ANECROMANCER'S GRIMOIRE: Steeds and Stallions



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ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

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Midnight

Anna had known from the first moment she laid eyes on that dark little foal, more legs than body, that it was a special horse. She could just feel it. She had worked hard all summer on her parents' farm, and so for her birthday her father had promised her that when Belle's foal was born, it would be all hers. Her father had, of course, warned her that a horse would be a big responsibility and a lot of work, but the words just floated unheard past her ears as she dreamed up images of herself astride her very own horse.

She had paid extra special attention to Belle during the mare's pregnancy, making sure she got the best of the oats and hay and sneaking her treats like apples, carrots, and molasses. She was excited when her father woke her up in the night to tell her Belle was in labor, and proud when he let her help with the foaling. Anna watched with wonder as the tiny foal wobbled to his feet for the first time, delighted with the small star on his forehead, the only white on the black colt's body. She named him Midnight.

The months, then years, flew by, and Midnight grew into a strong and spirited colt. He was known around the valley almost as much for his high-strung personality as he was for his speed. Anna had trained him herself – well, mostly: her father helped – first to accept human handling, then a halter and lead, and eventually a bridle and saddle. And there was no mistaking that Midnight was Anna's horse – he fussed whenever another member of the family tried to ride him, and flat-out refused to let strangers on his back. With Anna, though, Midnight was always gentle and affectionate, and she adored him.

One morning, during harvest time, Anna's mother called her downstairs.

"Anna, I promised to send some of my preserves to Mrs. Floyd, in town – poor woman has no one to look after her, you know. But with both your sisters off and married this summer, I just don't have time to do it myself, and heaven knows your father can't spare any of the boys this time of year. So I need you to take them for me, tomorrow. Do you think you can manage that?"

"Oh yes, Mama!" Anna answered, fairly bouncing with excitement. The town of Fairbridge was nearly half a day's ride away, and she rarely got the chance to go. She had also never been allowed to go by herself before, and she felt proud that her mother trusted her to go so far alone.

"Now, Anna, calm down. I want you home before bedtime tomorrow, which means you'll need to ride out before dawn and not dilly-dally too long at the market. You promise me you'll be careful?"

"Oh, I will, Mama!" Anna shouted, then checked herself, took a breath, and placed both feet on the floor. "I mean, I promise, Mama – I'll be very careful."

Her mother smiled. "I know you will, darling."

True to her word, Anna's mother sent her off before the sun had begun to rise the next morning, having carefully packed her jars into two saddlebags. She let Anna secure them on Midnight, however.

Anna soon found herself quite awake with adrenaline, alternatively humming tunes and telling Midnight all about the things she would see at the town's market. She could tell Midnight was enjoying the chance to get out and stretch his legs, too, and every once in a while she let him have his head and the two dashed across fields and through woods until both were out of breath.

Once in Fairbridge, Anna first made her way to Mrs. Floyd's house. The elderly woman was very

happy to have some company, and gave Anna some lunch and even a few sweets to take with her. Then, Anna made her way to the busy marketplace.

Midnight danced nervously as Anna guided him through the busy streets; his nostrils flared, taking in the strange smells, and his ears flicked in all directions as he tried to determine the source of each noise. Anna patted his neck and spoke to him with soothing words, and the horse began to calm down. Though still wary, twitching or side-stepping occasionally, by the time they reached the market, he had resumed his customary confident air.

Anna dismounted and led Midnight through the narrow aisles between the stalls, stroking the colt's nose to soothe him while she looked at the various wares with wide eyes. With her meager allowance, she bought a few small gifts to take back to her family. She spent the most time, however, at a vendor selling ribbons, agonizing over which color would look best braided through Midnight's silky mane. Finally, she decided on a bright red, pleased with how it stood out against the pitch black of the horse's mane and coat.

All too soon, Anna knew she had to leave, and after buying herself some dinner, she and Midnight made their way out of the town. The two rested under a tree not too far outside the town gates to eat before setting off for home. Midnight, though, refused to settle down, instead snorting and dancing about, often stopping to stare off into the distance. Anna turned to see what Midnight was staring at, and thought she could discern some figures in a clump of trees a ways off.

"Come on, Midnight, you wouldn't begrudge other travelers the chance to rest outside the town, would you? I suppose it's time for to be off anyway – don't want to be spend too much time traveling after sundown."

Midnight seemed anxious to leave the town far behind, but even long after the walls had passed from sight, the black horse retained his nervous air. He often threw his head around, looking this way or that, and his ears never stopped twitching. Imagining that the long day and the bustle of the city had simply been too much for him, she felt somewhat guilty for bringing the young horse, knowing she could have taken Belle or one of the other older horses, who were more used to trips into Fairbridge. As she turned him into the forest, she spoke in her most soothing voice, "Shh, shh, Midnight – home is just on the other side of these trees – we're nearly there."

If anything, though, Midnight grew more and more agitated once they entered the dark woods. Soon, his whole body was quivering, and he seemed torn between wanting to bolt through the trees and wanting to pull up at every noise. Night had fully overtaken the forest, and Anna could hardly see the path. Between the darkness and Midnight's strange behavior, she began to feel her own heart racing, and found herself starting at the rustling of branches and hooting of owls. Then, without warning, Midnight stopped dead, his ears pricked forward, his haunches slightly lowered as he seemed to be bracing himself, and Anna heard a man's voice from the trees in front of her.

"Good evening, miss."

She gulped and tried to find her voice. "Wh-wh-who's there?" she asked.

She saw several horseback figures emerging from the trees all around her, and the voice answered with a hint of a chuckle, "Oh, we're just some fellow travelers, wondering if you might be so kind as to share your goods from the town with us."

Anna froze, her breath caught in her throat. Her mind went blank – she only knew she had to get away from these men. "Run, Midnight," was all she managed to whisper.

And like a bolt of lightning, the horse was off. He flew through a gap between two horses before their riders could react, and Anna heard one of them swear before she heard the horses start off after her and Midnight. She was too frightened to think, and she simply gave Midnight his head and buried her face in his mane, clinging to his neck. Even if she had been sitting up, it was too dark and Midnight was running too fast for her to see where they were going.

She and Midnight had ridden about in these woods many times, however, and she knew the horse knew his way home; she also remembered her father telling her that Midnight would be able to see his way in the dark better than she could. She put all her trust in her horse, mumbling "Go, Midnight, go!" into his neck.

She could feel him weaving through the trees and hopping over logs. She felt him breathing heavy, and knew that, after the long journey to and from Fairbridge, he was not as his best. She heard the other horses pounding through the underbrush, and the shouts of the men as they tried to keep her and Midnight surrounded. She refused to think about what might happen if Midnight wasn't fast enough. Then, she began to faintly smell the foul odor of the bog, and a new panic took her. She lifted her head and tried to determine where she was, saying, "No, Midnight – we'll get stuck in the mud!" But Midnight kept plunging on ahead, darting between trees, and though she squinted into the darkness, she couldn't discern anything to tell her where they were headed – though the stench grew stronger.

Suddenly, just as she was sure she and Midnight were doomed to flounder in the murky bog, the colt dashed to the right so quickly she nearly lost her hold on him. As she regained her balance, she heard more cursing from the men, along with the unmistakable splashing and squishing sounds of hooves in the mire of the bog. After a few seconds, she heard them struggle their way out, but it was too late: the black colt had careened off into the night, and the shouts of the men grew dimmer as they failed to find him.

As the two came in sight of Anna's house, Midnight wheezing with exhaustion and Anna still shaking in fear, Anna's parents came out to meet them.

"Why, what's wrong, Anna?" alarm filling Anna's mother's voice at the sight of the pair.

"Midnight," she started, letting her father pull her off the quivering horse, "He saved me!"



Image: Bogatyrs (1898) by Viktor Vasnetsov

Introduction:

Mounts are a staple of fantasy settings, ranging from low-magic, pseudo-European fantasy settings where a farmer's horse might be his most valuable possession, all the way up to the kinds of epic, high-magic settings where legions of knights ride upon ferocious dragon mounts.

With a few exceptions, Pathfinder and the 3.5 system give very little attention to mounts. A horse is a horse is a horse, and it can be found in the *Bestiary*, and that's all there is to say about it. If you want a special horse, you could perhaps make it celestial, but otherwise, the only option is to take a class like paladin or druid, in which case your horse is a true monster on the battlefield, likely more powerful than the average grizzly, once you reach a certain level.

This was not always the case. The AD&D Dungeon Master's Guide contains a pair of tables which provide optional rules allowing a Game Master to create more widely varied and unique horses. These consisted of horse quality, which affected the mount's speed, carrying capacity, and price, and also of horse traits, which described a number of quirks (mostly negative) which would give a horse some extra personality, primarily for roleplaying purposes.

This book uses these simple rules as a starting point to create a rich and robust system of bringing light and life to your mounts, taking them from little more than a statistics block (if you even bother with such formalities; in my experience a mount is mostly treated like a mundane item, scrawled onto the character sheet and promptly ignored), and transforming them into interesting and well-rounded (if not necessarily talkative) NPCs in their own respect.

In order to give these roleplaying quirks and qualities some grounding in the world of game mechanics, as well as in the world of imagination, care has been given to ensure that each quirk (many of which are altogether new) has some real mechanical benefits and/or drawbacks attached to it, to help provide guidelines for both players and GMs to shape their expectations as to how a mount's quirks and quality will manifest in the gaming mechanics.

The book also includes a new set of rules for governing horse races and similar scenes, with more emphasis placed on the relative movement between two racers than on the actual distance traveled. These rules are designed to allow for fun and exciting race scenes, that involve skill and risk, rather than a simple comparison of base speeds.

As a final note, while care has been given to ensure that all of these rules are compatible with mounts more fantastic than horses, they were primarily designed with horses in mind, and are based loosely on common horse quirks and breeding practices. Some of the templates, quirks, or other rules may not work quite the same when applied to other creatures.

Owning a Horse

As anyone who has any experience with horses will tell you, owning one is not a simple matter. Horses require large amounts of space, expensive equipment, care, and attention. While owning a horse is a far more feasible prospect in a fantasy setting than it is in a modern one, there are still plenty of complications involved in horse ownership.

Feeding a Horse

Horses are large animals, and require a good deal of food. Though the exact amount of food a horse requires will vary depending on its size, breed, metabolism, and other factors, an average horse will typically require a little over 2 lbs of food each day per 100 lbs the horse weighs. Since most horses weigh around 1,000 lbs, this means that the average horse should be eating 20-25 lbs of food each day, with larger or more energetic horses eating more than that.

Grazing

In some ways, the cheapest and easiest way to provide this food is simply to let the horse graze. As herbivores, a horse left to its own devices in a grassy area will find its own food, happily munching on the available plant life. This approach has a number of advantages: mostly that it is the least expensive way of feeding the horse, and also doesn't require storing or carrying large amounts of feed.

On the other hand, it suffers from the twin drawbacks of requiring space and time. While most adventurers on the go have little concern for space—they're in the wilderness, after all, the horse can just graze anywhere—they generally spend most of the day travelling. In general, a horse spends about 9-14 hours per day grazing, and while they can generally make do with less time than that, giving the horse sufficient time to graze can notably slow down an expedition.

The issue of space tends to come up more when the horse is staying at a stable or ranch, rather than on the road. In general, an area of about an acre is required to feed a single horse by grazing for one month. A horse can typically be "rotated" through three or four such fields, moving from one to the next when it depletes the foliage in the area. That means that an area of at least three acres per horse is required to keep horses fed via grazing, which can quickly add up to a lot of land. Characters on a frontier, who may just be able to claim whatever land is around them, will have little problem with this, but characters who operate out of a town, or other civilized area, may have to pay quite a bit to acquire that kind of land.

Hay

When grazing is not available (typically in cities or towns, or on trips through inhospitable regions where plant life will be sparse), most horses are fed on hay. The hay is generally purchased by the bale, and it's important to ensure good quality hay, as bad hay can cause a wide variety of illnesses. Important things to check for when purchasing hay is that the hay is free of mold and dust, and the bales should be green when purchased. Careful horse owners are always certain to inspect the hay closely, insisting that the merchant open at least one bale for them to look at.

The price for feed listed in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* is for 10 lbs of feed, which is not enough to sustain a horse indefinitely. Unless the horse is also allowed to graze, it will need roughly twice that much (1 sp per day) in feed. Quality feed will cost more still, and a well-fed horse will cost about 2 sp per day in hay alone, if that is it's only food source.

Supplemental Foods

While a horse can typically survive on hay or grazing alone, their health will be greatly improved by supplementing their diet with oats, grains, and other specialty foods, especially when they are particularly young, pregnant, or heavily worked. The volume of such materials (which include, but are not limited to, oats, grains, beet pulp, carrots, apples, molasses, corn, and salt lick) is guite small compared to the amount of hay they consume, but are also notably more expensive. Often, merchants will offer pre-mixed bags of "specialty feed," which will contain a proper balance of these materials in the right amounts for the average horse nutrition. These typically cost around 5 sp per day's worth of food, though horse owners who buy the materials in bulk and mix them themselves can do so at a slightly lesser cost.

Horses fed with a regular diet of such supplemental foods in addition to their normal diet gain a +1 bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist diseases. If they are racing horses, they also gain a +1 bonus to their Stamina.

In a Fantasy Setting

In a fantasy setting, there are other methods of feeding horses. The third-level cleric spell create food and water, for example, can produce enough food to satisfy one horse per caster level. A plant growth spell can help a smaller amount of land accommodate a much greater number of horses without fear of depletion. Specialty stores might be available which sell magically- or alchemically-altered foodstuffs for horses, bags of feed which, when consumed by the horse, act as a potion (such as fly or bull's strength). These would cost the same amount as a normal potion, but would be far more appetizing and palatable to a horse.

Stabling a Horse

Horses are large animals, used to roaming large, open spaces, and they require a fair amount of space in order to be comfortable and happy. They are also very dependent on their owner, and require a good deal of attention and care.

Living Space

Most horses are kept in a stable when they are not grazing at pasture or being ridden. Stables are usually divided into a number of box stalls, allowing the horses to be housed separately from one another, while still under the same roof. These stalls are generally between 10' and 14' to a side, though a given stable will typically have a couple of larger, double stalls, which are reserved for particularly high-strung and energetic horses, or for a mare and its foal after a new horse is born.

In a medieval or fantasy setting, it would also not be uncommon (and may in fact be the norm) to see a somewhat different sort of stall, known as the tie stall. These stalls are much narrower than the kind described above, and the horse is tied to the wall at the end of the stall. These narrower stalls do not allow the horse to turn around, and, though space-saving, are more stressful for the horse.

Besides a stable, a horse needs the opportunity to run about and stretch its legs, if it is to be healthy in both body and mind. At a bare minimum, a horse would need a space of about 12' by 20', but realistically would need much more than that. To even get up to a run, a horse needs somewhere between 50' and 100'. Generally speaking, the more room a horse can be given, the better.

In a Fantasy Setting

Horses require a great deal of care and attention when kept in captivity, and require a real commitment from their owner. In addition to simply needing to be fed, horses need to be regularly exercised and allowed time to stretch their legs and move about. They also need to have their hooves trimmed (and shod) regularly, and they'll generally need to see a horse doctor once or twice a year to ensure that they are healthy and haven't caught any of a number of various horse diseases.

In most cases, providing the horse daily exercise is no problem for an adventurer, who rarely stays in one place for long. Even when staying in town for extended periods, however, a horse could be let loose in a pasture or other fenced-off area, or taken for a brisk ride for a couple of hours. In small amounts, a horse owner can certainly pay for someone trustworthy to exercise his horse for him, though this should not be done too frequently, lest the bond between horse and rider be forgotten.

A horse's hooves need to be trimmed, on average, every 6-8 weeks, or about twice every three months. They typically need to have their horseshoes changed in about the same time frame. Characters trained in Ride or Knowledge (nature) can typically handle trimming on their own with simple tools, and characters trained in Craft (blacksmith) or Profession (blacksmith) can typically shoe a horse with little issue, but characters without such training will need to call in a professional to do the job. Trimming and shoeing a horse typically costs about 20 gp, though a character crafting his own horseshoes and applying them himself need pay only 1/4 of that for raw materials.

Finally, horses should be seen by an animal doctor at least twice a year. Characters with ranks in Handle Animal or Heal can typically give a horse a checkup, and may be able to treat a horse's diseases (in the latter case). If a professional must be called in, however, such visits typically cost about 30 gp. For the most part, access to magic doesn't fundamentally change any of the requirements of caring for a horse: while a horse could potentially be stabled on a demi-plane full of green fields and allowed to run free when its owner didn't need it (while always being close at hand), such magic is expensive and difficult, and cheaper substitutes (such as keeping the horse in a *portable hole*) simply won't do.

Along the same lines, while an *unseen* servant could theoreticall handle shoeing a horse and trimming its feet, it simply lacks the skill to do the job properly, and will likely cause more problems than it solves. On the other hand, such magic is a simple way of mucking out a horse's stables, or feeding a horse, though it is no substitute for proper love and attention from the horse's owner.

One way in which magic can substantially ease the life of a horse-owner is in dealing with the horse's health. Characters with easy access to magic that can cure diseases and mend broken bones can use those to care for sick or injured horses, rather than relying on horse doctors.

Horse Quality:

The following are optional rules that allow players and GMs to differentiate different horses by quality, providing real mechanical benefits and penalties to the horse, reflecting the varying quality of different horses, from broken-down nags carrying children at carnivals to purebred racing horses competing in high-stakes events.

Each horse has a quality rating, either nag, broken-down, average, high-spirited, or charger. These ratings aren't a linear ranking, though some qualities are certainly more beneficial than others. Instead, each quality describes a broad category of horses, giving a general guide to their temperament and physical ability.

Nag: These horses are bred for reliability and placidity, rather than for speed or strength. They

Care

are very quiet and docile, but generally aren't considered to be very high quality, as they generally lack the speed, strength and coordination that more hot-blooded steeds provide.

Broken-Down: Horses of this quality aren't so much a product of breeding as they are a product of experience. Broken-down horses are typically older, and past their prime (use the brokendown template instead of applying age penalties to your horse), or else have seen abuse of some kind, such as starvation or excessive brutality. Like nags, they are typically quite slow and gentle.

Average: Any horse that doesn't specifically have another quality is considered "average." There is no template associated with average horses: use unmodified horse statistics.

High-Spirited: Horses of this quality have seemingly endless amounts of energy, and are mostly known for their speed and agility. They can sometimes be difficult to control, as their energy makes them excitable, but they are highly valued by those who race horses, as well as by couriers and others who need fast steeds.

Charger: Chargers are like high-spirited horses in that they are very energetic, and typically are physically above average. They are more stolid and dependable than high-spirited horses, however, and are primarily bred for combat, rather than speed.

When creating a horse, the DM should either roll randomly on Table 1-1: Horse Quality to determine the horse's quality, or else choose a quality that he or she likes, and then apply the appropriate template, below. Because a horse's quality changes its mechanical statistics, players should not be allowed to simply declare the quality of their horses. A horse's quality is not immediately obvious, but a successful Appraise or Handle Animal check (DC 25 and 15, respectively) will reveal a horse's quality, and for every 5 points by which the check exceeds the DC, the character can identify one of the horse's quirks, if any.



Image: Illustration from The Boy's King Arthur

Table 1-1: Horse Quality

d%	Quality	CR Adjustment	Cost Modifier*
01 - 20	Nag	-1	x 1/2
21 - 40	Broken- Down	-1	x 3/4
41 - 70	Average	1.1	=
71 - 85	High- Spirited	+1	X 2
86 - 100	Charger	+1	x 4

*In the case of modifiers which reduce the price, these apply only if the mount's quality becomes known, and merchants are generally not quick to volunteer such information.

Horse Quality Templates:

Nag

Creating a Nag

"Nag" is an acquired template that can be added to any living, corporeal creature that can be used as a mount (referred to hereafter as the base creature). A nag retains all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as the base creature -1 (minimum 1/2).

Special Qualities: A nag gains the following special qualities.

Plodding (Ex): Nags cannot take the run action, regardless of the form of movement they are using. Nags can still take a move action and a standard action each round, can move up to their speed twice, or can take full-round actions, such as withdrawing.

Steadfast (Ex): Nags do not scare as easily as other horses, and are well known for being calm and lethargic. Nags gain a +2 bonus on Will saves against fear effects.

Speed: A nag's base movement speed is ½ the base creature's movement speed. If the base creature has other movement speeds (such as a fly speed or a swim speed), they are similarly reduced.

Abilities: Adjust from the base creature as follows: Str -6, Dex -4, Con -4.

Broken-Down

Creating a Broken-Down Creature

"Broken-down" is an acquired template that can be added to any living, corporeal creature that can be used as a mount (referred to hereafter as the base creature). A broken-down creature retains all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as the base creature -1 (minimum 1/2).

Special Qualities: A broken-down creature gains the following special qualities.

Light Load (Ex): Broken-down mounts count as bipeds, rather than quadrupeds, for the purposes of how much they can carry. If the base creature was already a biped, it counts as one size category smaller for this purpose, instead. **Abilities:** Adjust from the base creature as follows: Str -2, Dex -2, Con -2.

High-Spirited

Creating a High-Spirited Creature

"High-spirited" is an inherent template that can be added to any living, corporeal creature that can be used as a mount (referred to hereafter as the base creature). A high-spirited creature retains all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as the base creature +1.

Special Qualities: A high-spirited creature gains the following special qualities.

Eager (Ex): A high-spirited creature gains a +4 racial bonus to initiative checks. If the high-spirited creature is being ridden, it grants this bonus to its rider's initiative checks, instead.

Excitable (Ex): A high-spirited horse is highly excitable. It takes a -2 penalty on Will saves against fear effects, as well as against any effect which specifically creates strong emotions (such as the rage spell).

Speed: Increase each of the base creature's movement speeds by 10 feet.

Ability Scores: Adjust from the base creature as follows: Dex +4.

Skills: A high-spirited creature gains a +8 racial bonus on all Acrobatics checks it makes. If the base creature has a fly speed, it gains a +4 bonus to all Fly checks it makes, as well.

Feats: A high-spirited creature gains the Run feat as a bonus feat.

Charger

Creating a Charger

"Charger" is an inherent template that can be added to any living, corporeal creature that can be

d%	Quirk	Description	Value
01 - 12	Stops Occasionally	Mount stops occasionally without warning.	-3
13 - 22	Feeble	Mount is less durable than normal.	-2
23 - 32	Won't Gallop	Mount refuses to gallop.	-2
33 - 40	Bites	Mount often tries to bite its rider.	-1
41 - 50	Chews Fences	Mount chews fences and other wood.	-1
51 - 64	Gentle	Mount deals less damage.	-1
65 - 69	Headstrong	Mount doesn't obey orders well.	-1
70 - 78	Steps on Feet	Mount often steps on its rider's feet.	-1
79 - 87	Graceful	Mount's movements are smooth.	+1
88 - 96	Sure-Footed	Mount rarely slips or falls.	+1
97 - 99	Roll twice on Table 1-3		-
100	DM's Choice		-

Table 1-2: Quirks for Nag Horses

added to any living, corporeal creature that can be used as a mount (referred to hereafter as the base creature). A charger retains all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as base creature +1.

Special Qualities: A charger gains the following special qualities.

Battle-Ready (Ex): Even when not expressly trained for combat, chargers are bred for battle, and so easier to command in a fight. Reduce the DC for all Ride checks made to control the charger by 5 (note that, in the case of some applications of the Ride skill, such as making the mount leap, this will not actually help the mount to jump any farther). Further, the DC to handle or push the charger with the Handle Animal skill (but not to teach, train, or rear it) is reduced by 5 as well.

Heavy Load (Ex): Chargers are well-suited to carrying heavy weight, such as armored riders and full suits of barding. As such, a charger counts as one size category larger for the purposes of carrying capacity.

Ability Scores: Adjust from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Dex +2, Con +4. Additionally, if the base creature has an Intelligence of 1, its Intelligence increases to 2. Feats: Chargers gain Toughness as a bonus feat.

Horse Quirks:

At the GM's discretion, this set of optional rules grants each horse 1d4 personality quirks and other odd behaviors. Like a mount's quality, these quirks are determined randomly, and are not readily apparent to the casual buyer, though GMs so inclined can hand-pick quirks for horses, instead.

To determine a horse's quirks, roll a d% for each quirk, and consult the appropriate table, from Table 1-2: Quirks for Nag Horses to Table 1-6: Quirks for Charger Horses, depending on the horse's quality. If you aren't using qualities for your horses, roll on Table 1-1: Horse Quality to determine which table to use, even if you don't apply the template itself.

Each quirk has a description listed below, which explains in detail what kind of behavior the horse displays. In the case of negative quirks, there is an explanation of whether or not the quirk can be trained out of the horse, and how difficult it is to do so.

Bites: Mounts with this trait have a tendency to bite their handlers. Each time you mount the creature, as well as each time you saddle it, there is a 50% chance that the horse will attempt to bite you. This takes the form of the creature's bite

d%	Quirk	Description	Value
01 - 08	Easily Frightened	Mount is easily frightened.	-3
09 - 20	Stops Occasionally	Mount stops occasionally without warning.	-3
21 - 33	Feeble	Mount is less durable than normal.	-2
34 - 45	Won't Gallop	Mount refuses to gallop.	-2
46 - 55	Bites	Mount often tries to bite its rider.	-1
56 - 64	Chews Fences	Mount chews fences and other wood.	-1
65 - 75	Gentle	Mount deals less damage.	-1
75 - 84	Steps on Feet	Mount often steps on its rider's feet.	-1
85 - 89	Fearless	Mount knows no fear.	+1
90 - 96	Knows a Trick	Mount knows an extra trick.	+1
97 - 99	Roll twice on Table 1-4		
00	DM's Choice	and the second se	

Table 1-3: Quirks for Broken-Down Horses

Table 1-4: Quirks for Average Horses

d%	Quirk	Description	Value
01 - 06	Easily Frightened	Mount is easily frightened.	-3
07 - 12	Feeble	Mount is less durable than normal.	-2
13 - 18	Won't Gallop	Mount refuses to gallop.	-2
19 - 24	Bites	Mount often tries to bite its rider.	-1
25 - 30	Chews Fences	Mount chews fences and other wood.	-1
31 - 36	Gentle	Mount deals less damage.	-1
37 - 42	Headstrong	Mount doesn't obey orders well.	-1
43 - 48	Jarring	Mount's movements are jarring.	-1
49 - 54	Kicks	Mount often tries to kick its rider.	-1
55 - 60	Steps on Feet	Mount often steps on its rider's feet.	-1
61 - 66	Untrained	Mount is difficult to train.	-1
67 - 72	Graceful	Mount's movements are smooth.	+1
73 - 78	Knows a Trick	Mount knows an extra trick.	+1
79 - 84	Robust	Mount is more durable than normal.	+1
85 - 91	Sure-Footed	Mount rarely slips or falls.	+1
92 - 96	Strong	Mount can carry more than normal.	+2
97 - 100	Roll twice on any other	table, or DM's choice.	-

attack, if it has one. If the horse doesn't have a bite attack, use a different natural attack the horse possesses (such as hoof), or choose a different trait. A successful Handle Animal check (DC 10 + the horse's Hit Dice + the horse's Charisma modifier, if any) will keep the horse from biting for a specific instance.

Additionally, the horse will also periodically bite while you are brushing, leading, or otherwise handling it (though not more than once per hour). This does not require an attack roll, and automatically deals a number of points of damage equal to the horse's Hit Dice. The horse does not need to possess a bite attack to bite its handler in this way.

A horse can be trained not to bite with a successful Handle Animal check, as though teaching the horse a trick. Teaching a horse not to bite in this way counts as a trick for the purposes of how many tricks the horse can learn, reducing the total number of tricks the horse can learn by 1.

d%	Quirk	Description	Value
01 - 05	Single Rider	Mount will accept only one rider.	-3
06 - 20	Bucks	Mount bucks violently.	-2
21 - 30	Bites	Mount often tries to bite its rider.	-1
31 - 45	Headstrong	Mount doesn't obey orders well.	-1
46 - 55	Jarring	Mount's movements are jarring.	-1
56 - 65	Kicks	Mount often tries to kick its rider.	-1
66 - 69	Untrained	Mount is difficult to train.	-1
70 - 84	Loves to Run	Mount runs longer and easier.	+1
85 - 89	Leaper	Mount is an exceptional leaper.	+2
90 - 96	Strong	Mount can carry more than normal.	+2
97 - 99	Roll twice on Table 1-6		
00	DM's Choice		

Table 1-5: Quirks for High-Spirited Horses

Table 1-6: Quirks for Charger Horses

d%	Quirk	Description	Value
01 - 05	Single Rider	Mount will accept only one rider.	-3
06 - 20	Bites	Mount often tries to bite its rider.	-1
21 - 30	Headstrong	Mount doesn't obey orders well.	-1
31 - 45	Jarring	Mount's movements are jarring.	-1
46 - 55	Kicks	Mount often tries to kick its rider.	-1
56 - 62	Fearless	Mount knows no fear.	+1
63 - 72	Knows a Trick	Mount knows an extra trick.	+1
73 - 82	Robust	Mount is more durable than normal.	+1
83 - 89	Sure-Footed	Mount rarely slips or falls.	+1
90 - 96	Strong	Mount can carry more than normal.	+2
97 - 99	Roll again twice		-
100	DM's Choice		-

Bucks: Horses with this trait have a tendency to buck harshly while ridden, in an attempt to knock their riders from the saddle. Outside of combat, this has little mechanical effect, besides being embarrassing and uncomfortable for the rider.

In combat, at the beginning of each of the rider's turns, as long as the rider is riding the horse, there is a 20% chance that the horse spends its turn bucking wildly. You must succeed at a Ride check (DC 10 + $\frac{1}{2}$ the horse's Hit Dice + the horse's Strength modifier) or fall from the saddle.

A horse can be trained not to buck in this way with a successful Handle Animal check, as though teaching the horse a trick. Teaching a horse not to buck in this way counts as a trick for the purposes of how many tricks the horse can learn, reducing the total number of tricks the horse can learn by 1.

Chews Fences: Horses with this trait have a tendency to chew on fences or other sources of wood, such as the stalls or stables they are stored in. In addition to any trouble this may cause due to the damage the horse does, this can also pose a serious health risk for the horse, if the habit is allowed to continue. Each day that the horse is able to chew on wood uninterrupted, there is a cumulative 5% chance that the horse contracts colic (see Sidebar: Horse Colic). If the horse is successfully stopped from chewing wood for at least one day, this percentage resets.

A horse can be trained not to chew wood



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Sidebar: Horse Colic

Colic is a serious intestinal disease that is a common problem amongst horses, especially those with strange eating habits. If the mount is not a horse, they may suffer similar symptoms, or may instead come down with a different disease entirely, at the DM's discretion.

HORSE COLIC

200

Type disease, ingested; Save Fort DC 18t isOnset 1d4 days; Frequency 1/days, orEffect 1d4 Constitution damageaseCure horse colic can't be cured without magical
or surgical intervention

with a successful Handle Animal check, as though teaching the horse a trick. Teaching a horse not to chew wood in this way counts as a trick for the purposes of how many tricks the horse can learn, reducing the total number of tricks the horse can learn by 1.

Easily Frightened: Horses with this trait are easily startled and spooked. They receive a -2 penalty to Will saves versus fear effects, and whenever they would become frightened, there is a 50% chance that they become panicked instead. Additionally, whenever the horse or its rider is attacked in combat, the horse must succeed on a Will save (DC 15; this is a fear effect) or become spooked, rearing violently, and forcing the rider to succeed on a Ride check (DC 5) or be thrown from the saddle. Then, the spooked horse immediately attempts to flee, moving as fast as it can away from the source of danger.

A horse can be trained not to frighten in this way with a successful Handle Animal check, as though teaching the horse a trick. Teaching a horse not to frighten in this way counts as two tricks for the purposes of how many tricks the horse can learn, reducing the total number of tricks the horse can learn by 2.

Fearless: Horses with this trait are almost never startled or spooked. The horse gains a +4 bonus on Will saves against fear effects. Further, if the horse would become panicked, it instead becomes frightened (if it was already frightened, it still becomes panicked).

Feeble: Horses with this trait are less durable than other horses of their kind. Reduce the horse's Constitution score by 2.

A horse with this trait cannot be trained to overcome it with the Handle Animal skill.

Gentle: Horses with this trait have gentle hearts, and do not enjoy combat. Any natural attack that the horse makes deals the minimum amount of damage.

A horse with this trait cannot be trained to overcome it with the Handle Animal skill.

Graceful: The movements of horses with this trait are smooth and graceful, providing a much more comfortable ride than most horses. The DC of Concentration checks made due to the horse's movements (such as casting a spell from horseback) is reduced by 2. Additionally, you gain a +2 bonus to Ride checks made to stay in the horse's saddle. Finally, the penalty to Ride checks for riding bareback is reduced to -2.

Headstrong: Horses with this trait are too proud and headstrong to obey the commands of their riders. All Handle Animal checks involving the horse have their DCs increased by +5. Additionally, Ride checks to guide the horse with your knees, direct the horse to attack, direct your horse to leap, spur your horse, or control the horse in battle have their DCs increased by 2.

A horse with this trait cannot be trained to overcome it with the Handle Animal skill.

Jarring: Horses with this trait are particularly jarring and vigorous in their motions, making it more difficult to concentrate while riding it. Whenever you need to make a Concentration check due to the horse's movement, the DC for that Concentration check is increased by 10.

A horse can be trained not to move in this way with a successful Handle Animal check, as though teaching the horse a trick. Teaching a horse not to move in this way counts as a trick for the purposes of how many tricks the horse can learn, reducing the total number of tricks the horse can learn by 1.

Kicks: Horses with this trait have a tendency to kick their handlers. Up to once per day, while you are handling the horse (as you mount or dismount, while you are saddling the horse, while you are brushing, leading, or otherwise working with the horse), the horse will try to kick you (the "kick" does not actually involve an attack roll). Unless you succeed on a Reflex save (DC 10 + the horse's Hit Dice + the horse's Strength modifier, if any) the horse successfully strikes you, dealing a number of points of damage equal to 1d6 per two Hit Dice the horse possesses + the horse's Strength modifier. A horse can be trained not to kick with a successful Handle Animal check, as though teaching the horse a trick. Teaching a horse not to kick in this way counts as a trick for the purposes of how many tricks the horse can learn, reducing the total number of tricks the horse can learn by 1.

Knows a Trick: Horses with this trait know an extra trick. This trick is determined before the horse is purchased, and does not count against the total number of tricks the horse can know.

Leaper: Horses with this trait are natural-born jumpers. The horse gains a +2 racial bonus to Acrobatics checks made to jump, and grants a +5 circumstance bonus to its rider on Ride checks to make the horse jump.

Loves to Run: Horses with this trait take great joy in running, and so it is much easier to spur them to greater speed than other horses of their kind. When making a Ride check to spur the horse, the DC is only 10, and the horse does not take any damage, as actual spurs are not necessary. It still becomes fatigued after a number of rounds equal to its Constitution score, and you still cannot spur a fatigued horse.

Robust: Horses with this trait are more durable than other horses of their kind, and can take extra punishment. The horse gains a number of additional hit points equal to its Hit Dice.

Single Rider: Horses with this trait bond quickly to the first rider who breaks them in, and then refuse to be ridden by anyone else. When first purchased, there is a 20% chance that the horse has not yet bonded with a rider, in which case it bonds with the first character to succeed on a DC 15 Handle Animal check. Otherwise, the horse is already bonded to another rider, and refuses to be ridden by any other character, ignoring any commands the rider gives and doing its best to throw the rider every turn (see the bucks trait).

Though difficult, it is possible to overcome this trait and force the horse to accept a new rider. This takes a full month, and requires the prospective rider to succeed on a Handle Animal check (DC 25 + ½ the horse's Hit Dice + the horse's Charisma modifier, if any). Once this process has been completed, the horse will accept the new rider, but still refuses to accept any riders who have not gone through this rigorous process.

Steps on Feet: Horses with this trait have a tendency to step on their handlers' feet, trampling them. Each time you mount the creature there is a 50% chance that the horse will attempt to stomp on your feet. You must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 10 + $\frac{1}{2}$ the horse's Hit Dice + the horse's Strength modifier) or the horse deals 1d4 + the horse's Strength modifier points of damage to you.

A horse can be trained not to stomp on feet with a successful Handle Animal check, as though teaching the horse a trick. Teaching a horse not to stomp in this way counts as a trick for the purposes of how many tricks the horse can learn, reducing the total number of tricks the horse can learn by 1.

Stops Occasionally: Horses with this trait have a tendency to stop suddenly while being ridden, ignoring the commands of their rider. Outside of combat, this has little mechanical effect, besides being embarrassing for the rider.

In combat, at the beginning of each of the rider's turns, as long as the rider is riding the horse, there is a 10% chance that the horse becomes unresponsive, refusing to obey any commands the rider gives. The rider can rouse the horse back to action with a successful Handle Animal check to handle the animal (a move action), at which point it will continue taking orders.

A horse can be trained not to stop in this way with a successful Handle Animal check, as though teaching the horse a trick. Teaching a horse not to stop in this way counts as two tricks for the purposes of how many tricks the horse can learn, reducing the total number of tricks the horse can learn by 2.

Strong: Horses with this trait can carry more than other horses. For the purposes of carrying capacity, treat the horse as though its Strength were 4 higher than it actually is.



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Sure-Footed: Horses with this trait have exceptional footing, and almost never slip or fall, even in the worst of terrains. The horse gains a +4 bonus to all Acrobatics checks and Reflex saves to avoid slipping, falling, losing balance, or similar hazards.

Untrained: Horses with this trait not only know no tricks when they are first purchased, but are also more difficult to train than most horses. The DC for Handle Animal checks to teach the horse a skill, train it for a general purpose, or rear it if it is wild, are increased by +5. Further, the horse is capable of learning one less trick per point of Intelligence than it would normally be able to.

Won't Gallop: Horses with this trait refuse to gallop under any circumstances. Such horses will not take the run action under any circumstances, not even with a successful Handle Animal check to handle or push the horse.

A horse with this trait cannot be trained to overcome it with the Handle Animal skill.

Racing Horses

While horses are most commonly used as a means of transportation or as heavy labor, there is a rich and ancient tradition of breeding, training, and racing horses for sport, testing the horses for their speed, their stamina, or both. Due to the expense of raising and training champion race horses, this is a sport that is predominantly the domain of the very wealthy, but even those who do not have the means to own their own race horse often participate by gambling on the results of the races.

This section presents optional variant rules for governing horse races (see Sidebar: Why New Rules?, on the next page). You should consult with your GM about using these rules in your game, as he or she may have other preferences for managing horse races.

Additional Stats

In order to determine the winner of a race, one must determine how fast each horse is going, and also how well each is able to endure the strain of the race. While measures such as initiative or movement speed are typically used for measuring speed, and Constitution or Fortitude checks are typically used to measure stamina, these measurements are for more general circumstances. In the heat of a race, with all the horses straining as hard as they can to be the first to cross the finish line, things can get closer, and a horse that has a somewhat speedy walk may not have the spirit to sprint as fast as another horse whose walking pace is a bit more leisurely.

As such, the racing method presented here makes use of two new statistics, similar to a base attack bonus or initiative modifier, which each horse possesses. These stats are derived from the horse's ability scores and a die roll, as indicated below. The die roll is made only once, the first time the horse's racing stats are determined, and cannot thereafter be changed. If one or more ability scores contributing to a racing stat increases or decreases, this will increase the horse's appropriate racing stats.

Speed: Separate from a horse's movement speed, this value represents a horse's capacity for sprinting and running in a race, rather than being an objective measure of the horse's overland speed.

A horse's Speed is equal to its Strength modifier + its Dexterity modifier + 1d6.

m Calles

Sidebar: Why Use New Rules?

Technically speaking, there are already rules in place that can be used to govern horse races. If one wanted to know which of two horses reaches a finish line first, one could determine the answer by using combat rounds, rolling initiative, comparing their movement speeds, and forcing them to make Constitution checks while running to be able to continue, for example, with the winner being the horse who crossed the finish line first. One might also settle the outcome of a horse race—assuming the horses are more-or-less equal, that is—by having the riders make opposed Ride checks, with the winner winning the race.

There is nothing wrong with using either of these sets of rules to determine the winner of a horse race. In fact, the first option will likely be the most internally consistent way, within the game, of determining which horse should win the race, as it uses the horse's actual movement speed to determine the winner. The latter is likely the most accurate way of determining the better rider, as it is determined directly by the rider's skill.

Neither of these methods, however, is going to be particularly exciting at most game tables. The first requires rules that many people are not familiar with and never have to use—making Constitution checks to continue running—and, depending on the length of the race, may go on for a very long time. More importantly, because most horses have the same movement speed, the results are either determined by the Initiative roll determining which horse goes first, or else by whichever horse is unlucky enough to get a low roll on their Constitution check first (assuming the race lasts longer than 1.7 minutes, which is when Constitution checks start being called for, on the average horse). The second is a lot simpler—most likely it's just a single roll, though in theory it could be a series of rolls, or even just a comparison of the two ride skills—but it also has the drawback of being a lot simpler. It's hardly fun and exciting. It can hardly be called a game.

The horse racing rules provided here are designed with the idea that anyone interested enough in making horses, ranching, and racing a major component of their game might appreciate a set of rules for horse racing that are designed to make such races fun and exciting, and hopefully to capture the spirit of horse racing, gambling, and race tracks in general. As such, it prioritizes being a fun, simple "mini-game" and capturing the right feel of play over, for example, existing rules that aren't as good at those things. If the optional rules for mount quality are being used, a horse's quality has an impact on its Speed. Nags suffer a -2 penalty to Speed, broken-down horses suffer a -1 penalty to Speed, high-spirited horses gain a +2 bonus to Speed, and chargers gain a +1 bonus to Speed.

Stamina: Separate from a horse's hit points or ability to make Constitution checks, this value represent's a horse's capacity to maintain a dead run, and endure the strain of racing as fast as it is able. Stamina is a resource that a horse's player can draw on for additional speed, spending Stamina on wagers to make it go faster in a race (see below). A horse's Stamina represents the maximum amount of Stamina it can have at any one time. Five minutes of rest completely restores a horse's Stamina.

A horse's maximum Stamina is equal to twice its Constitution modifier + 1d6.

If the optional rules for mount quality are being used, a horse's quality has an impact on its Stamina. Nags suffer a -2 penalty to Stamina, broken-down horses suffer a -1 penalty to Stamina, and chargers gain a +2 bonus to Stamina.

Racing

Like combat, horse racing is broken down into rounds. Each round, players are able to wager a certain amount of their horse's Stamina, with the potential payoff of a sudden burst of speed from their horse. Then, the horses move a distance determined by their wager, their speed, and other factors. This repeats until one horse crosses the finish line.

Making Wagers

Each round, before the horses move, each player who controls a horse may make a wager using the horse's remaining Stamina. Wagers allow players a chance to make their horse move dramatically quicker for one round, and are the key to both interesting and successful races. There are three "levels" of wager a player can make: a light wager (1 point of Stamina), a moderate wager (2 points of Stamina), or a hefty wager (3 points of Stamina). Players can also choose not to wager.

Each player declares the type of wager he or she would like to make, beginning with the player whose horse has the highest Speed. Once all of the wages have been placed, the GM rolls a single d6, revealing the result for all to see.

Then, each player rolls 1d6 for each point of Stamina they wagered that round. Each die that meets or exceeds the GM's roll grants a +2 bonus to that player's horse's speed for the round. For each die that is equal to or less than the GM's roll, that player's horse loses 1 point of Stamina. Note that this means that if a player's result ties the GM's result, that player gets the bonus to speed but also loses the wagered point of Stamina.

In addition, if two of a player's dice have the same result, any bonus to speed that that player's horse would gain this turn is doubled. Similarly, if all three of a player's dice have the same result, any bonus to speed that player's horse would gain is tripled.

Finally, characters who choose not to wager grant their horses a little rest, allowing them to recover 1 point of lost Stamina. If a horse already has its maximum Stamina, it gains no further benefit from not wagering.

Moving

Once all of the wagers have been sorted out, each horse moves an amount of movement points equal to its modified speed (its Speed score plus any adjustments). In general, there are two things that will modify a horse's speed: most notably wagers and weariness, though some other effects can alter a horse's speed.

Wagers: Any bonuses to Speed a horse gained from wagering are added directly to its speed score that turn for the purpose of determining how far it travels.

Weariness: If a horse has no Stamina remaining at the beginning of a round, it becomes weary, and its Speed is reduced. A weary horse's Speed is reduced by 2. Once the horse begins a round with at least 1 Stamina, it is no longer weary.

Other Modifiers: Other things can potentially adjust a horse's Speed during a race. Some stretches of a race track could have difficult terrain that slows a horse down, causing a horse to have to spend 2 points of Speed to move a single movement point while moving through it. Additionally, anything that augments the horse's movement speed (such as a haste spell) will affect its Speed as well, typically granting a +1 bonus per 10 feet of base land speed that it would normally increase. Note that many horse races ban such meddling, and horse owners should be careful to learn what is and is not an acceptable way to influence their horse's speed.

This movement occurs simultaneously for all horses. Then the round ends and the next round begins.

Finishing a Race

Each race has a specific distance to be covered before a horse finishes, and usually this distance is marked by a finish line or other marker to show that the horse has finished. This distance is chosen at the beginning of the race, and the winner is the first horse to cover that much distance in the race.

The rules presented here use an abstract measurement of distance, called movement points, rather than presenting distance in feet. A horse has completed the race when it has moved the number of movement points called for by the race (typically 50 or 100).

If multiple horses would finish the race in the same turn, the one who travelled the greatest total distance throughout the race is the winner. If both horses travelled the same distance, the one who had the higher bonus to Speed (not their actual Speed score, just bonuses and adjustments) on the finishing turn is the winner. If both horses travelled the same distance and had the same bonus to Speed on the finishing turn, each horse's player rolls a d6, with the higher result indicating the winner.

An Example of Play

Sir Percival Goldhand and Jorkrum the Barbarian decide to have a horse race against one another, to determine who is the better rider. Percival's mount, Twilight, has a Speed of 9, and 10 Stamina. Jorkrum's mount, Avenger, has a Speed of 12 but only 8 Stamina. They argue for a bit about the length of the race, as Twilight favors endurance races and Avenger favors short sprints, and eventually decide on a 50-movement point race.

In the first round, Jorkrum (whose mount has a higher speed, and therefore wagers first) chooses to place a hefty wager (3 Stamina). Percival chooses to place a moderate wager (2 Stamina). The GM rolls a d6, and gets a 4.

Jorkrum rolls 3d6, because he wagered 3 Stamina, and gets a 1, a 2, and a 4. Because the 3rd dice matched the GM's result, Jorkrum's mount Avenger gets +2 to its Speed this turn. Because all thee of Jorkrum's dice failed to beat the GM's result, however, Aveger also loses 3 Stamina, leaving him with 5.

Percival rolls 2d6, because he only wagered 2 Stamina. He gets a 3 and a 5. Because the 3 is less than the GM's 4, it doesn't grant a bonus, and Percival's horse Twilight loses a point of Stamina. Because the other dice was a 5, however, and beat the GM's result, Twilight gets a +2 bonus to his Speed for the round, and does not lose a second point of Stamina, leaving him with 9.

At the end of the first round, Avenger has moved 14 movement points (12 + 2), and Twilight has moved 11 (9 + 2). In the second round, Jorkrum once again chooses to make a hefty wager, and this time Percival does as well. The GM rolls his d6 and this time gets a 3.

Jorkrum rolls his 3d6, getting a 1, a 2, and a 6. His horse gets a +2 bonus to movement again, but loses 2 more Stamina, leaving him with 3. Percival, meanwhile, rolls a 2 and two 4s. Each of the 4s grants a +2 bonus to Twilight's Speed, and because two of his dice had the same result, that amount is doubled, for a truly impressive +8 bonus to Speed. The 2 does not increase his Speed, and reduces

Twilight's Stamina by 1, leaving him with 8.

This round, Twilight moves 17 movement points (9 + 8), closing on Avenger, who only moves 14 (12 + 2). This puts both horses neck-toneck at 28 movement points.

In the third round, both Jorkrum and Percival again choose to make hefty wagers. The GM rolls a d6 and gets a 6, making it hard to gain any speed this turn, and ensuring that all wagered Stamina will be lost. Jorkrum's dice give him two 3s and a 5, which unfortunately gives him nothing for his investment. Percival fares slightly better, getting a 2, a 3, and a 6. Twilight still loses 3 points of Stamina, because the 6 only met the GM's roll, rather than exceeding it, but he at least gains a +2 bonus to Speed for the round.

At the end of the third round, Avenger moves 12 movement points (his base Speed), pulling ever so slightly ahead of Twilight, who moves 11 movement points (9 + 2). Avenger has now traveled at a total of 40 movement points, and Twilight has traveled 39 movement points.

At the beginning of the fourth round, Avenger no longer has any Stamina, and becomes weary, imposing a -2 penalty to his Speed. Because Avenger has no Stamina, Jorkrum cannot wager any. Percival's Twilight still has 5 Stamina remaining, however, and he chooses to place a hefty wager once again as the finish line draws near.

The GM rolls a d6 and gets a 5. Percival rolls his dice, getting a 2, a 4, and a 5. Twilight loses 3 Stamina, but gains a crucial +2 bonus to Speed for the round.

Avenger moves a total of 10 movement points (12 - 2), and Twilight moves 11 (9 + 2), which brings them both to exactly 50 movement points, the end of the race, and a very close finish. Because they both finished in the same round, the first thing to check to determine the winner is the total distance traveled. Once again, however, they both travelled a total of 50 movement points, so a winner is still unclear. The next thing to check to determine the winner is which horse had the

greater bonus to speed in the final round. Avenger's bonus was +0, while Twilight's bonus was +2, making Twilight the narrow winner.

Other Uses for Horse Racing

Horses are used for quick and reliable travel at least as often as for racing in most fantasy settings, often far more so. While the above rules are rarely needed for typical travel on a horse, they can be easily adapted to provide helpful rules in the case of a mounted chase, with one character on horseback trying to catch another character on horseback (or, with somewhat more work, characters on horseback trying to catch or escape from characters on foot, or on dragonback, for example).

As with other races, this mechanic works best in circumstances where actual distance and speed (as in, feet per round) are less important than relative distance and speed (as in, which horse is going faster). In general, though, if it does become important, one movement point can be considered roughly equivalent to 10 feet.

Generally speaking, unlike races, a chase doesn't end simply because someone reaches a certain point. They end when either the chasers catch their target, or when it becomes apparent that they aren't going to, and they give up. In this way, there are a few adjustments that could be made to better suit the racing mechanic for such circumstances.

Holding Steady

While a horse's rider is placing his wager, he can declare that he wants to limit his horse's speed, in order to keep from overtaking a specific target. He does not need to set a specific Speed bonus to do this: he simply declares that he doesn't intend to allow his mount to pass ahead of a specified character, or else that he doesn't intend for it to pass a specified point (for example, the edge of a cliff up ahead). If the horse's Speed would cause it to pass the chosen point, it instead draws even with it. This is especially crucial for characters who want to get into melee combat



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with another rider (see below).

Mounted Combat

If desired, a character racing on horseback can attempt to combat another character in the race. If so, such combat is handled at the end of the round, after the horses have moved. Characters should roll initiative the first round of a race that combat is initiated, and characters can act in initiative order each round after wagers and movement.

In order to use a melee attack against a character (or the character's mount) the attacker must be within at least one movement point of his target (i.e., a character whose mount had travelled a total of 21 movement points could only be hit with a melee attack if his attacker had travelled 20, 21, or 22 movement points). For ranged attacks, treat each movement point of difference as 10 feet for the purpose of determining how many range increments the attacker is from his target. A character who successfully grapples another character can pull his target onto his own horse, move to the target's horse, or choose to fall to the ground with the target.

All other rules for fighting while mounted apply.

Obstacles

Any number of obstacles might present themselves in a chase on horseback, whether carts, merchant stalls, and pedestrians in a crowded marketplace, or trees, bramble thickets, muck patches, and lakes in an old forest. For the most part, obstacles take one of two forms: hazards or difficult terrain.

Difficult Terrain: Similar to the effect that difficult terrain such as thick underbrush or deep mud has on other kinds of movement, it slows down horses as well. It costs 2 or more points of Speed to gain a single movement point when travelling through such terrain, depending on how difficult it is to move through.

Hazards: These are obstacles that typically have a serious chance of stopping a horse dead in its tracks, rather than simply slowing them down. A good example of a hazard would be a merchant stall, a large pit or ravine, a fallen tree, or the like. Such hazards force the rider to either find a way to deal with them, or go around, losing precious time. Hazards can usually be overcome with a successful Ride check, though other checks might be allowed or required as well, depending on the hazard (for example, a character who decided to charge his horse through a flimsy vendor stall, rather than go around it, would need to make a Ride check to force the horse to do so, and then the GM might call for the horse to make a Strength check to see if it can actually do so, or if it stops dead in its tracks, possibly taking damage).

Mechanically, an obstacle typically has three components: a Ride DC (as well as the DCs of any other checks that can be used to bypass it), the consequence for failing the check (typically stopping the horse's movement at that point, though in the case of some hazards the consequences may be far worse), and the amount of movement required to simply go around the obstacle (typically at least 5, though possibly more or less depending on the nature of the obstacle).

Keeping Track of Obstacles: GMs

interested in using obstacles in a chase should make a quick note about their location on the "track," so that they can easily adjudicate them without second-guessing where and what they were as multiple racers cross the same obstacles in different rounds. A sample course might look something like this:

The Dark Fens (50 movement points)

Thick undergrowth (difficult terrain; 2 Speed; 14-20)
Fallen log (hazard; Ride DC 5; halt in place; 3 movement; 23)
Murky bog (difficult terrain; 3 Speed; 31-40)
Ravine (hazard; Ride DC 12; 2d6 fall damage, halt in place, 10 movement to get back on track; 12 movement; 45)

In this example, difficult terrains have two components: the amount of Speed required for 1 movement point, and the specific movement point range they occupy on the course (a character is in thick undergrowth starting on their 14th movement point, and ending on their 20th). Hazards have four: a Ride DC, the penalty for failing the DC, the amount of movement required to avoid the hazard, and the hazard's location on the track. Note that in the case of the ravine, failing the Ride check has a hefty penalty, inflicting 2d6 points of fall damage to horse and rider, stopping their movement for the turn, and requiring 10 more movement to get out of the ravine.



Image: Henriette Adelaide of Savoy on Horseback with her Husband by Jan Miel

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MOUNTS OF THE FINEST QUALITY

Mounts are a popular staple of the fantasy genre. Whether it's the knight riding off into the sunset on his trusty steed, or the shady horse merchant trying to disguise his broken-down nags as spirited chargers, or the cunning horse thief, mounts and horses are not only a person's primary means of transportation, they are also an adventurer's constant companions.

Of course, mechanically, all horses are just about the same. Barring a paladin's special mount or possibly a druid's animal companion, there's not a lot of ways to make them interesting...until now. A Necromancer's Grimoire: Steeds and Stallions presents a number of alternate rules, as well as a wealth of background information, designed to allow you to liven up horses in your game.

This book presents new rules for differentiating horses based on their quality, allowing you to mechanically represent the difference between a slow and plodding farm horse and well-bred, fiery-spirited race horse. Further, it allows you to give your horses some personality, by providing a number of quirks, traits, and habits common to real horses, which can be hand-picked or randomly generated for any horse. Finally, the book provides rules for racing horses, both in organized races and in similar scenes, such as chases or even mounted combat.

If you want your mount to stand out from the rest, this is the book for you.

