can choose to add new monsters, treasures, spells, and settings as he or she deems fit. Working together over months and years of play, the GM and the players can create an entire multiverse of adventure. By honoring both the authority of the GM as well as the free will of the players, the Old School Renaissance (OSR) spirit of the game can live on through the ages. The old school game will always be difficult, but it is the promise of adversity that makes those hard-won victories such fun!

After all, what is an adventure without the endless promise of danger emerging from the shadows?

"I am witch-born. I can fight!" the princess insisted. She knelt to her pile of torn-off silks and drew out her daggers, and hurled them into the vile Thing. Impaled by tiny thorns, it shivered and hissed an oath of annihilation. But still, it tumbled forward, eyes lolling and submerging and rolling forth once again. There was no time for spells, nor salvation. I gave the princess my envenomed axe and prowled my way before her.

I unsheathed the unholy blade which I had won from conquering the Lord Executioner of the Cult of Azathoth. The sword's orichalcum surface was black as night, filled with whirling stars and the twisted visages of screaming souls. Its hilt was wrapped in faded dragon's hide, the pommel crowned by a fractured bloodstone. The stone's reawakening power surged like lightning into my fingers. I shouted a war cry in the name of Crom, and barreled forward.

My momentum caused the writhing bulk of the Thing to tremor sideways, and to stir. One of its fanged maws shot forth from within its gelatinous membrane, extending like a thrusting lance wielded by a furious





giant. Venomous fangs clamped shut mere inches from my skull. I dove, rose and hacked at the maw's exposed and burbling "throat" with all my strength.

The blade's edge hissed and burned its way through the sinewy layers of slime, bursting arteries and chambered vapors as it slashed through and clanged against the basalt pillar on the other side. I stumbled back, fell, and skidded away from the lurching mass in horror. Tentacles lashed out at the darkness over me.

The princess behind me shouted an incantation, and barbs of coruscating violet light coursed and changed their paths around me, whirling into the Thing, tearing deeper wounds along the greasy sword-slash in its throat.

Unholy energies coursed through the shrieking, translucent Thing as all the souls of Golgotha's lost ones — slaves long imprisoned within the Lord Executioner's blade — poured deeply into the Abomination's branching veins, devouring it from the inside. With a thunderous boom, the Thing recoiled and shattered the basalt pillar, as it writhed its way back to the pit where — should Crom smile upon my foolhardy daring — it might finally die in agony.

The sword had been wrenched away from me, and I could see it splintering into fragments as the last of the souls surged forth from its benighted heart. However vile the blade and its Lord had been, it had saved me and savaged the Abomination. Good cannot always vanquish evil, but sometimes crude evil can conquer an elder evil, which is enough.

Acidic ichor splattered in streaks up across the walls. I stumbled backwards, ducking and cursing. Crying out from behind me, her arm speckled with gore, the princess of Golgotha fell. I rushed to her. She wrapped her other arm around my waist, shivering in terror. I swept her up, covering her imperiled flesh in my wolfskin cloak. She would require the hands of a healer, and soon.

The terrible Thing was slain, the princess nearly safe. The people of the land above would regard me as her savior, rather than a mere barbarian, and I would feast and revel well until their resentful whispers swirled anew ... or, until my golden ducats began to run out once again. But these were things to brood over tomorrow, in the light. Not this night.

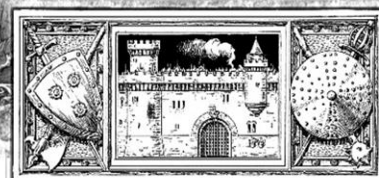
The princess was strong of heart. She pressed away and stood alone, and then she took my hand. We ran for the twilight of the cavern up above. She even smiled for the pain. And why not? Life, however bloody and short, would be glorious.

For a time.

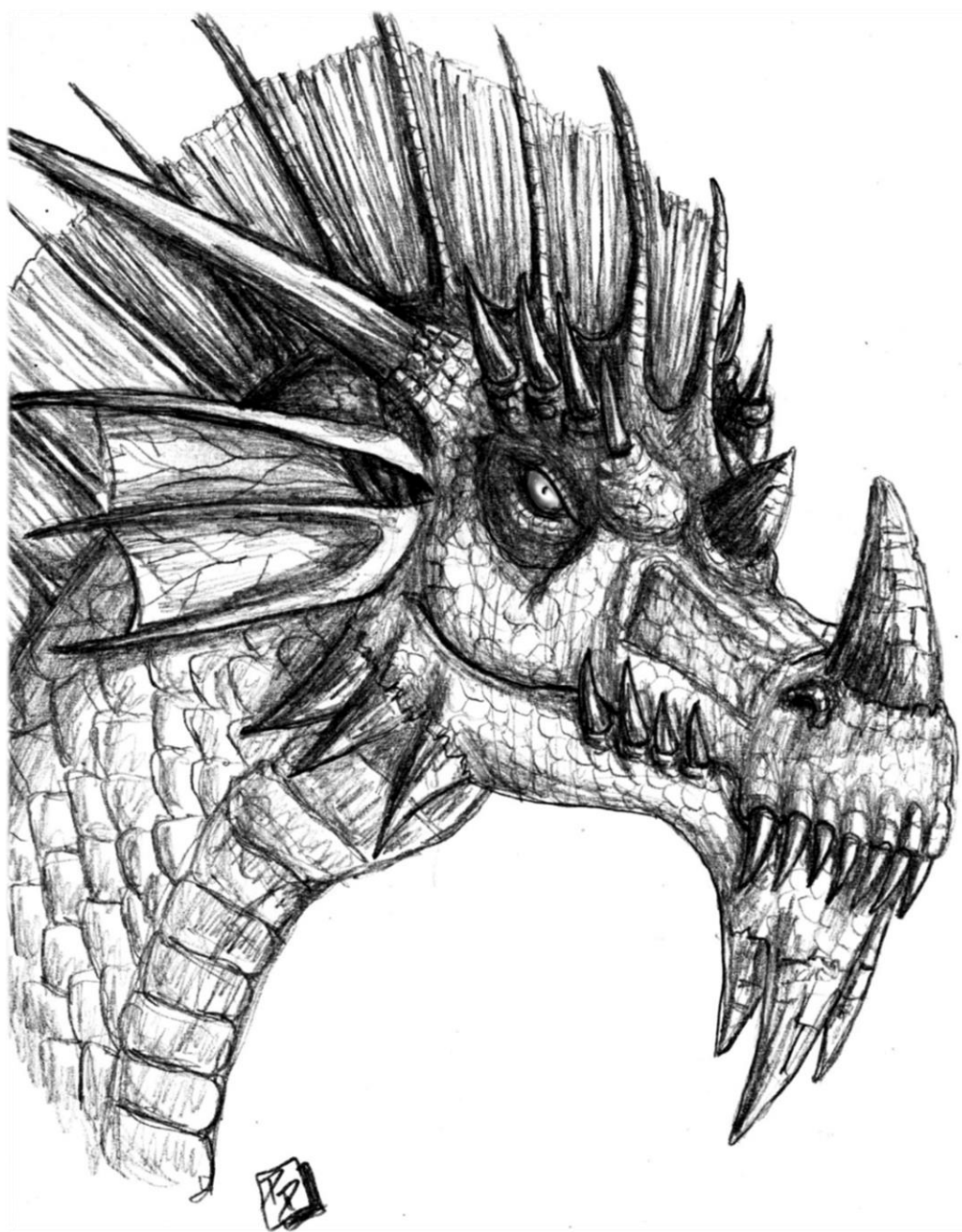
Kent David Kelly

27 March 2018





CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION





1-1

WHAT CASTLE OLDSKULL IS ALL ABOUT



The Castle Oldskull Sword and Sorcery Adventure Game (we simply refer to it as “The Game,” for those historically in the know) is a role-playing game designed for intelligent, young-at-heart people of any age. We recommend “15 years and up” as a general maturity guideline, depending on how dark, pulpy, decadent, or sensational you want the game to be. The classic way to play is with paper and pencil, face-to-face, at the tabletop; but online play — to accommodate players’ busy schedules in the modern age — is possible as well.





The title of the game hearkens back to the “old school” Lake Geneva castle-labyrinth paradigm, in which the masters of early 20th-century fantasy — Burroughs, Dunsany, Howard, Lovecraft, Merritt, Tolkien, and others — are honored above all. Late 20th-century influences such as Frazetta, Leiber, Moorcock, Otus, and Trampier are exemplified here as well.

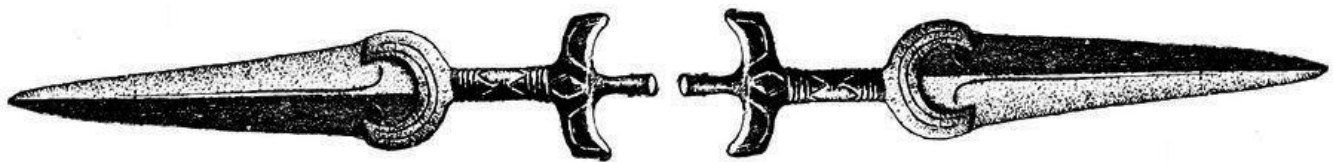
So what is a role-playing game?

Role-playing is a shared form of interactive fiction. In the imaginary game world, players will assume the roles of adventurers living and dying in a wondrous bygone age where Eldritch Horrors dwell, where magic is known and worshipped, and demigods and mighty heroes walk the earth. Heroes, heroines, and villains arising from every philosophy, culture, and bloodline battle their way throughout this world, discovering lost realms and slaying monsters and accruing filthy lucre. These adventuring “characters” (personas) earn experience points (XP) as their “score,” a measure of how well their controlling player is playing the game. Experience points are earned for playing well, solving puzzles, defeating foes, and for bringing treasures back to a safe stash somewhere in the city state, where these wandering characters reside between action-filled “episodes” that are played out in the dangerous lands beyond. As the experience points pile up, the characters become more detailed, more clearly envisioned, more powerful, more feared, and more influential throughout the cities and strongholds which stand in glory, in mortal realms, against the Outer Dark.

To play, you will need to read this book to create your characters. The next book in this series will help you to establish, equip, and empower those characters, too. Then, you will need to have at least two interested people, including yourself, to be able to play the game. One player (probably you) will be the storytelling Game Master (GM), while the other players run the characters through their paces. Each player will control at least one character, and possibly more, depending on their collective skill and the wishes of the GM. An average group will have three to six people playing. You can have as many as eight or even ten players at the table simultaneously, if everyone is having fun and the GM can handle all of the logistics during play.

Unlike a videogame or board game, the action in Castle Oldskull takes place only in your mind. A game board and playing pieces (miniatures) can be used, but such visceral practice is entirely optional. The only things you absolutely need to play are the rules, dice, pens or pencils, note paper, graph paper, hex(agon) paper, and the mutual understanding between players that everyone is going to be working with the Game Master to envision an ever-changing fantasy world, where the actions of the players’ characters (PCs) form the unpredictable momentum for an epic storyline within the game.

As play proceeds and the characters grow in power, you can add new rules volumes, new horizons, and new concepts to your game. This book is the threshold to the gateway where that journey truly begins.





1-2

FOR VETERAN PLAYERS: WHAT DOES CASTLE OLDSKULL OFFER?

(New players, feel free to read on if you desire.)

If you have already played classic fantasy role-playing games before, you can use this book either as a supplement to inform your existing campaign, or to begin a new one. This book is ideal as a bridge between ages and as a mentorship tool, designed to assist you in teaching new players the old ways. The features which will most appeal to veteran gamers are the optional rules, which together comprise a massive toolkit of choices which you can employ in your ongoing complexity dialing, detail control, character empowerment, game balancing, and systems customization. I have been a Game Master for many years and I know what it is like, struggling with unifying disparate systems against the tides of time, as players come and go. I wrote this book for the veteran and the neophyte, hoping to make the bridging process between skill levels and generations easier, and less harrowing.

You will also find use in the integrated step-by-step rules — introduced one campaign tier at a time — so that you don't need to page endlessly through your *Handbook*, *Guide*, *Unearthed*, *Demigods*, red box, blue book, white box, and brown book volumes in order to make sense of disparate rulings the Masters made throughout the decades. You will find that I have made this game my own, diverting or discarding some systems (level limits, psionics) and fixing others (initiative) while paying homage to yet other systems (weapons vs. armor class) in a simpler and cleaner way. My systems have been tested and developed in my own campaign, and I offer them here for your consideration. You will find things you agree with and things you do not, but I always strive to make everything unified and worthy of contemplation. Particularly, in this book you will find interesting guidance for campaign difficulty level selection, ability score generation and modifiers, archetypal class customization, spell casting, undead turning, and alignment rulings which will be very helpful to your game.

Also, you will find that these rules will be corrected, expanded, simplified, and filled with further examples, interpretations, and design notes in the future. As with all Castle Oldskull supplements, this is a living electronic document which grows stronger and ever more comprehensive over time. This game features an evolving set of modular rules which will grow and change with you. In an age when existing franchises have been taken over by corporate interests who do not always truly understand precisely what legacy they've purchased, it is up to us — the grognard gamers and lifelong dreamers — to carry the torch. You can consider Castle Oldskull not the vanguard of that movement, but one of many, a strong-backed guardian you can rely upon to shore up the ranks as years pass and customs change.





1-3

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This supplement (which you can print for your own use, or engage with electronically, by using the quick click links and Ctrl-F command to search for various terms as needed) features all of the rules and guidelines which you will need to initiate character creation for the Basic Level of the Castle Oldskull Sword and Sorcery Adventure Game. The rules in this book are organized into sequential chapters, as follows:

- The **INTRODUCTION (Chapter 1)** serves to give players and Game Masters a firm grounding in what to expect as we proceed.
- **UNDERSTANDING THE GAME (Chapter 2)** covers the overall game framework, and defines the technical terms, jargon, and acronyms which are common to FRPGs.
- **PLAYER CHARACTER CREATION (Chapter 3)** details how Player Characters are created, the generation of ability scores (characteristics), and the selection of race. This section especially is written for an experienced player with the beginner also in mind, and the most pertinent information is reiterated in table format for later reference.
- **INTRODUCTION TO CHARACTER CLASSES (Chapter 4)** gives players the first general information they will need when deciding what character class, or specialized profession, they want to play. Each class has its own style, advantages, and disadvantages.
- The **INTERPRETING ABILITY SCORES (Chapter 5)** section demonstrates the importance of each character's abilities, and the effects that an individual's strengths and weaknesses have upon the challenges in the game.
- **CHARACTER SURVIVABILITY (Chapter 6)** provides brief overviews of the crucial and intertwined concepts of hit points (which keep a character alive when wounds are suffered) and saving throws (which keep a character alive when unexpected "instant death" perils such as poison are suffered during an adventure).
- The **CHARACTER RACES (Chapter 7)** section provides information on the four basic bloodlines, or ancestries, in the game: the dwarves, elves, halflings, and humans. The information is given in two associated tiers, one for Basic Level play and one with Advanced Level additions.
- **THE CLERIC (Chapter 8)** details priest and cultist characters, both holy and unholy.
- The **SPELL CASTING AND DIVINE SPELLS (Chapter 9)** section serves two purposes. It first gives a general overview of spells (magical abilities) in the game, and then offers details on the basic clerical spells which must be understood and mastered by players of the cleric class. The players of magic-users should also read the first part of this chapter to gain an understanding of spells and how they work. Players of fighters and thieves will find this chapter informational, but optional.
- **THE FIGHTER (Chapter 10)** details warrior characters, and their potential paths toward future empowerment.





- **THE MAGIC-USER (Chapter 11)** chronicles wizard, warlock and witch characters, the practitioners of arcane magic.
- **ARCANE SPELL CASTING (Chapter 12)** details arcane (magic-user) spell lists. As in Chapter 9, each Basic Level spell is given game statistics and a brief yet detailed description, which will help to inform the GM's rulings as unusual spell-related situations emerge during play.
- **THE THIEF (Chapter 13)** details rogue and scout characters, those who use skullduggery and deception to win the day.
- **THIEVING SKILLS (Chapter 14)**, such as stealth and trap detection, are described in a separate chapter. Importantly, many Game Masters fundamentally disagree on the overall inclusion or exclusion of skills in the game, and the role that the thief plays in either mastering these skills, or reigning over them to the exclusion of all other characters, is contentious as well. Both approaches and more are detailed here.
- And lastly, **ALIGNMENT (Chapter 15)** outlines the philosophies and immortal powers which hold eternal yet tenuous sway over the mortal dominion ... giving characters potential life paths, while allowing them free will in accordance with player desire.
- The further chapters detailing equipment, skills, character customization and so forth are featured in the next volume of this series, Oldskull Sword & Sorcery II.

Taken as a whole, the chapters in this volume serve as a comprehensive primer for Basic Level play. This means that the rules herein give details which are helpful to beginning players, beginning and returning Game Masters, and Player Characters (PCs) of experience levels 1, 2, and 3. In general terms, the material in this book and the following volumes will be all you need for the first one to six months of play, depending on how often you play and how powerful your game's PCs become. Thereafter, you will probably want to add the volumes for Advanced Level play (and character experience levels 4 to 6) to continue immersion in the game as your imaginary world expands.

If you are going to be your group's Game Master (GM) — and yes, if you don't know who the Game Master in the room is, it's probably you — leading the other players through adventures, then you will want to read this entire book before you attempt to play. The Game Master serves as a storyteller, interpreter of player actions, and referee. He does not play the role of a Player Character; rather, he tells the players whether their PCs succeed or fail as they attempt dangerous actions in the world.

If you are not yet ready to assume the role of Game Master — which means you are going to be a player running one or more Player Characters in your GM's world — then you should at least be familiar with the basic rules and guidelines in this book. You can skip over the Optional Rules sections if you prefer, because your GM will inform you as to whether those rules are going to be used. Feel free to read anything in the first three volumes of this rulebook series. Many GMs will let you read additional books in this series if you like ... but some may ask you to refrain.

Traditionally, the game is the most fun, immersive, and surprising if you willingly refrain from reading too much of the information concerning monsters, treasures, secrets, and dungeons prior to beginning play. You can read as much as you like and no one can stop you, of course; but in the long term you might well find that you are punishing yourself (and curtailing your own enjoyment) if you read too far too





quickly. The first three books in this series will give you over a thousand pages of information to mull over in the weeks to come, so it's not as if you will be left in the dark on how to play!

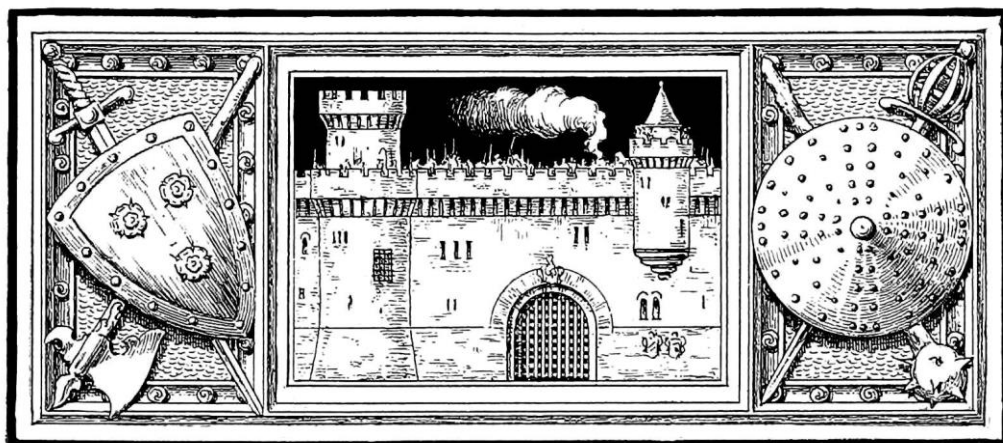
Before you go further, you should understand that this book is only filled with guidelines and advice. The Game Master controls the game ... the rulebook does not. Unlike a board game, you cannot point to a rule in this volume and challenge the Game Master's interpretation of it. (Well, you *can*, but if that is your mindset you will probably want to play a board game or collectible card game where you and the other players are on equal adversarial footing. This is not that game.) This is a *cooperative limited information game*. The only way that it works is when the GM withholds information from you, based on what your character cannot know, cannot see, and cannot fathom.

Further, the game's entire premise necessitates that the GM will have the authority to judge player actions and to enforce improvised rulings during unpredictable circumstances, while simultaneously building an entire fantasy world for you and your friends to explore. Think of the Game Master as the narrator of an unpredictable and improvised movie, starring you.

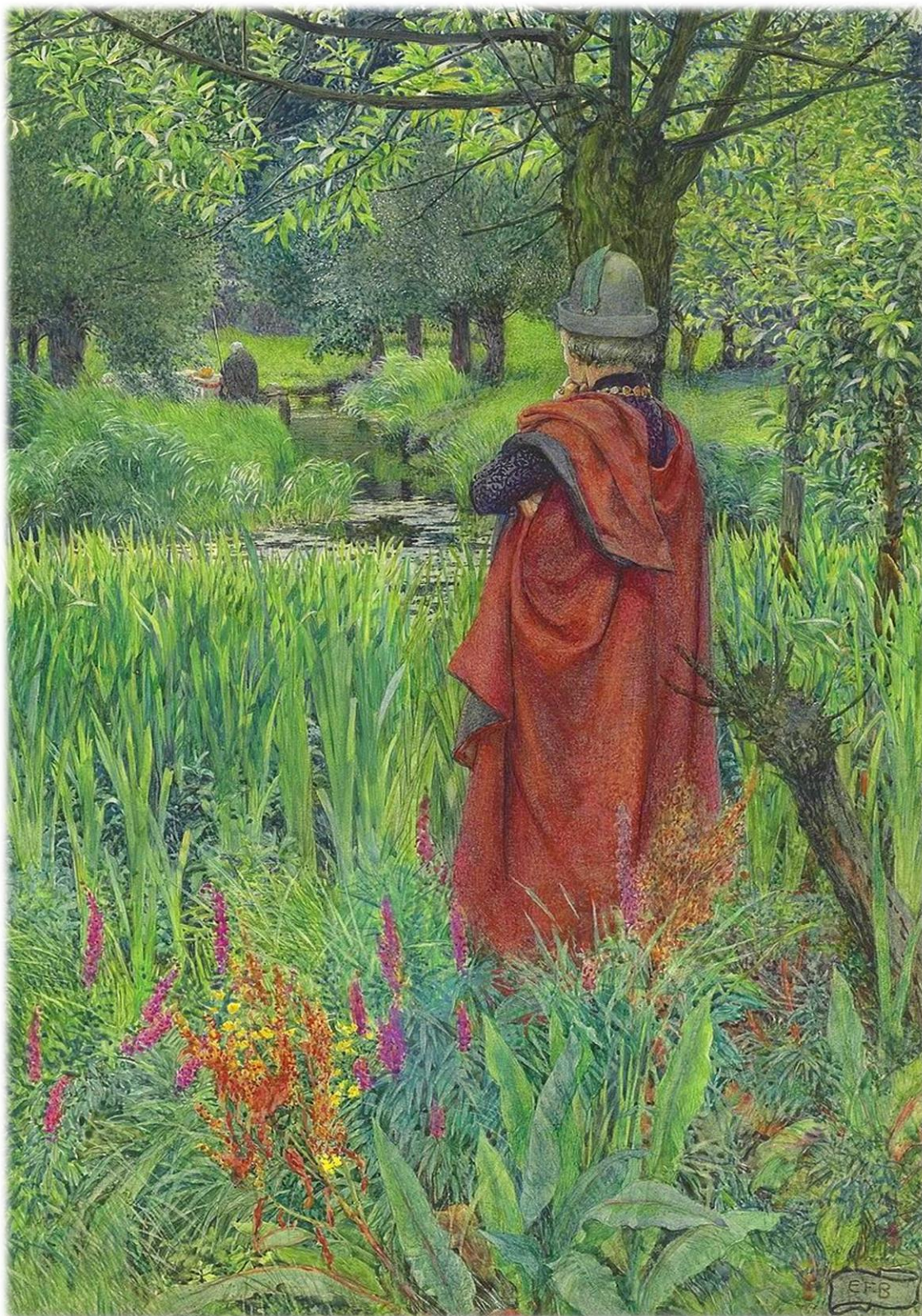
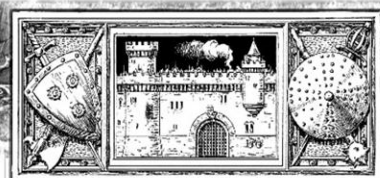
To feel comfortable with the framework for the rulings and to make the game world unique and uniquely challenging, your GM will therefore customize any or all of the rules found in this book to fit his (or her*) vision of what the fantasy world should be. By playing this game and not adopting the role of Game Master, you tacitly agree to this state of affairs for the good of the game, for civility, for your own future entertainment, and for the shared enjoyment of the other players. Challenging the GM directly is not your goal; rather, your goal is to rise to the GM's challenges.

(*By the way, as a male and a traditional writer I tend to use "he" where "he or she" is implied; this isn't meant as an offense, it's just the old school way I'm wired. I follow centuries of precedent, and my own education. I don't find it to be apology worthy but no affront is intended.)

By all means, you should always feel free to question the GM's rulings after the game, or to suggest changes and improvements to the game, or to request events, themes, and features to potentially be included in future sessions. But for the sake of the game and its inherent and crucial tenets as described above, such discussion is best kept away from the table and away from the active game session, unless your GM specifically invites such discussion during play.



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1-4

THE ONLY TRUE RULE

This is a book of imagination and discovery, filled with guidelines and advice. There is only one true rule in the Castle Oldskull game, and it is this: **The Game Master decides what all of the game's rules are, and what they mean.** In making that judgment call, he can use this book verbatim, or he can make some changes and design some house rules while keeping 98% of the guidelines in this book intact; or, he can dump entire systems, fusing this game with another preferred game system of his own liking; or, he can discard virtually everything and keep only a few pieces that he prefers for an ongoing campaign.

This solitary precept is called **Rule Number One**. All other rules which follow as derivatives from Rule Number One are actually subsets of that rule, as considered, kept, and codified by your Game Master.

As a result of the existence and the nature of Rule Number One, the players are expected to follow the Game Master's lead when it comes to interpretation of these rules. And due to the weight of that expectation, the Game Master should in turn feel obligated to listen to the players and to explain the reasoning behind rulings whenever necessary, while carefully considering players' requests for future rule modification. This game — despite the inherent imbalance of power, with the Game Master as ultimate judge and referee — is about friendly respect, and that respect runs both ways. Without that vested trust and synergy arising between the Game Master and the players, the game is either a shouting match, a tyrannical failure, or merely a glorification engine for unchallenged players' whims ... and Castle Oldskull is not any of those games.

And if you abhor any aspect of the spirit or the letter of Rule Number One, then congratulations! You just volunteered to become a Game Master. You have a lot of reading and preparation ahead of you, to be sure ...

1-5

OPTIONAL RULES AND GUIDELINES

Most of the rules in this book are considered **Core Rules**, which means that the GM should not remove them without having another custom-crafted solution ready to take a deleted core rule's place. Removing core rules without replacing them will always be detrimental to the functioning of the game.

But because every player and Game Master is different, each expecting different things from their gaming and social interactions, this book also features many **Optional Rules**. The optional rules (again, they're really guidelines for the GM's consideration) are glimpses of other approaches which might offer more or less complexity, older, classic, deeper, or newer perspectives, or simply alternate ways of





thinking about the interlocking systems within the game. These modular sections are tagged as (Optional), and you as the GM can consider or ignore them as you see fit.

The purpose of including the Optional Rules is to maximize the game's flexibility, while providing a working framework which offers a modern simulation engine that stays true to the old school spirit of the game. Reading and considering the optional rules will also allow a Game Master to cultivate his critical thinking skills. Players are encouraged to read through the optional rules as well, if they wish to discuss their personal preferences with the GM and the other players before the game begins. Doing so can eliminate many potential arguments down the road. But if this is your first time reading this book and you have never played an RPG, you can easily skip them all and come back later.

1-6

DEFINITIONS OF STANDARD GAME TERMS

SPECIAL NOTE: If this is your first time reading this section, you will probably want to read it twice. This section introduces many core game concepts which are interrelated, and the terms will make more sense when you have at least a partial understanding of the related words and how they interact with one another. This game involves an evolving and branching group of interconnected rules systems, and the same terms are used throughout the book's rules and guidelines for clarity's sake. Therefore, you will need to do some memorization here to understand the fundamental concepts of the game. But not to worry, this section won't be too intimidating by design. It's just rather detailed and intricate seeming the first time you go through.

*Terms in this section appear in **bold** when first introduced, and in Significant Capitals throughout. You may want to return to this section for future reference while you're reading the remainder of this volume.*

This is a **Basic Level** primer. Basic level means that the Player Characters — and perhaps the players, too — are relative novices to the ins and outs of skillful adventuring.





When your group plays the Castle Oldskull game, play is initiated by the **Game Master (abbreviated as GM)**. The GM is the one person who acts as the rules judge, ruling referee, and storyteller, interpreting the players' actions, rolling **Polyhedral Dice** (various dice with between four and twenty sides, which are used for in-game task probabilities and outcome randomness), and then explaining what happens as a consequence of those actions, whether the adventurers' attempted actions succeed or fail.

At the GM's discretion, there may also be an **Assistant Game Master (AGM)** who helps with more of the technical details whenever the GM is talking with the players, but this is generally rare outside of very large or time-limited games.

All of the other people involved in the game, who are not Game Masters, are **Players**. Each player runs one or more imaginary personas, or **Player Characters (PCs)**. They are sometimes called **Adventurers**, too. When the adventuring PCs encounter other people, entities, beasts, or monsters in the world, the roles of all those other creatures are played out solely by the GM. Collectively, these creatures and people beyond the players' control are called **Non-Player Characters (NPCs)**. Players can attempt to influence NPCs in the game (by fighting, running, communicating, coercing, deceiving, gaining trust, and so forth), but the GM ultimately decides what happens as a result of those attempts.

There is also a third subset of characters, who are controlled by the GM but also led by the players, called **Followers**. Followers are NPCs who might or might not obey the PCs' orders, depending on their personalities, how frightened or intimidated they are, or how they are treated. There are multiple subtypes of followers, including: **Henchmen** (long-term subordinate adventurers who follow a single mentor PC, and who are sometimes also called **Retainers**); **Men-at-Arms** (mercenary soldier "redshirts" who are likely to follow orders, yet quick to perish if poorly led); **Hirelings** (non-combatant temporary servants, such as porters, treasure carriers, guides, and torch bearers); and **Expert Hirelings** (experienced and specialized NPCs with rare and sought-after skill sets, such as alchemy or armor forging).

PCs can strongly influence the actions of followers due to various factors — including power, money, loyalty, and/or authority — but ultimately, the behavior of followers is still governed by the GM. The followers listen to the PCs, but the GM can change their minds about what is "in character" for them to do. For example, a follower will never accept a command to kill himself ... and that could extend well into the realm of refusing suicidal orders, too. Well-treated followers are more likely to obey the PCs during dangerous events, "fight or flight" crises, or other trying circumstances which come up during the game.

Together, the PCs (along with any follower NPCs and/or other invited NPCs who are accompanying an expedition), for as long as they are cooperating and moving and functioning as a group, are collectively called the **Party**. The terms **Company** and **Fellowship** are pretty much synonymous with party, but it depends on the play circumstances and the philosophical makeup of the group. Use the term you and your friends find most fitting and appealing.



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The party is basically the “starring group” of foremost characters in the game, and we will be following their stories during episodes of play. The overall performance of the party is extremely important, being a matter of every PCs’ potential victory or failure, life, or grisly death. One of the most important guidelines to remember when you’re a Player in the game is this: ***“Never split the party.”*** In other words, the party’s members should never move in two different directions simultaneously unless such a course is completely unavoidable. There are many reasons for this, both inside and outside the game world. Whenever the party is divided (and there is only a single poor GM to run the game, a mere mortal with only a single mouth and one brain!) the game bogs down and slows considerably. More worrisome is the fact that when a party is split in two, each half is twice as likely to die when surprised, endangered, or facing powerful enemies. Adventurers explore perilous places, and not all of them make it back alive to tell the lurid tale to the tavern wenches. If the monsters’ goal in the game is to divide and conquer the adventurers, you’re freely doing half of their work for them — to your own lack of pleasure and detriment — by splitting the party within any dangerous environment.



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While each player is deciding how best to shepherd one or more PCs throughout these various danger zones, the Game Master will be busy with many of the tracking duties inherent in the game. Foremost, the GM will create the environments which the adventuring PCs are going to explore. This is much more difficult than it might seem, because it is very time-consuming to devise imaginary towns, caves, dungeons, and wilderness regions replete with full details concerning the NPCs, monsters, and treasures to be found therein.

There are several shortcuts for those harried GMs who are short on time or creative ideas, however. The GM can purchase (or freely download, for those that are offered freely) a pre-written adventure setting and scenario that the PCs can experience and explore. These products are frequently called **Dungeon Modules**, and they can be purchased in game stores, or via sites such as RPGNow and DriveThruRPG. Alternately, the GM can create a **Sandbox Campaign**, which means "A game world story that is partially driven by random generation, with refined random results supplementing the GM's own original work."

Dungeon modules are authored by other game designers, and to an extent they guide the players' choices; while a sandbox campaign is authored chiefly by the GM, and the players can do just about anything therein. Most GMs use a mix-and-match approach, hybridizing the two extremes. The ideal





practice is for the GM to create all of the game world's sub-settings on his own, widening the realms as the PCs gain experience and explore, but as you might well imagine creating an entire world can be a truly Herculean task. Try to keep in mind that while you might only be playing a few hours a week, the GM will be spending at least twice as long reading, writing, and coming up with new material for you to enjoy. This is one of the core reasons why the GM is fully vested to run the game as a judge and referee, beyond any of the players' potentially argumentative dissension. The players play, while the Game Master plays and works simultaneously.

At the abstract level there are several basic **Setting** (region) archetypes which are found throughout the GM's quasi-medieval game world. A **Settlement** is any civilized base of operations, which might be a hamlet, village, town, city, stronghold, or something else (perhaps even a pirate ship, or underground hideout, or a castle under siege).

Dangerous labyrinthine interior regions, filled with **Traps**, **Tricks**, **Monsters** and **Treasure**, are generally termed **Dungeons**. **Traps** are perils which can cause damage or death to adventurers. **Tricks** are similar, but they are typically magical or sentient in nature, and some can even be beneficial. **Monsters** are non-human enemies and strangers throughout the world, and are frequently deadly. And **Treasure**, quite simply, is anything worth having (and stealing!) in the context of the game world. In a gamesman's sense, treasure is the scoring goal for players, while traps, tricks, and monsters are the obstacles blocking this objective.





Most, but not all, dungeons are found underground. Other examples of dungeons include abandoned city ruins, forbidden temples, eerie strongholds, deathtrapped pyramids, and magical towers. Below the dungeons there lies the **Netherworld**, a nearly endless subterranean realm filled with majestic wonders and **Lovecraftian** (extra-dimensional) horrors. The rest of the world above and outside of the dungeons is commonly called the **Known Lands**, or (in the author's campaign) the **World of Oldskull**. The GM can create his own world and call it whatever he likes. Region types in the Known Lands can include **Civilized Realms** (kingdoms and marches and duchies and so forth), the **Wilderness** (deadly untamed stretches of poorly-mapped terrain lying far from the rule of law), and the **Borderlands** (adventure-filled regions filled with outposts and lairs, which form a kind of "buffer zone" between the Wilderness and the Known Lands.)

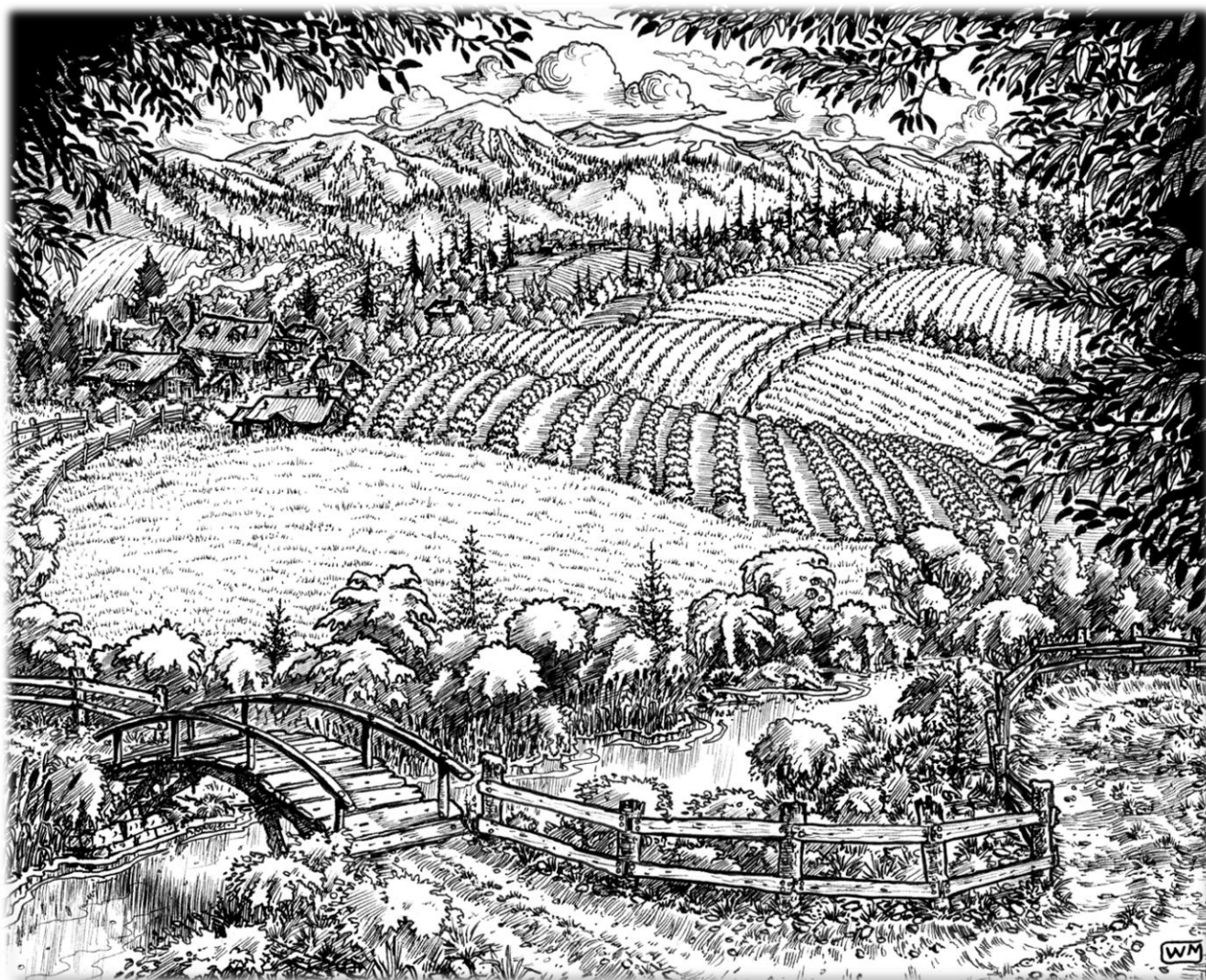


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There are also other planets, dimensions, and **Planes of Existence** (other worlds with strange physical laws) to consider, which are topics for **Advanced Level** play and a future volume.

These settings are all designed and/or customized by the GM, perhaps in combination with pre-written materials from other authors, without any overriding input from the players. As a player you can certainly suggest things you want to see in the world — a castle in the clouds, a lost city in the jungle, a haunted mansion, an earthly paradise, or what-have-you — but the GM will always decide what goes where, and when, and why. After all, the PCs will want to explore the vast **Unknown**, and the Unknown isn't worthy of its name if you try to poke and peek at it safely in advance!



When the GM has created a sufficient amount of Setting material — probably consisting of one settlement, one or two dungeons, and a borderland region containing them — the players will be invited





to create their **Player Characters (PCs)**. This process involves following the guidelines provided in this volume, as modified, deleted, or supplemented by the GM's own custom rules. The GM will probably be using these Castle Oldskull rules as written in the beginning, while making changes and improvements over time; but you should not automatically assume this to be the case. Ask your Game Master which rules have been changed, deleted, or added to his world before character creation begins.





Creating player characters is one of the most important, fun, and vital things that you can do as a player in the game. Succinctly, creating a PC involves choosing a **Race** or **Ancestry** (a species, or bloodline, such as “elf” or “human”), a **Class** (a calling or profession, such as “fighter” or “thief”) and several other details that allow you to outline your character’s background, skills, strengths, and weaknesses. Some of these details about your alter ego will come from decisions that you make; some will come from the Game Master; and others will come from random generation (via those ever-present polyhedral dice). When all players have generated one or more PCs, and the GM has approved each of them for play, the first game session can begin.

The GM might use a **Game Master’s Screen**, which is a long cardboard folder featuring a reference set of tables (printed on the GM’s side) and interesting artwork (on the players’ side) that is intended to keep and protect the GM’s “limited information” in secrecy, thereby safeguarding all of those tantalizing secrets that the players do not know. Remember that this is a game of limited information! If you want to know something, you will need to learn it by playing your character. The GM then rolls his polyhedral dice behind the screen, to keep the players guessing, while the players roll their own dice out in the open, so that the GM can be certain that they aren’t cheating during crucial scenes. (Don’t take offense; the anti-cheating mechanism is a rule, not an accusation.)

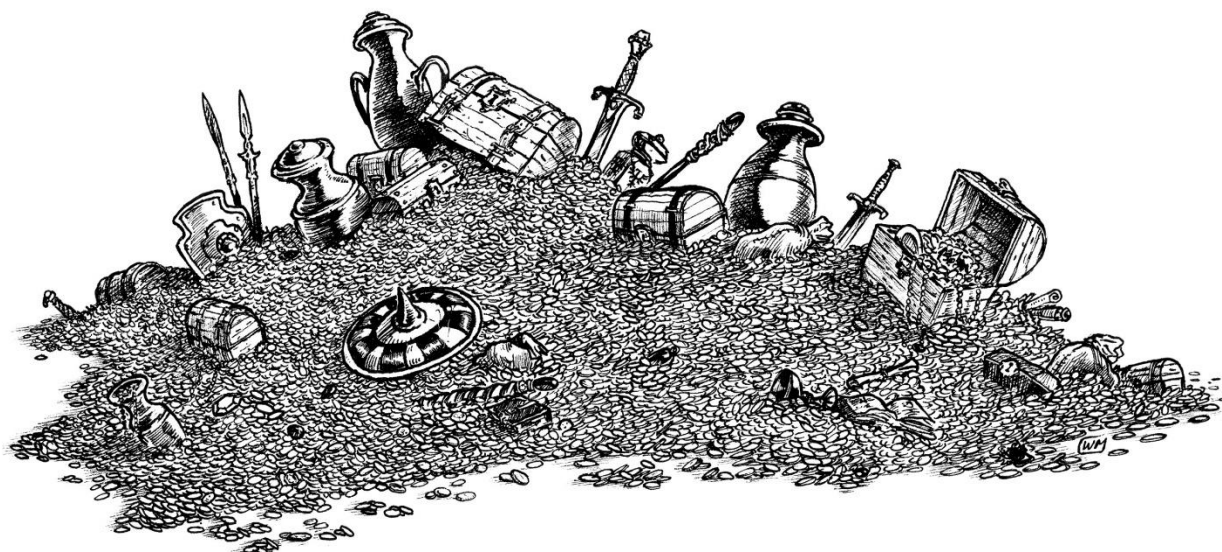
The game is played in **Sessions** of about two to six hours in length. You can certainly go longer than that if everyone agrees, but don’t neglect your responsibilities or your family while doing so! Most play groups meet once or twice a week, but you should work things out with the GM and the other players so that everyone can agree on the best pacing for your lifestyles. Each “episode” in the game is referred to as an **Adventure**. The first adventure might involve exploring a ruined castle dungeon, while the second adventure has the PCs following a treasure map they discovered and their journey into the wilderness. Or, an adventure might be completely improvised, with the players deciding to go off on a wild tangent while the GM creates new encounters and activities for the PCs along the way.

Generally, an adventure will last for one to ten sessions — two to six sessions being typical — depending on its complexity and the amount of play time spent per day. Most adventures end with the PCs returning to a settlement, counting their riches and healing, while they plan their next excursion into some other far-flung corner of the world. Over time, a sequential series of adventures featuring the same players — but not always the same *characters*, depending on PC deaths and other misfortune — is called a **Campaign**. Sometimes, the developing chronology and the game world where the GM conducts one or more campaigns are together called the **Milieu**. A campaign can last for six months, for a few years, or even longer. The “world records” that we know of involve campaigns that have been running for nearly forty years. You, the players — along with the GM — will decide how long your own group’s campaign should be, or when a new one should begin. The game only ends for you when you are no longer having fun. Truly, some people play the game in multiple campaigns throughout their entire lives, this present author included.

The very first adventure a new player experiences is commonly a fairly simple affair ... but it can nevertheless be deadly for the imaginary adventurers themselves. The classic scenario involves the PCs and a few men-at-arms (NPCs) entering a prison-like dungeon, where rats, vermin, undead, and sinister humanoids are known to dwell. The PCs will face these adversaries, find secret doors, wander around, get lost, argue, engage in heroics, succeed, fail, find treasure, and eventually leave the plundered place for the relative safety of the world above.



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Some of the PCs will usually die as a result of these shenanigans, and then new PCs are generated and introduced into play. Most of the PCs will *probably* live to fight another day. If you're lucky, powerful magics can even resurrect a fallen PC so that he can rise from the dead to fight again. But whatever happens, you will always have at least one character to play in the game. "Sitting out" because your chosen character perished is a not really "a thing" in this game of limitless adventure.

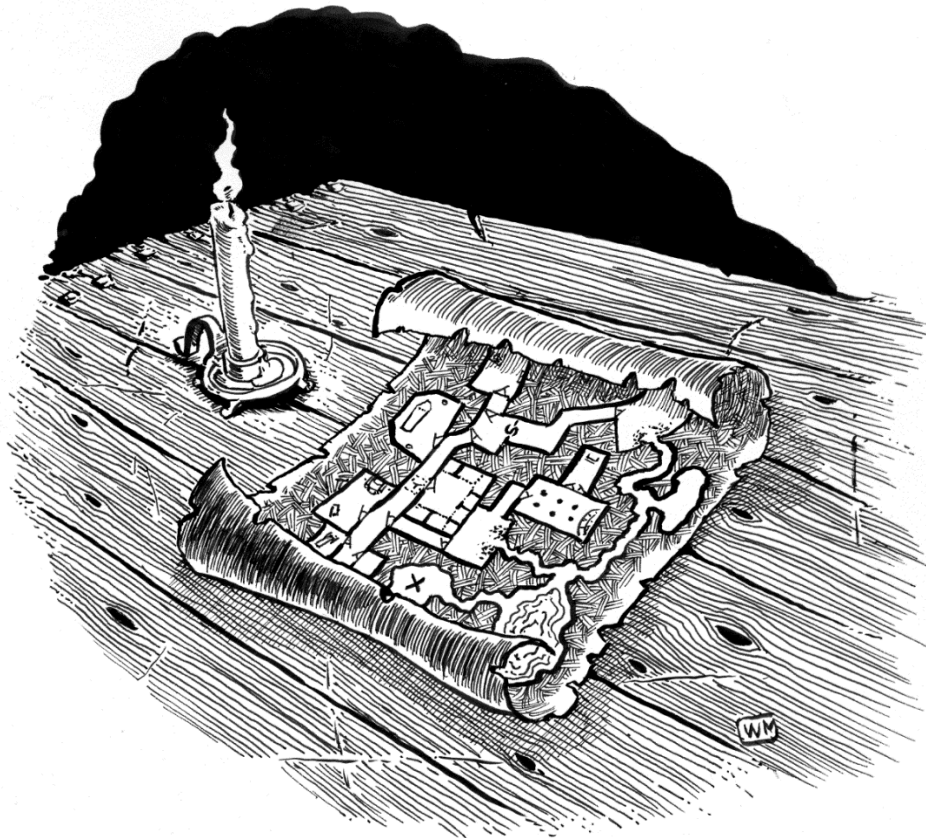


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When newly-generated PCs first begin the game in the settlement base, the GM will probably be quite lenient with the players. The would-be adventurers will have time to hire soldiers, buy armor and equipment, hear rumors at the local inn, and plan a route to the dungeon setting. But within the dungeon proper, all bets are off, and the GM will need to be far more strict with the players and their requests. You will be responsible for keeping track of limited resources, including light, food, water, ammunition, carrying capacity, and the health of your adventurers. You as a player will be told only what your character can see, smell, and hear. If you want to know what's inside the closed chest your PC is standing in front of, you will need to tell the GM that your character is opening it ... and it might be locked or trapped, or there might be poisonous spiders or even a deadly viper lurking inside!

To maximize their chances of survival the PCs will want to map their unknown surroundings, and the creation of those maps will involve player dedication. The GM has his own secret maps, but this information is not provided to the players. Remember, you only know what your PC experiences. But a kindly GM will probably give you a regional map to start with, showing the area that your PC is already familiar with. Dungeon maps are much harder to come by.





As a matter of convenience and tradition, most outdoor areas are mapped using **Hex Paper**, because hexagons offer a large number of travel directions (six) while still fitting geometrically together to form a grid. Dungeons and interiors are mapped using **Graph Paper**, because squares do a good job of replicating the right angles which exist in walls, rooms, tunnels, and intersections.

The player who is creating a map of the explored environment is called the **Mapper**. The duty of mapping is handled by most play groups in a rotating fashion, one player per session, but you should work out something that all of the players will appreciate and enjoy. If one player loves mapping and wants the duty all of the time, more power to them. And if your group is careful, two different players can map the labyrinths simultaneously. But do be duly warned: PCs who dare to explore a deadly maze without any map at all tend to live very short lives indeed!

If the night's play group is large, of different skills levels, or argumentative, the GM might request that the players designate a **Caller**. The caller ensures that the party (usually) stays together and travels in the same direction, while telling the GM what the group is doing during non-combat situations by majority consensus. Example caller directions to the GM might include "We're heading north with torches held high and weapons drawn," "We're going to march northeast for the day," or "We're going to camp here to rest, memorize spells, and heal."

When some uncertain event that will require individual player responses arises — typically, a potential combat encounter — the caller gives up this duty so that all of the players can speak for themselves. Many modern groups prefer not to have a caller at all, and to let each player speak for themselves all the time, and that's fine. (It's typically a question of GM control, efficiency, and speed of play, not personal freedom.) But a caller will never have the power to override your character's actions if you ever disagree with the caller's lead. You can always tell the GM what you want your own PC to be doing, and be heard. Just be patient if your deliberate course of action is going against the grain.

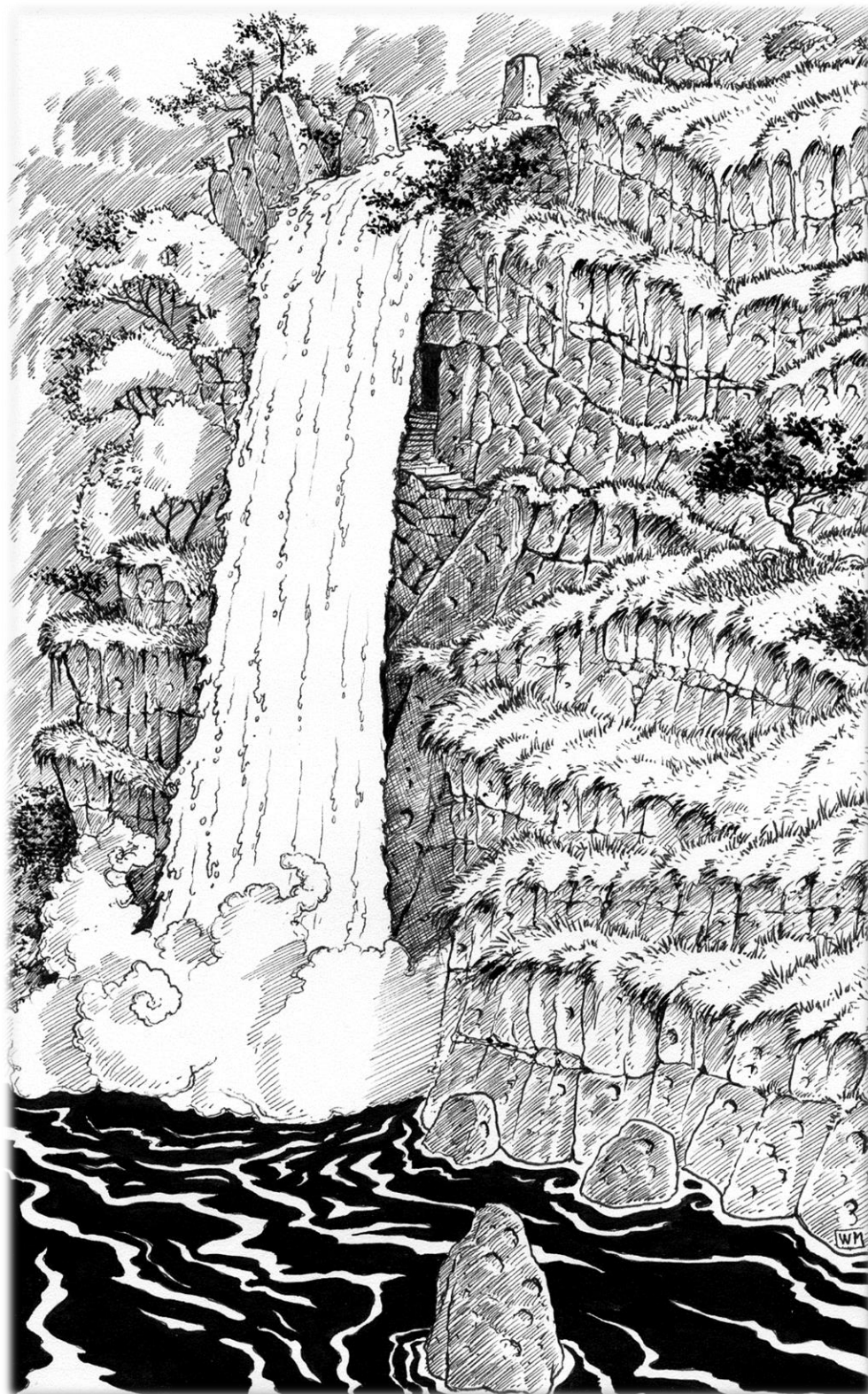
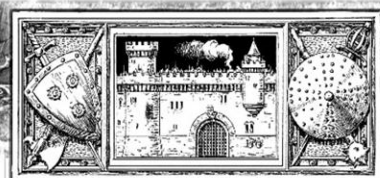
As the adventurers continue to explore their first dungeon, they will encounter potential adversaries. By tradition all of these creatures are called the **Monsters**, whether they are mindless vermin, beasts, undead, strangers (NPCs) or something else besides. Some encounters with monsters are peaceful, but many others are uncertain, dangerous, or downright deadly. What happens in each instance depends on the GM's decisions and random dice rolls, along with the players' declared actions and other various circumstances.

NPCs in a settlement are rarely monstrous in nature, but in any perilous dungeon the people and creatures encountered will be much less likely to be friendly toward the PCs. When PCs meet up with monsters in a dungeon or wilderness or other uncivilized setting, this is called an **Encounter**. The PCs in the party (during an encounter) might decide to communicate, fight, run away, intimidate, or do something else entirely. If a fight breaks out, the frenetic hand-to-hand action — with ranged weapon users and spell casters participating in the fighting from farther off — is termed a **Melee**.

As the PCs struggle, endure, and continue to explore, they will be rewarded by the GM for various encouraged and skillful actions. The two classically affirmed actions are vanquishing (but not always killing) monsters, and acquiring **Treasure**. Treasure is anything valuable, magical or otherwise, which the PCs gain through combat or other dangerous circumstances, such as by climbing down a cliff and discovering a secret trove hidden behind a waterfall.



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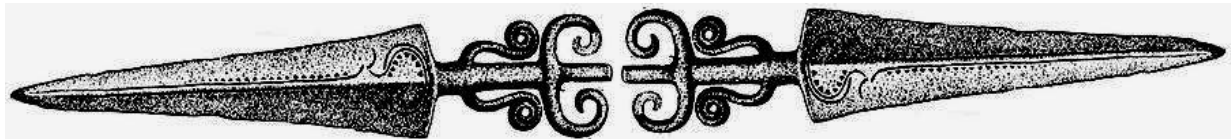
Other positive actions which your GM might reward include puzzle solving (players using their own intelligence and creativity to defeat obstacles), good role-playing (when the players say something particularly clever, eloquent or threatening in character to sway the monsters or NPCs), spell casting (when wizards and priests use magic to benefit the party or thwart enemies), or trap finding (when PCs risk life and limb to dismantle a deadly trap, such as a poisoned needle hidden in the lock on a treasure chest).

These various earned awards measure how excellent of a “score” each PC is earning, and each PC will get a separate award depending upon individual success and participation. The more skillful your play, the more experience your characters will potentially gain. These awards are numbered and totaled as your PC’s **Experience Points (XP)**. For purposes of bookkeeping and speed of play, the GM will keep track of your XP earned throughout the game, but will only announce the XP totals earned by each PC at the end of a session or an adventure.

All PCs, as our protagonists, begin the game as individuals of great potential. (That’s not *power realized*, mind you ... that’s only your character’s future *potential*! You will need to work and struggle through many adventures to earn XP for your PC, if you want him or her to eventually become a powerful hero.) This means that PCs begin the game at **Experience Level 1**. The experience level is a measure of a character’s prowess, survivability, lessons learned, talent, and growing skills as time goes by. A character of **Experience Level 2** is stronger than a level 1 character, a level 3 character is stronger than a 2, and so forth. **Basic Level** play involves the entirety of experience levels 1, 2, and 3. But the game does not end there. If you play a PC for many months and years, he might attain level 10, 15, 20, or something even higher.

The majority of common humans in the world who are the non-rulers, non-soldiers, and non-adventurers — meaning those mundane shopkeepers, farmers, merchants, and so forth — have an experience level of zero, **Level 0, “Normal Man.”** This means that these commoners are weaker than a beginning PC, and they will probably spend their lives much as you or I do, living safely (for the most part) while avoiding death-defying circumstances underground as a matter of daily sanity. PCs become more powerful than normal men because they frequently take significant risks, and overcome them. This in turn makes them more confident, more enduring, craftier and more deadly.

Nevertheless, despite this PC advantage you should always keep in mind that the game world is filled with NPCs who are more powerful than your young neophyte adventurer. A baron NPC for instance might be level 10 or so, while a king might be 18, and an emperor would surely be even higher. The PCs are superior to commoners, but they are certainly not superior to everyone. Do be careful in considering precisely who your PC decides to anger or threaten in the world!





Review of Core Game Terminology

Term	Definition
Advanced Level	More difficult game rules and concepts, which are introduced after Basic Level play is completed.
Adventure	A single episode, or scenario, in the Player Characters' ongoing improvised tale. An Adventure will typically take multiple Sessions to complete.
Adventurer	A Player Character, or Non-Player Character, who is a member of the exploring Party.
Ancestry	Another term for Race.
Assistant Game Master (AGM)	A second and optional Game Master, who assists the primary Game Master with technical bookkeeping (such as combat on a game board).
Basic Level	The introductory mode of play, featuring Player Characters of Experience Levels 1, 2, or 3.
Borderlands	The dangerous, semi-civilized regions which lie between the Civilized Realms and the Wilderness.
Caller	A Player role, which involves giving the Game Master succinct descriptions of collective Party actions during non-combat situations.
Campaign	An ongoing series of Adventures, featuring the same Players and Game Master.
Character	An imaginary in-game persona, or alter ego. Characters are split into two subtypes, Player Characters and Non-Player Characters.
Civilized Realm	A land which is mostly conquered by a ruler and made safe from Monsters and other perils.
Class	A profession or calling which a Character follows.
Company	Another name for a Party, which implies mercenary soldiery and a common goal of acquiring treasure through violent action.
Core Rule	A rule which is integral to the running of the game, which should not be removed unless the Game Master has a specific alternative in mind.
Dungeon	An interior, frequently subterranean area that is filled with Traps, Tricks, Monsters and Treasure.





Dungeon Module	A pre-written game scenario, which the Game Master can read and utilize to run a time-saving Adventure.
Encounter	A potentially dangerous or unpredictable situation in which the Player Characters meet up with Monsters or Non-Player Characters.
Experience Level	A numeric measure of a Character's power and expertise. Experience levels begin at 1 and proceed from there (2, 3, etc.) with higher numbers indicating greater power.
Experience Points (XP)	A measure of the score which a Player has achieved while playing a specific Player Character. Experience Points cause a Character's Experience Level to advance.
Expert Hireling	A very skilled and in-demand Hireling, who possesses knowledge that many other Characters desire.
Fellowship	Another term for a Party, which implies loyalty and oaths of defense between various Characters.
Follower	A Non-Player Character who acts in continued service to a Player Character. Players can influence the actions of Followers, but their actions are still dependent upon the final word of the Game Master.
Game Master (GM)	The game's rules master, judge, referee and storyteller, who interprets the Players' descriptions of Player Character actions.
Game Master's Screen	A cardboard folder which stands upright on the game table, serving as a barrier to hide the Game Master's secret information from the prying eyes of the Players.
Graph Paper	Paper that is covered in squares, used for Dungeon mapping.
Henchman	A Follower who follows a Character through repeated Adventures, gaining Experience Levels by assisting and defending the chosen Character and the Character's Party.
Hex Paper	Paper that is covered in hexagons, used to map Borderlands, Civilized Realms, and the Wilderness.
Hireling	A relatively weak and vulnerable Follower, hired to perform a specific service during an Adventure.
Known Lands	The Borderlands and Civilized Realms which are collectively known to most Characters. By definition, they are surrounded by The Unknown.
Level Zero (L0)	The Experience Level of a common peasant or similar Non-Player Character, who is highly vulnerable and unwilling to risk Adventure in most circumstances.





Lovecraftian	An adjective which describes creatures, events, or places that are weird, uncanny, and beyond even supernatural comprehension. The term is a tribute to author Howard Philips Lovecraft.
Man-at-Arms (M@A)	A Hireling who acts as a mercenary soldier. Men-at-Arms are more powerful than Level Zero citizens, but weaker than Characters of Experience Level 1.
Mapper	A Player role, which involves making maps for the Party using Graph Paper and Hex Paper.
Melee	A wild and frenetic hand-to-hand combat Encounter.
Milieu	A game world in which multiple Campaigns are held.
Monster	A creature that is, by definition, potentially hostile. Non-Player Characters, by definition, are a subtype of Monster.
Netherworld	The vast under-realm which lies deep beneath the game world's Dungeons.
Non-Player Character (NPC)	A human or demi-human character whose actions are controlled by the Game Master, not by any Player.
Normal Man (NM)	A commoner or peasant, who is Level Zero.
Optional Rule	A rule which can be used, modified, or ignored, as the Game Master deems fit.
Party	The cooperating group of Player Characters, and possibly allied Non-Player Characters, who undertake Adventures.
Planes of Existence	Supernatural realms beyond the celestial sphere of the game world and its sun. Planes can comprise other worlds, other dimensions, and other realities.
Player Character (PC)	A Character whose actions are controlled by a Player.
Polyhedral Die (singular) / Dice (plural)	A piece of plastic with numbered sides, used to generate numbers. The six-sided die is the most commonly known, but there are many other types with different sides.
Race	The bloodline or species of a Character (such as human, dwarf, elf, or halfling).
Retainer	A particularly loyal and long-term Henchman.
Rule Number One	The understanding that the Game Master controls the rules of the game.
Sandbox Campaign	A Campaign in which the Game Master creates most of the content, and the Players are given substantial freedom of action.





Session	A single night's (or day's) worth of game play.
Setting	A thematic region of the game world. Types of Settings include Dungeons, Settlements, and so forth.
Settlement	A civilized base of operations, where Adventurers can prepare for Adventures and recover from them as well.
The Unknown	The ultimate exploration goal of the Adventurers. The Unknown includes, but is by no means limited to, the game's Borderlands, Dungeons, Netherworld, Wilderness, and Planes of Existence.
Trap	A perilous, non-living obstacle, such as a pit, deadfall, or poisoned needle.
Treasure	Valuable items which are sought by Adventurers in dangerous circumstances. Treasure is frequently protected by Monsters, Traps, or Treasures. Adventurers who win Treasures earn Experience Points.
Trick	An unpredictable, and usually magical, obstacle which might sometimes be beneficial to Adventurers.
Wilderness	A vast untamed region of the surface game world which lies beyond the Borderlands.
World of Oldskull	The Milieu of the Castle Oldskull game's author. Game Masters are encouraged to use the World of Oldskull as their game world, unless they decide to craft a unique world all their own.





CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING THE GAME





2-1

SEPARATING PLAYERS FROM CHARACTERS

New players are sometimes confused by the many distinctions between players vs. player characters, and all of the implications of that divide. Very simply, players are real people who are playing the Castle Oldskull game, typically at a table or while sitting at their computers and communicating with the others. Characters are the imaginary people that the players are talking about. When a player plays the game, they are directing the actions of an imaginary character. Sometimes during the excitement of play the two terms get conflated, and the GM will need to correct some situations where a player is doing or saying something that a character cannot.

This is usually an amusing or a trivial matter, but sometimes it's important.

Consider:

- When you say "I do this" during the game, the GM will understand you to mean "My character attempts to do this." Success is not guaranteed, and you are not your character.
- Characters in the game do not know what game mechanics terms mean. You could ask an NPC, "What is your armor class?" But what your character is really asking in the game world is probably more along the lines of, "How protected are you against adversaries?" The GM may need to correct you from time to time, reminding you that game terms are for players, not characters, and those terms are not conducive to role-playing. An NPC will know that he is stronger than most others, but he will not know that he has a strength score of 16.
- What the players knows, and what the character knows, are different things. If a veteran player is playing a new level 1 character who is fighting a Deep One — a Lovecraftian horror that is well known to the player, because she likes to read stories — it would be considered bad form for that player to use secret knowledge that the character wouldn't yet know to warn others of the precise type of danger that the Deep One poses to the nearby village. The player will know that the creature is a minion of Dagon and likely a thrall of Great Cthulhu, and that villagers are going to potentially be abducted for breeding and sacrifice; but the character will not know that until later, as events are experienced. Spoiling surprises for other players, who might not know what you know in real life, is also considered bad form.
- If the party is ever split up, the GM will probably prevent you from talking if you are not "there" with the other characters in the GM's current scene. Saying "Hey, Mel, don't forget to check that chest for traps and secret compartments!" is fine when your friend Mel is sitting next to you and his character is standing right next to your own. But if Mel is sitting next to you and his character is 500' away from your character, you're providing Mel with unfair reminders that he should be thinking of on his own. You might even be asked to temporarily remain silent, or even leave the table, if you cannot play fairly in this regard.





- Similarly, when your character is unconscious or dying, the things you say will not be said by your character. If you are giving the other players tactical advice while their characters are fighting for survival and yours is knocked out, the GM might prevent you from participating in the battle chat any further. Once your character is healed, you can join freely again in the tactical conversation.
- Some GMs rule that when you speak at the table and are not addressing the GM directly, your character is speaking in the same manner. Other GMs are more lenient and say that players should state, “My character asks ...” or “I ask ...” before statements are considered to be said by the character. The GM’s opinion on this can be important, for example when the characters are supposed to be moving stealthily but one player wants to relay information to another player that will affect the characters’ immediate plans.
- The game world moves on its own timeline, outside of the real world timeline. In the real world, one second follows the next in a very predictable manner. In the game, the GM might say something like “Your party travels for four hours and then you reach the caves, it’s now early evening.” So if you ask, “What time is it?” the GM might well reply, “It’s 2:32 PM here, and in the game world it’s around 6 or 6:30 PM.”
- If you ever tell the GM “I didn’t say that!” or “I didn’t do that!” and the GM disagrees, it might be time to remind yourself to revisit this section of the rules after the game. “Take backs” are frowned upon. Saying “I attack the guard, just kidding,” in my own veterans’ campaign, for example, translates as “I attack the guard.” Be mindful!
- And if the GM ever says, “Your character doesn’t know that,” his word in the game is law. Insisting otherwise would be bad play and might be punished by a lack of gained experience points for the session. You can argue with the GM over these details, but the argument is best kept until after the current game session is over.

These are important considerations for a skill-based game of the imagination. There are many other nuances that will arise from this conceptual divide, but it’s always important to remember the one fact above all: Players as real-world people don’t ever fight, charge about, worship devils, make sacrifices, or cast spells as a result of playing the game! (You might think this is funny, but for those of us who lived through the Satanic Panic — look it up if you need to — you will learn that there are many ignorant people in this world who want to think the worst of you and this type of imagination-empowering game. Be sure not to confuse them any further with your behavior.)

The game world is a fantastic realm of unlimited potential. It can be filled with action, violence, the occult, battles for and against evil, and even provocative sensuality ... but the players themselves simply talk about what is happening in the imaginary world with the GM. Player excitement is a wonderful thing, but only characters face the dangers and act as death dealers. The players just sit back in the bleachers of reality and cheer.

Isn’t that right, Pardieu?

My friend Pardieu is visiting today. He says that’s absolutely right.





2-2

USE OF THE WORD “LEVEL”

A fairly significant amount of activity in the game involves designating various lethality, power, and danger levels with specific numerical ratings. As a subset of technical terms, the word **Level** gets bandied about with great frequency. There are four main uses of the term “level” which can be a bit confusing at first, but they become far more intuitive and innately understood over time:

Experience Level: As detailed above, an **Experience Level** is a measure of individual PC or NPC power. Each new experience level requires an ever-increasing amount of experience points to reach. PCs begin the game at experience level 1, while NPCs might well be considerably higher and more powerful.



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Monster Level: Separate from experience levels, Monsters are rated by **Monster Levels**. (These are sometimes termed **Lethality Levels (LLs)** or **Challenge Levels (CLs)**, depending on the edition of game supplement you might be using for background material.) Very generally, a monster of monster level X (that's Roman numeral 10) will be a life-threatening peril if faced by a single surprised and ambushed PC of equal experience level, while an entire party should be able to face multiple monsters of that level with a fair chance at survival. For example, "orcs" are humanoid creatures rated at monster level I (1). This means that in a one-on-one combat between an orc and a level 1 PC, the PC will have a moderate chance of dying during the battle. But if five orcs face five level 1 PCs, the prepared party — acting with careful teamwork — has a more-than-even chance of emerging victorious. If the party is ambushed, the tables might well be turned in a very dangerous fashion. Monster levels are based upon **Hit Dice** and **Special Abilities**, as will be further expanded upon in the Game Master's Basic Level rules supplement.



Spell Level: The magical powers which spell casting characters can use are similarly rated according to their magnitude of effect and power. Low-level apprentices can only cast **1st Level Spells (Spell Level 1)**, while higher-level wizards and patriarchs can cast higher-level spells. The **Clerical Spells** (powers from the gods of holy, or unholy, nature) range from spell level 1 to spell level 7, while the **Arcane Spells** (mystical formulae studied by wizards and warlocks) range from spell level 1 to spell level 9. In Basic Level play, only spell levels 1 and 2 are frequently considered.





Dungeon Level: Most subterranean settings feature descents toward the netherworld, where terrible monsters reign and survival of the fittest takes hold. This means that the deepest dungeons have the deadliest monsters, while the levels nearest to the world's surface frequently feature the lairs of weaker opponents. **Dungeon Level 1** is directly underneath the surface, and leads down to dungeon level 2, which leads to dungeon level 3, and so forth. Each dungeon has its own layout and number of levels. A small dungeon might have only 1 or 2 dungeon levels, while a “typical” dungeon will have 3 to 7 levels, and a **Mega-Dungeon** — an immense and almost never-ending magical labyrinth — might have 10, 20, or even more levels. Each dungeon has its own baseline difficulty and challenge level, but the general maxim will always hold true: The deeper you go, the deadlier it gets.

2-3

HOW TO USE THE POLYHEDRAL DICE

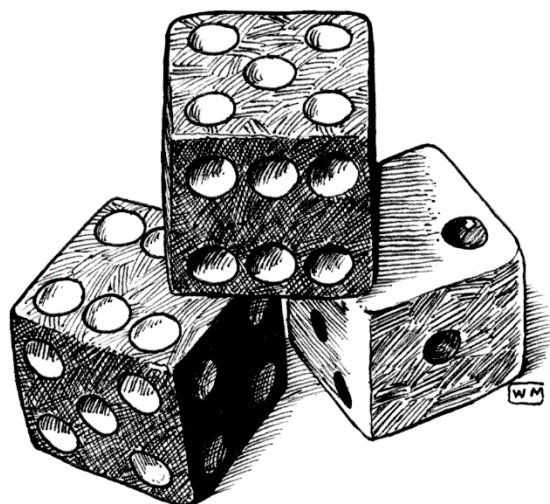


In the Castle Oldskull game, many different kinds of dice are used to determine random results. When your character swings a sword at an onrushing foe, there is neither a 100% nor a 0% chance that the blade will strike true. Rather, there is a chance between 5% and 95%, and the exact chance depends on the weapon wielder's prowess, the target's armor, magical protections, environmental factors such as darkness, and so forth. So how can the GM ever know what this attacker's probability “to hit” is, and how can the players ever know what they need to do to make that blade strike true and hit home?





The answer involves **Polyhedral Dice**. (A **Die** is a physical random number generator; **Dice** is the plural term.) You are almost certainly familiar with six-sided dice, which are the normal cubes found with most board games. Common six-siders have “pips” (dots) on each surface, while uncommon “gaming” ones have the numerals 1 through 6 etched into their sides. But six-sided dice do not give enough probability range for a game of this complexity; you need more options. Therefore, this game also uses four-sided dice (termed **D4s**), the usual and numeric six-siders (**D6**), eight-sided dice (**D8**), ten-sided (**D10**), twelve-sided (**D12**), and the ever-popular twenty-sided icosahedron (**D20**). Additionally, numbers from 1 to 100 (for percentage chances) can be rolled using two D10s to simulate **D100**, and three ten-siders can even be used to simulate **D1000**. Also, a three-sided die (**D3**) is sometimes used, which can be simulated with a D6 (1 or 2 = 1, 3 or 4 = 2, 5 or 6 = 3) if you do not have an actual D3 in your collection.



That is a lot of options, but you can easily purchase a basic set of the common polyhedrals (D4, D6, D8, D10, D12, D20) at any good gaming store. And this game always uses a careful, easily discernible notation to tell you how many dice to roll when, and what modifiers to apply as you add the results together.

The game's **Dice Notation** system is fairly straightforward. The number of dice you are supposed to roll comes first, then the letter D, then the number of sides of the die (or dice), then the modifier to be applied to the sum. Confusing? A little, but not really. At its simplest, “1D6” means “roll a single six-sided die,” “2D6” means “roll two six-sided dice and add the results together” (generating a number between 2 and 12), and “2D6+3” means “roll two six-sided dice and add the results together, then add 3” (generating a number between 5 and 15).

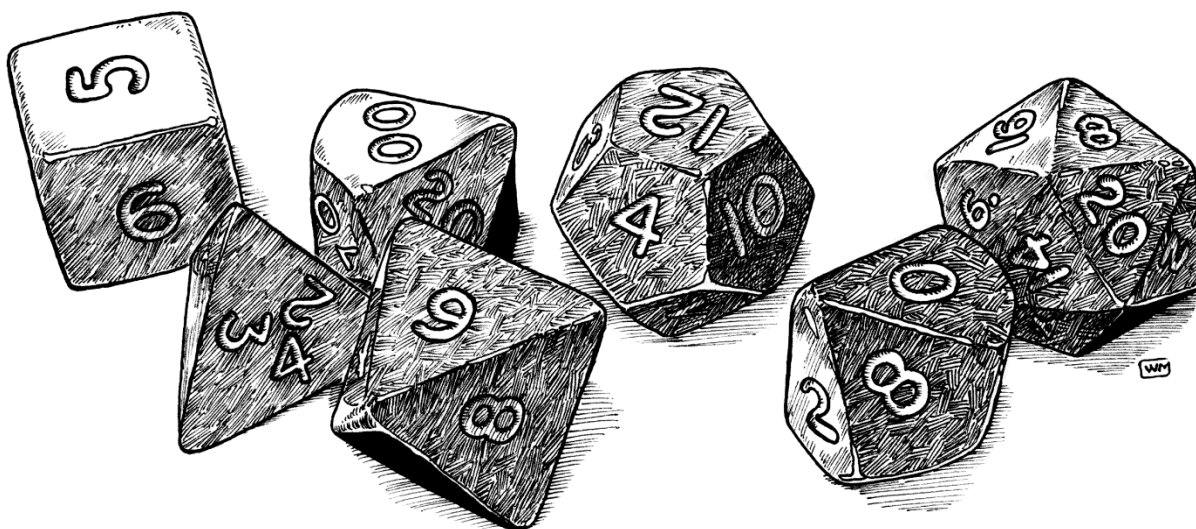
The other dice follow this notation too. The code “4D4-1” means “roll four four-sided dice, add the results together, and then subtract one” (generating a number between 3 and 15), while “5D8+4” means “roll five eight-sided dice, add them all together, and then add four.” In a similar fashion, “3D6x10” means “roll three six-sided dice, and after adding them together, multiply the sum by 10,” generating a number



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between 30 and 180, in increments of 10. Using these notation codes, you can simulate virtually any random range between a given (reasonable) low number and any other high number.

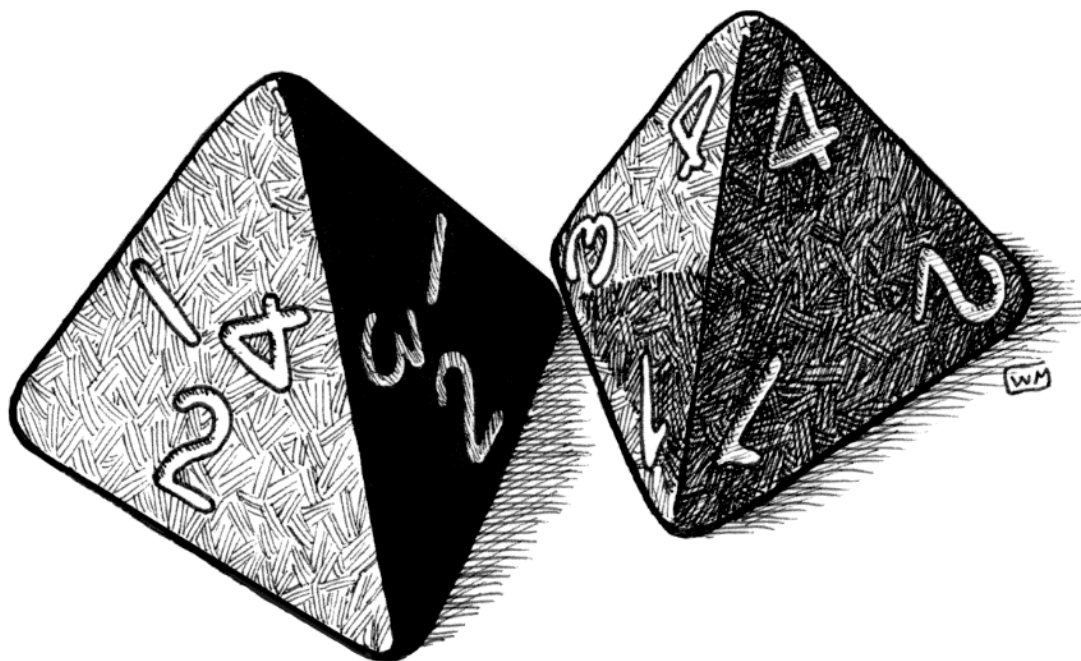


Returning to the example of the sword hitting between 5% and 95% of the time, that random roll is typically decided by **1D20**, because the D20 has a nice number of sides evenly divisible by 100. So when you roll 1D20, you have a 5% chance to roll a 20, a 10% chance to roll a 19 or higher, a 15% chance to roll an 18 or higher, a 20% chance to roll a 17 or higher, and so forth. The GM will tell you what roll you will need on 1D20 **“To Hit,”** and then when your character attacks that monster, you will know what the odds are that the sword will hit. If he says you need an 18 or higher on 1D20 to hit, that tells you that your character has only a 15% chance of hitting the monster with every attempted strike. Using such systems, the entire game is built upon random probabilities which are resolved using the dice, as rolled by either a player or the Game Master, as appropriate.

The one die that might give you pause is the pyramid-shaped D4. Besides being infamously painful when they are stepped on in the middle of the night, those pointy D4s are also tricky to roll because they don't have quite enough sides to tumble properly. To correctly roll a D4, you need to spin it vertically while tossing it upward, and then let it drop at least 12 inches or so. Any less effort than that, and it's very easy to fake the roll and to get the exact result you want a vast majority of the time. (Trust me.) Your GM might even insist on rolling all D4s himself to start with (for at least the first few sessions), or might employ a cool vertical chute called a **Dice Tower** to encourage true randomness at the table. To read the result of a D4 toss, on most dice you need to read the bottom number on each face. One face will be hidden (it's lying flat on the table), while the other three faces will either read 1-1-1, 2-2-2, 3-3-3 or 4-4-4. A variant type of D4 will have a number at the top of the pyramid, facing upward, either 1, 2, 3, or 4. See the following illustration. The die on the left is read as “2,” and the die on the right is read as “4.”



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In addition to these basic tenets of dice mastery, you will also want to know how to roll **1D100** for results ranging from 1 to 100 (**Percentile Dice**, **D100**, or **D%**), which can be generated by using two ten-siders of different colors. The first (or darkest) D10 is read as tens, while the second (or lightest) D10 is read as ones. So if you need a percentage and you roll an 8 and then a 7, that equals 87; and if you roll 6 and then a 3, that equals 63. A result of 01 is read as 1, while a result of 00 is read as 100. In some of the nicer dice sets, you can get ten-sided dice which have “ten-digit faces” (reading 10-20-30-40-50-60-70-80-90-00 instead of the single digits), which makes rolling D100 even easier.

Rolling **1D1000** is done in the same manner, with three ten-siders (instead of two) representing hundreds, tens, and ones. A result of 001 equals 1, and a result of 000 equals 1,000. The Castle Oldskull gaming supplements are a bit notorious for having massive random generation tables included in them — you can certainly blame the mischievous author, who loves that massive level of possibility — so you will be rolling D1000 quite frequently if you purchase other books in this series.

With all of that said, you can also use random electronic generators, as either a phone app or a computer program. And in the Excel spreadsheet program for example, you can generate numbers by using simple macros, such as `=RANDBETWEEN(1,100)` to simulate 1D100. But I do strongly recommend the use of real dice at a physical gaming table whenever you can manage it, because the true tactile experience of random generation on the spur of the moment adds a huge amount of atmosphere and character to the game.

Sometimes, the old ways *are* better. And that might well be true more often than you think.



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Summary of Frequently-Used Dice Notations

Number Range	Die / Dice Used	Notation	Average Roll
1 or 2	Any die, odds = 1, evens = 2	1D2	1.5
1 to 3	Six-sided die (1 or 2 = 1, 3 or 4 = 2, 5 or 6 = 3)	1D3	2
1 to 4	Four-sided die	1D4	2.5
1 to 5	Six-sided die (reroll a result of 6)	1D5	3
1 to 6	Six-sided die	1D6	3.5
1 to 7	Eight-sided die (reroll a result of 8)	1D7	4
1 to 8	Eight-sided die	1D8	4.5
1 to 9	Ten-sided die (reroll a result of 10)	1D9	5
1 to 10	Ten-sided die	1D10	5.5
1 to 11	Twelve-sided die (reroll a result of 12)	1D11	6
1 to 12	Twelve-sided die	1D12	6.5
1 to 20	Twenty-sided die	1D20	10.5
1 to 100	Two ten-sided dice (1st for 10s, 2nd for 1s)	1D100	50.5
1 to 1,000	Three ten-sided dice (1st for 100s, 2nd for 10s, 3rd for 1s)	1D1000	500.5
2 to 5	Four-sided die (add 1)	1D4+1	3.5
2 to 7	Six-sided die (add 1)	1D6+1	4.5
2 to 8	Two four-sided dice	2D4	5
2 to 9	Eight-sided die (add 1)	1D8+1	5.5
2 to 10	A four-sided die and a six-sided die	1D4+1D6	6
2 to 11	Ten-sided die (add 1)	1D10+1	6.5
2 to 12	Two six-sided dice	2D6	7
2 to 13	Twelve-sided die (add 1)	1D12+1	7.5
2 to 16	Two eight-sided dice	2D8	9
2 to 20	Two ten-sided dice	2D10	11
2 to 24	Two twelve-sided dice	2D12	13
3 to 18	Three six-sided dice	3D6	10.5
3 to 24	Three eight-sided dice	3D8	13.5
3 to 30	Three ten-sided dice	3D10	16.5
3 to 36	Three twelve-sided dice	3D12	19.5





2-4

HOW TO WIN

As you may have surmised by now, by design the Castle Oldskull game has open-ended win conditions. The game only functions properly when the players are playing together as a coordinated team. By nature it is somewhat competitive between the gathered team of players and the Game Master, but not fully so (because the GM is granted more power than the players, rendering such a competition basely unfair). The GM serves as an event portrayer, a rulings-making referee, and a neutral arbiter over the challenges which the PCs must face throughout the campaign. He will frequently root for the PCs, but nevertheless he cannot side with them over the monsters, or all of the game's challenges will become hollow and bleed away. Likewise the GM is not your enemy, as he is not in a directly adversarial position. Your adversaries are the monsters, as described and portrayed by the Game Master. Therefore you cannot ever "win" by sparring with directly the GM.

Similarly, in this cooperative game you cannot win by competing with the other players either. You can certainly become *competitive* with them, but considering the maxim of "**Never split the party**" — in body or in spirit — whenever your PC dares to attack another player's PC, the trust of the founded fellowship is broken ... and then chaos reigns, and everyone begins to lose.

There is nothing really stopping you from having your PC steal from another PC, besides the basic life maxim which I like to call "Hey, don't be an asshole"; but again, even if your PC willfully steals from a companion and gets away with it for a time, such dissent and betrayal of trust is against the very nature of the game ... and if that's really your thing, you would probably be happier playing a First-Person Shooter (FPS) videogame or a wargame where the stated goal is to eliminate other players. So the idea of a "win" against your compatriots who are enjoying Castle Oldskull while acting as your allies is out as well. Those types of players will NOT enjoy this game once the GM brings the hammer down.

At the most abstract philosophical level, you win by having fun, and if you help your friends to have fun as well you will win many times over. But that's too nebulous and idealized a concept for many people. That's a philosophy, not a score. Yet consider: At a baser level, you and your PC can "win" by acquiring as many experience points, treasures, and magic items as possible. As a PC gets more powerful, his ability to explore the Unknown expands, and ever-greater options and freedom of choice open up as a direct result of the player's rewarded skill.

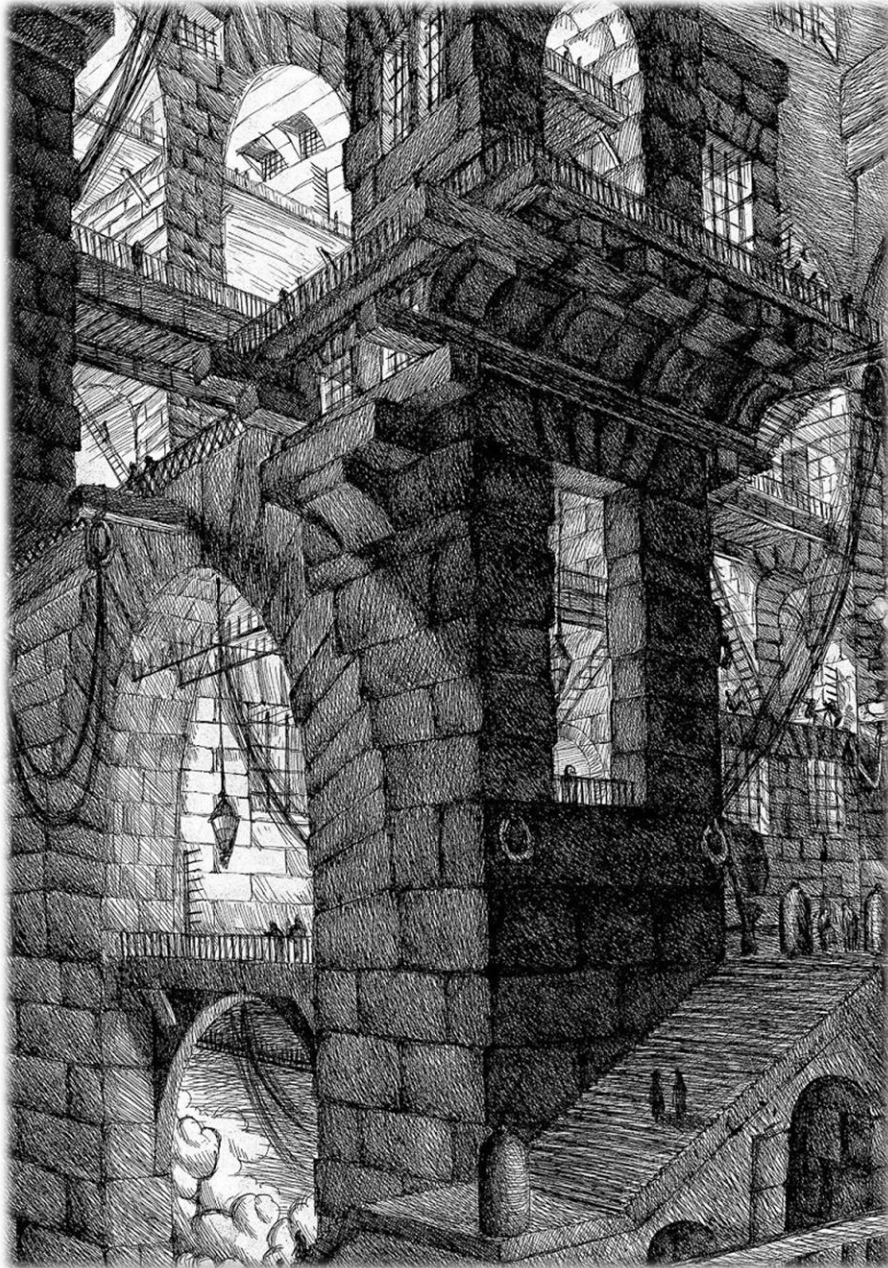
There is no end game. If you need a more concrete win condition than that, you can give yourself a personal goal, such as: [1] getting a PC to a higher experience level than you have ever achieved before; [2] completing a world-spanning adventure involving the conquering of mighty dragons or demon lords; [3] having your PC found a barony or other feudal territory, creating a hereditary legacy; or, [4] changing the game world in a fundamental and lasting way which only you can decide. As an example of the latter, one of my favorite characters once managed to usher in a new Golden Age by sacrificing herself to convince a furious goddess to stay her hand of destruction against the game world. My character died, but it was in a manner of my own choosing and she lived on as a legend for generations, and so I felt





that I had “won” the game after many years of play. I then created a new win condition for myself, and a new level 1 PC carried on to journey in her name.

I truly believe that you too will discover that the more you play the game, the more you gradually come to realize that *even win conditions are too limiting as a goal consideration*, because they imply an end point to your fun ... and the game never needs to end, as long as you have a willing Game Master, good friends, and the desire to keep on playing.





2-5

THE FIRST GAME PHASE:

DUNGEONS AND NETHERWORLD ADVENTURES

The Castle Oldskull game, as one manifestation of the mythical Hero's Journey of humankind, is predicated upon the epic and folkloric concept of treasure-concealing subterranean environments. These places are the embodiment of primal darkness, the original pre-human fear. Conquering “the dark” in the name of personal valor is a prime manifestation of the human experience.

The reasons for this are many and varied (and you can read my **Hawk & Moor** series of RPG history books if you want to learn more about the evolution of such concepts), but suffice it for now to say that all dungeons are rich in dread-building atmosphere, while simultaneously being somewhat limiting on player ingenuity. That latter point might seem a bit counter-intuitive, but it's actually a safety mechanism which protects your Game Master's sanity while allowing him to control the game. In a game where players' characters can literally attempt to do anything, a controlled environment makes the infinite freedom somewhat manageable for the GM to adjudicate.

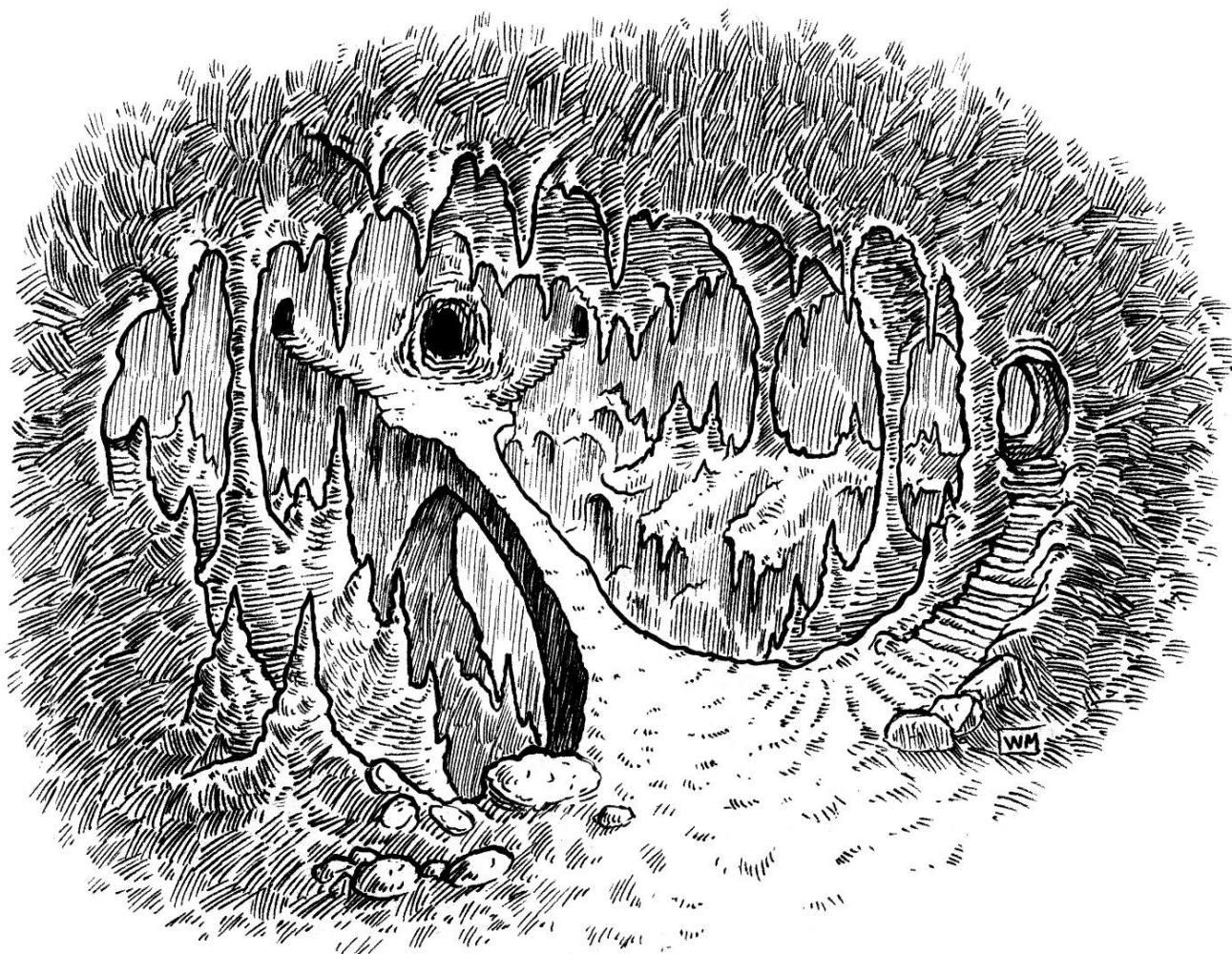
You can play your PC very cleverly and thrive in the game as a result of this freedom of choice, but when your character is faced with a dungeon chamber with a door in each wall and a pit in the floor, you really only have seven potential courses of significant action: [1] Stay there and rest (or wait for something to happen), [2] Go forward, [3] Go left, [4] Go right, [5] Investigate the pit, [6] Search the room, or [7] Go back the way you came. Compare this to the open-ended nature of an above-ground forest, where your PC might decide to go hunting, go fishing, explore in any direction, set up a camp, dig a hole, climb or cut down a tree, build a hut, pick some herbs, listen for birdcalls, attempt to tame a raccoon, or any other number of wildly random actions which will force your GM to devise a creative response to all your creative meddling! Dungeons are simply easier to learn and play, while staying true to the core and classical concepts of the game. For that reason, Basic Level play centers upon the dungeon exploration experience.

That level of wild player freedom is always fun for the players, but it can make things difficult for the GM while simultaneously slowing down play. When new players and the Game Master are not grounded in the basics of an adventure — preparation, exploration, stealth, combat, evasion, and navigating dungeon levels — the game tends to slow down drastically as a result of too much freedom, and the sessions can often become aimless when every player — tempted by too many choices — desires to attempt a different simultaneous thing. For all of these reasons and more, the dungeons are introduced in play *before* either the netherworld or the wilderness, but eventually every corner of the world is opened to adventure.

If the players greatly enjoy dungeon adventures, you can later introduce the netherworld as a similarly limited form of a “controllable wilderness.” Basically, the netherworld involves an endless series of labyrinthine caves filled with strange ecosystems involving fungi, giant insects, “lost world” races, sinister monsters, ancient horrors, and many other things which the smaller dungeons up above can only hint at.



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By creating tunnels that are miles long (underground roads) and galleries that are miles wide (underground realms), the GM can then introduce new concepts into play — nether cities, planar gates, ancient cultures, sunless seas, gateways to Hell, whatever — while still inherently limiting the PCs to somewhat predictable courses of action. The GM can even introduce limited regions of wilderness terrain in the netherworld, including fungal forests, rubble-pile hills, subterranean rivers, geothermal swamps, and even underground mountain ranges, as featured (for example) in Lovecraft's tale *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*.

The netherworld is far too vast and too dangerous for low-level PCs to explore, but around PC experience level 6 or so the GM might want to start offering glimpses and approaches to the upper brim of the nether, which intrepid heroes might eventually dare to explore.





2-6

THE SECOND GAME PHASE: THE WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN

For the many reasons given above, I recommend that dungeon play should dominate the Basic Level game. But inevitably, your curious players will crave variety over time. The world beyond the dungeons is filled with looming ruins and cities, vast seas, thick forests, savage deserts, unclimbable mountains (or *are they?*) and secret valleys. The wilderness will call to your players sooner rather than later. But because it is so open-ended, difficult to run, and due to the unpredictable freedoms these environments offer to players, I further recommend that you not introduce the option for long-term wilderness adventures until the PCs have reached at least experience level 4, or even 5 or 6. You can certainly include short jaunts between towns and dungeons well before then, where the PCs must trek for a day or two through the borderlands; but if you introduce the wilderness too early, the players will probably derail your game simply because of the overwhelming choices and opportunities which come their way.



ORIGINAL OLD SCHOOL FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAMES



The wilderness campaign will be discussed in much more detail in future volumes in this rulebook series. For now, you should know that in the wilderness the treasures tend to be richer, but the guardian monsters simultaneously tend to be more lethal and found in greater numbers. Where a 20'x20' dungeon chamber might only fit ten sinister goblins, a cave-pocked cliff face in the wilderness might hide the lairs of hundreds of such creatures! The scale of such encounters can present significant problems for the GM, not to mention the detrimental effects on a low-level PCs' survivability.



And as you consider the possibilities and perils represented by the wilderness and netherworld adventures, remember this old school paradigm and take it to heart: It is *always* up to the players to





gauge the risk vs. the potential reward of any dangerous circumstance encountered by the PCs in the game world. Do not ever make the “new school” mistake of assuming that the GM will only present situations which the PCs can easily conquer!

This is a game of danger and adventure, not mollycoddling.

Also, the endless nature of the wilderness will inevitably taunt the PCs away from the settlements and other bases of operation. This is not necessarily a bad thing, until the players realize that they have been relying on the crutch of having a nearby sanctuary where wounded PCs could rest and heal in safety between dungeon expeditions.

Out in the wilderness, after a near-lethal encounter the PCs can encamp and heal for a day or two, but there is nothing stopping the surrounding beasts and monsters from smelling blood, and crawling forth to finish the wounded heroes off. And even if the PCs wisely decide to flee after a near-catastrophic victory in the wilds, they still might be hundreds of miles away from the nearest safe place they left behind!

In considering such things, you can begin to see why the learning-level dungeons of the game world are actually *safer* for the PCs in many ways; and the dungeons’ inherent limits upon PC death and dismemberment will serve to keep neophyte players fairly challenged, learning, improving, and interested in the game.

2-7

THE THIRD GAME PHASE: THE BARONIAL CAMPAIGN

When, through hard play and many adventures, the PCs collectively rise to “**Name**” **Level** (an appellation traditionally given to experience levels 9 through 11), they will have become powerful enough for the local lords, counts, and kings to take notice of their deeds. Such PCs will frequently be offered outland **Baronies** in the borderlands, which are basically semi-controlled territories lying upon the edges of a kingdom, in semi-wild regions which are threatened by monsters due to a lack of civilian population density, a lack of soldiers, and a lack of on-site noble authority.

You do not need to consider such things just yet, but know that there is much more to a PC’s high-level life than dungeon exploration and wilderness travel. Not all players will gravitate toward **Baronial Level** play, but most campaigns will feature such themes as a reward to skilled players who are craving even more freedom of action.

Players who enjoy television series and films which highlight royal power struggles, courtly intrigue, kingmaking, assassinations, alliances, and kingdoms under siege will certainly look forward to the unique challenges inherent in Baronial Level play.



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2-8

THE FOURTH GAME PHASE: WORLDS BEYOND

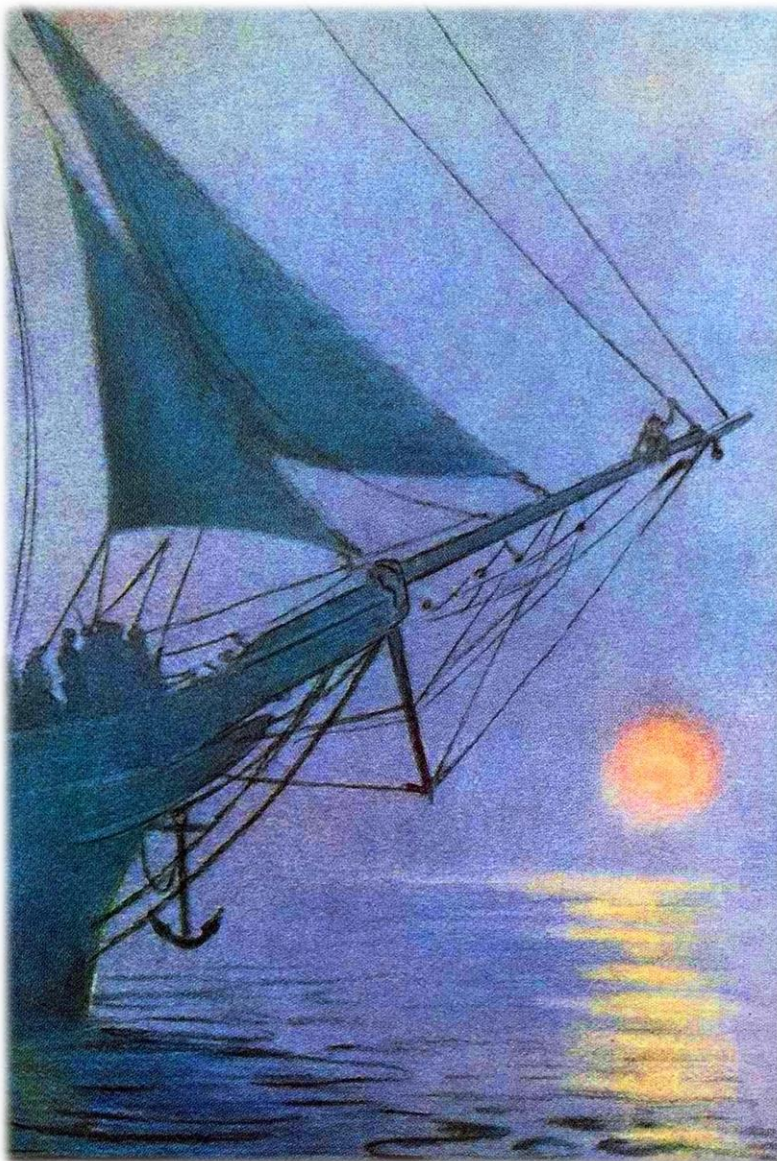
As the PCs rise to **Master Level** and **Epic Level** (commonly regarded as experience levels 13 and up), even more horizons will open. The game encompasses different time periods, different worlds, different dimensions, and different planes of existence. “**Planes**” (which are endless otherworldly surfaces) are infinite realms situated elsewhere in the **Multiverse**, where the primal and eternal forces of **Law, Chaos, Good, Evil, and Neutrality** battle throughout the eons and galaxies in the name of ultimate dominance over the very pillars of reality. Some say that the Gods battle for the right to destroy this flawed and entropic Multiverse, and to create a new and purer one in their own image. Who can say?





Long before their PCs attain such grandiose experience levels, the players will become well-versed in the concepts of **Clerics** (priests who derive their powers from the immortals), **Alignment** (the conflicting eternal philosophies noted above), **Gods, Goddesses, Godlings, Demigods, Arch-Devils, Demon Lords, Angels, Fallen Angels**, time travel, dimensional travel, and the mind-shattering revelations of the primordial **Cthulhu Mythos**. The nature of the ever-expanding campaign is that regardless of the PCs' ultimate mortal power, the Multiverse is endless; there will always be greater worlds to explore, and greater secrets to master.

Through developing such potentially infinite landscapes and mindscapes, the GM will ensure that the players will never run out of opportunities for glory, self-fulfillment, empowerment, and adventure.





The Progress of an Archetypal Castle Oldskull Campaign

Rules Set	Rules Complexity	Recommended Experience Levels	Introduced Play Style
1	Basic Level	1 to 3	Dungeon adventures
2	Advanced Level	4 to 6	Wilderness adventures
3	Expert Level	7 to 9	Seafaring adventures
4	Champion Level	10 to 12	Campaign adventures
5	Master Level	13 to 16	Alternate dimensions
6	Epic Level	17 to 20	Journeys to the inner planes
7	Mythic Level	21 to 24	Journeys to the outer planes
8	Legendary Level	25 to 28	Cataclysmic campaign events
9	Demigod Level	29+	Apotheosis and legacy

2-9

BEGINNING AT THE BEGINNING: FINDING OTHER PLAYERS

And now that you're completely overwhelmed by otherworldly concepts, we reconsider mundane reality ...

One of the most lamentable challenges you might face in the RPG hobby is finding other people to play with. This can be exceedingly frustrating, because there are few things more vexing than finding an excellent game and then wondering if there's anyone else that you can play with on a regular basis. The 21st century is a bit of a paradox, because although we can use the World Wide Web and Facebook to make contact with friendly strangers just about anywhere, technology also encourages us to spend our lives alone. So to find (and learn from, and possibly even teach) other players, you will need to manage your expectations, take a chance, and reach out.

You might want your immediate friends and family to help you, first and foremost. Try this loaded question on them: "Would you like to play a game?"

If your neighborhood has a friendly gaming store, you might want to continue your journey there. Ask the storekeeper if they host role-playing games, or if they have a bulletin board where you can post "play





group wanted” messages. If you now have an interested spouse, friends, or growing children, you can invite them to learn and play along with you. Be sure to be mindful of the maturity level of the themes you are going to feature in your game.

And you can also use the web. Facebook and Google groups can be a good start, as can forums at sites like Dragonsfoot, Knights-N-Knives, ODD74, ENWorld, and many other places. Sometimes the trick is not in finding people, but in finding mutual times where everyone can play. In that case you might want to set up an experimental weekend session that everyone can get to, or an online game using electronic tools such as Roll20, Skype, or forum chat rooms. These types of topics are quite beyond the scope of this rulebook, but you can find lots of information out there with a simple Internet search.

And what if your group is filled with neophytes? It’s a tricky situation, but that’s how I learned to play — after an experimental solitaire stint — in the early 1980s. In learning to play without any veteran players, one of you will need to volunteer to become the Game Master in training. This can be a very difficult challenge, and the GM should first warn the players that mistakes are going to be made as everyone learns together. The players must be patient and learn along. Alternately, you can find an ongoing campaign with a veteran GM; but that can be a bit disappointing for a number of reasons.

Foremost, veteran GMs usually have their own already-established play groups with high character experience levels. You as a new player will probably be expected to fit into an existing structure filled with house rules, unspoken understandings, and limited freedom of action for any newcomers. Secondly, old school gaming is a niche hobby of a niche hobby. Most of the players and GMs you will find out there are playing the Fifth Edition of the world’s most famous RPG.

Fifth Edition (5E) is not a bad game, but it is very different from the classic game that Castle Oldskull honors, upholds, and eternally hearkens back to. If you seek out a 5E game you might actually want to put this book down from time to time and ask someone to teach you 5E specifically, because this book will confuse you with the willful manner in which I as the author downplay 5E gentleness and those mechanisms which I feel act against the 1970s spirit of the original game.

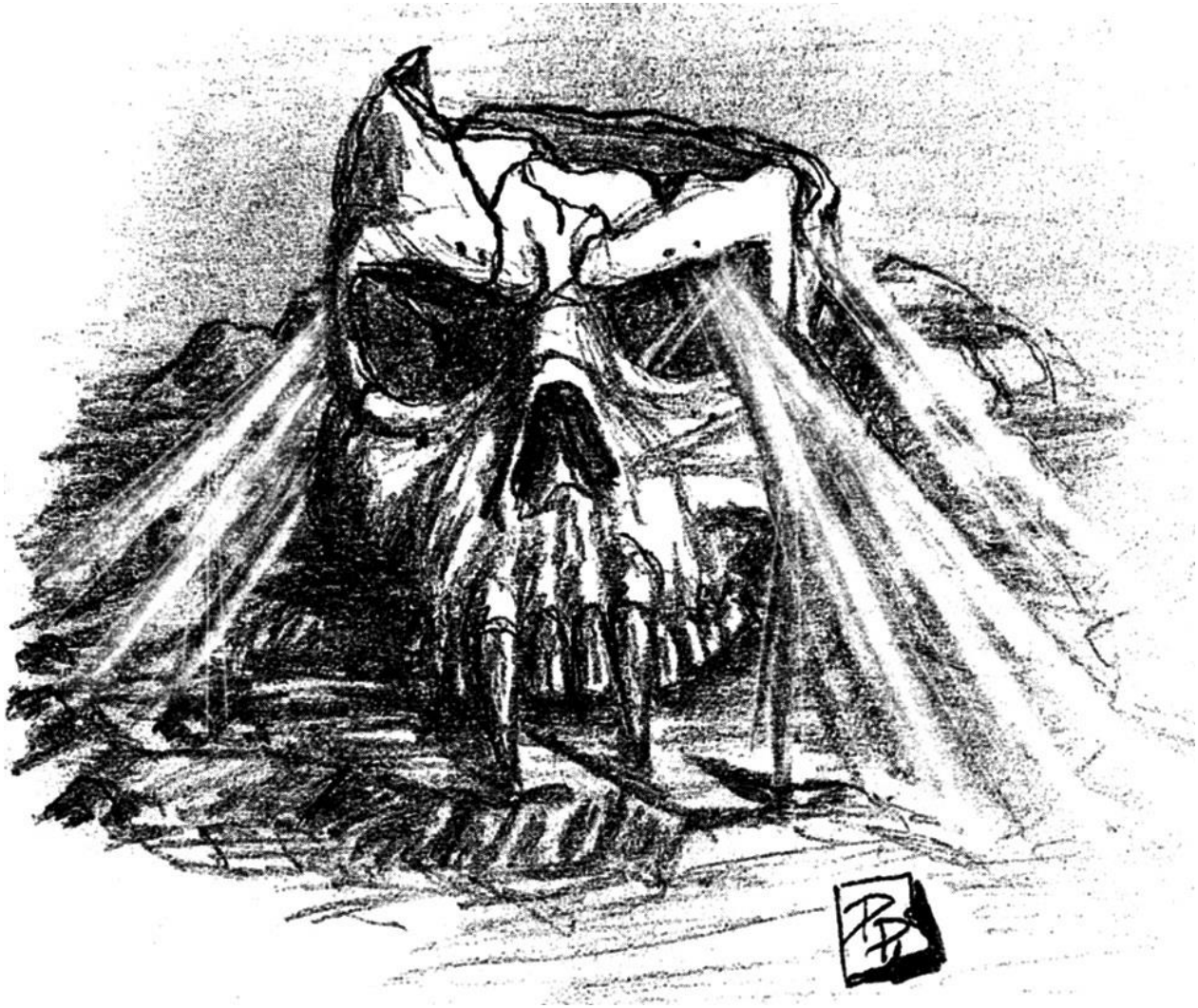
As an alternative option, if you can make it to a gaming convention, you can try that as well for the learning experience. Cons are not always the best place to learn, because in learning you will be overwhelmed and accidentally frustrating veteran players who have limited time slots in which to play. But you will certainly be able to make contact with like-minded souls and plan for casual evening sessions in the future, and you can be on the lookout for “Beginners Welcome” sign-ups as well.

However you choose to learn, you can always benefit from reading this book first from cover to cover, and generating a few characters until you become more familiar and comfortable with the rules. You have many, many options in finding a group that makes you comfortable; you will just need to be proactive in finding the opportunities that are out there.





CHAPTER 3: PLAYER CHARACTER CREATION





3-1

HOW TO CREATE A PLAYER CHARACTER

Creating a Player Character is time consuming at first, but nevertheless it is relatively easy. Just follow the steps provided throughout this book, and record the generated information as you go. Your character will come to life gradually as you continue the creation steps. At first, you will only have a set of abstract numbers and pieces of rules-speak at hand; but as the process continues and you try to envision the character — and what the numbers mean — you will find that the various factors and descriptors are gradually coalescing to form a mental image of a fantasy hero (or villain) in your mind.

3-2

THE CHARACTER RECORD

Whenever you create a new Player Character, you will want to enter your information in a single form which is called a **Character Record**, or **Character Sheet**. The record can be printed or electronic, templated or customized. You can use a notebook, a piece of paper, or a word processor (such as Microsoft Word) to develop the character as you go. Alternately, you might prefer to use an electronic sheet you find on the Internet; a sheet of your own design; or a spreadsheet program. The character record will serve as the storehouse for all of your PC's pertinent game information.

Each PC should have a separate dedicated record. The recorded notes will change frequently during play, so copies are recommended. If you're using printed sheets, you will probably want to use a pencil and eraser for all but the most permanent details.

I provide examples of the types of entries you will be making in the character record throughout this book. Just follow along, and keep those dice handy!

3-3

ABILITIES AND ABILITY SCORES

The first section you will be entering into your character record should be entitled **Character Abilities**. There are six **Abilities** in the game, which measure a PC's unique characteristics, advantages, and weaknesses on a simple numeric scale. These six factors are divided into three **Physical Abilities**, and





three **Mental Abilities**. Together, these six numbers will give you a basic profile that will reveal that new PC's potential (and lack of potential) in various professions.

The Three Physical Abilities are:

- **Strength** (abbreviated **STR**, or simply **S**), is a measure of physical muscle, power, and stature. In the game, Strength modifiers affect a character's carrying capacity, ability to open stuck doors, the chances to hit with a weapon, and the damage inflicted in combat (unarmed or otherwise), among other things.
- **Dexterity** (**DEX**, or **D**), is a measure of agility, reaction speed, coordination, balance, and reflexes. Dexterity modifiers affect a character's ability to react first in combat situations (initiative), ability to dodge attacks, and ability to engage in roguish skills (such as picking locks and moving silently).
- **Constitution** (**CON**, or **C**), is a measure of endurance, health, body size, vitality, and resistance. Constitution modifiers affect a character's hit points (survivability), resistance to disease, and resistance to some magical effects.





And the Three Mental Abilities are:

- **Intelligence (INT, or I)**, is a measure of learning ability, self-awareness, knowledge, problem solving capability, and logical reasoning. Intelligence modifiers affect a character's ability to learn other languages (including monstrous languages), and the ability of arcane spell casters to learn new spells.
- **Wisdom (WIS, or W)**, is a measure of intuition, perception, judgment, willpower, and sanity. Wisdom modifiers affect a character's resistance to magic, and ability to endure horrifying visions (such as beholding Lovecraftian Abominations). For priestly characters, wisdom also affects the number of spells a character receives from his or her worshipped deity.
- **Charisma (CHA, or Ch)**, is a measure of leadership acumen, influence, inspiring presence, and charm (or intimidation factor). Charisma modifiers affect the way that strangers react to a character, and also affect the number of followers a character can have, and their loyalty and bravery while attempting to follow the character's orders.

Summary of Ability Principles in the Game

Ability	Sphere	Abbreviations	Primary Game Principles
Strength	Physical	STR, or S	Attack Accuracy, Attack Damage, Carrying Capacity
Dexterity	Physical	DEX, or D	Initiative, Dodging, Thieving Skills
Constitution	Physical	CON, or C	Hit Points, Resistance, Survivability
Intelligence	Mental	INT, or I	Known Languages, Arcane Spell Casting
Wisdom	Mental	WIS, or W	Perception, Sanity, Divine Spell Casting
Charisma	Mental	CHA, or Ch	Reaction Rolls, Leadership, Follower Loyalty and Morale

* * * * *

Example of Ability Entries in the Character Record

As a direct example, I will create a new random player character as we go. To begin with, I prepare a character record and I write down the following information prompts on seven successive lines:

Abilities

Strength:

Dexterity:





Constitution:

Intelligence:

Wisdom:

Charisma:

I will enter in randomly generated numbers on these lines as we proceed.

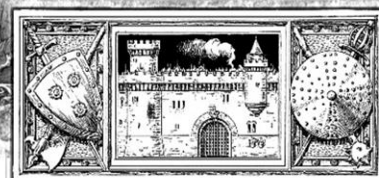
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The number assigned to each ability to measure a PC's power in that category is called an **Ability Score**. For player characters, these random scores will range between 3 and 18 inclusive. Any score between 9 and 12 inclusive is considered average. Scores between 3 and 8 are considered below average, and scores between 13 and 18 are considered above average. For most characters who are able to adventure and function on their own, a score of 3 is the absolute minimum, while a score of 18 is considered the natural maximum.

An ability score of 1 or 2 — which is too low to be possible during character creation — indicates extreme age, or severe debilitation, which might be caused by a monster attack, disease, or magical affliction. In many cases, a score of 0 indicates death, brain death, a powerful curse, or lasting damage (outside of the influence of powerful magical healing). If your character's ability scores should be temporarily or permanently affected during game play, you will be recording the new score next to the original score on your character record.



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Scores above the natural PC maximum of 18 can and do exist, but these extreme powers only come “naturally” to gods, demigods, and powerful monsters. For example, a giant will probably have a Strength score between 19 and 25, and an angel or fallen angel might have a Charisma score between 19 and 22.

In most instances, an ability score of 25 is considered to the absolute maximum for any anthropomorphic creature, including man-shaped avatars of the Gods. PC ability scores above 18 cannot be generated during the character creation process, and scores above 19 are frequently impossible unless the GM dictates otherwise. Player Characters might gain an ability score of 19, or even something higher, perhaps through various magical effects experienced during the Epic Level of play (experience levels 17+); but that is far beyond the scope of Basic Level play, and it is quite rare under any circumstances.





Impossibly high scores are not important to a character's success in the game, however. High scores within the possible range (3 to 18) will be beneficial to your character's survivability regardless of what happens in the game. The short of the matter is, you will want — but not necessarily need — as many ability scores that range between 13 and 18 as possible. However, even low character ability scores can be played well by a skilled player, and a single very low score might well become a character-defining role-playing hook and an interesting flaw. Ability scores only measure a character's potential, and only in a limited matter. A strong warrior for example has an advantage over a weak one, but that does not mean that the weak character cannot bravely rise to the occasion and win the day! And the weak warrior's triumph might make for a more interesting story, too. What you do with those ability numbers during the game is totally up to you.

3-4

CAMPAIGN DIFFICULTY AND ABILITY SCORES

To randomly generate the player character's six ability scores, you will be rolling six-sided dice (D6). Your Game Master will tell you how many dice to roll, depending on the difficulty level of the game. The discussion involving the game's overall **Difficulty Level (DL)** is one that is very hard for me to encapsulate, but I can say that the players' interests, skill levels, game experiences, teamwork potential, number, and preferences will very much be taken into account. Just as some players love "hardcore mode" or "iron man" videogaming (which means you play a character but there's only one death and you're done, game over), while others prefer a softer and more forgiving experience to reduce stress, minimize potential arguments, and to maximize the fun. But do remember that the game is inherently built on challenge, adversity, and players overcoming obstacles to obtain a satisfying victory, so the Game Master's choice of which DL is "just right" for your play group is not as simple as it might seem.

Your GM will need to consider the difficulty level before play can begin. If the GM cannot decide, or if you are reading this book and no GM has yet been designated for your play group, you should assume that your first campaign's difficulty level will be **Easy**. But if your GM is ready to make this decision now, here are some guidelines which can inform the decision that needs to be made.

My general rule of thumb is threefold: [1] If one or more of the players are new to the game, or the GM is running his first campaign, the difficulty level should be **Easy**. [2] If all of the players and the GM want the game to be harder, then the difficulty level should be **Challenging**. [3] If condition [1] does not apply and there is any disagreement between players, or there is a disagreement between players and the GM, the difficulty level should then be set to **Normal**. Each of these three different difficulty tiers has its own ramifications upon the character creation process.

Of course, the GM is free to enforce any difficulty level as desired, and the players cannot really contest the matter; but I feel that this is a very touchy subject and that a gentle hand is far more beneficial in this regard than a constricting one. The game should be *more fun than it is challenging* in the beginning





for any player. Even if your game features a new party filled with highly-powered PCs, those characters are still unproven and level 1, and they can die very easily when the players are reckless or overconfident in play. This means that even if the DL is set to Easy, bad play (or simply bad luck) can still cause a PC to die during a dangerous adventure. The players should always be prepared for that omnipresent possibility.

Once difficulty level has been considered, character creation can continue. The DL-influenced procedures I recommend for PC ability score generation are as follows:

- **Easy-DL Ability Score Generation (5D6):** If the GM decides that the game will be Easy, then players should roll all ability scores by **rolling five six-sided dice**, discarding the lowest two rolls, and summing the remaining three rolls to calculate each ability score. For example, if you roll a 1, 2, 4, 4, 6 for Strength, you would drop the 1 and 2, and add the three remaining rolls together (4+4+6) to give the new PC a Strength score of 14.
- **Normal-DL Ability Score Generation (4D6):** If the GM decides that the game's difficulty will be Normal, the players should roll all ability scores by **rolling four six-sided dice**, discarding the lowest roll, and summing the remaining three rolls to calculate each ability score. For example, if you roll a 1, 3, 4, 5 for Intelligence, you would drop the 1 and add the three remaining rolls together (3+4+5) to give the PC an Intelligence score of 12.
- **Challenging-DL Ability Score Generation (3D6):** If the GM decides that the game's difficulty will be Challenging, the players should roll all ability scores by **rolling three six-sided dice**, and adding the results together. So if you roll a 1, 2, 3 for Constitution, you're stuck with a Constitution score of (1+2+3) 6.

In each difficulty level, the ability scores for newly-created characters will still range between 3 and 18, but high scores will be considerably rarer when the difficulty is high. For example, the odds of rolling a "natural" 18 with only 3 dice are 1 in 216.

And yes, the GM can certainly ramp up the game's difficulty level over time as players gain confidence and skill. Or, he can alternately decrease the difficulty when a newly-beginning player enters the ongoing campaign. The campaign's DL is not a "fire and forget" setting. It should be considered, and reconsidered, by the GM every time a new PC is entering the ongoing game. Therefore if the game has been underway for several months and if the GM has noted that PCs are dying frequently, he might want to decrease the difficulty as new replacement PCs are rolled. But conversely, if the players are bragging about how trivial the challenges are, the GM can feel absolutely justified in resetting the campaign's difficulty level to Challenging for any new characters rolled.

The purpose of stating and tracking a campaign's difficulty is to keep these considerations at the forefront, so that the Game Master and the players are always on the same page. When the game is too hard, the players become frustrated with PC deaths and their fun is diminished. And when the game is too easy, some of the players might have fun, but interest will suffer in the long term because there are no significant challenges to be had. There is a precarious balancing act which must occur, monitored by





the GM, as the players adapt, characters die, and new characters are created. Properly performing that balancing act requires constant vigilance.

* * * * *

Example of Difficulty Level-Based Ability Score Generation

Continuing with our character creation example, let us say that I am reading this book for the first time and my future campaign does not yet have a designated Game Master. Considering the guidelines given above, this means that the Difficulty Level of my upcoming game will be Easy.

Looking at the bulleted points above, I can see that this means that for each of the six abilities, I will be rolling five six-sided dice, discarding the lowest two rolls, and summing the remaining three rolls to calculate each ability score in order. Rolling five dice will give me a greater than usual chance for some high ability scores, and low scores will be relatively unlikely. So let's do some dice rolling, and so precisely what type of person our new character is going to be.

First, for **strength (STR)**, I roll 3, 3, 2, 3, and 5. I discard the two lowest rolls, a 2 and a 3. This leaves me with a 3, another 3, and a 5. Adding $3+3+5$, I can see that my new character's strength score is 11. This falls into the average range, of scores between 9 and 12.

For **dexterity (DEX)**, I roll 3, 5, 1, 4, and 6. I discard the lowest two rolls, the 1 and the 3. This leaves me with a 5, a 4, and a 6. Adding $5+4+6$, I find that my character's dexterity score is 15. This falls into the above average range, of scores between 13 and 18.

For **constitution (CON)**, I roll 2, 1, 6, 3, and 4. I discard the two lowest, the 1 and the 2. This leaves the 6, 3, and 4. Adding $6+3+4$, I now know that my character's constitution score is 13. This falls into the bottom of the above average range.

For **intelligence (INT)**, I roll relatively poorly, with a 2, 6, 1, 3, and 1. I discard the two lowest, the 1 and the 1. This leaves me the 2, 6, and 3. Adding $2+6+3$, I find my character's intelligence score is 11. This falls into the average range.

For **wisdom (WIS)**, I roll a 1, 5, 5, 4, and 2. I drop the two lowest, the 1 and the 2. This leaves me the 5, 5, and 4. Adding $5+5+4$, we see my character's wisdom score is 14. This falls into the above average range.

And finally for **charisma (CHA)**, I roll 4, 2, 5, 1, 5. I drop the two lowest, the 2 and the 1. This leaves me with 4, 5, and 5. Adding $4+5+5$, we know that my character's charisma score is 14. This too falls into the above average range.

Recording my scores in the ongoing character record, my notes now look like this:





Abilities

Strength:	11
Dexterity:	15
Constitution:	13
Intelligence:	11
Wisdom:	14
Charisma:	14

My character has no extreme advantages, but no real weaknesses either. (This is a common effect of the “roll five dice” feature of the Easy-DL campaign rule.) His or her highest score is dexterity, at 15. These scores will change soon, but I wanted to show you the raw scores and how they already tell us some things about our newly-emerging imaginary person: he is more agile than he is strong, and wiser and more charming than he is intelligent.

* * * * *

3-5

PREDETERMINED

ABILITY SCORE SELECTION

(OPTIONAL RULE)

In some play groups, the traditional random nature of ability score generation is frowned upon, and deliberate character customization is celebrated instead. Random ability generation forces a player to work with unexpected results, while non-random ability generation empowers players with predictable results as deliberately chosen out of preference. As you might imagine, in this old school game I encourage you to use random ability generation whenever possible, unless your GM dictates otherwise. And why? Well, it's because [1] It's tradition and a rite of passage, [2] The original game's creators both felt that was the best method, and this game honors that legacy, [3] It underlines the fact that life isn't fair, and some people are randomly more advantaged than others are, and most importantly [4] It sets the tone of the future game. Remember that this a game based on challenge, and your first challenge is to prepare yourself for unfairness by adapting to a bit of potentially unpredictable adversity.





Don't worry, we'll be modifying ability scores a bit later on. Ability score modification can cover some of the worst ability scores weaknesses, at a considerable price. But nevertheless, setting the tone and managing expectations is important! Players who assume privilege and pout during character creation are *really* going to be unhappy once the swords start swinging and the spells are flying.

In the spirit of the original campaigns, the Castle Oldskull game allow deliberately moves away from the new school concepts of player character "builds," Internet lookups (where a player seeks to "min/max" a character based on someone else's studious research), and the creation of perfected power leveling monstrosities. That lazy mode of play is not encouraged here.

But nevertheless, this book has been written to allow options, GM consideration, and flexibility. Perhaps for example the GM is creating a new campaign for players who are accustomed to more choice-empowered games, and is easing the transition into the old school by allowing the players to choose their own ability scores as a matter of personal comfort. If your GM decides for whatever reason that random ability score generation is unwise, and decrees that everyone in the first game should begin on an equal footing, I recommend the following:

- **Overview:** Every new player character is assigned six identical ability scores. Each player can choose from one of the following sets of scores, based on campaign difficulty level and player preference:
- **Ability Score Assignments for Easy-DL Campaigns:** At this difficulty level, an ability score of 12.5 is considered average, and each PC has 75 ability score points. Players can choose from one of these three options:
 - **(E-DL-1) The Conservative Set of Scores:** 17, 13, 12, 12, 11, 10
 - **(E-DL-2) The High/Low Set of Scores:** 17, 17, 17, 8, 8, 8
 - **(E-DL-3) The Skewed Set of Scores:** 17, 15, 13, 11, 10, 9
- **Ability Score Assignments for Normal-DL Campaigns:** An ability score of 11.5 is considered average, and each PC has 69 ability score points. Players can choose from one of these three options:
 - **(N-DL-1) The Conservative Set of Scores:** 16, 12, 11, 11, 10, 9
 - **(N-DL-2) The High/Low Set of Scores:** 16, 16, 16, 7, 7, 7
 - **(N-DL-3) The Skewed Set of Scores:** 16, 14, 12, 10, 9, 8
- **Ability Score Assignments for Challenging-DL Campaigns:** An ability score of 10.5 is considered average, and each PC has 63 ability score points. Players can choose from one of these three options:
 - **(C-DL-1) The Conservative Set of Scores:** 15, 11, 10, 10, 9, 8





- **(C-DL-2) The High/Low Set of Scores:** 15, 15, 13, 7, 7, 6
- **(C-DL-3) The Skewed Set of Scores:** 15, 13, 11, 9, 8, 7

Each player assigns these six unaltered scores to the six abilities (STR, DEX, CON, INT, WIS, CHA) in whatever order they see fit. Note that perfect scores of 18 are not possible in this selection system, because they are a potential reward for players who accept the risks of random generation. The scores are also not to be modified in any way, because the point of assigning scores in the first place is to put everyone at the same level of power, with no perceived imbalances.

If — after considering the above — a player individually decides that he will roll ability scores randomly instead of selecting scores from the predetermined lists, the GM should allow the player to roll the dice. Once the dice are rolled, however the player cannot “change his mind” and go back to the predetermined scores.

3-6

THE POWER OF THE ZODIAC (OPTIONAL RULE)

In the author’s World of Oldskull campaign — which is set on a mythic version of late medieval Earth, inspired by the fictional legacies of Howard, Lovecraft, Dunsany, and others — the aspects of the zodiac influence the destinies of villains and heroes. This ability score modifier system allows players to quickly outline a new player character’s personality, as well as inherent strengths and weaknesses, through a simple choice-driven system.

Note that the system is not anachronistic but it can be misinterpreted. In the current modern age, the zodiac is regarded as something of a “have a nice day” slot machine with random horoscopes dished out by paid columnists. But in the medieval and renaissance eras, the mansions of the zodiac were known as astrological conduits of elemental power, channeling mortal strengths, weaknesses, dooms and destinies along refined and predictable pathways of celestial — meaning immortal-driven — influence and power. This system is not congruent with, “Hey, what’s your sign?” but rather, “Which of the elemental powers of the gods were you born unto?” I offer the rules in honor of that centuries-long arcane and occult tradition, not the corrupted modern mis-interpretation.

If you would like to consider this system in your own game, you as the Game Master can apply the following modifiers to PCs during the character creation phase. These late medieval interpretations of the ancient Hellenic and Chaldean zodiac as a reflection of the four elements (air, earth, fire, water) are indebted to the *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (AD 1486-1535), as found in the author’s gaming research library. The zodiac represents the power of celestial spheres —





and by extension, the planar realms and the gods and goddesses — over the intrinsic attributes of mortal-kind.

Please note that in this system, ability score modifiers are applied *after* ability score generation, and *before* the player makes any further desired ability modifications (as described a bit later on in this tome). No zodiacal penalties can reduce a rolled ability score below 3, and no zodiacal bonuses can increase a rolled ability score above 18.

I recommend that the zodiacal and celestial system be applied only to those demi-humans who are surface dwellers; this means elves and halflings, along with humans. Dwarves (and humanoids) however, as netherworld dwellers do not have their intrinsic attributes influenced by these celestial destinies. The attribute modifiers listed below do not apply to them.

If a player prefers, a 1D12 can be rolled to assign a random zodiacal birthright, but if the GM is agreeable to the idea of deliberate selection he can allow a player to “min/max” a bit in regards to attribute modifier selection. For example, the Sign of the Bull is favorable to fighters, the Sign of the Great Fish is favorable to clerics, and so forth. These modifiers are carefully balanced to offer both advantages and disadvantages.

This system does not go so far as to list the personality traits which are classically assigned to each zodiacal sign, because I did not want to presume that such suggestions should be more important than a player’s personal wishes in regard to character personality and role-playing. This section is therefore intentionally left cryptically short, so the player can know the “true soul” of each character without the details of personality becoming foreordained. In using this system to modify ability scores, you can still give your PC whatever personality traits you desire.

The recommended traits and modifiers are as follows:

Effects of the Zodiacal Mansions upon Creatures’ Elemental Quintessence

1	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Water Spirit (Aquarius)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Januarius or Februarius (midwinter) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The immovable aspect of elemental air ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR -1, DEX +1, CON -1, INT -1, WIS +1, CHA +1
2	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Great Fish (Pisces)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Februarius or Martius (late winter) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The capricious aspect of elemental water ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR -2, DEX +1, CON -2, INT +1, WIS +2, CHA no modifier





3	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Ram (Aries)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Martius or Aprilis (early spring) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The cardinal aspect of elemental fire ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR +1, DEX -1, CON no modifier, INT +1, WIS -1, CHA no modifier
4	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Bull (Taurus)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Aprilis or Maius (mid-spring) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The immovable aspect of elemental earth ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR +2, DEX no modifier, CON +1, INT -1, WIS -1, CHA -1
5	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Twin Spirits (Gemini)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Maius or Junius (late spring) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The capricious aspect of elemental air ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR no modifier, DEX -1, CON -1, INT +1, WIS +1, CHA no modifier
6	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Great Crab (Cancer)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Junius or Quintilis (early summer) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The cardinal aspect of elemental water ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR no modifier, DEX no modifier, CON -2, INT +2, WIS +1, CHA -1
7	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Lion (Leo)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Quintilis or Sextilis (midsummer) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The immovable aspect of elemental fire ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR +1, DEX -1, CON +1, INT -1, WIS -2, CHA +2
8	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Maiden Spirit (Virgo)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Sextilis or Septembre (late summer) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The capricious aspect of elemental earth ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR no modifier, DEX +1, CON -1, INT +1, WIS no modifier, CHA -1
9	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of Lady Justitia (Libra)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Septembre or Octobre (early autumn) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The cardinal aspect of elemental air ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR -1, DEX no modifier, CON no modifier, INT +1, WIS +1, CHA -1
10	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Scorpion (Scorpio)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Octobre or Novembre (mid-autumn) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The immovable aspect of elemental water ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR +1, DEX -1, CON +1, INT -1, WIS +1, CHA -1





11	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Centaur (Sagittarius)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Novembre or Decembre (late autumn) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The capricious aspect of elemental fire ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR +1, DEX +2, CON -2, INT -1, WIS -1, CHA +1
12	<u>The Sign and Celestial Mansion of the Lost Hippocampus (Capricorn)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Celestial Facet: Born in the month of Decembre or Januarius (early winter) ➤ Elemental Reflection: The cardinal aspect of elemental earth ➤ Ability Score Modifiers: STR +1, DEX -1, CON no modifier, INT -1, WIS +1, CHA no modifier

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Example of Random Zodiacal Influence Designation

We will assume that the GM has asked us to randomly select our character's zodiacal aspect. Therefore, we roll 1D12 and consult the table above. The result is 10, which means that our character was born under the Sign of the Scorpion.

The character's generated abilities were: STR 11, DEX 15, CON 13, INT 11, WIS 14, CHA 14. And the ability score modifiers for the Sign of the Scorpion are: STR +1, DEX -1, CON +1, INT -1, WIS +1, CHA -1.

Following these modifiers, the character's new ability scores are now STR 12, DEX 14, CON 14, INT 10, WIS 15, CHA 13. Notably, the character is now more wise than he is dexterous, which may change some of our decisions about his destiny in the character design process steps yet to come.

* * * * *

3-7

HOPELESS CHARACTERS

Sometimes — due to the luck of the dice — a player will happen to generate a character with two or more exceedingly low ability scores. This can present a problem, because when a PC has more than one significant weakness, it can gravely affect his or her potential survivability. These unlucky individuals are termed **Hopeless Characters**. (Conversely, all other PCs — including those who have only one very low ability score — are termed **Viable Characters** at this stage, which means you should proceed with the next steps of character generation.) Hopeless status means that although you fairly rolled the ability





scores as indicated, the newly-generated PC should be set aside and never played. This is in keeping with traditional rules because although random ability score generation is celebrated, the processed should be *risky*, but not *debilitating* to the player's future chances of success.

You as player should confirm the hopeless status of your PC with the GM, and then roll a new character from scratch.

The definition of a Hopeless Character depends on the game's Difficulty Level (DL), as follows:

- **In an Easy-DL Campaign:** If the character has two or more ability scores between 3 and 8 inclusive, the character can be deemed hopeless.
- **In a Normal-DL Campaign:** If the character has two or more ability scores between 3 and 6 inclusive, the character can be deemed hopeless.
- **In a Challenging-DL Campaign:** If the character has two or more ability scores between 3 and 5 inclusive, the character can be deemed hopeless.

If your newly-rolled PC does not meet these requirements for hopeless designation, and you're still unhappy with the character's ability scores, you should consult with your GM. The GM will probably tell you to play the character and to treat the lowest score as an interesting flaw, but there might be an exception made depending on the GM's play style and preferences. Just don't whine about it! The game, again, is all about skillfully overcoming adversity, and now you have your work cut out for you because your character has a tragic flaw. Do your best and have fun with it.

If you're having difficulty explaining or justifying a low ability score while keeping the character adventurous and viable, I recommend considering the following characterization options:

- **Low Strength (STR):** The character is likely either elderly, or cursed, or perhaps even one-armed due to a battle in his youth.
- **Low Dexterity (DEX):** The character is blind in one eye (affecting combat agility and depth perception), or is lamed in one leg.
- **Low Constitution (CON):** The character survived a deadly plague.
- **Low Intelligence (INT):** The character is very young (and INT might rise in the future, if the GM approves), or mentally challenged (think Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*), or psychically scarred by some past trauma (Hodor!).
- **Low Wisdom (WIS):** The character is very young (as above), has little self-control, or is nearly insane (perhaps due to beholding some entity of the Cthulhu Mythos).
- **Low Charisma (CHA):** The character is badly scarred (think *Mortal Engines*), or has difficulty communicating and is misunderstood, or is simply very ugly.





Many additional creative ideas can be found in the optional ability score descriptor system, featured later in this volume.



3-8

ADVANTAGEOUS CHARACTERS (OPTIONAL RULE)

Due to the deadly difficulty in some old school campaigns, some Game Masters hold to an older (1978) Gygaxian tenet, which states that successful player characters must have at least two ability





scores of 15 or higher. The presumption is that every character, despite any disadvantages, should have at least two decent advantages to balance things out while still honoring the principle of random generation.

If your character qualifies for this Optional Rule, you do not obtain this advantage immediately; you need to consult with your Game Master. If the GM agrees that this tenet rings true, then all players' characters will be able to boost their scores as needed to attain a minimum of two useful 15s.

For the Game Master's consideration, I only recommend considering this advantage if the game's intended Difficulty Level is Normal or Easy. Challenging campaigns, by nature, should likely not embrace this tenet at all.

If the GM agrees that the "boost to two 15s" should indeed take place, then the player can raise a PC's generated ability scores until at least two are rated at 15 or higher. The way it works is like this:

- **Raising a Single Ability Score:** If your character already has one ability score between 15 and 18, then you only get to boost one other ability score. You choose which other score to raise. For example, if your character's scores are STR 11, DEX 16, CON 13, INT 9, WIS 14, CHA 10, then you can choose to raise STR, CON, INT, WIS, or CHA to 15, depending on which one you'd prefer to boost.
- **Raising Two Ability Scores:** If your character has no ability scores between 15 and 18, then you can choose two scores to boost. There are two schools of thought here. If you want to obtain the maximum possible advantage, you could choose to raise your two lowest scores. But if you already have a character concept in option (and you covet high CON, high INT, or whatever), you should raise the two abilities that are most important to your style of play.

3-9

INCREASING ABILITY SCORES WITH EXPERIENCE LEVEL GAIN (ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

In the traditional old school experience, characters' ability scores rarely improve over time. The assumption is made that ability scores are "god-given," natural assets which form the fundamental baseline which a character's later achievements are measured by.

However, there is an obscure 1985 rule — originally intended only for characters of a specific class — which can be creatively interpreted as applying to all characters over time as they gain experience levels. In my World of Oldskull campaign, I have used this rule with some success. The idea is that as





characters survive hardship and become more powerful, they become stronger, or more agile, or wiser, or whatever else the player would care to gradually enhance. The gains from this process are minor in the short term, but can become fairly significant over time.

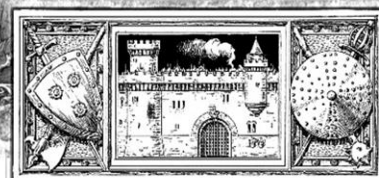
Either mode of play can be considered “correct.” Fixed ability scores are traditional, while improving ability scores are a reasonable reward for skilled play. The rule still embraces randomness within a fixed range of possibilities.

The rule works as follows:

- At experience level 1 (and during character creation), there is no effect. These gains only apply to experience levels 2 and up, which are gained during play. However, each ability score is assigned a decimal rating of .01 at this time. For example, if your character’s ability scores are STR 13, DEX 11, CON 17, INT 12, WIS 8, CHA 13, the scores would be updated to STR 13.01, DEX 11.01, CON 17.01, INT 12.01, WIS 8.01, CHA 13.01.
- Decimals have no appreciable effect on a character’s performance. In other words, a character with CHA 13.01 and a second character with CHA 13.99 are both deemed to possess a CHA score of 13 for the purposes of these rules. The decimal simply reflects how close the character is to gaining a new ability score point.
- Every time a PC gains a new experience level beyond level 1, the PC’s player can then select three specific ability scores — no more, no less — that he wants to increase. For example, a player with a fighter character might want to increase STR, DEX, and CON. The three ability scores to be raised are selected before any dice are rolled.
- For each selected ability, the player rolls 2D10. The sum of that roll is added to that ability score’s decimal rating. Continuing the above example, let us say that the character with STR 13.01, DEX 11.01, and CON 11.01 attains experience level 2. The player first rolls 2D10, and the sum turns out to be 13. This raises the character’s STR from 13.01 to 13.14. The player then rolls twice more, with sums equaling 10 and 18. This means that the character’s DEX increases to 13.11, and CON increases to 11.19.
- As each new experience level is gained, the player can either choose the three same ability scores to increase (which is the most advantageous choice), or different ability scores (which means that something has happened where the player has strategically changed his mind about which abilities are most important). Either approach is acceptable.
- Decimal points roll over normally. For example, if a character has INT 17.92 and gains 14 decimal points, then the INT score is raised to 18.06. This changes the PC’s game-rule INT from 17 to 18, conferring additional bonuses to the character as a reward for successful long-term play.
- Under no circumstances can an ability score be raised in this manner beyond 18.99.

This rule gives players with surviving characters a well-deserved morale boost. Statistically, the effects are minor but measurable in the early game. Since the highest roll possible on 2D10 is 20, and the average roll is 10.5, this means that no character will gain a +1 full point bonus to any ability score before experience level 6, and most characters will be experience level 9 or 10 before consistent +1 gains in multiple ability scores are achieved.





3-10

AN OVERVIEW OF BASIC CHARACTER RACES (ANCESTRY)



Once you have rolled and recorded the PC's six ability scores, you should choose a **Character Race**, or **Ancestry**, that you want to play. There are four major races in the Basic Level Castle Oldskull game:

Humans are the most common civilized race, and the youngest. They are known for their short lifespans, laziness, impulsiveness, short-sightedness, reckless individuality, and tribe-like xenophobia. However, they are also well-respected for their adaptability, quick learning aptitude, improvisation,





determination, and their uncanny ability to come together (despite all differences) in the face of deadly adversity.

The non-human character races are frequently called **Demi-Humans**, which simply means they are human-like in most respects, while also being regarded as a cultural minority in most of the human-dominated cities of the realms. The three main demi-human races are **Dwarf**, **Elf**, and **Halfling**.

Dwarves are an ancient and depleted race of short, stocky demi-humans. Most have beards, and all have sour attitudes. Their once-glorious netherworld and mountain kingdoms have been ravaged by centuries of war with evil invading humanoids. Dwarves are frequently bitter, dour, greedy, paranoid, stubborn, and slow to trust. But they are also gifted artificers, fiercely loyal, devoutly tradition-bound, and — many would argue — there is no better ally to have your back in a fight.





Elves are regarded as the eldest known race. Some are shorter than humans, and some are taller. All are slender and they have pointed ears and delicate features. Elves can be capricious, aloof, haughty, condescending, or downright rude in a righteous manner. But they are also forgiving, perceptive, eloquent, and honorable, not to mention the deep knowledge they come to harbor over a lifespan which can last for centuries. Dwarves and elves, with rare but notable exceptions, greatly dislike one another. The elves' numbers are few and dwindling, as many of their kind are leaving the mortal realms for the lands of Fey and Faerie beyond the West. As a race they are fascinated by magic, nature, and ancient mysteries.

Halflings are a rustic and relatively simple shire-dwelling race, who share the unique distinction of annoying and charming all of the other races (sometimes doing both, and everything in between, in the space of five minutes). They are small, plump, doddering, easily distracted, and sometimes rather ridiculous. But they are nevertheless hard-working, tireless, intuitive, diplomatic, and incredibly brave. Halflings love home and comfort, and adventurous halflings are considered as poor wanderlust-driven aberrations by most of their fellow-kind.

Humans are considered the “baseline” race, and therefore they have few truly special abilities. The other races possess inherent advantages and resistances, due to their less-than-human adaptability they tend to gain experience points in a slower fashion. Over time, the human PCs will tend to out-level most of their demi-human compatriots. But at the Basic Level of play (experience levels 1 to 3), this is not much of a concern. The differences become most notable around experience levels 8 to 12.

Unlike some FRPGs, there are no ability score minimums for various races in the Castle Oldskull game. You can have a stupid elf, a weak dwarf, or an exceedingly wise halfling, and that's fine. Gifted and disadvantaged individuals occur with equal frequency in every race.

Player characters by their very nature are exceptional and unordinary when contrasted against the “normal” population of many thousands of level zero NPCs, and the racial norms do not apply to these unusual individuals. Indeed, many rulers, officials, and “normals” will regard the PCs as dangerous wandering outcasts due to their differences in ability, culture, and outlook, and that is not an entirely unfair appraisal.

Choose the one race which appeals to you most, and record that on your character sheet. You can make the choice now, or you can wait until you read further to see exactly what each race's advantages and disadvantages are.





3-11

OTHER CHARACTER RACES (ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)



In keeping with tradition, I highly recommend that players play with the four Basic Level races before diluting the game's given atmosphere with the inclusion of other races. But as the campaign goes on and various NPCs and strange monsters races are met with, the GM and players might well collectively agree that it is time to increase the potential variety of options available to newly-rolled player characters who might be introduced into ongoing play.

In more advanced versions of the game, there are many such races which the GM can allow the players to experiment with. Some of the most popular include **Gnomes**, **Half-Elves**, **Half-Ogres**, and **Half-Orcs**, in addition to various sub-races of Dwarves, Elves, and Halflings. More exotic races which the GM might eventually consider include **Beastmen**, **Centaur**s, **Dryads**, and **Lizard Men**. These options add a great deal of spice, but some of them also create potential issues with game balance and





campaign flavor. As such, they are relegated to a future Advanced Level volume in this series, and they are not recommended for Basic Level play.





3-12

QUALIFYING FOR DEMI-HUMAN RACES (ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

In some traditional old school RPG campaigns, the default choice for character race selection is human, and any players who wish to play a demi-human race will need to *quality* for that race with appropriate ability scores. The thinking here is that because demi-humans are advantageous (despite some limitations), they should be made statistically more rare so that every player is not playing a demi-human all the time. This issue does not frequently arise in the author's campaign, but anecdotally I know it can and does occur ... particularly if your group of friends is into power gaming!

For Game Masters who wish to use this "racial qualification" system, the following ability score minimums are recommended. You will note that these scores are not very hard to qualify for in most cases, unless the Challenging Difficulty Level is in effect.

- **Ability Scores to Qualify for the Dwarf Race:** STR 8+, DEX 3+, CON 12+, INT 3+, WIS 3+, CHA 3+
- **Ability Scores to Qualify for the Elf Race:** STR 3+, DEX 7+, CON 6+, INT 8+, WIS 3+, CHA 8+
- **Ability Scores to Qualify for the Halfling Race:** STR 6+, DEX 8+, CON 10+, INT 6+, WIS 3+, CHA 3+
- **(Humans** do not require any ability scores to qualify; they are the default selected race.)

Minimum Ability Scores Required for Demi-Human Characters

Ability	Dwarf	Elf	Halfling	Human
Strength	8+	3+	6+	3+
Dexterity	3+	7+	8+	3+
Constitution	12+	6+	10+	3+
Intelligence	3+	8+	6+	3+
Wisdom	3+	3+	3+	3+
Charisma	3+	3+	3+	3+





CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCTION TO CHARACTER CLASSES





4-1

AN OVERVIEW OF CHARACTER CLASSES

Now that you know the PC's general ability scores and race, you will next want to consider the single profession, or **Class**, which your PC will devote his or her life to. This is a major decision and it requires careful thought. There are four major classes in the Basic Level game, and each represents a different motif (**Archetype**) and play style. The four choices are **Cleric** (a type of priest), **Fighter** (warrior), **Magic-User** (mage) and **Thief** (rogue).

Each class has its own set of **Character Abilities**, which are briefly summarized below and which will be explored in more detail a bit further on. If you are a new player to old school RPGs, I strongly recommend reading these summaries to gain understanding of the possibilities, while refraining from committing to a choice until you read the rest of the book.



4-2

CLERICS

Clerics are spell casters who derive their power from the sincere and devout worship of an immortal. Good clerics tend to worship gods and goddesses, while evil clerics worship arch-devils, demon lords, or entities of the Cthulhu Mythos. All clerics share several unique abilities, including the power to cast spells while wearing armor, mastery of divine (or unholy) magics received from the immortals through





meditation, and the ability to sometimes influence and control the undead. Good clerics hunt down and smite the undead, while evil clerics control or even create them.

The play style most associated with clerics is that of party support. Clerics have protective and healing magics, and tend to have high wisdom scores, which causes the other PCs to frequently look up to them as potential saviors in times of danger.

All of the Basic Level races (dwarves, elves, halflings, and humans) can be clerics.

4-3 FIGHTERS

Fighters are warriors who trust their strength, bravery, and mastery of weapons to win the day. They prefer brute force over uncertain magical forces, and so they have no spell casting capability. At low levels, fighters tend to be more powerful than spell casters, and the party may rely on them to serve as guardians, defenders, and monster slayers whenever a furious melee is underway.

The play style associated with fighters is one of direct solutions and physical prowess. Fighters tend to act first and think later, bashing down doors, killing enemies, destroying obstacles and intimidating doubters. This is not to say that they are all unintelligent, but they can be exceedingly rash when their blood is up ... which is often. Other PCs might need to intervene when subtler methods are required.

All of the Basic Level races (dwarves, elves, halflings, and humans) can be fighters.





4-4

MAGIC-USERS

Magic-Users are the “wizards” of myth and folklore. However, they do not begin the game as powerful spell casters. Instead they represent newly-mentored apprentices, who have stepped out into the world from under the arcane tutelage of their mentor. Each magic-user knows spoken, hand-woven, and psychic formulae — recipes to selectively bend the laws of physics for a time, which are termed “arcane spells” — and has the intellectual capacity to learn more such formulae as time progresses.

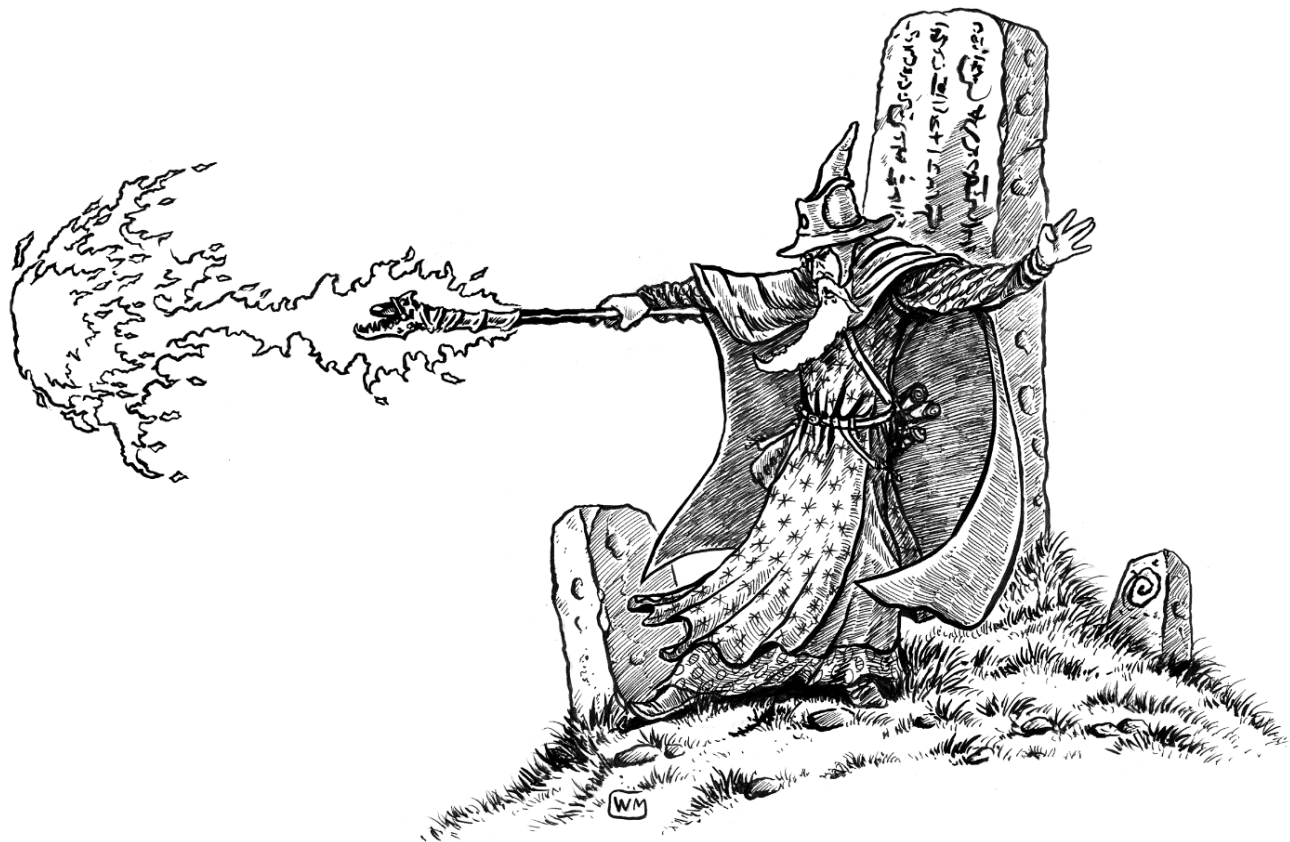


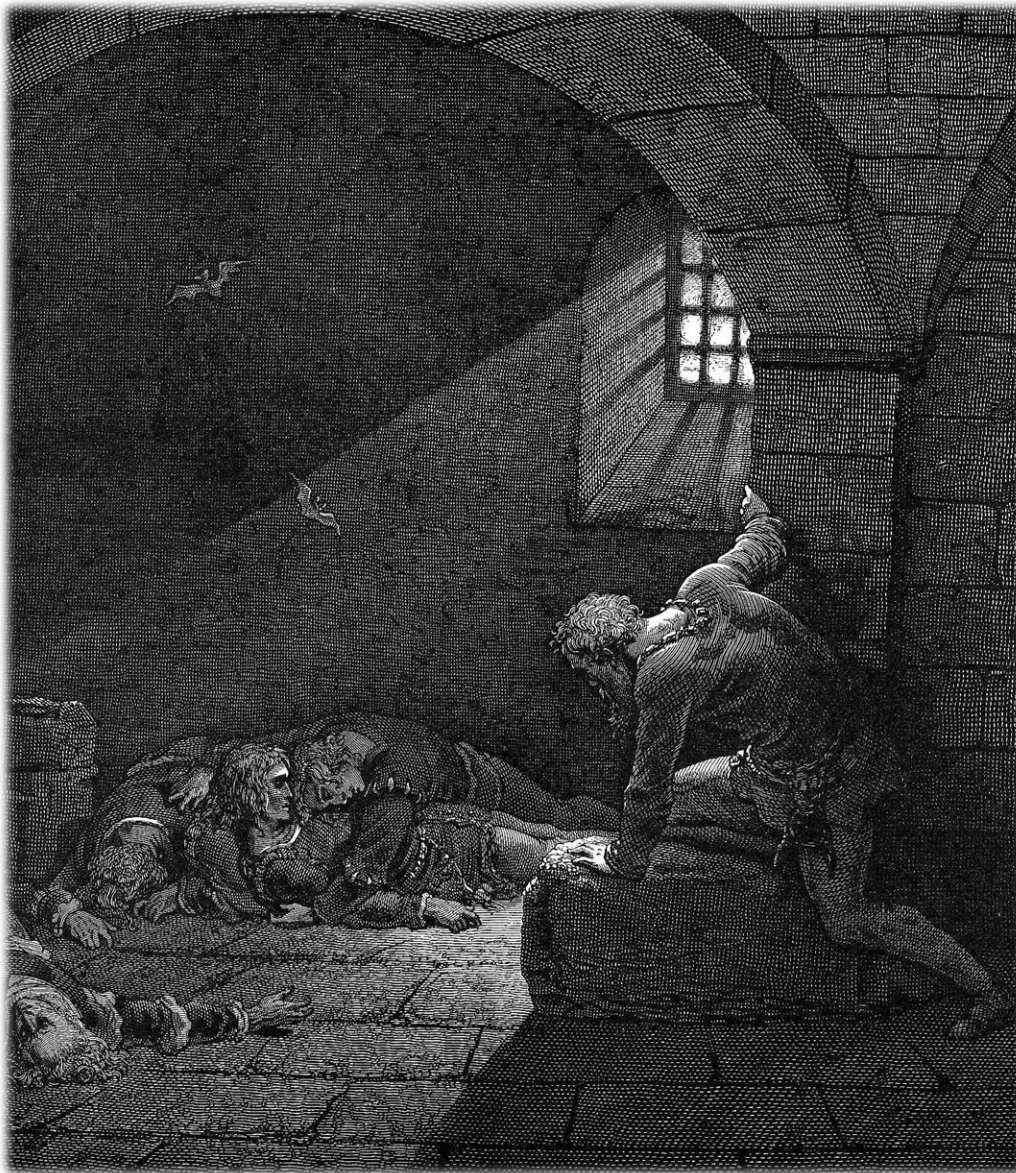
ORIGINAL OLD SCHOOL FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAMES



Magic-users differ from clerics in that they do not draw their powers from a deity. They can certainly decide to worship an immortal of their choosing, but their powers are derived from the Primordial Unknown, which is the eternal force which first created the meshwork underlying the unknowable framework of the Multiverse. The Primordial Unknown is capricious, and requires specific channels and rituals for its powers to be drawn upon by the chosen.

Due to the innate psychic connection which such esoteric spell casting requires, only the races that are attuned to the Primordial Unknown can follow the calling of the magic-user. In the Basic Level game, these races are elves and humans. Dwarves and halflings revere magic as well, but they have an ancient and profound distrust of the arcane powers because they do not originate from a sentient and somewhat comprehensible immortal entity. This is a fancy way of saying that dwarves and halflings not only dislike the idea of casting arcane magic themselves; they are spiritually incapable of mastering the art.





4-5

THIEVES

Thieves are not just and robbers and criminals. They are cunning opportunists, specialists, daredevils and survivalists who believe that direct and self-endangering action — the brutish path of the fighter — is a suicidal fool's game, when much subtler methods to deal with the deadly challenges are always close





at hand. If there is one word that describes thieves, it is “stealthy.” Less charitable words might accurately apply as well, depending on who you ask.

When it comes to adventuring, dungeon delving thieves are those individuals who are greedy enough to seek riches and thrills without constantly coming under the attention of the law. A good thief can easily case out locales and lucrative targets within the city state, but a more alluring course of action involves allying with powerful friends (clerics, magic-users, and absolutely fighters too) to assist them with the dirty work of treasure hunting in the deeps. After all, everyone can get behind the idea of ridding the world of evil monsters ... and why shouldn't the monster slayers enrich themselves in the process?

The skills of a thief are deceitful, indirect and usually non-magical. Their silent movement, and their ability to hear quiet noises, make them ideal scouts. They are dirty fighters, and while they can't stand up to direct punishment for very long they excel in the nasty arts of the backstab, the eye gouge, the kick in the kneecap and the coup de grace. “Honorable” thieves tend to die violent deaths, and rather quickly; the ones who are still alive are the ones who sincerely believe that a fair fight is an excellent course of action, but only when the opponent is the sole idiot who is following the rules.

Despite their tendency to occasionally borrow things from companions without openly telling them so, other adventurers value thieves for their scouting talents and their nefarious gifts of subterfuge. Thieves can open locks, find deadly traps, or even scale cliffs and tomb walls ... which allows them to anchor a spike and to throw down a scaling rope for everyone else.

If any of this description made you smile, you will likely find the thief to be a very rewarding class to play. They tend to gain experience levels very quickly despite their vulnerability, which creates a “high risk, high reward” gambling type of play style which heartily rewards the clever tactical player.

All of the Basic Level races (dwarves, elves, halflings, and humans) can be thieves. They are the charlatans, guttersnipes, outsiders, pirates, scoundrels, scouts, and spies of the game world.

4-6

MULTI-CLASSED CHARACTERS (ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

In the more advanced rules, demi-human characters can have more than one character class, with example combinations being cleric / fighter, fighter / magic-user, and fighter / thief. However, these complicated options slow down PC advancement, and can even render PCs less dependent upon one another due to the confluence of weaker hybrid combinations in the place of well-defined and powerful archetypes. For these reasons, multi-classed characters do not appear in the Basic Level rules. They are especially suited for Advanced Level play. Therefore, these combinations will be fully explored in later volumes in this series.





If you are a veteran player or GM, I assure you that I find the existing rules to be oblique, overly complicated and under-explained, so you can look forward to some detailed explication — despite a requisite bulk of page count — in future rulebooks to come.

And you will find rules for obscure sub-classes, such as hunters and jesters, too!



4-7

CHARACTER CLASS SELECTION

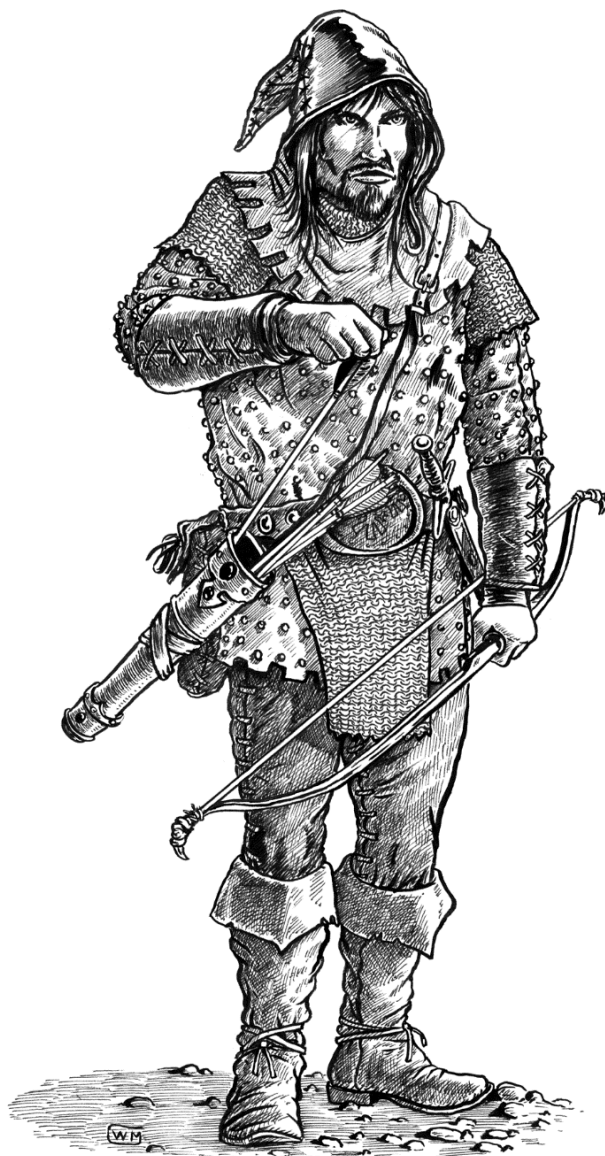
Now that you have learned the types of classes that exist in the game, you should start leaning toward — but not yet commit to — the one that appeals to you the most. Please note that you will probably want to have at least one above-average appropriate ability score which causes a character class to excel, unless you really want a challenge. You can play a low-intelligence magic-user for example for fun, but your character will be markedly inferior in comparison to virtually all other magic-users in the game.

Because of this dependence upon ability-influenced class selection, I recommend considering the following ability scores, depending on your preferred class:





- **Cleric:** A cleric should have at least one of the following ability scores at 13+ — wisdom, constitution, and/or charisma. Wisdom is the most important.
- **Fighter:** A fighter should have at least one of the following ability scores at 13+ — strength, dexterity, or constitution. Strength is the most important.
- **Magic-User:** A magic-user should have at least one of the following ability scores at 13+ — dexterity, constitution, or intelligence. Intelligence is the most important.
- **Thief:** A thief should have at least one of the following ability scores at 13+ — dexterity, intelligence, or charisma. Dexterity is the most important.





At-a-Glance Summary of the Basic Character Classes

Class	Play Style	Primary Ability	Secondary Abilities	Lesser Abilities
Cleric	Divine magic, support	WIS	CON, CHA	STR, DEX, INT
Fighter	Combat, direct action	STR	DEX, CON	INT, WIS, CHA
Magic-User	Arcane magic, flexibility	INT	DEX, CON	STR, WIS, CHA
Thief	Stealth, indirect action	DEX	INT, CHA	STR, CON, WIS

4-8

MANDATORY CHARACTER CLASSES DUE TO SUB-OPTIMAL ABILITY SCORES (OPTIONAL RULE)

In the 1978 version of the original fantasy game, there were even more punishing side effects for low ability scores. Generally speaking, under those rules if you have a PC with a very low ability score (between 3 and 5), you are likely to be forced into a character class against your will during ability score generation. This premise adds insult to injury, punishing those players who are otherwise willing to accept the interesting character flaw associated with a very low ability score.

If this “natural selection” effect sounds logical, it might well be. But for this author it falls the crucial tests for a nuance within the game: It isn’t skill-based, it isn’t strategic, and the rule just isn’t very fun. For those reason and many others, I list the 1978 rule here as an optional restriction which the GM might choose to employ for a Challenging Difficulty Level campaign while playing with veteran players. Using this rule at either the Easy or the Normal Difficulty Level is not at all recommended.

The sub-rules, as they apply to the four basic character classes, are as follows:

- **Strength:** If your character’s strength score before play is between 3 and 5, the character must belong to the magic-user class.
- **Dexterity:** If your character’s dexterity score before play is between 3 and 5, the character must belong to the cleric class.
- **Constitution:** A low constitution score does not force the character into any of the four Basic Level classes.
- **Intelligence:** If your character’s intelligence score before play is between 3 and 5, the character must belong to the fighter class.





- **Wisdom:** If your character's wisdom score before play is between 3 and 5, the character must belong to the thief class.
- **Charisma:** A low charisma score does not force the character into any of the four Basic Level classes.

4-9

QUALIFYING FOR CHARACTER CLASSES WITH ABILITY SCORES (OPTIONAL RULE)

Some Game Masters feel that ability scores should serve as minimum requirements for character classes. It logically follows that fighters should be strong, clerics should be wise, thieves should be agile, and magic-users should be highly intelligent. Some Advanced Level character classes even use ability scores as a sort of game balancing mechanism, enforcing the rarity of more powerful classes by limiting the number of players who can beat the odds to “qualify” for any desired class.

There are several problems with this approach. Limiting access to the four Basic Level classes robs the player of free will in the crucial strategic decision of class selection. It is certainly optimal to have a strong fighter instead of a weak one, but if a player is willing to work with a low strength score and is going to attempt to role-play a frail village youth who is determined to risk his life in a wild hope that he might rise to greatness as a warrior, why should the player be punished for creatively working with a randomly-assigned handicap?

Also, as will be shown in the Advanced Level rules, requiring high ability scores for qualification toward a powerful character class merely ensures that those few PCs who qualify for the powerful advanced classes will be *more* overpowered than they were going to be in the first place. As a game balance mechanism, ability score requirements are a well-intended failure.

In my World of Oldskull campaign, I apply these minimum ability score requirements to NPCs, but not to Player Characters. I list the requirements here for your consideration, should you decide to enforce them in a campaign of Normal or Challenging Difficulty Level. In an Easy-DL campaign, I recommend that this restriction process be avoided.

- **Cleric:** To become a cleric, a character must have the following minimum ability scores — STR 6+, DEX 3+, CON 6+, INT 6+, WIS 9+, CHA 6+.
- **Fighter:** To become a fighter, a character must have the following minimum ability scores — STR 9+, DEX 6+, CON 7+, INT 3+, WIS 6+, CHA 6+.





- **Magic-User:** To become a magic-user, a character must have the following minimum ability scores — STR 3+, DEX 6+, CON 6+, INT 9+, WIS 6+, CHA 6+.
- **Thief:** To become a thief, a character must have the following minimum ability scores — STR 6+, DEX 9+, CON 6+, INT 6+, WIS 3+, CHA 6+.

If a newly-generated character cannot qualify for any of the four classes, that character is designated as Hopeless, and the player should discard that PC and generate a new one.

Minimum Ability Scores for Basic Character Classes

Ability	Cleric	Fighter	Magic-User	Thief
Strength	6+	9+	3+	6+
Dexterity	3+	6+	6+	9+
Constitution	6+	7+	6+	6+
Intelligence	6+	3+	9+	6+
Wisdom	9+	6+	6+	3+
Charisma	6+	6+	6+	6+





CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETING ABILITY SCORES





5-1

MODIFYING ABILITY SCORES

Once a character's basic ability scores — possibly including scores raised to 15, and/or zodiacal influence, as noted previously — are all generated, and a race and a class have been tentatively selected, the player can choose to deliberately modify the PC's ability scores further to fit a preconceived vision of the character's viability in the game. For example, if you are playing a fighter (meaning that the strength ability score is very important to you) and your fighter's strength score is currently 17, you might want to raise it by +1 to the maximum of 18, because an 18 ability score gives even more additional bonuses which can very beneficial during play.

Before you decide whether you want to further modify ability scores, you should know that this dabbling comes at a price. You will be losing 2 points in one ability to gain only 1 point in another, and there are also some restrictions on which abilities you can raise. Additionally, you should know before you decide that the most advantageous "break points" for ability scores in the game are 13 (which is the lowest score to be above average, and which gives a minor advantage, where an ability score of 12 gives none), 16 (because a score of 16 gives more of an advantage than a 13, 14, or 15) and 18 (because 18 is the natural maximum and gives the most benefit that you can get). So if (for example) your fighter has a strength of 12, spending 2 ability points to raise that to 13 makes a lot of sense. But if your fighter only has a strength of 10, you would need to spend 6 ability points to raise the strength to 13, which is probably too steep a price to pay.

If you don't want to deal with that math and fiddling, you can choose not to modify your character's ability scores at all and proceed to the next section. But if you do want to at least consider modification, then you should know that ability scores modified in this way cannot be raised above 18, and they cannot be lowered below 9, under any circumstances. This means that if you have an ability of score of 10 that you want to lower to give another ability score +1, you cannot do so, because the -2 penalty would reduce the 10 to 8, which is below 9. However, you could reduce an ability score of 11 down to 9, or an ability score of 12 down to 10, and so forth. You must decide for yourself which sacrifices are acceptable and which are too grim a price to pay.

You can repeatedly apply these -2 / +1 modifiers if you like, so long as you abide by the "no lower than 9, no higher than 18" maxim. This means that if you were blessed with two ability scores of 18 and only one of these 18s was important to you, you could lower the other 18 up to four times (-2 to 16, -2 to 14, -2 to 12, -2 to 10) to gain a considerable +4 bonus to another ability score.

* * * * *





Example of Strategically Modifying a Character's Ability Scores

As an example of this process in action, let us say that you have a dwarf who will probably be a fighter, and his ability scores are currently STR 15, DEX 10, CON 12, INT 15, WIS 8 and CHA 13. You decide that you are going to play this dwarf as a front-line battler, so he will need the highest strength score that he can get. Dexterity and constitution are important too, to make him hit first and live longer as he suffers wounds in combat. His intelligence, wisdom and charisma are less important to you ... but cannot be lowered below 9 regardless. It's certainly useful to have a smart and charming character, but you've decided to specialize as a battler so that you can leave the "soft stuff" — meaning negotiation, strategizing, and influencing others — to the other players and their PCs.

With this agenda in mind, you can see that it will take three +1 boosts to get your dwarf's STR 15 up to 18. You don't want to lower DEX or CON to get there, and WIS is already too low (since 8 is lower than 9) to reduce any further. So that leaves INT and CHA as the resource pools that you're going to be tapping to boost your character's power.

Looking further, you can see that you would need to use another three +1 boosts to raise the DEX 10 up to the advantageous break point of DEX 13, so you can't get there while also prioritizing STR. But the CON 12 score is only 1 away from the break point, so maybe you should consider doing that instead to ensure that your battler will live a little longer.

So let's change the scores around to manage the objectives that we can.

The first step is to reduce the highest unwanted score by -2 (you select the INT 15 to lower), to get that first +1 boost to STR. This gives your dwarf the newly-modified scores STR 16, DEX 10, CON 12, INT 13, WIS 8, CHA 13. Then you apply the next +1 boost to STR, again reducing INT, this time from 13 to 11. So the dwarf's scores are now STR 17, DEX 10, CON 12, INT 11, WIS 8, CHA 13. Doing this one more time, you get the scores STR 18, DEX 10, CON 12, INT 9, WIS 8, CHA 13. This is still a viable character, and that STR 18 is going to be a huge asset in battle.

Now comes the tricky part, which is a matter of personal choice. You can apply another -2 reduction, this one to CHA, to get a +1 bonus to CON. This will give you STR 18, DEX 10, CON 13, INT 9, WIS 8, CHA 11. Or, you can leave the scores as is. You could even apply -2 to CHA twice to get +2 to CON twice, which would give you STR 18, DEX 10, CON 14, INT 9, WIS 8, CHA 9, but I personally would not recommend that, because CON 13 and CON 14 give the same level of advantages in most circumstances ... and when you are losing two ability points to gain one, you're actually weakening your character overall to gain a specialized bonus, so it would be unwise to reduce CHA to 9 (in my opinion) just to gain CON 14.

But other players will disagree with my assessment, which is where the tactics of personalization come into play ... the choices of ability score modification are yours and yours alone. You just need to abide by the "no lower than 9, no higher than 18 rule," and to record and then report the final ability scores to your Game Master before play begins.





5-2

BONUSES AND PENALTIES DUE TO ABILITY SCORES

Once your PC's ability scores have been selectively modified — or once you as the player have made a choice not to make any modifications at all — the level 1 PC's ability scores are considered *finalized*. This means that they might go up or down during play (as a result of magic, affliction, the optional ability score decimal rules, a powerful blessing or curse, etc.), but they will not change any further until after the game begins. Knowing this, we can now apply the game modifiers for the ability scores to the character, and record this information on the character record. Each of the six abilities and each ability score number has its own set of modifiers which determine the success rates when your character attempts various actions during play.

If this is your first time reading through the rules, some of the specific game terms which have not yet been discussed in detail may seem a bit cryptic to you. However, you can still record this information in your character record and learn exactly what each variable means a bit later on, before you begin to play the game. You will need to be patient as you read for the first time ... each pertinent rule will be explained soon.

5-3

BONUSES AND PENALTIES DUE TO STRENGTH

The modifiers based on a character's strength (STR) are as follows:

➤ **Strength 3:**

- The character has a -3 penalty to melee **"To Hit"** rolls. Since combat rolls are made using 1D20, this equates to a -15% chance to hit per attack. Please note that this penalty applies only to melee weapons, not to ranged weapons. Attacks with ranged weapons are modified by dexterity instead of strength, which we'll consider a bit later.
- The character also has a -3 penalty to **Damage** inflicted with any attack, whether the attack is made with no weapon (an unarmed attack), a melee weapon, or a missile weapon.





Nevertheless, a successful attack which hits a target will always inflict a minimum of 1 point of damage, regardless of negative modifiers.

- The character has a 1 in 6 chance of opening a stuck or heavy door.
- **Strength 4 or 5:** The character has a -2 penalty to melee “to hit” rolls (-10%), a -2 penalty to damage inflicted, and a 1 in 6 chance of opening a stuck or heavy door.
- **Strength 6 to 8:** The character has a -1 penalty to melee “to hit” rolls (-5%), a -1 penalty to damage inflicted, and a 1 in 6 chance of opening a stuck or heavy door.
- **Strength 9 to 12:** The character has no penalty to melee “to hit” rolls, no penalty to damage inflicted, and a 2 in 6 chance of opening a stuck or heavy door.
- **Strength 13 to 15:** The character has a +1 bonus to melee “to hit” rolls (+5%), a +1 bonus to damage inflicted, and a 3 in 6 chance of opening a stuck or heavy door.
- **Strength 16 or 17:** The character has a +2 bonus to melee “to hit” rolls (+10%), a +2 bonus to damage inflicted, and a 4 in 6 chance of opening a stuck or heavy door.
- **Strength 18:** The character has a +3 bonus to melee “to hit” rolls (+15%), a +3 bonus to damage inflicted, and a 5 in 6 chance of opening a stuck or heavy door.

Effects of Strength (STR)

Strength Score	Melee To Hit	Damage	Open Doors	Feat of Strength
3	-3	-3	1 on 1D6	3%
4	-2	-2	1 on 1D6	4%
5	-2	-2	1 on 1D6	5%
6	-1	-1	1 on 1D6	6%
7	-1	-1	1 on 1D6	7%
8	-1	-1	1 on 1D6	8%
9	0	0	1-2 on 1D6	9%
10	0	0	1-2 on 1D6	10%
11	0	0	1-2 on 1D6	11%
12	0	0	1-2 on 1D6	12%
13	+1	+1	1-3 on 1D6	13%
14	+1	+1	1-3 on 1D6	14%
15	+1	+1	1-3 on 1D6	15%
16	+2	+2	1-4 on 1D6	16%
17	+2	+2	1-4 on 1D6	17%
18	+3	+3	1-5 on 1D6	18%

Strength modifies a character’s carrying capacity, which measures the amount of gear and treasure which can be hauled around. This is detailed in the next volume of this series under the encumbrance rules section. Low strength ratings greatly minimize the amount of weight that can be carried.





Strength also allows characters to attempt remarkable feats of strength up to three times per day, such as bending steel bars (for example, in a portcullis) and lifting gates. The chance for success in these great feats is equal to (STR %); for example, a STR 11 character would have an 11% chance of bending steel bars. Each character can only attempt such a great feat three times per day, succeed or fail.





5-4

BONUSES AND PENALTIES DUE TO DEXTERITY

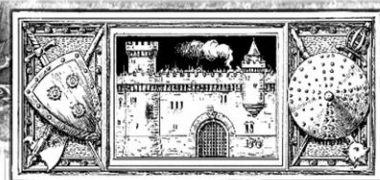
The modifiers based on a character's dexterity (DEX) are as follows:

➤ **Dexterity 3:**

- The character has a -2 penalty to **Initiative Rolls**, which means that he is slow to react during the initial stages of combat. Since combat results are resolved one creature at a time, this indicates that enemies have a good chance to attack the slow character before the character can react.
- The character has a -3 penalty to **Armor Class**, which is a measure of how difficult the character is to hit in combat. Since combat rolls are made using 1D20, this equates to a +15% chance to be hit by enemies.
- The character also has a -3 penalty to missile "To Hit" rolls. Since combat rolls are made using 1D20, this equates to a -15% chance to hit per ranged attack. Missile attacks include attacks with missile-discharging weapons (such as bows, crossbows, and slings), and also attacks with thrown melee weapons (such as axes, daggers, and spears). Please note that this penalty applies only to missile attacks, not to melee attacks. Melee attacks are modified by strength instead of dexterity, as noted previously.

- **Dexterity 4 or 5:** The character has a -1 penalty to Initiative Rolls, a -2 penalty to Armor Class (+10% to be hit), and a -2 penalty to missile "to hit" rolls (-10%).
- **Dexterity 6 to 8:** The character has a -1 penalty to Initiative Rolls, a -1 penalty to Armor Class (+5% to be hit), and a -1 penalty to missile "to hit" rolls (-5%).
- **Dexterity 9 to 12:** The character has no penalty to Initiative Rolls, no penalty to Armor Class, and no penalty to missile "to hit" rolls.
- **Dexterity 13 to 15:** The character has a +1 bonus to Initiative Rolls, a +1 bonus to Armor Class (-5% to be hit), and a +1 bonus to missile "to hit" rolls (+5%).
- **Dexterity 16 or 17:** The character has a +1 bonus to Initiative Rolls, a +2 bonus to Armor Class (-10% to be hit), and a +2 bonus to missile "to hit" rolls (+10%).
- **Dexterity 18:** The character has a +2 bonus to Initiative Rolls, a +3 bonus to Armor Class (-15% to be hit), and a +3 bonus to missile "to hit" rolls (+15%).





Effects of Dexterity (DEX)

Dexterity Score	Initiative	Armor Class	Missile To Hit
3	-2	Worse by 3	-3
4	-1	Worse by 2	-2
5	-1	Worse by 2	-2
6	-1	Worse by 1	-1
7	-1	Worse by 1	-1
8	-1	Worse by 1	-1
9	0	No modifier	0
10	0	No modifier	0
11	0	No modifier	0
12	0	No modifier	0
13	+1	Better by 1	+1
14	+1	Better by 1	+1
15	+1	Better by 1	+1
16	+1	Better by 2	+2
17	+1	Better by 2	+2
18	+2	Better by 3	+3



5-5

BONUSES AND PENALTIES DUE TO CONSTITUTION

The modifiers based on a character's constitution (CON) are as follows:

➤ **Constitution 3:**

- Beyond experience level 1, the character suffers a -3 penalty to additional **Hit Points** gained for each level earned. For example, a level 2 thief would typically gain +1D6 hit points (a maximum of 6 additional points) for attaining 2nd level; but with a CON of only 3, the character would only gain 1D6-3 (a maximum of 3 additional points).
- However, a character will always gain at least 1 additional hit point per experience level after the 1st, regardless of this penalty.

➤ **Constitution 4 or 5:** The character has a -2 penalty to all additional hit point rolls beyond experience level 1.

➤ **Constitution 6 to 8:** The character has a -1 penalty to all additional hit point rolls beyond experience level 1.

➤ **Constitution 9 to 12:** The character has no penalty to additional hit point rolls.

➤ **Constitution 13 to 15:** The character has a +1 bonus to additional hit point rolls.

➤ **Constitution 16 or 17:** The character has a +2 bonus to additional hit point rolls.

➤ **Constitution 18:** The character has a +3 bonus to additional hit point rolls.

Constitution also effects a character's chance to survive devastating shocks to the system, such as enduring resurrection (being raised from the dead), being hasted (a magical effect which makes someone move with blurred speed), or being polymorphed (magically turned into another type of creature, such as a bird or a dragon). The odds of **Shock Survival** are equal to the character's CON x 8%, to a minimum of 40% and a maximum of 99%. For example, a character of CON 10 would have an 80% shock survival rate.

When a character fails a shock roll, he is either reduced to zero hit points in an Easy-DL campaign; to -1 hit points in a Normal-DL campaign; or is slain outright in a Challenging-DL campaign.

Further, constitution also has another important role to play in the ongoing campaign. In this game of risk taking, characters are quite likely to die as a result of adventuring. When an NPC dies, he usually stays dead, unless the GM rules that someone cared enough to find, sanctify and resurrect his remains.



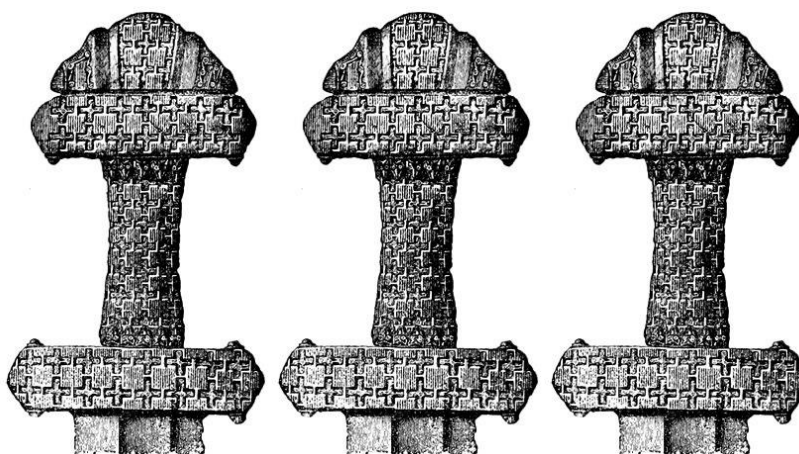


Player characters, however, are subject to a more special fate. They are free-willed vessels of destiny who are watched over by a patron deity, and as such they are quite likely to be resurrected. This favor comes, of course, at a significant price.

This will be discussed in a further volume of these rules, but for now it helps to know that a character's maximum number of resurrections is equal to his constitution score. This means that a CON 10 person can be resurrected up to 10 times. Each resurrection attempt however requires a successful shock survival rating, which means in practice that most PCs will only manage a few resurrections (at best) before they are rendered forever dead. CON scores of 13+, however, can certainly result in a champion falling and rising many times before the ultimate end.

Effects of Constitution (CON)

Constitution Score	Hit Points per Hit Die	Shock Survival Rating	Potential Resurrections
3	-3	40%	3
4	-2	40%	4
5	-2	40%	5
6	-1	48%	6
7	-1	56%	7
8	-1	64%	8
9	0	72%	9
10	0	80%	10
11	0	88%	11
12	0	96%	12
13	+1	99%	13
14	+1	99%	14
15	+1	99%	15
16	+2	99%	16
17	+2	99%	17
18	+3	99%	18





5-6

BONUSES AND PENALTIES DUE TO INTELLIGENCE

The modifiers based on a character's intelligence (INT) are as follows:

➤ **Intelligence 3:**

- The character has trouble speaking, cannot read, and cannot write. If you and your Game Master want to role-play this disadvantage, you can try to use only monosyllabic words while speaking in character ... a unique challenge to be sure!
- The one language your character can speak is the **Common Tongue** ("Common,") which is the language shared by most intelligent and civilized creatures in the game world.

➤ **Intelligence 4 or 5:** The character can speak words up to two syllables in length. The character cannot read or write, however.

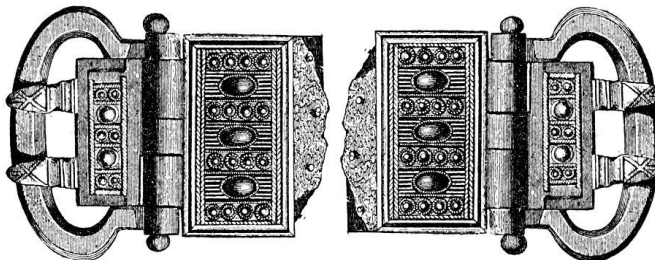
➤ **Intelligence 6 to 8:** The character can speak Common, but with noticeable halting and difficulty for complex words. The character can read slowly, and can write words up to five characters in length (using modern English as the general rule for that limitation).

➤ **Intelligence 9 to 12:** The character can speak Common fluently, and can read and write as well.

➤ **Intelligence 13 to 15:** As for INT 9-12. In addition, the character will know (or be able to learn) one additional language. This language can be rolled randomly, so that the character knows the unusual language when the game begins; or, it can be reserved as a "saved slot" so that the character can learn a single chosen language later in the game, at the GM's discretion.

➤ **Intelligence 16 or 17:** As for INT 9-12. In addition, the character will know (or be able to learn) two additional languages.

➤ **Intelligence 18:** As for INT 9-12. In addition, the character will know (or be able to learn) three additional languages.





Effects of Intelligence (INT)

Intelligence Score	Literacy	Additional Languages
3	Trouble speaking, cannot read or write	0
4	Halting speech, cannot read or write	0
5	Halting speech, cannot read or write	0
6	Some halting speech, can read and write	0
7	Some halting speech, can read and write	0
8	Some halting speech, can read and write	0
9	Can speak fluently, can read and write	0
10	Can speak fluently, can read and write	0
11	Can speak fluently, can read and write	0
12	Can speak fluently, can read and write	0
13	Can speak, read, and write eloquently	1
14	Can speak, read, and write eloquently	1
15	Can speak, read, and write eloquently	1
16	Can speak, read and write eloquently	2
17	Can speak, read and write eloquently	2
18	Can speak, read and write masterfully	3





You should note that a character's intelligence is not equivalent to a player's intelligence! A player's intelligence will typically range, in game terms, between INT 10 (representing a modern IQ of 100) and INT 18 (approximately representing an IQ of 150). People who play role-playing games tend to be more intelligent on average than those who do not; that's just a fact. But if your real world INT is around 12 (IQ 110) and your character's INT is 18, what do you do?

The answer is, it depends on the decisions of your Game Master.

Most old school GMs prefer that players use their own intelligence to solve riddles and problems in the game, regardless of their character's intelligence. Further, if you have a real world INT of 11 and your character's INT is only 4, you would be a good role-player if you would speak haltingly when talking in character, and keeping your mouth shut when the other players are attempting to solve a riddle ... even if you think you know the answer. Other GMs, however, prefer a more gamist approach, where solving a riddle simply involves rolling against your character's INT instead of having you solve the riddle in real life. I find this approach anti-climactic and boring, but some GMs do insist that it makes more sense this way. Be sure to ask your GM how he feels about player intelligence vs. character intelligence in the game, and try to play accordingly.

In practice, this is just one of those strange "the player is not the character" divides which crop up in a role-playing game from time to time.

5-7

CHANCE TO LEARN ARCANES SPELLS DUE TO MAGIC-USER'S INTELLIGENCE (ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

In the traditional Basic Level game, when a magic-user finds a magical scroll or spell book as treasure, the arcane spell(s) can be recorded into the magic-user's own spell book for future memorization and casting. In the Advanced Level game, however, not all magic-users are capable of learning all of the new spells they come across. The purpose of the Advanced Level ruling is to further reward magic-users of high intelligence, and to further balance the class so that magic-users do not become overpowered at higher levels. At low experience levels, this can be a significant handicap; however, a clean version (the 1978 advanced rule with minimums and maximums is messy, clunky and time-consuming) of the esoteric ruling is provided here for GMs who would like to implement it.

➤ Intelligence 3:

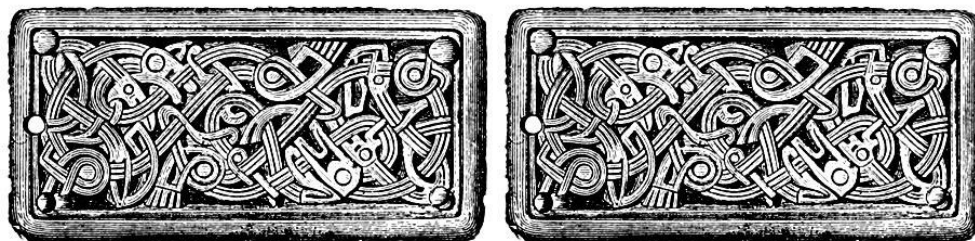
- When a magic-user encounters a new spell, roll percentile dice. The magic-user has a 20% chance to be able to interpret the spell and record it into his spell book.





- If the roll fails, and the magic-user encounters this spell again, a new comprehension roll cannot be made until the magic-user has gained a new experience level. For example, if a magic-user attempts to interpret a spell at level 2 and fails, he must attain level 3 before a new roll can be made.
 - Do keep in mind that the magic-user will at least gain one new spell per experience level gained, per the separate “1 new spell per level gained” rule. Any spells that the magic-user happens to discover in treasure (scrolls and spell books) are in addition to that incremental gain.
- **Intelligence 4:** The magic-user has a 25% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 5:** The magic-user has a 30% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 6:** The magic-user has a 35% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 7:** The magic-user has a 40% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 8:** The magic-user has a 45% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 9:** The magic-user has a 50% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 10:** The magic-user has a 55% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 11:** The magic-user has a 60% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 12:** The magic-user has a 65% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 13:** The magic-user has a 70% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 14:** The magic-user has a 75% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 15:** The magic-user has a 80% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 16:** The magic-user has a 85% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 17:** The magic-user has a 90% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.
 - **Intelligence 18:** The magic-user has a 95% chance to learn newly-discovered spells.

This rule should also apply to situations when two PC magic-users — controlled by two different players — attempt to share the spells in their spell books with one another. This will be discussed in more detail later on, in the magic-user chapters.





5-8

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SPELLS PER LEVEL DUE TO MAGIC-USER'S INTELLIGENCE (ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

In the original Basic Level game, a magic-user can know however many spells he can get his arcane little paws on. If the GM would like to limit this potential, the following rule is recommended:

The maximum number of spells that a magic-user can ever know, per spell level, is equal to his INT-4, to a minimum of 3. For example, a magic-user of INT 13 can ultimately know 9 1st-level spells, 9 2nd-level spells, and so forth. This is simply a potential limit to a magic-user's knowledge capacity; most Basic Level characters will never approach these limits until later in a magic-user's life.

Some versions of the original RPG also enforce a *minimum* number of spells which a magic-user can know. However, due to the extensive bookkeeping and clumsy rerolling necessitated by such a system, that rule does not exist in the Castle Oldskull game. Veteran GMs can feel free to refer to the 1978 and 1979 Gygaxian rules pertaining to "minimum spells per level" if they wish to use that system in their own campaign.

5-9

ADDITIONAL MAGIC-USER SPELLS DUE TO HIGH INTELLIGENCE (ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

Game Masters who would like to encourage the survival and utility of low-level arcane spell casters might consider increasing the number of spells which high-intelligence magic-users can cast. This rule never appeared in the traditional game, because magic-users tend to be overpowered at high experience levels. Nevertheless, the following rule option can increase low-level magic-user's survivability without unbalancing the game. I have used it in my campaign with considerable success.

The bonuses are as follows:

- **Intelligence 3 to 12:** No additional spells are gained.





- **Intelligence 13 to 15:** The magic-user can memorize 1 additional 1st-level spell per day.
- **Intelligence 16 or 17:** The magic-user can memorize 2 additional 1st-level spells per day.
- **Intelligence 18:** The magic-user can memorize 3 additional 1st-level spells per day.
- Note that for game balance purposes, high intelligence does not ever give any additional spells per day beyond spell level 1.

Importantly, these bonus spells can only be classified as miscellaneous or defensive. Refer to the spell chapter for further information. Bonus spells *cannot* be offensive in nature. Offensive 1st-level spells include (but are not limited to) charm person, magic missile, and sleep.

5-10

BONUSES AND PENALTIES

DUE TO WISDOM

The modifiers based on a character's Wisdom (WIS) are as follows:

- **Wisdom 3:**
 - The character has a -3 penalty to saving throws vs. magic. A **Saving Throw** is a special type of die roll made during play, in which the player attempts to “save” the character from a potentially negative or disruptive effect. In the specific case of a saving throw vs. magic, this is a roll to avoid a harmful spell, a magical curse, or the power of an enemy's magic item. Saving throws are made by rolling 1D20, which means that a -3 penalty equates to a -15% chance for you to save your character from such effects.
- **Wisdom 4 or 5:** The character has a -2 penalty (-10%) to saving throws vs. magic.
- **Wisdom 6 to 8:** The character has a -1 penalty (-5%) to saving throws vs. magic.
- **Wisdom 9 to 12:** The character has no penalty to saving throws vs. magic.
- **Wisdom 13 to 15:** The character has a +1 bonus (+5%) to saving throws vs. magic.
- **Wisdom 16 or 17:** The character has a +2 bonus (+10%) to saving throws vs. magic.
- **Wisdom 18:** The character has a +3 bonus (+15%) to saving throws vs. magic.





A character's wisdom score also slightly modifies the amount of experience points he earns through his life, as follows:

- **Wisdom 3:** The character suffers a -6% penalty to all experience earned.
- **Wisdom 4 or 5:** The character suffers a -4% penalty to all experience earned.
- **Wisdom 6 to 8:** The character suffers a -2% penalty to all experience earned.
- **Wisdom 9 to 12:** No experience modifier pertaining to wisdom.
- **Wisdom 13 to 15:** The character gains a +2% increase to all experience earned.
- **Wisdom 16 or 17:** The character gains a +4% increase to all experience earned.
- **Wisdom 18:** The character gains a +6% increase to all experience earned.
- These bonuses to experience are not just for clerics! They apply to all characters, of all classes.





Effects of Wisdom (WIS)

Wisdom Score	Saving Throws vs. Magic	Experience Earned
3	-3	-6%
4	-2	-4%
5	-2	-4%
6	-1	-2%
7	-1	-2%
8	-1	-2%
9	0	No modifier
10	0	No modifier
11	0	No modifier
12	0	No modifier
13	+1	+2%
14	+1	+2%
15	+1	+2%
16	+2	+4%
17	+2	+4%
18	+3	+6%

5-11

CHANCE OF CLERICAL SPELL FAILURE DUE TO LOW WISDOM (OPTIONAL RULE)

If your GM decides that clerics with low wisdom should be considerably less effective in their sacred channeling of immortal-granted spells, there will then be a percentage chance that each spell that a low-wisdom cleric casts can actually fail. Failed spells are simply negated when the spell casting is attempted.

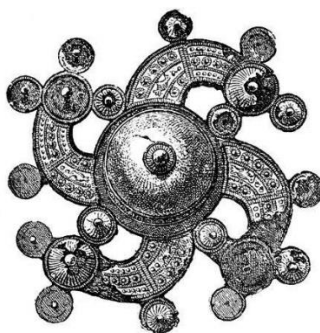
This failure chance is determined by percentage dice (rolled by the cleric's player) whenever the spell is cast, and if the spell fails it is lost from memory while creating no magical effects whatsoever. The wisdom thresholds for this negative effect are as follows:

- **Wisdom 3 to 8:** 20% chance of spell failure
- **Wisdom 9:** 16% chance of spell failure
- **Wisdom 10:** 12% chance of spell failure
- **Wisdom 11:** 8% chance of spell failure





- **Wisdom 12:** 4% chance of spell failure
- **Wisdom 13 or higher:** No chance of spell failure



This rule would apply to both PCs and NPCs. It also has the curious side effect of making humanoid clerical shamans (goblins, lizard men, orcs, and so forth) quite unpredictable in battle, because their wisdom scores tend to be on the lower end.





5-12

ADDITIONAL CLERICAL SPELLS

DUE TO HIGH WISDOM

(OPTIONAL RULE)

Your Game Master might well decide that the number of spells that a cleric (only) can hold in memory at any one time is based not only on their experience level, but also on their wisdom score. If this is the case, then the following guidelines can be used:

- **Wisdom 3 to 12:** The cleric gains no additional spells.
- **Wisdom 13:** The cleric can memorize 1 additional 1st-level spell.
- **Wisdom 14:** The cleric can memorize 2 additional 1st-level spells.
- **Wisdom 15:** The cleric can memorize 2 additional 1st-level spells, and 1 additional 2nd-level spell. (Note that clerics cannot cast 2nd-level spells until experience level 4.)
- **Wisdom 16:** The cleric can memorize 2 additional 1st-level spells, and 2 additional 2nd-level spells. (Clerics cannot cast 2nd-level spells until experience level 4.)
- **Wisdom 17:** The cleric can memorize 2 additional 1st-level spells, 2 additional 2nd-level spells, and 1 additional 3rd-level spell. (Clerics cannot cast 2nd-level spells until experience level 4, and they cannot cast 3rd-level spells until experience level 6.)
- **Wisdom 18:** The cleric can memorize 2 additional 1st-level spells, 2 additional 2nd-level spells, 1 additional 3rd-level spell, and 1 additional 4th-level spell. (Clerics cannot cast 2nd-level spells until experience level 4, and cannot cast 3rd-level spells until experience level 6, and cannot cast 4th-level spells until experience level 8.)

If this rule is used, then level 1 clerics of wisdom 3 to 12 are still incapable of casting any spells, but level 1 clerics of wisdom 13 are capable of casting 1 level 1 spell, and level 1 clerics of wisdom 14 or higher are capable of casting 2 level 1 spells.





5-13

WISDOM AND SANITY

(ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

If your Game Master wants to include the Cthulhu Mythos and other mind-melting revelations of eldritch horror in your game, then the player characters will each need a **Sanity** score. Sanity is a sub-attribute of wisdom, which measures how just how strong of a grasp a character has on his own free will and mental fortitude. Losing sanity causes a player to temporarily lose control of his or her PC, as a result of a madness-inducing trigger such as witnessing the rising of an Elder God, a world-shattering planar vision, or psychic invasion by the ever-crawling mind moles.

Due to the loss of player free will, sanity is a rather touchy subject in a fantasy role-playing game. I recommend that it be used sparingly and with the players' general agreement. It is a perfect mechanism for horror-themed games and dark fantasy, but it functions poorly within the tenets of heroic fantasy. Some players will enjoy the sanity and madness rules, because horror is a perfect enhancer for dark fantasy role-playing. But others might be offended by the notion that their player characters will be temporarily controlled by the GM in dangerous situations. The ultimate decision on whether sanity and madness will be aspects of the campaign is dependent upon the will of the Game Master, as informed by the considered wishes of the players before play begins.

A character's initial sanity score is equal to WISx5. Demi-humans, who tend to know more about the dark corners of the world and the wider multiverse through ancestral lore, gain a +5 bonus to sanity. Human clerics gain a +5 bonus to sanity as well. For example an elven fighter of WIS 13 would have 70 sanity points to begin the game.

Whenever a horrifically weird event occurs, the GM will require a sanity check to be made by all sane and present characters. Note that mundane horrors such as mutilation, corpses, shock and dragon fear are not *weird* and do not require a sanity check. Weird means something uncanny which defies the natural and magical laws of reason, the rational foundation which the characters' world and experiences are built upon. Seeing an evil monster, in this magic-filled game world, is not weird in and of itself. Seeing an evil monster crawl out of a halfling's head and then watching it turn itself inside out while piping on an intestinal flute in order to open a dimensional gateway to Carcosa of the Thousand Dying Suns, however, is *very weird*. The GM should determine what types of events qualify as being weird and uncanny enough to require a sanity check. The "Lovecraft Rule" is useful here; if you can envision something only happening in an H. P. Lovecraft story, it's almost certainly weird according to the definition we are using here.

A sanity check is rolled on percentile dice. The roll is made by the affected player(s) as PCs first witness the event. If the percentile roll is greater than the character's current sanity, then a fair amount of sanity will be lost. If the roll is less than or equal to the character's current sanity, then only a small amount of sanity will be lost. Using the example of the elven fighter above, the character would succeed at his sanity check on a roll of 01 to 70, and would fail the check on a roll between 71 and 00.



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The following guidelines indicate the general levels of weird events, which the GM can extrapolate from to develop rulings for unique circumstances:

General Guidelines for Sanity and Madness Events

Example Event	Intensity	Sanity Loss with a Successful Sanity Roll	Sanity Loss with a Failed Sanity Roll
Seeing a minor Lovecraftian entity for the first time (Deep One, Mi-Go, etc.)	Disturbing (1)	None	1D3 (average 2)
Being attacked by a minor Lovecraftian entity (each encounter)	Eerie (2)	1D2 (average 1.5)	1D4 (average 2.5)
Seeing a Mi-Go emerge from a human-flesh "body mask"	Startling (3)	1D3 (average 2)	1D6 (average 3.5)
Seeing a greater Lovecraftian entity for the first time (Elder Thing, Yithian, etc.)	Uncanny (4)	1D4 (average 2.5)	2D4 (average 5)
Being attacked by a greater Lovecraftian entity (each encounter)	Otherworldly (5)	1D6 (average 3.5)	2D6 (average 7)
Having your brain extracted and then replaced	Terrifying (6)	2D4 (average 5)	3D6 (average 10.5)
Seeing a major Lovecraftian entity for the first time (Bhole, Shoggoth, etc.) ("Zuul!")	Horrifying (7)	2D6 (average 7)	3D8 (average 13.5)
Being attacked by a major Lovecraftian entity (each encounter)	Mind-Warping (8)	3D6 (average 10.5)	3D10 (average 16.5)
Having your brain extracted, taken on a galactic journey for a century, and then replaced	Spirit-Wracking (9)	3D8 (average 13.5)	3D12 (average 19.5)





Seeing a Lovecraftian Un-God for the first time (Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, etc.)	Mind-Melting (10)	3D10 (average 16.5)	5D8 (average 22.5)
Being attacked by a Lovecraftian Un-God (each encounter)	Soul-Shattering (11)	3D12 (average 19.5)	5D10 (average 27.5)
Being chosen by Nyarlathotep and learning the true secret of Kadath, beyond the Cold Wastes	World-Ending (12)	5D8 (average 22.5)	7D10 (average 38.5)
Being swallowed, absorbed, and psychically melded by Great Cthulhu	Apocalyptic (13)	5D10 (average 27.5)	10D10 (average 55)





Sanity losses are subtracted from a character's maximum sanity score.

If a character is ever reduced to zero or lower sanity, he is rendered insane for 5D6 days, with some form of **Severe Madness** effect determined by the GM. Example effects include catatonia, extreme paranoia, extreme psychosis, incapacitating insomnia, uncontrollable raving, and so forth. During this time, the PC will be controlled by the Game Master, unless he is restrained by allies and taken back to a house of healing. A high-level cleric will be able to instantly heal the character, likely for a fairly high price (that the party can nevertheless afford). If the services of a high-level cleric cannot be afforded, the character's affliction will take effect for only $5D6 / 3$ days, rounded down. For example, if the GM rolled a 17 on 5D6 (indicating 17 days of madness), that duration be reduced to only 5 days if the character is incarcerated within a house of healing.

The other party PCs will need to pay for the mad character's stay, control, and care, at the rate of 10 gold pieces per day.

When a character loses more sanity (as a result of one event) than his wisdom score, he will suffer milder and **Temporary Insanity**. For example, a WIS 13 character would experience temporary sanity when losing 13 or more sanity points at once. This effect will last 4D8 hours, unless healed. Example effects include confusion, exhaustion, hallucinations, manic euphoria, nausea, phobia, suicidal thoughts, or an inability to memorize or pray for spells. A cleric using any cure or heal spell can reduce the length of temporary insanity on a point-for-hour basis; for example, a cure light wounds spell used to cure insanity instead of heal, with 5 points of healing rolled, would reduce the duration of temporary insanity by 5 hours. The player can retain control of the temporarily insane PC during this time, provided that the required role-playing is skillfully done. As demonstrations of effective madness role-playing, the afflicted PC might be too paranoid to trade with trusted allies, too exhausted to flee from monsters without being carried, too manic to leave the dungeon with the group even as those allies are departing, and so forth. If the player cannot effectively role-play the weakness, the GM should take control of the PC until the temporary insanity subsides.

Characters suffering from the effects of temporary insanity can still adventure, fight, and cast spells. Characters with severe madness cannot. And importantly, characters with severe madness who are trapped in a dungeon and unable to emerge — say, for example, a madman runs off and his companions cannot find him — will be fully controlled by the GM for those 5D6 game days! The GM will report back on the mad character's fate once the severe madness finally ends. (Personally, I would mercifully rule that a PC who ran away like that would survive the dungeon, and then show up at his companions' inn, naked, gaunt, wounded, and amnesiac ... but alive. The party's next quest would undoubtedly be to re-enter the dungeon, and to get that character's valuable possessions back!)

A complete 24-hour day of rest and inactivity will increase a character's current sanity by +1D3 points, up to the character's maximum sanity score. By contrast a mere full night's sleep, while restful, will only restore 1 point of sanity per night. Regaining sanity and healing go hand in hand, so wounded characters will certainly regain sanity in this manner (1D3 per day) while experiencing full bed rest (and perhaps mild interactions with other PCs). Lawful and neutral clerics regain sanity at the rate of +1D4 points instead of +1D3, as they pray and meditate and reaffirm their faith.

In the context of the game world, failed sanity checks indicate a character's grudging and instinctual awareness — beyond self-knowledge — of the aeons, planets, sciences, and universes beyond our own,





coupled with a lingering comprehension of mere mortals' insignificance in the multiverse. Insane characters are forced to realize and envision the eventual fated future victory of entropy, mankind's fall, and the illimitable dominion of Chaos over all. The first time a character is driven insane by a sanity check event, he will come to understand that faith is a partial lie, and that humanity is doomed to fall to Great Cthulhu at some irrevocable point in the future. This grim fate can be delayed, yet never changed.



Superstitious non-player characters — NPC clerics, especially — might deem an insane character to be possessed. Lawful or neutral clerics might well attempt an exorcism (and fail, of course); chaotic clerics might deem the insane person a demon and attempt to slay them. Individual NPC reactions, varying wildly in mercy and sophistication, will be determined by the GM. If for some reason an insane character ever needs to act as spokesperson for the party, or is accosted by guards etc., the insane person will suffer a -3 penalty to reaction rolls.

Heroism, self-empowerment, and personal glory all work against the loss of sanity. Every time a character gains a new experience level, he gains a +5 bonus to his maximum sanity level, and a +15 bonus to his current sanity level (which cannot exceed the maximum). For example, a level 2 character of current sanity 32 and maximum sanity 50 would have her current sanity raised to 47, and her maximum sanity raised to 55. The maximum sanity score for any mortal however is 95, regardless of circumstances.

These general sanity rules can be further developed and expanded as needed by the GM. Players who role-play temporary insanity with considerable talent should probably be given an experience bonus





during that session; say, a +10% to all XP earned that game night. Insanity is not just a punishment; it is an opportunity for enhanced role-playing and storytelling, and should always be treated as such.



Effects of Wisdom (WIS)

Wisdom Score	Chance of Clerical Spell Failure	Additional Clerical Spells	Maximum Sanity
3	20%	None	15
4	20%	None	20
5	20%	None	25
6	20%	None	30
7	20%	None	35
8	20%	None	40
9	16%	None	45
10	12%	None	50
11	8%	None	55
12	4%	None	60
13	0%	1 1st	65
14	0%	2 1st	70
15	0%	2 1st, 1 2nd	75
16	0%	2 1st, 2 2nd	80
17	0%	2 1st, 2 2nd, 1 3rd	85
18	0%	2 1st, 2 2nd, 1 3rd, 1 4th	90





5-14

BONUSES AND PENALTIES DUE TO CHARISMA



The modifiers based on a character's charisma (CHA) are as follows:

➤ **Charisma 3:**

- The character has a -2 penalty to **Reaction Rolls** made by the Game Master. This may seem like a nebulous penalty, because reaction rolls are not made in sight of the players. But you should know, as a player, that reaction rolls are made using 2D6, and that a -2 penalty is roughly a -15% modifier. This is sufficient to turn a neutral reaction by an NPC





or monster into a negative one, and a negative reaction into a hostile one. A CHA 3 character will need to have allies with higher CHA to advocate for him to avoid most such situations.

- The character can also have a maximum of 1 long-term follower at any given time. This does not apply to temporarily hired helpers, such as men-at-arms or Hirelings; but it does apply to henchmen / retainers and other similar long-term bodyguards.



- Additionally, the **Morale Level** (ML) score of any followers — long-term or otherwise — who are led by the character will be only 4. Morale will be discussed in detail later in this book, but for now you should know that morale is rolled on 2D6. This means that when your followers are faltering in battle, you would need to roll a 2, 3, or 4 on 2D6 for them to hold fast instead of fleeing or surrendering. This is a very poor rating. A charisma 3 character should probably leave leadership duties to an allied PC of higher CHA whenever possible.
- **Charisma 4 or 5:** The character has a -1 penalty to reaction rolls. Further, the character can only have up to 2 long-term followers, and the morale of followers will be ML 5 (below average).
- **Charisma 6 to 8:** The character has a -1 penalty to reaction rolls. Further, the character can only have up to 3 long-term followers, and the morale of followers will be ML 6 (below average).
- **Charisma 9 to 12:** The character has no penalty to reaction rolls. The character can have up to 4 long-term followers, and the morale of followers will be ML 7 (average).





- **Charisma 13 to 15:** The character has a +1 bonus to reaction rolls. Further, the character can have up to 5 long-term followers, and the morale of followers will be ML 8 (above average).
- **Charisma 16 or 17:** The character has a +1 bonus to reaction rolls. Further, the character can have up to 6 long-term followers, and the morale of followers will be ML 9 (above average).
- **Charisma 18:** The character has a +2 bonus to reaction rolls. Further, the character can have up to 7 long-term followers, and the morale of followers will be ML 10 (superior).

As a further guideline, you should note that the maximum number of men-at-arms and hirelings (level zero NPCs) your character can lead is equal to experience level + CHA. This means that a level 2 PC with a CHA of 12 could lead up to 14 level zero NPCs at once. This may seem like a big troop, and in the cramped tunnels of a dungeon, it is. But later in the game, when your group is undertaking overland journeys with porters and caravans and engaging in skirmishes against tribes of humanoids with numbers in the hundreds, those men-at-arms are going to be dropping like flies!

At such times, it is important to know that each PC can command his or her own personal squad of level zero characters, each dependent on the commanding PC's level plus charisma. This guideline is in place until a PC achieves experience level 9, "name level," which is when a considerable number of followers will voluntarily choose to follow your powerful PC for no remuneration. This will be further explained in the Advanced Level rules for experience levels 9 and higher.

Effects of Charisma (CHA)

Charisma	Reaction Rolls	Maximum Level 0 NPC Followers	Maximum Level 1+ Followers	Follower Morale
3	-2	3 + Level	1	4
4	-1	4 + Level	2	5
5	-1	5 + Level	2	5
6	-1	6 + Level	3	6
7	-1	7 + Level	3	6
8	-1	8 + Level	3	6
9	0	9 + Level	4	7
10	0	10 + Level	4	7
11	0	11 + Level	4	7
12	0	12 + Level	4	7
13	+1	13 + Level	5	8
14	+1	14 + Level	5	8
15	+1	15 + Level	5	8
16	+1	16 + Level	6	9
17	+1	17 + Level	6	9
18	+2	18 + Level	7	10





5-15

DEFINING ABSTRACT ATTRIBUTES

WITH DESCRIPTORS

(OPTIONAL RULE)

If you as a player are having difficulty envisioning any aspect of your character at this time, you might want to select one or more **Descriptors** to further detail your PC's place in the world. Descriptors are simply adjectives which can describe the effects of an individual's given strength, dexterity, and so forth. They have no game effect other than to aid you in role-playing, and so this section can be safely skipped if you have no interest in the character envisioning concept.

I offer and suggest six different potential descriptors for each ability score level, as detailed hereafter. You can either roll randomly on each table in accordance with your PC's ability score (on 1D6), or select the option which seems most interesting to you. I recommend recording the descriptors in your character record, adjacent the ability score entries, for future reference.

Suggested Descriptors for Strength

- **Strength 3:** 1 = Badly Decrepit, 2 = Defenseless, 3 = Helpless, 4 = Nearly Paralyzed, 5 = Partially Paralyzed, 6 = Utterly Powerless.
- **Strength 4:** 1 = Decrepit, 2 = Enfeebled and Frail, 3 = Feeble and Frail, 4 = Forceless, 5 = Powerless, 6 = Small and Frail.
- **Strength 5:** 1 = Enfeebled, 2 = Feeble, 3 = Puny, 4 = Purely Ineffectual, 5 = Strengthless, 6 = Wholly Inadequate.
- **Strength 6:** 1 = Impotent, 2 = Inadequate, 3 = Ineffectual, 4 = Infirm, 5 = Scrawny, 6 = Very Weak.
- **Strength 7:** 1 = Highly Vulnerable, 2 = Incapable, 3 = Insignificant, 4 = Shaky, 5 = Unprotected, 6 = Weak.
- **Strength 8:** 1 = Bony and Underweight, 2 = Faltering, 3 = Flabby, 4 = Insubstantial, 5 = Short, 6 = Vulnerable.
- **Strength 9:** 1 = Bony, 2 = Gaunt, 3 = Raw-Boned, 4 = Soft, 5 = Underweight, 6 = Unimpressive.
- **Strength 10:** 1 = Average Physique, 2 = Average Power, 3 = Average Strength, 4 = Normal Physique, 5 = Normal Strength, 6 = Tall and Gaunt.
- **Strength 11:** 1 = Capable, 2 = Fairly Large, 3 = Firm-Shouldered, 4 = Good Physique, 5 = Lean, 6 = Tall.





- **Strength 12:** 1 = Able-Bodied, 2 = Broad-Shouldered, 3 = Large, 4 = Lean and Muscular, 5 = Sinewy, 6 = Sound-Bodied.
- **Strength 13:** 1 = Bulky, 2 = Burly, 3 = Muscular, 4 = Robust, 5 = Strong, 6 = Very Large.
- **Strength 14:** 1 = Forceful, 2 = Huge, 3 = Impressive, 4 = Potent, 5 = Solid, 6 = Well-Muscled.
- **Strength 15:** 1 = Heavily Muscled, 2 = Rugged, 3 = Solid and Forceful, 4 = Staunch, 5 = Strapping, 6 = Very Solid.
- **Strength 16:** 1 = Empowered, 2 = Heavyweight, 3 = Huge and Rugged, 4 = Powerful, 5 = Rugged and Strapping, 6 = Stalwart.
- **Strength 17:** 1 = Daunting, 2 = Dominant, 3 = Gigantic, 4 = Massive, 5 = Monstrous, 6 = Ogrish.
- **Strength 18:** 1 = Daunting and Gigantic, 2 = Fearsome, 3 = Heroic, 4 = Massive and Monstrous, 5 = Mighty, 6 = Nigh Indomitable.

Suggested Descriptors for Dexterity

- **Dexterity 3:** 1 = Badly Deformed, 2 = Crippled, 3 = Deformed and Hamstrung, 4 = Deformed and Hobbling, 5 = Lamé and Deformed, 6 = Mangled.
- **Dexterity 4:** 1 = Badly Hamstrung, 2 = Deformed, 3 = Hamstrung and Hobbling, 4 = Lamé and Hamstrung, 5 = Lamé and Hobbling, 6 = Slow and Hobbling.
- **Dexterity 5:** 1 = Hamstrung, 2 = Hobbling, 3 = Lamé, 4 = Limping and Deformed, 5 = Limping Heavily, 6 = Very Sluggish.
- **Dexterity 6:** 1 = Limping, 2 = Slow and Clumsy, 3 = Slow and Inept, 4 = Sluggish, 5 = Ungainly, 6 = Very Slow.
- **Dexterity 7:** 1 = Awkward and Imbalanced, 2 = Bumbling and Inelegant, 3 = Clumsy, 4 = Graceless, 5 = Inept, 6 = Slow.
- **Dexterity 8:** 1 = Awkward, 2 = Bumbling, 3 = Imbalanced, 4 = Inelegant and Imprecise, 5 = Plodding and Ponderous, 6 = Uncoordinated.
- **Dexterity 9:** 1 = Imprecise, 2 = Inelegant, 3 = Plodding, 4 = Ponderous, 5 = Somewhat Imbalanced, 6 = Somewhat Slow.
- **Dexterity 10:** 1 = Average Agility, 2 = Average Coordination, 3 = Average Dexterity, 4 = Average Reflexes, 5 = Normal Balance, 6 = Normal Reflexes.
- **Dexterity 11:** 1 = Balanced, 2 = Competent, 3 = Decent Reflexes, 4 = Fairly Coordinated, 5 = Respectable Reflexes, 6 = Well-Balanced.
- **Dexterity 12:** 1 = Alert and Reflexive, 2 = Coordinated, 3 = Fairly Agile, 4 = Fairly Deft, 5 = Somewhat Agile, 6 = Somewhat Dexterous.
- **Dexterity 13:** 1 = Agile, 2 = Deft, 3 = Dexterous, 4 = Fairly Quick, 5 = Hasty, 6 = Rather Nimble.





- **Dexterity 14:** 1 = Deft and Agile, 2 = Deft and Dexterous, 3 = Deft and Rather Nimble, 4 = Nimble, 5 = Precise, 6 = Quick.
- **Dexterity 15:** 1 = Accurate, 2 = Graceful, 3 = Nimble and Precise, 4 = Poised, 5 = Quick and Precise, 6 = Very Nimble.
- **Dexterity 16:** 1 = Adept, 2 = Adroit, 3 = Catlike, 4 = Finely Poised, 5 = Poised and Graceful, 6 = Stealthy.
- **Dexterity 17:** 1 = Acrobatic, 2 = Adept and Catlike, 3 = Exacting, 4 = Nigh Untouchable, 5 = Stealthy and Catlike, 6 = Uncanny Reflexes.
- **Dexterity 18:** 1 = Blurred Grace, 2 = Blurred Speed, 3 = Perfect Agility, 4 = Perfect Coordination, 5 = Perfect Reflexes, 6 = Untouchable.

Suggested Descriptors for Constitution

- **Constitution 3:** 1 = Badly Deteriorated, 2 = Badly Emaciated, 3 = Dying, 4 = Very Sickly, 5 = Wasted and Frail, 6 = Wasting.
- **Constitution 4:** 1 = Ailing and Frail, 2 = Debilitated, 3 = Deteriorated, 4 = Emaciated, 5 = Frail and Quavering, 6 = Sickly.
- **Constitution 5:** 1 = Ailing, 2 = Frail, 3 = Lethargic and Fragile, 4 = Quavering and Fragile, 5 = Slothful, 6 = World-Worn and Haggard.
- **Constitution 6:** 1 = Fragile, 2 = Haggard and Unhealthy, 3 = Lethargic, 4 = Quavering, 5 = World-Worn, 6 = Worn and Haggard.
- **Constitution 7:** 1 = Always Inactive, 2 = Ashen and Unhealthy, 3 = Ashen and Unwell, 4 = Haggard, 5 = Unhealthy, 6 = Worn.
- **Constitution 8:** 1 = Ashen, 2 = Idle and Lazy, 3 = Inactive, 4 = Unfit, 5 = Unsound, 6 = Unwell.
- **Constitution 9:** 1 = Declining Health, 2 = Fading Health, 3 = Idle, 4 = Lazy, 5 = Somewhat Ashen, 6 = Susceptible.
- **Constitution 10:** 1 = Average Constitution, 2 = Average Endurance, 3 = Healthy yet Lazy, 4 = Normal Constitution, 5 = Normal Endurance, 6 = Normal Health.
- **Constitution 11:** 1 = Fairly Active, 2 = Fairly Fit, 3 = Good Health, 4 = Healthful yet Lazy, 5 = Healthy, 6 = Lively.
- **Constitution 12:** 1 = Active, 2 = Fairly Energetic, 3 = Fit, 4 = Healthful, 5 = Lively and Fairly Fit, 6 = Very Healthy.
- **Constitution 13:** 1 = Active and Fit, 2 = Energetic, 3 = Fairly Athletic, 4 = Lively and Healthy, 5 = Resilient, 6 = Resistant.
- **Constitution 14:** 1 = Athletic, 2 = Energetic and Resilient, 3 = Good Resistance, 4 = Hale, 5 = Resilient and Resistant, 6 = Vital.





- **Constitution 15:** 1 = Athletic and Resilient, 2 = Athletic and Vital, 3 = Driven, 4 = Hale and Resistant, 5 = Tough, 6 = Vigorous.
- **Constitution 16:** 1 = Doughty, 2 = Staunch-Hearted, 3 = Steadfast, 4 = Tenacious, 5 = Tough and Driven, 6 = Very Tough.
- **Constitution 17:** 1 = Doughty and Steadfast, 2 = Indefatigable, 3 = Nigh Unstoppable, 4 = Tireless, 5 = Tough and Tenacious, 6 = Unyielding.
- **Constitution 18:** 1 = Deathless, 2 = Impervious, 3 = Tireless and Tenacious, 4 = Tireless and Unyielding, 5 = Unbreakable, 6 = Unstoppable.

Suggested Descriptors for Intelligence

- **Intelligence 3:** 1 = Instinctive and Primal, 2 = Mindless, 3 = Moronic and Oblivious, 4 = Oblivious and Stupefied, 5 = Primal Instinct Only, 6 = Semi-Intelligent.
- **Intelligence 4:** 1 = Exceedingly Stupid, 2 = Idiotic and Preposterous, 3 = Moronic, 4 = Oblivious, 5 = Stupefied, 6 = Stupid and Preposterous.
- **Intelligence 5:** 1 = Doltish and Feebleminded, 2 = Exceptionally Dumb, 3 = Idiotic, 4 = Preposterous, 5 = Stupid, 6 = Witless.
- **Intelligence 6:** 1 = Doltish, 2 = Dull-Witted and Forgetful, 3 = Dumb, 4 = Fairly Stupid, 5 = Feebleminded, 6 = Frequently Stupid.
- **Intelligence 7:** 1 = Dim-Witted and Forgetful, 2 = Dull-Witted, 3 = Foolish and Simple, 4 = Simple and Naive, 5 = Thick-Witted, 6 = Very Forgetful.
- **Intelligence 8:** 1 = Dim-Witted, 2 = Forgetful, 3 = Gullible and Distracted, 4 = Illogical, 5 = Naive, 6 = Simple.
- **Intelligence 9:** 1 = Distracted, 2 = Gullible, 3 = Ill-Advised, 4 = Reasonable yet Forgetful, 5 = Somewhat Naive, 6 = Woolgathering.
- **Intelligence 10:** 1 = Average Intellect, 2 = Average Intelligence, 3 = Normal Intellect, 4 = Normal Intelligence, 5 = Rational, 6 = Reasonable.
- **Intelligence 11:** 1 = Comprehending, 2 = Dreaming, 3 = Highly Rational, 4 = Logical, 5 = Lucid, 6 = Very Reasonable.
- **Intelligence 12:** 1 = Contemplative, 2 = Creative, 3 = Perceptive, 4 = Shrewd, 5 = Skeptical, 6 = Thoughtful.
- **Intelligence 13:** 1 = Bookish, 2 = Clever, 3 = Fairly Erudite, 4 = Inventive, 5 = Savvy, 6 = Witty.
- **Intelligence 14:** 1 = Analytical, 2 = Cunning, 3 = Erudite, 4 = Scholarly, 5 = Sharp-Witted, 6 = Studious.
- **Intelligence 15:** 1 = Adept, 2 = Calculating, 3 = Deductive, 4 = Innovative, 5 = Intellectual, 6 = Scheming.





- **Intelligence 16:** 1 = Brilliant, 2 = Calculating and Innovative, 3 = Gifted, 4 = Innovative and Intellectual, 5 = Professorial, 6 = Scheming and Calculating.
- **Intelligence 17:** 1 = Brilliant and Gifted, 2 = Brilliant and Professorial, 3 = Gifted and Scheming, 4 = Masterful, 5 = Profound, 6 = Near-Genius.
- **Intelligence 18:** 1 = Adept and Masterful, 2 = Brilliant and Profound, 3 = Calculating and Masterful, 4 = Genius, 5 = Ingenious, 6 = Masterful and Profound.

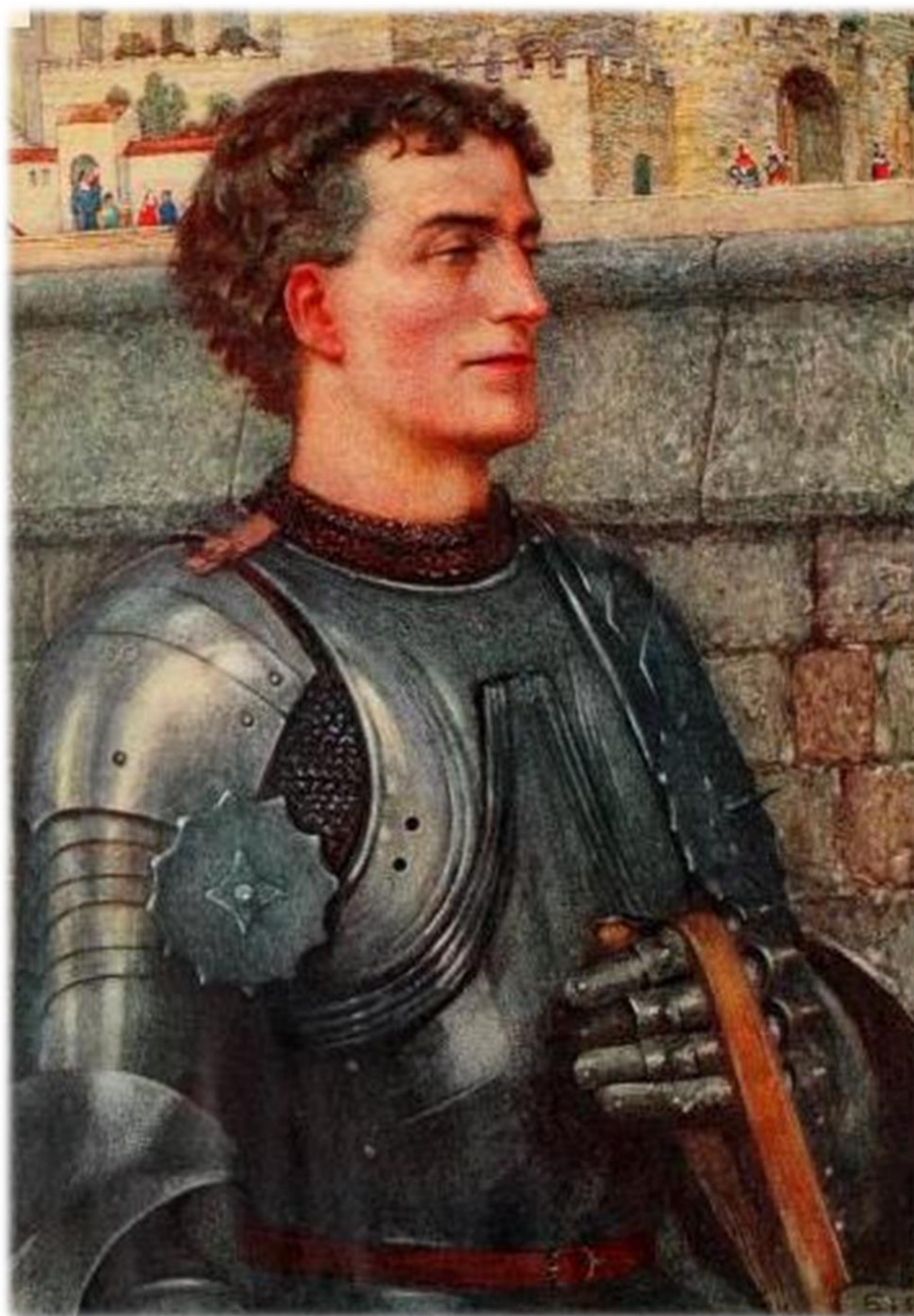
Suggested Descriptors for Wisdom

- **Wisdom 3:** 1 = Imbecilic, 2 = Incomprehensible, 3 = Ludicrous and Oblivious, 4 = Nonsensical, 5 = Utterly Oblivious, 6 = Utterly Ridiculous.
- **Wisdom 4:** 1 = Ludicrous, 2 = Ridiculous, 3 = Senseless and Irrational, 4 = Utterly Foolish, 5 = Utterly Preposterous, 6 = Utterly Senseless.
- **Wisdom 5:** 1 = Foolish and Absurd, 2 = Highly Irrational, 3 = Preposterous, 4 = Senseless, 5 = Utterly Absurd, 6 = Very Foolish.
- **Wisdom 6:** 1 = Absurd, 2 = Foolish, 3 = Highly Impulsive, 4 = Impulsive and Unreasonable, 5 = Irrational, 6 = Very Unwise.
- **Wisdom 7:** 1 = Imprudent and Misled, 2 = Impulsive, 3 = Misled and Unaware, 4 = Unreasonable, 5 = Unwise, 6 = Weak-Willed and Unaware.
- **Wisdom 8:** 1 = Imprudent, 2 = Misled and Inexperienced, 3 = Somewhat Unwise, 4 = Sophomoric and Insecure, 5 = Unaware, 6 = Weak-Willed.
- **Wisdom 9:** 1 = Insecure, 2 = Irresolute, 3 = Misled, 4 = Somewhat Weak-Willed, 5 = Sophomoric, 6 = Unintuitive.
- **Wisdom 10:** 1 = Average Intuition, 2 = Average Understanding, 3 = Average Wisdom, 4 = Inexperienced, 5 = Inspired yet Sophomoric, 6 = Intuitive yet Uninspired.
- **Wisdom 11:** 1 = Experienced, 2 = Fairly Disciplined, 3 = Fairly Intuitive, 4 = Inspired, 5 = Intuitive yet Sophomoric, 6 = Intuitive yet Uninspired.
- **Wisdom 12:** 1 = Disciplined, 2 = Fairly Insightful, 3 = Intuitive, 4 = Prudent, 5 = Somewhat Reflective, 6 = Worldly.
- **Wisdom 13:** 1 = Insightful, 2 = Reflective, 3 = Sometimes Far-Sighted, 4 = Understanding, 5 = Wily, 6 = Wise.
- **Wisdom 14:** 1 = Far-Sighted, 2 = Insightful and Reflective, 3 = Judicious, 4 = Meditative, 5 = Wily and Understanding, 6 = Wise and Reflective.
- **Wisdom 15:** 1 = Erratically Sagacious, 2 = Highly Judicious, 3 = Nigh Prescient, 4 = Philosophical, 5 = Sophic, 6 = Wise and Meditative.
- **Wisdom 16:** 1 = Prescient, 2 = Sagacious, 3 = Sagely, 4 = Sophic and Sagacious, 5 = Wise and Judicious, 6 = Wise and Philosophical.





- **Wisdom 17:** 1 = Enlightened, 2 = Exceedingly Wise, 3 = Nigh Revelatory, 4 = Prescient and Sagacious, 5 = Prescient and Sagely, 6 = Uncannily Prescient.
- **Wisdom 18:** 1 = Ancestral Enlightenment, 2 = Ancient Soul, 3 = Greatly Enlightened, 4 = Illumined, 5 = Revelatory, 6 = Uncannily Wise.





Suggested Descriptors for Charisma

- **Charisma 3:** 1 = Disgusting, 2 = Exceedingly Repulsive, 3 = Grotesque, 4 = Terribly Disfigured, 5 = Very Nasty, 6 = Vile.
- **Charisma 4:** 1 = Barbaric and Ugly, 2 = Brutish and Barbaric, 3 = Nasty, 4 = Offensive, 5 = Repulsive, 6 = Ugly and Disfigured.
- **Charisma 5:** 1 = Badly Scarred, 2 = Barbaric, 3 = Brutish, 4 = Disfigured, 5 = Heavily Scarred, 6 = Ugly.
- **Charisma 6:** 1 = Crude and Irritating, 2 = Irritating and Unlikable, 3 = Irritating and Uncouth, 4 = Rude, 5 = Scarred, 6 = Unpleasant.
- **Charisma 7:** 1 = Artless and Unlikable, 2 = Crude, 3 = Homely and Unlikable, 4 = Irritating, 5 = Uncharismatic, 6 = Uncouth.
- **Charisma 8:** 1 = Artless, 2 = Forgettable and Unattractive, 3 = Homely, 4 = Reserved and Forgettable, 5 = Unlikable, 6 = Willfully Forgettable.
- **Charisma 9:** 1 = Forgettable, 2 = Pleasant yet Plain, 3 = Reserved, 4 = Unappealing, 5 = Unattractive, 6 = Uncommunicative.
- **Charisma 10:** 1 = Average Appearance, 2 = Average Charisma, 3 = Nondescript Appearance, 4 = Normal Charisma, 5 = Plain, 6 = Pleasant yet Reserved.
- **Charisma 11:** 1 = Agreeable, 2 = Good-Looking yet Reserved, 3 = Plain yet Pleasing, 4 = Mildly Attractive, 5 = Pleasant, 6 = Somewhat Attractive.
- **Charisma 12:** 1 = Agreeable and Pleasant, 2 = Attractive, 3 = Comely, 4 = Good-Looking, 5 = Occasionally Charming, 6 = Pleasing.
- **Charisma 13:** 1 = Appealing, 2 = Charismatic, 3 = Charming, 4 = Eye-Catching, 5 = Likable, 6 = Winning.
- **Charisma 14:** 1 = Alluring, 2 = Fetching, 3 = Impressive, 4 = Influential, 5 = Persuasive, 6 = Stately.
- **Charisma 15:** 1 = Charming and Influential, 2 = Compelling, 3 = Immaculate, 4 = Imposing, 5 = Magnetic Personality, 6 = Remarkable.
- **Charisma 16:** 1 = Authoritative, 2 = Beautiful / Handsome, 3 = Fascinating, 4 = Inspiring, 5 = Intimidating, 6 = Resplendent.
- **Charisma 17:** 1 = Beguiling, 2 = Bewitching, 3 = Commanding, 4 = Entrancing, 5 = Radiant, 6 = Regal.
- **Charisma 18:** 1 = Hypnotic, 2 = Imperious, 3 = Stunning, 4 = Supreme, 5 = Transcendent, 6 = Unforgettable.







5-16

BONUSES AND PENALTIES

DUE TO THE PRIME REQUISITE

In addition to the normal modifiers listed above for the six ability scores, each character will also have a special additional modifier to experience points (XP) gained during play. This XP modifier is dependent upon the character's **Prime Requisite**, which is defined as the one ability score that is most important to his or her class, as follows:

- The Prime Requisite for **Clerics** is **Wisdom**.
- The Prime Requisite for **Fighters** is **Strength**.
- The Prime Requisite for **Magic-Users** is **Intelligence**.
- The Prime Requisite for **Thieves** is **Dexterity**.

The Prime Requisite reveals how effective the character is at learning the skills and challenges inherent in his or her chosen profession. For example, a thief with high DEX will find that delicate work such as opening locks, searching for traps, and climbing walls will “come naturally” to her, due to her superior agility and aptitude. But a thief with low DEX, while still able to learn the tricks of the trade, would need to practice much more to accomplish those same tasks which are easily understood and performed by the “gifted” higher DEX thief.

In the game, this disparity is reflected by the XP modifier. Characters with a low Prime Requisite will suffer an XP penalty, and those with a high Primer Requisite receive a substantial XP bonus.

The modifier depends on the ability score of the Prime Requisite (as listed above for each class), as follows:

- **Prime Requisite 3:** The character has a -20% penalty to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 4:** The character has a -15% penalty to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 5:** The character has a -12% penalty to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 6:** The character has a -9% penalty to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 7:** The character has a -6% penalty to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 8:** The character has a -3% penalty to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 9 to 12:** The character has no modifier to XP earned.





- **Prime Requisite 13 or 14:** The character has a +2% bonus to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 15:** The character has a +4% bonus to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 16:** The character has a +6% bonus to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 17:** The character has a +8% bonus to all XP earned.
- **Prime Requisite 18:** The character has a +10% bonus to all XP earned.

All PCs begin the game with zero experience points. As mentioned earlier, points are earned during the game for accomplished feats such as conquering monsters, finding treasure, and solving problems. Your GM will award all XP, and will apply the appropriate Prime Requisite modifier to all new XP earned at the end of each game session.

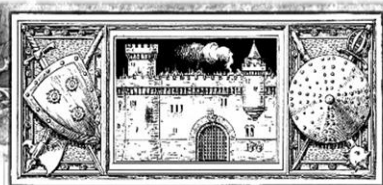
Effects of Prime Requisites by Character Class

Prime Requisite Score	Cleric	Fighter	Magic-User	Thief
3	-20% (WIS)	-20% (STR)	-20% (INT)	-20% (DEX)
4	-15% (WIS)	-15% (STR)	-15% (INT)	-15% (DEX)
5	-12% (WIS)	-12% (STR)	-12% (INT)	-12% (DEX)
6	-9% (WIS)	-9% (STR)	-9% (INT)	-9% (DEX)
7	-6% (WIS)	-6% (STR)	-6% (INT)	-6% (DEX)
8	-3% (WIS)	-3% (STR)	-3% (INT)	-3% (DEX)
9	No modifier	No modifier	No modifier	No modifier
10	No modifier	No modifier	No modifier	No modifier
11	No modifier	No modifier	No modifier	No modifier
12	No modifier	No modifier	No modifier	No modifier
13	+2% (WIS)	+2% (STR)	+2% (INT)	+2% (DEX)
14	+2% (WIS)	+2% (STR)	+2% (INT)	+2% (DEX)
15	+4% (WIS)	+4% (STR)	+4% (INT)	+4% (DEX)
16	+6% (WIS)	+6% (STR)	+6% (INT)	+6% (DEX)
17	+8% (WIS)	+8% (STR)	+8% (INT)	+8% (DEX)
18	+10% (WIS)	+10% (STR)	+10% (INT)	+10% (DEX)

And as a very important reminder, which you might have overlooked: Your character might already have an XP modifier due to his or her wisdom score, as noted previously! Both of these XP modifiers, for wisdom and for the prime requisite, are applied and added to one another. For example, a cleric of wisdom 14 would have a +2% XP bonus from the wisdom rules, and a further +2% bonus for being a cleric with a prime requisite of 14, for a total bonus of +4%.

By contrast, a fighter with a measly WIS of 7 and a STR of only 8 would suffer –a 2% (for wisdom) and an additional -3% (for a prime requisite score of 8), for a total XP penalty of -5%.





CHAPTER 6: CHARACTER SURVIVABILITY





6-1

HIT POINTS AND HIT DICE

Before we proceed to the chapters defining races and classes, every player and prospective GM should understand the two concepts pertaining to character survivability: **Hit Points**, and **Saving Throws**.

Every creature in the game world — meaning monsters, NPCs, and yes, player characters as well — has its survivability measured in **Hit Points** (abbreviated HP). Combat in Castle Oldskull is very abstract, so you should not assume that HP solely represent endurance and body size. Hit Points do embody these two concepts, but — for characters especially — they also embody luck, divine (or infernal) protection, determination, heroic spirit, and the skill to dodge a killing blow at the last possible moment. A level 1 PC (for example) might have 7 HP, while a level 10 PC might have 50 or even more.

Hit point totals can be misleading to interpret, however. This does not mean that you can stab the level 10 character with a sword 7 times, and the level 1 character only once! Instead, it means that the level 1 character will get run through badly during a melee with swordsmen, while the level 10 character could dodge many potentially death-dealing blows — while also being protected by luck, divine protection, magic, agility, and dodging — until finally being worn down to the point where that killing sword blow could no longer be avoided. For large monsters, hit points are almost entirely a matter of body mass and toughness. But for characters, you would be better off considering hit points as a sort of “risk timer,” measuring just how long someone can dodge all of those fatal strikes until their luck finally runs out.

As you might well imagine, you will want your character to have as many hit points as possible. Hit point totals start out relatively low, but they will increase as your PC gains experience levels.

Every character and monster actually has two differing hit point totals to keep track of: **Maximum HP**, and **Current HP**. When a character's maximum HP and current HP are equal, this indicates that the character is unharmed, protected, and fully healthy. But as the character suffers wounds and damage and dodges near misses, the maximum HPs will stay the same, while the current HPs are depleted. As an example, let us say that you have a thief PC with 13 hit points. When she goes adventuring, her maximum and current HP totals are both 13. But if she's hit with an axe for 4 points of damage, her maximum HP rating is still 13, but her current HP total is reduced to 9. The lower the current HP total falls toward zero, the closer the PC is to death. A great deal of the strategy in this game involves you as a player gauging risk vs. reward, considering your PC's current HP as a timer, and the deeper dungeons (holding treasure) as a measure of how far your character might be able to go before he or she must retreat.

As a general rule of thumb for new players, I would suggest that if your character's current HP are less than 50% of his maximum HP, he needs healing before proceeding. If you cannot magically heal, you should strongly consider convincing the rest of the group to leave the dungeon ... and if they disagree, you may want to seriously consider having your PC back away from the front ranks of combat, pulling out a ranged weapon to keep contributing while minimizing the chances of untimely death.





Beyond this “timer” consideration the effects of hit point losses are actually quite negligible, until life’s time nears its grisly end. Any creature reduced to zero or fewer hit points is knocked out of combat, being at the very least unconscious, and possibly dying or already dead. The general rule for determining a depleted creature’s ultimate fate is as follows:

For monsters, a monster is **Unconscious** at zero HP, **Dying** at negative HP equal to its **Hit Dice (HD)** or less, and **Dead** at any lower negative total. This means that a 4 HD monster would be Unconscious at 0 HP, Dying at -1, -2, or -3 HP, and Dead at -4 or lower HP.

For PCs and NPCs, a character is **Unconscious** at zero HP, **Dying** at negative HP, and **Dead** at low negative HP. Refer to the table hereafter for full details. This special circumstance reserved for characters indicates the extent to which divine favor, luck, fate, and spiritual determination will keep a dying character holding on to the edge of life.



The three stages of debilitation are ruled in the game as follows:

- **Unconsciousness:** As will be further discussed in the Combat chapters in a future volume, creatures who are unconscious cannot move, act, speak, or defend themselves, but they stay steady at zero HP unless they are hit again. Good and valiant characters will certainly seek to protect unconscious allies from killing blows at all costs.





- **Dying:** Dying creatures suffer all of the penalties of unconscious creatures, with the further complication that they lose an addition HP every round even if they are not struck by an enemy, until death occurs.
- **Death:** Death is exactly what it sounds like — the creature is dead. (There are a few other conditions for creatures that were never alive; for example, an undead creature is annihilated, a living statue is shattered, and so forth. These are merely semantics for descriptive purposes, however. In simple game terms, dead is dead.) However, there are powerful magics in the game world which can sometimes return the dead to life ... and sometimes at a terrible price.

Generally, you should also know that fighters tend to have the most hit points, followed by clerics, while thieves are average and magic-users are below average. These hit point totals reflect the play style and theme of each different class: [1] Fighters suffer wounds protecting their allies, and keep standing in battle as long as possible; [2] Clerics are protected by an immortal, and call upon their spiritual defenses in times of need; [3] Thieves are wily skirmishers, who weave in and out of combat while avoiding perilous deadly blows; and, [4] Magic-Users are highly vulnerable and must be protected by their allies whenever possible.

In addition to these considerations, characters with low constitution scores suffer a HP penalty, while characters with high constitution have a HP bonus.

The rules for character imperilment resulting from loss of current hit points are summarized here:

Hit Point Qualities Based on Constitution Score

Constitution Score	Active	Unconscious	Dying	Dead
3	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 or -2	HP -3 or lower
4	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -3	HP -4 or lower
5	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -4	HP -5 or lower
6	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -5	HP -6 or lower
7	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -6	HP -7 or lower
8	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -7	HP -8 or lower
9	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -8	HP -9 or lower
10	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -9	HP -10 or lower
11	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -9	HP -10 or lower
12	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -9	HP -10 or lower
13	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -10	HP -11 or lower
14	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -10	HP -11 or lower
15	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -10	HP -11 or lower
16	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -11	HP -12 or lower
17	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -11	HP -12 or lower
18	HP 1 or higher	HP 0	HP -1 to -12	HP -13 or lower





6-2

DETERMINING A PLAYER CHARACTER'S STARTING HIT POINTS

Now that you know that zero and negative hit point totals are very bad, you probably want to know precisely how many hit points your new character possesses!

The answer depends on the difficulty of the campaign in which you are playing. At experience level 1, all player characters possess a predetermined number of hit points before the game ever begins. The exact number of hit points each character will possess depends on their class, constitution, and the Difficulty Level (DL) of the campaign, as follows:

In an Easy-DL campaign: All PCs automatically begin with the maximum number of hit points, and a minimum of 3. The HP will be:

- **For a Level 1 PC Cleric:** Cleric of CON 3, HP 5. Cleric of CON 4-5, HP 6. Cleric of CON 6-8, HP 7. Cleric of CON 9-12, HP 8. Cleric of CON 13-15, HP 9. Cleric of CON 16-17, HP 10. Cleric of CON 18, HP 11.
- **For a Level 1 PC Fighter:** Fighter of CON 3, HP 7. Fighter of CON 4-5, HP 8. Fighter of CON 6-8, HP 9. Fighter of CON 9-12, HP 10. Fighter of CON 13-15, HP 11. Fighter of CON 16-17, HP 12. Fighter of CON 18, HP 13.
- **For a Level 1 PC Magic-User:** Magic-User of CON 3-8, HP 3. Magic-User of CON 9-12, HP 4. Magic-User of CON 13-15, HP 5. Magic-User of CON 16-17, HP 6. Magic-User of CON 18, HP 7.
- **For a Level 1 PC Thief:** Thief of CON 3, HP 3. Thief of CON 4-5, HP 4. Thief of CON 6-8, HP 5. Thief of CON 9-12, HP 6. Thief of CON 13-15, HP 7. Thief of CON 16-17, HP 8. Thief of CON 18, HP 9.

In a Normal-DL campaign: All PCs begin with a random number of hit points (rolled with a class-appropriate type of die), but they will always have an average or above average total (rounding fractions up). The HP will be:





- **For a Level 1 PC Cleric:** Cleric of CON 3, HP 1D8-3. Cleric of CON 4-5, HP 1D8-2. Cleric of CON 6-8, HP 1D8-1. Cleric of CON 9-12, HP 1D8. Cleric of CON 13-15, HP 1D8+1. Cleric of CON 16-17, HP 1D8+2. Cleric of CON 18, HP 1D8+3. If the Cleric has fewer than 5 HP, increase the amount to 5.
- **For a Level 1 PC Fighter:** Fighter of CON 3, HP 1D10-3. Fighter of CON 4-5, HP 1D10-2. Fighter of CON 6-8, HP 1D10-1. Fighter of CON 9-12, HP 1D10. Fighter of CON 13-15, HP 1D10+1. Fighter of CON 16-17, HP 1D10+2. Fighter of CON 18, HP 1D10+3. If the Fighter has fewer than 6 HP, increase the amount to 6.
- **For a Level 1 PC Magic-User:** Magic-User of CON 3-8, HP 3 (no random roll). Magic-User of CON 9-12, HP 1D4. Magic-User of CON 13-15, HP 1D4+1. Magic-User of CON 16-17, HP 1D4+2. Magic-User of CON 18, HP 1D4+3. If the Magic-User has fewer than 3 HP, increase the amount to 3.
- **For a Level 1 PC Thief:** Thief of CON 3-5, HP 4 (no random roll). Thief of CON 6-8, HP 1D6-1. Thief of CON 9-12, HP 1D6. Thief of CON 13-15, HP 1D6+1. Thief of CON 16-17, HP 1D6+2. Thief of CON 18, 1D6+3. If the Thief has fewer than 4 HP, increase the amount to 4.

In a Challenging-DL campaign: All PCs begin with a random number of hit points, but will have at least 2-4 HP minimum, depending on class. The HP will be:

- **For a Level 1 PC Cleric:** Cleric of CON 3, HP 1D8-3. Cleric of CON 4-5, HP 1D8-2. Cleric of CON 6-8, HP 1D8-1. Cleric of CON 9-12, HP 1D8. Cleric of CON 13-15, HP 1D8+1. Cleric of CON 16-17, HP 1D8+2. Cleric of CON 18, HP 1D8+3. If the Cleric has fewer than 4 HP, increase the amount to 4.
- **For a Level 1 PC Fighter:** Fighter of CON 3, HP 1D10-3. Fighter of CON 4-5, HP 1D10-2. Fighter of CON 6-8, HP 1D10-1. Fighter of CON 9-12, HP 1D10. Fighter of CON 13-15, HP 1D10+1. Fighter of CON 16-17, HP 1D10+2. Fighter of CON 18, HP 1D10+3. If the Fighter has fewer than 4 HP, increase the amount to 5.
- **For a Level 1 PC Magic-User:** Magic-User of CON 3-5, HP 2 (no random roll). Magic-User of CON 6-8, HP 1D4-1. Magic-User of CON 9-12, HP 1D4. Magic-User of CON 13-15, HP 1D4+1. Magic-User of CON 16-17, HP 1D4+2. Magic-User of CON 18, HP 1D4+3. If the Magic-User has fewer than 2 HP, increase the amount to 2.
- **For a Level 1 PC Thief:** Thief of CON 3, HP 3 (no random roll). Thief of CON 4-5, HP 1D6-2. Thief of CON 6-8, HP 1D6-1. Thief of CON 9-12, HP 1D6. Thief of CON 13-15, HP 1D6+1. Thief of CON 16-17, HP 1D6+2. Thief of CON 18, 1D6+3. If the Thief has fewer than 3 HP, increase the amount to 3.



ORIGINAL OLD SCHOOL FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAMES



Starting Hit Points for Level 1 Player Characters

Campaign Difficulty	Class	CON 3	CON 4-5	CON 6-8	CON 9-12	CON 13-15	CON 16-17	CON 18
Easy	Cleric	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Easy	Fighter	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Easy	MU	3	3	3	4	5	6	7
Easy	Thief	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Normal	Cleric	1D8-3 (min 5)	1D8-2 (min 5)	1D8-1 (min 5)	1D8 (min 5)	1D8+1 (min 5)	1D8+2 (min 5)	1D8+3 (min 5)
Normal	Fighter	1D10-3 (min 6)	1D10-2 (min 6)	1D10-1 (min 6)	1D10 (min 6)	1D10+1 (min 6)	1D10+2 (min 6)	1D10+3 (min 6)
Normal	MU	3	3	3	1D4 (min 3)	1D4+1 (min 3)	1D4+2	1D4+3
Normal	Thief	4	4	1D6-1 (min 4)	1D6 (min 4)	1D6+1 (min 4)	1D6+2 (min 4)	1D6+3
Challenging	Cleric	1D8-3 (min 4)	1D8-2 (min 4)	1D8-1 (min 4)	1D8 (min 4)	1D8+1 (min 4)	1D8+2 (min 4)	1D8+3
Challenging	Fighter	1D10-3 (min 5)	1D10-2 (min 5)	1D10-1 (min 5)	1D10 (min 5)	1D10+1 (min 5)	1D10+2 (min 5)	1D10+3 (min 5)
Challenging	MU	2	2	1D4-1 (min 2)	1D4 (min 2)	1D4+1	1D4+2	1D4+3
Challenging	Thief	3	1D6-2 (min 3)	1D6-1 (min 3)	1D6 (min 3)	1D6+1 (min 3)	1D6+2	1D6+3





6-3

MAXIMUM HIT POINTS AT EXPERIENCE LEVEL 1 (OPTIONAL RULE)

As you can see, level 1 PCs are particularly vulnerable. This fact of life makes it crucial for the players to practice teamwork early on, and for player characters to defend one another in combat whenever possible. Low hit points are a negative-enforcement training mechanism for players. If you play poorly, your new character will die. And even if you play well, your character might still die if he or she is very unlucky. This is part and parcel to the old school gaming experience. However, it can be a singularly unforgiving rule for new players who are accustomed to videogames with save points, or readers of heroic fiction where protagonists take ungodly risks yet never seem to die.

When you are learning the game, the GM might consider giving your player character a break in this regard.

If the GM feels that the campaign is going to be particularly dangerous — or, if he just wants to encourage calculated risk taking early in the game — he might decide that all starting PCs begin the game with maximum hit points at experience level 1, and then additional hit points are rolled randomly at levels 2 and up.

If this option is used, the following hit point totals are assigned:

- **For Level 1 Cleric PCs:** 8 hit points + CON modifier
- **For Level 1 Fighter PCs:** 10 hit points + CON modifier
- **For Level 1 Magic-User PCs:** 4 hit points + CON modifier
- **For Level 1 Thief PCs:** 6 hit points + CON modifier

6-4

SAVING THROWS

Hit points are not the only survivability mechanism in the game. There are also **Saving Throws** to consider. A saving throw is a random roll made during game play — at the prompting of the GM — which determines whether or not a character can survive a sudden calamitous effect, such as a cave in, a





poisonous bite, a harmful spell, an opening pit, or a dragon's fiery breath. Whether the character survives the calamity unscathed is a matter of luck, fate, magical protection, and split-second reflexes. Hit points don't always come into play if the peril is too quick and too deadly to be considered as a mere "flesh wound."

The luck factor of a saving throw is represented by a twenty-sided die (1D20). The fate factor is measured by the character's class, experience level, abilities, and sometimes other factors. Higher-level characters have a considerably better chance of avoiding a disastrous effect and "making their save." Low-level characters, however — and particularly level zero characters — fail their saving throws with truly demoralizing frequency.

Saving throws are quite similar to "to hit" rolls made in combat: the player (or GM, for a monster's or NPC's saving throw) rolls 1D20, hoping to roll high. If the roll is equal to or higher than the character's saving throw rating, the save attempt succeeds; otherwise, it fails.

When a saving throw succeeds, depending on the circumstances the character might dodge and avoid damage entirely or take only half damage, or the dangerous spell might be resisted. And when a saving throw fails, the effects can be very bad ... up to and including immediate character death, regardless of number of hit points. Saving throws are inherently unfair because they are statistically modeling the chances that someone will die when a boulder crashes down a mountain, or a gaping chasm opens during an earthquake, or a magical fireball explodes and incinerates everyone in the party. Some people barely get out of the way, and survive, while others quickly die.

Each effect which requires a saving throw will have different parameters, as will be explained in the various entries for spells, monsters, magic items, traps, and environmental effects in these game rules. Regardless of modifiers, in the Castle Oldskull game a saving throw roll of 1 will always fail, and a saving throw roll of 20 will always succeed. The reasons for this are twofold: [1] Every character should have a chance, no matter how dire the circumstances may be, but conversely [2] No superhero should ever be 100% convinced that he can walk into a deathtrap and remain unscathed. There is always a sliver of hope, and there is a spectre of risk. It is simply the way of dark and perilous world where the adventurers live and die.

The baseline saving throw ratings for Basic Level characters are calculated according to each character's class and experience level, as follows:

Basic Saving Throws for Characters of Experience Levels 1 to 3

Class	Experience Level	Saving Throw vs. Magic	Saving Throw vs. Monsters	Saving Throw vs. Perils
Saving Throws for Clerics (Experience Levels 1-3)				
Cleric	1	14+ (35%)	11+ (50%)	16+ (25%)
Cleric	2	14+ (35%)	11+ (50%)	15+ (30%)
Cleric	3	13+ (40%)	11+ (50%)	15+ (30%)
Saving Throws for Fighters (Experience Levels 1-3)				
Fighter	1	16+ (25%)	14+ (35%)	17+ (20%)
Fighter	2	16+ (25%)	14+ (35%)	16+ (25%)
Fighter	3	15+ (30%)	13+ (40%)	16+ (25%)





Class	Experience Level	Saving Throw vs. Magic	Saving Throw vs. Monsters	Saving Throw vs. Perils
Saving Throws for Magic-Users (Experience Levels 1-3)				
Magic-User	1	12+ (45%)	13+ (40%)	13+ (40%)
Magic-User	2	11+ (50%)	13+ (40%)	13+ (40%)
Magic-User	3	11+ (50%)	12+ (45%)	13+ (40%)
Saving Throws for Thieves (Experience Levels 1-3)				
Thief	1	14+ (35%)	13+ (40%)	15+ (30%)
Thief	2	14+ (35%)	12+ (45%)	15+ (30%)
Thief	3	14+ (35%)	12+ (45%)	14+ (35%)

The first number shows the target number, which will need to be rolled (or higher) on 1D20 to make a successful saving throw. The percentages, in parentheses, are for reference and reveal the odds of any saving throw roll being successful. For example, a level 2 cleric has saving throw vs. magic of 14+, which means that a player would need to roll a 14 or higher on 1D20 to make the save against an opponent's spell. The odds of rolling a 14 or higher are 35% (or about 1 in 3 ... not really the best of chances, truth be told). As characters survive and gain more power and experience, their saving throw ratings gradually improve.

The saving throws might look a bit complex at first glance, but they have actually been significantly streamlined and simplified. In the original old school game, saving throws were split into five irrational classifications, based on ten different attack types: breath weapon, death magic, paralyzation, petrification, poison, polymorph, rod, spell, staff, and wand. Then, if (for example) the attack was from a wand which caused a magical poison effect while being held by a spell caster, the GM could have a merry time indeed crunching through the sub-rules and technicalities, hoping to quickly determine whether that particular instance would call for a save vs. rod / staff / wand, a save vs. paralyzation / poison / death magic, or a save vs. spell. After all, it's a spell coming from a wand, and it's a magical poison effect, and the wand's holder is a spell caster, so surely all three of those categories apply, right? No? Oh, I see, according to the rules I need to comb through and determine which precise category applies the most, and then follow through with that ruling even if the distinction between categories makes no sense? Oh, okay, that's perfectly fine. (Argh ...)

If any of this sounds fun to you, you can certainly look up the 1979 Gygaxian saving throw matrices and apply those numbers to your game along with all of the technicalities that go along with them.

(You might be able to surmise that I do not have a dear place in my heart to hold the original rules for saving throws.)

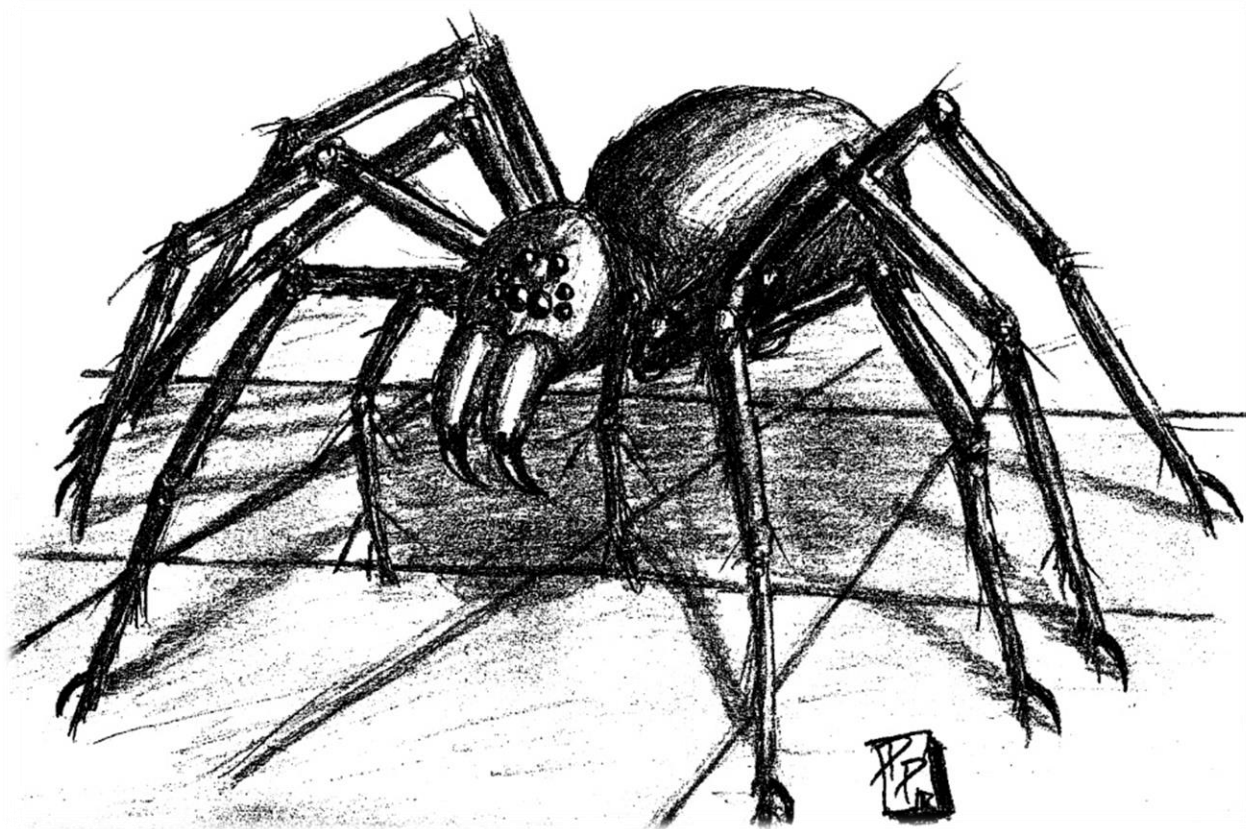
Many game designers over the years have found more elegant ways to approach the categorical saving throws, while still honoring the traditional "roll a D20 to save yourself" mechanism and the exciting, nerve-wracking tension the roll entails. Some games have even reduced saving throws to a single number per character, regardless of attack type (poison, death magic, and so forth). To my mind, this is well-intentioned, but a bit too simplistic. It erases significant class advantages, and causes too much of the original system's nuance to be lost in the name of ease of play.





In the Castle Oldskull rules, I have decided upon a middle ground approach which has served me well in years past. There are three different saving throw categories in this game, and they are fairly intuitive:

- **Saving Throw vs. Magic:** This category is used whenever the character is being faced by a magical effect that is not from a monster. Therefore, a saving throw vs. a wand, an NPC's spell caster's spell, and a magical trap would all fall into this category. The gaze of a basilisk however would not fit this category; that would be a saving throw vs. monster (below).
- **Saving Throw vs. Monsters:** This category is used whenever the character is saving against an effect caused by an inhuman monster, not by an NPC. This includes a basilisk's gaze, a dragon's breath, a giant spider's poison, a ghoul's paralyzing touch, and so forth.
- **Saving Throw vs. Perils:** This category is used whenever the character is saving against a non-magical effect which is not caused by a monster. This category is used against poisoned weapons (which are held in the hand, but are not part of their wielder), mechanical traps, pits, cave-ins, and so on.





A few clarifications to the above:

- When an **NPC casts a spell** on a PC, that's a **saving throw vs. magic**.
- When a **monster (not an NPC)** uses an envenomed stringer against a PC, that's a **saving throw vs. monsters**.
- When an **NPC uses a poisoned weapon** against a PC, that's a **saving throw vs. perils**.
- Generally speaking, **saving throws vs. magic** are rolled against **energy and forces**; **saving throws vs. monsters** are rolled against **living inhuman things**; and **saving throws vs. perils** are rolled vs. **mundane inanimate objects**.
- Each of these categories will be classified in the rules wherever possible, so that you almost never need to guess.





I have found this system to be very easy to work with, while retaining most of the spirit of the original labyrinthine “five categories, ten attack types, lots of technicalities” system which never really covered every classification of the danger in the game despite all of its attempts. As one example of the problematic original system, a 1982 Gary Gygax module once said this concerning an oncoming avalanche: “The falling rocks will kill each party member who fails a saving throw versus spells (although the avalanche is not magic, of course; the save simply indicates the relative danger.)” In other words, after all of that classification, a save vs. spells was still needed for a non-spell effect which hadn’t been considered yet in 1979. This makes it quite clear that the original system *never really had accurate and comprehensive saving throw classifications* to begin with, and therefore it needed to be extended for various circumstances later on. This in turn makes it very easy for a game designer to justify putting a cleaner and more universal solution in place.

(Optional systems are also provided for those Game Masters who disagree with my assessment.)

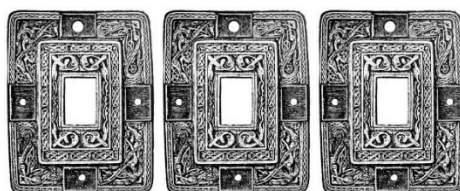
6-5

SIMPLIFIED SAVING THROWS (OPTIONAL RULE)

If the GM would like to make saving throws as simple as possible, every character can be given a single unified saving throw target number that applies to all dangerous effects, regardless of the source. To calculate a simplified saving throw, you can simply add together the Magic, Monsters, and Perils scores for a character’s class and level (as described above), and round down, which favors the character.

Here are the pre-calculated simple saving throws for each class and experience levels 1 to 3:

- **Cleric:** Level 1 to 3, Saving Throw 13+.
- **Fighter:** Level 1 or 2, Saving Throw 15+. Level 3, Saving Throw 14+.
- **Magic-User:** Level 1 to 3, Saving Throw 12+.
- **Thief:** Level 1, Saving Throw 14+. Level 2 or 3, Saving Throw 13+.





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SAVING THROWS

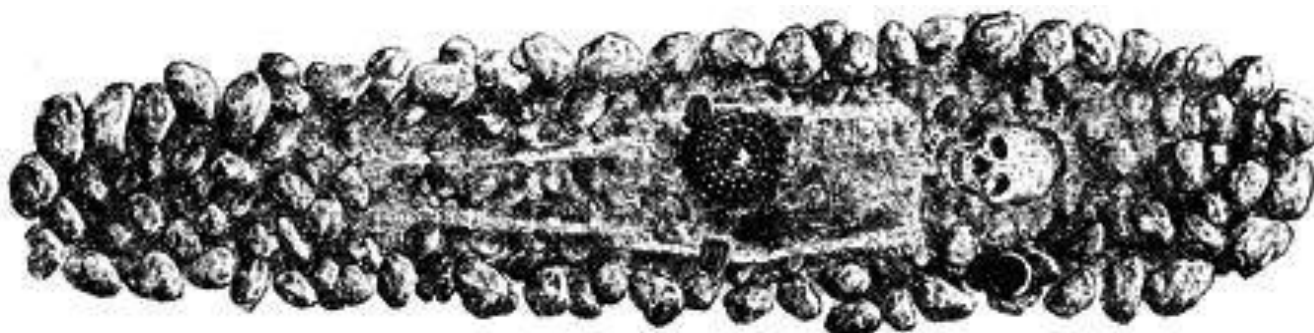
VS. SPECIFIC ATTACK TYPES

(ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

For those Game Masters who adhere to the 1979 Gygaxian system, here are the saving throw rolls and categories for characters of experience levels 1 to 3:

- **Cleric, Experience Level 1 to 3:** Breath Weapon, 16+; Paralyzation / Poison / Death Magic, 10+; Petrification / Polymorph, 13+; Rod / Staff Wand, 14+; Spell, 15+.
- **Fighter, Experience Level 1 or 2:** Breath Weapon, 17+; Paralyzation / Poison / Death Magic, 14+; Petrification / Polymorph, 15+; Rod / Staff Wand, 16+; Spell, 17+.
- **Fighter, Experience Level 3:** Breath Weapon, 16+; Paralyzation / Poison / Death Magic, 13+; Petrification / Polymorph, 14+; Rod / Staff Wand, 15+; Spell, 16+.
- **Magic-User, Experience Level 1 to 3:** Breath Weapon, 15+; Paralyzation / Poison / Death Magic, 14+; Petrification / Polymorph, 13+; Rod / Staff Wand, 11+; Spell, 12+.
- **Thief, Experience Level 1 to 3:** Breath Weapon, 16+; Paralyzation / Poison / Death Magic, 13+; Petrification / Polymorph, 12+; Rod / Staff Wand, 14+; Spell, 15+.

If you'd like to house rule a bit more simplicity into the irksome saving throw determination sub-system, I recommend that the best saving throw category that fits should always apply. For example, if an attack could be classified as both a breath weapon and a spell vs. a magic-user — considering that the Breath Weapon saving throw is 15+ and the Spell saving throw is 12+ — the target would need to roll a 12 or higher to save.





CHAPTER 7: CHARACTER RACES (ANCESTRIES)





7-1

CHARACTER RACE DETAILS AND RACIAL LORE

Now that your knowledge of the game — and how to create player characters ready for adventure — has increased significantly, you will want to know the details about the character **Race**, or **Ancestry**, you have in mind and want to play.

Each race has its own special considerations, strengths, and weaknesses, which are described in this section. You should know that the old school game world is thematically “humanocentric,” which means that humans — the youngest, most ambitious, and most populous race warring in the current age — are the most commonly encountered sentient creatures, while the demi-human dwarves, elves, and halflings are somewhat rarer. This is not a restriction on whether you can play a demi-human race; it is just a note to the Game Master that 50% or more of the NPCs encountered throughout the world will be human, regardless of realm or terrain. This design paradigm keeps the demi-humans as they always should be: legendary, mysterious, unknown, fading, sought after, and perhaps a bit awe-inspiring from time to time.

Because of this prevailing humanocentric focus, humans as a race actually have the fewest game modifiers, because all of the game’s variables and systems already consider them as the baseline.

For each of the other races, you will want to read the following detailed rules. Note that demi-human rules are split into two tiers: Basic Level, with advantages and disadvantages that always apply; and Advanced Level, for those Game Masters who want to add more detail and strategic thought to race selection.

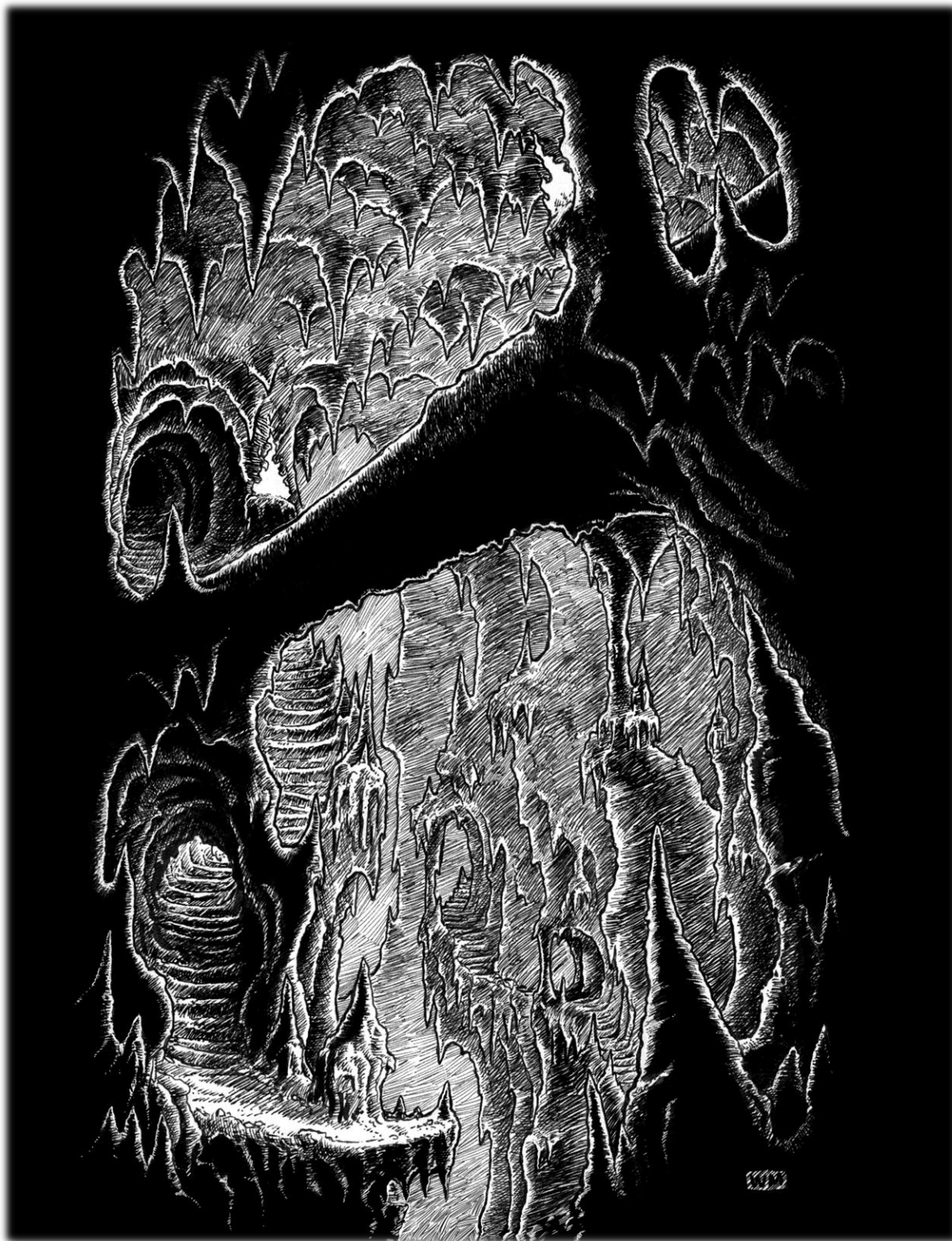
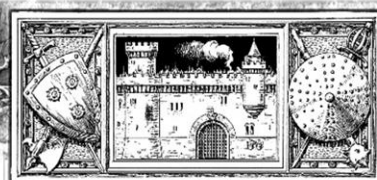
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DWARVES

Overview: Dwarves are a proud elder race, short in stature but great in strength, valor, artisanship and dignity. They make powerful fighters, and the elders are frequently clerics. Outcasts, scouts, netherworld delvers and survivalists among the dwarves sometimes follow the calling of thieves. There are however no dwarven magic-users, because arcane magic is elven in nature, and no uncorrupted dwarves are born with the gift to ever channel such powers. (There are indeed corrupted and vile sub-races of dwarves dwelling in the netherworld, as you might have been wondering; but they are beyond the scope of the Basic Level game. Here, we concern ourselves with “true” dwarves of the surface world.)



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Background: Of all the civilized races, dwarves are the uncontested masters in the arts of stonemasonry, mining, blacksmithing, and subterranean architecture. These skills were developed as after-effects of their true gift, which is the finding of gemstones, gold, and other precious metals. Unfortunately, this drive (some would call it greed) to discover ever greater treasures beneath the earth brought the ancient dwarves into conflict with evil humanoids and other powerful netherworld monsters which lair beneath the earth. Dwarves have battled these terrors for centuries, and although they frequently emerge victorious in these epic struggles, their numbers in the last few hundred years have been dwindling. This, coupled with their longevity, low birth rate, scarcity of females (due to an ancient — some say elven — curse), and the loss of their conquered underworld kingdoms, has led the race to become somber, distrustful, secretive and grave. These qualities frequently translate as “grumpy” to outside observers, but of course only a dwarf could comprehend the true depth and nature of dwarvenkind’s ultimate sorrow.

Description: Dwarves possess as many skin, hair, and eye colors as humans do. A classical dwarf, however, is heavyset, about four feet tall, bearded, and rough-featured. Even female dwarves frequently have beards, which they gracefully bejewel and veil in the company of outsiders.





Armor Restrictions: If your Game Master is using the optional rule for racially-sized armor types, dwarves can only wear dwarf-sized armor. They can use any size of shield.

Experience Penalty: Due to their racial advantages, dwarves suffer a permanent -10% penalty to all experience points earned. This modifier is added to the dwarven character's wisdom and prime requisite XP modifiers, if any; for example, if a dwarf has a +6% XP bonus due to a prime requisite ability score of 14, then the dwarf's XP penalty is only -4%.

Known Languages: Before random languages are considered for high INT, dwarves know Common, dwarvish, gnomish, the goblin tongue, and kobold.

Special Ability, Delving Lore: Dwarves live much of their lives underground, and they learn the secrets of stonecraft from their elders. They have a 2 in 6 chance to perform any of the following feats: detect relatively new stone construction (hewn in the last few years); detect sloping passages up or down; determine direction of facing (failure indicates a random wrong direction is given by the GM, off by up to 90 degrees); determine depth underground (failure indicates the GM will give a figure that is off by up to +/- 20%); find stone-based secret doors (such as shifting walls); or find stone-based traps (such as pits or falling stone blocks). Each of these non-magical talents requires at least a minute (or 10 rounds) of uninterrupted tapping, rumination and concentration, and only one talent can be used at a time. A roll of 1 or 2 on 1D6 indicates success ... and the roll is made by the GM.

Movement Rate: (Game design note: This game uses the corrected Gygaxian base movement rates for demi-humans, which are 90' for short-legged races, 120' otherwise. Gary noted this figure in a discussion forum long after the rules were originally published.)

An unarmored dwarf's movement rate is 90'. In the simple encumbrance system (with two potential movement rates based on weight carried), dwarves move at 90' when unburdened, and 50' when burdened. In the complex encumbrance system (with four potential movement rates), dwarves move at 90' (100% rate), 70' (75%), 50' (50%) or 30' (25%).

Vision: Dwarves have standard-strength dark vision, which allows them to see up to 60' in the dark, even in absolute darkness.

Weapons Restrictions: Dwarves cannot use human-scaled pole arms, which are too long for them to properly employ. But they can use dwarf-sized pole arms, which are (on average) about 2' shorter than human-scaled pole arms while inflicting the same amount of damage. Dwarves cannot use long bows, pole arms, or two-handed swords unless their strength is 16 or higher. (Those dwarves of strength 15 or less who insist on doing so will suffer a -2 penalty to hit.) They can use all other weapons types, as humans can.





7-3

ADVANCED

DWARVEN CONSIDERATIONS

(ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

In the advanced game, dwarves have several additional abilities which are not accounted for in the Basic Level rules. If the players and Game Masters would like the demi-human races to be more complex and differentiated from humanity, here is a summary of the additional modifiers:

Special Ability, Giant Killer: Due to their small size and battle training, all dwarves gain a +4 armor class bonus vs. giants, ogres, and trolls. This includes sub-races such as hill giants, half-ogres, giant trolls, and so forth.

Special Ability, Goblin Slayer: Due to their training and their hatred of the goblinoid races, all dwarves gain +1 to hit vs. goblins, hobgoblins, and orcs. The bonus does not apply to damage. It does apply to both melee and ranged attacks. This category includes sub-races such as svart goblins, tusked hobgoblins, half-orcs, and so forth.





Special Ability, Magic Resistance: Dwarves gain a bonus to their saving throws vs. magic, which is dependent on their constitution. The bonuses are: CON 3, no modifier; CON 4 to 6, +1; CON 7 to 10, +2; CON 11 to 13, +3; CON 14 to 17, +4; CON 18, +5.

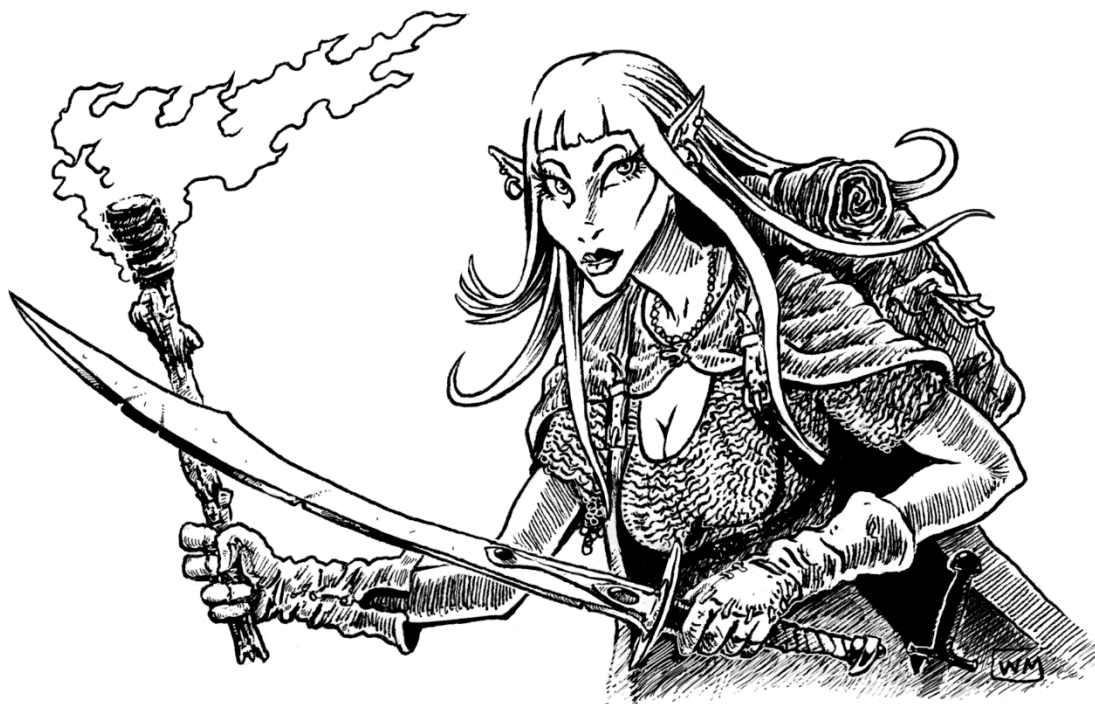
Special Ability, Poison Resistance: Dwarves gain a bonus to all saving throws vs. poison, regardless of the source (venomous beast, monster, envenomed weapon, etc.). The bonuses are: CON 3, no modifier; CON 4 to 6, +1; CON 7 to 10, +2; CON 11 to 13, +3; CON 14 to 17, +4; CON 18, +5.

Special Disadvantage, Mutual Distrust: Dwarves can never have a higher than 16 charisma score as far as non-dwarf races are concerned. A notation can be used as a reminder; CHA 17 (16) would mean for example that the dwarf has a 17 CHA, but only 16 in regards to non-dwarves and non-dwarven followers.

Experience Penalty: Due to all of these additional bonuses, advanced game dwarves have a -15% penalty (not -10%) to all awarded experience. This penalty keeps dwarves on par with humans and the game in balance.

7-4

ELVES

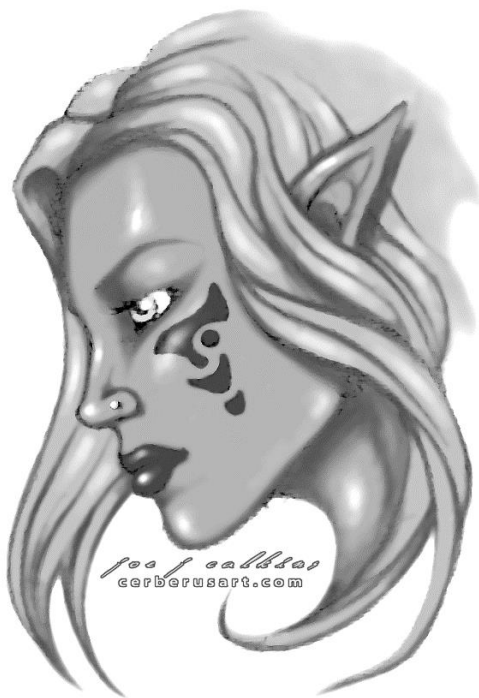




Overview: Just as the dwarves are the lords of the underworld and stone, elves are the lords of nature, faerie, arcana, and the world beneath the sun. Elves are considered as an enigma by other races. They are charming and exasperating, empathic and impenetrable. Their exceedingly long lifespans give them a somewhat alien and distant comprehension of the world and all its creatures. Paradoxically, this state of affairs can also render elves (at times) capricious, childlike, dream-swept, or innocent in their actions. It is known that the elves suffered a devastating civil war thousands of years ago, in which an Abomination-worshipping sect of evil elves was driven underground away from the gifts of the light. These hateful nemeses, the Dokkalfar, still dwell beneath the earth and are the sworn enemies of the Ljosalfar (light elves) and all their allied kindred.

Background: The elves are the eldest of the surviving civilized races. In fact, it is whispered that the lost gods of the ancient elves created the dwarven, halfling, and human races as kindred spirits each with a separate gift, but this “fact” is hotly contested by each of the non-elven races in their stead. The elves themselves were born of Faerie, the mystical dream- and shadowland which was first created from the idle musings of the Nameless God before the coming of evil. (And if you are interested in delving into my Castle Oldskull gaming supplement *The Pegana Mythos* — which details the early fantasy world conceived by Lord Dunsany in 1905 — you will find that the secret and forbidden name of the Nameless God is actually Mana-Yood-Sushai.)

Description: Elves vary in height, but they are slender, with pointed ears, long fingers and almond-shaped eyes. They are frequently fair and long-haired, as they associate hair with memory; but there is much variation in their appearance, and various clans and enclaves bear unique physical features.





Armor Restrictions: If your Game Master is using the optional rule for racially-sized armor types, elves can only wear elf-sized armor fittingly. They can use human armor if there is need, but the armor class of such will be reduced by 1 factor due to ill-fitting pieces and various issues. They can use any size of shield.

Experience Penalty: Due to their racial advantages, elves suffer a permanent -10% penalty to all experience points earned. This modifier is added to the elven character's wisdom and prime requisite XP modifiers, if any; for example, if an elf has a +6% XP bonus due to a prime requisite ability score of 14, then the elf's XP penalty is only -4%.

Known Languages: Before random languages are considered for high INT, elves know Common, elvish, gnoll, hobgoblin, and orcish.

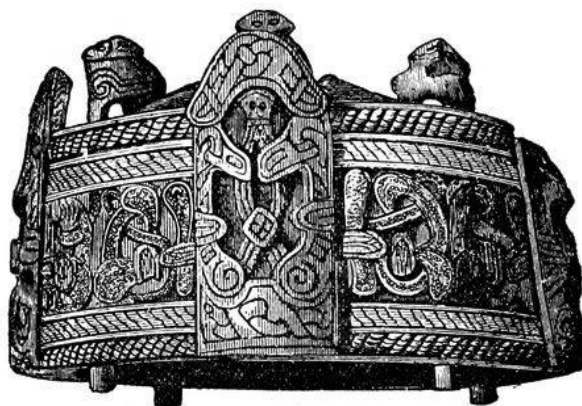
Movement Rate: An unarmored elf's movement rate is 120'. In the simple encumbrance system (with two potential movement rates based on weight carried), elves move at 120' when unburdened, and 60' when burdened. In the complex encumbrance system (with four potential movement rates), elves move at 120' (100% rate), 90' (75%), 60' (50%) or 30' (25%).

Special Ability, Grace of the Light: Elves are immune to the paralyzing touch of ghouls and similar chaotic and evil (but not lawful, neutral, or unaligned) creatures. This protection does not extend to other sinister powers of the undead, such as energy drain.

Special Ability, Perception: When actively searching for hidden doors and tunnels, elves have a 2 in 6 chance of detecting secret doors, and a 3 in 6 chance of detecting concealed doors. When moving within 10' of a hidden door and even while not searching, elves have a 1 in 6 chance of detecting secret doors, and a 2 in 6 chance of detecting concealed doors. (Secret doors are doors which are made to look like a wall, with an unusual opening mechanism; while concealed doors are hidden from view by an obstruction, such as boxes, plaster, or a tapestry.)

Vision: Elves have standard-strength dark vision, which allows them to see up to 60' in the dark, even in absolute darkness.

Weapons Restrictions: Elves have no weapon restrictions based on their size or height, but they are still restricted, by class, in which weapon types they can wield while gaining experience points.





7-5

ADVANCED

ELVEN CONSIDERATIONS

(ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

In the advanced game, elves have several additional abilities which are not accounted for in the Basic Level rules. If the players and Game Masters would like the demi-human races to be more complex and differentiated from humanity, here is a summary of the additional modifiers:

Special Ability, Bow Mastery: Due to their archery training, all elves gain a +1 to hit bonus when using a long bow, short bow, composite long bow, or composite short bow.

Special Ability, Enchantment Resistance: Elves are 90% immune to sleep spells, and to charm person spells. If either of these two spells is cast upon an elf, the GM should roll for immunity first (on percentage dice), and then a saving throw should only be required if the immunity roll result is 91-00.

Special Ability, Fey Stealth: In outdoor forest terrain (of any climate) or grasslands terrain (of temperate climate only), elves can camouflage themselves in a highly superior fashion. Unless already observed by a stranger or enemy, elves have +90% move silently and +90% hide in shadows skill modifiers in these forms of terrain. Skill penalties for armor worn, conditions etc. do still apply. If they move no more quickly than 20' per round, they can remain hidden and technically invisible even in daylight. Attacking, casting spells, or using a magic item will negate this effect as soon as the elf's attacking / casting / using action is complete. This effect is fey in nature and partially magical, which means that spells such as detect magic and detect invisibility will betray a hidden elf's presence.

Special Ability, Silent Movement: In any terrain (including dungeons and building interiors), elves can move silently with considerable skill. They conditionally gain a +40% move silently skill modifier. The conditions are: [1] they must not be wearing mail or plate armor of any kind; [2] they must either be alone, or only be accompanied by elves, halflings, or thieves; and, [3] any companions who are not elves, halflings, or thieves can be no closer than 90' behind the stealthy group. Note that this is silent movement only; elves do not gain a similar bonus to their hiding in shadows skill (outside of the fey stealth ability in specific outdoor terrain, as already described).

Special Ability, Sword Mastery: Due to the blade mastery training, all elves gain a +1 to hit bonus when using a long sword or short sword.

Special Ability, Tactical Celerity: In combat situations, most characters and monsters must end their movement phase when engaging in an attack. Elves, however, can move, attack, and then complete their movement (up to their full movement rate) after the attack has been made. This ability is still subject to being blocked in movement by an intervening foe, but can be very useful when using ranged weapons.





Experience Penalty: Due to all of these additional bonuses, advanced game elves have a -15% penalty (not -10%) to all awarded experience. This penalty keeps elves on par with humans and the game in balance. As an optional balancing rule in Challenging difficulty level campaigns, if all or nearly all of the players select the elven race, the GM might want to consider enforcing a -20% penalty instead of just -15%.

7-6

HALFLINGS

Overview: The diminutive halflings are the tricksters, rustics, jesters, dreamers, and grand storytellers of the game world. They love smoking, eating, drinking, reading, gardening, crafting, and telling outrageous embellishments. They do have a darker side; they are vulnerable to curses and foul magics, and their overwhelming curiosity can easily lead them into annihilation. Other more “serious” races (demi-human, human, humanoid, and otherwise) tend to underestimate halflings due to their small size and comfort-loving natures, but at heart and in unity the halflings are a determined, profound, indefatigable race ... and they excel in the arts of exploration, cartography, illustration, lore mastery, wayfinding, and puzzle solving.

Background: Halflings are an enigmatic cousin-kindred of humankind. However humans were created, halflings were created at the same time in someone else’s rather similar yet very different image. But while humankind dared to spread across the earth and seas in search of adventure (and bred and took over like locusts), the pastorally-minded halflings sought shelter in valleys, on islands, and in secret glades and dells throughout the forested lands afar. Due to this more reclusive and insular nature, halflings live in isolated communities which have strong yet distant trade ties to dwarven, elven and human settlements along their borderlands. The civilized races all regard halflings as allies, which has been known to cast unsuspecting halflings into the accidental role of “diplomat” from time to time.

The race is blessed (cursed?) by the gift of wanderlust, which affects less than one percent of halflings throughout the world. These “gifted ones” find their hearts filled with a yearning for adventure, an irrepressible urge which causes them constant heartbreak as they leave home with newfound non-halfling friends, only to then desperately crave a return to comfort and halfling traditions once again. PC halflings, of course, invariably fall into this time-honored and baffling errant bloodline which seems to run wild through every respectable halfling family. These black sheep love their dwelling-holes and homes, but nevertheless ... *they want to go see the elves.*

Description: Halflings are usually only three or four feet tall, although some who hail from the wandering bloodlines are rather taller. They tend to have large eyes, ruddy or tanned skin, curling hair, a bit of a paunch, and leather-thick foot-soles which allow them to creep even through frigid caverns without the cumbersome and stealth-defeating burden of leather footwear.





Armor Restrictions: If your Game Master is using the optional rule for racially-sized armor types, halflings can only wear small-sized armor. They can use small or medium shields, but not large ones.

Experience Penalty: Due to their racial advantages, halflings suffer a permanent -10% penalty to all experience points earned. This modifier is added to the halfling character's wisdom and prime requisite XP modifiers, if any; for example, if a halfling has a +6% XP bonus due to a prime requisite ability score of 14, then the halfling's XP penalty is only -4%.

Movement Rate: An unarmored halfling's movement rate is 90'. In the simple encumbrance system (with two potential movement rates based on weight carried), halflings move at 90' when unburdened, and 50' when burdened. In the complex encumbrance system (with four potential movement rates), halflings move at 90' (100% rate), 70' (75%), 50' (50%) or 30' (25%).

Special Ability, Missile Prowess: Halflings have a +1 chance to hit with any thrown or missile weapon, including random rocks picked up off the ground (which inflict 1D2 or 1D3 points of crushing damage, depending on size).

Special Ability, Nimble: Halflings gain a +1 bonus to their personal initiative rolls, as will be described in the combat chapters in this series.

Special Ability, Quick-Footed: Halflings gain a +2 armor class bonus whenever they are attacked by larger than man-sized creatures.

Special Ability, Stealth and Camouflage: In the wilderness, halflings who have time to hide have a 90% chance to hide themselves in forest terrain, 70% in swamps, 50% in hills or mountains, and 30% in plains or wastelands. The halfling can remain hidden as long as he does not move or attack, unless the creatures he is hiding from approaches within 10' of the hiding place. Shadows and dim lighting are not required to use this ability; the halfling can attempt this even in stark daylight. The ability is a combination of the halfling's size, stealth, stillness, and drab clothing. The GM might rule, if a halfling is dressed in bright and flamboyant clothing or magical gear, that this ability cannot be used. Also, the halfling cannot hide any companions, only himself.

Vision: Not all halflings have dark vision, and various strains and bloodlines in their culture have differing gifts of this nature. When a PC halfling character is created, the GM should roll 1D8. The dark vision of the character will be as follows: 1-4 = none, 5 = very weak (10' range), 6 = weak (20' range), 7 = dim (30' range), 8 = full strength (60' range). This natural ability or lack thereof will stay with the halfling for the rest of his life.

Weapons Restrictions: Halflings cannot use long bows, two-handed swords, or human-scaled pole arms, which are too long for them to properly employ. Halflings cannot use dwarf-sized pole arms unless they are willing to accept a -1 to hit and damage penalty for doing so. Halflings can use weapons which are 1-handed (from a human perspective) without penalty; they can use 1- or 2-handed weapons (from a human perspective) if they use them in 2-handed fashion only; and they can use 2-handed weapons (from a human perspective) with a -1 penalty to hit and damage, with the exceptions of the aforementioned long bows, two-handed swords, and pole arms.





7-7

ADVANCED

HALFLING CONSIDERATIONS

(ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

In the advanced game, halflings have several additional abilities which are not accounted for in the Basic Level rules. If the players and Game Masters would like the demi-human races to be more complex and differentiated from humanity, here is a summary of the additional modifiers:

Special Ability, Ancestral Delving Lore: In the manner of dwarves, some (but not all) halfling bloodlines have limited abilities of stone-craft. The chance for any one halfling, PC or otherwise, to have these abilities is 10% (which the GM should roll percentile dice for). If the halfling has this knowledge, he will have a 1 in 6 chance to perform any of the following feats: detect relatively new stone construction (hewn in the last few years); detect sloping passages up or down; determine direction of facing (failure indicates a random wrong direction is given by the GM, off by up to 90 degrees); determine depth underground (failure indicates the GM will give a figure that is off by up to +/- 20%); find stone-based secret doors (such as shifting walls); or find stone-based traps (such as pits or falling stone blocks). Each of these non-magical talents requires 1 turn (10 rounds) of uninterrupted tapping, rumination and concentration, and only one talent can be used at a time. A roll of 1 on 1D6 indicates success. The GM rolls the die.

Special Ability, Magic Resistance: Halflings gain a bonus to their saving throws vs. magic, which is dependent on their constitution. The bonuses are: CON 3, no modifier; CON 4 to 6, +1; CON 7 to 10, +2; CON 11 to 13, +3; CON 14 to 17, +4; CON 18, +5.

Special Ability, Missile Mastery: Due to their archery training and life-long habit of throwing and hurling stones (in competition, in combat, or simply for fun), all halflings gain a +3 to hit bonus when using a short bow, composite short bow, or sling. Even with a normal stone picked off the ground — an improvised weapon — they gain a +2 bonus to hit instead of a penalty. In print, this ability might seem minor; but it can completely change the manner in which a halfling character is played, and to deadly effect. These bonuses replace the Missile Prowess ability which is described for Basic Level halflings.

Special Ability, Poison Resistance: Halflings gain a bonus to all saving throws vs. poison, regardless of the source (venomous beast, monster, envenomed weapon, etc.). The bonuses are: CON 3, no modifier; CON 4 to 6, +1; CON 7 to 10, +2; CON 11 to 13, +3; CON 14 to 17, +4; CON 18, +5.

Special Ability, Silent Movement: In any terrain (including dungeons and building interiors), halflings can move silently with considerable skill. They conditionally gain a +40% move silently skill modifier. The conditions are: [1] they must not be wearing mail or plate armor of any kind; [2] they must either be alone, or only be accompanied by elves, halflings, or thieves; and, [3] any companions who are





not elves, halflings, or thieves can be no closer than 90' behind the stealthy group. Note that this is silent movement only; elves do not gain a similar bonus to their hiding in shadows skill (outside of the fey stealth ability in specific outdoor terrain, as already described).

Experience Penalty: Due to all of these additional bonuses, advanced game halflings have a -15% penalty (not -10%) to all awarded experience. This penalty keeps halflings on par with humans and the game in balance.





7-8

HUMANS

Overview: Humans, as mentioned, are the most widespread of the civilized races in the Known Lands. Their innate recklessness, curiosity, resourcefulness and ability to quickly adapt to harsh environments have, in the span of only a few dozen centuries, rendered them the one of the most powerful — yet unpredictable — of all the young races.

Most humans in the Basic Level game are Normal Men (experience level zero), but the most adventurous souls among them can be clerics, fighters, magic-users, or thieves.

You know much of what there is to know about humans, because their history is the history of your world, just up through the late medieval age in a world that is tinged with more magic, wonder, and supernatural darkness than our own.

Background: No one can quite agree on the origin of humankind. Some say they were created by the Gods of Pegana, others say they were experimental lifeforms crafted by the Elder Things, and one madman has even put forth the wild conjecture that they descended (magically?) from halfling-sized monkeys. The truth remains unknown ... but in less than a thousand years, the race has spread and prospered throughout the Known Lands from the tropics to the boreal reaches of the Utter North.

Description: Looking around you, you will know that humans come in all shapes, colors, sizes and body types. The rules tend to gloss over the existence of human dwarfs and human giants, simply because the possible extremes of height and weight tend to create a lot of complications within the game. (A GM can of course create such anomalous humans as playable options, modeled after the demi-human races, if such a side project appeals to you.) In the author's World of Oldskull campaign, the subtypes of humans somewhat model classical earth, with fair-haired people in the north, dark-skinned people in the far south, and olive-complexioned humans on the shores of the Inland Sea. But in my campaign, humans have wandered farther and in greater numbers than one might expect, and all types of people (while rare away from their homelands) can be found everywhere throughout the Known Lands.

Armor Restrictions: If your Game Master is using the optional rule for racially-sized armor types, humans can only wear human-sized armor. They can use any size of shield.

Experience Penalty: Due to their lack of racial abilities, human characters have no experience penalty. Their experience modifier (if any) for a high or low prime requisite ability score, however, still applies.

Movement Rate: An unarmored human's movement rate is 120'. In the simple encumbrance system (with two potential movement rates based on weight carried), humans move at 120' when unburdened, and 60' when burdened. In the complex encumbrance system (with four potential movement rates), humans move at 120' (100% rate), 90' (75%), 60' (50%) or 30' (25%).





Special Abilities: Humans have no significant special abilities, besides being the dominant race in many civilized regions of the world.

Vision: Humans do not have dark sight. When underground or in total darkness, they require light sources such as torches or lanterns in order to be able to see effectively.

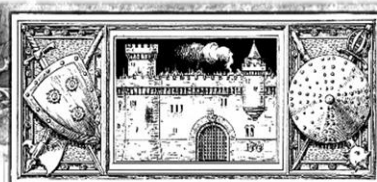
Weapons Restrictions: As the combat system in the game is developed from the perspective of human combatants, humans have no weapon restrictions. However they are still restricted, by class, in which weapon types they can wield while gaining experience points.



(The chapters concerning the four iconic Basic Level classes proceed hereafter.)



ORIGINAL OLD SCHOOL FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAMES



CHAPTER 8: THE CLERIC





8-1

INTRODUCTION TO THE CLERIC

Overview: Clerics are worshippers, the devout and faithful who have devoted their mortal lives to serving a single god, goddess, demigod, angel, arch-devil, demon lord, or Lovecraftian Abomination. Disciples of Zeus, Athena, Thor, Azrael, Ashmodai, and Cthulhu are all clerics, in name and deed. They can be quite intolerant of one another even in the best of times, and good and evil clerics often battle to the death so that they might further the power of their chosen entity in defiance of all heretics and unbelievers.

Zealous clerics nevertheless are pious, wise, contemplative, protective, and enduring. However, they are not mere temple servants. They are champions ... the Knights Templar, the Knights Hospitaller, the supreme cultists, the crusaders for their deity, battling in the war-torn realms which lie far beyond (and below) the Known Lands, smiting unbelievers in the name of their revered immortal overlord.

Examples of heroic clerics include Bishop Turpin, Friar Tuck, and Van Helsing the vampire hunter.





Oracles, plague doctors, shamans, sibyls, witch hunters, plague doctors, and tribal spell casters are other examples of specialized spell casters who can be generally classified as clerics in the game.

Due to their martial and idealistic philosophy, clerics train in the disciplines of combat prowess as well as spell casting. But survival takes precedence over power, and so level 1 clerics are proficient in battle, but they cannot spells until they attain experience level 2.

8-2

PRECEPTS

OF THE CLERIC CLASS

Prime Requisite: Clerics must have high Wisdom to effectively serve their deity. Those with high Wisdom gain experience points more quickly than their unwise brethren do.

Play Style: The player who assumes the role of a cleric is typically someone flexible, who enjoys teamwork and supporting other players. (Indirectly, the other PCs' reliance on a cleric's protective spells and healing might make the cleric a leader, but this is something that occurs naturally and the player can either accept that sub-role or refuse it.) It is probably the best class to play if you are uncertain of the style which you want to adopt in playing the game.

(Please note that the most significant power of the cleric class, divine spell casting, is explained in the Spells chapter toward the end of this volume.)

Alignment: Clerics can be Chaotic, Lawful, or Neutral in philosophical outlook. They always share this alignment with their deity (chaotic clerics worship gods of chaos, lawful clerics worship gods of law, and so forth).

Hit Points: Clerics gain between 1 and 8 hit points per experience level (1D8), as detailed hereafter.

Armor: Clerics can use any type of armor, as well as a shield.

Weapons: Clerics typically use blunt instruments in combat, such as maces, hammers, clubs, and even staves and slings. Each priestly order also allows their clerical followers the use of one sacred weapon which is the symbol of their god, but this characteristic is subject to your Game Master's discretion. You cannot simply say, "My cleric is a spear god cleric, because I like spears"; in this role-playing game, you will need to research your deity's mythic attributes to determine what the appropriate sacred weapon might be.

To aid you in this research, here is a quick (and necessarily partial) guide to weapons which are favored by various deities who are worshipped in the Known Lands:





- **[*]** (Please note that weapon types described in the Advanced Level rules are included her for the sake of comprehensiveness.)
- **[*] Aklys:** Sirami (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Axe (Any):** Agni (Indian, Chaotic), Ama-Tsu-Mara (Japanese, Neutral), Forseti (Norse, Lawful), Girru (Babylonian, Lawful), Hastseitsi (American Indian, Lawful), Huitzilopochtli (Central American, Neutral), Nanna-Sin (Sumerian, Neutral), Rama (Indian, Lawful), Shiva (Indian, Chaotic), Xochipilli (Central American, Neutral)
- **Axe (Battle):** Thrym (Norse, Chaotic)
- **Axe (Hand):** Inanna (Sumerian, Chaotic)
- **[*] Bola:** Limpang-Tung (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **[*] Boomerang:** Limpang-Tung (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Bow (Long or Short):** Apollo (Greek, Lawful), Artemis (Greek, Neutral), Brahma (Indian, Neutral), Chih-Chiang Fyu-Ya (Chinese, Chaotic), Hastsezini (American Indian, Chaotic), Heng (American Indian, Lawful), Heracles (Greek, Neutral), Indra (Indian, Neutral), Odin (Norse, Lawful), Rama (Indian, Lawful), Rudra (Indian, Neutral), Shiva (Indian, Chaotic), Tobadzistsini (American Indian, Chaotic), Vishnu (Indian, Lawful)
- **Bow (Long):** Uller (Norse, Neutral)
- **Bow (Short):** Dorozhan (Pegana, Neutral)
- **[*] Caltrop:** Mung (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **[*] Chain:** Hoodrazai (Pegana, Neutral)
- **Club (Any):** Aegir (Norse, Chaotic), Arawn (Celtic, Chaotic), Dagda (Celtic, Neutral), Heracles (Greek, Neutral), Hiisi (Finnish, Chaotic), Mana-Yood-Sushai (Pegana, Neutral), Osiris (Egyptian, Lawful), Sirami (Pegana, Chaotic), Skarl (Pegana, Chaotic), Surma (Finnish, Chaotic), Tuoni (Finnish, Chaotic), Untamo (Finnish, Neutral)
- **Club (Throwing Stick):** Limpang-Tung (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Crossbow (Light):** Dorozhan (Pegana, Neutral)
- **Dagger:** Apep (Egyptian, Chaotic), Apshai (Egyptian, Chaotic), Artemis (Greek, Neutral), Camazotz (Central American, Chaotic), Hachiman (Japanese, Neutral), Kib (Pegana, Chaotic), Loki (Norse, Chaotic), Loviatar (Finnish, Chaotic), The Norns (Norse, Neutral), Sish (Pegana, Neutral), Tezcatlipoca (Central American, Chaotic)
- **Dart:** Dorozhan (Pegana, Neutral), Indra (Indian, Neutral)
- **Flail (Any):** Hoodrazai (Pegana, Neutral)
- **Hammer:** Daikoku (Japanese, Lawful), Hephaestus (Greek, Neutral), Lei Kung (Chinese, Chaotic), Silvanus (Celtic / Roman, Neutral), Skarl (Pegana, Chaotic), Thor (Norse, Lawful)



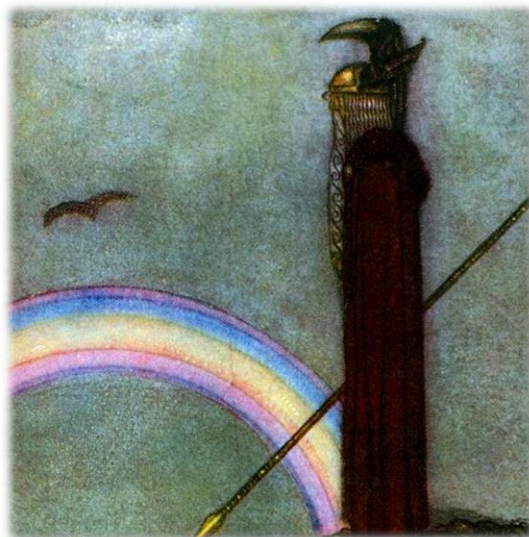


- **[*] Harpoon:** Slid (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Javelin:** Karthikeya (Indian, Neutral), Zeus (Greek, Lawful)
- **Knife:** Apep (Egyptian, Chaotic), Apshai (Egyptian, Chaotic), Hastsetsi (American Indian, Lawful), Kib (Pegana, Chaotic), Loki (Norse, Chaotic), Sish (Pegana, Neutral)
- **Lance (Any):** Anhur (Egyptian, Neutral), Horus (Egyptian, Lawful)
- **[*] Lasso:** Hoodrazai (Pegana, Neutral), Limpang-Tung (Pegana, Chaotic), Yama (Indian, Neutral)
- **Mace (Any):** Anu (Babylonian, Lawful), Chih Sung-Tzu (Chinese, Neutral), Druaga (Babylonian, Chaotic), Enki (Sumerian, Lawful), Hanuman (Indian, Lawful), Ninurta (Sumerian, Lawful), Raiden (Japanese, Neutral), Seker (Egyptian, Lawful), Vishnu (Indian, Lawful), Yama (Indian, Neutral)





- **Mace (Footman's):** Sirami (Pegana, Chaotic), Skarl (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Maul:** Skarl (Pegana, Chaotic),
- **[*] Net:** Limpang-Tung (Pegana, Chaotic), Marduk (Babylonian, Lawful), Slid (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Pole Arm (Any one type, chosen for life):** Mana-Yood-Sushai (Pegana, Neutral), Yoharneth-Lahai (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Pole Arm (Glaive):** Izanagi (Japanese, Neutral)
- **Pole Arm (Halberd):** Huan-Ti (Chinese, Neutral), Izanagi (Japanese, Neutral), Seker (Egyptian, Lawful)
- **Pole Arm (Pike):** Tsukiyomi (Japanese, Neutral)
- **[*] Sap:** Sirami (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Scimitar:** Sish (Pegana, Neutral),
- **[*] Scythe:** Mung (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **[*] Shield (Spiked):** Nergal (Babylonian, Chaotic)
- **[*] Sickle:** Ahto (Finnish, Neutral), Mung (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Sling:** Dunatis (Celtic, Neutral), Yoharneth-Lahai (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Spear:** Ares (Greek, Chaotic), Athena (Greek, Lawful), Chao Kung Ming (Chinese, Neutral), Cu Chulainn (Celtic, Lawful), Demeter (Greek, Neutral), Diancecht (Celtic, Lawful), Goibhnie (Celtic, Neutral), Herne (Celtic, Neutral), Lugh (Celtic, Neutral), Morrigan (Celtic, Neutral), No Cha (Chinese, Chaotic), Odin (Norse, Lawful), Shakak (American Indian, Chaotic), Set (Egyptian, Chaotic), Slid (Pegana, Chaotic), Tobadzistsini (American Indian, Chaotic), Tou Mu (Chinese, Chaotic), Varuna (Indian, Lawful), Zeus (Greek, Lawful)





- **Staff (Any):** Brigit (Celtic, Neutral), Dionysus (Greek, Neutral), Ebisu (Japanese, Lawful), Geb (Egyptian, Neutral), Hera (Greek, Neutral), Itzamna (Central American, Lawful), Mana-Yood-Sushai (Pegana, Neutral), Naraka (Indian, Chaotic), Nike (Greek, Neutral), Shiva (Indian, Chaotic), Skarl (Pegana, Chaotic), Thor (Norse, Lawful), Wukong (Chinese, Chaotic), Yama (Indian, Neutral), Yoharneth-Lahai (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **[*] Staff Sling:** Yoharneth-Lahai (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Sword (Any):** Ares (Greek, Chaotic), Chih-Chiang Fyu-Ya (Chinese, Chaotic), Chung Kuel (Chinese, Lawful), Fei Lien (Chinese, Neutral), Feng Po (Chinese, Neutral), Forseti (Norse, Lawful), Freya (Norse, Lawful), Freyr (Norse, Lawful), Hades (Greek, Chaotic), Heimdall (Norse, Lawful), Hel (Norse, Chaotic), Horus (Egyptian, Lawful), Kali (Indian, Chaotic), Mannanan mac Lir (Celtic, Neutral), Modi (Norse, Neutral), Nuada (Celtic, Neutral), Ravana (Indian, Chaotic), Shiva (Indian, Chaotic), Sif (Norse, Lawful), Sish (Pegana, Neutral), Surya (Indian, Lawful), Susanowo (Japanese, Chaotic), Tou Mu (Chinese, Chaotic), Tyr (Norse, Lawful), Ukko (Finnish, Lawful), Virabhadra (Indian, Chaotic), Vishnu (Indian, Lawful), Wen Chung (Chinese, Chaotic), Yen-Wang-Yeh (Chinese, Neutral)
- **[*] Sword (Khopesh):** Mung (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Sword (Short):** Bes (Egyptian, Neutral), Kib (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **Sword (Two-Handed):** Balder (Norse, Lawful), Frey (Norse, Lawful), Hachiman (Japanese, Neutral), Oh-Kuni-Nushi (Japanese, Lawful), Surtur (Norse, Chaotic), Uller (Norse, Neutral)
- **Thrown Weapon (Any one type, chosen for life):** Roon (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **[*] Tiger Claws:** Kib (Pegana, Chaotic)





- **[*] Torch (Wielded as a weapon):** Hecate (Greek, Chaotic)
- **Trident:** Poseidon (Greek, Neutral), Shiva (Indian, Chaotic), Slid (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **[*] Whip (Any):** Dorozhan (Pegana, Neutral), Hoodrazai (Pegana, Neutral), Shiva (Indian, Chaotic)
- **[*] Whip (Scourge):** Mung (Pegana, Chaotic)
- **[*] (Unarmed Combat, and also for consideration in regards to the advanced monk character class):** Bast (Egyptian, Lawful), Dionysus (Greek, Neutral), Heracles (Greek, Neutral), Lei Kung (Chinese, Chaotic), Magni (Norse, Lawful), Oghma (Celtic, Neutral), Pan (Greek, Chaotic)



Some GMs will encourage you to develop a clerical theme using these deities from real-world mythology, while others will allow you to devise an obscure (new) deity or demigod which exists only in





the game world. Demi-humans, in particular, are rather likely to worship their own gods outside of earthly folklore. Consult with your GM before arbitrarily deciding which course to take in this regard.

Once your GM has approved your selection of a deity and a sacred weapon, you can list that weapon on your character sheet as being sacred to your priestly order. You must choose a single weapon type; for example, if you choose “Sword (Any),” you must select “Short Sword” or “Long Sword” or something similar as your personal sacred weapon. Clerics who wield a sacred weapon have a +1 (+5%) chance to hit, and inflict +1 damage.

Esoteric Weaponry: Clerics can use flaming oil in combat. Lawful clerics cannot use poison; neutral clerics can only use poison if the GM decides that the nature of the worshipped deity justifies such use; and Chaotic clerics can use poison freely. Lawful and neutral clerics can use holy water against undead, while chaotic clerics can use unholy water against holy creatures (such as angels, lammasus, and shedus).

Experience Level 1: A level 1 Cleric is commonly known as an Acolyte, Catechumen (lawful only), Cult Minion (chaotic only), Scribe, or Temple Aspirant. The experience point range for level 1 begins at XP zero, and continues through XP 1,499. Level 1 Clerics begin the game with between 1 and 8 hit points, modified by Constitution, as noted in the ability scores chapter. At this level, Clerics are attuned to their deity through meditation and worship, but they have not yet been granted any spells because they have yet to prove their worth to the deity’s holy (or unholy) cause.

Experience Level 2: A level 2 Cleric is commonly known as an Adept, Anchorite, Cultist (chaotic only), Friar, Temple Initiate, or Temple Servant. The experience point range for level 2 begins at XP 1,500, and continues through XP 2,999. Level 2 Clerics gain 1D8 additional hit points when they first rise from level 1, modified by Constitution. (For example, a level 2 Cleric with CON 13 (+1) will gain 1D8+1 hit points instead of just 1D8.) At this level, Clerics can cast one 1st-level spell per day.

Experience Level 3: A level 3 Cleric is commonly known as an Adept of the Order, Advocata (female), Advocatus (male), Cult Adept (chaotic only), Deacon (male, lawful only), Deaconess (female, lawful only), Priest (male), Priestess (female), Village Priest (male), or Village Priestess (female). The experience point range for level 3 begins at XP 3,000, and continues through XP 5,999. Level 3 Clerics gain 1D8 additional hit points when they first rise from level 2, modified by Constitution. At this level, clerics can cast two 1st-level spells per day.

(Do note that the XP totals used in this game throughout the various classes’ higher levels are slightly different than the total ranges given in the original classic game, because the original totals do not follow a mathematical formula, which could arguably be interpreted as intellectual property in a copyrighted game that is owned by another company, and hence the totals cannot be replicated in a future work without potential legal issues arising. That may be more than you wanted to know, but I like to explain the reasoning behind various rules and rulings, so there it is.)



ORIGINAL OLD SCHOOL FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAMES



Summary of the Cleric Class (Experience Levels 1 to 3)

Experience Points	Experience Level	Hit Points	Suggested Level Titles	Notes
0 to 1,499	1	4 to 8 (avg. 6)	Acolyte, Catechumen, Cult Minion, Scribe, Temple Aspirant	Cannot yet cast spells.
1,500 to 2,999	2	+1D8 (avg. 10.5)	Adept, Anchorite, Cultist, Friar, Temple Initiate, Temple Servant	Can cast 1 level 1 spell per day.
3,000 to 5,999	3	+1D8 (avg. 15)	Adept of the Order, Advocatus / Advocata, Cult Adept, Deacon / Deaconess, Priest / Priestess, Village Priest / Village Priestess	Can cast 2 level 1 spells per day.





8-3

CLERICS INFLUENCING UNDEAD

Beyond divine spell casting, the most important power of a Cleric involves influence over the Undead. The undead are monsters which are either animated corpses of formerly living things (such as skeletons and zombies), or the malevolently aware spiritual remnants of hateful mortals who retain a non-corporeal presence after death (such as spectres and ghosts). A third form of undead is the soulless vessel, which is a soulless intellect trapped with a supernaturally-powerful body that neither ages nor feels pain (such as wights, mummies, and vampires).

The “good” and the neutral gods of the Multiverse are powerful conduits of life force. They resonate with prayers and lamentations received from their clerics and followers, and they return this power to worthy mortals in the forms of spell casting ability, blessings, miracles, and visions. All good gods and goddesses — whether they be immortals of the sun, sea, fire, earth, time or whatever else — are sacred incarnations of life and creation. Conversely, the evil gods, as well as the other worshipped infernal powers who are known as the arch-devils and the demon lords, are unholy incarnations of death and destruction. All of these immortals grant their worshippers the power to influence the Undead, who are frequently considered as the thralls and champions of immortal evil.

Good and neutral clerics can Turn Undead. This is the power to repel, banish, or even annihilate undead creatures through the empowerment of a cleric’s holy symbol — a physical manifestation of the worshipped god’s will — and the voice, heart, and conviction of the turning cleric. Lower-level clerics can only sometimes invoke this power with success, while high-level clerics can do so frequently. Further, weak undead (such as zombies) are easier to turn, while powerful undead (such as vampires) are much more powerful and more likely to resist the cleric’s holy will.

Evil and chaotic-inclined clerics can Compel Undead. This is the power to force undead creatures to accept the cleric’s presence, even if only temporarily. More powerful compulsion effects include limited communication and temporary control. Lower-level evil clerics can manifest this empowerment only infrequently, while high-level evil clerics can do so as a matter of course. And again, weaker undead are easy to influence, but powerful undead will resist the evil cleric’s domination even if there is an alliance between the two before the attempt at compulsion is made.

The effective range for attempts to influence undead — and the cleric must have a line of sight to the undead, even if they are sightless! — is 50’, plus 10’ per cleric experience level. This means that a level 2 cleric can attempt to influence undead who are up to 70’ away.

In the Castle Oldskull game, clerical attempts to affect undead are rolled using percentile dice. Only one attempt can be made for each group of undead encountered, and new attempts to influence the same group of undead — whether prior attempts succeeded or failed — can only be made once per game day (never twice in 24 hours). The specific game effects of influence over the undead, for clerics of experience levels 1 to 3, are as follows:





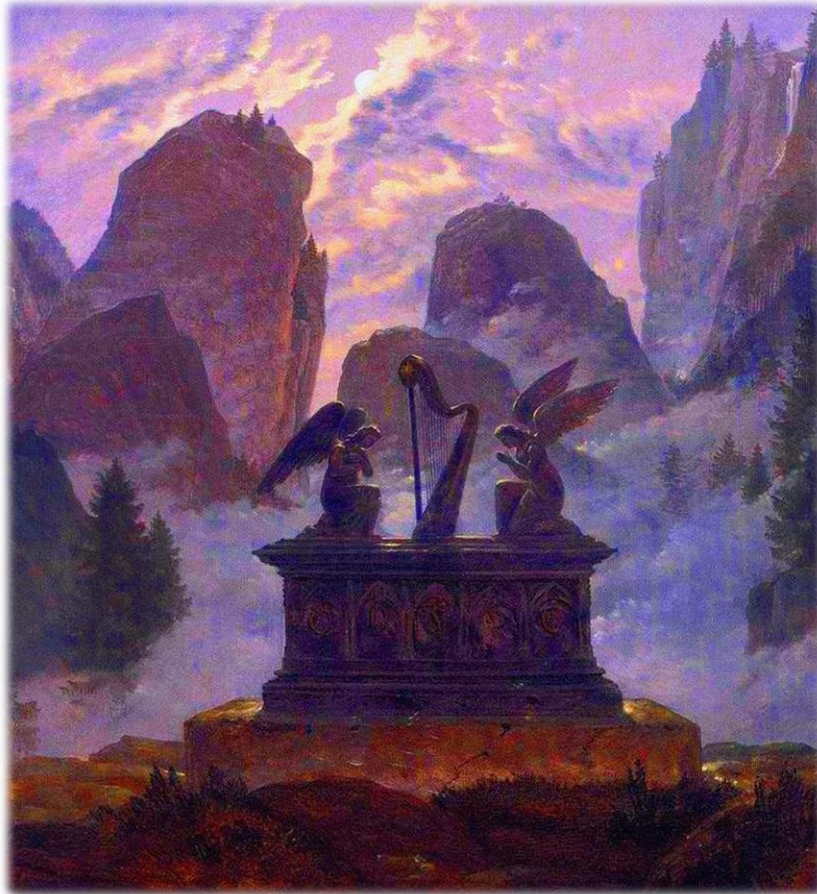
For clerics of life and the light:

- **For Level 1 Good, Lawful, and Neutral Clerics:** For skeletons (the weakest form of commonly-encountered undead), the cleric's Turning Target Roll is 55%. This means that the cleric's player must roll between 01 and 55 on 1D100 to turn the skeletons. If the roll is successful, the skeletons will flee the cleric (and his accompanying allies) for 3D6 rounds; but if the fleeing skeletons are attacked, they will fight until destroyed. If the attempt fails (due to a roll that is higher than 55), another attempt against those skeletons cannot be made that day. The level 1 cleric's further turning target rolls are 40% for zombies, 25% for ghouls, 10% for shadows, 5% for wights, and only 1% for ghosts. The number of undead affected will be 2D6 skeletons, 1D6 zombies, 1D4 ghouls, 1D2 shadows, 1 wight, or 1 ghost. More powerful undead creatures (such as wraiths and mummies) cannot be affected until the cleric gains additional experience levels.
- **For Level 2 Good, Lawful, and Neutral Clerics:** The target rolls for a level 2 cleric are 70% for skeletons, 55% for zombies, 40% for ghouls, 25% for shadows, 10% for wights, 5% for ghosts, and 1% for wraiths. The number of undead affected will be 2D4+4 skeletons, 2D4 zombies, 1D6 ghouls, 1D3 shadows, 1D2 wights, 1 ghost, or 1 wraith. More powerful undead cannot be affected.
- **For Level 3 Good, Lawful, and Neutral Clerics:** The target rolls for a level 3 cleric are 85% for skeletons, 70% for zombies, 55% for ghouls, 40% for shadows, 25% for wights, 10% for ghosts, 5% for wraiths, and 1% for mummies. More powerful undead cannot be affected. The number of undead affected will be 1D4+8 skeletons, 2D6 zombies, 2D4 ghouls, 1D4 shadows, 1D3 wights, 1D2 ghosts, 1 wraith, or 1 mummy.
- **For Clerics of Higher Level:** Refer to the Advanced Castle Oldskull rules (to be published by Wonderland Imprints) for information regarding clerics of experience levels 4 and up. At higher





levels, clerics can influence powerful undead and sometimes even evil-manifested planar creatures, such as demons and devils.



For clerics of death and darkness:

- **For Level 1 Evil and Chaotic Clerics:** For skeletons, the cleric's Compulsion Target Roll is 55%. This means that the cleric's player must roll a 01 to 55 on 1D100 to temporarily dominate the skeletons. If the roll is successful, the skeletons will tolerate the presence of the cleric and his allies for 1D6 hours for a "turn" result, or for higher level clerics, 1D12+12 hours for a "destroy" result (with the effect duration roll randomly and secretly determined by the GM). After that time period, the skeletons will attack unless they were created by a worshipper of the cleric's own god, arch-devil, or demon lord. This effect will be negated immediately if the skeletons are attacked. If the compulsion attempt fails (due to a roll that is less than 7), another attempt to compel those skeletons cannot be made that day. The level 1 cleric's further compulsion target rolls are 40% for zombies, 25% for ghouls, 10% for shadows, 5% for wights, and only 1% for ghaunts. More





powerful undead creatures cannot be affected. The number of undead affected will be 2D6 skeletons, 1D6 zombies, 1D4 ghouls, 1D2 shadows, 1 wight, or 1 ghastr. Higher-level evil and chaotic clerics are able to demand service from undead, as will be explained in the Advanced Level rules.

- **For Level 2 Evil and Chaotic Clerics:** The target rolls for a level 2 cleric are 70% for skeletons, 55% for zombies, 40% for ghouls, 25% for shadows, 10% for wights, 5% for ghastrs, and 1% for wraiths. More powerful undead cannot be affected. The number of undead affected will be 2D4+4 skeletons, 2D4 zombies, 1D6 ghouls, 1D3 shadows, 1D2 wights, 1 ghastr, or 1 wraith.
- **For Level 3 Evil and Chaotic Clerics:** The target rolls for a level 3 cleric are 85% for skeletons, 70% for zombies, 55% for ghouls, 40% for shadows, 25% for wights, 10% for ghastrs, 5% for wraiths, and 1% for mummies. More powerful undead cannot be affected. The number of undead affected will be 1D4+8 skeletons, 2D6 zombies, 2D4 ghouls, 1D4 shadows, 1D3 wights, 1D2 ghastrs, 1 wraith, or 1 mummy.
- **For Clerics of Higher Level:** Refer to the Advanced Castle Oldskull rules (to be published by Wonderland Imprints) for information regarding clerics of experience levels 4 and up. At higher levels, clerics can influence evil planar creatures such as demons and devils.



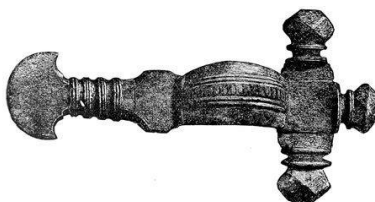


When groups of different types of undead are encountered, there is an unholy hierarchy of power which manifests itself. The weaker undead will be easy to influence, while their masters (the stronger monsters) are more difficult to dominate. As an example, if a lawful cleric is facing 10 skeletons, 6 zombies and a wraith, the first turning attempt would be rolled against the skeletons. If the attempt against the skeletons fails, then all further turning attempts made by that cleric on that day will fail! If the attempt succeeds, and all of the skeletons have been either turned or destroyed in combat, then a second attempt (later in battle) can be made against the zombies. The wraith can only be turned if the skeletons and zombies have either all been turned, or all of them have been destroyed. Each separate turning attempt requires one combat round of dedication action (in this example first against the skeletons, then second against the zombies if the skeleton turning was successful, then third against the wraith if the zombie turning was successful).

When there is more than one cleric in a party, each cleric can attempt to turn undead as an individual, regardless of whether other clerics fail in their turning attempts. Similarly, when there is more than one chaotic cleric, each can attempt to influence the undead separately, and any success will temporarily benefit the cleric's party.

Effects of Clerics upon the Undead (Experience Levels 1 to 3)

Type of Undead	Level 1 Cleric	Level 2 Cleric	Level 3 Cleric
Skeleton	55% to turn or compel 2D6	70% to turn or compel 2D4+4	85% to turn or compel 1D4+8
Zombie	40% to turn or compel 1D6	55% to turn or compel 2D4	70% to turn or compel 2D6
Ghoul	25% to turn or compel 1D4	40% to turn or compel 1D6	55% to turn or compel 2D4
Shadow	10% to turn or compel 1D2	25% to turn or compel 1D3	40% to turn or compel 1D4
Wight	5% to turn or compel 1	10% to turn or compel 1D2	25% to turn or compel 1D3
Ghast	1% to turn or compel 1	5% to turn or compel 1	10% to turn or compel 1D2
Wraith	0% chance to influence or control	1% to turn or compel 1	5% to turn or compel 1
Mummy	0% chance to influence or control	0% chance to influence or control	1% to turn or compel 1
(More powerful)	0% chance to influence or control	0% chance to influence or control	0% chance to influence or control



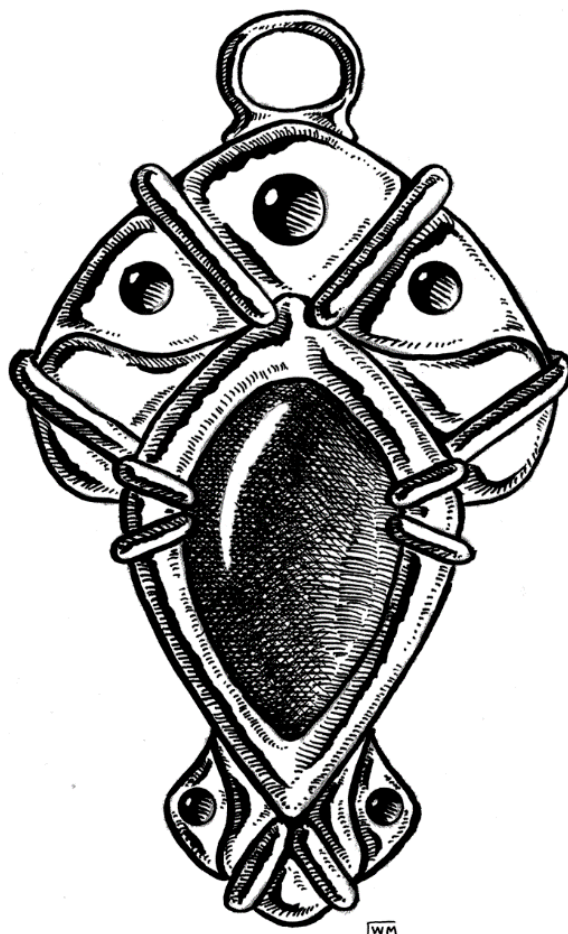


8-4

SYMBOLS AND INFLUENCE OVER THE UNDEAD (OPTIONAL RULE)

In the fundamental Basic Level game, a cleric will require his holy (or unholy) symbol to successfully turn or compel the undead. Some GMs will also state that the symbol must be brandished (held aloft in one hand). Without the symbol, the dice cannot even be rolled; the attempt to influence the undead will fail.





If the GM would like to add a bit more nuance to this process, I recommend the following modifiers based on the type of symbol carried by the cleric:

- **Improvised Symbol:** This is something which is hastily carved, crafted, or molded by the cleric. The details are wrong and it is crude, but in an emergency it can nevertheless channel the cleric's spiritual strength. An improvised symbol allows a cleric to turn undead but at a -20% penalty to the D100 roll. Improvised symbols cost nothing and can be created in 1D6 rounds.
- **Wooden Symbol:** This is a basic "homespun" symbol, which was likely created by the cleric or a parent, and it will have strong sentimental value and channeled faith. Such symbols can also be purchased from woodcarvers, beggars, prophets, and so forth. A wooden symbol gives no modifier to the die roll.



- **Iron Symbol:** This is a general entry (see the equipment lists in this book) for a symbol which has been finely crafted by temple priests and artisans. Not all of them are iron, but most are. Other talismanic materials appropriate to a deity might be seashell (for Aphrodite), horn (for Cernunnos), flint, granite, baked clay, faience, and so forth. An iron (or “fine”) symbol gives a +5% bonus to the D100 roll.
- **Silver Symbol:** This is a symbol which has been carefully crafted by a silversmith, and blessed by a matriarch or patriarch of the god’s temple. It is not a magic item, but it does have residual energies which a faithful cleric can feel, and which will also be detected by a detect magic spell. Some priesthoods craft symbols from other valuable materials such as crystal, gold, platinum, and so forth; but these are more treasures than they are equipment, and they give no further advantage so they are not included here. A silver symbol gives a +10% bonus to the D100 roll.

And in case it needs to be said, a cleric can never influence undead by holding aloft a holy symbol which is dedicated to another god than his own! It is not just the symbol, it is also the cleric’s faith and the power of the deity channeled through the symbol which is evoking the effect over the undead.





CHAPTER 9: SPELL CASTING AND DIVINE SPELLS





9-1

OVERVIEW OF SPELL CASTING

Please note that players of clerics should read this entire chapter, and players of magic-users should read the first parts of this chapter — particularly sections 9-2, 9-4, 9-5, 9-6, and 9-7 — which pertain generally to spell casting. Players of fighters and thieves can proceed to the next section and study here later, if desired.

This chapter is probably the most complex one in this volume, and you may need to read it twice before playing your first spell caster character in the game.

9-2

THE NATURE OF SPELL CASTING

Magic is the eternal force which differentiates the game world from our own. Effects, items, monsters, and locales which exhibit any considerable aspect of this force are deemed **Magical** in nature. Temporary appearances of magic are termed **Spells**.

A **Spell** is a magical formula which allows a **Spell Caster** (wielder of magical power) to bend the laws of physics in a specific manner for a limited time. Clerics cast **Divine Spells**, which frequently but not always tend to be protective or divinatory in nature. Chaotic (and evil) clerics can cast **Unholy Spells** as well, which are generally powerful curses, blights, and afflictions. Clerical magics are received from worshipped immortals through **Meditation** and prayer.

Magic-users cast **Arcane Spells** instead of divine spells, and these arcane spells vary wildly in origin and purpose. Some of them are derived from the powers of the four primal elements (air, earth, fire, and water), some create illusions, some draw power from light or darkness, some alter time or objects or even bodies, and so forth. Magic-user spells are received through analytical contemplation and **Memorization** of the physical laws of the universe set down in **Spell Books** (or **Grimoires**), and are channeled from the Outer Dark and through the magic-user by the **Primordial Unknown**.

Spell casters are relatively rare in the game world. Immortal casters and powerful monsters can frequently cast mighty spells **At Will**, which means whenever desired, while still being limited by casting time and other rules. Mere mortals, however (such as the PC clerics and magic-users) are limited in the amount and frequency of magical channeling that they can perform in any given day. Spells that are cast by a mortal are depleted, and must be regained through meditation (in the case of clerics) or memorization (in the case of magic-users).

It is known that in some manner, the energies of the sun and other celestial bodies affect the magical empowerment of mortal minds, because mortals who cast spells cannot re-empower themselves more





than once in any 24-hour period. Perhaps it is the alignment of the game world, “Earth,” and its facing in regards to celestial bodies and planar gates which affects this rate of magical spell recovery, but the true secrets of such things remain unfathomable and unknown.

Each spell has its relative power rated by a numeric **Spell Level**. The weakest spells belong to **Spell Level 1**. The strongest clerical spells belong to Spell Level 7, and the strongest magic-user spells belong to **Spell Level 9**. Low-level characters can only cast low-level spells, with very few castings per day. High-level characters, with their innate experience and furthered comprehension of the nature of magic and its immortal sources, can cast higher-level spells with multiple castings per day.

The limits on spell casting per day are clearly spelled out in the cleric and magic-user descriptions in this volume. To briefly review, level 1 clerics cannot cast spells; level 2 clerics can only cast 1st level spells; and level 3 clerics can cast 1st and 2nd levels. Level 1 and 2 magic-users can only cast 1st level spells, while level 3 magic-users can cast 1st and 2nd level spells. In Advanced Level play, higher-level spell casters can cast many more spells and of higher levels ... and for that reason, higher-level spells are detailed in the Advanced Level rules volumes.

It must be remembered that mortal casters do not have innate magical power within them, they are merely channelers of powers which they can temporarily control but not harbor within themselves. Therefore when a spell is cast, the caster channels the great desired power from the immortal source, and in casting the spell “burns out” the memory imprint which formerly harbored the sigils of power. This is called **Spell Elimination**. This means that if a level 1 cleric memorizes a Cure Light Wounds healing spell, that spell can only be cast once. Thereafter, the cleric must meditate once again and re-memorize that spell before it can be cast again.

Here is a summary of the nature of magic in the game world for future reference:

Magical Concept	Clerical Understanding	Magic-User Understanding
Source of Magic	Worshipped Immortal	The Primordial Unknown Spell Books
Required Item for Acquiring Spells	Holy or Unholy Symbol	Spell Book
Classification of Magic	Divine Spells (from good immortals) Unholy Spells (from evil immortals)	Arcane Spells
Common Spell Types	Divination Healing Protection	Arcane Manipulation Elemental Force Evocation
Spell Acquisition Process	Meditation	Memorization
Weakest Spell Level	1 (1st)	1 (1st)
Strongest Spell Level	7 (7th)	9 (9th)

In addition to these concepts, players need to understand that the spells available to a spell caster are very different depending on the character's class. Clerics can potentially know any and all spells within a single spell level. For example, all level 2 clerics (who can cast 1st-level divine spells) can



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potentially memorize and cast any of the divine spells that are listed in this book. Unholy spells, however, are dangerous for more non-chaotic clerics to memorize and cast.

Magic-users however cannot know any spells unless they read them in a spell book or scroll and commit them to memory. For example, all level 1 magic-users (who can cast 1st-level arcane spells) can potentially find any of the arcane spells that are listed in this book, but they must personally acquire them before they have access. A magic-user does not know the Sleep spell until he finds and inscribes it in his spell book. Magic-user spell acquisition will be further detailed in the arcane magic chapter, hereafter.





9-3

DIVINE AND UNHOLY SPELLS

Clerics acquire spells through meditation and prayer.

When clerics pray for spells, as noted they have access to all of the divine (but not arcane) spells that exist in the world, as long as they can cast spells of that spell level. Therefore, although level 1 clerics cannot cast any spells, level 2 or 3 clerics can pray to receive any 1st level divine spell in existence. But do remember that there is still a hard limit on the number of spells that a cleric can cast a day, as defined by their experience level. (Level 2 clerics can cast 1 1st-level spell per day, and level 3 clerics can cast 2 1st-level spells per day.)





All clerics can pray for and receive non-unholy spells. But for the spells that specified as unholy, this means that only chaotic (or evil) clerics can pray for these spells safely. Lawful and neutral clerics can still pray for and receive these spells, but if they cast them against anyone but a chaotic or outright hostile target, the cleric will require **Absolution**. Absolution means that the cleric must atone at the temple of his immortal, sacrificing a burnt offering (treasure of his choice) worth 100 gp per experience level of the cleric. Therefore, a level 3 cleric requiring absolution would need to sacrifice 300 gp worth of treasure while spending a day praying for forgiveness in the temple. The sacrificed treasure will vanish, accepted by the immortal as a sincere offering of tribute and apologia. An un-absolved cleric can still cast those spells that are already held in his memory, but he cannot meditate for new spells until absolution and sacrifice take place. Merciful GMs should allow a cleric who is lost in the wilderness, or deep in a dungeon, to meditate for 24 continuous and sleepless hours in a safe place, in lieu of attending a temple.

9-4

SPELL ACQUISITION

Once a spell is memorized (for a magic-user) or received through prayer (for a cleric), the character will remember it until it is cast. These Acquired Spells are listed in the character's record for the duration of the current dungeon expedition or other adventure. Acquired spells cannot be changed during a day, unless the caster willfully decides to memorize a new spell over the place of an old one. For example, if a caster has memorized spell A twice and he wants spell A once and spell B once instead, he will need to rememorize one of the spell A's to "overwrite" it with spell B.

In the Castle Oldskull game, the amount of time required for spell acquisition — for either clerics or magic-users — is very simple to calculate. The time needed is equal to the character's experience level, times 30 minutes, to a maximum of 8 hours. Therefore a level 1 magic-user can memorize his spell in 30 minutes, a level 2 cleric or magic-user can memorize all of his spells in 60 minutes, a level 3 cleric or magic-user can memorize all of his spells in 90 minutes, and so forth. The time of memorization or meditation can only be briefly interrupted, and only for actions which take less than one minute to complete (such as answering an ally's question, moving from one room to another, casting one non-combat spell and then returning to study, and so forth). If there are more than three interruptions in any given spell acquisition interval, the acquisition will fail and must be started afresh from the beginning.

As an important technicality, a spell caster who is able to acquire more than one spell of the same spell level can choose to acquire **Multiple Instances** of the same spell. For example, a level 2 mage (capable of memorizing and casting two 1st-level spells) could choose to memorize spell A once and spell B once, or spell A twice, or spell B twice. Memorizing a spell gives it a number of "charges" before it disappears from the caster's memory. Therefore if the magic-user memorized spell A twice, after casting it once he could still cast it one more time (at any time that day) before it fully vanishes from his mind. And after the magic-user re-memorized depleted spells, he could perform the spell selection process all over again.





9-5

DREAMLANDS EMPOWERMENT (OPTIONAL RULE)

In addition to the normal rules for spell acquisition, some veteran GMs also allow an optional interpretation of meditation and memorization which I term **Dreamlands Empowerment**. This means



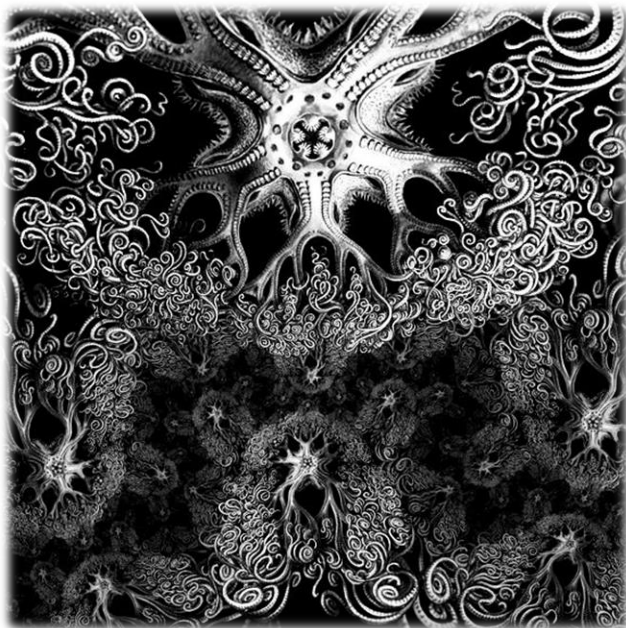


that while a spell caster is sleeping, he or she can choose to dream of the wondrous lands of phantaste surrounding Kadath in the Cold Wastes. There, the sleeper's questing spirit can wander and study and pray while the body sleeps. In game terms this means that spell casters can memorize spells while sleeping and count that as "memorization" (for magic-users) or "meditation" (for clerics) despite not being awake.

In campaigns where dreamlands empowerment is not employed, spell casters must always memorize or meditate for spells while the other player characters guard them and wait through down time. The empowerment option can be used as an atmospheric way to keep the game moving while keeping spell casters balanced in their relative level of power.

As a guideline, if the GM is willing, I recommend the following limitations on Dreamlands Empowerment which are dependent upon the difficulty of the campaign:

- **In an Easy-DL campaign:** All clerics and magic-users can experience Dreamlands Empowerment.
- **In a Normal-DL campaign:** Only clerics of WIS 13+, and magic-users of INT 13+, can experience Dreamlands Empowerment.
- **In a Challenging-DL campaign:** Only clerics of WIS 16+, and magic-users of INT 16+, can experience Dreamlands Empowerment. Further, the GM might rule that excessive use of this ability (say, for three successive nights in a row) will likely bring the spell caster to the malign attention of some grim dream-crawling Lovecraftian entity, such as a Mi-Go, a Moonbeast, or an Elder Thing.





While dreamlands empowerment can be attempted every night if the player wishes, it is not always successful. The dreaming spell caster must have at least 6, and preferably 8, hours of uninterrupted sleep for the dreamlands empowerment to be successful. If the sleep is interrupted, the attempt fails and no spells are memorized during the slumber. Common examples of interrupted sleep include: [1] being awakened by a loud noise (such as repeated thunder, or the shout of an ally, or the roar of a monster); [2] interrupting one's sleep to stand watch and guard the PCs' encampment (unless the caster manages 6 hours of full sleep either before or after serving watch); [3] being attacked; [4] being shaken awake; and so forth. The caster can attempt to return to sleep after being interrupted, but 6 uninterrupted hours of rest are required for spell acquisition.

This rule is strictly optional, but I will note that it tends to make the overall campaign more action-filled and exciting, because there are fewer "We can't go adventuring today guys, I need to study" days where the fighters and thieves are left either twiddling their thumbs through the daylight hours, or risking disaster by going it alone without spell caster support.





9-6

THE SPELL CASTING PROCESS

The full process of using a spell, from selection to acquisition to casting, can best be learned and understood in table format:

Spell Casting Step	Cleric Spell Caster	Magic-User Spell Caster	Potential Hindrances
[1st] Spell Selection	The cleric's player reviews all of the spells of the appropriate level(s), and decides which one(s) will be acquired.	The magic-user's player reviews all of the spells in his spell book of the appropriate level(s), and decides which one(s) will be acquired.	The cleric will require a holy or unholy symbol. The magic-user will require his spell book, which is not usually taken along on adventures.
[2nd] Consideration of Multiple Instances of Spells	The spell caster decides if he wants to acquire each available spell once, or if some spells will be acquired multiple times.		The spell caster is limited, by experience level, in how many total spells can be memorized.
[3rd] Spell Acquisition	The cleric meditates to receive spells from his worshipped immortal.	The magic-user memorizes spells that are written in the spell book.	Spell acquisition can be time consuming. The spell acquisition process requires relative silence and peace, and can be interrupted.
[4th] Spells Are Held in Power	The spell caster holds the acquired spells in his mind, until the player decides it is time to cast a spell.		If the spell caster's player wishes to change spells already acquired, re-memorization or re-meditation will be required.
[5th-A] Spell Casting Outside of Combat	The spell is cast when the player desires.		The spell caster will need a short amount of time to cast the spell, but without significant hindrance.
[5th-B] Spell Casting During Combat	The spell casting begins while enemies are attacking the spell caster's party.		Spell casting starts at the beginning of a combat round, but is completed until later. If an enemy wounds the caster during this time, the spell will be interrupted and wasted.
[6th] Spell Casting is Completed	The spell is completed and its effect takes place.		Friendly targets might be within the range of a dangerous spell.





		Enemy targets might receive a saving throw to reduce the spell's effect.
[7th] Spell Elimination	The spell is removed from the spell caster's memory.	Clerics will need to re-meditate to regain the spell. Magic-users will need to re-memorize to regain the spell.

Spell casting requires vocal (chanted) and somatic (hand-weaving) actions to successfully channel the spell through the character's body and spirit, and out into the world. If the caster cannot speak (being gagged, strangled, or magically silenced), or cannot make the proper hand motions (carrying a shield, bound, or grappled by an enemy), no spells can be cast while the negative condition persists. Casting also requires trance-like concentration, which means that the caster cannot walk, run, fight, converse, or use magical items while casting. A caster cannot cast spells while unconscious either. That may seem amusing and obvious, but I have for example seen an unconscious cleric try to heal herself to avoid death; so this rule is worth stating plainly.

A casting character can still innately defend himself, which means that his armor class is normal (not penalized) in regards to attempted attacks against him while casting. This includes dexterity and dodging ability, as the caster can dodge while standing in place.

A spell caster can only cast a maximum of one spell at a time, and a maximum of one spell per combat round. Some spells require longer than one round to cast.

When a spell is successfully cast, the spell caster's player (or the GM, in the case of an NPC spell caster) will need to make some decisions about what precisely occurs. The spell caster may need to select a target, or a range at which the spell "detonates," or something similar. These details are fully explained in the description for each spell.

9-7

THE LISTS OF SPELLS

The lists of spells in this book feature the basic spells which are integral to the game, and ones which are ideal for use by learning players. Additional more unusual and esoteric spells will be introduced in the advanced compendium and beyond, in addition to spells of higher levels. Each spell entry has its own set of descriptors, as follows:

Casting Time: In this game, the casting time — the amount of time needed for vocalization and hand-weaving before the spell is successfully cast — has been somewhat simplified. Each spell's casting time is either instantaneous, short, or long. An instantaneous spell activates as soon as the spell caster is able to act (meaning it takes less than a second of concentration to cast). A short spell activates at the end of the combat round in which the spell caster is able to cast, unless the caster is interrupted (typically by magical silence or a successful attack against him). A long spell activates in the next combat





round, when the caster is able to next act, unless he is interrupted. This will be further clarified in the combat chapter; but for now, just know that instantaneous spells can be easily cast in combat, short-time spells are risky propositions, and long-time spells are extremely risky. Interruption spoils a spell, so that it never successfully activates, but it is still erased from the caster's memory.

Range: Range is a measure of the maximum distance at which the spell can be cast. For example, if the range of a spell is 120', then the caster can cast it 10' away, 60' away, 120' away, or any other distance desired. The distance can be horizontal and/or vertical, which means that the caster could even cast the spell at the top of a 60' tall cliff that is nearby. (GMs who are sticklers for spell ranges may need to do a bit of calculative triangulation to keep vertical ranges accurate; otherwise, you can eyeball it.) A range of "Touch" means that the caster must touch the intended target. An ally within 5' can be touched at will; an enemy within 5' can be touched if the cleric makes a normal "to hit" roll against the enemy's armor class.

Target: This descriptor clarifies what the caster can cast the spell on. "Self" means that the caster can only cast the spell on himself, while "Self or Ally" means he can cast it on himself or a chosen companion within range. "Enemy" means he can cast it on a chosen enemy within range; "Object" means he can cast it on a thing; and "Area" means he can cast it on a wall, floor, ceiling, or similar surface, or just the air above a particular place.

Duration: This describes how long the spell's effect lasts. An Instantaneous duration means the spell hits immediately, and then goes away. Otherwise, durations can be measured in rounds, turns, hours, or even days. Rounds and turns are abstract time measurements which will be described later in this volume. A spell caster can choose to end a spell's duration early, simply by choosing to do so as an instantaneous action. This of course only applies to spells which the caster has personally cast; the spell effects of allies, enemies, and strangers cannot be nullified so easily.

Saving Throw: Many spells allow the potential victims of a successfully cast spell to make a saving throw, a 1D20 attempt to resist or dodge the spell's effect. Each affected individual creature is entitled to its own saving throw. (As always, the GM rolls saving throws for NPCs and monsters; players roll saving throws for their own PCs.) Beneficial spells cast on an allied PC or NPC do not require a saving throw, because the target is not actively resisting the magic. But a beneficial spell cast upon an ally or tamed creature might require a saving throw if the GM believes that the creature is afraid of the caster, or distrusting.

Description: This is a general commentary on how the spell is intended to be used. Players can get very clever and creative with spell casting, so I must stress that not every possible casting condition or weird effect can be covered here. You as the GM will need to make some careful judgment calls when a spell is cast in a strange way, or on an unusual target, or in a way that interacts oddly with a monster, magic item, or other ongoing spell effect. This is part and parcel with your refereeing responsibility, because spells are intentionally designed to make the game more unpredictable and exciting. You may want to write your rulings down for later consideration, especially if a player decides that he or she likes the new creative effect and will try it again.





9-8

FIRST LEVEL DIVINE AND UNHOLY SPELLS

These are the Basic Level, 1st-level spells which clerics can pray for.



Cause Fear

(C1, Offensive)

The utterance of abhorrence, the chaunt of the dreadful visage

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Touch

Target: Enemy





Duration: 1 round per experience level of the cleric

Saving Throw: Target must save vs. spell to negate the spell, otherwise it takes full effect

Description: This spell will instill a touched enemy with intense, magical, mind-altering fear. The fear is immortal in nature, and gives a near-instantaneous vision of a hellish afterworld which the victim — regardless of alignment or faith — will believe is awaiting him. Simultaneously, the victim the caster as a demonic emissary of the immortal power which reigns there (Ashmodai, Cthulhu, Hades, Orcus, the Ulthrogorgon, or whatever else the GM would care to concoct.) The resulting fear is overpowering, and even player characters can be affected by its magnitude ... which will result in the player of a PC victim temporarily losing control over the character.

If the saving throw is successful, the illusory effect will be quickly perceived and negated. But if the saving throw fails, the victim will run away from the caster at the greatest possible speed, in what seems like the safest direction (as determined by the GM).

If the fleeing victim is attacked by the caster or the caster's allies, the fear is immediately negated.

Cause Light Wounds

(C1, Offensive)

The touch of the grave, the chill upon the heart of the unbeliever

(Unholy)

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Touch (Enemy)

Target: Enemy

Duration: Permanent (but target can be healed by magic after being harmed)

Saving Throw: No saving throw is allowed

Description: This spell is the opposite of a cure light wounds spell. It causes the chaotic cleric to temporarily drain away a victim's life force, causing 1D6+1 points of damage. Alternately, the spell can be used vampirically if the cleric's player desires, which inflicts only 1D3 damage but simultaneously heals the casting cleric for the same amount.

If the casting cleric is of experience level 6 or higher, an advantage die is rolled. This means that the damage is rolled twice, and only the highest roll is accepted.

The spell cannot damage unliving creatures, which includes automatons (golems, animated statues, etc.), illusions, and the undead. It can damage any creature which has a life force, no matter how unusual (demons, devils, fungi, plants, slimes, and so forth).

Cure Light Wounds

(C1, Defensive)

Being the lesser cheirotonia, the laying on of hands

Casting Time: Instantaneous





Range: Touch (Ally)

Target: Ally or self

Duration: Permanent (but target can be wounded further after healing)

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This spell allows the cleric to heal 1D6+1 points of damage that have already been suffered by the target living creature. The spell cannot be cast upon unharmed individuals as a “shield,” and it cannot bring a slain person back to life. It can, however, stabilizing a bleeding ally who is dying, and it can even bring a character from negative hit points to zero hit points. If used to bring a character from negative hit points to positive hit points, the revived person will require at least 1 hour of uninterrupted rest (with STR, DEX, and CON temporarily reduced to 1) before he can actively move and fight again without being carried.

If the casting cleric is of experience level 6 or higher, an advantage die is rolled. This means that the healing amount is rolled twice, and only the higher roll is accepted.

If there is “overage” as a result of the healing, the creature is simply restored to maximum hit points. For example a thief with 6 hit points when unwounded, currently at 3 hit points, who receives 4 points of magical healing will be restored to 6 hit points. He will not be boosted up to 7 hit points, which is above his natural threshold.

At the GM's option, a cure light wounds spell can alternately be used cure, instead of heal, if that is the cleric's player's wish. Curing involving removing negative states from a creature but not healing their wounds. Examples of minor states which can be cured by this spell include paralysis or stunning. Examples of major states which cannot be cured by this spell include blindness, deafness, disease, energy drain, petrification, poisoning, and so forth. If the cure removes a minor state, it will not also heal 1D6+1 damage. If the cure is attempted on a major state (and fails), it will heal 1D6+1 damage instead, or the spell will simply be wasted if the subject is unwounded.

Darkness

(C1, Miscellaneous)

Being the manifestation of Cimmerian shadow from upon the wold

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Self or 120'

Target: Ally, area, enemy, object, or self

Duration: 6 turns (60 rounds) plus one turn per caster's experience level

Saving Throw: Spell is negated if cast on an enemy who makes his saving throw; otherwise, a saving throw is not needed

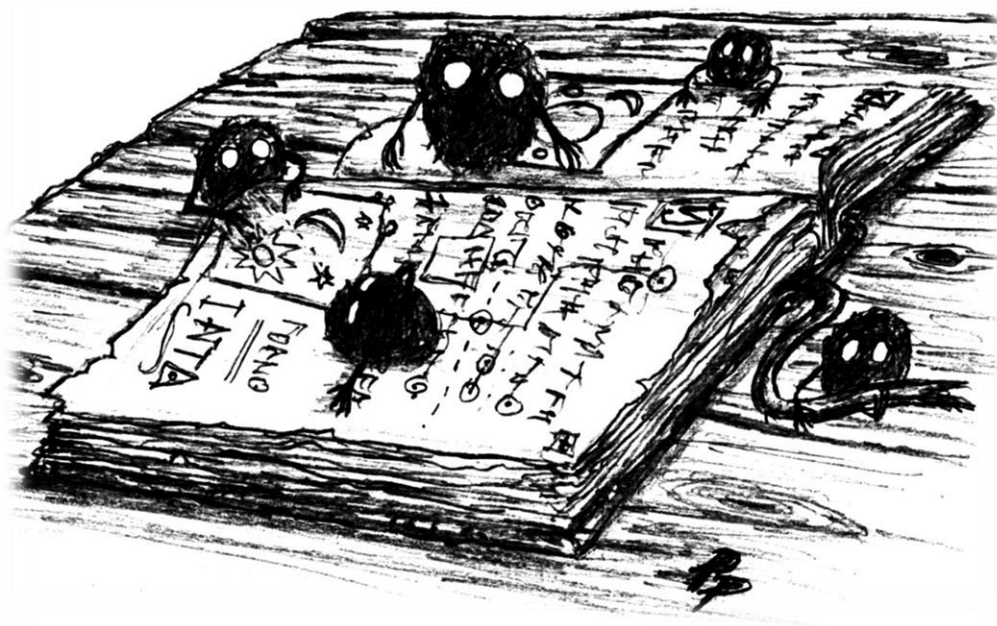
Description: This spell creates thick, lightless, magical darkness which is neither fog nor shadow ... it is simply the absence of light. A light spell and a darkness spell cast on the same thing (object, person, area, etc.) will nullify one another, leaving only the normal light level in that area once again. The exact nature of the spell depends on the chosen target.



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If cast on an ally, the spell is centered just behind the ally's head, and fills a 15' radius. The advantageous reason to cast the spell in this manner would be if the targeted ally can see in darkness (e.g., a demi-human) while enemies attack the ally might not. This renders the ally effectively invisible, meaning that attackers will a -4 penalty to "to hit" rolls while attempting to hit the dark-mantled creature. However, if the ally cannot see in the dark (e.g., a human), the ally will be affected in this manner as well! Worse, the ally will not be able to cast spells effectively if line of sight is required. But nevertheless this spell can save an ally; for example, I have seen it cleverly cast on a wounded adventurer who was being targeted by human archers ... all of those archers suffered a -4 penalty to hit after the spell was cast. In a similar manner, it could create absolute darkness around a thief, giving him a 100% chance to hide in shadows (although the sphere of absolute blackness would certainly look suspicious).



If cast on an area, there will be a sphere of darkness centered upon the area in a 15' radius. A clever caster might cast the spell on a point 15' above the ground, creating a sphere; or if cast on the ground or ceiling, the darkness will be a hemisphere. Creatures who cannot see in absolute darkness, who are trying to fire missile weapons at an enemy while the darkness is in their direct line of sight, will suffer a -4 penalty to hit.

If cast on an enemy, the spell is centered on the target's eyes (a saving throw will negate the spell). If the target enemy cannot see in darkness then he or she is effectively blinded, suffering a -4 penalty to "to hit" rolls until the spell is negated or the duration ends. Creatures who can see in darkness will not be penalized. The 15' radius of the darkness will remain in effect, so if the enemy flees, there will be a strange orb of absolute darkness moving with him ... which might make the enemy easier to track (for example, while fleeing through a crowd).





If cast on an object (such as a weapon or shield), the object will shed darkness in a 15' radius unless it is in a sealed container. Creatures who cannot see in darkness will suffer a -4 to all to hit rolls against the object holder, and the holder will also suffer this penalty unless he can see in darkness. This might be a creatively odd use of the spell; for example, an NPC magic-user who is hurling fireballs at the party with a magical staff, and who suffers a darkness spell cast on the staff, might be forced to drop the staff if he wishes to keep targeting the party with spells in his line of sight. Further, the magic-user would not be allowed a saving throw because the spell was not technically cast on him!

If cast on the caster, the spell is centered just behind the caster's head, similar to the effect of casting darkness on an ally.

Note that allies and enemies cannot cause the darkness to end at will; only the casting cleric can do that. Otherwise, the darkness will last until dispelled or until the spell's duration runs out.

Detect Chaos / Detect Evil

(C1, Miscellaneous)

The kinaesthesia of the lords of darkness, and of entropy

Casting Time: Short

Range: Self and 120' radius

Target: Centered on caster

Duration: 1 turn (10 rounds) plus 5 rounds per caster's experience level

Saving Throw: None

Description: This spell is called "detect chaos" if your GM is using the simple alignment system, or "detect evil" if he is using the complex alignment system. It allows the caster to detect all sources of sentient corruption within 120', ignoring walls, stone, the ground surface, and so forth.

"Evil" is defined as the spiritual quality of a creature born of evil circumstances (such as an orc or a demon), and is additionally defined as thoughts which involve premeditated harm to others. So if the caster casts detect evil while some goblins and a murderer are nearby, the spell will detect both the goblins and the murderer ... even if they are in hiding somewhere within range. Evil/chaotic creatures will be either (a) all creatures of chaotic alignment, or (b) all creatures of evil alignment (CE, LE, or NE), depending on which alignment system the GM is using. At the GM's discretion, good or neutral creatures who are thinking genuinely evil thoughts (as defined above) will be detected, but the exact nature of those thoughts will not be revealed.

Evil objects will be detected as well, but only quasi-sentient objects can be evil. This includes evil intelligent swords, evil altars, and evil artifacts. However it does not include traps, tricks, unintelligent cursed items or potentially deadly environments, such as thin ice or a crumbling staircase. Similarly, aggressive non-evil predators (giant frogs, insect swarms, lions, and so forth) will not register as evil either.



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Detected evil things and creatures will glow with a pale aura. If the source of evil cannot be seen — for example, it is behind a wall or door — the caster will know the exact direction and approximate distance of the evil. The general strength of the chaos or evil should be decided upon and described by the GM, as either “very faint,” “faint,” “moderate,” “strong,” “very strong” or “overwhelming.”

Once the spell is cast, it creates a divinatory sphere of energy around the caster. The caster can move normally and the invisible sphere of detection will move with him.



**Detect Law / Detect Good****(C1, Miscellaneous)***The kinaesthesia of the lords of light, and of the ordering of the celestial spheres***Casting Time:** Short**Range:** Self and 120' radius**Target:** Centered on caster**Duration:** 1 turn (10 rounds) plus 5 rounds per caster's experience level**Saving Throw:** None

Description: This spell is called "detect law" if your GM is using the simple alignment system, or "detect good" if he is using the complex alignment system. It allows the caster to detect all sources of sentient law and purity within 120', ignoring walls, stone, the ground surface, and so forth.

"Good" is defined as the spiritual quality of a creature born of good circumstances (such as an angel or lammasu), and is additionally defined as thoughts which involve a willful need to help and protect others. So if the caster casts detect good while an angel and a good NPC cleric are nearby, the spell will detect both the angel and the cleric ... even if they are in hiding somewhere within range. Good/lawful creatures will be either (a) all creatures of lawful alignment, or (b) all creatures of good alignment (CG, LG, or NG), depending on which alignment system the GM is using. At the GM's discretion, chaotic or evil creatures who are thinking genuinely pure thoughts (as defined above) will be detected, but the exact nature of those thoughts will not be revealed.

Good objects will be detected as well, but only quasi-sentient objects can be good. This includes good intelligent swords, good altars, and good artifacts. However it does not include holy symbols, unintelligent magic items or potentially beneficial environments, such as a hidden sanctuary room or safehouse. Similarly, neutral and unaligned creatures will not register as good either, even if they are steadfast and loyal to the cleric (dogs, horses, neutral men-at-arms, etc.).

Detected good things and creatures will glow with a pale aura. If the source of good cannot be seen — for example, it is behind a wall or door — the caster will know the exact direction and approximate distance of the good. The general strength of the law or good should be decided upon and described by the GM, as either "very faint," "faint," "moderate," "strong," "very strong" or "awe-inspiring."

Once the spell is cast, it creates a divinatory sphere of energy around the caster. The caster can move normally and the invisible sphere of detection will move with him.

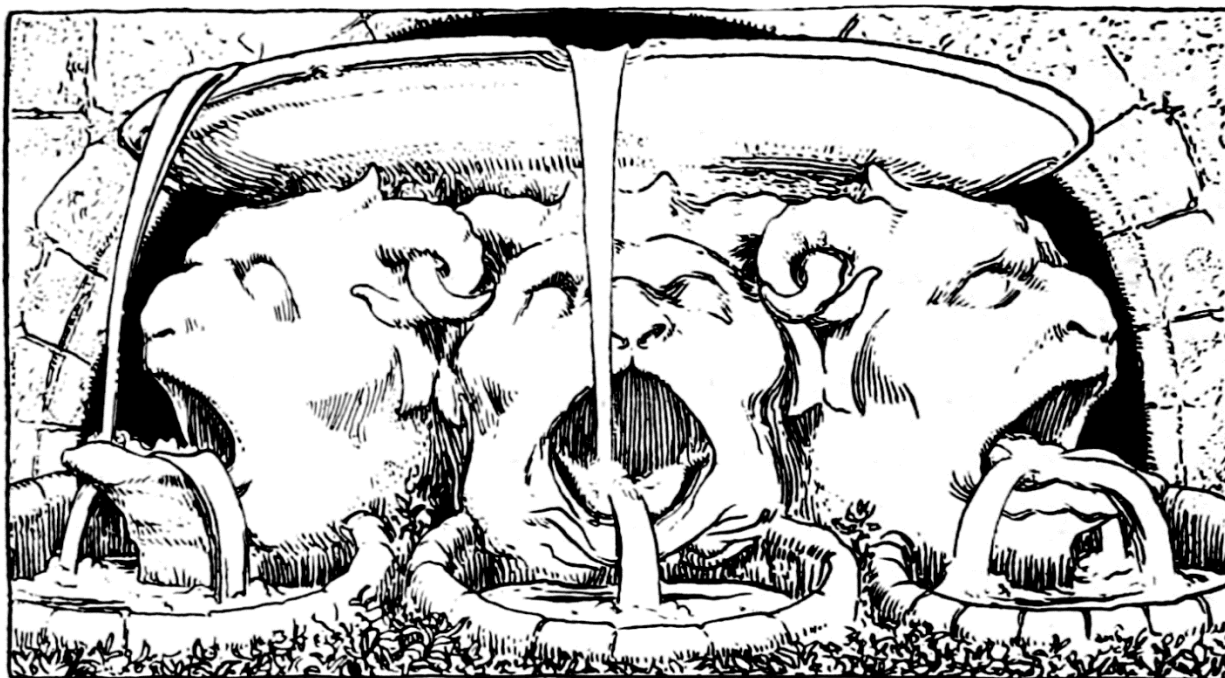
Detect Magic**(C1, Miscellaneous)***That which beckons the aura of the Yood to come reveal itself***Casting Time:** Short**Range:** Self and 60' radius**Target:** Centered on caster**Duration:** 2 turns (20 rounds)



Saving Throw: None

Description: This spell will detect magical effects, lasting magical spells, and magical objects, but not magical creatures. Temporary effects and magical effects will be detected, and if a temporary effect ends during the duration of the detect magic spell, the detecting spell caster will know the effect has ended. This spell allows the caster to detect such sources of magic within 60', ignoring walls less than 1' thick, metal less than 1" thick, and so forth. Thicker obstructions will block the spell.

The GM will need to become accustomed to the potential and limitations of this spell. Instantaneous spells cast by someone else will be detected as a flicker, but the flicker will fade before the caster can do any more than sensing the approximate direction of the source. Innately magical things such as a magical trick, a wizard locked door, magical water in a fountain, and so forth will be detected without difficulty.



Magical items (potions, swords, armor, spell books, and even cursed items) will be detected as well. Magical trap-related objects will be detected, but not the fact that the source of magic is a trap, which can require some careful GM description: the GM might state that a pressure plate is magical, while saying nothing about the hidden spears that are propelled forward by magic whenever the plate is activated.

The strength of the magic detected will be described by the GM as "very dim," "faint," "moderate," "powerful" or "exceedingly powerful," as seems appropriate. But note that this spell will rarely tell a low level caster about the type of magic detected! The chance for the caster to learn either the type of magic (abjuration, necromancy, etc.) or the spell type (invisibility, dangerous rune, illusion, etc.), as decided by the GM, is only 10% per level of the caster. This means that if a PC caster is a level 3 magic-user, the GM would roll percentile dice, and a 01-30 would mean that the GM would tell the magic-user's player





about the type of magic, but a roll of 31-00 would only allow a vague explanation of “You cannot discern the specific type of magic that you’re detecting.” This also means that a level 10 or higher caster will always be able to discern the type of magic involved.

The spell will not detect spell casters who are not casting spells, or magical creatures, unless those creatures have spells which are currently cast upon them. For example a magic-user and her golem would not be detected, but if the magic-user should cast a light spell on the golem, the spell would be detected, and the caster of detect magic would note that some kind of spell has been cast on a large object that is moving.

There is also a complex wrinkle to this spell: creatures will not be detected, but the magic items they are carrying will be! And since the caster of detect magic will know (for example) that a small, unseen, metallic and magical source item has been detected and it is moving, it will be easy for the caster deduce that the item is being carried by someone nearby.

If a creature is described as being magical and detected by this spell, it is almost certainly an illusion ... but the GM will not state that unless the percentile roll is made. And if an immortal’s shrine is magical, the magic will be detected, but the caster will rarely know whether the shrine is good or evil. In the same way, magical items will be detected (“There’s a small metal object behind the wall, and it’s magical”), but the caster will not know that it’s a luck blade with wishes inside of it, buried under an unseen pile of rubble. Even held magic items — say, a potion — will register as magical, but the caster will not know the type of potion until it is tasted.





Detected magical things will glow with a golden aura. If the source of magic cannot be seen — for example, it is in a treasure chest or a pouch — the caster will know the exact direction and distance of the magical thing, and will know if someone nearby (within line of sight) is carrying it, or the container which the magical thing is in.

Light

(C1, Miscellaneous)

Being the manifestation of Elysian radiance from upon the blessed windswept land

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Self or 120'

Target: Ally, area, enemy, object, or self

Duration: 6 turns (60 rounds) plus one turn per caster's experience level

Saving Throw: Spell is negated if cast on an enemy who makes his saving throw; otherwise, a saving throw is not needed

Description: This spell creates sourceless, bluish, magical light which is neither hot nor extinguishable (unless the caster wills the spell to end, or a countering darkness spell is cast). The light has a twilight-like intensity; it is not as bright as sunlight, but is about as light as a torch (without flickering), and it is plenty bright enough to read by. The light is also likely to attract nearby monsters in the dark. The exact nature of the spell depends on the chosen target.

If cast on an ally, the spell is centered just behind the ally's head. This allows the ally to see up to 30' in what would otherwise be absolute darkness.

If cast on an area, there will be a sphere of light centered upon the area in a 15' radius. A clever caster might cast the spell on a point 15' above the ground, creating a sphere; or if cast on the ground or ceiling, the light will be a hemisphere.

If cast on an enemy, the spell is centered on the target's eyes (a saving throw will negate the spell). The target is effectively blinded, suffering a -4 penalty to "to hit" rolls until the spell is negated or the duration ends. Further, the 15' radius of the light will remain in effect, so if the enemy flees through darkness, the cleric and his allies will be able to see (and potentially fire missiles and spells at) the target very easily.

If cast on an object (such as a weapon or shield), the object will shed light in a 15' radius unless it is in a sealed container. A partially sealed container, such as a sack with an untethered opening, will cause the light to peek out with feeble rays ... whether that is what the object's carrier would like, or not.

If cast on the caster, the spell is centered just behind the caster's head, similar to the effect of casting light on an ally.

Note that allies and enemies cannot cause the light to end at will; only the casting cleric can do that. Otherwise, the light will last until dispelled or until the spell's duration runs out.





Protection from Chaos / Protection from Evil

(C1, Defensive)

The abjuration in defiance of the kith of tumult and misrule

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Self

Target: Self

Duration: 3 rounds per spell caster's experience level

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)





Description: This spell is called “protection from chaos” if your GM is using the simple alignment system, or “protection from evil” if he is using the complex alignment system. It protects the caster from chaotic or evil creatures. Chaotic (evil) clerics cannot cast this spell, because their worshipped immortal will not grant it to them.

The protection takes the form of an invisible enchanted barrier, which surrounds the caster’s body. The protection does not extend far enough to benefit any of the casting cleric’s allies, and the spell cannot be cast upon an ally instead of on the caster himself. The cleric will gain a +1 bonus to all saving throws made against effects which originate from a chaotic (evil) creature, or a chaotic (evil) magic. As examples: A chaotic hobgoblin with a poisoned weapon who strikes the cleric, forcing a saving throw vs. poison, will give the cleric a +1 bonus to the saving throw because the weapon was used by a chaotic creature. Also, a spell cast by a chaotic magic-user will allow the cleric the same +1 bonus. However an attack by a lawful or neutral creature, a spell cast by a lawful or neutral NPC, and a trap are all examples of non-chaotic sources which will not enable the +1 bonus.

In addition to the saving throw bonus, all chaotic creatures who attack the cleric will suffer a -1 penalty to their attack rolls. Further, one of the most important side effects of this spell is that an affected chaotic creature cannot attack the cleric with a physical part of its body. This means (for example) that a chaotic hobgoblin could attack the cleric with a weapon, but not with a fist; and a chaotic troll (which uses claw and bite attacks without weapons) could not attack the caster at all. Spells cast by affected creatures can still target the caster, unless the range of the spell is “touch” in which case the spell cannot be successfully cast.

The cleric will also experience these effects when attacked by magical creatures. A magical creature, as identified by the GM’s discretion, is typically one which is alive (not undead), and which was not born through natural birth or spawning. Examples of magical creatures include animated statues, golems, illusions, and summoned or conjured monsters.

If the cleric attacks an affected creature, or casts a hostile spell on an affected creature, that individual creature is no longer affected by the protection. For example, if a cleric is facing seven gnolls and the cleric attacks one of them, that one gnoll will no longer be debilitated by the -1 to hit roll penalty, but the other six gnolls will be. If the caster used an area of effect spell or ability that targeted all of the gnolls, the protection spell would persist until the end of its duration, but none of the seven gnolls would be affected by it.

Protection from Law / Protection from Good

(C1, Defensive)

The abjuration in defiance of the kith of commandment and ascendancy

(Unholy)

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Self

Target: Self

Duration: 3 rounds per spell caster’s experience level





Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This spell is called “protection from law” if your GM is using the simple alignment system, or “protection from good” if he is using the complex alignment system. It protects the caster from lawful or good creatures. Lawful (good) clerics cannot cast this spell, because their worshipped immortal will not grant it to them. Neutral clerics can use this spell if they feel the need, but it is still classified as Unholy and may cause them to experience a punishment as per the Absolution rules described earlier.

The protection takes the form of an invisible enchanted barrier, which surrounds the caster’s body. The protection does not extend far enough to benefit any of the casting cleric’s allies, and the spell cannot be cast upon an ally instead of on the caster himself. The cleric will gain a +1 bonus to all saving throws made against effects which originate from a lawful (good) creature, or a lawful (good) magic. As examples: A lawful elven magic-user who strikes the cleric with a fireball, forcing a saving throw vs. spells, will give the cleric a +1 bonus to the saving throw because the spell was cast by a lawful creature. However an attack by a chaotic or neutral creature, a spell cast by a chaotic or neutral NPC, and a trap are all examples of non-lawful sources which will not enable the +1 bonus.

In addition to the saving throw bonus, all lawful creatures who attack the cleric will suffer a -1 penalty to their attack rolls. Further, one of the most important side effects of this spell is that an affected lawful creature cannot attack the cleric with a physical part of its body. This means (for example) that a lawful guardsman could attack the cleric with a weapon, but not with a fist; and a lawful shedu (which uses claw attacks without weapons) could not attack the caster at all. Spells cast by affected creatures can still target the caster, unless the range of the spell is “touch” in which case the spell cannot be successfully cast.

The cleric will also experience these effects when attacked by planar creatures. A planar creature, as identified by the GM’s discretion, is typically one which is alive (not undead), and which was either (a) not born through natural birth or spawning, or (b) born on another plane of existence or in another dimension. Examples of planar creatures include animated statues, demons, devils, elementals, genies, hags, and summoned or conjured monsters.

If the cleric attacks an affected creature, or casts a hostile spell on an affected creature, that individual creature is no longer affected by the protection. For example, if a cleric is facing three lawful dwarves and the cleric attacks one of them, that one dwarf will no longer be debilitated by the -1 to hit roll penalty, but the other two dwarves will be. If the caster used an area of effect spell or ability that targeted all three of the dwarves, the protection spell would persist until the end of its duration, but none of the three dwarves would be affected by it.

Purify Food and Water

(C1, Miscellaneous)

The blessed invocation of purity upon the aliment and the waters

Casting Time: Short

Range: 10’

Target: Area (5’ radius)





Duration: Permanent (but the food can spoil thereafter and the water can be contaminated thereafter)

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This spell is of marginal use to a party on a dungeon expedition, but it can be very helpful on overland journeys, and it can also gain the trust of deprived or superstitious NPCs. As a general guideline, the GM can assume that receptive NPCs will roll a new reaction roll in regards to the cleric at +2 or even +3 (if they share the cleric's faith).

The spell will make spoiled or decayed food edible (and quite tasty), and/or will purify water, even poisoned or parasite-infested water. Wine and similar drinkable liquids will be affected as well. The spell will affect all food and water within the area of effect.

The spell will not create new food or new water. If used on preserved and already-edible rations, or on magical potions or pure water, the spell will have no appreciable effect.



Remove Fear

(C1, Defensive)

Invocation to bring forth the vigilant dominion of serenity

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Touch

Target: Ally (or self, if the cleric has significant self-control represented by a Wisdom score of 15 or higher)





Duration: 1 turn (10 rounds); thereafter, fear might grip the target again

Saving Throw: Special (see below)

Description: This spell causes the target to become calm and inspired by the cleric's immortal-influenced presence. The target will be free of all natural and magical fear.



Player characters do not technically experience natural fear, unless the player decides to role-play fear. They can, however, be afflicted with magical fear, which is a supernatural psychic effect caused by magical spells (such as cause fear) as well as by powerful monsters such as dragons.

Non-player characters however experience natural fear when their morale fails, as described in the combat section; and they can be afflicted by magical fear just as PCs can. Beasts and monsters are affected in the same ways, becoming fearful when their morale fails or when the fear is magically induced.

When cast upon an NPC who has failed morale, this spell will restore the NPC's morale. This means that if he was surrendering or fleeing, he will stand again in valor and fight if he must.

If the target is fleeing or panicking (such as huddled in the fetal position) at the time of the casting, the target must make a successful saving throw vs. spells or the remove fear spell will fail to affect them.





If the target is not fleeing — for example, someone who is in a fighting withdrawal or considering surrender or just extremely nervous — no saving throw is required, and the fear removal is automatic. The saving throw roll is made at a bonus of +1 per experience level of the caster, which means that (for example) a level 3 cleric would give the target a +3 bonus to the saving throw.

Resist Cold

(C1, Defensive)

The abjuration in defiance of Boreas, and Grandfather Frost, and of Cailleach Bheur

Casting Time: Short

Range: Target and 15' radius

Target: Ally or self

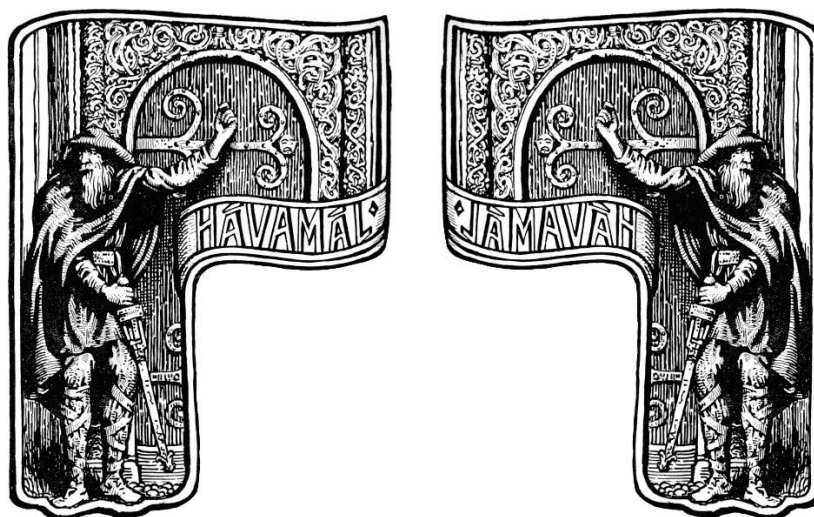
Duration: 1 turn (10 rounds) per experience level of the caster

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This spell will instill the target with magical warmth, and the aura will extend from the target in a 15' radius. All other creatures huddled within the radius can also benefit from this effect. The spell's aura is not significantly warm enough to flash-melt ice, but it will be noticeable in cold conditions to anyone who happens to be nearby.

The aura will make the affected creatures immune to any damage and penalties caused by non-magical cold, such as freezing temperatures or icy water. It will also reduce the effects of cold-based damage, such as a white dragon's ice breath.

Against natural cold, all required saving throws will automatically succeed, and natural cold will cause no damage. All saving throws vs. magical cold made by the warmed creatures will be made at +3, and all magical cold damage suffered will be reduced by half when a saving throw is successful, or reduced by one quarter (25%) when a saving throw is failed.





Summary of Basic Cleric Spells

Spell / Minimum Caster Level	Spell Level	Casting Time	Range	Target	Duration	Saving Throw
Cause Fear (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Instant	Touch	Enemy	1 round / level	Negates
Cause Light Wounds (caster lvl 2+)	C1 (Unh)	Instant	Touch	Enemy	Permanent	None allowed
Cure Light Wounds (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Instant	Touch	Ally or Self	Permanent	None needed
Darkness (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Instant	Self or 120'	Ally, Area, Enemy, Object, or Self	6 turns + 1 turn / level	Negates (if target was an enemy)
Detect Chaos / Detect Evil (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Short	Self and 120' radius	Centered on Caster	1 turn + 5 rounds / level	None needed or allowed
Detect Law / Detect Good (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Short	Self and 120' radius	Centered on Caster	1 turn + 5 rounds / level	None needed or allowed
Detect Magic (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Short	Self and 60' radius	Centered on Caster	2 turns	None needed or allowed
Light (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Instant	Self or 120'	Ally, Area, Enemy, Object, or Self	6 turns + 1 turn / level	Negates (if target was an enemy)
Protection from Chaos / Protection from Evil (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Instant	Self	Self	3 rounds / level	None needed or allowed
Protection from Law / Protection from Good (caster lvl 2+)	C1 (Unh)	Instant	Self	Self	3 rounds / level	None needed or allowed
Purify Food and Water (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Short	10'	Area	Permanent	None needed
Remove Fear (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Instant	Touch	Ally or Self	1 turn	Special (see description)
Resist Cold (caster lvl 2+)	C1	Short	Target and 15' radius	Ally or Self	1 turn / level	None needed



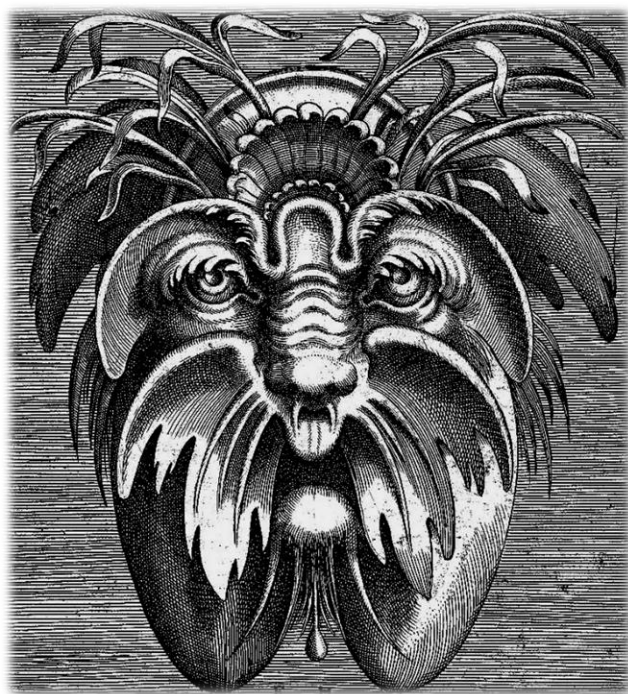


9-9

HIGHER-LEVEL DIVINE AND UNHOLY SPELLS

Further supplements in this series will address the higher-level divine (and unholy) spells which clerics have access to at higher experience levels. Clerics gain the ability to pray for and receive these spells as follows:

- **2nd-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 4.
- **3rd-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 6.
- **4th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 8.
- **5th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 10.
- **6th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 12.
- **7th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 17.





CHAPTER 10: THE FIGHTER





10-1

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIGHTER

Overview: Fighters are brave, deadly individuals who believe that the direct (and frequently brutal) approach is the best way to solve difficult problems in dangerous times. They are the characters who are the most likely to attack and slay a dragon, or stab a goblin, or to duel with an evil overlord until he surrenders ... or dies. Similarly, even in non-combat situations fighters will often be the ones to break down doors, smash treasure chests, intimidate strangers, interrogate prisoners, and — for better or for worse — to charge in shouting with no quarter offered and no questions asked.

Examples of heroic fighters include Conan, Heracles, King Arthur, the Amazons and Amazon Queens such as Hippolyta, and many others.

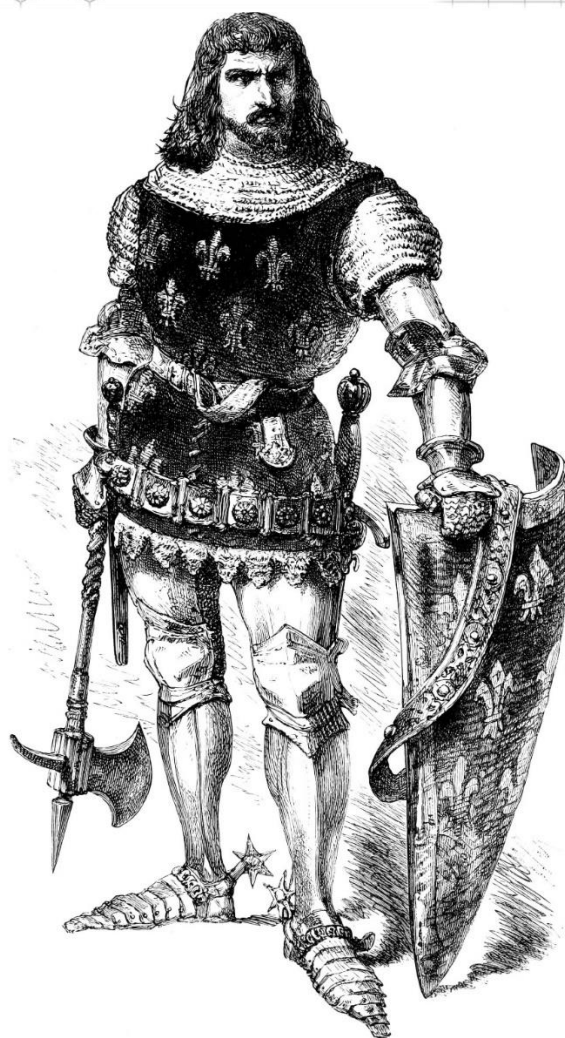
Barbarians, gladiators, guards, knights, samurai, soldiers, tribal champions, swashbucklers and Viking raiders are all examples of the fighter class.

In Basic Level play, fighters are frequently the most powerful player characters of all. Indeed, the other players might even want to pool their gold together to buy the fighters more expensive armor and weapons, because they will be doing most of the fighting and killing most of the monsters. Conversely however, fighters tend to suffer the most wounds and fatalities during play, because they are always on the front lines. Fighters require the healing and protective powers of clerics if they are to maximize their potential, and magic-users and thieves frequently possess subtle and clever solutions to problems which fighters might not be able (or willing) to solve. As such, fighters are stronger as team members than they are on their own.

At higher levels, fighters gain the ability to attack multiple times per round. They may also have additional optional powers as decided by the Game Master, and as revealed in the Optional Rules hereafter.

As play goes on, fighters tend to diminish in relative power while clerics and magic-users become more powerful due to their mighty spells. (Thieves tend to diminish a bit in power too, but their specialist skill set is always in demand, particularly when it comes to scouting, stealth, lock picking and trap removal.) Most veteran play groups understand this dynamic, and will make a simple pact amongst themselves: the fighters will keep the magic-users alive, and then the tables will then turn later in the game as the protected spell casters grow in potency and potential.





10-2

PRECEPTS OF THE FIGHTER CLASS

Prime Requisite: Fighters must have high Strength to survive and triumph in battle. Those with great strength gain experience points more quickly than their less fortunate and brothers and sisters.

Play Style: The play style of the fighter is simple and direct. Problems are solved brashly, and frequently with force. This is not to say that fighters are unintelligent, however. Fighters can be calculating, stubborn, silent and valorous, or hot-headed. The other PCs (and players) will tend to rely





on fighters early on in the name of survival, which can sometimes result in a leadership role if the fighter's player prefers.

Alignment: Fighters can be of any alignment.

Hit Points: Fighters gain between 1 and 10 hit points per experience level (1D10), as detailed hereafter.

Armor: Fighters can use any type of armor, as well as a shield.

Weapons: Fighters are masters of arms, which means they are the only class that can wield any weapon.

Esoteric Weaponry: All fighters can use flaming oil. Lawful and neutral fighters can use holy water against undead, and chaotic fighters can use unholy water against holy creatures. Lawful fighters cannot use poison, while chaotic fighters can. Whether neutral fighters can use poison is determined by the GM. (The author leans toward "No, unless you want to become chaotic by doing so.")

Veteran's Toughness: Upon gaining experience level 2, a fighter will gain an inherent toughness and resilience which gives him a permanent +1 armor class bonus, even while unarmored. For example, while a normal level 1 fighter in chain mail would possess AC 5, the same fighter upon attaining level 2 would possess AC 4.

Experience Level 1: A level 1 Fighter is commonly known as a Veteran. This is because Men-at-Arms (and Women-at-Arms), as well as guardsmen and common soldiers, are experience level 0 "Normal Men" who have never engaged in combat without a commander, or by a commander's order. New level 1 fighters (0 XP) are characters who have decided to leave their force behind in search of a life of dangerous adventure. They may adventure alongside other characters, but they are no longer subordinates ... they are equals or even leaders themselves. Other level 1 fighter titles which are sometimes encountered include Armsman (male), Armswoman (female), Footman (male), Footwoman (female), Guardsman (male), Guardswoman (female), or Petty Sergeant. The experience point range for level 1 begins at XP zero, and continues through XP 1,999. Level 1 fighters begin the game with between 1 and 10 hit points, modified by constitution, as noted in ability scores chapter. Fighters might well worship a god or goddess, but they do not derive magical or sacred power through doing so. Unlike clerics, they are solely reliant on their own physical gifts, combat training, and ever-increasing experience in battle.

Experience Level 2: A level 2 fighter is known as a Junior Lieutenant, Legionnaire, Sergeant, Warrior, Watchman (male) or Watchwoman (female). The experience point range for level 2 begins at XP 2,000, and continues through XP 3,999. Level 2 fighters gain 1D10 additional hit points when they first rise from level 1, modified by constitution. (For example, a level 2 fighter with CON 17 (+2) will gain 1D10+2 hit points instead of just 1D10.)

Experience Level 3: A level 3 fighter is known as a Fletcher (ranged specialist), Lieutenant, Senior Sergeant, Skull Crusher (chaotic only), Swordsman (male), or Swordswoman (female). The experience





point range for level 3 begins at XP 4,000, and continues through XP 7,999. Level 3 fighters gain 1D10 additional hit points when they first rise from level 2, modified by constitution.

The principle power of a fighter is very straightforward: when it comes to combat, fighters have the most accurate “to hit” rolls against enemies. Higher level fighters gain the ability to attack more than once per combat round, which means that they can attack more frequently than other high-level characters.

Fighters also have the ability of Battle Fury, which means that they can attack very frequently against nearly-defenseless foes. Specifically, when fighters are facing foes of under 1 hit die or experience level, they can attack once per round per experience level (so a level 3 fighter can strike 3 times per combat round against such foes). Creatures which fall into this nearly-defenseless category include Normal Men, goblins, kobolds, and minor vermin such as giant rats and centipedes. However, enemies of a full hit die or strength, including hobgoblins, orcs, level 1+ NPCs and similar creatures, are able to defend themselves against Battle Fury which nullifies the effect.

Summary of the Fighter Class (Experience Levels 1 to 3)

Experience Points	Experience Level	Hit Points	Suggested Level Titles	Notes
0 to 1,999	1	5 to 10 (avg. 7.5)	Armsman / Armswoman, Footman / Footwoman, Guardman / Guardswoman, Petty Sergeant, Veteran	May have parrying ability if DEX 16+. 1 combat feat per session, feat rolls at +1.
2,000 to 3,999	2	+1D10 (avg. 13)	Junior Lieutenant, Legionnaire, Sergeant, Warrior, Watchman / Watchwoman	Battle fury, 2 attacks per round vs. HD <1. May have parrying ability if DEX 16+. 2 combat feats per session, feat rolls at +2.
4,000 to 7,999	3	+1D10 (avg. 18.5)	Fletcher, Lieutenant, Senior Sergeant, Skull Crusher, Swordsman / Swordswoman	Battle fury, 3 attacks per round vs. HD <1. May have parrying ability if DEX 16+. 3 combat feats per session, feat rolls at +3.





10-3

EMPOWERMENT OPTIONS

FOR FIGHTERS

(OPTIONAL RULE OVERVIEW)

In this author's opinion, there are two significant issues with the classic game's allotment of character power progressions over the experience levels. The first issue is that thieves are weaker and more specialized than the other three classes overall. I address this design problem at length in the thief information section.

The second issue is a bit more subtle. Fighters begin the game with a significant degree of power, but their power in relation to spell casters (and in relation to spell-using monsters) becomes diffused at higher experience levels. The design challenge here is to offer the GM options which make fighters stronger at mid- to higher levels, without causing them to become overpowered early on. The following rules have been designed to potentially address this gap.

Please note that if all of these options are granted simultaneously, you may have some game balance issues to contend with, depending on a fighter's ability scores! The exact level of fighter power is something that each GM will need to consider on his or her own, and is contingent upon many variables which might seem unrelated. These variables include: the frequency in which potions of healing are discovered in the GM's game world, whether or not the party has clerics, whether the GM allows wounded adventurers to rest and heal in all dangerous environments, the ratio of dungeon (melee) to wilderness (ranged) battles in your game, the personalities of the players' PCs and the ways in which they self-limit risk or choose to endanger themselves, the size of the party, the number of fighters in the party, and so forth. Because fighters serve as the bulwark of a party, soaking up damage for the other specialists so that the entire party can succeed, each of these optional rules will require careful GM consideration. There are too many variables for me to be able to give you much sage advice in this regard.

But do not panic! If you're a first-time GM, you can allow the early sessions to proceed with "unadjusted" fighters, observe, and then decide if you need to revisit this optional rules section once you have had time to watch your players' party dynamics in active play.





10-4

SUPERIOR FIGHTER HIT POINTS (OPTIONAL RULE)



One simple optional rule that I've used with some success involves the GM allowing fighters (only) to gain above-average hit points when they attain experience levels beyond level 1. This allows the fighter to increase in survivability over time in relation to other characters.





Under this rule, a fighter's level 1 hit points are unaffected. However, for each level thereafter, the fighter gains 1D10 advantaged hit points. This means (for example) that if a fighter attains experience level 2, then 1D10 would be rolled twice to determine added hit points. If a 3 and a 9 were rolled, the 3 would be ignored and the 9 would be accepted, resulting in the fighter adding 9 hit points (plus any constitution modifiers) to his level 1 total.

This rule makes fighters more powerful from experience levels 2 to 9, while still remaining within the traditional constraints of the class. The hit points gained during this time will indirectly empower level 10+ fighters as well because they will have a "head start" on their existing hit point totals as they move toward epic-level play.

10-5

FIGHTER PARRYING ABILITY (OPTIONAL RULE)

This is an interesting rules option, because it increases a fighter's defensiveness only. It works in a passive manner, at any time that the fighter is engaging in melee combat. The fighter must have a melee weapon equipped and ready; a shield cannot parry, and a bow cannot either.

Parrying effectively gives the fighter a situational bonus to armor class, but only when fighting foes who are meleeing and attacking the fighter. A sword strike aimed at the fighter could potentially be parried; but an arrow or thrown rock could not. Spells, even touch spells, cannot be parried. Monster special attacks (such as a basilisk's gaze or a manticore's tail spikes) cannot be parried, but a monster's physical attacks (such as claws, fangs, or a tentacle swipe) can be. Attacks aimed at another character besides the fighter cannot be parried.

If the GM is using a battle grid and/or combat facing rules, note that a fighter can only parry attacks which are coming from the front. Attacks from the side, flank, or rear cannot be parried.

The effectiveness of parrying depends on the fighter's experience level and dexterity, as follows:

Parrying Effectiveness for Fighters

Fighter's Level	DEX 3	DEX 4 or 5	DEX 6 to 8	DEX 9 to 12	DEX 13 to 15	DEX 16 or 17	DEX 18
1 to 4	No bonus	No bonus	No bonus	No bonus	No bonus	+1 AC	+1 AC
5 to 8	No bonus	No bonus	No bonus	No bonus	+1 AC	+1 AC	+2 AC
9 to 12	No bonus	No bonus	No bonus	+1 AC	+1 AC	+2 AC	+3 AC
13 to 16	No bonus	No bonus	+1 AC	+1 AC	+2 AC	+3 AC	+4 AC
17 to 20	No bonus	+1 AC	+1 AC	+2 AC	+3 AC	+4 AC	+5 AC
21+	+1 AC	+1 AC	+2 AC	+3 AC	+4 AC	+5 AC	+6 AC





10-6

FIGHTERS EXCELLING WITH RANGED WEAPONS (OPTIONAL RULE)

Many Game Masters envision the fighter as a melee-focused specialist, although the class also embodies other iconic combat roles such as the archer, the crossbowman, the javelineer, the skirmisher, and the slinger. For Game Masters who want to give fighters an advantage in using ranged weaponry, you can try this optional rule: Fighters (only) can gain to hit and damage bonuses with thrown and missile weapons based on either their STR or their DEX, whichever is higher. So if a Fighter has a STR of 16 (+2 to hit and damage with melee weapons) and a DEX of 8 (normally -1 to hit with melee weapons), the GM could decide that the fighter receives bonuses of +2 to hit and damage with all weapons, whether they be melee, thrown, or missile.

This rule can make fighters quite powerful, particularly at the Easy campaign difficulty level when more PCs will possess higher ability scores. It also encourages new players to fight tactically at range whenever possible, which is a good play skill to cultivate. And the power of the ability is balanced by the fact that hostile NPC fighters will enjoy this bonus as well! Be mindful of the fact that labyrinthine dungeon environments, with small rooms and dark dead ends, will frequently render missile fire impossible ... many encounters will simply begin and end at melee range, particularly if a door must be opened. You might well see a jump in fighter power in outdoor encounters, but not necessarily in subterranean environments.

I recommend considering this rule for at least new players in a new campaign, with the understanding that fighters will somewhat dominate early play. The other classes will still be very useful with their unique abilities, and their power as noted (in relation to fighters) will increase over time.

Note to Game Masters: If you use this optional rule, it will frequently increase the survivability of the party somewhat due to the resultant larger ratio of ranged combat and the lower number of PCs wounds received. Just don't let the players abuse the advantages of ranged weapons to tell you when they can and cannot do things, such as firing at point blank range or aiming into a swarming melee. Those rulings are made by you the Game Master, not the players!





10-7

FIGHTERSAND WEAPON SPECIALIZATION
(ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

Some GMs further allow fighters to specialize in the use of a single weapon type, such as a long sword, a long bow, or even the use of darts. Specialization entails significant bonuses to hit and damage.





Because of the potentially imbalanced power of specialization — which is exacerbated by low-level play and the ranged weapon guideline offered prior — the details of this system are left to the Advanced Level game. From experience, I recommend that the Game Master not consider the use of weapon specialization until PC fighters attain at least experience level 4.

10-8

COMBATIVE FEATS FOR FIGHTERS (ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

If the Game Master is willing (or perhaps even eager) to add more detail, violence, interactivity and creativity to combat, fighters (only) can be granted combative feats. This is a flexible rule which requires player maturity, patience, and understanding, because it is rather nebulous and wide open to GM balance and interpretation. Castle Oldskull is not a “new school” game, and feats are largely antithetical to the old school design paradigm. But because fighters are the simplest, most abstract and most customizable class in the game, they are perfect models for a bit of feat-using in an old school way. Feats can keep players interested in playing fighters, because the feats are only limited by what the players can dream up.

To avoid rules bloat, I must stress that combative feats are always adjudicated by the GM. The GM decides what happens, what penalties apply to a struck foe, what damage bonuses are accrued (if any), and so forth. Only very general guidelines are given here. But I would strongly encourage the GM to abide by this balancing rule of thumb: A combative feat, in and of itself, can never result in a fatal blow to an opponent. If a player wants a PC fighter to kill a foe outright, he should not use a combative feat; he should just use a normal attack roll instead.

When a fighter is engaged in combat, at the beginning of any round the fighter’s player can announce an attempted feat. The feat attempt is made before that round’s attack roll, if any. The player rolls 1D20, and must roll a 20 or higher for the feat to be effective. The player gains a +1 bonus to the roll per fighter experience level, including at level 1. This means in practice that a level 1 fighter has a 10% chance of success, a level 2 fighter has a 15% chance, and so on.

As this is a “heroic action” roll and not a to hit roll, there is no penalty for failing the roll, even if the roll is a 1. A player can attempt a feat up to 5 times per game session, succeed or fail. Only 1 success per experience level, at most, can occur in a session. This means that a level 1 fighter can only succeed once per session, a level 3 fighter can succeed up to three different times per session, and so on. The absolute maximum of 5 successes per session applies to fighters of levels 5 and up.

If the feat roll succeeds, the player can devise a reasonable (not superhuman!) feat for GM consideration. The GM then decides what happens. If a to hit roll is required (meaning the feat is a type of attack against a foe), then that attack roll is made at +4.





For PC fighters, the player is responsible for keeping track of feat counts. For NPC fighters, I recommend that no one NPC ever be able to perform a feat more than once per battle, unless you're crazy-in-love with bookkeeping.

The exact same feat cannot occur more than once per session, per character. Your fighter can throw sand at an opponent's eyes and temporarily blind him, but he cannot throw sand at three different opponents in three different battles during the same table session. Feats are not superpowers or videogame power-ups. They are creative, improvised, dramatic-license story elements and exhaustive repetition does not become them.

The following table provides some example reasonable combative feats for GM and player consideration:

Example Combative Feats and Guidelines for Fighters

Combative Feat	Ideas for Potential Effects
Battle Shout	Forces all badly wounded foes currently engaged in melee to make an immediate morale check.
Blinding Bloodletting	The fighter makes a cut (on a hit) above the target's eyes, causing blood to flow into his eyes and causing temporary blindness. Can only be performed with a slashing weapon.
Brutal Kick	The fighter kicks an enemy and deals weapon-equivalent damage with this bonus unarmed attack. If the to hit roll is a 20, the opponent is knocked down and his weapon goes flying.
Charge and Knock Down	The fighter barrels toward a nearby opponent and knocks them to the ground, perhaps causing them to drop a weapon or item. Can only be attempted against human-sized or smaller opponents.
Cleave and Slay	If the fighter killed an opponent in the previous combat round, this feat allows him to attack two opponents with a single sweeping attack. Both opponents, if hit, suffer normal weapon damage. Cannot be performed with impaling weapons.
Crack Skulls	The fighter crashes two nearby opponents' heads together, stunning them both. Only effective against minor monsters or low-level NPCs.
Disarm Foe	Allows the fighter to knock a weapon out of an opponent's hand.
Dislodge Helmet	The fighter knocks off an enemy's helm, giving them a minor armor class penalty for the remainder of the battle.
Draw Second Weapon	After a successful attack, the fighter draws out a second small melee or thrown weapon (such as a dagger in a boot) and performs a bonus attack with it in the same round.
Fighting Withdrawal	The fighter moves backwards while preventing monsters from attacking protected allies, allowing escape.
Flying Table Calamity	(The author requests bonus points for naming this ability.) The fighter, with a surge of adrenaline, performs a crazy attack such as tipping over a table and throwing it into three opponents, knocking them down. Many different attack forms are possible depending on the environment.





Grapple and Overbear	The fighter rapidly sheaths his weapon, grabs an opponent's limbs, and attempts to wrestle them to the ground. Can only be attempted against human-sized or smaller foes.
Haul Enemy Off Mount	The fighter grabs a nearby enemy who is mounted, and rips them out of the saddle. A generous GM might allow a high-DEX fighter to mount up in the same action.
Hurl Heavy Weapon	The fighter throws an unwieldy melee weapon (such as a long sword) up to 30'. This attack is probably a normal roll, or at a minor penalty, instead of at +4
Improvise an Immediate Weapon	If the environment allows, the fighter immediately creates a new improvised weapon (a snapped tree branch, a piece of rubble, a fallen foe's spiked shield, rusted shackles torn out of a wall, etc.) and performs a surprise bonus attack with it.
Intercept	This feat is attempted when a nearby allied PC is hit. If successful, the hit is willingly suffered by the fighter, not by the original target.
Last Stand	This feat is attempted the moment a fighter falls to zero or fewer hit points. The fighter can continue to battle for 1D3 more rounds at a negative hit point total, down to -15 (at which point he dies standing).
Shield Slam	The fighter temporarily stuns a target with his shield, even if the target is huge or giant-sized.
Skull Bash	The fighter actually knocks out a smaller-than-human-sized opponent with a single blow, and they stay down for 1D2 rounds regardless of hit point total. Can only be performed with crushing weapons.
Skewer	Allows the fighter to attempt to hit and run through an opponent, pin an arm to a wall, impale a hand, etc. Will not cause fatal damage, but will create a grave wound and force an immediate morale check. Can only be performed with impaling weapons.
Snatch Item	The fighter grabs an item out of the foe's hands (perhaps a spell scroll or wand), or even snatches a key or amulet from their neck.
Spinning Attack	The attacker, still managing a +4 to hit roll, spins with blinding speed and attacks an opponent at his flank, or even directly behind him, before reverting to his original facing ... all in one round.
Sunder Shield	The fighter attacks not to wound, but rather to splinter and permanently destroy an opponent's shield.
Throw Sand in the Eyes	If the environment allows, the fighter throws sand and temporarily blinds an opponent up to 20' away.
Trip, Step and Vault	The fighter uses a sweeping kick to cause an opponent to stumble, then steps onto the opponent's exposed back and leaps up to grab something (a ledge, a hanging rope, a rafter, etc.).
Whirling Recovery	If the fighter missed an attack last round and succeeds in this round (as determined by the feat and then a following to hit roll), the successful attack deals maximum damage.
(Etc.)	Use your imagination.





Examples of combative feat types which should *not* exist include superhuman leaps and flips, attacks which yield double or higher damage, attacks which hit an inordinate number of opponents, and so forth. Combat feats do not make fighters superhuman or even superheroic; they just make them more “cinematic.”

I personally apply what I like to call the “Savage Conan” rule: If you can picture Conan the Barbarian performing the feat in a comic book, the feat can potentially succeed. But if it’s something that even Conan could never do, you’re outside of the bounds of reason and the feat can never succeed.

Game Masters, use your judgment, remember that NPC fighters will get to attempt these feats too, and have fun!





CHAPTER 11: THE MAGIC-USER





11-1

INTRODUCTION TO THE MAGIC-USER

Overview: Weavers of the arcane arts, magic-users are the wizards, sorcerers, alchemists, and enchantresses of the world. They believe that knowledge is the true key to power, and so they leave the pursuit of physical mastery to others while they seek ever-more esoteric sources of spells, riddles, incantations, and treasure maps leading the, to netherworld caches of unimaginable sorcerous power.

Examples of heroic magic-users include Circe, Merlin, and Morgan le Fay.

As apprentices of the arcane arts, magic-users are the ever-learning disciples and masters of spell casting. They are the chosen ones, the “Twin Souls” who have been instilled with a resonant life force, a dual spirit which is attuned to the magical forces which created and manifested the Multiverse long ago. This inherent gift comes at a considerable price, however. Magic-users must neglect the martial arts in favor of spell mastery, which in turn makes them mediocre defenders and poor challengers in physical combat. And due to the nature of arcane magic channeling — a delicate and fastidious process which can be easily disrupted by worn masses of metal — magic-users almost always disdain the use of armor. Even padded or leather armor can limit a caster’s range of movement during somatic spell casting, and those rebellious magic-users who envision themselves as warriors are not truly favored by the Primordial Unknown.

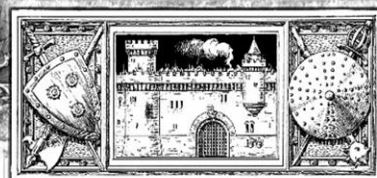
The Twin Souls, young and ancient, of the magic-user’s spirit must be honored and appeased by ritual and tradition, and those who choose weaponry over casting are neither attuned nor spiritually favored until they see the error of their ways. And because spell casting requires precise hand and finger positions in order to weave the channeled arcane energies, magic-users also refuse to use shields and other protective barriers. Logically, a magic-user can wear whatever armor he wants, whenever he wants, and can carry a shield because it is physically possible to do so; but by acting against the arcane rites and life force rituals which draw forth the arcane potential of the Primordial Unknown, a magic-user who does so will earn no experience points while any form of physical armor is being worn.

Each magic-user is the master of different spells. Whenever you create a new level 1 magic-user PC, you will need to determine the spells that the character knows.

As an easy analogy, I recommend considering the “Spells Known” as being similar to the books that you own and keep in your home, while the “Spells Memorized” are the books that you’re currently carrying in your backpack. The Spells Known are certainly known to you, but to recite the formula word-for-word in detail, the known spell needs to be in the Spells Memorized category before you can cast it. To over-extend, the analogy, when you cast a spell, it’s as if that book in your backpack disappeared and went back to your home bookshelf after you’ve quoted a paragraph from it ... so after the first casting, you no longer have that spell memorized and castable. (And if you have a spell memorized twice, that’s the



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equivalent of having two copies of that book in your backpack. One disappears on the first quoting, but the second copy is still in there and ready to quote.)



The spells that your magic-user knows at experience level 1 can be chosen by you, the player, unless the GM dictates otherwise. The spells are selected as follows:

- **The First Arcane Spell:** The very first spell that every magic-user apprentice is taught is Read Magic. This spell is necessary to read, write, and comprehend arcane magical formulae.





- **The Second Arcane Spell:** The next spell that magic-users are taught by their mentor are defensive in nature. The level 1 defensive spells include:
 - Hold Portal
 - Protection from Chaos / Protection from Evil
 - Protection from Law / Protection from Good
 - Shield

- **The Third Arcane Spell:** Once the magic-user has learned to comprehend magic and to defend himself, manipulation of the environment and other creatures can begin. This spell will be miscellaneous in nature. The level 1 miscellaneous spells include:
 - Darkness
 - Detect Magic
 - Floating Disc
 - Light
 - Read Languages
 - Ventriloquism

- **The Final Arcane Spell:** The last spell that a level 1 magic-user will learn before setting out into the world will be offensive in nature. The level 1 miscellaneous spells include:
 - Charm Person
 - Magic Missile
 - Sleep

11-2

PRECEPTS

OF THE MAGIC-USER CLASS

Prime Requisite: Magic-users must possess high Intelligence to decipher, learn and master spells. They literally live and die on the basis of their memorization abilities, and their psychic channeling link with draws upon the power of the Primordial Unknown. Magic-users with low intelligence are the “idiot savants” of the game world, and serve as talented tricksters, entertainers, and petty criminals. But adventuring magic-users must possess considerable intelligence to survive to the point where they can cast more powerful spells. This is reflected in their intelligence-based experience award adjustments, with INT as their prime requisite.

Play Style: Magic-users are attractive to problem solving players. Choosing the correct spells to memorize before an adventure requires strategy, and the limited allotments of spells at low experience levels demand opportunistic patience on the player's part. You will need to identify when your spell sway





the game, and when it would be wasted, while being mindful of the inherent risk of attempting to cast spells during combat. Outside of spell casting, the role of the low-level magic-user involves using ranged and thrown weapons (somewhat poorly), parleying on behalf of the party, perhaps mapping, and offering strategic advice to the other players. “Biding one’s time” is the watch-phrase which embodies the low-level magic-user play style. At higher levels, the class becomes a powerhouse, and the game strategy shifts into issues of resource management, risk assessment, and vulnerability. Be sure to keep on good terms with those fighters and men-at-arms!

Alignment: Magic-users can be of any alignment.

Hit Points: Magic-users gain between 1 and 4 hit points per experience level (1D4), as detailed hereafter.

Armor: Magic-users cannot abide armor or shields which interfere with either their channeling abilities, or their ability to weave magics with their hands and bodily stance. This means that magic-users do not wear armor, and cannot effectively use shields. If you insist upon your magic-user wearing armor — after all, there is nothing physically preventing a wizard from piling on some plate mail — your GM will let you know that this is antithetical to the will of the Primordial Unknown, and significant penalties to your character’s performance will follow. It’s truly best to not wear armor and to trust in your wits and allies to protect you from harm.

Weapons: In a similar manner, magic-users only wield Twin Soul-honoring weapons which serve as attenuators and conduits of channeled energy. These ritualized weapons include daggers, darts, knives, rods, slings, staves, and wands. Rods, staves, and wands are magical weapons which are not available at the beginning of the game.



Again, a magic-user is capable of carrying and even wielding a sword out of desperation, but the character who does so will not gain any XP during the session when the weapon was wielded. Magic-users who wish to gain further power quickly learn to reverse and honor the old ways, rather than resisting and fighting against them.

This is called the Riddle of the Two Souls. There are many theories as to why this state of affair exists, and the true answer is twofold: [1] The Primordial Unknown is a sentient force, which favors bloodlines of ancestral mortals who align themselves honorably with its age old channeling rituals; and,





[2] Game balance necessitates that magic-users have poor defenses and inferior combat capability to weigh against their sheer power of arcane spell casting. Magic-users are already the most powerful class in the game at higher levels; and they have traditionally been balanced by the precept that wizards don't wear armor when they put their avowed trust in the arcane. It may seem arbitrary, but this rule is an important one for the purposes of atmosphere, tradition, and game balance.

Esoteric Weaponry: Magic-users can use flaming oil in combat. Lawful and neutral magic-users can use holy water against undead, while chaotic magic-users can use unholy water against holy creatures. Lawful and neutral magic-users cannot use poison, but chaotic magic-users can. Lawful or neutral magic-users who insist upon using poison will become chaotic, and will be penalized by the GM for abandoning their beliefs.



Experience Level 1: A level 1 magic-user is commonly known as a Medium. (The term comes from spiritualism, and it means someone who serves as a channeler between the arcane realm and the mortal realm.) Other titles which are sometimes used include Apprentice, Familiar Seeker, Prentice, or Prestidigitator. The experience point range for level 1 begins at XP zero, and continues through XP 2,499. Level 1 magic-users begin the game with between 1 and 4 hit points, modified by constitution, as noted in ability scores chapter. At this level, magic-users have just recently left the tutelage of their wizardly mentor after proving that they can manage to cast and control a few arcane spells of their own. They are highly vulnerable, and will require the protection of other party members if they are ever to attain





experience level 2. Unlike clerics (who can only cast spells once they attain level 2), level 1 magic-users can already cast one 1st-level spell per day.

Experience Level 2: A level 2 magic-user is commonly known as an Alchemist's Disciple, Arcane Seer (male), Arcane Seeress (female), Evoker, Glassblower (alchemical specialization), Promising Medium, Seer (male) or Seeress (female). The experience point range for level 2 begins at XP 2,500, and continues through XP 4,999. Level 2 magic-users gain 1D4 additional hit points when they first rise from level 1, modified by constitution. (For example, a level 2 magic-user with CON 14 (+1) will gain 1D4+1 hit points instead of just 1D4.) At this level, magic-users can cast two 1st-level spells per day.

Experience Level 3: A level 3 magic-user is known as an Abjurer, Conjurer (male), Conjuress (female), Dweomer Crafter, Master Evoker, or Reagent Gatherer. The experience point range for level 3 begins at XP 5,000, and continues through XP 9,999. Level 3 magic-users gain 1D4 additional hit points when they first rise from level 2, modified by constitution. At this level, magic-users can cast two 1st-level spells and 1 2nd-level spell per day.

Summary of the Magic-User Class (Experience Levels 1 to 3)

Experience Points	Experience Level	Hit Points	Suggested Level Titles	Notes
0 to 2,499	1	2 to 4 (avg. 3)	Apprentice, Familiar Seeker, Medium, Prentice, Prestidigitator	Can cast 1 level 1 spell per day.
2,500 to 4,999	2	+1D4 (avg. 5.5)	Alchemist's Disciple, Arcane Seer / Arcane Seeress, Evoker, Glassblower, Promising Medium, Seer / Seeress	Can cast 2 level 1 spells per day.
5,000 to 9,999	3	+1D4 (avg. 8)	Abjurer, Conjurer / Conjuress, Dweomer Crafter, Master Evoker, Reagent Gatherer	Can cast 2 level 1 spells and 1 level 2 spell per day.

11-3

MAGIC-USER SPELL BOOKS

(GRIMOIRES)

Instead of relying on token weapons and armor, magic-users carry a mighty talisman which symbolizes and embodies their role as channelers between the world and the arcane: this is the Spell Book, a tome which is unique to each magic-user in the game.





Spell books are bulky, weighty grimoires fashioned from leather-bound reams of parchment, vellum, or papyrus. Each thick page is filled with magical incantations written in the mnemonic arcane language, pictures of magic circles, diagrams showing hand positions, notes on reagents (physical spell components, eye of newt, wing of bat, etc.), and warnings against the hazards of the incorrect spell casting. A single spell can require several pages of such art and information, thereby allowing the magic-user to re-memorize a known spell after it has been cast and its energies depleted from memory.



They all share some general traits which are worth considering. They are bulky and inconvenient Large (L3) objects according to the simple encumbrance system, and weigh the equivalent of 20 lbs. due to their awkward nature and need for careful carrying. The market value of a book is 1,000 gold pieces plus 100 gold pieces per experience level; this means that a book with 5 1st-level spells and 3 2nd-level spells (totaling 11 levels) would be worth 2,100 gold pieces. However, this is only worth knowing for when a spell book is discovered as treasure in an old grisly tomb or some such ... no living magic-user (a scion who lives his life in the name of high intelligence, no less!) would ever be so stupid as to sell a book for gold, utterly ruining himself in the process.

Because of the importance of the spell book, magic-users almost never adventure while carrying the grimoire. The book is almost always left at home, hidden carefully under lock and key. Once again, there is nothing physically stopping a determined magic-user from carrying the book into battle. And it can be advantageous to do so, because a caster can cast spells directly from the book without undergoing the usual memorization ritual. But the grave downsides to doing so are perilous:





[1] If a spell is cast directly from the book, there is a 25% chance that the casting's power will cause the spell's writings to be permanently erased, forever destroying the spell.

[2] If the spell book is destroyed, the magic-user will lose his library of spells and cannot memorize spells again until a new book is written ... which can require years, and thousands of gold pieces. And,

[3] When a spell is cast directly from a book, there is a 1% chance that the entire book will be consumed and blasted into ash by the mighty release of the chosen spell.

Combining these factors, it is very easy to see why casting a spell directly from the book is a fool's errand. Players can choose to have their magic-users do so, fully aware of the magnitude of the gamble they are taking. If the book is lost, stolen, or destroyed, the GM's response should amount to "Too bad, so sad." In the author's campaign, magic-users who have lost a spell book have retired in shame, rather than facing the terrible prospect of never regaining that true magnitude of power ever again.

Further information concerning higher-level grimoires, and special spell books, will appear in the Advanced Level volumes in this series. Rules will also be presented for the expensive recovery of lost spell books, the re-scribing of lost spells, and similar arcane issues.

Refer to the next chapter of this volume for more information on arcane spell casting.





CHAPTER 12: ARCANE SPELL CASTING





12-1

THE NATURE OF THE ARCANE



Unlike clerics who can pray for any spell of the appropriate spell level, magic-users must strive to discover new spells (typically inscribed on scrolls) throughout the world, and to add those new spells to their book. A magic-user can only memorize the spells which are written in his spell book; all other spells are denied to him. A very fortunate magic-user who discovers another mage's spell book as treasure can acquire the new book and add it to his collection, giving a total of two books to peruse during spell selection and memorization. (This will not happen often, and when it does, your PC magic-user will probably be quite ecstatic with the find!)

A level 1 magic-user will only four spells in his book: Read Magic (which is necessary to read any magical spells), an offensive spell, a defensive spell, and a miscellaneous utility spell, as mentioned prior. The spells will be selected by the player before the game begins, unless the GM dictates that he will randomly assign spells to the magic-user instead.

Each time a magic-user attains a new experience level beyond level 1, he undergoes a period of research — typically conducted in scholomances (magical schools), musty libraries, arcane archives and other willing wizards' collections — when spells are potentially traded with an NPC magic-user, or discovered in a musty tome and duly recorded in the PC's spell book. This activity requires one week of uninterrupted study, and results in the discovery of one random spell of the highest spell level that the magic-user can now cast, as rolled by the GM. For example, if Bastien the Conjurer advances from experience level 2 to level 3, thereby gaining the ability to cast 2nd-level spells, he will discover one





random 2nd-level spell which can then be freely added to his book. (If the GM ever rolls a spell which the magic-user already knows, the result will be rerolled until a truly new spell is discovered.)

This benefit is accrued with every experience level gained, but only if the magic-user spends the week researching alone, and only one spell per experience level.

In addition to this process, the magic-user will be scouring the land in search of new spells to add to the book as the result of adventures, companionship, and role-playing. The easiest arcane spells to potentially earn are those already known and secured by a companion. If the players of other magic-user PCs agree, the PC magic-users can “compare notes” and inscribe one another spells in their own books, even before play begins. This is a delicate matter of mutual trust, but if the players agree then the repertoires of both magic-users will be increased considerably.

Other spells can be gained from magical scrolls, defeated NPC magic-users’ spell books, and perhaps even paying gold to a higher-level magic-user NPC to swap valuable spells. All of these spell gaining activities will be devised and monitored by the Game Master during play.





12-2

FIRST LEVEL ARCANES SPELLS



**Charm Person****(M1, Offensive)***Being the bewitching art of Nimue, and the gentling of the mighty***Casting Time:** Instantaneous**Range:** 120'**Target:** Enemy**Duration:** Variable (see below)**Saving Throw:** A successful saving throw negates the spell

Description: This powerful spell allows a magic-user to attempt to beguile a sentient, living humanoid creature and to compel it to do his bidding.

If a saving throw vs. the spell is successful, the target will react in hostile fashion. A lawful victim would likely shout for the local guardsmen or cast the magic-user out, while a chaotic victim would probably attack (as determined by the GM).

If the saving throw is failed, the creature will treat the spell caster as a good and trusted friend. Note that this "good and trusted friend" guideline will be carefully monitored by the GM; a good friend would allow you into his home on momentary notice, but he would not allow you to ransack and take all of his treasures. The spell specifically compels the victim to fight other creatures in defense of the magic-user, however, and to assist in many other life-threatening circumstances. The GM might well assign penalties to lawful magic-users who use this spell to literally exploit innocent victims to death, however.

If the magic-user speaks the victim's language or can otherwise communicate (not including sign language and gestures), commands can be given. Commands by the caster's allies or others will not be accepted. No creature will accept a command to kill itself, and no creature will act against the most devout tenets of its own alignment. This means that lawful creatures will not commit murder on command, neutral creatures will only commit murder if the magic-user is in grave imminent danger, chaotic creatures will not surrender themselves to imprisonment, and so forth.

If the caster or one of the caster's allies ever harms the creature, the spell is immediately negated and the victim will attack. And further, in a Challenging difficulty level campaign, if the charmed creature is attacked or damaged by any source (not just the caster or an ally), the creature is able to make a saving throw when suffering the damage, with a successful save negating the charm person spell. This caused-by-damage saving throw can occur up to once per combat the creature is engaged in. The Game Master will need to decide if this rule also applies to Easy and Normal difficulty level campaigns; I suggest that it not do so, unless the players of magic-user PCs are thoroughly abusing the power of this level 1 spell (by, for example, turning innocent civilians into combat slaves).

The following is a list of creatures that can be affected by this spell: Beastman, Brownie, Deep One, Dryad, Dwarf (and all dwarven sub-races, such as Dvergar), Elf (and all elven sub-races, such as Dokkalfar), Gnoll, Gnome (and all gnomish sub-races), Goblin (and all goblin sub-races, such as Svart Goblin), Gremlin, Half-Elf, Half-Ogre, Half-Orc, Halfling (and all halfling sub-races), Hobgoblin (and all hobgoblin sub-races, such as Tusked Hobgoblin), Human, Kobold, Lizard Man, Nereid, Nixie, Nymph, Ogre, Orc, Pech, Pixie, Shade, Siren, Spriggan, Sprite, Swanmay, Tengu, Troglodyte. By extension, any creature that is not listed here (such as a wererat) is not affected by this spell unless the GM adjudicates





otherwise. The GM can also add to this list as needed as new creatures are developed and brought into the game.

Game Masters, please note that this spell is very powerful yet dangerous for its level, and it is specifically designed to empower level 1 magic-users and to ensure their potential survivability. Abuse of this spell is common and the potential for such should be vigilantly monitored during play.



**Darkness****(M1, Miscellaneous)**

This spell is identical to the level 1 cleric spell of the same name.

Detect Magic**(M1, Miscellaneous)**

This spell is identical to the level 1 cleric spell of the same name.

**Floating Disc****(M1, Miscellaneous)**

The arcane force-creation of earnest Lord Tensarien, barbarous mage of the Grey Realms

Casting Time: Short

Range: 5'

Target: Centered on caster

Duration: 3 turns (30 rounds) plus 1 turn per caster's experience level

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This spell creates a levitating, horizontally-positioned circle of dimly-radiant force, which follows the caster at a range of about 6' away. The disc hovers at a height of 3'. The translucent disc's energy sheds dim light in a 10' radius.





The purpose of the spell is to allow a spell caster to transport more treasure and equipment without encumbering themselves. It is even possible for someone to ride on the disc, or for a wounded comrade to be settled upon it. However, since it follows the caster, the caster himself cannot ride on it! The caster can however approach the disc (using a hand gesture) to drop things onto it, and to lift things from its surface.

In tight spaces, the disc will do its best to accommodate the physical limitations of the area without moving through objects. The disc is about 3' wide, so it should be able to move into most areas. A rapidly closing door could cause the door to intervene between disc and caster, which would cause the disc to vanish once the caster is more than 6' away. During frenetic situations such as combat, however, the disc will absolutely move as the caster moves, whether charging, fleeing, or attempting to make way for attacking allies. This can create some rather amusing situations as materials are jostled off the disc's surface, or the disc "crashes" into someone at low speed and potentially pushes them out of the way (for no damage).

The disc will hold up to 5,000 coins worth of weight (500 lbs.). If overloaded by any amount, it will vanish. It will also vanish upon the caster's command, or when the spell duration ends. Vanishing is abrupt and potentially disastrous if the disc was carrying potion bottles, a dying companion, a fragile treasure, etc. The spell has significant limitations, and the caster would be well advised to track the amount of passing time as more and more material is loaded onto the disc's surface.

Hold Portal

(M1, Defensive)

Being the invisible hand which grasps, the kinetic force which remains upon the threshold

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: 20' per caster's experience level

Target: Object

Duration: 1 round per caster experience level

Saving Throw: None allowed

Description: This telekinetic spell can be cast upon any aperture which opens and closes. It can be used on a door, gate, portcullis, trapdoor, the covering of a pit, and so forth. It cannot be cast on an open archway, open air, or an object (such as an upended table blocking a doorway).

The effect of the spell is to hold the portal closed with an invisible force of considerable strength. A character of less than 18 strength and cannot open the portal until the spell ends, unless they make a successful bend bars / lift gates percentage roll (per the strength rules). Each character can only attempt to open the door once while the spell is in effect. A character of 18 strength, or a monster of 3 hit dice or more, can open the door in 1 round. Monsters of less than 3 hit dice cannot open the door unless they are stated to have a strength score, in which case they follow the bend bars check rule (with the GM rolling 1D100 to determine success or failure).

The spell does not work against planar creatures, such as demons, devils, elementals, and so forth.





Once the door is opened, the spell is negated. The caster can choose to open the door, but doing so negates the spell; it cannot admit or deny creatures selectively based on the caster's wishes.

A knock spell (see later, 2nd level) will negate and break a hold portal spell.

Light

(M1, Miscellaneous)

This spell is identical to the level 1 cleric spell of the same name.

Magic Missile

(M1, Offensive)

The spell-darts of the Magus Vincentus of the Ultimate Price, arcane duelist extraordinaire

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: 60' plus 10' per caster's experience level

Target: Enemy

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: No saving throw is allowed

Description: This spell allows the caster to shoot arrow-like bolts of luminous energy from his fingertips. The missiles move at blinding speed, crossing the distance (up to the spell's maximum range) in less than a second. Further, they are "heat-seeking" and cannot be dodged. The missiles will even dodge around intervening creatures and objects to strike the intended target, and no other. However the caster must have a line of sight to the target at the moment the spell is cast. (This means that invisible creatures cannot be targeted, but flying creatures and those hiding behind defending minions certainly can.)

Each missile inflicts 1D6+1 points of energy damage. Being magical, the missiles will damage creatures who can only be hit by magic weapons. If there are multiple desired targets, the caster can decide how many missiles to send at target A, how many to send at target B, and so forth. Missiles which "overkill" a target (killing it, leaving multiple missiles sent into a target that is already dead) will not redirect themselves to a newly-desired target; the missiles will only hit the creature(s) the magic-user's player first declared as target(s).

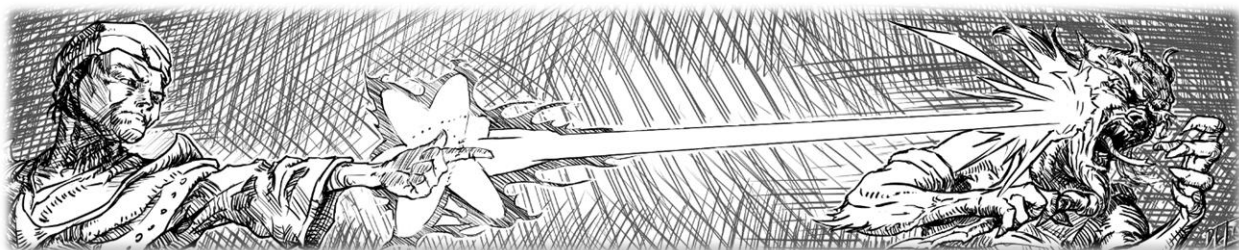
The exact number of missiles which will be cast is dependent upon the caster's experience level, as follows:

- **Experience Level 1 to 3:** 1 missile only
- **Experience Level 4 or 5:** 2 missiles
- **Experience Level 6 to 8:** 3 missiles
- **Experience Level 9 or 10:** 4 missiles
- **Experience Level 11 to 13:** 5 missiles





- Experience Level 14 or 15: 6 missiles
- Experience Level 16 to 18: 7 missiles
- (etc.)



Protection from Chaos / Protection from Evil

(M1, Defensive)

This spell is identical to the level 1 cleric spell of the same name.





Protection from Law / Protection from Good

(M1, Defensive)

This spell is identical to the level 1 cleric spell of the same name.



Read Languages (aka Comprehend Languages)

(M1, Miscellaneous)

The manifestation of the Primordial Unknown upon the third eye, eternal speaker of tongues

Casting Time: Short

Range: Self

Target: Self (and technically affected objects)

Duration: 5 rounds per caster's experience level

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This spell will allow the caster (only) to read any language. If the caster is of experience level 5+, he can also comprehend (but not speak) any spoken language.





The language could be foreign, or ancient, or in a primal alignment tongue, or even a secret code, and the magic-user will nevertheless be able to fully interpret the meaning. The spell works partly via divination and immortal guidance, and partly by the caster picking up a psychic resonance which has been left behind by the writer.

As a general guideline, the magic-user can skim up to 30 pages or read up to 15 pages in full detail before the spell expires. The text on the page will not change, only the caster's interpretation of it. This means that once the spell expires the writing will become cryptic and indecipherable once again ... but the magic-user's memory of what has read will remain.

This spell will not however allow the caster to read magical spells which have been written down in a scroll or spell book; that is the sole province of the read magic spell (below).

If a magic-user wishes to cast a "reversal" of this spell (called Confuse Languages), this effect can be used to make any document unreadable by anyone who does not cast a Read Language spell. Due to the short duration, however, this specialized technique is highly situational and rarely used.

Read Magic

(M1, Miscellaneous, Mandatory)

Being thy prime lesson in all the arcane arts, namely, that of arcane comprehension

Casting Time: Short

Range: Self

Target: Self (and technically affected objects)

Duration: 1 turn (10 rounds) or 2 rounds per caster's experience level, whichever is higher

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This is the one spell which every magic-user in the game world possesses. It is the first spell that an apprentice learns from his mentor, and the success of the spell marks the caster as a chosen one who is favored by the Primordial Unknown.

If a magic-user looks at a magical scroll or spell book without casting this spell, he will understand that the written runes indicate some kind of arcane spell, but he will not be able to decipher what is said. When this spell is cast, a psychic channel is opened in the caster's mind and the spell's intent and procedures are made clear.

A spell that is deciphered in this manner can either be saved for future use, remaining in the scroll or spell book where it already resides; or, the magic-user can choose to copy the spell into his own spell book. In the Basic Game, this procedure takes an amount of time equal to the caster's experience level minus the spell level, plus one, multiplied by 60 minutes:

$(\text{Experience Level} - \text{Spell Level} + 1) \times 60$

For example, a level 1 spell caster recording a level 1 spell would require 60 minutes to copy the spell. Spells which are beyond the caster's level of comprehension (of a spell level too high for the caster to yet cast) cannot be correctly recorded, and any such attempt will fail.





The minimum amount of time required to copy a spell is 30 minutes. The spell can continue to be copied even after the read magic spell's duration ends. It requires the spell book, a quill, ink, and uninterrupted time spent in relative silence without interruption. In other words, copying a spell in a dungeon is a risky proposition, but the task is easily handled "at home."

If a spell is copied from a scroll into a spell book, or from a spell book into another spell book, the original writing will remain and the copy will remain as well. But if a spell is copied from one scroll onto another, the writing on the original scroll will fade as the same words are copied onto the new scroll; this means that copying a scroll will change the scroll that the spell is written on, but it will not create two spell scrolls where only one existed.

This spell can also be used to read enchanted runes, symbols, and sigils, and to comprehend the gist (but not the full mantra) of a clerical spell. For example, a magic-user casting a read magic spell on a clerical scroll would be able to determine that the scroll has the divine spells cure light wounds and light written on it, but he would not be able to effectively copy those spells in his book, or cast them.



Shield

(M1, Defensive)

The manifestation of the arcane scutum, repulsor of the barbs and slings of lesser beings

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Self





Target: Self

Duration: 5 rounds per caster's experience level

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This spell creates a translucent, magical barrier of energy in front of the caster. The spell is roughly in the form of a vertical oval, as tall as the caster and about 3' wide. This is a field of force large enough to deflect many attacks, but it is not large enough to block significant effects of power (such as a dragon's fiery breath or a poisonous gas). The spell will not protect the caster's allies, with the sole exception of a small familiar that is in contact with the caster (say, an imp perched on the caster's shoulder).

The spell gives the caster a frontal-and-flank +8 armor class bonus vs. ranged physical attacks, and a +6 armor class bonus vs. physical melee attacks. For example, if a magic-user of high DEX (17, +2 armor class) has a normal armor class of 8, he will have a temporary AC of 0 vs. missiles and AC 2 vs. melee weapons. He will not be protected from attacks from behind, however.

No amount of damage will negate the shield. The caster can cancel the spell when desired, as the shield will (for example) effectively make it very difficult for the caster to attack with a melee or ranged weapon, or even to open a door. Weapon attacks made by a shielded caster will be at -4 to hit, and awkward interaction with physical objects will need to be interpreted by the GM. However the caster's ability to cast additional spells while the shield is up will be not be penalized in any significant way.

Sleep

(M1, Offensive)

The slumberous chaunt of the Eye-Hungering Sandman, deceiver of the sentry's vigilance

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: 30' plus 10' per caster's experience level

Target: Area or Enemy (special restriction, see below)

Duration: 4 to 16 turns (40 to 160 rounds), as secretly determined by the Game Master rolling 4D4

Saving Throw: A saving throw vs. magic will negate the effect for that creature (this balancing measure is required, otherwise this spell would be far too powerful for a 1st-level spell, particularly when used against the PCs)

Description: This powerful magic will force selected enemies within the range of the spell to fall into a temporary coma-like slumber. That wording by the way is important: If there is a melee going on between the caster, 7 allies, and two groups of 7 monsters each, the caster could choose to target one of the groups of monsters, or both of them, and the intervening allies would not be adversely affected. However, the caster cannot target individuals within a group. If there were 7 goblins, the caster's player could not state, "I will cast sleep on unwounded goblins number 3 and 5"; the spell would be an all or nothing affair against all 7 goblins. Some GM adjudication may be needed in a confused melee with more than two battling factions.



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Creatures which do not sleep by nature cannot be affected by this spell. This includes the undead, elementals, automatons, golems, and so forth. Strange creatures which need to rest or lie dormant for a while (such as small slimes and fungi) could potentially be affected, however.

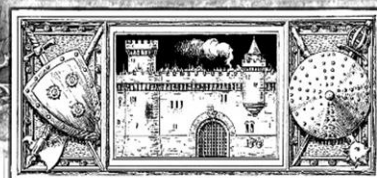


Trickily, the caster cannot determine which creatures are affected, and the number of creatures affected will be random. A total of 2D8 hit dice or levels of creatures will be affected, and the weakest creatures will be targeted first. Any creatures of experience level zero, or hit dice lower than 1, are treated as HD 1 for such considerations. Also, a creature with “plusses” in its hit dice would have those plusses rounded down for target determination purposes. Creatures of 5 or more hit dice or levels are always immune to this spell.

As an example, if a sleep spell is cast at 5 kobolds (HD ½ each), 3 evil men-at-arms (level zero), 2 lizard men (HD 2+1 each) and a level 4 chaotic cleric, the values for targeting purposes would be kobolds HD 1, men-at-arms HD 1, lizard men HD 2, and cleric HD 4. If the caster’s player rolled a 9 on 2D8, the spell would target all of the kobolds and all of the men-at-arms (8 HD-equivalents total). A lizard man however would not be affected, because there would only be 1 HD-equivalent left in the power of the spell vs. the lizard man’s HD 2, and a creature cannot be “partially asleep.” If a 10 had been rolled, 1 lizard man would have been affected in addition to the kobolds and the men-at-arms. The cleric in any case would not be affected. If a 5 had been rolled instead of a 9, then only kobolds and men-at-arms would be affected, as determined by the GM. I would recommend splitting the effect, so that (for example) 3 kobolds and 2 men-at-arms would suffer the effects of the spell.



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Any sleeping creature can be awakened by shaking or slapping, but not by shouting or the clamor of melee. Awakened creatures will recover quite slowly, requiring a full round — even in the midst of a melee — to awaken and be prepared for fight or flight. Sleeping creatures cannot protect themselves from attacks, but adjacent allies can defend them, which means (in practice) that sleeping creatures cannot be slain until after melee has ended.

The rules for a coup de grace, or one-hit kill against a defenseless opponent, depend on the GM's sense of fairness and the difficulty of the campaign. I recommend the following guidelines:

- Sleeping victims do not gain any armor class modifiers from dexterity or shields, but they do gain (passive) armor class from armor worn and protective magic items.
- In a combat situation where sleeping victims can be attacked — for example, when the party is dispatching sleeping orcs and the orcs' allies who could save them are 60' away, across the room — a to hit roll is required.
- In a non-combat situation — for example, if all of the orcs in the room are already slain or sleeping — no to hit roll is required.
- In an Easy-DL campaign, a sleeping creature can be attacked and brought to zero hit points by a single blow, and will then not awaken due to unconsciousness; a second blow will cause death.
- In a Normal-DL campaign, a sleeping creature can be attacked and brought to -1 hit points by a single blow, and will not awaken due to bleeding and unconsciousness; a second blow will cause death.
- In a Challenging-DL campaign, a sleeping creature can be killed with one successful attack.
- A creature delivering a coup de grace can conduct no more than one such "attack" per round.

If the GM would like to allow casters to use targeted sleep casting (targeting a specific creature instead of an area), the restrictions on such casting are as follows: [1] The player of the casting magic-user must declare that a target sleep spell is being cast, and must declare the single target enemy ("the biggest orc," "the spell caster," "the guy in the glowing helm," etc.). [2] The player must understand that no dice will be rolled to determine the number of creatures affected; only the single target will be effected. [3] If the saving throw is made by the single target, the spell is wasted. [4] If the target has 5 or more hit dice, or 5 or more experience levels, the saving throw automatically succeeds and the spell is wasted. [5] The GM is under no obligation to tell the caster's player if the target has too many hit dice or levels; the GM will pretend to make a saving throw, and will simply state that the target made its save. Whether targeted sleep is allowed in the game is solely up to the GM, and if it is, it applies to every PC and NPC who can cast the spell. Remember that these restrictions are in place to balance the power of this already powerful 1st-level spell.

Now do keep in mind that evil NPCs can cast this nasty sleep spell on the party, and effectively take the party down with one series of bad saving throw rolls! For this reason, the GM is encouraged to have





this spell used to take the PCs prisoner, rather than killing them outright. But if the PCs use this spell mercilessly on enemies, those enemies will surely return the favor.

In pace requiescat ...



**Ventriloquism****(M1, Miscellaneous)***The throwing of voices, the mimicry of beasts, the call of the cackling raven***Casting Time:** Instantaneous**Range:** 10' per caster's experience level, to a maximum of 60'**Target:** Area, enemy, or object**Duration:** 2 rounds + 1 round per caster's experience level**Saving Throw:** None

Description: This spell allows the caster to "throw" his voice to something within range. His voice will seem to come from a creature, a place (such as the darkness around a corner), or an object as desired. The caster's voice will not change, but he can attempt to mimic growls, a guttural shout, or whatever else he likes. The effect on other creatures within range is dependent upon the GM's interpretation, but considering the fact that this is a 1st-level spell (at the same power tier as magic missile and sleep), it is very likely that the effect will be beneficial to the party. For example, if the party is being charged by goblins, and the caster (imitating a goblin chieftain) were to shout "More attackers, help! Save us!" then the goblins would be likely to fall back to the point where the voice was coming from. However, this spell will not automatically turn intelligent creatures stupid!

The caster cannot use this spell to speak in an unknown language, or to cast a spell from another remote location. At the GM's option, it can be used to create very loud amplified noises (such as a roar) or convincing sound effects (such as the moaning of a ghost, or perhaps even a distant explosion). The level of mimicry allowed by this spell should be minimal, but the GM should also consider that this spell is relatively underpowered if creative interpretation by the caster's player is not (at least sometimes) rewarded.

12-3

SECOND LEVEL ARCANES SPELLS**Continual Darkness****(M2, Miscellaneous)***The ever-lasting ebon mantle, that which hides the revelation of Nyx and of Nyarlathotep***Casting Time:** Instantaneous**Range:** Self or 120'**Target:** Ally, area, enemy, object, or self**Duration:** Permanent until dispelled

Saving Throw: Spell is negated if cast on an enemy who makes his saving throw; otherwise, a saving throw is not needed





Description: This spell is very similar to a darkness spell (already described), but the duration is permanent until the darkness is either dispelled by a more powerful magic (dispel magic, level 3), or the caster wills the spell to end. All of the effects and options are — besides the text listed above in this entry — are identical to a darkness spell.



Continual Light

(M2, Miscellaneous)

The eternal radiance of the Primordial, emanation of the gathered celestial mansions

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Self or 120'

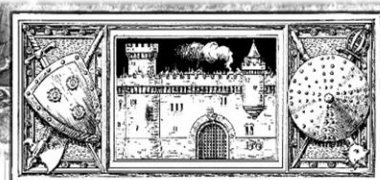
Target: Ally, area, enemy, object, or self

Duration: Permanent until dispelled

Saving Throw: Spell is negated if cast on an enemy who makes his saving throw; otherwise, a saving throw is not needed



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Description: This spell is very similar to a light spell (already described), but the duration is permanent until the light is either dispelled by a more powerful magic (dispel magic, level 3), or the caster wills the spell to end. All of the effects and options are — besides the text listed above in this entry — are identical to a darkness spell.

Hypothetically, this spell could cause permanent blindness to a creature if cast on the eyes and if the spell persisted for many days or weeks without being dispelled.



**Detect Chaos / Detect Evil****(M2, Miscellaneous)**

This spell is identical to the level 1 cleric spell of the same name.

Detect Law / Detect Good**(M2, Miscellaneous)**

This spell is identical to the level 1 cleric spell of the same name.

Detect Invisibility**(M2, Miscellaneous)**

The ocular revelation of They who walk between the worlds, serene

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Self and 30' Radius

Target: Centered on caster

Duration: 5 rounds per caster's experience level

Saving Throw: None needed or allowed

Description: This spell allows the caster to detect invisible creatures, objects, and features within the spell's radius. It will not fully detect ethereal, astral, or shadow creatures, but they will be revealed as hazy outlines ... although they cannot be attacked unless the caster magically enters the same realm where such creatures reside (the ethereal plane, the astral plane, or the plane of shadow, as described in the Advanced Level supplements in this series).

This spell will, depending on the GM's interpretation of the spell, likely also detect any character or monster that is hidden in shadows, or merely camouflaged.

Detected invisible creatures can be attacked, but they will not become visible until they themselves attack or cast a spell. Detected invisible objects and features can be manipulated or further investigated, but they will not lose their invisibility as a result of this spell, and the caster will "lose sight" of such things once the spell's duration has fully expired.

Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP)**(M2, Miscellaneous)**

Being the prying upon the eye of the Other, that which beholds only reflections

Casting Time: Short

Range: 5' per caster's experience level, to a maximum of 90'

Target: Ally or enemy

Duration: 1 round per caster's experience level

Saving Throw: None is allowed





Description: (Please note this spell's casting time, which can make it difficult to use.) This spell establishes a one-way psychic link between the caster and a selected living creature. The caster will be able to hear the thoughts of the creature in question, for the duration of the spell.

The undead, mindless things, and fungal creatures cannot be affected by this spell. Lovecraftian entities can have their thoughts read, but not fully comprehended; and the caster risks temporary insanity by probing too deeply. Beasts can have their thoughts read as quick impulses of words and images and sensory impacts, but the GM will not be inclined to provide full sentences of psychic narrative unless the affected creature's intelligence is at least 5.

The affected target will know that something is wrong, but will not be able to pinpoint the nature of the psychic disturbance. The caster might well be able to learn secret passwords, the locations of secret rooms, alliances, love interests, and so forth if the target is actively thinking of such things; but deeper layers of suppressed memory (past experiences, origin, etc.) will not be detected.

A line of sight to the target is required when the casting of this spell begins but the effects can continue even if the subject then moves out of sight ... but only to the maximum range of the spell. If there are intervening sentient creatures in the direct line between the caster and the subject when the link is first established, the caster will then require 1D6 minutes of meditation to find the subject's "channel" and to comprehend the thoughts as unique insights amongst an outside swarm of gibberish.

Once the link is fully established, the caster can do other simple things — walk, explore, listen — but cannot perform strenuous activities, or cast another spell, or the link will be instantly nullified. Walls thicker than 2', and any thickness of lead, will prevent this spell from functioning through the barrier.

Invisibility

(M2, Defensive)

The veils of mists, the shroud of the twisted light

Casting Time: Short

Range: Self or 240'

Target: Ally, object, or self

Duration: Special, permanent until nullified (see below)

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This spell allows the caster to turn himself invisible for a limited amount of time. Alternately, a willing ally can be affected, or a single object. Note that "single object" may require GM interpretation; a treasure chest could be rendered invisible, but if the chest was opened the contents would become visible, and removed coins (for example) would remain visible until they are placed back into the chest.

When cast on a creature the spell magically warps light around the subject's form, while simultaneously granting the subject the ability to see out of the effect without distortion. Worn and carried objects will remain invisible for as long as they are carried. A sword drawn by the subject would remain invisible, but would become visible if dropped; and if picked up again, it would be rendered invisible once again. But if the caster were knocked over and a carried sack was spilled, the objects in the sack would





tumble out and become visible while the caster remained unseen. And interestingly, if a torch were carried, the torch would be invisible but the light emanating from it would be very visible (!) and the heat from the flames would surely be felt.

Invisibility only affects the character's visibility. It does not make the subject silent or fragrance-free! Further, the invisible subject can be detected if surrounded by smoke, mist, powder, water, etc. The spell effectively grants a 90% hiding in shadows skill while active, and the subject can move or even run while invisible and likely remain unseen ... although he will probably be heard.

As can be surmised, this spell requires careful descriptions of action from the caster's player, and judicious interpretation by the Game Master.

If an invisible character or creature attacks, the invisibility is immediately negated, but the character will enjoy a +2 chance to hit in melee due to the abject surprise of the defender. Similarly, casting a spell from invisibility negates the spell; but the invisibility is then not nullified until the spell is completed, which will typically allow the caster to get a "one off" spell fully cast.

When an invisible person uses a magic item, they will lose invisibility if the magic item's effect targets an enemy or area. For example, drinking a potion will not break invisibility; but aiming a wand at an ogre and discharging magical energy at it will break the invisibility at the moment the wand is used.

Most monsters will soon detect an invisible character, unless he is not using a light source, and is moving silently. But anyone attempting to attack a known invisible creature in the area suffers a -4 penalty to any to hit rolls. And further, the invisible creature will not become visible simply by being attacked by outsiders. The invisibility is only negated if the invisible creature attacks or casts a spell.

The spell can also be negated by the caster at will. And logically speaking, if cast on a creature who is not the caster, the subject can cause himself to become invisible by willing himself to appear to others, which negates the spell. (This is a rare instance where the subject, rather than the caster, can willingly end the magical effect.)

Knock

(M2, Miscellaneous)

The kinetic force of the malleus-fist upon the forbidden gateway

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: 60'

Target: Object

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Description: This spell uses an invisible bolt of telekinetic force to open a stuck, or even a locked, portal. It can break a hold portal or wizard lock spell, or shackles and manacles. It can temporarily unlock any physical lock, but if the door is then allowed to close it will lock itself once more. (And a trap, if present in conjunction with the lock, will certainly trigger when the knock spell is cast ... which can save the caster some serious trouble if the spell is cast from a decent range.)

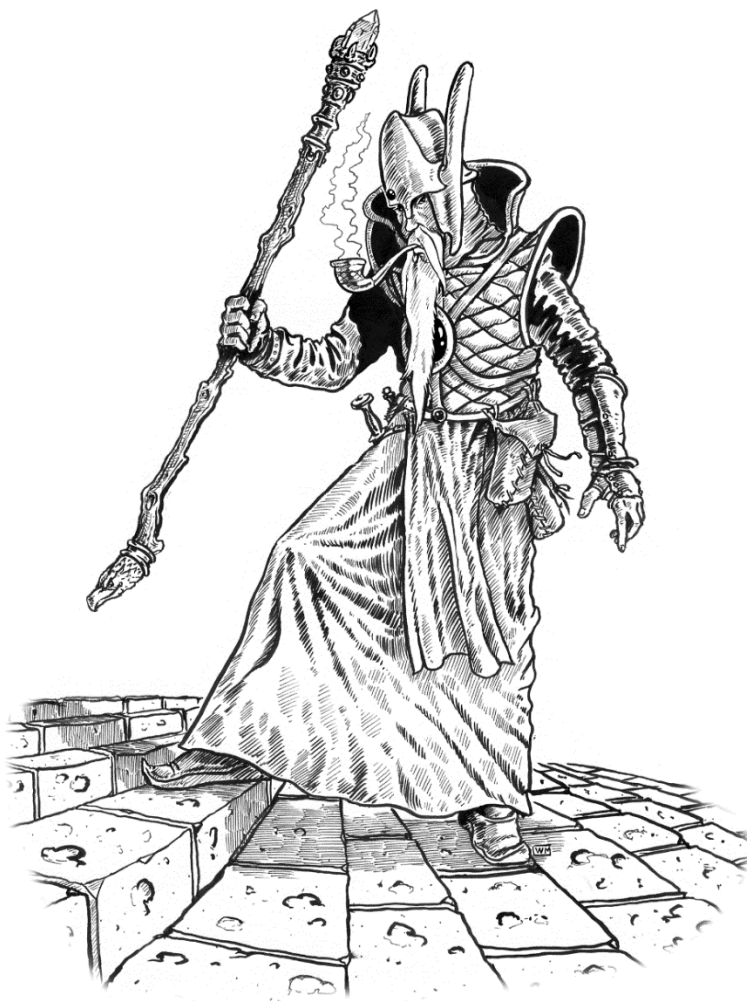




If cast at a locked, stuck, and barred door, the spell will simultaneously unlock the lock, unstick the door (leaving it standing open), and lift the bar. If cast at a closed portcullis, and if the caster is of experience level 6+, the portcullis would lift and remain in the up position for 1D6 rounds (as randomly rolled in secret by the GM). If the caster is of experience level 5 or lower, a portcullis cannot be affected. If cast at a drawbridge, the drawbridge would probably not lower, because it is technically a bridge and not a portal, but that is open to the GM's interpretation.

This spell can also be used to unlock chests, a locked and clasped grimoire, and so forth. It can open a detected secret door if the door's opening mechanism has not yet been located, but it cannot be cast at a wall in hopes of finding an undetected secret door. The spell cannot be used to knock over creatures or objects, and it cannot be used to remove barriers in front of a door or opening, such as a boulder or a pile of rubble.

The spell will only affect a single "object." In other words, in a room featuring six locked chests, the caster would need to decide which single chest would be the target of the spell.



**Levitate****(M2, Miscellaneous)*****The lifting of the corporeal form upon the aether*****Casting Time:** Instantaneous**Range:** Self or 30'**Target:** Ally, enemy, or self**Duration:** 6 turns (60 rounds), plus 1 turn per experience level of the caster (7 turns at experience level 1)**Saving Throw:** If the target of the spell is unwilling, then a successful saving throw will lift the target only an inch above the ground before the spell is negated**Description:** This spell will cause the caster (only) and all carried objects to rise into the air, at a maximum rate of 20' per round. The direction and speed of ascent and descent can be controlled by the will of the caster. It does not allow forward, backward, or sideways movement of any kind. However, a caster could rise to touch the ceiling, and then use his hands to move along the ceiling slowly (10' per round) in a desired direction.

The technical limit of things that can be carried by the caster of this spell is 100 lbs., or 1,000 coins per experience level of the caster, to a maximum of 1,000 lbs. or 10,000 coins. If someone were to grasp the caster's ankles, that person might be lifted into the air if he or she was light; but more likely, such action would prevent the caster from levitating properly.

While the spell is active, the caster can cast other spells and remain levitating. Similarly, if the caster descends to ground level, the spell does not end; he can then walk somewhere else and re-levitate and continue to do so until the spell's duration has expired.

Locate Object**(M2, Miscellaneous)*****The seeking of the serendipitous, the phantom hound which scents the way*****Casting Time:** Short**Range:** Self and 60' radius, plus an additional 10' per experience level of the caster (80' at experience level 1, etc.)**Target:** Centered on caster**Duration:** 1 round per caster's experience level**Saving Throw:** None needed (beneficial)**Description:** This spell is a divination. It allows the caster to temporarily channel with some immortal presence, for the sole purpose of located a specified type of object. The caster will have an abstract mental compass gauging the nearest appropriate object, and will therefore — despite walls, obstacles, or verticality — know the direction but not the precise distance to the appropriate thing. If the thing is buried, in a container, etc., the caster will know when he is standing in close proximity because the "compass" will no longer be moving.



The object can either be specific if known (“The silver key that was stolen from us yesterday”) or abstract if not (“A key,” or “Something made of silver”). The spell can also be used to target a desired type of object-feature, such as a stairway, door, chest, or even the metal gold. And yes, a clever player could state “A secret door” as the object to be searched for, which would turn this spell into a “find secret doors” spell until such a door is detected. At that point, the secret door would be found and the spell’s channeling would continue on in search of other instances of secret doors.

The spell cannot be used to detect a creature, and it will not detect traps or unfortunate circumstances. For example, if the caster decides to focus on “gems and jewels,” the spell will detect the nearby gems in a treasure chest ... but it will not detect the trap inside the chest, nor the giant spiders which have spun an enormous web above it.

Mirror Image

(M2, Defensive)

Being the coruscating reflections upon the prism of deceit

Casting Time: Instantaneous

Range: Self and 5' Radius

Target: Self

Duration: 6 turns (60 rounds)

Saving Throw: None needed (beneficial)

Description: This defensive spell creates 1D4 illusory reflections of the caster. If the spell caster is of experience level 6 or higher, an advantaged 1D4 is rolled (roll 1D4 twice, and accept only the highest result).

The reflections are not sentient or free-willed, they are merely “smoke and mirrors.” They are however 100% convincing, and indistinguishable from the caster. Further, they are fully animated and they will appear to speak, move, and act as the caster does. Note that they cannot cast spells or attack, however.

The reflections will appear within a 5' radius of the caster. If one reflection is created, it will take station either to the left or right of the caster; and if multiples are created, they will appear and remain in random locations and they move in relation to the caster. Note that the effect of this spell can be accidentally spoiled by an ally being in direct proximity to the caster, meaning in the same square (for those GMs who use a game board to track tactical activity).

A solid attack on an image will destroy the image, but the caster will not be successfully hit until all of the images are dissipated in this manner. Each reflection will have the same armor class as the caster himself. An area of effect spell or breath weapon will probably negate all of the images simultaneously, while also causing damage to the caster. This means that the spell is much more effective against weapon attacks than it is vs. spells.

If a magic missile is cast at a mirror-imaged caster, the first 1 to 4 missiles will hit the images (one per reflection), destroying them. Any remaining missiles will then successfully hit the mirror-imaged caster once all of the reflections have been thus destroyed.



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Web

(M2, Offensive)

Manifestation of the prisons of Arachne, binding as woe come the crawlings from under Leng

Casting Time: Short

Range: 10'

Target: Area, enemy, or object

Duration: 2 turns (20 rounds) per caster's experience level

Saving Throw: If a successful saving throw vs. spells is made, that target has the duration of the web's effect reduced by half, rounded down

Description: This rather disturbing spell opens a one-way dimensional portal to Leng, and causes giant spider web strands to spew forth into an area immediate in front of the caster. The range is a 10'x10'x10' area per experience level of the caster, to a maximum of 800 square feet of coverage (8 10'x10' squares).





The spell is dangerous because it will engulf friend and foe alike if they happen to be standing in the area affected. A webbed area will block movement through the affected area, and will block missile fire as well (except for flaming oil, of course, which will burn the webs away). Note that due to these circumstances, this spell is quite powerful against a single person or creature who is exploring a dungeon without allies.

Spiders, non-corporeal creatures, and slimes cannot be impeded by this spell.

Once creatures are engulfed by the webs, they are immobilized and can no longer move. Any armor class bonuses for dexterity or shield are negated. They can cast spells if they are lucky (DEX x 3% of the time) and speak, but they cannot attack or use any items that are not already held in hand. Hits will not land automatically on the affected creature(s), but armor class will be compromised and they will be very vulnerable until they can break free. Characters in webs gain no dexterity bonus to armor class, and opponents are at +4 to hit them with ranged weapons, or +1 to hit them with melee weapons. The slight +1 bonus to melee attacks is because attackers must be careful not to get their weapons (or physical strikes) snared by the webs.

As a matter of game balance, each successful hit landed on a web-entrapped creature will reduce that creature's length of ensnarement by 5 melee rounds. For example, if a character was only going to be trapped for 4 more rounds, and an attacker successfully hits him, the character will suffer that attack's damage and then be freed from the webs.

Breaking free requires either flame or violent resistance. Flame can be used if any trapped creature was carrying a lit torch or lantern at the time of engulfment, or from an outside friend or foe.

If fire is used, the webs will burn away and allow freedom in 2 rounds, but all creatures who were trapped will suffer 1D6+1 points of fire damage.

The amount of time it takes creatures to break the webs with violent force is based on each trapped creature's strength, as follows:

- **STR 3 to 8:** 50 to 80 rounds ((1D4+4)x10)
- **STR 9 to 12:** 20 to 80 rounds (2D4x10)
- **STR 13:** 10 to 60 rounds (1D6x10)
- **STR 14:** 10 to 40 rounds (1D4x10)
- **STR 15:** 5 to 30 rounds (5D6)
- **STR 16:** 4 to 18 rounds (4D4+2)
- **STR 17:** 3 to 12 (3D4)
- **STR 18:** 3 to 6 rounds (1D4+2)
- **STR 19 to 21:** 2 rounds
- **STR 22 or 23:** 1 round
- **STR 24 or 25:** Instantaneous breakage





- Separate round durations are rolled for each trapped creature
- Note of course that if the spell's duration runs out, all still-trapped creatures are automatically freed from the webs.

Wizard Lock

(M2, Defensive)

The binding which holds upon the treasures of the wise

Casting Time: Long

Range: 10'

Target: Object

Duration: Permanent until dispelled

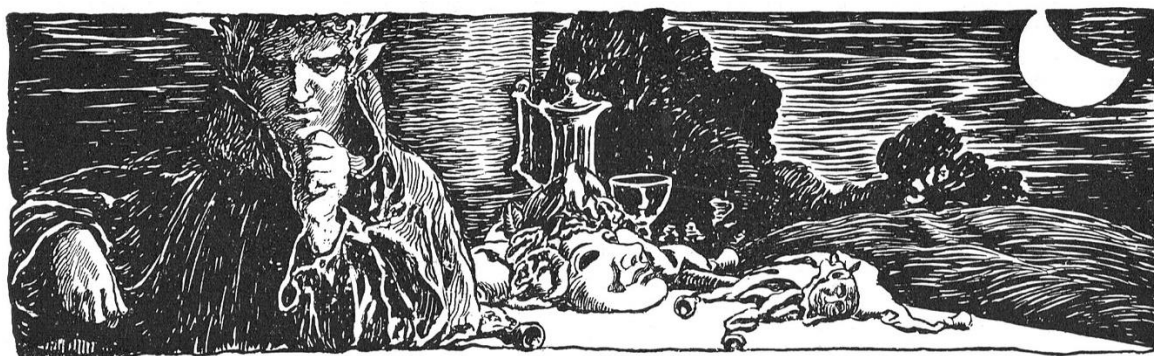
Saving Throw: None

Description: This spell is similar to hold portal, but it takes a longer time to cast, and its effect can be permanent. The spell can be cast on anything with a lock or locking clasp, such as a door, trapdoor, padlocked gate, treasure chest, or spell book. If desired, the magic-user can "key" the lock so that he (only) can open the locked thing with ease, but no one else can do so.

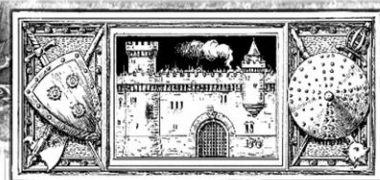
Planar creatures (demons, devils, elementals), etc.) cannot sunder a wizard lock spell, because the kinetic enchantment is more powerful than a mere level 1 hold portal spell.

The spell can usually only be lifted in one of three ways: [1] a knock spell; [2] a dispel magic (level 3) spell; or, [3] any magic-user (but not other class of character) who is at least 4 experience levels higher than the wizard lock caster can open the lock unimpeded. Method [2] is permanent, but methods [1] and [3] will only nullify the wizard lock for 1D4+1 rounds before its enchantment resumes.

If these measures are not available, there is nothing stopping adventurers from hacking away at the locked thing with axes or similar chopping weapons. A typical dungeon door has 100 hit points, a wooden chest has 50, a typical lock has 30 and a coffer has 15. However, this will cause a great deal of noise and any fragile treasure held inside a container that is treated in this manner is almost certain to be destroyed.



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Summary of Basic Magic-User Spells

Spell / Minimum Caster Level	Spell Level	Casting Time	Range	Target	Duration	Saving Throw
Charm Person (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	120'	Enemy	Variable	Negates
Continual Darkness (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Instant	Self or 120'	Ally, Area, Enemy, Object, or Self	Permanent until dispelled	Negates (if target was an enemy)
Continual Light (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Instant	Self or 120'	Ally, Area, Enemy, Object, or Self	Permanent until dispelled	Negates (if target was an enemy)
Darkness (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	Self or 120'	Ally, Area, Enemy, Object, or Self	6 turns + 1 turn / level	Negates (if target was an enemy)
Detect Chaos / Detect Evil (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Short	Self and 120' radius	Centered on Caster	1 turn + 5 rounds / level	None needed or allowed
Detect Invisibility (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Instant	Self and 30' radius	Centered on caster	5 rounds / level	None needed or allowed
Detect Law / Detect Good (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Short	Self and 120' radius	Centered on Caster	1 turn + 5 rounds / level	None needed or allowed
Detect Magic (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Short	Self and 60' radius	Centered on Caster	2 turns	None needed or allowed
Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP) (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Short	5' / level, maximum 90'	Ally or Enemy	1 round / level	None allowed
Floating Disc (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Short	5'	Centered on Caster	3 turns + 1 turn / level	None needed
Hold Portal (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	20' per caster level	Object	1 round / level	None allowed
Invisibility (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Short	Self or 240'	Ally, Object, or Self	Permanent until nullified	None needed
Knock (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Instant	60'	Object	Instant	None
Levitate (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Instant	Self or 30'	Ally, Enemy, or Self	6 turns + 1 turn / level	Negates (if target was unwilling)
Light (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	Self or 120'	Ally, Area, Enemy, Object, or Self	6 turns + 1 turn / level	Negates (if target was an enemy)
Locate Object (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Short	Self and 60' radius + 10' / level	Centered on Caster	1 round / level	None needed





Spell / Minimum Caster Level	Spell Level	Casting Time	Range	Target	Duration	Saving Throw
Magic Missile (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	60' + 10' / level	Enemy	Instant	None allowed
Mirror Image (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Instant	Self and 5' radius	Self	6 turns	None needed
Protection from Chaos / Protection from Evil (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	Self	Self	3 rounds / level	None needed or allowed
Protection from Law / Protection from Good (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	Self	Self	3 rounds / level	None needed or allowed
Read Languages / Comprehend Languages (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Short	Self	Self	5 rounds / level	None needed
Read Magic (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Short	Self	Self	1 turn or 2 rounds / level	None needed
Shield (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	Self	Self	5 rounds / level	None needed
Sleep (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	30' + 10' / level	Area or Enemy	4 to 16 turns	Negates
Ventriloquism (caster lvl 1+)	M1	Instant	Self	Area, Enemy, or Object	2 rounds + 1 round / level	None
Web (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Short	10'	Area, Enemy, or Object	2 turns / level	Reduces ensnarement duration by half
Wizard Lock (caster lvl 3+)	M2	Long	10'	Object	Permanent until dispelled	None





12-4

HIGHER LEVEL ARCANES SPELLS



Further supplements in this series will address the higher-level arcane spells which magic-users have access to at higher experience levels. Magic-users gain the ability to acquire, memorize, and cast these spells as follows:

- **3rd-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 5.
- **4th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 7.
- **5th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 9.



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- **6th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 12.
- **7th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 14.
- **8th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 16.
- **9th-Level Spells:** First learned at experience level 18.





CHAPTER 13: THE THIEF





13-1

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIEF

Overview: Thieves are the most resourceful, cunning, duplicitous, stealthy and uncatchable of all characters. They are also frequently craven, untrustworthy, double-dealing, opportunistic and not necessarily reliable in a fight. But despite their questionable morals and motivations, thieves are grudgingly respected as some of the finest treasure hunters in all the realms. They are deadly when capable of fighting on their own terms, and any high-level thief is certainly a foe to be reckoned with ... because the only way a thief can grow old and mighty is by outliving the many hundreds of lesser thieves who tried and failed to secure the magical treasures which only the Master Thief will ever seize.

Examples of heroic thieves include Autolycus, Odysseus, and a legendary dwarf-allied halfling burglar of some repute ... whatever his name might have been.

Thieves are sly and kindred spirits. The thieves of the game world refer to themselves as the Canting Crew, or "They Who Speak Amongst Themselves." All thieves know a slang- and code-driven cryptoelect half-"language" which is called the Thieves' Cant. All thieves speak this language fluently, and non-thieves can never learn the language unless they are taught directly by a thief. This allows thieves of all races and ancestries to form brotherhoods in the name of ill-won lucre. The cant by the way was a real sub-language a few hundred years ago; you can research it if you want to add some color to your game. Some of the known code words included cackle ("discover"), darkmans ("night"), glymmer ("fire"), ken ("house"), mort ("damsel"), and so forth. You can find a later part of this language preserved in a tome on the Internet Archive, entitled *A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern of the Canting Crew, in Its Several Tribes of Gypsies, Beggars, Thieves, Cheats, etc.*, published 1698 and 1899 AD.

13-2

PRECEPTS OF THE THIEF CLASS

Prime Requisite: Thieves must possess high Dexterity, or they will not live for long. Those with truly impressive dexterity gain experience points more quickly than their ill-fated brethren. High-dexterity thieves frequently refer to low-dexterity compatriots as "bumbles," "trap springers" or "guttersnipes."

Play Style: Thieves are basically the opposite of fighters from a play style perspective. Where fighters are brash, straightforward, intimidating, brave, and predictable, thieves are subtle, elusive,





conniving, discretionary, and surprising. They begin play as underdogs, trusted by few but somewhat respected by those who require their skills and subterfuge. Due to their limited fighting ability and fickle affiliation with the realms of magic, a thief's player will need to be ever mindful about the thief's survival and inherent weaknesses. Thieves make excellent scouts, spies, skirmishers (with ranged weapons), ambushers, lock breakers, and agents. They make poor front-line battlers, however. Every thief should be equipped with ranged weapons, as well as the tools of the wily.



Alignment: Thieves cannot be lawful at the beginning of their careers. They must be neutral or chaotic. In time, if they choose to gravitate to the ethos of law (with penalties), they can do so. Such “White Thieves” frequently preserve and cultivate their skills as spies and agents, serving a worthy power.

Hit Points: Thieves gain between 1 and 6 hit points per experience level (1D6), as detailed hereafter.





Armor: In most campaigns, thieves can only wear leather or cloth (padded) armor. This is because they value stealth over the protection in melee. There are optional rules hereafter which detail how a thief can wear metal armor when need be, but it's rarely a good idea. The class is designed to function as a lightly-armored skirmisher, engaging in hit and run attacks while favoring the shadows. Thieves cannot use shields without accruing experience penalties from the Game Master, either.

Weapons: In the Castle Oldskull game, thieves are only forbidden the use of two-handed melee weapons. This means that they can wield one-handed melee weapons, one- or two-handed melee weapons (such as the bastard sword), thrown weapons, or any ranged weapons. Optionally, the GM may allow thieves to commonly wield quarter staves and walking sticks as well; these are used not only while in disguise, but also to assist with leaps, trap detection, catwalk balancing, and so forth.

Esoteric Weaponry: All thieves can use flaming oil. Lawful thieves (those few who exist) and neutral thieves can use holy water against undead, and chaotic thieves can use unholy water against holy creatures. Lawful thieves cannot use poison, but neutral and chaotic fighters can. The GM might rule that neutral thieves who habitually use poison will become somewhat corrupted, falling to chaotic alignment over time.

Experience Level 1: A level 1 thief is commonly called a Dark Apprentice. This infers that the character learned the "streetwise arts" from a master thief, and has only recently set out on his own in search of an illicitly-acquired fortune. Other level titles which are sometimes encountered include Alley Cat, Beggar Thief, Dungeon Scout, Lock Breaker, or Trap Springer (if of low luck or dexterity). The experience range for level 1 begins at XP zero, and continues through XP 1,249. Level 1 thieves begin the game with between 1 and 6 hit points, modified by constitution, as noted in ability scores chapter. At this level, thieves are highly vulnerable, and they should skulk in the shadows — using ranged weapons, strikes of opportunity, and outright evasion — until they manage to attain experience level 2. Just as there is no honor among thieves, there is no stupidity in living to fight another day! Fortunately, thieves gain experience levels much more quickly than other classes do; but as a tactical trade-off they are especially weak at level 1.

Experience Level 2: A level 2 thief is known as a Footpad, which is an archaic word that means "a scoundrel who chiefly mugs and robs defenseless civilians." (Hey, it's a living.) Other less common level titles include Black Cat, Lock Picker, Rogue, and Trap Finder. The experience point range for level 2 begins at XP 1,250, and continues through XP 2,499. Level 2 thieves gain 1D6 additional hit points when they first rise from level 1, modified by constitution. (For example, a level 2 thief who is blessed with CON 18 (+3) will gain 1D6+3 hit points instead of just 1D6.)

Experience Level 3: A level 3 thief is known as a Grave Robber, Highwayman (male), Highwaywoman (female), Robber, Shadow Skulker, or Smuggler. The experience point range for level 3 begins at XP 2,500, and continues through XP 4,999. Level 3 thieves gain 1D6 additional hit points when they first rise from level 2, modified by Constitution.





Summary of the Thief Class (Experience Levels 1 to 3)

Experience Points	Experience Level	Hit Points	Suggested Level Titles	Notes
0 to 1,249	1	3 to 6 (avg. 4.5)	Alley Cat, Beggar Thief, Dark Apprentice, Dungeon Scout, Lock Breaker, Trap Springer	Acquires basic thieving skills. Backstab for double damage.
2,500 to 4,999	2	+1D6 (avg. 8)	Black Cat, Footpad, Lock Picker, Rogue, Trap Finder	Thieving skills are improved over experience level 1.
5,000 to 9,999	3	+1D6 (avg. 11.5)	Grave Robber, Highwayman / Highwaywoman, Robber, Shadow Skulker, Smuggler	Thieving skills are improved over experience level 2.

13-3

THE THIEF'S BACKSTABBING ABILITY





Thieves are masters of ambushes, backstabbing, and stealthy flanking attacks. If they can strike from behind while hidden in shadows, they gain a +4 bonus to hit. Even in normal combat, striking from behind while not hidden, they gain a +2 bonus to hit. If they can attack from a flank (90 or more degrees from the direction the target is facing), they gain a +1 bonus to hit.

Level 1, 2, and 3 thieves inflict double damage with a successful backstab or flanking strike, with any weapon (including ranged weapons). The term “double damage” can be a bit misleading, however, because the dice are doubled, but the modifiers are not. For example, a thief of STR 13 (+1 damage) attacking with a weapon which normally inflicts 1D6 damage would cause 1D6+1 damage from the front, or 2D6+1 “double” damage from the flank or the back. The D6 which represents the weapon’s inherent damage is doubled, but the strength bonus is not.

Creatures without definable backs, such as slimes, tentacle beasts, fungi and non-corporeal creatures, cannot be backstabbed under any circumstances.

Higher-level thieves gain more lethal backstabbing prowess, as will be explained in the Advanced Level rules.

If your play group is not using a game board to track combat and character positions, the question of “Can I attack from the back or the flank?” will come up frequently. This is a question that only the GM can answer, but I recommend the following guidelines:

- **Strikes at the beginning of combat:** At the beginning of the encounter, the thief can attempt to hide in shadows. If successful, the character will be able to attack one target from the back during the following combat round, after the hiding in shadows attempt. If the targets are split up — for example, there are 6 goblin warriors and 4 goblin archers, and the warriors attack the party while the archers stay back and fire — then the thief would be able to backstab one of the warriors, but not one of the archers.
- **Strikes against opponents standing at range:** Attacks against these targets will always only be normal attacks, not flanking or back attacks, unless the GM says otherwise. A GM might allow a “skulking” attempt, which would involve the thief spending 1 round moving silently along the outskirts of battle to position himself for a flanking attack against a more distant foe; but this really only makes sense in very dark and chaotic conditions.
- **Strikes during melee:** After the first backstabbing attack, the thief can also contribute to the melee. I recommend that the GM roll vs. either the thief’s INT x 3% or DEX x 3%, whichever is higher. A critical success (a roll between 01 and 05) indicates that the thief has an opportunity to hit a meleeing opponent in the back at +2 to hit. A normal success indicates that the thief can perform a flanking attack at +1 to hit. A failure means that the thief can only perform a normal attack that round.
- **Advantage to thieves only:** Unless a game board is being used with miniatures to track the position and facing of every combatant, I recommend that this system be used solely to benefit thieves. If miniatures are used, a non-thief character can make a flanking or back strike when the miniatures and facing indicate that this is possible. This will be discussed further in the tactical combat section of the next volume in this series.





As an example of the above, let us say that a thief has INT 13 and DEX 14. His INT would give him a 39% chance to perform an ambushing strike each round, but his DEX gives him a 42% chance, so the DEX score is used instead. After the first melee round, when the thief's player asks, "Can I make a back attack or flanking attack this round?" the GM rolls the percentile dice. A roll of 01-05 means he can make a back attack, a roll of 06-42 means he can make a flanking attack, and a roll of 43-00 means he can only make a normal attack. This represents the thief using his superior agility, cunning and expertise to wait for a perfect moment of opportunity before striking as other combatants turn and shift position during melee.

This system is a bit abstract, but it is the best solution I have found so far and it is superior to "winging it" in my opinion. Game Masters who demand concrete tactical yes or no answers to the "back attack" question are strongly encouraged to use a game board and miniature figures during play.

13-4

EMPOWERMENT OPTIONS

FOR THIEVES

(OPTIONAL RULE OVERVIEW)



As noted previously in the fighter section, thieves are a bit underpowered in comparison to the other classes. Some players love this fact, because their ingenuity combined with rapid experience





progression give the thief class a strong “risk vs. reward ratio” that makes playing one well very rewarding. But in a typical dungeon scenario where point-blank melee and the occasional monstrous ambush are frequent occurrences, even a well-played thief can die very quickly. This is exacerbated by two factors: [1] thieves need to risk life and limb to perform their primary functions of opening locks and removing traps, and [2] thieves are often asked to scout ahead to gauge the challenge of a monster's lair. These situations leave the thief at the mercy of the dice at crucial junctures in the game. When these hard facts of life are combined with a thief's relative vulnerability in combat, the poor thieves tend to die very frequently indeed.

To more fairly balance this predicament, without making thieves too powerful, I offer two major optional rules for the GM's consideration.

13-5

LUCK FOR THIEVES (OPTIONAL RULE)



In a world where fighters smash monsters, clerics heal the wounded and smite the undead, and magic-users sling spells left and right, the thief class can be quite difficult for amateur players to actually





play. Also, the one character class that should have daredevil characteristics is ironically relegated to skulking in the shadows until those percentage-based thieving skills get a little higher. These realities collectively mean that although thieves progress through experience levels rapidly on paper, the numbers of thieves who actually survive to attain levels 2 and 3 are commonly quite small.

In the Advanced Level game, this is largely solved by multi-classed thieves, who can pair their skills with a more survivable or powerful class. But this option leaves the iconic “pure” thief in the dust, which this author finds unacceptable. Further survival measures might be required.

In the World of Oldskull campaign, thieves (only) are granted the power of **Luck**. This represents the thief’s innate sixth sense as well as additional divine or infernal protection, as the thief’s patron deity keeps a watchful eye over the thief’s early years in service of some unknowable destiny.

Luck is simple, yet very powerful. It means that when a thief must make a saving throw, two D20s (instead of only one) are rolled, and the highest roll is kept and the lowest roll is discarded. For example, if a thief is bitten by a giant black widow spider and must make a saving throw vs. the monster’s poison, let us say that the saving throw required is 15 or higher. This represents only a 30% chance of survival. The player rolls 1D20, and rolls a 13. Under the normal hardcore rules, the thief would likely be dead. But if the Luck ability were in play and the player rolled another 1D20 for a result of 18, the 18 would be kept and the 13 ignored, and the thief would live to fight another day ... or at least, another combat round.

Luck can be unbalancing to the game if the GM allows any other classes beside single-classed thieves to enjoy its privileges. But as a thief-only ability, I have found it quite useful in helping to give those low-level thieves a fighting chance in the early game.

At the GM’s discretion, a maximum number of luck uses can be enforced as well; I would recommend a limit of no more than 5 Luck-based saving throw rolls per game session, whether those actual saving throws succeed or fail.

13-6

RIPOSTES FOR THIEVES

(ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

In the same spirit as Luck, the GM might also want to consider the optional thief-only skill of **Riposte**. This is a talent which turns thieves from craven crawlers into dashing duelists and swashbucklers. If you as the GM are concerned that PC thieves will be hiding on the sidelines during combat while the rest of the PCs suffer against the monsters, you might want to try this option out in play.

Where Luck gives thieves more survivability against arbitrary misfortune, Riposte gives thieves a small boost in melee combat.

The suggested rules work like this:

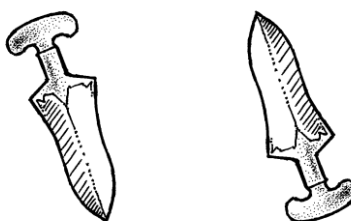




- Ripostes occasionally allow thieves a “free attack” against enemies who make strikes against them, and miss.
- Ripostes only work against melee attacks, and only if the thief has a melee weapon ready.
- Ripostes do not work against missile attacks, spells, or creature effects such as a dragon’s breath. However, they do work against creature melee attacks, such as claws and bites.
- When the enemy attacks the thief in melee and misses, the thief immediately makes an automatic “free” riposte attack against that attacker. The thief rolls his melee to hit roll against the enemy’s armor class, but at -3 to hit.
- The riposte can only target the attacker who struck out at the thief and missed, and no one else.
- If the riposte hits, it inflicts normal weapon damage to the attacker, even though the attack is taking place outside of the thief’s normal opportunity of action.
- Level 1 thieves can only make a maximum of 1 riposte per round, regardless of the number of attacks aimed at them.
- Level 2 thieves can only make a maximum of 2 ripostes per round, regardless of the number of attacks aimed at them.
- Level 3+ thieves can make 1 riposte per miss. For example, if a troll attempts three times to hit a thief (with claw / claw / bite attacks) and hits once and misses twice, the thief will make 2 automatic riposte attacks against the troll.

By providing thieves (only) with this “defensive offensive” advantage, the GM will probably find that the players of thief PCs will be more willing to engage in melee against foes ... particularly when the party is hard-pressed by multiple attackers.

There are some game balance concerns if both Luck and Ripostes are granted to thieves simultaneously, but they are relative minor in Basic Level play. If the GM opts to use both rules to encourage the play of thieves, he will want to be sure to monitor the power level of adventuring thieves over time as additional experience levels are gained.





13-7

IMPROVISED MELEE WEAPONS

FOR THIEVES

(OPTIONAL RULE)

If the GM would like to give thieves a bit more swashbuckling flair, the author suggests that thieves should never suffer more than a -1 to hit penalty when using improvised weapons (broken bottles, pieces of rubble, sharpened poles, etc.) in melee. This advantage is not conferred to the use of improvised missile weapons, however. But yes, clever players will note that if you combine this optional rule along with a thief PC who happens to be a halfling, some amusing and surprisingly effective combat situations will be the result.





CHAPTER 14: THIEVING SKILLS





14-1

OVERVIEW

OF THIEVING SKILLS

There is a set of stealth- and subterfuge-focused talents which are particularly useful to adventurers, which are collectively called Thieving Skills. Thieving Skill rolls are rolled by the Game Master, not the player. These skills include, but are not necessarily limited to:

Climbing Sheer Surfaces: All characters can climb steep surfaces (up to a 45-degree incline) with little difficulty, as long as they are moving slowly. Steeper inclines than that, however, require a skill check. This skill allows a character to climb very steep surfaces. Movement rates for climbing are necessarily quite slow; a thief can move 24' per non-combat round (or 8' per combat round) along an ideal surface (with lots of roots, projections, fissures, etc.); 18' (or 6') along a normal dungeon wall with cracks and rough surfaces; 12' (or 4') along a relatively smooth but rough-hewn wall; or only 6' (or 2') along a smooth wall with minute projections that only the climber can see. A somewhat slippery surface will reduce climbing skill by 40%, and a very slippery surface will reduce climbing skill by 90%.

Thieves, and only thieves, can also attempt to “free climb” vertical surfaces — such as a cliff face or wall — without ropes or other climbing equipment. High-level thieves of significant STR and DEX can even attempt to scale overhangs! A skill roll is required for every 100', or fraction thereof, that the character attempts to climb. So if a cliff is 140' high, there would be one skill roll for the 1' to 100' stretch, and second roll for the 101' to 140' stretch. Because a failure can prove fatal, the GM should very carefully apply the climbing failure rule: If there is a fall (skill failure), the fall will occur 1D100% of the way up the surface. So if the thief is climbing that first 1' to 100' stretch and fails, and the GM then rolls a 63 (indicating the fall occurs when the thief has already covered 63% of the distance), the thief will fall from a height of 63 feet.

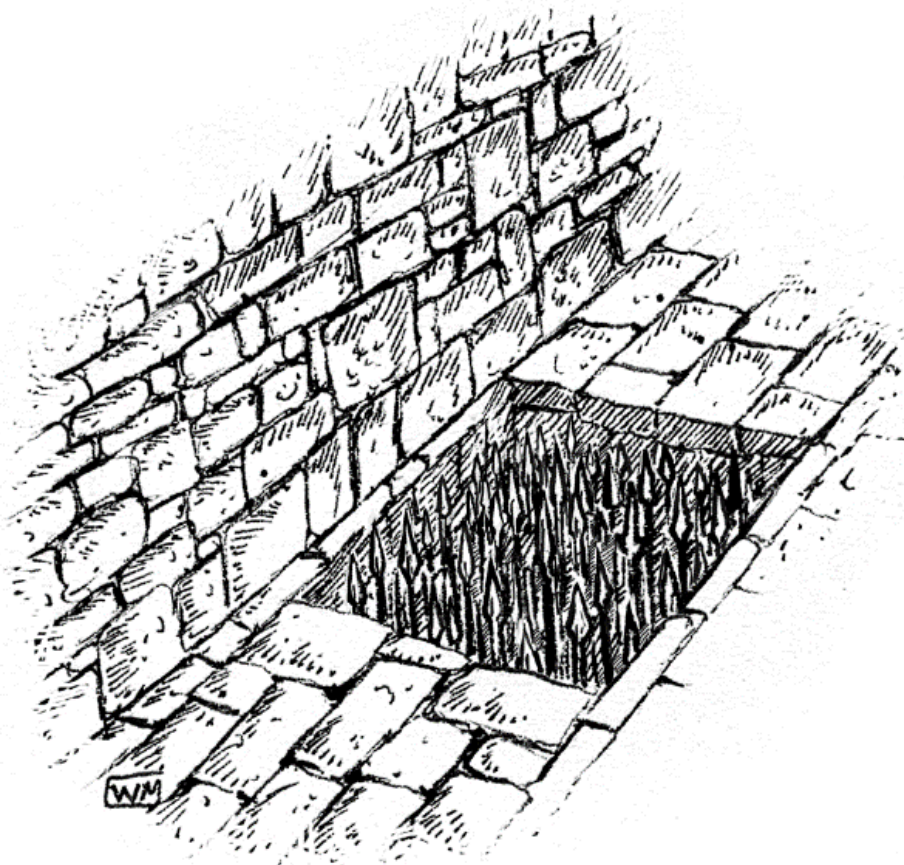
Damage for a fall is typically 1D6 per full 10' fallen, which means that a 63' plunge will inflict 6D6 damage — enough to be certainly be fatal to a low-level character. Falling into water, deep mud, or a similar surface reduces damage by one half, rounded down; a similar modifier is applied for near-vertical surfaces (such as a 70-degree cliff) where the character can slow himself by tumbling and staying in contact with the stone.

Finding Traps: This talent allows the character to search a door, container, or other area (such as a wall, floor, etc.) for mechanical or magical traps. Some strict GMs might rule that magical traps cannot be detected, but I personally rule that magical traps must have subtle tell-tale signs (faint runes, a dim glow in a chest's inner seams, a trace of silver dust, etc.) that will potentially reveal non-mechanical traps to a carefully trained eye.





Of course, only the GM knows if there is ever really a trap there, and “You don’t find anything” might just mean that you failed your roll, not that there’s nothing there! A successful roll means that the trap is discovered and not activated.



Hearing Noise: All characters have the ability to hear normal noises at normal ranges, just as you or I do. This skill involves deliberate attempts to hear quiet or distant noises (such as giant ants scuttling down a corridor from 200’ away), or attempts to hear monsters or NPCs through an intervening door. The skill is not passive; the thief’s player must declare an attempt is being made. You don’t need to know what you’re listening for, you just need to shush everyone and concentrate.

As a couple of qualifiers, note that the undead do not make noise, and combat conditions — which are very loud — nullify all attempts. Very silent creatures such as bugbears, some illusions, and undead cannot be heard under any circumstances.





Hiding in Shadows: This skill enables the character to hide in the presence of NPCs or monsters, conditionally. There must be significant shadows (no more than torchlight or lantern light in effect), the monsters must not have the ability to see in the dark (which is very common), and the character must remain motionless or be seen.

To hide in shadows from creatures who can see in the dark, the thief must be in full shadow (e.g., under a wagon or between two barrels) while also being within 10' of a hot light source, such as a torch or lantern ... a difficult conditional threshold to reach in most environments. See the related skill Moving Silently, below, which allows movement. The thief will always believe that he is well hidden, and only the GM rolling the dice will know what really happens. Hidden characters who attack any enemies that are not already engaged in battle have a 65% chance to surprise their foes.





Moving Silently: This talent allows the character to stealthily move when enemies or strangers are nearby, provided the character is not observed. (If the character's position is observed, a Hiding in Shadows roll will also be needed, at a penalty of -40%, which means that only higher-level thieves can attempt this feat.)

If the roll succeeds, the character moves past without being seen. Unfortunately, the PC will always believe that he is successful until those shouts of alarm ring out! Thieves who are attempting to move silently can only move up to 12' per round, and this skill is practically worthless in combat.

Opening Locks: This skill involves opening locked doors and containers, such as treasure chests. The attempt is made with lock picks but without a key. When the skill attempt succeeds, the lock is opened. Each attempt takes about 1D6+1 rounds with normal lock picks, or 1D4 rounds with master lock picks. When the skill attempt fails, the lock remains latched, and if there is a trap attached to the door or container, it will very likely go off. (See Removing Traps skill entry, below, for details.)





A character can only attempt to open a given lock once per experience level. This means that if there are two locked doors and your character opens one but not the other, he cannot attempt to unlock the second door again until he has gained a level. (Other characters may try on their own, however.) Note that locks can be forced using strength, tools, and or/weapons, but while frequently successful such actions are extremely loud and serve to alert all nearby monsters to the party's presence.

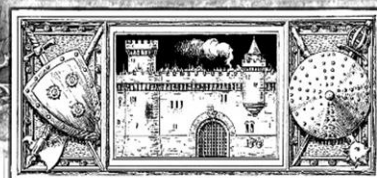


Pilfering: This skill involves stealing things from someone's person (pockets, pouches, etc.) without the person noticing what is happening. The percentage chance of success is reduced by 5% per experience level of the intended victim. Further, if the D100 roll the GM makes is equal to more than twice the percentage chance of success, the victim will notice the failed attempt. For example, if your character has a 35% chance of pilfering a victim, then the GM's D100 roll will equate to 01-35 = success, 31-70 = failure, 71-00 = failure and the attempt is noticed.

If an attempt fails and the thief is not engaged in communication or otherwise observed by the victim, additional attempts can be made. As a note to Game Masters, I recommend that an intended victim who notices the thief's attempt should make a random reaction roll at -4 (very negative) to determine what



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happens next. In a civil or urban setting, most victims who react with a random “attack” response will attempt to apprehend the thief, while shouting for the guards of the watch. If the victim NPC is chaotic, however, he will probably attack the thief outright (as decided by the GM).

Note that pilfering cannot be attempted in combat, but in non-combat situations, if a thief fails a pilfering roll and remains undetected he can continue to make attempts until the thief is either discovered or decides to relent.





Removing Traps: This skill, used in conjunction with Finding Traps, allows a character to attempt to remove or deactivate a discovered trap. The trap must be discovered by someone (the thief or a companion) before removal can be attempted.

A successful removal roll means that the trap is nullified. A failed roll means that the trap remains, and is possibly triggered by the character as well. The chance of the trap triggering is equal to 100%, minus the character's DEX x 4, minus the character's experience level x 5. For example, a level 2 thief of DEX 15 would have a (100 minus 15 x 4 equals 30, minus 2 x 5 equals) 20% chance of triggering the trap. There is always a minimum 5% chance that the trap will activate regardless of DEX and level. A character can only attempt remove a given trap once per experience level.

The Thieving Skill percentages for a thief character depend on his experience level, Dexterity, and race, as follows:

Base Thieving Skills by Experience Level:

- **Thief Level 1:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces 85%, Finding Traps 20%, Hearing Noise 15%, Hiding in Shadows 10%, Moving Silently 20%, Opening Locks 25%, Pilfering 30%, Removing Traps 20%.
- **Thief Level 2:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces 86%, Finding Traps 25%, Hearing Noise 17%, Hiding in Shadows 15%, Moving Silently 25%, Opening Locks 29%, Pilfering 35%, Removing Traps 25%.
- **Thief Level 3:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces 87%, Finding Traps 30%, Hearing Noise 19%, Hiding in Shadows 20%, Moving Silently 30%, Opening Locks 33%, Pilfering 40%, Removing Traps 30%.

Thieving Skills for Thieves (Experience Levels 1 to 3)

Thieving Skill	Level 1 Thief	Level 2 Thief	Level 3 Thief
Climbing Sheer Surfaces	85%	86%	87%
Finding Traps	20%	25%	30%
Hearing Noise	15%	17%	19%
Hiding in Shadows	10%	15%	20%
Moving Silently	20%	25%	30%
Opening Locks	25%	29%	33%
Pilfering	30%	35%	40%
Removing Traps	20%	25%	30%





14-2

THIEVING SKILL MODIFIERS

DUE TO RACE

(OPTIONAL RULE)

If the GM decides that each demi-human race should have its own advantages and disadvantages in regards to thieving skills, the following adjustments to the provided percentage scores are recommended:

- **Dwarf Thieves:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces -10%, Finding Traps +15%, Opening Locks +10%, Pilfering +5%, Removing Traps +15%.
- **Elf Thieves:** Hearing Noise +5%, Hiding in Shadows +10%, Moving Silently +5%, Opening Locks -5%, Pilfering +5%.
- **Halfling Thieves:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces -15%, Finding Traps +5%, Hearing Noise +5%, Hiding in Shadows +15%, Moving Silently +10%, Opening Locks +5%, Pilfering +10%, Removing Traps +5%.
- **Human Thieves:** No racial modifiers, because the original figures provided assume a human baseline for comparison to other races.

Racial Thieving Skill Modifiers

Thieving Skill	Dwarf	Elf	Halfling	Human
Climbing Sheer Surfaces	-10%	No modifier	-15%	No modifier
Finding Traps	+15%	No modifier	+5%	No modifier
Hearing Noise	No modifier	+5%	+5%	No modifier
Hiding in Shadows	No modifier	+10%	+15%	No modifier
Moving Silently	No modifier	+5%	+10%	No modifier
Opening Locks	+10%	-5%	+5%	No modifier
Pilfering	+5%	+5%	+10%	No modifier
Removing Traps	+15%	No modifier	+5%	No modifier

If the GM decides that the bonuses give too much of an advantage to demi-human thieves, I recommend that human thieves should be given one “knack” of the player’s choice, and that thieving skill should gain a permanent +10% bonus. If finding traps is selected as the knack, then the removing traps skill also receives the same +10% bonus.





14-3

THIEVING SKILL MODIFIERS

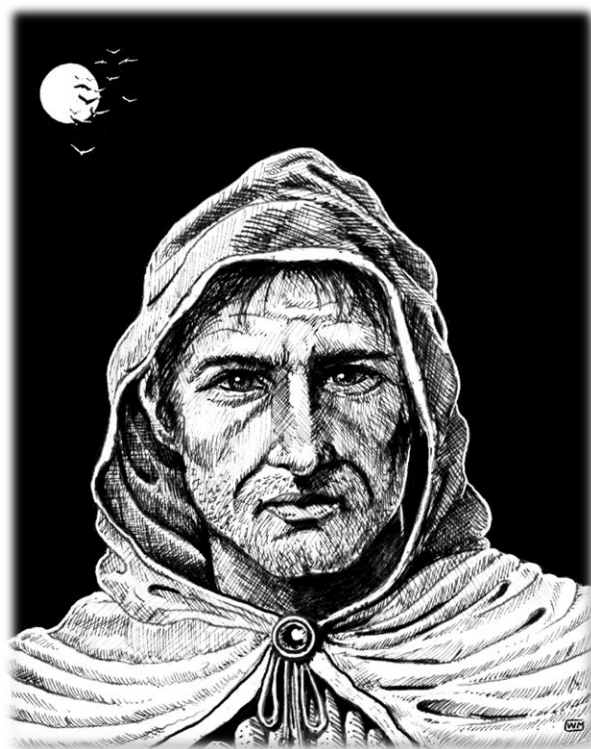
DUE TO ABILITY SCORES

(OPTIONAL RULE)

If the GM opts to reward thief characters of high dexterity, while punishing thieves of low dexterity, the following DEX-based adjustments can be made to the provided thieving skill percentage scores:

- **Dexterity 3:** Finding Traps -36%, Hiding in Shadows -32%, Moving Silently -40%, Opening Locks -32%, Pilfering -36%, Removing Traps -36%.
- **Dexterity 4:** Finding Traps -32%, Hiding in Shadows -28%, Moving Silently -36%, Opening Locks -28%, Pilfering -32%, Removing Traps -32%.
- **Dexterity 5:** Finding Traps -28%, Hiding in Shadows -24%, Moving Silently -32%, Opening Locks -24%, Pilfering -28%, Removing Traps -28%.
- **Dexterity 6:** Finding Traps -24%, Hiding in Shadows -20%, Moving Silently -28%, Opening Locks -20%, Pilfering -24%, Removing Traps -24%.
- **Dexterity 7:** Finding Traps -20%, Hiding in Shadows -16%, Moving Silently -24%, Opening Locks -16%, Pilfering -20%, Removing Traps -20%.
- **Dexterity 8:** Finding Traps -16%, Hiding in Shadows -12%, Moving Silently -20%, Opening Locks -12%, Pilfering -16%, Removing Traps -16%.
- **Dexterity 9:** Finding Traps -12%, Hiding in Shadows -8%, Moving Silently -16%, Opening Locks -8%, Pilfering -12%, Removing Traps -12%.
- **Dexterity 10:** Finding Traps -8%, Hiding in Shadows -4%, Moving Silently -12%, Opening Locks -4%, Pilfering -8%, Removing Traps -8%.
- **Dexterity 11:** Finding Traps -4%, Moving Silently -8%, Pilfering -4%, Removing Traps -4%.
- **Dexterity 12:** Moving Silently -4%.
- **Dexterity 13 to 15:** No modifiers to thieving skills based on DEX score.
- **Dexterity 16:** Moving Silently +4%, Opening Locks +4%.
- **Dexterity 17:** Hiding in Shadows +4%, Moving Silently +8%, Opening Locks +8%, Pilfering +4%.
- **Dexterity 18:** Finding Traps +4%, Hiding in Shadows +8%, Moving Silently +12%, Opening Locks +12%, Pilfering +8%, Removing Traps +4%.





Dexterity-Based Thieving Skill Modifiers

Dexterity	Finding Traps	Hiding in Shadows	Moving Silently	Opening Locks	Pilfering	Removing Traps
3	-36%	-32%	-40%	-32%	-36%	-36%
4	-32%	-28%	-36%	-28%	-32%	-32%
5	-28%	-24%	-32%	-24%	-28%	-28%
6	-24%	-20%	-28%	-20%	-24%	-24%
7	-20%	-16%	-24%	-16%	-20%	-20%
8	-16%	-12%	-20%	-12%	-16%	-16%
9	-12%	-8%	-16%	-8%	-12%	-12%
10	-8%	-4%	-12%	-4%	-8%	-8%
11	-4%	No mod	-8%	No mod	-4%	-4%
12	No mod	No mod	-4%	No mod	No mod	No mod
13	No mod	No mod	No mod	No mod	No mod	No mod
14	No mod	No mod	No mod	No mod	No mod	No mod
15	No mod	No mod	No mod	No mod	No mod	No mod
16	No mod	No mod	+4%	+4%	No mod	No mod
17	No mod	+4%	+8%	+8%	+4%	No mod
18	+4%	+8%	+12%	+12%	+8%	+4%





Additional modifiers to the climbing sheer surface skill can be based on STR if the GM desires, as follows:

- **Strength 3:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces -28%
- **Strength 4:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces -24%
- **Strength 5:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces -20%
- **Strength 6:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces -16%
- **Strength 7:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces -12%
- **Strength 8:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces -8%
- **Strength 9:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces -4%
- **Strength 10 to 12:** No modifier to Climbing Sheer Surfaces skill
- **Strength 13:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces +2%
- **Strength 14:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces +6%
- **Strength 15:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces +10%
- **Strength 16:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces +14%
- **Strength 17:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces +18%
- **Strength 18:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces +22%

Further, modifiers to the hearing noise skill can be based on WIS (the ability score of perception) if the GM desires, as follows:

- **Wisdom 3:** Hearing Noise -7%
- **Wisdom 4:** Hearing Noise -6%
- **Wisdom 5:** Hearing Noise -5%
- **Wisdom 6:** Hearing Noise -4%
- **Wisdom 7:** Hearing Noise -3%
- **Wisdom 8:** Hearing Noise -2%
- **Wisdom 9:** Hearing Noise -1%
- **Wisdom 10 to 12:** No modifier to Hearing Noise skill
- **Wisdom 13:** Hearing Noise +2%
- **Wisdom 14:** Hearing Noise +4%





- **Wisdom 15:** Hearing Noise +6%
- **Wisdom 16:** Hearing Noise +8%
- **Wisdom 17:** Hearing Noise +10%
- **Wisdom 18:** Hearing Noise +12%

Strength- and Wisdom-Based Thieving Skill Modifiers

Ability Score	Climbing Sheer Surfaces	Hearing Noise
3	-28% (STR)	-7% (WIS)
4	-24% (STR)	-6% (WIS)
5	-20% (STR)	-5% (WIS)
6	-16% (STR)	-4% (WIS)
7	-12% (STR)	-3% (WIS)
8	-8% (STR)	-2% (WIS)
9	-4% (STR)	-1% (WIS)
10	No modifier	No modifier
11	No modifier	No modifier
12	No modifier	No modifier
13	+2%	+2% (WIS)
14	+6%	+4% (WIS)
15	+10%	+6% (WIS)
16	+14%	+8% (WIS)
17	+18%	+10% (WIS)
18	+22%	+12% (WIS)

14-4

MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM THIEVING SKILL PERCENTAGES

In the interests of giving every underdog a fair chance at a lucky break, applied modifiers for race or a low ability score can never reduce the success chance of any skill below 5%.

Skills can increase above 98%, but there is always at least a 2% chance of failure. If a thieving skill is above 98% — for example, we will use an example value of climbing sheer surfaces at 113% for a very dexterous thief — it is notated as 98% (15%), which means that the thief has a 98% chance of climbing a normal sheer surface, and a 15% chance of climbing a surface that would be impossible for others to climb, such as an overhang or oil-soaked cliff face.

Examples for “impossible” actions in each thieving skill category include:





- **Climbing Sheer Surfaces:** Overhangs, slippery surfaces, smooth walls (which will prove to have minute cracks and irregularities that are invisible from ground level).
- **Finding Traps:** Finding traps which are invisible, magically transformed, or described as “impossible to detect.”
- **Hearing Noise:** Hearing noises at up to twice the normal range, or through walls which are no more than 3’ thick.
- **Hiding in Shadows:** Attempting to hide in shadows while also moving at a slow rate of speed.
- **Moving Silently:** Moving silently at running speed.
- **Opening Locks:** Opening locks which are magical in nature, or described as “uncrackable.”
- **Pilfering:** Stealing from someone who is making eye contact with you, through misdirection, speed, or a sleight of hand illusion.
- **Removing Traps:** Deactivating traps which are described as “impossible to remove,” or compound traps (two traps on one container).





14-5

THIEVES' ABILITIES FOR THIEVES ONLY (OPTIONAL RULE)

If you want to engage in a hardcore game mode where thieves' abilities are protected as a unique asset solely available to their own class, you can rule that other non-thief characters can never engage in Thieving Skill game mechanics. I recommend against this (see the next following section), but the old rules can technically be interpreted in this manner if you believe that thieves require a monopoly on these valuable traits.

Keep in mind that if you enforce this interpretation, that the thief class will be practically mandatory for any party which wants to survive the perilous dungeons beneath the world.

14-6

THIEVES' ABILITIES FOR NON-THIEVES (OPTIONAL RULE)

There is arguably a crucial design flaw in the original fantasy game, because the thief class was introduced by other players (not the game designers themselves, Gygax and Arneson) only after the game had been published, and these players were not fully in sync with the designers' original vision. Basically, thieves were given a percentage chance to hide in shadows, climb walls, find traps, and so forth, while the original classes were given no such percentage chances at all. The default implication — with percentages given to thieves only, and to no one else — is that *only* thieves can move silently, while other characters can never do so (regardless of their prowess or dexterity), which is rather absurd in this author's opinion.

Game design note: The precedent for these skills being universal (and not exclusive to thieves) is the 1979 Gygaxian interpretation of "Hear Noise," which is a talent that all characters obviously possess, but thieves are absolutely much more skilled in this regard due to their training and expertise. This state of affairs logically follows for all of the other skills as well, up to and including the detection and removal of traps.





Considering this design flaw, in the Castle Oldskull game all characters are given thieving skill percentages, but the percentages are low enough — and increase with level slowly enough — that the supremacy of thieves in this regard is never threatened. Game Masters who wish to enforce the implied original 1975 “no chance unless you’re a thief” paradigm can certainly do so, but after decades of play on both sides of the issue I highly recommend against that course of action.

Instead, I encourage GMs to consider the following percentage ratings for all non-thief characters in the game.

- **Level 1 Non-Thief Characters:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces 50%, Finding Traps 10%, Hearing Noise 10%, Hiding in Shadows 0%, Moving Silently 10%, Opening Locks 10%, Pilfering 20%, Removing Traps 10%.
- **Level 2 Non-Thief Characters:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces 51%, Finding Traps 13%, Hearing Noise 11%, Hiding in Shadows 3%, Moving Silently 13%, Opening Locks 12%, Pilfering 23%, Removing Traps 13%.
- **Level 3 Non-Thief Characters:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces 52%, Finding Traps 16%, Hearing Noise 12%, Hiding in Shadows 6%, Moving Silently 16%, Opening Locks 14%, Pilfering 26%, Removing Traps 16%.
- **Higher Level Non-Thief Characters:** Climbing Sheer Surfaces +1% per level, Finding Traps +3% per level, Hearing Noise +1% per level, Hiding in Shadows +3% per level, Moving Silently +3% per level, Opening Locks +2% per level, Pilfering +3% per level, Removing Traps +3%. (The purpose here is to provide progression, without invalidating thieves as a specialized character class with significant advantages which other characters cannot match.)

If this rule is used, you will probably want to also include the thieving skill modifiers for character race and ability scores, as described in the two prior sections.

Non-thieves can never have a thieving skill rating above 50% (despite any and all modifiers), with the sole exception of climbing sheer surfaces, which can reach as high as 90%.

Thieving Skills for Non-Thief Characters

Thieving Skill	Level 1 Non-Thief	Level 2 Non-Thief	Level 3 Non-Thief	Level 4+ Non-Thief
Climbing Sheer Surfaces	50%	51%	52%	+1% / level
Finding Traps	10%	13%	16%	+3% / level
Hearing Noise	10%	11%	12%	+1% / level
Hiding in Shadows	0%	3%	6%	+3% / level
Moving Silently	10%	13%	16%	+3% / level
Opening Locks	10%	12%	14%	+2% / level
Pilfering	20%	23%	26%	+3% / level
Removing Traps	10%	13%	16%	+3% / level





14-7

EFFECTS OF ARMOR

ON THIEVING SKILLS

(ADVANCED OPTIONAL RULE)

As written, the rules presume that thieves are wearing armor that is ideally light, quiet, and easy to maneuver in. Namely, that is leather armor. If the Game Master would prefer a bit more realism — and, especially, if non-thief characters are allowed to use thieving skills — he or she may want to consider applying modifiers to thieving skill attempts that are made in heavier armor, as well as some minor bonuses for daring souls who go with lighter armor.





The recommended modifiers are as follows:

Unarmored: Climbing Sheer Surfaces +10%, Finding Traps no modifier, Hearing Noise no modifier, Hiding in Shadows +5%, Moving Silently +10%, Opening Locks no modifier, Pilfering +5%, Removing Traps no modifier.

Unarmored with Shield: Climbing Sheer Surfaces +5%, Finding Traps no modifier, Hearing Noise no modifier, Hiding in Shadows no modifier, Moving Silently +5%, Opening Locks no modifier, Pilfering no modifier, Removing Traps no modifier.

Light Padded Armor (Cloth): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -5%, Finding Traps no modifier, Hearing Noise no modifier, Hiding in Shadows -5%, Moving Silently -5%, Opening Locks -5%, Pilfering -10%, Removing Traps no modifier.

Padded Armor (Cloth): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -15%, Finding Traps -5%, Hearing Noise -5%, Hiding in Shadows -10%, Moving Silently -10%, Opening Locks -10%, Pilfering -20%, Removing Traps -5%.

Glued Linen Cuirass (Cloth): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -20%, Finding Traps -10%, Hearing Noise -5%, Hiding in Shadows -15%, Moving Silently -15%, Opening Locks -10%, Pilfering -20%, Removing Traps -10%.

Light Leather Armor (Leather): Climbing Sheer Surfaces +5%, Finding Traps no modifier, Hearing Noise no modifier, Hiding in Shadows no modifier, Moving Silently +5%, Opening Locks no modifier, Pilfering no modifier, Removing Traps no modifier.

Leather Armor (Leather): No modifiers, because the thieving skill percentages are built around the assumption of worn leather armor as a baseline.

Heavy Leather Armor (Leather): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -20%, Finding Traps -10%, Hearing Noise -10%, Hiding in Shadows -10%, Moving Silently -10%, Opening Locks -5%, Pilfering -20%, Removing Traps -10%.

Hide Armor (Leather): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -60%, Finding Traps -20%, Hearing Noise -10%, Hiding in Shadows -20%, Moving Silently -20%, Opening Locks -15%, Pilfering -60%, Removing Traps -20%.

Ring Mail (Mail): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -30%, Finding Traps -10%, Hearing Noise -10%, Hiding in Shadows -25%, Moving Silently -30%, Opening Locks -15%, Pilfering -30%, Removing Traps -10%.

Scale Mail (Mail): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -40%, Finding Traps -15%, Hearing Noise -20%, Hiding in Shadows -35%, Moving Silently -50%, Opening Locks -15%, Pilfering -50%, Removing Traps -15%.

Chain Mail (Mail): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -40%, Finding Traps -15%, Hearing Noise -20%, Hiding in Shadows -30%, Moving Silently -40%, Opening Locks -15%, Pilfering -40%, Removing Traps -15%.

Banded Mail / Armor (Mail / Plate): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -90%, Finding Traps -20%, Hearing Noise -30%, Hiding in Shadows -50%, Moving Silently -60%, Opening Locks -20%, Pilfering -50%, Removing Traps -20%.





Bone Armor (Plate): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -40%, Finding Traps -15%, Hearing Noise -10%, Hiding in Shadows -40%, Moving Silently -50%, Opening Locks -15%, Pilfering -45%, Removing Traps -15%.

Brigandine Armor (Plate): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -30%, Finding Traps -10%, Hearing Noise -10%, Hiding in Shadows -30%, Moving Silently -30%, Opening Locks -15%, Pilfering -35%, Removing Traps -10%.

Splint Armor (Plate): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -50%, Finding Traps -25%, Hearing Noise -25%, Hiding in Shadows -30%, Moving Silently -40%, Opening Locks -15%, Pilfering -40%, Removing Traps -25%.

Plate Mail (Plate): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -70%, Finding Traps -40%, Hearing Noise -50%, Hiding in Shadows -75%, Moving Silently -80%, Opening Locks -40%, Pilfering -75%, Removing Traps -40%.

Field Plate Armor (Plate): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -80%, Finding Traps -60%, Hearing Noise -60%, Hiding in Shadows -85%, Moving Silently -85%, Opening Locks -60%, Pilfering -85%, Removing Traps -60%.

Full Plate Armor (Plate): Climbing Sheer Surfaces -90%, Finding Traps -80%, Hearing Noise -70%, Hiding in Shadows -95%, Moving Silently -90%, Opening Locks -80%, Pilfering -95%, Removing Traps -80%.

Effects of Armor on Thieving Skill Success Rates

Armor Worn	CSS	FT	HN	His	MS	OL	P	RT
Unarmored	+10%	NM	NM	+5%	+10%	NM	+5%	NM
Unarmored with Shield	+5%	NM	NM	NM	+5%	NM	NM	NM
Light Padded Armor	-5%	NM	NM	-5%	-5%	-5%	-10%	NM
Padded Armor	-15%	-5%	-5%	-10%	-10%	-10%	-20%	-5%
Glued Linen Cuirass	-20%	-10%	-5%	-15%	-15%	-10%	-20%	-10%
Light Leather Armor	+5%	NM	NM	NM	+5%	NM	NM	NM
Leather Armor	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM
Heavy Leather Armor	-20%	-10%	-10%	-10%	-10%	-5%	-20%	-10%
Hide Armor	-60%	-20%	-10%	-20%	-20%	-15%	-60%	-20%
Ring Mail	-30%	-10%	-10%	-25%	-30%	-15%	-30%	-10%
Scale Mail	-40%	-15%	-20%	-35%	-50%	-15%	-50%	-15%
Chain Mail	-40%	-15%	-20%	-30%	-40%	-15%	-40%	-15%
Banded Mail	-90%	-20%	-30%	-50%	-60%	-20%	-50%	-20%
Bone Armor	-40%	-15%	-10%	-40%	-50%	-15%	-45%	-15%
Brigandine Armor	-30%	-10%	-10%	-30%	-30%	-15%	-35%	-10%
Splint Armor	-50%	-25%	-25%	-30%	-40%	-15%	-40%	-25%
Plate Mail	-70%	-40%	-50%	-75%	-80%	-40%	-75%	-40%
Field Plate Armor	-80%	-60%	-60%	-85%	-85%	-60%	-85%	-60%
Full Plate Armor	-90%	-80%	-70%	-95%	-90%	-80%	-95%	-80%

(A separate type of optional armor, Elfin Chain Mail, will be discussed in the Advanced Level rules.)





These statistics presume non-magical armor. Magical armor, which is lighter and easier to maneuver in, will move any penalties up to 10% toward zero, but will not give any advantage. For example, the stats for magical padded armor would be Climbing Sheer Surfaces -5%, Finding Traps no modifier, Hearing Noise no modifier, Hiding in Shadows no modifier, Moving Silently no modifier, Opening Locks no modifier, Pilfering -10%, Removing Traps no modifier.

Hearing Noise penalties can be reduced to -0% if the thief has time to remove headgear, and then to replace it afterwards (1 round required for each action). Removing headgear creates the following temporary armor class penalties: cloth -1 AC, leather -2 AC, mail -3 AC, plate -4 AC. (GMs can get more detailed than that if they prefer, but detailed hit location systems by targeted body area are not featured in this game, where abstracted combat imagined by the players and described by the Game Master is the norm.)

No thieving skill percentage chance can be reduced below 1%, or increased above 98%, by these modifiers. In a high-level campaign, there will eventually be characters with truly epic stealth abilities ... but that simply helps to explain how those bold adventurers survived so long against impossible odds.





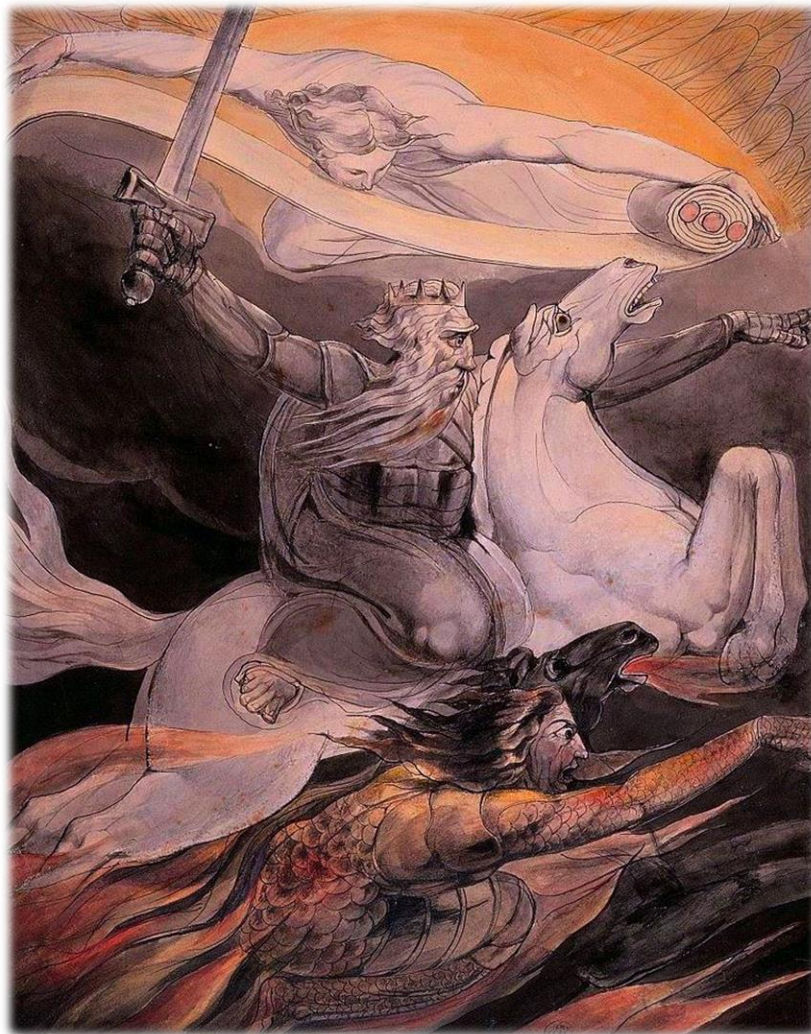
CHAPTER 15: ALIGNMENT





15-1

UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER ALIGNMENT



In the Basic Level game, there are three dominant philosophies which rule over the actions of mortal and immortal creatures throughout the Multiverse. An individual's embrace of one of these philosophies to the exclusion of others is called **Alignment**. Every character has one alignment, no more and no less.





The three fundamental forces which govern the cosmic struggle for eternal dominance are called **Chaos, Law, and Neutrality**. Creatures who follow these principles with their personal alignment are termed **Chaotic, Lawful, or Neutral** as appropriate. Every creature has one alignment, no more and no less. You should choose the alignment that you want your character to adopt; refusing to make a choice is equivalent to embracing the alignment of neutrality.

The forces of good and evil exist in the game world, but this simple and abstract philosophy system allows the Game Master to interpret in-game actions without adhering too strongly to a 21st-century moral code. If you want to include literal good and evil in your game, refer to the next following section. But in its simplest form, alignment is a rough guideline to creature behavior which deliberately sidesteps thorny issues inherent in the modern interpretation of imaginary acts. After all, it really is just a game!





15-2

LAW

AND LAWFUL CHARACTERS

The philosophy of law exemplifies order, creation, truth, control, justice, authority, and a belief that civilized individuals grow stronger when they cooperate with one another. It frequently parallels the concept of “good,” but not always. For example, a lawful character will fully believe that a willful criminal — a murderer, arsonist, kidnapper, etc. — should suffer a grave punishment for committing an unjust act, up to and including the penalty of death if that is what balances the severity of the crime.

Whether a lawful character will obey an unjust law, by the way, is an open question which every individual PC (and NPC) must answer for himself. Generally speaking, lawful characters will follow unjust laws only if the authorities upholding the laws are already trusted for other reasons. Otherwise, they will see the unjust law as a form of corruption.

Spiritually, lawful creatures tend to believe in the powers of fate, destiny, meaning, and prophecy.

Alignment with law is a good character choice for those who want to play the roles of heroes, righteous inquisitors, bounty hunters bringing criminals to justice, loyal soldiers, and so forth.

Many clerics, dwarves, halflings, soldiers, and “team players” are lawful in nature. Lawful creatures thrive in civilized places, where cooperation and controlled competition are the keys to mutual benefit.

15-3

CHAOS

AND CHAOTIC CHARACTERS

The philosophy of chaos exemplifies disorder, destruction, deceit, absolute freedom, randomness, individuality, and a belief that sentient creatures can only be strong when they rely upon themselves and the fulfillment their own whims, and no one else. Chaotic characters do have friends, but in life-or-death situations they will think of themselves before they think of saving anyone else. Chaotic behavior is frequently considered selfish and “evil,” but this is an oversimplification in many circumstances. A dark-minded chaotic character might well be a murderer, but a light-minded one would insist upon self-liberties while avoiding hurting others if at all possible. Chaotic behavior is wide open to GM interpretation (or player interpretation, for a player with a chaotic character); but their behavior is always seemingly random and potentially dangerous from an outside point of view.





Alignment with chaos is a fine character choice for players who want freedom of action, flexibility in uncertain moral circumstances, and the ability to keep all options open when dangerous in-game situations occur. You should be mindful that your character will be disruptive to a degree and disliked by many NPCs, however, if you choose this path. Selfish freedom comes at a considerable price.

Spiritually, chaotic creatures tend to believe in luck, randomness, self-directed destiny, and the “laugther of the gods,” meaning that the immortals cannot be trusted to care about the trivial niceties of mortals and their fates.

Many cultists (clerics), mercenary fighters, lone wolves, and thieves are chaotic in nature. Chaotic creatures are very common in dangerous and savage places, such as dungeons and wildernesses, where adherence to an honor code can get you killed because the others around you will take advantage of your weakness.





15-4

NEUTRALITY

AND NEUTRAL CHARACTERS

The philosophy of neutrality strives to find a balance between the extremes of law and chaos. For a neutral character, everything is about the consideration of circumstances and the long-term aftermath of acts which are too extreme in any direction. A neutral character might be a killer in self-defense, or when slaying the minions of an evil overlord; but the killing of an innocent person for self-gain would be





reprehensible. Similarly, a neutral character would celebrate justice if a criminal was made to pay for his actions without being executed, yet could easily see mitigating circumstances which caused the criminal to act as he did (and which might well invite consideration of mercy).

Spiritually, neutral creatures tend to believe in nature, cosmic balance, the elemental powers (beings of primal air, earth, fire, and water), and unknowable immortal judgments beyond the power of mortal comprehension.



I actually recommend the neutral alignment for most player characters, for several reasons. Foremost, an ideal party of PCs is an efficient and cooperative team which strives to empower all of its members. The team might include lawful clerics and chaotic thieves who are all working together for a common goal, namely to kill the vile monsters and steal their treasure! The lawful characters would be





focused on vanquishing evil, while the chaotic characters would be bent on enriching themselves, and verbal clashes would erupt over the treatment of prisoners, cries for mercy, plundering sacred tombs, and so forth. The presence of diplomatic neutral characters ensures that these arguments do not end in violence.

If you are unsure of your character's alignment or how your character should act in any situation before the situation actually occurs, I recommend that you consider neutrality.

Many elves, fighters, magic-users, and wanderers are neutral in nature. Neutral creatures are found everywhere, and especially in small towns, villages, wilderness enclaves, and the borderlands.

A Summary of Common Alignment-Derived Principles

Principle of Existence	Prevailing Chaotic Belief	Prevailing Lawful Belief	Prevailing Neutral Belief
Battle is the Time for ...	Cruelty	Mercy	Self-Preservation
Our Driving Force is ...	Fear	Faith	Wisdom
Our Goal in Life is ...	Power	Justice	Equilibrium
The Greatest Form of Control is ...	Randomness	Destiny	Self-Actualization
We Crave Freedom ...	From Consequence	For the Worthy	Of Decision
What Brings Immortality?	Undeath	Apotheosis	One's Own Legacy
What Punishment is Fitting for One's Enemies?	Torture	Imprisonment	Measured Punishment to Fit the Misdeed
What Realm Do We Find the Most Allies Within?	The Netherworld	Civilization	The Wilderness
Which is Greater, Good or Evil?	Evil	Good	Neither; the Cosmic Balance Reigns
Who is Worthy of Worship?	Demons, Devils	Gods, Goddesses	Deities, Elementals





15-5

ALIGNMENT IN THE GAME

So why is alignment important to the game? It lets the Game Master know what to expect of your character, and it encourages the player to stay “in character” instead of simply doing whatever they want at any time. If you decide to play a lawful character because you want the authorities to allow you free passage in their city, and then your PC runs around committing crimes for personal advantage, that is not staying in character! Even if you get away with your crimes, you can expect your GM to punish you (with a lack of gained experience points) if you insist on gaming the system in this way for personal benefit. Conversely, if you choose to play a chaotic character and you become self-sacrificing, loyal, trustworthy and allegiant to a liege while swearing oaths of fealty, that’s all very noble ... but you are just as out of character as the player with the criminal lawful PC just mentioned. The GM will probably punish your character with an XP loss (“You have abandoned the gods of chaos who watched over you in youth”) while changing his alignment to neutral.

The alignment system avoids what I term the “murderous saints” dilemma. This means that many players tend to metagame when the alignment system is not in play, to gain advantage for themselves ... and to get away with things that they would never try in real life. Without alignment, quite a few players tend to play their characters as murderers, and then avow strict adherence to a faith whenever they are caught in the act by authorities. Other players tend to play their characters as “the good guys,” until they are denied a substantial treasure or reward ... and then they end up slitting the stable boy’s throat and throwing his body in a ditch before enjoying a few rounds of mead at the local tavern. These wild swings in protagonists’ morality give the game a cheap and difficult-to-justify “videogame” feel, which I try to avoid.

The alignment system therefore exists to make players commit to a greater sphere of morality. You can certainly play the selfish bad guy, but if you do so you need to declare yourself for “team chaos” early on so that the GM knows what to expect ... and what types of NPC reactions to plan for in advance. Since actions have consequences, chaotic behavior can come at a rather grave and serious price in deadly situations when the chips are down.

So how does a new player tackle the concept of alignment? The situation can be a bit confusing at first, but it helps if you understand that your Game Master is building an entire imaginary world with the player characters as the protagonists, and to remember that the world is filled with clashing factions, knights, priests, monsters and fallen gods who are all vying against one another in a vast eternal conflict. The GM’s job becomes easier when he knows that lawful PCs will be readily accepted by strangers in cities, neutral PCs will be regarded with suspicion (but they will have the flexibility to negotiate with chaotic foes), and chaotic PCs will be deemed untrustworthy in most circumstances. Alignment is a shorthand codification that allows the GM to outline potential actions and responses throughout the game world while the players perform random actions and take unpredictable paths.

If you are asking yourself “Why would I want my character to have an alignment? What’s in it for me?” then the better question might be, “What alignment should I choose to make the game easier for





the Game Master?” Because if you don’t care about the potential repercussions of negative acts, you might actually be one of those players who the GM needs to keep an eye on! (Don’t feel bad if you love playing chaotics, though ... those were my favorite PCs to play early on in the game, and even now from time to time.)



For the Basic Level player, alignment is shorthand which implies a character’s personality. Some players enjoy mapping out a PC’s detailed background, behavior, philosophy, and habits before play, while others (this author included) prefer “emergent play.” This involves just quickly choosing an alignment to guide your role-playing with the new character, and then letting the details develop as a



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result of unusual situations during the game. You might not yet know that your character hates dwarves, loves to eat apples, stutters, and is haunted by a dark past, but after you play the role for a few months and imagine up the details in response to the GM's challenges, you will find that your character's personality develops naturally. Alignment is a guide along this path, allowing you to change the question of "What would this character who I don't know very well yet do in this situation?" into "What would a chaotic person likely do here?"

Alignment is not a straitjacket, and for any individual character it can change over time, but it is a valuable tool that makes the GM's job easier while also lending moral and role-playing guidance to the player.





15-6

CHARACTER ALIGNMENT AND COURSES OF ACTION

In this section, I will demonstrate what three PCs of different alignments might commonly do when faced with challenging ethical circumstances. We'll call them Ulric the Craven, Damiana Lightwielder, and Taren the Wild-Wanderer.

Before I make this demonstration, I should stress that alignment does not force you to play the game in a certain way, and this chart is only an example that you might decide your character will take! This is only a guide. You can always choose what your character will do, but your choices will have consequences if you decide to play "against the grain" of your PC's chosen philosophy. (This is another reason why I encourage new players to try out of a neutral character first.)

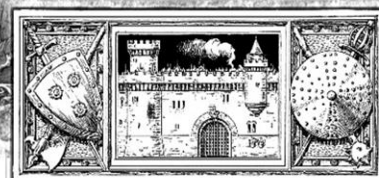
Here are some example situations for you to consider:

Examples of Alignment-Influenced Situations in Role-Playing

Adventure Situation	Ulric the Craven (Common Chaotic Response)	Damiana Lightwielder (Common Lawful Response)	Taren the Wild- Wanderer (Common Neutral Response)
A kidnapper abducts your ally and demands a ransom	Ignore the kidnapper's threats, he's not getting your gold	Pay the ransom, and then strive to bring the kidnapper to justice	Pay the ransom if you must, but seek a negotiation first
An ally is threatened with death and requires aid	Save the ally only if there is no personal danger, or demand a reward	Save the ally even if you must sacrifice yourself to do so	Save the ally if you can, but not at the expense of your own life
Authorities demand that you turn in a young thief who has taken shelter in your inn	Lie to the guards, then blackmail the thief for a reward because you saved him	Hand the thief over because the authorities are probably right in their accusations, and it's the right thing to do	Hand the thief over if you must, while asking the authorities if there is a potential misunderstanding of the young thief's motive



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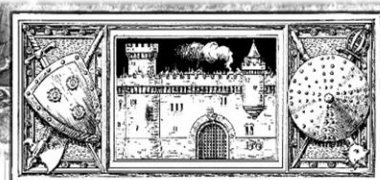


Adventure Situation	Ulric the Craven (Common Chaotic Response)	Damiana Lightwielder (Common Lawful Response)	Taren the Wild-Wanderer (Common Neutral Response)
Chaotic monsters threaten the party and demand tribute	Refuse to pay, offer counterfeit jewels, or perhaps even consider switching sides if death is looming	Threaten the monsters in turn, and attack them if necessary while protecting your companions	Parley with the monsters and try to seek a mutually advantageous solution
The party is dividing hard-won treasure after an adventure	Pretend to abide by the group's wishes, but steal what you can	Honorably divide the treasure, even if your character gains less than someone else	Divide the treasure fairly, but speak up aggressively if your character is not equally rewarded
The party requires information from a captured monster	Torture the monster until you gain all of the information you need	Demand information from the monster, but leave it bound and unharmed if it does not cooperate	Rough up the monster if needed, but not to the point of torture, unless a more diplomatic approach yields results
The party is overrun by monsters and must flee combat	Run away and save yourself at all costs	Organize a fighting withdrawal, sacrificing yourself if there is no other way	Protect your allies, but abandon the fallen if you are about to die as well
Xenophobic elves, nocking arrows, demand that your party leave their guarded lands at once	Attack them, insult them, or lie to justify your presence	Leave the guarded lands and return the way you came, even though the detour will be lengthy	Insist that you come in peace, and that you are only passing through, while offering tribute

Using this table as a guide, players and Game Masters should be able to extrapolate the general information to determine not only the courses of action which PCs might take, but also the responses of chaotic, lawful, and neutral creatures or NPCs who are reacting to the PCs and the decisions the players make as well.



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15-7

THE ENIGMA OF GOOD AND EVIL (OPTIONAL RULE)

The question of whether a baby orc is “born evil,” or becomes evil as a result of growing up with the tribe, is a classic one in conversations concerning the game. One school of thought insists that if the orc is removed from her tribe and raised by priests, she will grow up to be pious and good because she will learn from the examples of those who have cared for her. Others, however, would insist that because





the orc was created by an evil god, her “blood will come true” and she will become evil as an adult regardless of circumstances, as her corrupted nature will exert itself in the end.

If you as the Game Master believe that creatures are inherently good or evil — rather than learning behavior over time — you might want to consider adding the alignment axis of “Good vs. Evil” to your game. However, if you believe that free will triumphs over a creature’s origin — or, if you would simply rather not “go there” in a game — you can skip this optional rules situation with no further consideration.



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In the Basic Castle Oldskull game, there are only three alignments which govern the fates of sentient creatures: chaotic, lawful, and neutral. But if you want to add the complexity of good and evil your campaign, this requires the creation of a second alignment axis. The possible alignments then look like this:





The Nine Alignments of Law, Chaos, Good, Evil, and Neutrality

Aspects of Law	Aspects of Neutrality	Aspects of Chaos
<u>Lawful Good (LG)</u> Angels Saints Believers in Justice	<u>Neutral Good (NG)</u> Spirits Champions Believers in Unity	<u>Chaotic Good (CG)</u> Archons Heroes Believers in Freedom
<u>Lawful Neutral (LN)</u> Scions Overlords Believers in Discipline	<u>True Neutral (TN)</u> Elementals Druids Believers in Nature	<u>Chaotic Neutral (CN)</u> Exarchs Cultists Believers in Anarchy
<u>Lawful Evil (LE)</u> Devils Hellbringers Believers in Tyranny	<u>Neutral Evil (NE)</u> Fiends Slayers Believers in Death	<u>Chaotic Evil (CE)</u> Demons Abominations Believers in Cruelty

As you can see, this adds much more philosophical complexity to the game, but it also further restricts player choice and potential courses of action ... instead of fitting into three wide-open realms of possibility, characters must now constrain themselves to one of nine philosophies, which makes it much easier for confused players to “stray from the path.”

In the monster and NPC descriptions which occur later in this rules series, I will be showing the simple alignment as the primary, and then the complex alignment parenthetically. Therefore, an entry of “Lawful (LN)” would mean “This creature is lawful if you are using simple alignment, or lawful neutral if you are using complex alignment.”

If you want this level of complexity, I recommend the following guidelines for interpretation of each ethos:

Overview of the Nine Alignments in the Campaign

Complex Alignment	Foremost Philosophy	Legendary Exemplars	Precepts and Beliefs
Chaotic Evil	Evil	Ares, Demon Lords, Morgan le Fay	Cruelty, Demon Worship, Freedom from Consequences, Malignancy, Power, Randomness, Ruthlessness, Self-Worship, Torture
Chaotic Good	Good	Aphrodite, Bast, Thor, Zeus	Exploration, Free Will, Individuality, Liberty, Personal Freedoms, Self-Fulfillment



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Chaotic Neutral	Chaos	Coyote, Dionysus, the Great Old Ones, Loki, Pan, Poseidon	Anarchy, Caprice, Disorder, Disruption (of Law, Evil, and Good), Randomness, Self-Reliance, Unpredictability
Lawful Evil	Evil	Arch-Devils, Hecate, Louhi, Set	Conquest, Devil Worship, Glory for the Strong, Hierarchical Loyalty, Tyranny, Slavery for the Weak, Vengeance
Lawful Good	Good	Anubis, Athena, Heimdall, King Arthur, Osiris	Apotheosis, Destruction of Evil, Divine Deliverance, Judgment, Justice, Retribution, Righteous Order, Salvation
Lawful Neutral	Law	Horus, Nike, Quetzalcoatl	Authority, Control, Discipline, Honor, Logic, Rationality, Reign of Law, Stability, Tradition
Neutral Evil	Evil	Hades, Hel	Death, Destruction of Good, Dominance, Empowerment of All Evil, Fear, Warfare
Neutral Good	Good	Gilgamesh, Lemminkainen, Merlin, Odin, Ra	Charity, The Common and Greater Good, Fairness, Mentorship, Mercy, Tolerance, Unity
True Neutral	Neutrality	Artemis, Gaea (Mother Earth), Ishtar, Silvanus, Thoth	Balance and Counterbalance, Diplomacy, Elemental Worship, Nature, Nullification of Extremes, Wisdom
Unaligned	(None)	Apshai, Beasts, Dinosaurs, Insects	Action, Instinct, Predation, Self-Interest, Survival





15-8

LIMITATIONS ON CHARACTER ALIGNMENT (OPTIONAL RULE)



In the Castle Oldskull game as written, there are no limitations on character alignment. Any character, regardless of race, class, or background, can adhere to any one alignment that the player prefers to play.

Traditionally however, there are some expectations built into the older games which the Game Master might want to consider. Fighters and magic-users have always been regarded being open in alignment (with chaotic, lawful, and neutral being perfectly viable options), but some GMs interpret the rules as saying that clerics must be either lawful or chaotic, with neutrality forbidden. My personal opinion is that this is unnecessarily restrictive, because there are many neutral gods and goddesses in the game, and





those immortal entities would certainly desire that their followers and adherents shared the philosophy of the deity, and not the philosophy of a rival power.

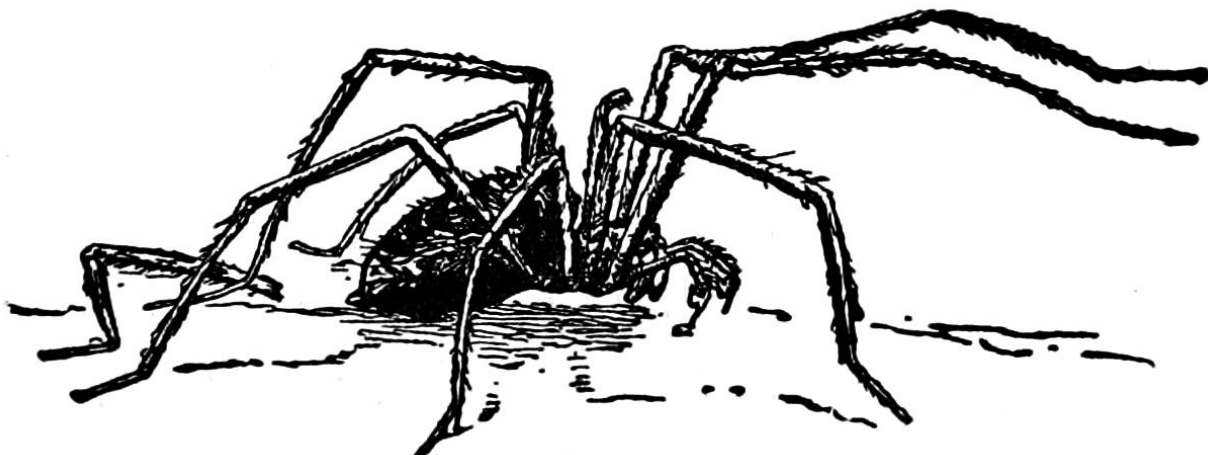
Also, some GMs believe that thieves should only be either chaotic or neutral, but never lawful. I disagree with this, because I believe that thieving skills represent talents in subterfuge which exist outside of philosophy; each individual thief must decide whether those skills are to be used for good or evil. Potential examples of lawful thieves include medieval special forces (basically honorable soldiers with stealthy talents), agents of the King (who use their skills to entrap criminals or bring them to justice), or good-hearted dungeon scouts (who employ their skills to aid other party members during adventures, while also slaying evil monsters and doing good deeds). This issue is wide open to interpretation by the Game Master.

A bit more nebulously, some GMs feel that the demi-humans should not be chaotic or evil, because the forces of evil are already well-represented by humanoids and monsters. This issue boils down to whether you want to force your players to assume the roles of heroes, or if you would rather prefer that they decide their PCs' destinies for themselves.

15-9

UNALIGNED CREATURES (OPTIONAL RULE)

Because alignment is philosophical in nature, I recommend that GMs consider creating an additional Unaligned option for most lower animals and unintelligent creatures (sharks, boars, centipedes, giant spiders, and so forth).





Many GMs are comfortable with the tradition of assigning the alignment of Neutral to such creatures, but then there are actually two types of neutrality which are very different from one another: one for intelligent creatures who willfully choose to avoid the extremes of law and chaos, and one for unintelligent creatures who don't have the capacity to care either way.

In the monster listings, I list such creatures' alignment as "Neutral (Unaligned)," which can be read as simply "Neutral" if you disagree with this recommendation.





AN END TO SWORD & SORCERY BOOK ONE



Once you have carefully considered your character's alignment and entered your decision into your character record, you have completed the final step of preliminary Basic Level character creation. There are still decisions that you will need to make before you can play, but all of the philosophical, role-playing driven, and major characteristic decisions are now complete. It might not seem like we've covered a lot so far, but we've discussed the nature of the game universe, hundreds of technical terms, optional rules and complexity tiers, campaigns and difficulty levels, ability scores, races, classes, sanity and insanity, survivability, thieving skills, spells, alignment, good and evil, and much more. In reading this book, you





have mastered a basic understanding of not only the Castle Oldskull Sword and Sorcery Adventure Game, but also the general tenets of all fantasy role-playing games.

So what still lies ahead? In book two, you as a player will learn about coinage, starting wealth, weapons, armor, shields, equipment, armor class and defense ratings, attack ability and combat prowess, languages, skills (beyond thieves' skullduggery), and many optional details pertaining to names, height and weight, descriptions, and so forth. Once you've completed book two you'll be ready to play. In book three, we'll cover everything you need to know to play the game so that your newly-crafted character can hopefully survive the dungeons deep.

For Game Masters and veteran players, in book two you can look forward to the most detailed (yet streamlined) weapon and equipment systems that I know of, as well as fully delineated lists of armor and shields with some new gear and medieval research to inform some rather interesting optional rules that I've come up with. You'll also find optional rules for variable gold by starting class, social standing, weapon damage by character class, weapon damage by type of wound, critical hits and misses, weapon quality, armor size, defensive and offensive shield variants, simple and complex encumbrance systems, a hundred optional skills, and much more.

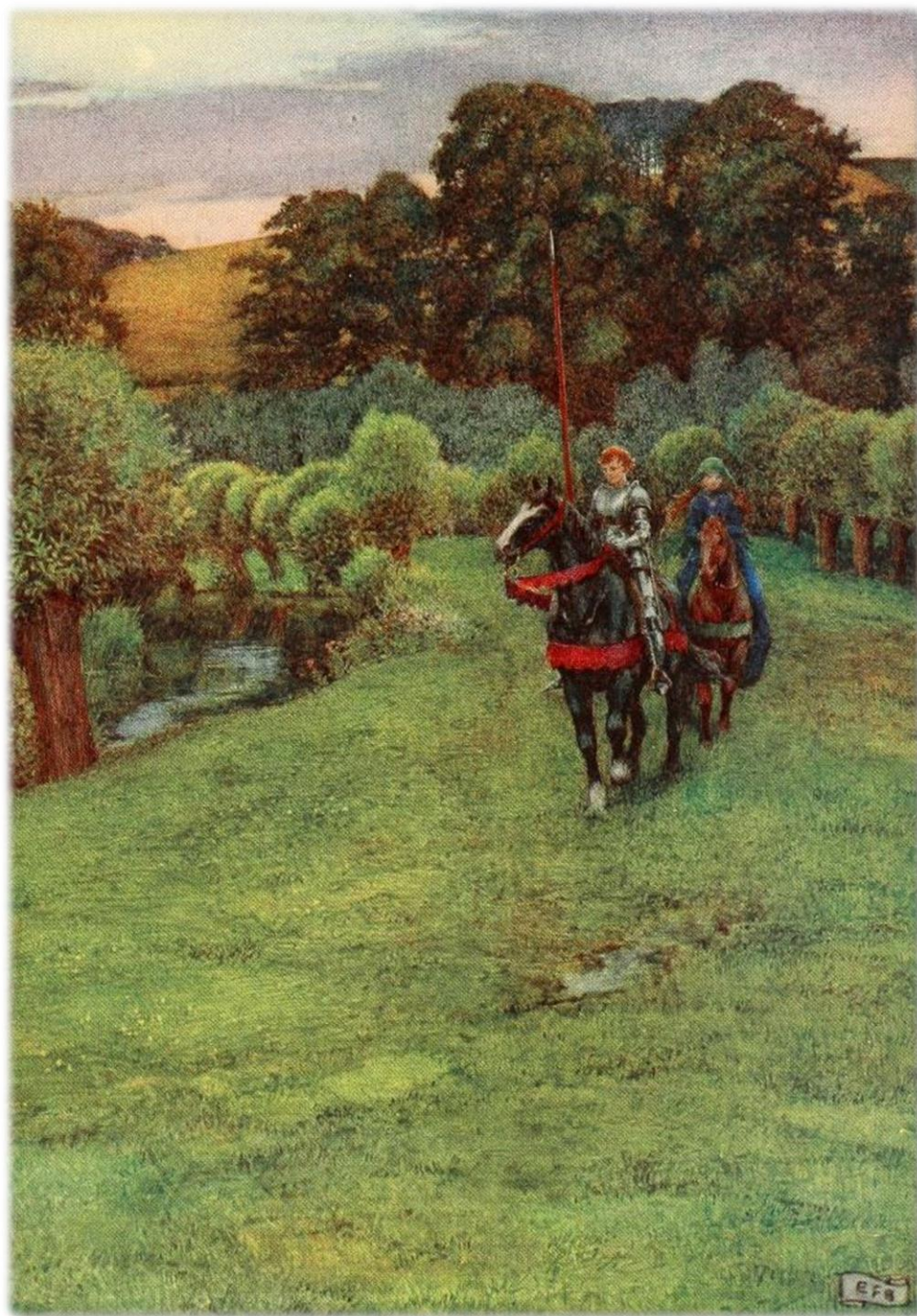
Once the Basic Level "player trilogy" of books is complete, I will be creating books to aid new and veteran Game Masters in creating a campaign from the ground up. We'll go over dungeon design, adventure design, wilderness design, game world design, in-play game decisions, campaign approaches, thematic play development, ways to approach creating your own house rules, and everything else that I can think of that you might need to play. If you're impatient, you'll be happy to know that I have written many platinum- and gold-medal books already which cover precisely these topics in a very detailed way. These books are not simple, because they focus more on options and random generation than they do on teaching; but once the series is complete, you will have an ascending series of "stepping stones" which will take you from the very beginning of play to the end of epic-level milieu development.

I hope that you have found this book useful and enjoyable. My goal in writing this volume was to approach character creation for beginners, from the perspective of both a player and a Game Master, while providing enough options, choices, and design notes to make even veterans take notice and reconsider the way they've played for years. If I have given you inspiration, explained the way that characters are made, and made you rethink things that you've had settled in your mind for years, then I will consider this book to be a success.

I believe this book is rather unwieldy in its current form, simply because it's large and wordy and it takes its time with detailed consideration of subjects which tend to be glossed over in other OSR rules systems. But I felt that it was crucial to take my time to get all the details right first, in a learning and teaching mode, and then to streamline things thereafter. In the future, therefore, I will be publishing a streamlined "table reference" version of these rules which will strip things down to tables, bulleted reminders and flowcharts, so that players have both a learning volume (this current book) and a refresher that can be used during play for rapid lookups and comprehensive summaries of the rules.

Until next time, I hope you enjoy your gaming and are looking forward to the even greater revelations yet to come! The key to Castle Oldskull belongs to you now. May you never roll a 1 for initiative when your character comes face to face with Great Cthulhu ...







ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beginning play as a chaotic neutral normal human with one measly hit point to his name, KENT DAVID KELLY eventually became apprenticed to a magic-user of ill repute ... a foul man who dwelt in the steamy deeps of the Ivory Cloud Mountain. After this mentor carelessly misplaced an intelligent soul-sucking sword and then died under suspicious circumstances, his former henchman Mr. Kelly escaped to the deeper underground and there began playing Satanic role-playing games. This, the legends tell us, occurred in the year 1981.

Hoary wizard-priests who inspired Mr. Kelly in his netherworldly machinations included the peerless Gygax, Carr, Arneson, Cook, Hammack, Jaquays, Bledsaw, Moldvay, Kuntz, Schick and Ward. Sadly, a misguided made-for-the-basements movie entitled *Mazes and Monsters* gave Mr. Kelly's parents conniptions in 1982. As a result of that blasphemous Tom Hanks debacle (and other more personal lapses in judgment), Mr. Kelly was eventually forbidden from playing his favorite game for a considerable length of time.

Nonplussed but not defeated, he used this enforced exile to escape to a friend's alehouse, and there indulged himself in now-classic computer RPGs such as Zork, Telengard, Temple of Apshai, Ultima, Tunnels of Doom, The Bard's Tale, Phantasie, Pool of Radiance, Wizard's Crown and Wasteland. He then went on to write computer versions of his own FRPGs, which led to his obsession with coupling creative design elements with random dungeons and unpredictable adventure generation.

Mr. Kelly wrote and submitted his first adventure for Dungeon Magazine #1 in 1986. Unfortunately, one Mr. Moore decided that his submission was far too "Lovecraftian, horrific and unfair" to ever serve that worthy periodical as a publishable adventure. Mr. Kelly, it must be said, took this rejection as a very good sign of things to come.

In the late 80s and 90s, Mr. Kelly wrote short stories, poems and essays ... some of which have been published under the Wonderland Imprints banner. He wrote several dark fantasy and horror novels as well. Concurrently, he ran Dark Angel Collectibles, selling classic FRPG materials as Darkseraphim, and assisted the Acaeum with the creation of the Valuation Board and other minor research projects.

At this time, Mr. Kelly and his entourage of evil gnomes are rumored to dwell in the dread and deathly under-halls of the Acaeum, Dragonsfoot, ENWorld, Grogardnia, Knights & Knaves, ODD, and even more nefarious levels deep down in the mega-dungeon of the Web.

There he remains in vigil, his vampiric sword yet shivering in his hand. When not being sought outright for answers to halfling riddles or other more sundry sage advice, he is to be avoided by sane individuals *at all costs*.





OTHER FINE OFFERINGS FROM WONDERLAND IMPRINTS

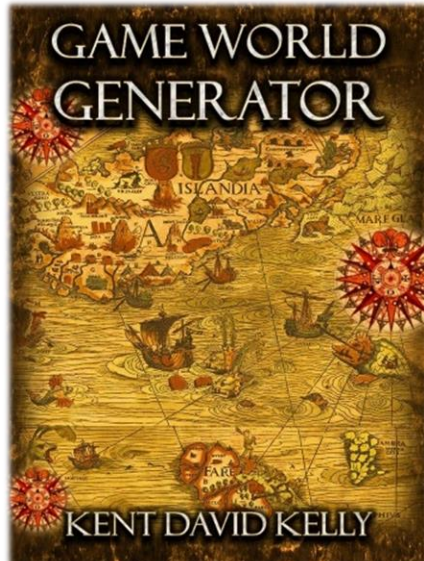
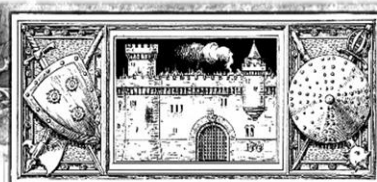
I CASTLE OLDSKULL OLD SCHOOL FRPG SUPPLEMENTS

 <p>CLASSIC DUNGEON DESIGN GUIDE</p> <p>KENT DAVID KELLY</p> <p><u>The Classic Dungeon Design Guide, Book I</u> (5-Star Platinum Medal Best-Selling Supplement)</p>	 <p>KENT DAVID KELLY</p> <p>CLASSIC DUNGEON DESIGN GUIDE BOOK II</p> <p><u>The Classic Dungeon Design Guide, Book II</u> (4-Star Gold Medal Best-Selling Supplement)</p>	 <p>CLASSIC DUNGEON DESIGN GUIDE BOOK III</p> <p>KENT DAVID KELLY</p> <p><u>The Classic Dungeon Design Guide, Book III</u> (4-Star Gold Medal Best-Selling Supplement)</p>
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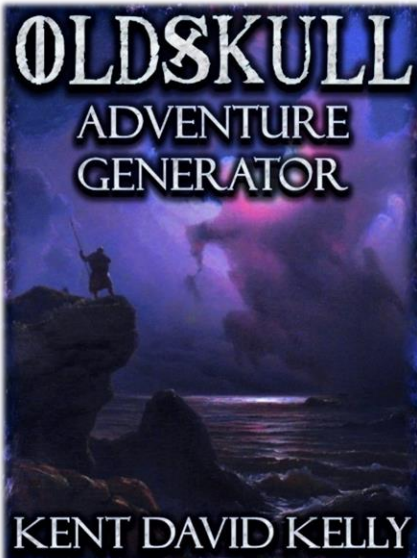


ORIGINAL OLD SCHOOL

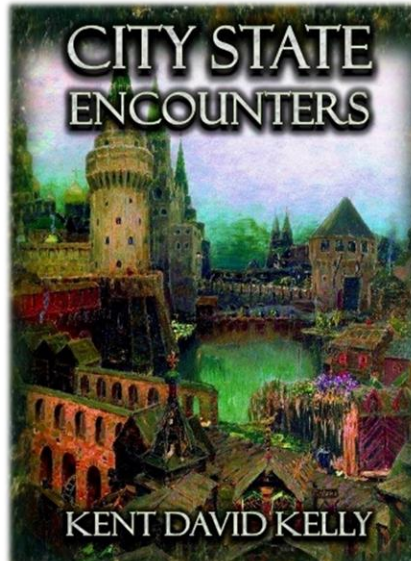
FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAMES



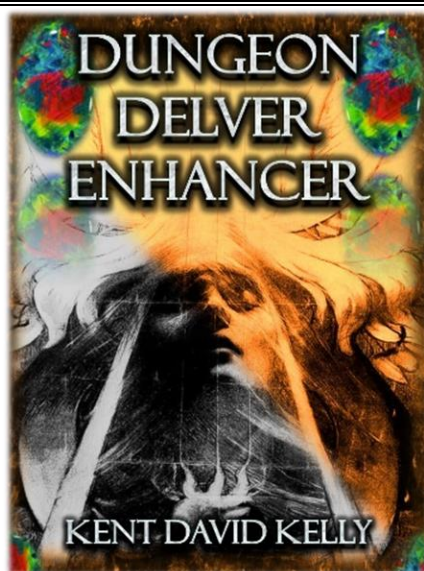
[Game World Generator](#)
(4-Star Platinum Medal Best-Selling Supplement)



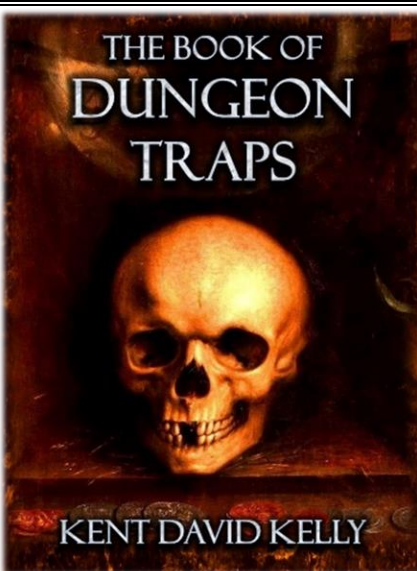
[Oldskull Adventure Generator](#)
(4-Star Gold Medal Best-Selling Supplement)



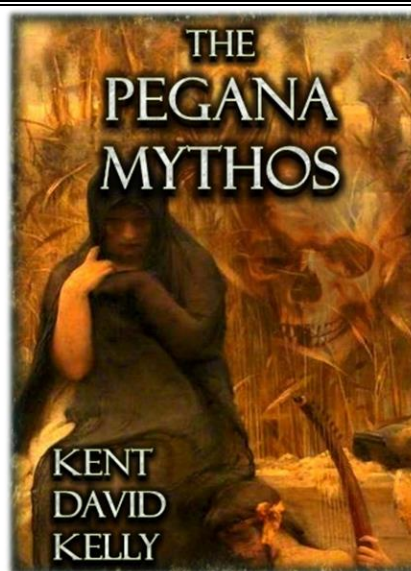
[City State Encounters](#)
(4-Star Gold Medal Best-Selling Supplement)



[Dungeon Delver Enhancer](#)
(4-Star Gold Medal Best-Selling Supplement)



[The Book of Dungeon Traps](#)
(4-Star Gold Medal Best-Selling Supplement)

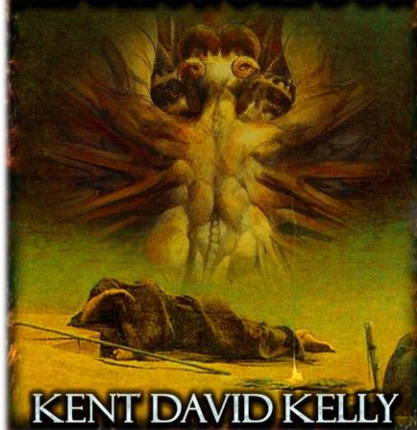


[The Pegana Mythos](#)
(4-Star Electrum Medal Best-Selling Supplement)





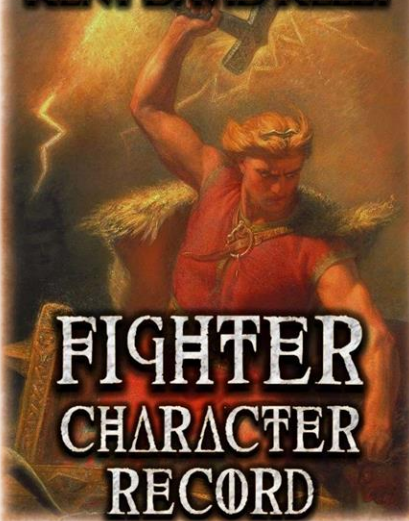
THE OLDSKULL NECRONOMICON



KENT DAVID KELLY

[The Oldskull Necronomicon, Book I](#)
(4-Star Silver Medal Best-Selling Supplement)

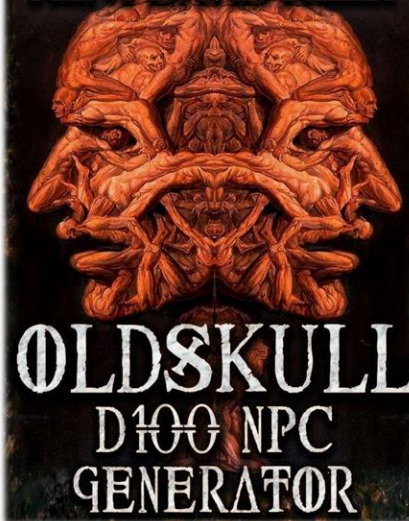
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FIGHTER CHARACTER RECORD

[Fighter Character Record](#)
(Free Deluxe Character Sheets)

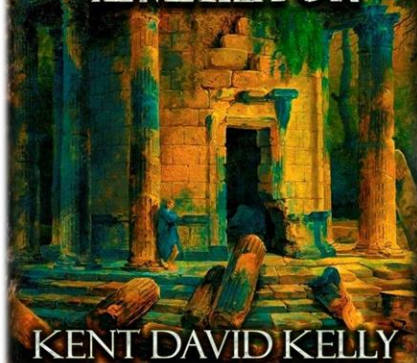
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OLDSKULL D100 NPC GENERATOR

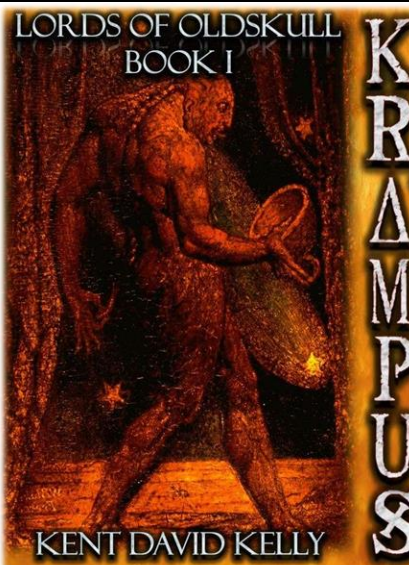
[Oldskull D100 NPC Generator](#)
(Silver Medal Best-Selling Supplement)

OLDSKULL DUNGEON GENERATOR



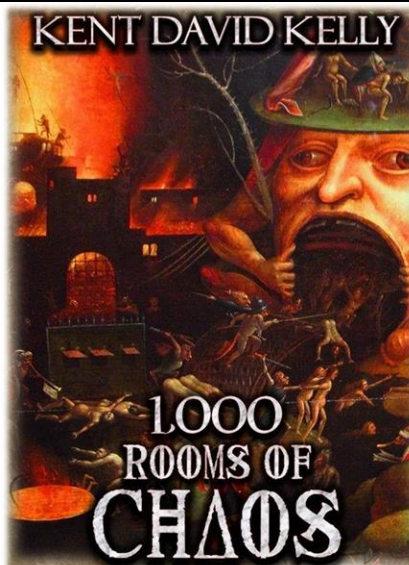
KENT DAVID KELLY

[Oldskull Dungeon Generator, Level I](#)
(Electrum Medal Best-Selling Supplement)



KENT DAVID KELLY

[Lords of Oldskull, Book I, Krampus](#)
(Copper Medal Best-Selling Supplement)



KENT DAVID KELLY

1000 ROOMS OF CHAOS

[1,000 Rooms of Chaos, Book I](#)
(Silver Medal Best-Selling Supplement)

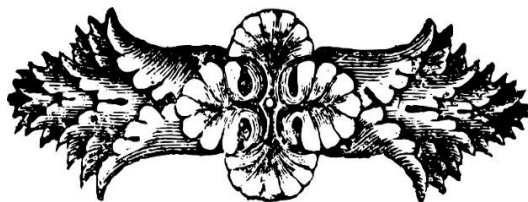




<p>KENT DAVID KELLY</p>  <p>1000 ROOMS OF CHAOS II</p> <p><u>1,000 Rooms of Chaos, Book II</u> (A New Plethora of Maddening Dungeon Room Ideas)</p>	<p>KENT DAVID KELLY</p>  <p>THE OLDSKULL DECK OF STRANGEST THINGS</p> <p><u>The Oldskull Deck of Strangest Things</u> (4-Star Copper-Medal Best- Selling Supplement)</p>	<p>KENT DAVID KELLY</p>  <p>OLDSKULL TREASURE TROVE</p> <p><u>Oldskull Treasure Trove, Book I</u> (Massive Treasure Generation System and Idea Book)</p>
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II HAWK & MOOR GAMING INDUSTRY HISTORY BOOKS

*(Please note that several of the Hawk & Moor titles are not yet available at DriveThruRPG,
but will be made available there in the future.)*



ORIGINAL OLD SCHOOL FANTASY ROLE PLAYING GAMES



HAWK & MOOR



KENT DAVID KELLY

[Hawk & Moor, Book I](#)
(4-Star History of Gygaxian
RPGs, Silver Medal Best
Seller)

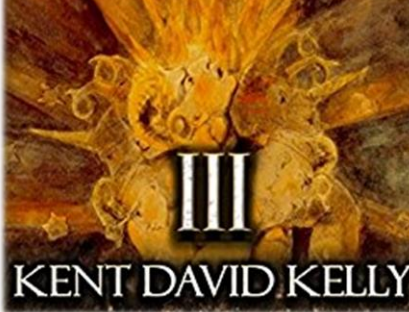
HAWK & MOOR



KENT DAVID KELLY

[Hawk & Moor, Book II](#)
(4-Star History of Gygaxian
RPGs, Silver Medal Best
Seller)

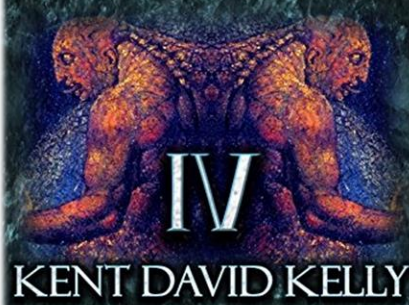
HAWK & MOOR



KENT DAVID KELLY

Hawk & Moor, Book III
(4-Star History of Gygaxian
RPGs)

HAWK & MOOR



KENT DAVID KELLY

Hawk & Moor, Book IV
(4-Star History of Gygaxian
RPGs)

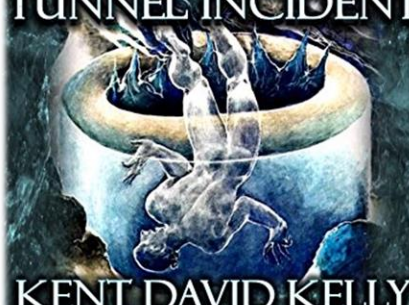
HAWK & MOOR



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Hawk & Moor, Book V
(4-Star History of Gygaxian
RPGs)

HAWK & MOOR THE STEAM TUNNEL INCIDENT



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Hawk & Moor, The Steam
Tunnel Incident
(4-Star History of a Tragic
Event)

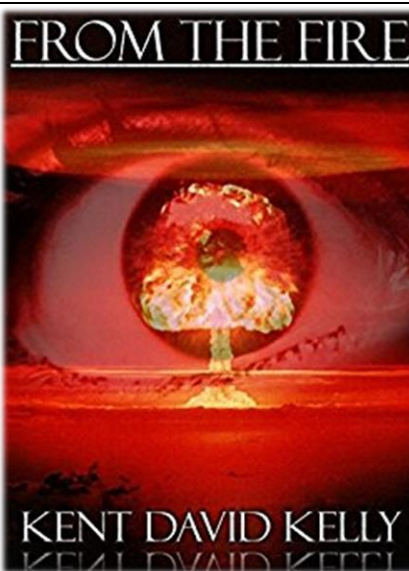
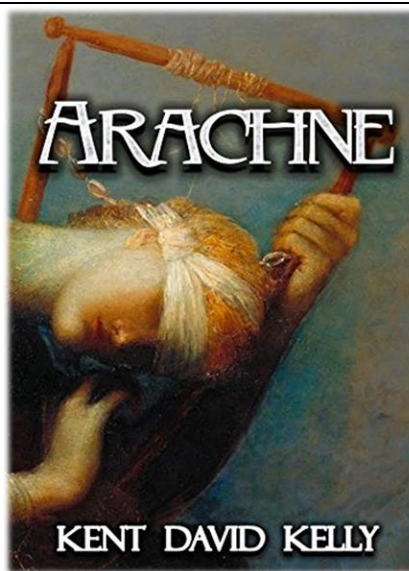




III

FANTASY NOVELS

BY KENT DAVID KELLY

 <p>Necronomicon, The Cthulhu Revelations</p> <p>(4-Star Lovecraftian Novel; reproduced in Castle Oldskull format as well, with additional expanded gaming material)</p>	 <p>From the Fire</p> <p>(4-Star Post-Apocalyptic Novel; my most famous and best-selling book to date)</p>	 <p>Arachne</p> <p>(4-Star Dark Fantasy Novel; my very first publication)</p>
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(Be sure to check the websites listed below for the latest releases. And there are more obscure and diverse works to discover as well, if you dig around!)





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(at DriveThruRPG.com)

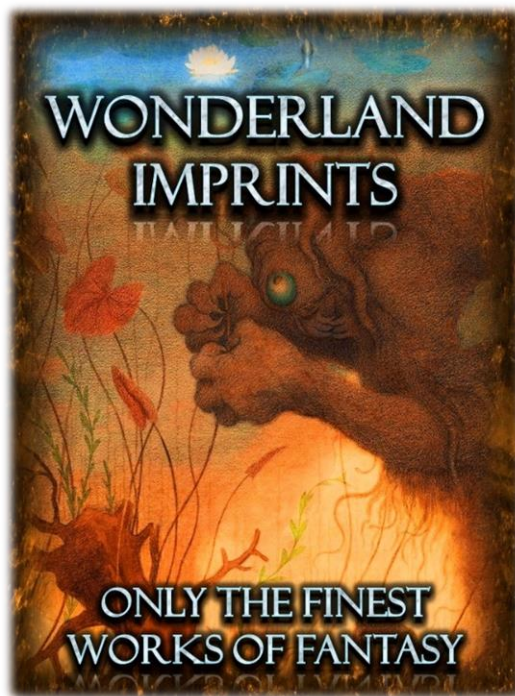
<http://www.drivethrurpg.com/browse/pub/7178/Kent-David-Kelly>

(at RPGNow.com)

<http://www.rpgnow.com/browse/pub/7178/Kent-David-Kelly>

(at DMsGuild.com)

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