

💡 The Genius Guide to:

Loot 4 Less Hot Rods



PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

Welcome to the third volume in the *Loot 4 Less* line, in which we deal exclusively in items with a cost-to-consumer of 2,500 gp or less. And just to up the level of difficulty, we also don't deal in one-shot (or even two- or three-shot) magic items. Here in *Volume 3: Hot Rods*, we're specifically looking only at magic items that are longer than they are wide. Think of it as the Freudian Spellcaster Special.

In this volume we focus on rods, the nearly undefinable class of petite poles that can do anything, as long as you're holding them. Rods have less tradition in fantasy literature than other arcane sticks such as wands and staves, but they enjoy a long history in fantasy rpgs (not even counting epic quests designed to put together artifact rods broken into little pieces). Fighters in particular have often found a rod or two useful over the course of their careers, and we have the entry-level examples they need until they can afford anything with "lordly might" in the name. Rods can be of use to anyone, making them perfect for GMs who need generic treasure fast.

WHY?!

Okay, so let's say that all sounds great, but you're not sure why you should care. Do campaigns really need a few dozen more magic item options? We answer that question in more detail in *Loot 4 Less volume 1: Armor and Weapons*, so I don't want to belabor the point too much here. Essentially, cheap magic items make it easier to:

1. Give the gear to low-level foes, thus making the treasure low-level characters pick up more varied and interesting.
2. Allow low-level PCs to build wealth, since their early treasure items aren't all scrolls, potions and partially-used wands that lose value if they get used.
3. Give mid-level characters who craft magic items a broader range of options that don't take more than a couple of days to create, increasing the chance they'll get to use their various Craft feats.

RODS

Rods are an odd class of magic item, in that their only unifying theme is that they don't have a unifying theme. Some rods are weapons, some cast spells, and some have various magical effects.. Most work a given number of times per day, but some work constantly and a few have limited charges. In truth, rods are miscellaneous magic items that just happen to be sticks 2 to 5 feet long and, instead of using one of the limited item slots (gloves, boots, etc.), must be held in order to be used.

On the other hand, most rods can be used by anyone. This makes them excellent low-level

treasure, since any member of the party can make use of a "generic" rod. A trove of 4 such rods allows players to mix-and-match as they desire (unlike 1 wand, 1 magic shield, and 2 special martial weapons, which limits players' choices based on their classes). Of course, because rods can do almost anything and be used by anyone, they're difficult to price. No standard rod comes in under our 2,500 gp limit, though a few could (a *lesser silent metamagic rod* that worked twice per day would cost 2,000 gp, rather than 3,000). So clearly, a whole slew of lesser rods are in order.

BEHIND THE COUNTER:

HOW TO PRICE BOLT THROWING

The *rod of bolt throwing* is a perfect example of an item that's hard to price. It doesn't really do much, other than to allow Small characters use a Medium ranged weapon, and prevent characters from needing to reload between shots. At first glance it seems similar to a repeating crossbow, so it might be fair to price it at 5,000 gp (assuming it's worth the same as a bonus feat, since it takes Exotic Weapon Proficiency to use a repeating crossbow). But in truth the comparison isn't that accurate. A repeating crossbow can fire more than once per round, and only holds 5 arrows.

The *rod of bolt throwing* really acts more like a spell device — doing one thing once a round. If we compare it to a wand that fires *magic missile* at will the comparison, is much closer. A 1st-level *magic missile* at will deals 1d4+1 magic force damage with no need to hit, while the *rod of bolt throwing* deals 1d8, but requires attack rolls and occasional reloading. The 1d8 deals an average of 4.5 points of damage (slightly more once you account for critical hits), while the 1d4+1 deals an average of 3.5 points of damage. That makes up for the rod's other

drawbacks, so the two items are of approximately equal use. Since a wand that fires a 1st-level spell with a caster level of 1 costs 2,000 gp, we priced the rod to match.

The same basic method — comparing the usefulness of a rod's effect against a 1st-level spell cast at caster level 1 — was used for several other rods. For example the *rod of hidden light* is clearly a specialty item more useful to creatures with low-light vision than *light* (since the light is hidden from the eyes of creatures without low-light vision), but also obviously not as useful as *darkvision*. That places it firmly at the 2,000 gp mark in this book. The same test was applied to the rods listed below.

Many Uses: The ability to suddenly have a particular tool is similar to *summon instrument* (a 0-level spell). However, the tools the rod duplicates can include weapons, so the rod is priced as a 1st-level spell at 2,000 gp.

Rings: There's nothing that really serves the same purpose as the *rod of rings*. It essentially saves time in that the user can't gain the benefit of more than one ring on a hand, but can switch rings freely. The rod has some further limitations since you must be holding it and not have a ring on that hand in order to gain any benefit. The ability to take extra

ROD OF BOLT THROWING

Aura: Minor transmutation; **CL** 1st

Slot: none; **Price:** 2,000 gp, **Weight:** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

A *rod of bolt throwing* acts as a Medium light crossbow (and qualifies as a simple weapon), but it's less awkward to carry and load. The rod is a 2-foot-long steel tube, open at one end with a leather-wrapped handle at the other end. A small stud is located on the handle, roughly where the thumb of a hand would rest when holding the rod. The

actions or movement is similar to either *haste* (which is 3rd level, comes with lots of extra benefits, and affects multiple targets) or *expeditious retreat* (which only adds to speed). As a gut-level comparison, we decided we'd much rather have a permanent *haste* item than a *rod of rings*, but might just barely prefer the rod to a permanent *expeditious retreat* item, so the final price was listed at 2,500 gp.

Screaming: Obviously this is patterned on *ghost sound*. It doesn't have nearly the versatility but can be delayed and can't initially be disbelieved, so it's about as useful as *ghost sound*. Since you don't have to be holding the rod for it to go off, we went with a final price of 2,500 gp.

Telescoping: The rod can only reach as far as a *mage hand* spell and can apply more force than that spell, but it can't actually grab things. That about equals out, so we went with a price of 2,000 gp.

Weight: A *rod of weight* can only get as heavy as a typical Medium creature. Since a Medium creature can be brought forth with a 1st-level *summon monster I* spell, it seems clear the weight is less useful than a 1st-level spell. We went with a final price of 1,250 gp.

open end often has a simple decoration, such as the mouth of a dragon or a bundle of spear heads. No matter how many bolts are in it, the rod weighs only 5 lb. and can be fired using one hand, even by Small or Tiny creatures.

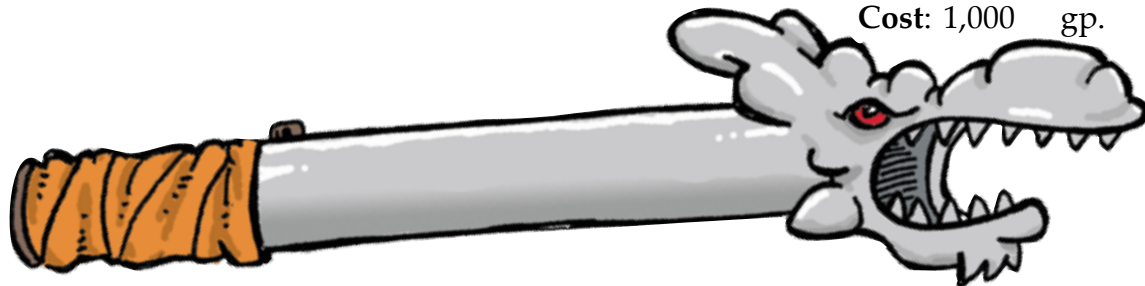
The rod can hold up to 20 bolts at a time (which are stored in an extradimensional space). It takes a full round to load one bolt. Each round, the rod can fire a single bolt as a ranged attack action. It cycles through pre-loaded bolts in a set order, but can only fire one a round.

A *rod of bolt throwing* can be given magic weapon augmentations as if it was a masterwork light crossbow, with the cost of the weapon abilities added to the rod's base cost. Only 10% of all such rods have additional magical properties.

Similar item exist, such as *rods of stone hurling*. These items look like *rods of bolt throwing*, but are of a larger diameter. They act as Medium slings, and can have as many as 50 sling bullets loaded in advance. They are otherwise identical to *rods of bolt throwing*.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Rod, *magic stone*;
Cost: 1,000 gp.



GRAPNEL ROD

Aura: Minor transmutation; **CL** 1st

Slot: none; **Price:** 2,000 gp, **Weight:** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

A *grapnel rod* is a light, dull length of steel that feels hollow. One end has three small claws projecting from the tip, while the butt end is wrapped in worn leather straps. When a command word is spoken, the tip of the rod shoots forth (trailing rope), and the three small claws extend to turn it into a grappling hook. The rope can extend up to 90 feet, and remains firmly attached to both handle and grappling hook ends. A character using a *grapnel rod* gains a +5 bonus to all attack rolls to successfully use it as a grappling hook (see the rules for throwing grappling hooks in Chapter 6 of *The Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*), and it can be climbed as a typical rope would be. The rope can reel back into the handle when the command word is spoken again (taking one full round), but does so with no particular strength (it can't be used to pull people or other heavy objects up, only to reload itself for another use).

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Rod, *animate rope*;
Cost: 1,000 gp.

ROD OF MANY USES

Aura: Minor transmutation; **CL** 1st

Slot: none; **Price:** 2,000 gp, **Weight:** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

A *rod of many uses* appears to be a simple 3-foot long length of brass, with a single stud on one end, and three rings marked with runes located just above the stud. By spinning the three rings and pressing the stud, the rod can change form to add small wheels, spikes, blades or claws, increase or decrease its diameter or length, add internal reservoirs, become flexible, add cross-posts, or form a handle. The combination of these changes allows the rod to function as any of a number of tools or weapons. Actually pressing the stud is a free action, but changing the setting of the rod from one tool to another is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity.

A *rod of many uses* can change form to act as a bullseye lantern (though it must be loaded with oil, and any oil left in it when it changes back to a rod is dumped on the ground), block and tackle, case (map or scroll), chain (10 ft.), crowbar, grappling hook (rope not included), ladder (10 ft.), lock (good quality), piton (just one), pole (10 ft.), portable ram, shovel, club, dagger, javelin, light flail, light mace, short sword, or throwing axe.



CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Rod, *prestidigitation*;
Cost: 1,000 gp.

ROD OF NOBLE APPEARANCE

Aura: Minor enchantment; **CL** 3rd
Slot: none; **Price:** 2,500 gp, **Weight:** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

Rods of this type are always ornately decorated, with delicate carvings out of what appear to be gold, silver, gems, ivory, or marble, and are often called scepters rather than mere rods. In fact, these seemingly precious decorations are all fake, though fakes of the highest quality. The magic property of a *rod of noble appearance* is not counterfeit, however. Any character holding one seems more impressive and trustworthy to onlookers, giving the character a +5 enhancement bonus to Diplomacy and Charisma checks made to determine initial NPC attitudes (but not to change an NPC's attitude once it has been established).

CONSTRUCTION

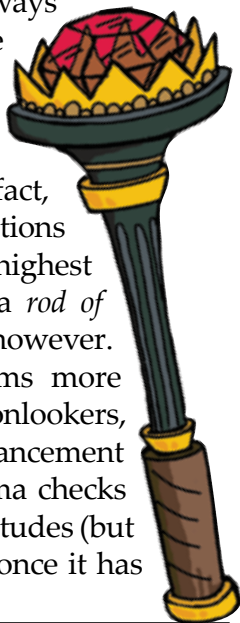
Requirements: Craft Rod, *eagle's splendor*;
Cost: 1,250 gp.

ROD OF RINGS

Aura: Minor transmutation; **CL** 1st
Slot: none; **Price:** 2,500 gp, **Weight:** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

A *rod of rings* is an 18-inch rod of ivory or bone wrapped lightly with gold or silver wire. It is frequently carved so that it appears to be made of numerous finger bones wired together, but must actually be made from a single solid piece. Up to



three magic rings may be placed on the *rod of rings*, sitting snugly enough they that they can't fall off unless intentionally removed.

A *rod of rings* only works when it is held in a hand on which no magic ring is currently worn. As long as that is the case, the holder can gain the benefit of one of the rings currently on the rod, acting as though he was wearing that ring. A character can only benefit from one ring on the rod at a time. As a free action that may only be taken at the beginning of his round, a character holding a *rod of rings* may change which of the rings on the rod is active.

For example, wizardress Perry Hotter is holding a *rod of rings* on which she's placed a *brightmote ring*, a *ring of avoidance*, and a *ring of canine control* (all from *Loot 4 Less*, vol. 2: *Pretty, Pretty, Rings*). If she's not holding the rod, or is holding it with a hand that already has a magic ring, she gains no benefit from any of the rings on the rod. But if she is holding it with a ring-free hand, she can access any one ring on the rod at a time. While wandering around at night, Perry uses light from the *brightmote ring*. Suddenly she comes across a large, dog-like creature. At the beginning of her next round, Perry opts to change the rod so that the *ring of canine control* is active. Though it's now dark, she can see well enough to try to use that ring's *charm animal* power on the dog. However, since it's actually a hell hound, her effort fails. The hell hound breathes a cone of fire at her, forcing a Reflex save. Since it's not her turn, she can't make it so that the *ring of avoidance* is active for this saving throw (though she could make that change at the beginning of her next turn if she likes, though the light from the *brightmote ring* might be more helpful in lighting her path of retreat).

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Rod, Forge Ring, *mage hand*; **Cost:** 1,250 gp.

ROD OF SCREAMING

Aura: Minor illusion; **CL** 1st
Slot: none; **Price:** 2,500 gp, **Weight:** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

A *rod of screaming* is generally made of brass, bronze or copper. It is slightly wider at the tip than at the handle, and has a figure with an open mouth worked into the tip end. The rod is hollow, with the interior visible through the figure's open mouth. As a move action, a small ring set above the handle can be turned to set the rod to go off any time from one to twenty rounds in the future. The ring slowly twists back into place, at which point the rod begins to scream like a humanoid child being horrified, attacked, or both. During the first two rounds of screaming it is impossible for those only hearing the sound to determine that it is artificial, but beginning on the third round all listeners may make a DC 11 Will save to realize the screaming isn't coming from a real humanoid. After the third round, one additional save is granted to each listener. Of course anyone who sees the rod while it's screaming immediately realizes it is the source of the sound. The screaming persists for 10 rounds, or until the rod is touched by any living creature.

These rods are often used by rogues and assassins to create distractions, often to sneak past a guard or to throw off pursuers.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Rod, *ghost sound*;
Cost: 1,250 gp.

ROD OF SMASING DOORS

Aura: Minor transmutation; CL 3rd
Slot: none; **Price:** 2,500 gp, **Weight:** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This rod is a sturdy iron cylinder 3 ft. long, with crude etchings of goats, elephants, and battering rams along its length. It can serve as a mundane club, but its main function is to force open doors. Any check made to break open, force open, or knock down a door, gate, portcullis, or similar barrier gains a +5 competence bonus if the character is holding a *rod of smashing doors*.

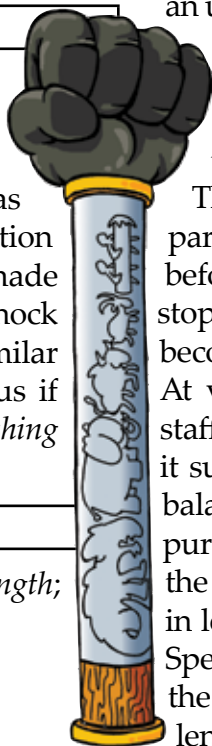
CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Rod, *bull's strength*;
Cost: 1,250 gp.

BEHIND THE COUNTER:

HOW TO PRICE SMASHING DOORS?

The *rod of smashing doors* gives a +5 bonus to Strength checks made for one specific purpose — to break open doors. It seems reasonable to price that the same way you would a skill bonus (bonus squared x 100 gp), since it's only one specific use of a Str check. The same logic applies to the *rod of noble appearance*.



TELESCOPING ROD

Aura: Minor transmutation; CL 1st
Slot: none; **Price:** 2,000 gp, **Weight:** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

A *telescoping rod* is always made of polished hardwood (often bacote, which has an unusual and distinctive wood grain) with iron shod caps at each end. The normal length for such a rod is three feet, but when a command word is spoken it can telescope out up to twenty-five in length.

This extension of its length occurs with no particular force — if the rod meets resistance before reaching the desired length it simply stops. Once it reaches the desired length it becomes as rigid as a normal hardwood pole. At varying lengths, it can serve as a club, staff, or greatclub, though attacks made with it suffer a –1 penalty because the rod is not balanced or designed for combat. Its primary purpose is to serve as a 10-foot pole, though the the fact that it can extend up to 25 feet in length gives it some increased versatility. Speaking a second command word causes the rod to shrink back down to its 3-foot length (which is its minimum size).

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Rod, *enlarge person*;
Cost: 1,000 gp.



ROD OF WEIGHT

Aura: Minor transmutation; CL 1st
Slot: none; **Price:** 2,000 gp, **Weight:** 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

A *rod of weight* is a hefty stone cylinder four feet long, with etchings of scales and merchants' weights along its length. It normally weighs no more than a typical rod (5 lbs.), making it actually seem light for its size. When a command word is spoken, the wielder may increase the rod's weight up to a maximum of 150 lbs. The change is instantaneous and remains in effect until the command word is spoken again and the rod's weight returns to 5 lbs. The rod can be used as a light mace or club if it weighs no more than 10 lbs., but is too unwieldy to use as a weapon when heavier than that.

Though these rods seem frivolous at first glance, cunning schemers have made great use of them through the ages. They can increase the owner's weight when he is being carried off by a massive monster (in the hope of forcing a creature into medium or heavy encumbrance and thus putting it at penalties against attacks made by his allies). When goods are being sold in bulk, it can be slipped onto a scale to add to the apparent weight of the valuables. If a lightweight character is attempting to hold rope or similar item to prevent a friend from falling into a pit, the rod can be used as a makeshift anchor.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements: Craft Rod, *feather fall*;
Cost: 1,000 gp.

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