

DRAGONHEAD

DRAGONHEAD is a fantasy adventure game for two to six players questing for gold and glory in a dangerous land. It is played using paper, pencils, dice and imagination.

If you swear you have heard this all before, that is because you have. Dragonhead is an OSR game, meaning *Old School Rules*, meaning it was designed to carry the feeling of rpgs from the late 1970's and early 1980's.

This book, the **Banger's Handbook** or *BHB*, contains the core rules of the game. If you have never played an rpg it is good to understand that *you do not need to know all the rules to play the game*. Just read to get an understanding of how the game is played and the rest you can figure out later.

The **Character Compendium** is a resource book containing all the stuff that goes into the creation of characters, such as classes, equipment and spell-like powers. Often characters are created using the BHB and Compendium side by side.

The **Dragonhead Master's Guide** or *DMG*, is for the Dragonhead Master to read and everyone else to eventually discover by playing the game. It is critically important that you **do NOT read** the Dragonhead Master's Guide or anything written for the DM unless you are the DM of the group! These books contain secrets that will ruin the surprise of what you are destined to encounter.

The **Monsters & Treasure** book is like a character compendium for Dragonhead Masters. It is also for the DM's eyes only, seeing as it contains the stuff DMs use to create adventures.

An Ongoing Project

If you are reading this blurb chances are the game is still in its prototype state. It is playable but it does not yet contain all of the classes, monsters, spells, etc that the final game will contain.

It is highly recommended that you go to the website www.chameleondream.com/dragonhead and join the mailing list to stay abreast of updates to the system.

What You Need

Dragonhead Bangers. Dragonhead Bangers are intrepid souls eager to embark on an epic adventure in ages untold. *This is you!* Your armaments? A freshly printed character sheet and a pencil with a good eraser. Having your own dice helps. Miniatures are optional. Imagination is essential.

Dragonhead Master. The Dragonhead Master controls the world the adventure takes place in. The DM's authority over all that happens in it is irrefutable. If you do not have a DM, everyone at the table should roll 1d20. Whoever rolls the greatest number is now the group's Dragonhead Master. *All hail the new DM!*

Characters & Creatures. Bangers run characters while the Master runs creatures. For the most part these two terms are inter-changeable and play by the same rules. Unless something says otherwise, what applies to characters applies to creatures and vice-versa.

An Adventure Module. An adventure module should contain everything you need for a few nights of exciting gaming. It is up to the Dragonhead Master to acquire an Adventure module and read it through before the game begins.

If you have just been thrust into the DM's seat be sure to check out the starting adventure in the front of the Dragonhead Master's Guide. It was made to be used with little to no preparation.

Funny Looking Dice. At the very least you will need one set of polyhedrals containing a **d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20** and **d00**. It also helps to have three six-siders and up to four twenty-siders.

If you don't know dice, the d-number is the number of sides on a die so a d6 is your standard six-sided die. A number tacked onto the front is the number of times you roll it. A 3d6 translates to "roll three six-sided dice" or "roll a six-sided die three times." If a number has been added to the end of a roll, such as 3d6+2, roll the dice and add two points to the total.

Percentile Dice. Many tables rely on the percentile dice. If you've never made a percentile roll, roll the d10 and the d00 together (they have the same shape). The d00 provides the tens digit and the d10 the ones digit.

When the d00 rolls 20 and the d10 a 1 that's 21.

When the d00 rolls 20 and the d10 a 0 that's 20.

When the d00 rolls 00 and the d10 a 0 that's 100.

True Sign Dice. The game does not require special dice, but if you are up to it, buy a few blank d20 dice online as well as two ultra-fine sharpies of different colors. Draw a 1 on one face and a 20 on the opposite side in a different color. Now do the same by drawing nine minus signs around the 1 and nine plus signs around the 20. This will make sense once you read the section on *Action*.

Merlins. Merlins are plastic gold coins often sold as *Pirate's Treasure* in costume shops. Poker chips, checkers or even normal coins will work just as well but we highly recommend the plastic gold ones. You will also need a bowl to collect them in as they are spent during the game.

Every gaming session should begin with each banger at the table rolling to see how many Merlin's they start with. What you roll depends on the number of bangers present.

One to Three = **2d6 each.**

Four to Six = **2d4 each.**

A Place to Play. Preferably a large table with nice seats in a room without much noise. This is largely a spoken-word game, if you cannot hear what the other people are saying you cannot play it.

Snack Food. Because you have friends coming over, snacks are a must! If you are going over to someone else's place, be sure to pick up something to share or be ready to throw in for pizza.

Always Round Down. The math in this game is nothing complex, but every now and then it will leave you with a decimal point. When that happens - **round down** - discard the decimal and go with what is left. Both a 3.5 and a 3.99999 round down to 3.

A Smart Phone. PSYCHE! You do not need a smart phone to play Dragonhead. Power it down, put it away and do not take it out until after the game is over. You will thank yourself later.

Gaming Style

How you choose to play depends on who you play with and what you enjoy. Every group is different but two major styles predominate: Immersive and Omniscient gaming.

Immersive Gaming. In immersive gaming each player has one character and they play that character the way an actor

plays a role. While seated at the table you become your character. You speak as that character might speak and use its name in place of your own. If someone calls you by your actual name you are honor-bound to stare at them funny and act as if you have no idea what they are talking about. It is only when you stand up from the table that you return to being yourself.

Omniscient Gaming. Instead of actors, in an omniscient game you and your friends are more like unacknowledged gods presiding over the adventure spread out before you. You roll the dice of fate and lead your heroes about. Sometimes you speak as your characters. Other times you talk as if they were standing in the room with you. Often it can feel as if the group runs the party of heroes more-so than any individual player, yet in the end it is the player holding the character sheet who has final say on what a character will do.

Choosing a Style. How you choose to play is between you and your friends, but this is something you should nail down before the game begins. Dragonhead supports both styles and doesn't consider one to be any better than the other, although it will admit that Immersive gaming works best with large groups of people while Omniscient gaming is better for small ones. What does not work is having some at the table playing Immersively while the others are trying to play Omnisciently.

Games Without End

If you haven't figured it out by now, Dragonhead is not a board game where you race around a maze and whoever makes it to the end first is the winner. This a *game without end*. You win it by having fun while playing it. An adventure can last a single night or ramble on for years.

Unfortunately, life has a terrible way of trampling long campaigns, so if you must leave early, be sure to hand your characters off to your friends. Yes, they may make your barbarian walk around with his bearskin speedo on his head, but at least the adventure can continue without you.

For the same reason, at the end of the night ***all character sheets go back to the DM***. This way the group can pick up where it last left off, even if not everyone who played the last time could make it.

Real Playing Game?

You thought the R stood for Role. *Not in Dragonhead.* In Dragonhead the R stands for **Real**. While there is a decent amount of role-playing involved and many fantastic things can happen, at base Dragonhead is a game that plays by reality's rules.

Ultimately, this is what separates role playing games from other games. In Monopoly you can only go around the board in a clockwise direction. Your actions are limited to buying hotels, paying rent, etc. If Dragonhead were Monopoly you could cut across the board, break your friends out of jail and party like rock stars, trashing the hotels on Boardwalk.

This doesn't mean you will get away with it, but you can try. When it comes down to what your character can or cannot do, we imagine it all happening as if it were real and go with what our imaginations show us, keeping things true to life.

The rules are not here to limit your actions. They are here to help reinforce the reality of the situation. *The rules make the fantasy seem real.*

Character Creation

It is good to create your character in the company of friends. Adventure parties often need a decent mix of classes and the last thing you want is everyone showing up with a Warlord.

Follow these steps in order. Read through it once while creating your first character to get an understanding of the process. Afterward you should be able to create them quite quickly using just our **Character Creation Cheat Sheet** as a guide.

If you don't have a character sheet, visit the website at www.chameleondream.com/dragonhead for a PDF. Otherwise, wrangle up some dice and let's go!

1.) Choose a Class

Your class best describes your character. What do you want to play? No idea? Roll **1d12**.

12: Warlord

11: Warlock

10: Elf

9: Dwarf

8: Rogue

6: Wizard

4: Cleric

1: Fighter

This is a **Threshold Table**. They are used extensively through-out the game. It helps to read them from the bottom up with the line number being where the threshold begins and the line above it being where it ends. If you rolled a 1, 2 or 3 your character is a Fighter. At 4 you rolled a Cleric. The top line applies to that number as well as anything above it. If you had rolled a 1d20 then any roll of 12 or more would be a Warlord.

Class descriptions are found in the *Character Compendium*. It's good to give your class a once over to make sure it is something you want to play. If not, roll again.

Male or Female? Can't decide? Roll a die. An odd number is male while an even one is female. When rolling your abilities, you can opt to create a more masculine character

by taking a Muscle +1 and Charisma -1 or a more feminine character with a Muscle -1 and Charisma +1. For an overly masculine or feminine character change these 1's to 2's.

Body Size. Most classes are Medium in size, meaning you can ignore matters of body size. Others may be smaller or larger than this and will require extra work.

For more on *Body Size* see its entry in the *Adventure* section. And yes, body size is the reason why the Halfling does not appear in the random roll table above. It is good to stick with medium-sized characters until you have a fuller understanding of the game.

2.) Roll Your Abilities

Roll **3d6** seven times and write the totals on a piece of scrap paper. A 9 to 12 is considered average, 13 to 15 is pretty good and 16 to 18 excellent. On the flipside, 6 to 8 is sub-par and 3 to 5 pathetic.

Once finished, you may re-roll any score of 5 or less providing you have no rolls of 16 or better. Otherwise you need to re-roll an excellent score to re-roll a pathetic score.

Look at your class and use it as a guide to assigning the rolls to your abilities. The **Primary Abilities** are the ones that the class has the most use for. You don't have to put your best rolls into them, but that is the idea. As far as what the abilities stand for...

Spirit is the will to do what needs to be done. It helps a character harness magical forces and hold their ground in the face of fear.

Muscle is what it sounds like. This is the meat that makes things go. You need it for lifting, pushing and pulling things around.

Intellect is the muscle of the mind. It is used for grasping big concepts or recalling large amounts information with accuracy and detail.

Wisdom is a mix of perception and intuition. Wise characters have a good understanding of how the world works. They are very observant and rarely surprised.

Dexterity is about precision and coordination. It is a pivotal ability for making combat attacks, defending oneself and moving when you need to move.

Constitution is a character's health, natural good looks and sturdiness of frame. It helps prevents sickness, disease and death.

Charisma is the ability to think fast and say what needs to be said to entice others into doing your bidding.

Abilities are often known by the first three letters of each name. On a character sheet where it says **Con** that is short for **Constitution**.

Existence and Transformation classes often come with ability modifiers. Be sure to add these to your sheet. Should you ever gain and then lose a transformation class these ability modifiers should be gained and then lost along with it.

3.) Choose A Level

A character's **Level** is a general measure of power. Traditionally, all characters start at 1st level but you may want to create a higher level character for a higher level adventure. If so roll **1d12**.

11: use the highest recommended level.

9: use a level from the high middle.

5: use a level from the low middle.

1: use the lowest recommended level.

If the adventure module recommends character levels 4 to 7? The lowest level would be 4. The low middle is 5. The high middle is 6. The highest is 7.

Record your level and near the bottom of the sheet write in the number of experience points or **XP** it takes to get there.

Ability Increases. For every level add a **+1** to an **ability score** of your choosing. A character starting at 4th level gets a +4 that could be dropped all on one ability or spread across four of them or any combination in-between.

Class Bonuses. Your class bonus is **equal to your level**. This helps your character do things that someone of the class should be able to do, such as a Wizard trying to make sense of mystical glyphs, a Rogue eavesdropping on a conversation or a Fighter being able to judge the quality of weapons and armor.

While the uses of a class are open to interpretation, each class comes with a list of **Class Bonuses** to let you know what the class bonus can be used with - *no questions asked*

- be sure to copy this list to your character sheet in the space beneath your class.

If an item is followed by $\frac{1}{2}$, such as *Magic $\frac{1}{2}$* , this means you only get half your class bonus to a check of it. If followed by a bonus, such as *Magic +1*, then you get your class bonus as well as the bonus attached to it.

Attribute Bonuses. Attribute bonuses are similar to class bonuses. They tell you which attributes on your character sheet will benefit from your class.

Unlike class bonuses, you do not have to write down your attribute bonuses. Just be sure to add them in when you come to them. Having *Melee $\frac{1}{2}$* will add half of your class bonus to your Melee ability.

4.) Hit Points

Hit Points keep you alive. They come from a **Base HP** provided by your class added to what your **Spirit, Muscle** and **Constitution** scores take from this table.

30:	+40
29:	+38
28:	+36
27:	+34
26:	+32
25:	+30
24:	+28
23:	+26
22:	+24
21:	+22
20:	+20
19:	+18
18:	+16
17:	+14
16:	+12
15:	+10
14:	+8
13:	+6
12:	+4
11:	+2
9:	0
7:	-2
5:	-4
3:	-6
1:	-8

If your class gives you a Base HP of 6 and you have Spirit 12, Muscle 11 and Constitution 12 this adds up to $6 + 4 + 2 + 4 = 16$ hit points.

Should your scores be so bad that your hit points add up to a negative number then congratulations! *You just died during character creation.* Go back to step 2 and start over.

Damage. Using a Pen - **yes a Pen** - draw a circle around one silver circle for each hit point, moving left to right and down if needed. Switch back to a pencil, split your total hp in **half** and count backwards that amount from the last circled point. Draw a slash between it and the following circle. Do this again but this time using a **quarter** of your total hit points. Here is what it should look like for a character with 16 hit points.



Rege & Stun. Your **Regeneration Rate** and **Stun Point** come from your hit point total divided by **5** with a minimum of 1. Put these where it says Stun and Rege on the sheet.

5.) Secondary Abilities

Secondary abilities are an open-ended collection of attributes that come from combinations of your primary abilities. They go in the diamonds in the center of your character sheet. Everyone has the following five. Depending on your class and the needs of your DM you may have more.

Agility. $Mus + Dex / 2$. This is your character's ability to move ones whole body with strength and precision.

Melee. $Mus + Mus + Dex / 3$. This is used attacks like punches, sword swings or axe blows. Yes, it uses two servings of muscle.

Throw. $Mus + Dex / 2$. This is used with muscle powered ranged weapons such as the bow, javelin, or sling.

Ranged. $Dex + Wis / 2$. This is used with weapons that need to be aimed like a crossbow.

Luck. $Cha + Wis / 2$. Luck is often used with checks where no other ability fits the bill.

Calculating Scores. Add the scores of the abilities mentioned above, divide by the number behind the slash and that is your score.

For Agility, if your character has Muscle 15 and Dexterity 12? Added together is 27, divided by 2 and rounded down gives the character Agility 13.

Class Attribute Bonuses. Unlike your primary abilities, secondary abilities may be increased by a class bonus. Check the class's Attribute Bonuses list. If **Luck** is present add your class bonus to your luck score. If a $\frac{1}{2}$ follows it, like **Luck $\frac{1}{2}$** , add only half the class bonus. If a bonus follows it, like **Luck +1**, add your class bonus plus one.

6.) Equipment

Classes come with **free** equipment. This is the stuff your character has accumulated on the way to becoming who they are. You may swap out items for similar items of an equal or lesser value, but all of it will be in used condition. Try to hock any of it and you will find it worth barely half the market value.

Everything else you need to buy. Typically, shopping is done in character once the game begins. Use the tables found in the equipment section of the *Character Compendium* but realize that not everything is available everywhere.

Currency. The world of Dragonhead runs on coins. Each weighs a hefty tenth of a pound. The **Iron Piece** is the base currency of the realm and it is just what it sounds like, a chunk of iron or steel melted down and cast as a crude coin, often with a hole in its center so it can be strung on a cord. Anything with a dollar sign next to it is in Irons. Some other coins you might encounter...

1 Gold Piece or GP = \$100

1 Silver Piece or SP = \$25

1 Copper Piece or CP = \$10

These are *old world coins*. They are often found stamped with a design whose meaning has long since been forgotten yet is still treasured since a nicely stamped coin *probably* has not been filed down to make it worth less than it seems.

Starting Coin. Unless your DM says otherwise, you get **40 iron** pieces per level. These you may change into old world coins to make them more portable.

BET. BET stands for **Basic Expense Tab** and it is equal to **10%** of the **total value of the coinage** you carry on your person. Anything you want that costs this amount or less you simply get and do not have to pay for.

This is done to steer the game away from getting bogged down by minor purchases, like having to mill over a tavern menu and juggle prices while trying to decide what your character will have for dinner. Dragonhead is a game of heroic adventure. You enter the tavern, grab a shank of beef and a stein of beer and we are *betting* you will be good for it.

BET is not a limitless coin pouch. It is a privilege. Abuse it and you lose it.

Arms & Armor. Classes often come with a number of taboos surrounding the weapons a character can wield and the armor one can wear. Why? Because what a character wears says a lot about who they are. The other members of the class tend to care immensely about this and what it says about the class as a whole.

You may break a cultural taboo - you can be *that wizard who wears armor* - but it will come back to haunt you. Most level advancement comes from schools run by the classes. If they hear of your misconduct they may choose not to teach you anything and stymie your advancement.

Encumbrance. Muscle controls how much equipment you can carry. Every two points above 29 increases by 100 pounds:

29: 400
27: 300
25: 250
23: 200
21: 150
19: 100
17: 70
15: 60
13: 50
11: 40
9: 30
7: 20
5: 10
3: 05
1: 02

Take this number and multiply it by the following to fill out the line below your equipment list.

Packing = x 1

Lugging = x 2

Trudging = x 3

Straining = x 4

These describe how you are moving as well as the amount of weight that it takes to bring you to that state.

Packing means you can no longer sprint.

Lugging causes a Bulk -2 and you can no longer run.

Trudging causes a Bulk -4 and your movement speed drops by half.

Straining causes a Bulk -6 and you can only shuffle forward at 1 step per round.

Moving is not on your sheet but it is the state you are in when carrying less than your packing amount. It is best to do what you can to stay there because that bulk penalty effects **everything** you do.

Pack Weight. Notice in your equipment list that there are two columns for weight: **Wt** and **Pack**. This lets you separate the equipment on your person from the equipment in your pack. The idea being that you can drop your pack in an emergency.

If you are carrying a bulk penalty that modifier should be written on the front of your sheet as a hindrance. If you can change it by dropping your pack write in both your normal bulk penalty and your pack-free bulk penalty separated by a slash, for example -1/0 for a character who is packing now but wouldn't be without their backpack. If you are packing and cannot sprint write in **NS** for **no sprinting**, like so Bulk NS/0.

Although some equipment uses a decimal point, such as .1 for a tenth of a pound, when it comes to your total and pack weight round down to the nearest pound.

7.) Attacks

Attacks are typically weapons and magic spells. If your equipment list includes weaponry, you should write them in as attacks.

Hit. This is the hit score used by the attack. Weapons are typed as either **Melee**, **Ranged** or **Throw** and use your

secondary abilities of the same name. Add to this any other modifiers from your character sheet which may apply (class bonuses, quality, etc). Your hit score should be something you can quickly use with little more than a risk roll. Only hindrances are left out because they change so often.

Quality. The +1 on the classic *Long Sword +1* is a quality bonus. Magic may have had a hand in its creation, but it is actually just a very well-made sword. Quality bonuses should **always** be added to an attack's hit score even though it sits on the end of a weapon's name right next to it.

Damage. Damage is a die roll and a letter. The die roll produces the force of the attack. The letter tells us its damage type: **p** = Pierce, **s** = Sharp, **m** = Mixed, **b** = Blunt, **i** = Impact. More on this will be explained in Combat.

Punches & Kicks. Even if you don't mean to use them, it doesn't hurt to have these two on your sheet. Both Punch and Kick are **Melee** attacks. Punch does **1d4i** for damage and a Kick does **1d4+1i**.

8.) Magic

Magic using characters have supernatural powers that should be written in as attacks on your character sheet. Feel free to skip this step if your class does not use magic.

There are three big divisions in the world of magic. **Spell-Casters** learn what they know from studying spell books. **Divine Power** users have their prayers answered by divine powers. **Natural-Casters** come upon their magical powers naturally. For more on these, see their entries in the Adventure section.

Magic. Casting a spell is essentially a check of your Magic ability. What creates it depends on the class itself. Some take the score from a single ability. Others will add up different abilities and average them out.

Spell Count. The number of powers you can have in your attack list is your spell count. It too depends on the class granting your magical powers. When it comes to choosing the spells you can cast, that also changes from class to class so be sure to read up on what you have.

Hit. The hit score of a spell is your Magic score plus the spell's hit modifier, which is often the level of the spell turned into a penalty.

$$\text{Hit} = \text{Magic} + \text{Hit}.$$

If your character has any other constant magic modifiers (such as a focusing tool) be sure to add these in too. A wizard with Magic 15 trying to cast a 3rd level spell with the help of a Wizard's Staff +1 would have a $(15 - 3 + 1)$ Hit 13.

Can Wizards Wear Armor? While the classes may have their taboos, the only thing actually stopping a magic-user from wearing armor is a possible bulk penalty.

Spell Books. Spell-Casters who are just starting out should be given a spell book as a piece of equipment. Its pages contain the arcane knowledge necessary for casting the spells you have chosen. *Guard this with your life!* Lose your spell book and eventually you will lose the ability to cast spells.

Spell Swapping. Spell-Casters and Divine Power users can swap spells out of their attack list and replace them with others. Typically this takes **an hour** of reading in ones spell book or praying to a deity to swap out each spell. Natural-Casters cannot do this. They are stuck with the powers they have whether they like them or not.

How Many Times Can I Cast a Spell? As often as you like or are willing to try. Failing to cast a spell can be detrimental. Crashing it can be devastating.

The same mentality stands behind the matter of "what level spells can I cast?" You can cast any level spell you have access to, but a low-level wizard is going to have an incredibly hard time getting a ninth level spell to work.

If you are going to play a magic-using character, be sure to read up on the spells you have before the game begins. Nobody appreciates being asked to wait while you go look something up.

9.) Armor Class

Armor Class comprises two layers of protection. The first keeps you from being hit. The second reduces the damage when the first layer fails. AC is that first layer and kept in a shield on your character sheet, often as two numbers separated by a slash.

Full AC. The first number is your **FAC**. It is your Agility plus any FAC Class Bonus you may have.

FAC = Agility + FAC Class Bonus.

Suck AC. The second number is your **SAC**. It is used against surprise attacks, back attacks or pretty much any situation where your defenses start to suck. It is your Luck score.

SAC = Luck.

If your SAC is somehow greater than your FAC then use SAC for both of them.

Size AC. Characters of all sizes gain an AC bonus based on their own size compared to their opponent's size. For a medium-sized character write this on your sheet.

Size AC: Lar +1, Ext +2, Big +3, Hug +4.

The three letters are the first three letters of each size category. Hug is short for Huge. It has nothing to do with running up and giving a creature a hug.

Armor. Armor is the second part of Armor Class. What it does is absorb damage after a blow has landed. This is what the Armor value of your armor, shield and helmet adds up to. Tally it in your equipment list and write it on the front of your character sheet.

If your character is carrying a shield it is a good idea to write in two numbers for Armor. The first is everything you have and the second in parenthesis is your armor without the shield.

Quality armor such as a Shield +1, does not effect AC! Instead the bonus adds **2 Armor** points per +1.

Magical Protection. Certain powers and magical items create force fields that repel attacks. Mage Armor, Rings of Protection and Bracers of Defense in particular. Gamewise these add to your AC, both FAC and SAC. They also repel each other. Unless something says otherwise you get **just one magical protection**. Put on ten Rings of Protection +1 and you still only get a single AC +1.

10.) Movement

Movement is the speed your character travels at, comparable to *miles per hour* for long overland travel. In combat it is the number of steps your character can take per round, aka your *steps per round* or **SPR**. With miniatures on a battleboard, each square or hex is one step.

Movement = Class Move + Agility Bonus.

To find a movement speed, start with the move speed provided by your class, add to it a bonus brought by your agility using the table below. If less than 1 it stops at 1.

30: +10
28: +9
26: +8
24: +7
22: +6
20: +5
18: +4
16: +3
14: +2
12: +1
10: +0
8: -1
6: -2
4: -3
2: -4
1: -5

If your class comes with a body size distance multiplier, be sure to multiply your speed by it, with a minimum of 1 SPR.

If the movement mentions a class bonus then you gain it to your speed. A level 4 character who gets *Walk 4 + ¼ Class Bonus* would have a walk speed of 5.

11.) Alignment

Alignment is the great cosmic divide between the forces of Good and Evil. Neutral is the natural unaligned state of the universe and exists somewhere between the two. Choose the alignment (**Good, Neutral, Evil**) that best suits your character. On your sheet, pencil a circle around the letter with a dot above it representing that alignment.

Basically, as you commit resoundingly good acts the circle moves left. Commit a resoundingly evil act and the circle moves right. What qualifies as a good or evil act is between you and the DM. As your actions push your character to becoming more good or evil, divine forces will take notice and take this into consideration when it comes to using divine power to help or harm the character.

12.) Languages

The language of trade is called **Common** because it is the most common language spoken in any place. In some isolated places, especially dwarven mines and elven kingdoms, common may be replaced by a more native language and the Common language of trade treated like a foreign language.

To find what you speak, compare your **Intellect** to the following table. An additional language is learned with every 2 points above 20.

- 20: Common + 6 languages.
- 18: Common + 5 languages.
- 16: Common + 4 languages.
- 14: Common + 3 languages.
- 12: Common + 2 languages.
- 10: Common + 1 language.
- 8: Common only.
- 6: Crude Common only.
- 4: Grunts, snorts and an occasional word of Common.
- 1: Grunts and snorts.

Read & Write. All characters start as functionally illiterate and only able to read simple things like signs and menus unless they have spent a language on **Read & Write**. Once possessed, a character should be able to read and write any language they speak.

Fantasy Language. While the actual languages available will change from place to place the following languages exist in most fantasy worlds. Arranged from common to obscure...

Dwarvish: the chant-like grunting of dwarves.

Elvish: the high lilting sing-speak of elves.

Law: the secret language of the forces of Law.

Chaos: the secret language of the forces of Chaos.

Gnomish: the jibber-jabber-jargon of gnomes.

Goblin: the screech of goblins and other subhumanoids.

Reptilian: the susurrus of the reptile people.

Subterranean: the rare tongue of the deep underground.

Fluency. If loading up on languages does not interest you, you may instead add a +1 fluency bonus to a language you already speak. A character with an Intellect of 16 could choose Common and Elvish +3 instead of Common and four different languages. This would give the character a +3 when speaking Elvish and be more likely to impress any elf who hears the character speak.

Gamewise, fluency is used in place of a class bonus. Typically you use it with Spirit when trying to get a rise out of someone, Intellect when trying to impress them with your smarts, or Charisma when trying to sound cool.

13.) Personality

For a quick personality, pick 2 positive traits, 1 neutral trait, and 1 negative trait from the list of personality traits at the back of the *Character Compendium*. Write them down where it says **Personality** on your character sheet.

On the back of your character sheet is space for writing more about your character such as a back story and how they came to be an adventurer. For those who are graphically inclined there is even a 4 x 4.5 inch space for a character portrait.

With this said, it is good to keep from diving into this task without knowing that your character is going to stick around for a while, especially when creating low level characters who may bite it on the very first encounter.

14.) Name the Character

Hopefully by now an image of the character has coalesced in your mind. Give it a name that sums it up. If you can't think of anything then go with a working title (ex: My Fighter) until something better comes along.

15.) Level Up

This is not a step in creation but it is worth mentioning since you will want to revisit character creation once you acquire enough **Experience Points** or **XP** to advance in level.

Changing Levels. This is the purpose of the Level Advancement tables at the end of the class descriptions. The Fighter's 2 = 4,500 means that second level is reached once you have 4,500 XP under your belt. Go to step **3.) Choose a Level** and follow it from there forward, readjusting abilities, bonuses, hit points, etc.

Changing levels can be time-consuming, so it is best to wait until after the game is over and people are starting to pack up and head home. Remember **character sheets stay with the DM!** If you truly need to leave then give your sheet to the DM and level up at the start of the next game.

Gaining XP. How you gain experience points depends on your DM. Traditionally they come from accomplishing adventure goals and seeking out training.

Adventure goals and how much they are worth is left up to the DM. Generally speaking, the more important and intrepid the goal the more XP you should get for accomplishing it.

Training usually happens in-between adventures at a university, guild, dojo or some other place of learning. For tuition, every **1 XP costs \$1**. Think of this as a good place to unload all that treasure you acquired on your last adventure. Money spent to acquire XP in this way is gone for good. The institution takes it into their coffers, cackles maniacally and your loot is never seen again. *Welcome to higher education.*

However you gain the XP, it generally takes **1 year** to turn it into **1 level** of experience. That is, of course, time for your character inside the game as opposed to time spent for you spent at the table.

Sample Character Creation

Alright. So let's build a brand new character from the ground up.

1.) Choose a Class. I don't have anything in mind so I roll for a class and the Warlord turns up. For a sex I roll 1d6 to a 4, an even number so she is female.

I read the class description for Warlord and jot down a few notes on my character sheet. Most of it are uses of the class bonus brought on by being a Warlord.

Battle Initiative.

Detecting Surprise Attacks.

Reaction Checks.

Grappling.

Helping others defend against fear.

Slip-Thru.

And of course the complications...17>12 4>11

Primadonna. Will not work with other warlords.

2.) Roll Abilities. I roll **3d6** seven times to get: 9, 8, 17, 12, 4, 10, 11. Yikes! I don't like that 4. I want to re-roll it but I have a 17. Is it worth getting rid of? Yes. Yes *it is*. I re-roll the 4 to get an 11 and re-roll the 17 to get a 12.

In the end I have: 9, 8, 12, 12, 11, 10, 11. Not bad. I take a look at the Warlord class and see that Charisma,

Spirit and Wisdom are its prime abilities so I decide to give her...

Spirit 12

Muscle 9

Intellect 8

Wisdom 11

Dexterity 10

Constitution 11

Charisma 12

3.) Choose a Level. Our adventure module says it is for levels 4 to 7. I roll a 1d12 and a 2 turns up. That puts her at 4th level. This gives her a +4 class bonus which I scribble on the sheet.

It also gives her four extra ability points. I don't like that Intellect and increase it one point. Warlords are basically fighters so I send her to the gym for two more points of Muscle, and lastly one more point of Charisma.

Spirit 12

Muscle 11

Intellect 9

Wisdom 11

Dexterity 10

Constitution 12

Charisma 13

It takes 20,000 XP to reach 4th level. This I write in near the bottom of her calling info.

4.) Hit Points. Warlord provides a base 6 hit points. She has Spirit 12, Muscle 11 and Constitution 12. This translates to $6 + 4 + 2 + 4 = 16$ hit points.

With a pen I draw rings around 16 circles. Split in half makes 8 so I count back eight circles from the end and put a slash between the 8th and 9th circles. I cut eight in half and count back four circles to put another slash between the 12th and 13th circles.

For Stun and Rege, 16 divided by 5 is 3.

5.) Secondary Abilities. For secondary abilities, Agility and Throw all use $Mus + Dex / 2$. That's easy enough, just remember to round down, $11 + 10 = 21 / 2 = 10$. Melee uses $Mus + Mus + Dex / 3$ which is $11 + 11 + 10 = 32 / 3 = 10$.

Ranged uses Dex + Wis / 2 which is $10 + 11 = 21 / 2 = 10$.

Luck uses Cha + Wis / 2. That is $13 + 11 = 24 / 2 = 12$.

Warlord is a fighting class. From it she gets a full +4 class bonus for Melee, Ranged and Throw.

6.) Equipment. From the Warlord class description I quickly jot down its list of equipment on the back of her sheet. The numbers before the periods are their weights in pounds.

Sword 4. Dagger 1. Chain Hauberk 12. Medium Shield 6.
Helmet 2. Cloak 3. Leather Boots 3. Heavy Gloves 2.
Money Pouch .1. Signal Whistle .1. Backpack 2*. Leather
Sack .5*. Flint & Tinder .5*. Whetstone .5*. Dry
Rations 7*. Waterskin 6*.
Total Wt: 49

Pack Wt: 16

She has Muscle 11 and this gives her Packing 40, Lugging 80, Trudging 120 and Straining 160. Carrying 49 pounds leaves her packing, which means no sprinting unless she decides to drop her pack. As a hindrance she writes in Bulk NS/0 for no sprinting or zero if she drops her pack.

The Chain Hauberk has Armor 5. The Medium Shield has Armor 4. On the front of her sheet I pencil in Armor 9 (5). The (5) being her armor sans shield.

For starting coin she gets 40 iron pieces per level. This gives her 160 iron which she changes into 6 silver and 10 irons. Ten percent of this gives her a BET of \$16.

7.) Attacks. Under Attacks I write in entries for her weapons. Sword, dagger and shield are all melee weapons so they get a Hit 14 from her Melee ability.

Sword. Hit 14. Damage 1d8s.

Dagger. Hit 14. Damage 1d4p. Balanced.

Medium Shield. Hit 14. Damage 1d6b. Slow.

8.) Magic. Warlords have no magical abilities so we skip this step.

9.) Armor Class. And her ACs? Warlord does have FAC in its class bonus list so...

FAC = Agility 10 + Warlord 4

SAC = Luck 12

AC = 14 / 12

10.) Movement. Warlord has Walk 4 and she receives no agility bonus.

11.) Alignment. She's one of the good guys. I draw a circle around the G with a dot above it.

12.) Languages. With an Intellect of 9 she speaks Common and cannot read or write, at least not complex things. I write this in under her class info.

13.) Personality. Let's see, 2 positive traits, 1 neutral and 1 negative. I pick...

Brave

Bodacious

Relentless

Instigator

14.) Name the Character. Always the hardest part. She needs a name. I want to call her Morgan but Morgan sounds like a guy's name. How about Megan? *Megan Ironblade*. A little too on the nose? *Megan Brightblade*. A little too bright and shiny? How about *Megan Steelblade*? Not bad.

I riffle through my collection of fantasy character images and come up with one in a chainmail dress with sword and shield, as well as a bow and quiver. *I'll have to go back and give her a bow*. She has this huge 1980's lion mane of hair and, wait. Hmmm....

Megan Steellion? Megan Stellion? Not bad. *Megan Steelion?* That's it! Right there. She'll probably pronounce it *Steel-ion*, but basically its *Steellion* without the annoying double e's and double l's right next to each other. *Megan Steelion*. I like that. I think our party has just found its new leader.

[sheet image]

Action

The game begins. The DM tells you what kind of a mess your characters have gotten themselves into and you - *the Dragonhead Bangers* - carry it forward from there. You tell the DM what your characters are doing. You speak on your character's behalf. The DM listens to what you have to say and tells you what comes of it.

Most of the time, if what you are doing sounds reasonable enough you just do it. You cross the bridge. You peek around the corner. You jiggle the door handle to see if it is unlocked.

Ability Checks. Other times the DM will ask you for an **Ability Check**. *You do not use your abilities to do things.* Instead, you do things and we check your abilities to see if your character can do the thing you are trying to do.

Megan jiggles the door handle on the back of the wizard's guild to see if it is locked. Sneaking into the wizard's guild late at night? Probably not a good idea, but that is what our party is doing.

There are three characters in this party. Ralph Cabbagehammer a dwarven rogue, Grudge Orcslayer a dwarven warrior, and Megan Steelion its leader.

Most examples in this book are written in dialog, filling us in on what is actually being said at the table. Observations of the game mechanics are kept in parentheses (like so).

DM: You jiggle the door handle to find it is locked.

Megan: Ralph? Think you can open it?

Ralph: I don't know. I crouch down to take a look.

DM: Well, it looks pretty high-end, not your normal house door lock by any means. Do you have your lock picks on you?

Ralph: Indeed I do.

DM: Alright, if you want to try it, give me a Dex check.

Hard & Easy. If the DM describes a check as Hard or Easy, this is a way of talking in numbers without having to mention any. Each Hard puts a -2 on the check. Every Easy gives it a +2. While there is no limit to how hard or easy a check can be, rarely does it go beyond six points in either direction.

Triple Easy = +6

Double Easy = +4

Easy = +2

Hard = -2

Double Hard = -4

Triple Hard = -6

Talk it over with your DM. If you can think of some interesting or innovative way to make an action easier the DM might just decide to let you off easy.

Class Bonus. When doing something a member of your class should know something about you get its class bonus. If the class only half covers the activity you only get half its bonus. With class bonuses, it is up to you to know what your character class is good for, tell it to the table and bring it into play.

Ralph: I'm going to use my rogue's ability to open locks. That gives me a +3 (which is Ralph's class bonus in Rogue). I have Dex 11 so it's a 14, not bad.

DM: Okay, but wait! Just as you kneel down to do this, the sky above you breaks open with a torrential downpour. That combined with the dark night makes it a *double hard* task to do.

Ralph: Double hard! (the -4 of the double hard brings his 14 down to 10)

Grudge: *Something doesn't want us to go in there.*

Megan: I drape my cloak over Ralph to keep the rain off of him.

Grudge: And I hold the hooded lantern steady and close to the lock to give him some light.

DM: Ok, that does help, somewhat. *Single hard.* And on a possibly unrelated note, you hear distant booted footsteps on the cobblestones.

Grudge: What do they sound like?

DM: Soldiers, possibly the night watch. At least they don't sound like they're in a hurry but with the rain coming down they are definitely not taking their time.

Ralph: How many chances do I have before they get here?

DM: (rolls a 1d6, a 1 turns up) Oh, I'd say one.

Ralph: *Cabbages!* Alright, *let's do this.* Any idea of what I need?

DM: No way to know until you try. And those boots are tromping ever closer.

Ralph: Ok. I've got Dex 11, +3 for the class, -2 for the rain, a total of 12.

DM: Roll the dice.

Risk Roll. Once you finish modifying your score, cap it with a **Risk Roll** by rolling a **d20** and **d6** at the same time. The d20 is called the *Sign Die* and it tells us what the d6 or *Risk Die* turns into.

20: Critical

11: Bonus

2: Penalty

1: Stumble

If the d20 rolls a 17 and the d6 a 4? That's a +4 bonus. If the d20 had rolled a 7 and the d6 a 4? That's a -4 penalty.

Basically, if the sign die rolls a double-digit number it's a bonus while a single-digit is a penalty, with the exception of 10 which you just have to watch out for. If you bothered to make "True Sign Dice" then any + sign is a bonus and a - sign is a penalty.

Crits & Stumbles. Rolling a 20 on the sign die is a Critical. It **doubles** the bonus of the risk die. Rolling a 1 is a Stumble. It doubles the penalty.

Strength. Add everything together and that is the **Strength** of your action. Strength is a measure of performance. Where an ability score gives us your character's potential, strength tells us what you actually did with it.

Success. How good is your strength? To find out we take it to the Success Table.

50: 9 Mind-Blowing

45: 8 Stellar

40: 7 Amazing

35: 6 Fantastic

30: 5 Incredible

25: 4 Excellent

20: 3 Terrific

15: 2 Great

10: 1 Average

5: ½ Little

1: 0 Fail

0: X Crash!

A Success is a count and a description. A strength of 17 creates two successes and is a Great action. A Great is often called a Double because it does double damage in combat.

Little Success. Although called a success, the little success is a murky area straddling success and failure. If you were jumping a ravine, a little success would leave you dangling by your fingertips on the other side.

Crash! A Crash happens any time your strength drops to **zero or less**. You fail and some horrendous unexpected calamity strikes your character. What actually happens is left to the DM to either consult one of the game's many crash tables or simply dream something up.

Effects. While the impact of a success can be guessed at, scattered around the game are various **Effects** tables like this one which tells us how to handle diving for cover to reduce the damage taken from an explosion.

Diving For Cover

Check: Agility

5: Take no damage.

3: Take quarter damage.

1: Take half damage.

½: Damage remains the same.

0: Damage increases by half.

X: Double Damage!

First you get a title and the ability to be checked. Following it is a threshold table of effects and the successes they start at. The top effect applies to that success and everything above it, so any check doing 5 or more successes will cause the character to take no damage. A zero is a Fail and may not be there unless the fail has something special worth mentioning. An X is a Crash and even more rare.

Try Hard. Characters are always trying to get things done but sometimes they need to try harder. Before rolling the dice, tell the table you are *Trying Hard*, *Harder* or your *Hardest*. Mark down the wear damage this does and add dice to your roll.

Try Hard = 1 wear, add 1 die.

Try Harder = 2 wear, add 2 dice.

Try Hardest = 3 wear, add 3 dice.

Add sign dice to get it right and risk dice to do better. When adding risk dice always add the next die in line. So the base roll uses a d6. Add one risk die and you roll a d6 and d8. Add two risk dice and you roll d6, d8 and d10. Try your hardest, adding nothing but risk dice, and you roll a d6, d8, d10 and d12.

Roll the dice all at once and ignore everything but the **biggest** rolls. If you try harder and roll d20, d20, d6 and d8 and the dice respectively roll 7, 16, 5 and 8? We ignore the 7 and 5 and use the 16 and 8 to create a +8 bonus.

Rolling more than one **20** on the sign dice adds another instance of the risk die to your total. Had you rolled 20, 20, 5 and 8? The first 20 doubles the 8 to +16. The second 20 adds another 8 for a whopping +24. Sorry, but it would not double the +16 to an earth-shaking +32.

Rolling more than one **1** does the same. Roll 1, 1, 5 and 8 and the first 1 creates a -8 that doubles to -16. The second 1 adds another -8 for a total of -24.

Merlins. *Don't like what you rolled?* If you have any of the gold coins known as Merlins you can spend one and make the roll again. This can be done up to **three times** per action. With every re-roll the previous roll is lost. Merlins can overturn a failure but they cannot stop a crash.

Ralph: Hmm. (Ralph picks up the d6 and a d20. This seems like a good time for something more.) I Try Hard to get it right (he marks down a point of damage and picks up another d20. *Shake Shake Shake.* The dice hit the table with a 1 and 3 on the sign dice and a 4 on the risk die. A -4! This brings his 12 down to 8 and a little success. Ralph looks uneasily at the DM. The DM looks uneasily at Ralph).

Ralph: Heh. Heh. (Ralph tosses a merlin into the discard bowl and tries again. This time the sign dice roll 9 and 14. The risk die rolls a 6 for a +6 bonus) Yes! An 18.

DM: A great success! The lock pops open and the door effortlessly slides inwards. A darkened room awaits beyond it.

Megan: Everyone, quick, inside before the night watch gets here.

DM: You all hustle in out of the rain, presumably closing the door behind you (no one speaks up, so it happens). Just as the door closes shut an armed contingent of guards carrying torches goes marching past.

Ralph: Whew! I look around the room. What do I see?

DM: You find yourself in a parlor of sorts. You know this because candles all around the room suddenly burst alight and you find yourselves standing before a wizard. Complete with cloak and staff and metal skullcap, he doesn't look happy to see you and yet he doesn't seem perturbed either.

"You could have knocked," he says, with a completely straight face.

DM Fiat. While events pertaining to your characters should follow the rules, outside of them anything can happen. A dragon and an efreet can fight for hours on end without a single die being rolled and yet the outcome is completely legit.

If the DM says it happens, it does so.

This is known as **DM Fiat**. In the example above, the wizard Zothabar uses magic to cause some candles to burst alight. This is a minor feat of magic that any wizard of his stature should be able to perform. If the characters were to try it a spell would need to be cast and the dice rolled to see how they fared, but since Zothabar is one of the DM's creatures and the action will in no way impact the characters we just let it happen.

DM & The Dice. The same goes for the DM's use of the dice. Most of the time the DM will roll for creatures just the way you roll for characters, but as the number of creatures increases the DM may change the way the dice are rolled to speed things up.

Group rolling is where the DM makes one risk roll and lets it be used by a bunch of creatures who are all doing something at the same time.

Middle rolls are used to skip rolling for damage. Basically the middle of the roll is used, aka *the best that could be rolled cut in half*. With a 1d8+4 the best roll is a 12 so the middle is a 6.

All of this is DM Fiat. While it may not seem very exciting, it helps immensely when three hundred goblins storm the castle gates.

Character Tables & Notes. You may have noticed that there are four pages to the character sheet PDF. These are designed to be printed on the fronts and backs on two sheets of paper. The first sheet is your character sheet. The second is the **Tables & Notes** page. Most of it is space

for writing down notes, but in the margins are the tables mentioned in this section.

The idea is that you play with the Tables page lying under your character sheet and just off to the side so you can see the tables and your character sheet at the same time.

[image]

Challenges

With a check we simply want to know how well you did. With a challenge we want to see how you did against a force that is opposing you. Trying to cause something to happen puts you on **Offense**. Trying to stop that thing from happening puts you on **Defense**. Where the two collide we get a challenge often phrased as **Offense vs Defense**.

Hit vs AC, Muscle vs Dexterity, and Magic vs Hard Spirit are all challenges with the offense on the left and the defense on the right. Notice the last one has a Hard tacked onto it to make the challenge hard for the defender.

Victory! Each side makes a check and we subtract the defense from the offense. The result is its **Challenge Strength** and it determines the offense's success if any.

40: 9 Mind-Blowing

35: 8 Stellar

30: 7 Amazing

25: 6 Fantastic

20: 5 Incredible

15: 4 Excellent

10: 3 Terrific

5: 2 Great

0: 1 Average

-5: ½ Little

Essentially, the offense needs to roll the same strength as the defense or better to make something happen, but if you come within five points of doing so you still score a little success.

Defeat & Failure. Roll less than a little success and that is a defeat. In an effects table its line starts with a **D**. Defeat is not the same thing as Failure. You failed to beat the opposition but you did not fail to commit your action.

Failures and Crashes still happen but they happen before the challenge when you roll up a strength of 4 or less.

So when a spell-caster casts a spell that is defeated by the creature it's been cast upon? The spell is still cast. It went off without a hitch. However, if the spell caster rolled a strength of 4 or less then the spell cast fails and the caster forgets the spell and cannot cast it again.

Beat & Defeat. Another way to know you are dealing with a challenge is through the words **Beat** and **Defeat**. When called to beat a strength that puts you on offense. Defeating it puts you on defense. Think *Defeat = Defense*.

Saving Throws. A saving throw is a challenge where your character is stuck on defense. Most of the time a saving throw is not anything you do, it's what you are. It is a test of character. For this reason **Risk Rolling is optional** for defenders. The Offense should always risk roll their action but the defender may simply go with a score as is.

Much talking has happened since the party entered the Wizards Guild. In short, Zothabar wants them to seek out an old tomb rumored to be high in the snowy mountains and bring back a powerful sword known as the Dragonslayer. Megan and Ralph are all for it. Grudge is not. The bangers talk it over while walking to a tavern but Grudge will not budge leaving them stuck at a logger-head of indecision.

Grudge: I don't like it. Zothabar's up to something I just know it!

Ralph: Oh come on. They're mountains! We're dwarves. Mountains and dwarves. Dwarves and mountains. We go together like, like? Like Mountains! And Dwarves!

Megan: Come on Grudge, when was the last time you've even seen a crisp line of snow covered peaks beneath a perfectly blue sky?

Grudge: I'm not going.

Megan: Don't be such a wet blanket. We need you there. You're our muscle.

Grudge: (folds his arms over his chest) Nope! Not doing it. Uh-uh.

DM: I think you guys need a **Charisma vs Spirit** challenge (assuming Megan is on offense and Grudge on defense).

Megan: Can I use my class bonus with this?

DM: You are a Warlord.

Megan: (She takes this as a yes. Megan has Charisma 13 and Warlord +4. She risk rolls a +3) Strength of 20. *Defeat that!*

Grudge: I try my hardest to not agree with her (Grudge has Spirit 14. Even though they are just talking he marks down 3 points of wear damage and rolls d20, d20, d6, d8, d10 to a +8) 22! Forget it Megan. We're not going.

Megan: Oh come on. Why not? What do you have against it?

Grudge: Oh no, I won your Charisma challenge-

DM: (With a challenge we subtract the defense from the offense to find the success. Her 20 minus his 22 is a -2 and a little success.) Actually Grudge, she did score a little success.

Grudge: Fine! If you want me to go on some stupid frozen goose-chase, you've got to beat me on my own turf. *Arm wrestling!* (Grudge makes a muscle which bulges impressively)

Megan: I can't beat you at arm wrestling!

Ralph: *But I can.*

Checks & Challenges? Every now and then, especially when dealing with spells & powers you will come across something that is both a Check and a Challenge, such as the spell Illusion which people defend against using their Wisdom.

These are more check than challenge. The caster makes a check to see just how good an illusion they create. Then the on-lookers check their Wisdom to see if they can tell if it is a fake. The outcome of the Wisdom checks has no effect the success of the Illusion.

Competitions

In a competition everyone is on offense. Actions are made. Dice are rolled. Strengths are compared and the character creating the **greatest strength** wins it. If the competition can end in a tie then it does so. Otherwise the checks should be made again.

Unlike a challenge, typically **three** bouts are made and compared. This can represent anywhere from a few seconds to a few days depending on the nature of the competition itself. Try Hard may be used but only with those competitions where each round represents less than a day's worth of time.

With the cacophony of the tavern raging around them Grudge and Ralph lock fists. Ralph has Muscle 15. Grudge has Muscle 16. Characters don't know their own stats so while Grudge does have the advantage, it's not an obvious one. The DM sets them up with a best two out of three rolls competition. Ties are acceptable.

On the first roll Grudge rolls up a strength of 14. Ralph does the same. It's a tie. Their fists waver in the air.

On the second roll both try hard. Grudge rolls a 18. Ralph rolls a 19. Ralph wins it. Grudge's fist leans closer to the table.

On the third roll they grit their teeth and try their hardest. Ralph rolls a strength of 17. Grudge bombs with an 11.

Ralph: Yes! YES! YES! I slam his fist to the table, jump up and pound a flagon of ale in victory!!!

Grudge: I rub my sore wrist and contemplate a re-match.

Ralph: *Eat it Orcslayer!* We are going to the mountains!

Grudge: Alright, enough already.

DM: Okay, so while you've all been doing this, a bunch of orcs sitting at the bar spin around on their stools. One of them smacks the other on the shoulder with a pudgy porcine hand and says, "Ey! Clancy. Was it me or did dat rock-eater over dere just call the other one *Orcslayer?*"

Megan: *Uh-oh.*

Competitions can involve single characters or teams of characters. The three most common team configurations are the Tug-O-War, Star-Player and Weakest Link.

Tug-O-War. Here two teams of competitors directly face off against one another. Everyone on a side makes the same check, successes are added up and the side with the most success wins it.

The Star Player. Both sides make their checks but only the greatest strengths are compared. When more than one star player emerges, the team with the greatest number of them wins it.

The Weakest Link. The opposite of the star player. With a weakest link competition the side producing the worst strength (or the greatest number of worst strengths) loses.

Combat

In combat, characters and creatures do not take turns. Everyone goes all at once trying to beat each other to the punch. *Sometimes literally!* They declare what they are going to do with the next three seconds, a stint of time known as a **Round**. Dice are rolled simultaneously and whoever creates the greatest strength goes first. The second greatest goes second and so on with the least successful strength going last. This continues, round after round, until the fight is over.

Fast & Slow. Of course, some actions are faster than others. Those bearing the aspect **Fast** add 2 points to an action's strength. Those with a **Slow** subtract 2 points. These are only there for speed comparison. Once you go to use the action the strengths bounce back to normal.

Ranged & Melee. Simply put, a ranged attack will strike before a melee attack if the melee attacker needs to move to reach the ranged attacker. Otherwise they are treated as equals.

Combat Communication. An important point not to overlook is that each round is just **three seconds long**. This means that if you want to strategize your attack with the rest of your party you need to do it in-character and say only as much as can be said in three seconds. If you want to talk and attack at the same time your action will take a **Hit -2**.

You Snooze, You Lose. Even when your character is not doing anything, it is good to pay attention to what the rest of the table is doing and plan in advance. While there is no direct correlation between in-game time and time at the table, a ratio of **1 round to 1 minute** is not a bad place to start. This means that when given the chance to go you should not spend more than 1 minute of table time doing what you need to do.

Choke! Spend too much time trying to make up your mind and the DM may say - **you choked** - and skip your turn. Basically, you couldn't make up your mind and so your character couldn't either. *Those who hesitate are lost.*

Encounters. The entire fight we call an **Encounter**. This is not just a description but a very rough length of time equal to however long it takes or **10 minutes** for the characters in the game.

When you see a spell that describes its effects as lasting *1 Encounter* this means it will last for as long as you need it to or ten minutes. *Whichever comes first*. While it may be interesting to keep track of time during a game, most combat encounters will not last one minute let alone ten of them, but they all last one encounter.

Battles

When the number of combatants is small comparing strengths to see who goes first is fine, but this quickly grows unwieldy as numbers increase. A **Battle** is a form of combat where we divide everyone up into warring sides and the combat proceeds side by side.

Roll Initiative. The first thing that happens is a leader from each side enters a **Charisma Competition** to see who commands the battlefield. The side producing the greatest strength can choose to go first or force the other side to do so.

From there the battle goes **Side-By-Side** with every character on a side making their action for the round before the other side gets to go.

When your side attacks it doesn't matter who goes first since you are all working together to defeat the opposition. No attack order is needed, just go when it makes sense to.

Changing Command. Back and forth the tides of combat flow, round after round, until either the battle is won or a leader is knocked unconscious or worse. At that point a different character needs to step up and assume command, re-rolling Initiative for that side. If no one is willing then the group must rout, leaving the area as quickly as possible or surrendering if escape is impossible.

A Break in the Battle. A battle breaks when a round passes where no one on either side attacks. Should the battle suddenly re-ignite initiative should be rolled again.

Move!

When your side goes on offense, every character gets to make one action, typically this begins with movement and ends with an attack.

With miniatures your movement rate is the number of **Steps** you can move your mini. A character with Walk 4 can move 4

hexes across the battleboard. When not using miniatures, just imagine it as best as you can.

Running & Sprinting. Running will **double** your speed but bring a **-2** to your action. Sprinting **triples** it but brings a **-4**. Running and sprinting can be done with any form of movement even Swim, Fly or Dig.

Attack!

The number of attacks you can pack into your action depends on what is available to you. A character with a single weapon or two-handed weapon gets one attack per action.

Weapon & Shield. A character with a shield on one arm can do nothing with that arm except use it to defend oneself.

Weapon in Each Hand. A character with a weapon in each hand can attack once with each one. Either the weapon in your off-hand should roll a **d4 or less** for damage or both of your weapons should roll a **d6 or less** for damage. To do otherwise brings a **Hit -2** to the entire action. To make your attacks, **risk roll once** and use it with each weapon.

Creature Attacks. Creatures are often able to make multiple attacks, such as a dragon's *claw / claw / bite* attack. Like attacking with a weapon in each hand, **one risk roll** is made and used by every attack in the action.

Magic. Spells and powers are always a **single action**. Only one can be cast per round and the character can do nothing except move around while trying to bring the spell into existence.

Other Options. Do realize that there is more you can do than just chip away at your opponent's hit points. Anything you can imagine fitting into three seconds of time is on the table. How to handle this is between you and the DM.

Defend!

Combat is a **Hit vs AC** challenge. **FAC** is used against the attacks you see coming and **SAC** against those you don't. Many spells are defended against using an ability such as Spirit or Agility. If nothing is mentioned then AC is used.

Risk-Rolling AC? Unlike all other checks in the game, risk-rolling AC is optional. Most characters and creatures skip it and use their AC as is.

Doing Damage. When an attack hits, roll its damage die, multiply it by the attack's success, and tell the table what happened. A sword is a sharp weapon doing 1d8s for damage. With a great attack and a damage roll of 5 it does 10 points of sharp damage, aka 10 *Sharp*.

Taking Damage. The first thing that damage hits is your armor. Subtract from it that amount. If this reduces the damage to zero no damage is taken!

Wear Damage. Wear damage is exhaustion. It is a character holding ones own against the force of the blow. You pencil it in with slashes through the hit point circles. If 6 points of damage slips past your armor you slash six circles.

Tear Damage. Tear damage is actual physical damage and it depends on the blow's damage type. These you slash in the opposite direction, X-ing out wounds which have already taken wear damage.

Pierce = 1 tear for every 1 point of wear.

Sharp = 1 tear for every 2 point of wear.

Mixed = 1 tear for every 3 points of wear.

Blunt = 1 tear for every 4 points of wear.

Impact = 1 tear for every 6 points of wear.

A blow doing 6 points of Piercing damage would do 6 tears of damage. A Sharp attack does 3 tears of damage. A Mixed attack does 2 tears. A Blunt or Impact attack does just 1 tear of damage. If no damage type is mentioned then the attack does all wear and no tear.

Filled in, an attack doing Sharp 6 would look like this, along with one point of scar damage from a previous encounter.



Like Lightbulbs. When it comes to wear and tear, think of hit points as lightbulbs. A healthy hit point shines brightly. Wear damage causes the bulb to dim. Tear damage

whacks it with a hammer. That bulb is not going to burn again until it's been replaced. How many clerics does it take to screw in a light bulb?

Hopefully just one.

Stun. If a **single blow** does more **Wear** damage than a defender's **Stun** point that character will lose their next immediate action to recovering from the blow. Immediate means that the action may be something you have already rolled for but have yet to carry out. *Stun interrupts everything.* Spells being cast will be lost. If a character is desperately holding onto something they suddenly let go.

Knocked Down. If a single blow does **double** the stun point or more, or if someone has been stunned and is stunned again before they can recover, they will be **knocked off their feet**. On the ground they defend with **SAC**. They will need to spend one action recovering from the stun as well as another getting back on their feet.

Creatures that cannot be knocked down, such as an ooze, will simply be stunned twice. Flying creatures will plummet until they recover.

Damage States. Remember the lines between your hit points? These separate the bar into three damage states: Scratched, Injured and Fubar. The state you are in depends on the amount of **tear** damage taken.

Scratched. Your character is getting dinged up but it's not bad enough to effect performance.

Injured. Your character is starting to feel the damage. A **Damaged -2** hindrance should be taken to all checks. Sprinting is no longer an option.

Fubar. The character is seriously hurt. A **Damaged -4** is taken by all checks. Neither running nor sprinting is possible.

Report! After a hit lands, people will want to know how your character is doing. Characters cannot see their own stats so they can't tell you how many hit points they have left, but it will be pretty obvious when a character has been stunned or injured.

If you have just changed damage states or been stunned or knocked down, tell the table about it. For a knocked down character, knock over their mini.

Sacrificial Armor. Instead of taking tear damage, you can opt to let your armor take it instead. Simply remove the tear damage from your armor value. Your armor won't protect you

as well in the future but it may save you from dying in the present.

While pieces of damaged armor will drop off a character. You will never lose enough to significantly change its weight, not unless you voluntarily do something like throw away a now worthless shield.

Where this armor damage actually goes (suit, shield, helmet, etc) is left up to you to figure out on a piece by piece basis. In the heat of the moment, just record the armor damage on the front of your sheet. Update your equipment list when you get the chance.

Half-Damage? In combat the Little success is ignored. Roll your opponent's AC or better and the attack hits otherwise it misses.

The reason is because most damage rolls once split in half are probably going to be absorbed by your opponent's armor anyway. This makes the little success little more than a time-wasting nuisance.

When fighting someone who isn't armored or when wielding a weapon that naturally does a staggering amount of damage then you can bring the little success back into play, otherwise it is best left out.

Unconsciousness & Death

Take more wear damage than you have hit points and it will knock your character unconscious. Continue marking the excess damage using slashes through the extra silver circles on your sheet. Your character will wake up once this excess damage has been recovered as well as 1 wear point in your hit point circles.

Take more tear damage than you have hit points and you die. Your character is gone. Time to roll up a new one and jump back in the game. Your next character may be of any class except the one you just played. Its level should be one level less than your previous character unless that level was zero.

Sample Combat

DM: The noise in the tavern dies down as a bunch of orcs get off their stools and sidle up to your table. "Ey!" says the biggest one of the bunch, "my friend here tells me that one of yousall is named Orcslayer. Yoink! Is dat right? Yoink! Yoink!"

Grudge: I stand up out of my chair and dig my thumbs in behind my belt. "Yeah, that's right. *It's an honorific.* You gotta problem with that? *Pignout?*"

DM: The orc chortles to his friends, "heh, hey he called me Pignout," and turns and decks you with a right hook.

Grudge: Yeah? Well, before he can do that I punch him in the gut.

Ralph: And I slam one of them over the head with my ale flagon.

DM: Alright, alright, make your hit rolls.

Ralph: Um, I don't have Flagon on my character sheet.

DM: That's fine, just use your Melee score and for damage? I'll say a Flagon does 1d4 blunt.

Grudge: (Grudge's punch attack has Hit 17. He rolls. The sign die rolls a 20. The risk die rolls a 4 which doubles to +8) Yes! *Strength of 25!*

DM: (Orcs have Hit 12. The DM risk rolls a +5.) Strength of 17.

Ralph: (Ralph has Hit 15 and risk rolls a +4) 19.

DM: Ok, Grudge hits first. These orcs have AC 10 so that's (25 - 10 = 15) Wow. That's excellent. A quadruple!

Grudge: (Punches do 1d4i for damage and Grudge rolls a 3) Twelve points of fist right to the pork belly!

DM: (Orcs have 10 hit points and 7 armor points. $12 - 7 = 5$. The DM marks down five points of damage. Five is double the orc's stun point of 2 so the orc is both stunned and knocked off its feet. Grudge forgot to mention the damage type so the DM doesn't bother with tear damage) fff-WHAPP! You hit him hard. Something like ale mixed with whatever he had for dinner goes flying out of his snout and he is lifted off the ground and laid out flat. Ralph?

Ralph: Strength of 19.

DM: ($19 - 10 = 9$ and a great success) That's a double.

Ralph: (Rolls a 3 on the 1d4) 6 blunt.

DM: (Six points isn't enough to breach the orc's armor so no damage is done) Your flagon smashes on the orc's helmet leaving you with just a handle in your hand. He's not damaged or even stunned, but he is looking pretty perturbed.

Megan: So, how many orcs come in a bunch?

DM: Six to be exact.

Megan: I think we need to turn this into a battle. I flip the table over and shout, "ATTACK!"

DM: *Roll for Initiative.*

Megan: (Megan is a Warlord. She is made for this with Charisma 13 and a +4 class bonus. She risk rolls a -6) An 11? *Stupid dice!*

DM: (The DM marks one of the orcs as its leader. Orcs have a charisma of 8. She risk rolls a +3 for it.) The orc leader also has a strength of 11. It's a tie so roll again (remember, initiative is a Charisma competition).

Megan: (Megan rolls again, this time with a +6) Yes! POOM! 23!

DM: (Knowing there is no way the orcs can match it, the DM doesn't even bother) Alright, you guys go first.

Grudge: Is there another orc near me?

DM: They are literally crowding around you. *Specifically you.*

Grudge: I haul off and hit another one (he rolls a +1) with an 18.

DM: (18 - 10 = 8) A double.

Grudge: (rolls a 1 on the 1d4) Eh. 2 points impact.

DM: It just bounces off his jowls.

Ralph: I step in to cover Grudge's back and take a swing at whoever's closest (Ralph rolls a -1). Strength of 14 (he remembers that the Orcs have AC 10 so that's a hit. He rolls for damage) Impact 4.

DM: Your fist also bounces off his armor.

DM: Megan. You're left.

Megan: Know what? I *try hard* to roundhouse one with a kick (Megan marks down a point of wear damage for the try hard and rolls a +7). Yes! Twenty-one! (It's a triple. She rolls 1d4+1i for 4 points of damage). *Twelve-freaking-impact!*

DM: Damn. (12 - 7 = 5 wear. This isn't enough to knock the orc out but it does knock him down.) Your boot connects with his very surprised snout and he is lifted up and sent spinning to the ground.

DM: And now it's their turn. Two of them are struggling to get back up, and two of them come at Grudge with fists flying. Let's see (she risk rolls for both of them), one hits with a 15 and the other an 8.

Grudge: (Grudge has AC 13.) That first one's a single.

DM: (flips a four-sider) 2 impact.

Grudge. (Without his shield Grudge has Armor 5) And that doesn't do squat. That in fact tickles.

DM: Another orc picks up a chair and bashes it over Ralph's head with a (rolls a +5) 17.

Ralph: (Ralph has AC 15) That's a single.

DM: The chair is basically a two-handed club, so I'll say it does 1d6+2 for damage. Take (rolls the dice) 7 blunt.

Ralph: *Cabbages!* (Ralph has Armor 3 which reduces the attack to 4 points wear and 1 point of tear. He marks it on his sheet). That's gonna leave a mark, still not enough to stun me though.

DM: The last orc? The orc leader looks around somewhat nervously and instead of attacking he reaches back and grabs the battle axe slung over his shoulder, and that is his action for the round. (The old round ends and a new round begins).

Megan: Oh, so that's how it's going to be, is it? *I draw my sword.*

DM: Okay, but just as you do so what looks like a crackling cavalcade of purple lightning bolts shoots over your shoulders to wrap around the creature, pick him up and slam him back over the bar. A bunch of bottles smash, chime and tinkle as they fall to the floor. And that orc is out of it. (More DM Fiat, this time using the spell Arcane Lasso).

A new guy has just joined your party.

Ralph: Is it Zothabar? The guy we talked to at the Wizard's Guild?

DM: You should be so lucky. This guy's name is Odd Kalis. He's a 3rd level Wizard sent by Zothabar to assist you on your journey.

Grudge: *Or keep an eye on us.*

DM: Kalis is a bit on the puny side, kinda weak and wiry like an old hippie, but he's got some interesting spells. Who wants to run him? (The DM

puts Odd Kalis's character sheet on the table for anyone interested.)

Miniatures

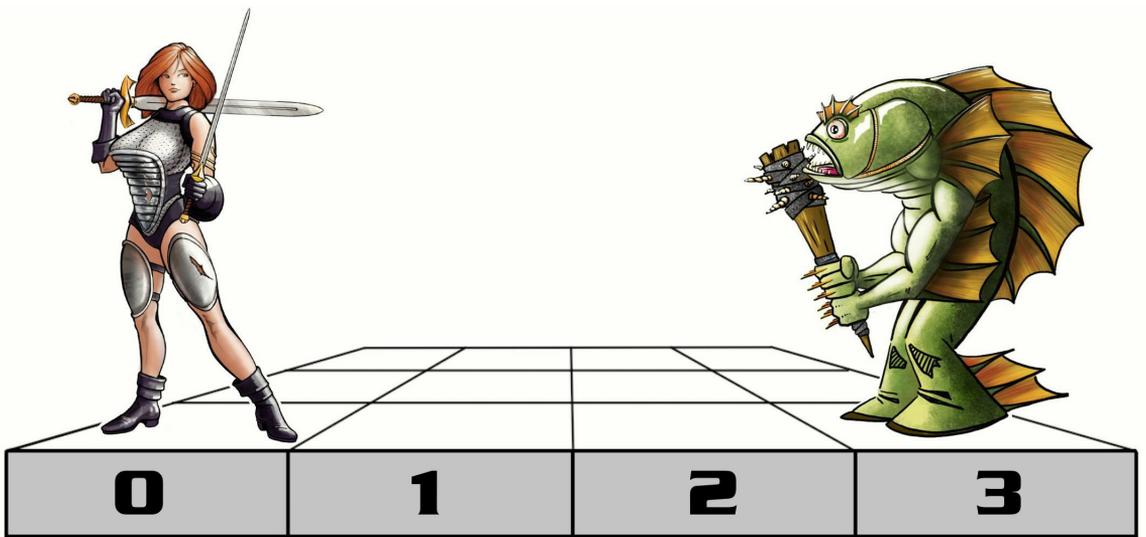
You do not need miniatures to play Dragonhead. They are entirely optional yet can also be quite helpful, even if you only use them to keep track of who is fighting who. For serious miniatures combat, here are a couple of things you might want to have on hand.

- **Miniatures.** Paper, Plastic or Metal. One for each character and creature involved.
- **A Vinyl Battle Mat.** These come covered in 1-inch squares or hexes and are designed to be drawn on using Dry Erasable Markers.
- **Dry Erasable Markers.** For drawing walls and other shapes on the battle mat. Do not use permanent markers. *Sharpies are forever!*
- **A Roll of Paper Towels.** For cleaning off the mat after a battle.
- **A Small Measuring Tape.** For making quick distance measurements.
- **A Mini-Mag Light.** For lighting up areas.

The Step. The base measurement used by the game is the Step. This is a square roughly 3 to 3.3 feet per side. Three feet is the distance a typical adult human can cover with a single step which makes it relatable. The fuzzy 0.3 margin lets us assume that nine steps can fit inside a ten foot square on a larger map.

Turning. A character traveling normally can turn up to **90 degrees** per step without problem. Turning more than that will cost you an **extra step** of movement. Running characters can turn up to 45 degrees per step. Sprinting characters can do the same but only on every other step.

Measuring Distance. To measure the distance between two characters, start counting with the step adjacent to the one you are in and stop with the step adjacent to the one your opponent occupies. In the example below, our sword maiden is standing 2 steps away from the troglodyte.



This is where having a pocket tape measure comes in handy. Instead of counting squares you can easily measure any distance at any angle as long as you remember that 1 inch equals 1 step.

Melee Reach. A melee attack can either reach its opponent or it cannot. Most can only hit a creature standing in an adjacent step. If the attack has the **Reach** aspect, such as a spear, then it can reach over that adjacent step to hit an opponent. If the Reach has a number attached to it, such as the Halberd's Reach 2 or the Lance's Reach 3, that is the number of steps that can stand between a character and its opponent.

In the example above neither the sword maiden nor the trogg can reach each other. If our sword maiden were wielding a spear with Reach she could strike into step 2 but still not reach the trogg. If she were using a halberd with Reach 2 then she could attack the trogg.

Ranged Attacks. Range tells us just how far a missile attack can hit unhindered. When using minis it is easiest to use a measuring tape to see whether something is in or out of range. While you can measure steps as inches it is often easier to simply measure feet:

- Point-Blank = $\frac{1}{2}$ '
- Close = 1'
- Short = 2'
- Medium = 4'
- Long = 8'

When a target is out of range it can still be hit, but will take a -1 for being out of range and then another -1 for every six inches out of range.

So a Close attack can hit anything up to 1 foot away. It will take a -1 after that point. This increases to -2 at a foot and a half, -3 at two feet, -4 at two and half feet and so on.

Area Attacks. To find what has been hit by an area attack, find the point of detonation, measure on the battle mat the size of its radius (always count horizontally or vertically, never diagonally) and hold the flashlight above the battle mat, moving it up or down until the edge of the beam hits the outer edge of the blast. Any mini caught in the light will be hit.

For cone shaped blasts, lay the flashlight on its side behind the point of detonation and shine it forward. Mini-mag lights are good for this because they are bright, portable and come with a head that can be focused into a tighter or wider beam.

Adventure

By now you should have a good idea of how the game is played. On the whole, we like to leave as much to the imagination as possible, but there are a number of situations that do well with some definition. This is what the Adventure section is for.

As has been said before and cannot be said enough - *you don't need to know every rule to play the game* - you just need a general understanding of how Dragonhead is played as well as a willingness to look things up when needed.

No Do-Overs. With this said, it is good to keep in mind that the game only moves forward. If you realize that you should have had a Charging bonus and it might have caused the battle to go differently? *No, we cannot go back and do it again.* Just try to remember next time. Often through hindsight is how much of this is learned.

The same goes for the Dragonhead approach to rules in general. If you honestly forget about something and no one notices then the game moves on. You are still playing the game right, just not as well as it could be played.

Ammo

Weapons that use ammo will eventually run out and need to be reloaded. Those that have the **Reload** aspect will need to spend that many turns reloading the weapon before it can be fired again. Weapons which use ammo but do not have a Reload time are known as **Load & Fire** weapons. These you load and fire all in one action.

Ammo Checks. By all means you should keep track of your ammo. Otherwise the DM might just ask you to make a **Luck** check, usually at the worst possible moment. With an Average or better success you have **half** your ammo count left. A Fail means you're out. A Little leaves you with just one shot. *Make it count!*

Area Attacks

An area attack is one that floods a space with damage, such as a dragon's breath weapon or a wizard's fireball. The check is made. Damage is rolled and multiplied by its

success. Anyone caught in that area will be hit by the same amount of damage. Armor does protect against it.

Dive For Cover. Characters may attempt to reduce this damage by diving for cover, a check made hard or easy depending on how much cover there is to dive behind. The check is completely **optional** and most creatures will not take it.

Diving For Cover

Check: Agility

5: Take no damage.

3: Take quarter damage.

1: Take half damage.

½: Damage remains the same.

0: Damage increases by half.

X: Double Damage!

Area Shapes. Areas come in different shapes identified by a term such as Cone or Wall. When looking down from above...

Blast = a full circle.

Stream = a 15 degree angle.

Cone = a 90 degree angle.

Wall = a 180 degree angle.

Pour = a 270 degree angle.

Dome = a bell jar or bubble.

Cloud = a projected full circle.

Area Size. Attached to the shape is its **blast radius**. This is the number of steps the area radiates out from the step in which it detonated. For example:

48: Massive

24: Huge

12: Big

6: Large

3: Medium

1: Small

0: Dinky.

An explosion with Blast 0 is like a firecracker. It hits anything occupying the same step as itself. A larger explosion with Blast 1 will hit that step and every adjacent step. Something with Blast 6 will hit the step it goes off in as well as 6 steps in every direction. That is a blast diameter of 13 steps or 39 feet!

With characters straddling the edge of a blast use a **Luck** check to see if they are in it or not. An average or better success means they avoided it.

Cloud Attacks. A cloud attack is a full circle explosion except that instead of billowing out around the point of detonation this one projects one length of its radius forward and billows out around that point. Doing so protects whatever created the cloud from being hit by it.

[image]

Domes. A dome is essentially a sphere whose sides drape to the ground. It covers everything as tall as the sphere as well as standing in the circle it makes on the ground. It even covers the ground beneath the character's feet.

Stream Attacks. When using miniatures, a streaming attack shoots forward in a line, hitting everything it crosses paths with. When not using miniatures a streaming attack can hit **2 different targets per success**.

Detonated Explosions. When a character simply detonates an explosive device and has nothing to do with the size or the intensity of the blast. It does **one success of damage**.

The success the character rolls for may help determine if the explosive goes where the character wants when thrown or detonates on time when timed, but it does not multiply the amount of damage done by the blast.

If the character fails with the detonation then there is a **25%** chance it is a dud that does not go off. Otherwise they blow themselves up. With a crash they definitely blow themselves up.

Aspects

Aspect tags are short reminders of how an attack works. These show up in the Aspects section of an Attacks list. Most but not all are combat related.

2hds. These weapons either take two hands to use or the character's whole body. Basically, you can't use your hands while using it.

Ammo. The number following this tag is the number of shots a weapon can fire before needing a reload.

Armor. The armor value an item supplies.

Bastard. A bastard weapon is a one-handed weapon with an elongated grip that allows it to be used with either one hand or two. When used with two hands it gains **Damage +2**. When a non-bastard weapon is used with two hands it only gains Damage +1.

Nearly any one-handed weapon can be turned into a bastard weapon by lengthening its handle. This alteration increases its price by 25% (round to the nearest \$10). Be sure to attach the word **Bastard** to its name, such as **Bastard Sword** or **Bastard Mace**.

Weapons such as the **Spear** have **Bastard** as an aspect because they are made to be used one-handed but can easily be used with two.

Balanced. Melee weapons can be thrown at an opponent, but unless they are balanced for throwing (such as a dagger) they take a **Hit -2**. If a thrown weapon has no range attached to it, its range is **Close** for one-handed weapons and **Point-Blank** for two-handed weapons.

Def. Short for **Defense**, this tells us the ability to use when defending against a spell-like power.

Dif. Dif is short for **Difficulty**. Some weapons are just harder to use than others, such as the **Stone Sling**. This should be added to an attack's Hit modifier.

Dur. Dur is short for **Duration**. It is how long a spell lasts. When just a number it is a number of rounds. If a **ps** follows the number it stands for "per success." A spell with 5 ps is one that will last five rounds per success.

Conc means the spell will last as long as its caster continues to concentrate on making it last. Casting a different spell or making some other action will dismiss it. The caster can move around but that is it.

Enc means the spell will last for the length of the encounter or 10 minutes, whichever comes first.

Fast. These weapons are quicker than most. When comparing strengths to see who hits first they gain a **+2** but only for comparison. This does not change the actual strength of the attack.

Flexible. Weapons on a chain are designed to get around shields. They gain a **Hit +1** when used against an opponent who is defending with one.

Fire. This attack might set an opponent on fire. The creature should make a **Luck** check. Fail and **1d6b** damage will be taken every round. A Little success does **1d4b** instead. AC does not protect against it but stop, drop and roll might.

Great. Like **Bastard**, this aspect is normally found attached to the name of a weapon. It represents a one-handed weapon made bigger to deal more damage.

Gamewise you must use two hands to wield it and it gains **Damage +3**. The price increases by **50%**. It also gets the **Slow** and **2hds** aspects. If the weapon already has the Slow aspect it also takes a **Hit -2**. This is why Great Swords tend to be more popular than Great Broad Swords.

Range. Range is the number of steps a missile weapon can travel and still be able to hit its target without penalty.

Reach. These weapons have the benefit of reach. When comparing strengths to see who hits first they gain a **+2** but only for the comparison and only when first engaging an opponent. When a number follows the Reach tag, that extends its reach. See the *Miniatures* rules for an explanation.

Reload. This is the number of actions it takes to reload a weapon.

SEP. This stands for **Single Effect Power**. Each use of the power dismisses any previous cast you made of it. Staves to Snakes turns a staff into a snake. Cast it two times in a row and the snake caused by the first cast will turn back into a staff as the second one transforms.

Slow. These weapons are a bit slower than most. When comparing strengths to see who hits first they take a **-2** but only for comparison. It does not actually change the strength of the attack.

Time is the number of rounds it takes to bring a spell into existence. During this time the caster may do nothing but chant and dance and do whatever it takes to cast that spell. If the caster attempts to do anything else or is stunned during the cast the spell will be lost.

Touch. To use this power a character must physically touch what it effects.

Body Size

Characters and creatures come in a wide variety of sizes, to keep it under control we narrow this down to fourteen categories. The default is medium or *man-sized* and changes nothing. The others may have a dramatic effect on how characters and creatures operate.

Teeny	Mass 0.25. sHP: 0.4. sDMG -3. Dis 0.5.
Tiny	Mass 0.50. sHP: 0.6. sDMG -2. Dis 0.75.
Small	Mass 0.75. sHP: 0.8. sDMG -1. Dis 1.
Medium	Mass 1. sHP: 1. sDMG +0. Dis 1.

Large	Mass 1.5.	sHP: 1.25.	sDMG +1.	Dis 1.
Extra	Mass 2.	sHP: 1.5.	sDMG +2.	Dis 1.25.
Big	Mass 4.	sHP: 2.	sDMG +1d6.	Dis 1.5.
Huge	Mass 6.	sHP: 3.	sDMG +1d10.	Dis 2.
Massive	Mass 10.	sHP: 5.	sDMG +2d8.	Dis 4.
Humongous	Mass 20.	sHP: 10.	sDMG +2d10.	Dis 6.
Enormous	Mass 40.	sHP: 20.	sDMG +1d20.	Dis 8.
Gigantic	Mass 100.	sHP: 50.	sDMG +2d20.	Dis 12.
Titanic	Mass 200.	sHP: 100.	sDMG +3d20.	Dis 16.
Gargantuan	Mass 400.	sHP: 200.	sDMG +4d20.	Dis 20.

Mass. Mass is a multiplier which tells us how the creature relates to Medium. A tiny creature will have only half the mass of a medium-sized character. A huge one will have six times that mass.

Mass & Muscle. The strength of **muscle** checks should be effected by mass. A tiny character rolling up a muscle strength of 12 would actually produce a strength of 6. Meanwhile a huge creature doing the same would create a strength of 70. For obvious reasons, this should never be used with checks that do damage. Instead add sDMG to damage rolls.

Mass & Equipment. Mass is often used to size things up or down to fit a creature. A huge giant will carry a shield that is six times larger and heavier than a normal shield. Likewise your encumbrance thresholds should also be multiplied by mass.

Because it can be a pain multiplying the weight of every individual item you carry, try keeping all your normal equipment at normal medium weight and only multiply the total weight. Keep separate those items which have not been sized to fit your character and add them in afterward.

All equipment a character buys or acquires during character creation is assumed to have been sized to fit that character. In class descriptions equipment weights have been kept medium in size and the modified total is in parentheses.

sHP. sHP stands for **Size Hit Points**. It multiplies the amount of hit point damage a character can take as well as the damage one does to oneself with a minimum of 1 point.

When a Massive creature *Tries Hard* with a check, instead of taking 1 point of damage they take 5. When a Teeny creature does the same? $1 \times 0.4 = 0.4$. Of course, a 0.4 rounds down to 0, but there is a one point minimum which makes sure that it does one point of damage.

sDMG. sDMG stands for **Size Damage**. This is added to or subtracted from any damage dealing attack that a creature makes *before* success multiplies it. Small characters will take an sDMG penalty. This can never reduce the damage done by an attack to less than 1 point.

Dis. Dis is short for **Distance** and is a multiplier used when dealing with speed or distance. When a medium-sized breath weapon strikes? That has a 3 step radius. A tiny dragon's breath weapon would only strike a 2 step radius. Meanwhile a gargantuan dragon would strike a 60 step radius.

Hiding & Slip-Thru. Size will effect your character's ability to hide and slip through an area. However it only effects the first seven body sizes. Teeny: +6, Tiny: +4, Small: +2, Medium: +0, Large: -2, Extra: -4, Big: -6. Everything larger than Big will suffer a -6.

Size AC. Your body size will give you an AC bonus when fighting something larger than yourself. What you get depends on just how much larger your opponent is.

- 1 **Size** = AC +1.
- 2 **Sizes** = AC +2.
- 3 **Sizes** = AC +3.
- 4 **Sizes** = AC +4.

On your character sheet this is often written using just the first three letters of each size next to a bonus. A medium-sized character would have:

Size AC: Lar +1, Ext +2, Big +3, Hug +4.

Size AC is your responsibility to bring it into play. Forget to mention it and it doesn't happen.

Break Point

A Break Point or **BP** is the amount of damage it takes for a **single hit** to demolish an inanimate object or at least break it until it no longer functions. A vase with 1 bp will shatter after taking a single point of wear damage. Meanwhile a wrench with 12 bp you can hammer on endlessly

until a hit does 12 points of wear damage or more and breaks it.

Break point is a suggestion and never the rule since there are so many different ways in which something can be broken. Sometimes it is best to just use your imagination and listen to what it tells you.

Burst Attacks

A burst attack fires off a machine-gun like volley of missiles. Make the attack, roll for damage, and then roll the burst die to see how many missiles actually hit. Each shot will have to penetrate a character's armor separately.

Light = 1d4

Small = 1d6

Medium = 1d8

Large = 1d10

Heavy = 1d12

Huge = 1d20

For ammo purposes the number of shots fired is equal to the best number on the burst die. A medium burst fires off eight rounds.

Spreading the Burst. You may fan a burst out over an area to hit multiple targets but a penalty on the burst roll will be taken for the size of a spread.

Tight concentration (15° angle) = -1

Loose concentration (45° angle) = -2

Wide spread of fire (90° angle) = -3

If this penalty drops the burst roll to zero or less then the burst was spread too thinly and no shots hit anyone. Otherwise, divide the shots evenly among those in the area. Be sure to compare their ACs to your attack separately for each target. This will tell you how to multiply for damage.

DM: A pair of bugbears rush in out of the darkness, war hammers raised high over their heads to smash you flat.

Odd Kalis: I cast Magic Missile (Kalis only has 6 hit points. He knows he probably won't survive a hit from a bugbear, let alone two of them). No! Make that *Magic Salvo* and I fire off a Small Burst trying to hit both of them.

DM: Okay, well, they're standing side by side so I'll say that's a tight concentration.

Odd Kalis: (Kalis has a Hit 17 with Magic Missile) I try my hardest to make this work. (Kalis marks down three point of wear damage and picks up a d20, d6, d8, d10 and d12. With Magic Salvo a small burst creates a Hit -2 reducing his score to 15. The dice hit the table.) A -3? (Kalis tosses a merlin into the bowl and tries again) Come On....(the dice roll again) +9! Yes! Magic 24.

DM: The bugbears have AC 12 so that's a terrific success. A triple! Roll for your burst.

Odd Kalis: (A small burst with a tight concentration is a 1d6-1. A 6 turns up.) 6! I mean 5. And for damage. (Magic Missile does 1d6s) A 1? (he tosses another merlin into the bowl and rolls again) A 2? (he tosses another merlin into the bowl, that's his third merlin and the last one for this action) Come on now... A 6! Now that's more like it!

DM: Wow. So let me figure this all out. That's five missiles, each doing 18 points of damage. Jeeze. We'll say three hit one bugbear and two hit the other. Their armor of 4 reduces each shot to 14 points of damage. Bugbears have 24 hit points so ($3 \times 14 = 42$ and $2 \times 14 = 28$) that is a tremendous amount of damage, enough to cover the hallway in splattered bugbear.

Odd Kalis: *Hot Patootie!* That'll teach you to pick on an old geezer! Bwah-hahhahahahaha!

Called Shots

A called shot is any instance where you do something out of the ordinary to do more damage with your attack. Instead of just kicking your opponent you hit him with a *jumping side kick*.

Gamewise, the DM thinks about this and comes up with a Called Shot modifier. Usually, each Hit -2 causes a Damage +1. A jumping side kick may be hard to pull off with a Hit -4 but you get a +2 damage bonus if it succeeds.

Charging

Charging puts the force of velocity behind the damage of a melee attack. It depends on the speed you are moving. Every 5 steps per round will add a Damage +1. This begins at 10 steps per round.

50: Damage +9
45: Damage +8
40: Damage +7
35: Damage +6
30: Damage +5
25: Damage +4
20: Damage +3
15: Damage +2
10: Damage +1

Charging has nothing to do with the distance you traveled before impact. It is all about speed. If you moved with a speed of 16 but took only 3 steps before engaging your opponent? You get a Damage +2 bonus.

For speeds greater than 50, divide by 5 and subtract 1. At 55 SPR you get Damage +10.

Chases

Eventually it happens, a character or creature takes off running and the rest go chasing after. The game turns into a series of **Agility Competitions**, each representing a few rounds of movement. The first to win **three** gets their way.

Encumbrance. Because the chase assumes that you will be running and sometimes sprinting as fast as you can, anyone who is **Packing** should take an **Agility -1** due to their inability to sprint. Characters who are Lugging, Trudging or Straining suffer their **Bulk** penalty as well as an **additional -1**.

Speed Matters. The speed of the slower party, when **doubled**, needs to be greater than or equal to the speed of the faster party for a chase to happen. Running and sprinting do not apply. With groups, a party is only as fast as its slowest member.

Time to high-tail it! Megan takes off running with a gang of hobgoblins in hot pursuit. Speedwise Megan has Walk 4 and the Hobgoblins Walk 5. She is the slower party but her speed doubles to 8 which is still greater than the hobgoblin's Walk 5 and so a chase can happen.

Megan has Agility 10. The Hobgoblins have Agility 12. Unfortunately, Megan is also packing which will cause

her to take a -1. Checks are made with the whole gang of hobgoblins being treated as one character. With Megan against the Hobgoblins...

14 & 13 Megan wins.

8 & 12 Hobgoblins win.

8 & 7 Megan wins.

11 & 11 A Tie!

They go to roll again but Megan freaks out and decides to jettison her backpack to get rid of that -1. They roll the dice.

15 & 13 Megan wins a third time and wins the chase.

Although Megan was at a bit of a disadvantage the dice sided with her. As the winner she declares that she turns a tight corner on a city street, cuts through an alley way and disappears into the night.

The hobgoblins decide to double back and see if they can find the pack she dropped, hoping they might find something in it that could lead them back to her.

Hard and easy depends on how convoluted and maze-like the area is where the chase takes place. An urban neighborhood may be a hard check for someone who is new to it, yet an easy check for someone who grew up there.

Hazards. At any time during the chase the GM can stop the contest and drop a hazard into the middle of it. This is something the characters need to get around such as a wall to be climbed, a door to be knocked down or a gap between rooftops to be leapt over. While the details may vary, the general idea is that the chased character needs to get past the hazard or be caught. The chasers then need to get past the hazard to remain in the chase.

Climbing

Any creature with the **Climb** or **Cling** form of movement should have no problem climbing a vertical surface, but even monkeys occasionally fall out of trees.

Climbing is an **Agility** check made hard or easy by the nature of the climb. The slicker, more vertical or higher the climb the harder the check should be. Meanwhile, using climbing gear or climbing a surface the character has climbed many times before will make it easier.

With a **Little** success the character slips and slides down a few feet before catching oneself. That character should

make the check again but with a -2 because of the precarious situation.

With a **Fail** the character falls. Roll **1d4** to find how far the character climbed before losing ones grip...

4: 100% of the way.

3: 75% of the way.

2: 50% of the way.

1: 25% of the way.

If the character was trying to climb a 40 foot ascent, failed the climb check and rolled a 3? That character falls 30 feet. See *Falling* to figure out the damage done.

Typically, just one check is made for the entire ascent, but with a long climb such as up a mountain-side more checks may be needed, each representing the climb to a different stopping point.

As in a chase, hazards may be placed at these stopping points. Characters who are trying to beat each other to the top can compare their strengths to see who wins. Check out *Chases* to see how this works.

Cover

Taking cover means hiding behind something to avoid being hit. While cover can vary it comes in three basic types: Partial, Full and Total cover.

Partial Cover = 50%. Basically half of your body is covered. You can act normally but if you move you will lose your cover.

Full Cover = 80%. Nearly all of your body is covered. Move and you lose it. With a ranged attack you may return fire but will take a **Hit -2**.

Total Cover = 95%. You think you are completely covered and will not move or return fire to maintain it.

With each of these, when a character with cover is attacked roll 1d100. If it rolls **equal to or under** the percentage listed the cover will be hit. Otherwise the character is attacked verses **FAC** for partial cover or **SAC** with full and total.

This cover is not the same thing as *Diving for Cover* which is explained in *Area Attacks*.

Damage Types

Weapons are designed with a certain damage type in mind but they are not locked into it. Consider the spear. By default it does piercing damage, but you could slash with it to do sharp damage, hit with its butt end to do blunt damage or use it like a staff to do impact damage.

The general rule is that you can do this without problem so long as you are not making the weapon be more lethal than it is. When it makes sense that you can do this, such as using the spike found atop most battle axes to do piercing damage, it will bring a **Hit -2** to the attack.

Divine Power

Clerics or anyone relying on divine power is a *divine power* user. Divine powers themselves are often noticeably different from other spell-like powers. When they come into being they often appear to surround the character casting them rather than coming from inside them. Powers whose type is solely Divine (such as Bless) can only be cast by a divine power user, even if some other class says they can use any power imaginable.

Fickle Gods. The gods are notoriously distant when it comes to explaining why they do what they do. The divinities are also very territorial. Their focus is on the grand scheme of universal domination, something that even the most powerful cleric is only an infinitesimally small part of. When it comes to the use of divine power those forces will not budge for anyone.

Good divine power can only be used to help good characters and harm evil ones. Evil divine power can only be used to help evil characters and harm good ones. Both may be used to harm neutral characters but will suffer a **Hit -2** when attempting to help them.

When it comes to divine power users of the same alignment, even if the characters absolutely hate each other they may not use their divine powers to directly harm one another. *Indirectly?* The gods are always watching, but they may not be watching that closely.

Doubt! When the casting of a divine power **fails** (or an attempt to Turn Unbelievers, see the Cleric class) that character will suffer **Doubt -1** as a hindrance. This is the character's faith being chipped away by a perceived failure on the part of the gods to support them. It will effect

everything the character does. The only thing that can remove doubt is a religious retreat. Each week spent in prayer and solitude will remove one point of doubt.

The Alignment Bar. The alignment bar on a character sheet is a gauge of just how good or evil a character is on the grand scheme of things. Characters who benefit from divine power need to stay in the range that fits them. If they fall into neutral territory they may remain who they are but will be stripped of their divine powers until they do something to return themselves to where they belong. If they defect to the other side, not only will they permanently lose their divine powers but they may someday be visited by a demoniac or angelic entity seeking to put them out of their misery. Good or Evil, no divine power appreciates a traitor.

Sensing Alignment. Anyone can do this using nothing more than a **Wisdom** check. Clerics and other divine power users gain their class bonus. Essentially, a few rounds are spent steeped in the atmosphere of a place and then the dice are rolled.

Sense Alignment

Check: Wisdom

3: Not only can you actually see the good or evil hanging about a person or place but you can quite accurately measure its intensity.

2: You home in on the good or evil thing like a metal detector buzzing over a coin lost in the sand.

1: You sense a definite presence of something good or evil but cannot tell what it is.

½: A big fuzzy feel of something good or evil is in definitely in the area.

0: Nope. Nothing out of the ordinary here. Must have been something I ate for lunch.

Of course, this check will be made hard or easy by way of just how strong the source of alignment is as well as just how much it contrasts with the background ambiance of the place.

Places can have an alignment just as readily as people and an evil creature lurking in an evil forest will seem to disappear into the miasma. Meanwhile a good creature in the same forest will stick out like a sore thumb.

Doors

Doors exist to bar entry. Sometimes the only way through is to break it down. For this doors often come with a break point, a number fronted by the word **break**.

Light Door = break 10. Something you might find inside a house.

Medium Door = break 20. The door you might find on the front of a house or a room inside a fortress.

Heavy Door = break 40. The door you might find entering a fortress or prison cell.

X-Heavy Door = break 80. The fortified entrance to a fortress or high-security area.

Break. This is the amount of damage it takes for a **single hit** to either bust a door down or knock it off its hinges. Throwing your shoulder against a door uses a **Muscle** check and does **1d8i** for damage.

Battering rams exist to let characters combine their efforts. Basically, everyone on the pole makes a **Hard Muscle** check, damage is rolled, combined and used against the door.

Secret. Secret doors come with a strength fronted by the word secret ex: *Hidden Door (secret 12, break 20)*. To detect it a character needs to beat the secret strength with a **Wisdom** check.

Locked. Locked doors come with a lock strength ex: *Hidden Locked Door (secret 12, locked 14, break 20)*. This is the strength a character would need to beat with a **Dexterity** check to pick it. Picking a lock cannot be done without a set of lock picks.

Hear. This is the strength a **Wisdom** check needs to beat to make sense of any sound coming through the door ex: *Thick Hidden Locked Door (secret 12, hear 13, locked 14, break 20)*.

Falling

When your character takes a fall, the damage done is equal to **half the height of the fall** in damage points. Fall 10 feet and you take 5 points of damage. The damage type depends on what you land on. Armor does not protect against fall damage.

None = Water, deep snow, large hay pile.

Impact = Dirt, mud, lawn, field.

Blunt = Concrete, cobblestones, flagstones.

Mixed = Jagged rocks, broken timbers.

Sharp = Sharp rocks, broken glass, rebar.

Pierce = Spikes, stalactites.

Fall Check. Optionally, you may test your luck to see if you improve your landing. Each success moves the damage type of a fall one step closer to None. So if you are plummeting towards Sharp rocks and score a double success you will only take Blunt damage on impact. *Careful though!* A little success changes nothing, but a fail will move you one step closer to Pierce. aloft.

Fall Check

Check: Luck

5: Move 5 Damage Types closer to None.

4: Move 4 Damage Types closer to None.

3: Move 3 Damage Types closer to None.

2: Move 2 Damage Types closer to None.

1: Move 1 Damage Type closer to None.

½: Nothing happens.

0: Move 1 Damage Type closer to Pierce.

Terminal Velocity. In most situations you can only fall so fast before the air itself begins to break your fall. Gamewise, falls max out at **200 feet**.

DM: You are knocked off the side of the cliff and go plunging towards the rocky coastline below. It's a good forty foot drop doing 20 points of blunt.

Grudge: Um. Don't I get a luck check with this fall?

DM: If you want. It may make the damage type better or it may make it worse.

Grudge: I'll take it and try my hardest. (Grudge has Luck 11 and rolls) A +5. That's 16. A great success!

DM: Okay (thinking, two damage types up from Blunt is None) You go spinning through the air and the whole coastline is nothing but sand and big smooth water washed boulders rushing up towards you but somehow, just somehow you manage to find a small washtub-wide nook between two boulders and plunge into the seawater with a big white plume rising up behind you. Take 20 points of damage, all wear and no tear.

Grudge: Whew! (This knocks Grudge down to just 4 wear points remaining) Well, I'm still conscious. Can I swim to shore?

DM: Good question. Can you?

Flight

While those creatures who were born with wings can fly without a thought, that flight will never be as safe as traveling on the ground. At least **once each flight** traveling more than ten feet upwards, a Flight check should be made. Natural flyers use **Agility**. Magical flyers use **Luck**. Wind and weather conditions may make it harder to stay aloft.

Flight Check

Check: Agility or Luck

1: You fly without problem.

½: You begin to plummet, make this check again at -2.

0: You fall out of the sky.

Falling. With a failure, figure out the maximum height you had hoped to fly and roll a **1d4**. Like a failed climb, this determines how far you fall.

4: 100% of the way.

3: 75% of the way.

2: 50% of the way.

1: 25% of the way.

If you intended to fly 200' in the air, failed your flight check and rolled a 2 on the 1d4? You fall 100' to the ground. If you have no idea how high you meant to fly, roll **1d100** to find the distance.

Aerial Combat. Because of distance and elevation, true aerial combat where both parties are in the air is hard to do. Minis can be used to keep track of who is fighting who but it is best not to take it all too seriously.

Instead, imagine what is happening and **yield movement to the faster flyer**. If you have two dog-fighting wizards one flying at 20 SPR and the other at 30 SPR, the wizard flying 30 SPR gets to control how far apart the two remain from each other. If the faster wizard decides they will stay at Medium range from one another then only Medium ranged attacks or longer will be able to hit. Short, Close and Point-Blank ranged attacks will be useless.

Evasive Maneuvers. When fighting in the sky, **Evasive Maneuvers** can make you harder to hit. Declare you are doing it and make a flight check. When successful it increases your AC. When it fails you plummet.

Evasive Maneuvers

Check: Agility or Luck

5: AC +10

4: AC +8

3: AC +6

2: AC +4

1: AC +2

½: No AC bonus.

0: You fall out of the sky.

Evasive maneuvering counts as an attack. If you want to do anything else during that round you need to treat the evasion as a multiple attack. Meaning, all checks take a **-2** including this one. See *Multiple Attacks* for more on this. If you are piloting a flying machine that **-2** will be taken by everyone on-board.

Chases & Stunts. Chases in the air run by the normal *Chase* rules but will require a Flight check at the start to get off the ground. As a Hazard the chased character can declare a Stunt, such as flying fast under a rock bridge or through a winding canyon. This is typically a Flight check made harder by the complexity of the stunt. The character being pursued performs the stunt first and all pursuers need to do it afterward to stay in the chase.

Flying into Things. Flying into something (such as a rock bridge after a failed stunt) is never good. To find the damage done, take your flight speed, divide by 5 and add a roll of 1d10. Damage type depends on what you hit but will most often be Impact.

$$\text{Damage} = (\text{Speed} / 5) + 1d10i.$$

Creatures with a larger than medium body size add their SDMG to the roll.

Taking Damage. When a flying character takes damage, if the blow manages to **Stun** a character that character will start to plummet but be given the chance to make a Flight check and remain aloft. A character who has been **Knocked Down** or **Unconscious** will helplessly plummet to the ground.

Food & Water

Food is fuel and everything alive needs to eat and drink in order to survive. Each **day** spent without one or the other will do bodily harm to the character:

No Food = 1d6 impact.

No Water = 1d6 sharp.

Normally characters eat one meal at the end of the day. Skip it and that is when starvation hits. If the characters have insubstantial food or fetid water to consume they will not take damage from it but at the same time they will not fully rejuvenate as they sleep (see *Rest & Recovery* below).

Body Size. The amount of food and water one needs to consume depends on the body mass of that character. A tiny creature with a Mass 0.5 only needs to eat half as much as a medium-sized character. Meanwhile a large one will need to eat 1.5 times as much.

As Equipment. Food is normally sold in day-sized servings. Water is sold in containers that we assume will carry enough to keep the character hydrated for a week provided it is sipped and not guzzled.

On the whole, when traveling long distances it is good to forage and hunt for food and refill those waterskins whenever possible.

Frequency

Frequency tells us how common something is in the world. These are known by a single/double letter designation.

A = Abundant.
C = Common.
U = Uncommon.
R = Rare.
VR = Very Rare.
XR = Extremely Rare.
I = Individual.
M = Mythical.

Shopping. Most of what you find for sale will be abundant or common. Finding anything else will require a decent **Luck** check to beat the frequency of the item. In an urban area you might need to beat a strength of...

Uncommon = 10
Rare = 15
Very Rare = 20
Extremely Rare = 25

Rural areas may increase these values. Individual items are one of a kind and always hard to find. Mythical items are beyond rare and may not even exist. Mythical items should never be found using a simple ability check.

Grappling

Grappling is wrestling. Gamewise it is an **Agility Competition** where the winner locks the loser in a hold, rendering them unable to do anything until they break free.

Breaking free requires beating the strength of the grapple with either an **Agility** check for wiggling free or a **Muscle** check for busting loose. Size AC may be used when defending with Agility. Size Mass will also help when using Muscle to break free.

The character maintaining the grapple can do nothing but maintain the grapple while doing so. Both characters use **SAC** against the attacks coming at them while stuck in the grapple.

One-Armed Grapple. You can make a normal grapple using just one arm to keep your other arm free but doing so makes the check a **Hard** one. That free arm can make attacks but they will likewise be hard ones.

Pile-On. More than one character can attempt to grapple another. They combine their strengths, but each makes a **Hard Agility** check because of all the confusion this creates.

DM: The captain of the guard laughs haughtily in your face. *Bah-hahahahaha!*

Megan: Where is Kalis! What have you done with the old man!

DM: (speaking in the voice of the captain) *That is none of your concern.*

Megan: You better believe it is! I draw my sword.

DM: Are you sure you want to do that? There's a contingent of sixteen armed guards standing behind him.

Megan: *You better believe I do!*

Ralph: *Whoa, hey!* I step in between the two of them. Arms upraised.

Megan: I push Ralph aside and draw my sword!

Grudge: Before she can do that I jump on Megan and try to grab her, before she gets us all killed.

DM: Know what? Everybody make an Agility check (they have essentially entered a combat situation. The roller of the greatest strength goes first).

Ralph: 8.

Grudge: 16.

Megan: 13.

DM: Alright. Megan, you do push Ralph out of the way, but before you can unsheath your sword Grudge grabs you from behind and locks you in a grapple.

Megan: I slip out of it.

Grudge: Is there an exit to this place I can drag her out through?

DM: Megan, give me an Agility check. Grudge? In a minute.

Megan: I try hard and (rolls dice) 17! POOM!

DM: Okay, so Megan busts loose (the grapple was set with a strength of 16. A 17 beats it and she breaks free).

Ralph: I jump in and grab her.

Grudge: I help him, trying to lift her up off the ground.

DM: Give me another round of Agility checks. Ralph, you and Grudge make hard ones but you get to combine your strengths.

Ralph: 7.

Grudge: 14.

Megan: 7.

DM: 21 vs 7? Megan, you're not wiggling free this time.

Megan: As they drag me out the door I point to the captain of the guard and shout, "This is not over!! I WILL HAVE MY REVENGE!!!!"

Hiding & Sneaking

Skulking about is a **Wisdom vs Wisdom** challenge which pits the worst strength of the characters trying to pass undetected against the best strength of any creature that might detect them. Think **Hiders vs Seekers** if it helps.

On the hider's side, studying the area and trying to come up with an interesting way to move through it or hide in it may make for an easier check. Wearing metal armor or

carrying something that may rattle or reflect light will make the check considerably harder.

On the seeker's side, they need to be actively searching for something. If just passively milling around and not expecting anything their check becomes a **Hard Wisdom** check.

Hindrances

A hindrance is something wrong with your character. The character is sick or intoxicated or injured or simply carrying too much stuff, etc. This penalty effects **everything** your character does. Typically hindrances are written down in the Hinders section of your character sheet and erased as they clear up.

Hirelings

Hirelings are NPCs you hire typically to accompany the party on an adventure, possibly to carry gear, guide your way through the wilderness, fight on your behalf or simply carry a torch. Often hirelings come with a set cost per day, will want to know the expected length of their hire and demand **half in advance** before setting out. On top of all this, the character employing the hireling will need to make a Charisma check to see how the initial negotiation went.

Hiring Hirelings

Check: Charisma

1: Will do it with a Loyalty +1 for every extra success.

½: Will do it but for double the pay and Loyalty -1.

0: Sorry, no sale.

This check may be made harder by just how dangerous the adventure sounds and easier by the promise of increased pay or a possible cut of the treasure. If the hirelings have worked with the character before this too will influence the check.

Loyalty. During the adventure, any event which seems to put the operation in jeopardy - such as the death of a party member or having to flee a fight or hide from a powerful force - as well as any demands an employer makes that goes beyond what the hireling signed on for will be cause for a loyalty check.

This is a **Charisma vs Wisdom** challenge pitting the employer's charisma against the hireling's wisdom. If the hireling was hired with a Loyalty bonus this will effect the employer's Charisma but also **lose a point** each time it is tested, possibly turning into a penalty. Loyalty returns to zero once the adventure is over.

Rout, Run & Muting! A lost loyalty challenge may not be immediately evident to the character who lost it, but it will become apparent once the hireling takes the next best possible moment to disappear into the wilderness.

Good-aligned hirelings will often sneak off into the night hoping to never run into the party again. They may even leave behind their advance as a token of appreciation.

Neutral hirelings will also disappear but not only will they not give back their advance, they will probably steal a few things if the opportunity presents itself.

Evil hirelings will not only steal and run but unless they have something better to do they may choose to hang out in the wilderness, watching the party from afar, hoping to pounce on them as they return home weakened by the adventure yet laden with treasure.

DM Controlled. No matter how much force of Charisma you have over your hirelings, they are ultimately creatures run by the DM. Treat them badly, force them to take risks you are not willing to take and all agreements are off. The hirelings will quit and probably eventually come seeking retribution.

Max Number of Hirelings? The only thing limiting the number of hirelings you can have is the amount of money your character has to spend on them. What works with a small party of adventurers also works with a continental army.

Rebellion! When it comes to large numbers of hirelings it is recommended that the DM choose one NPC to represent the whole group. If this character is a revolutionary leader actively instigating people into revolt against the employer then the loyalty challenge should be a **Charisma vs Charisma** competition between the two leaders.

If the rebellious leader wins then those forces will break away to become a separate faction, falling in behind the rebel leader's command.

Magically Charmed Hirelings. The power Charm locks a character into an Ecstatic reaction when dealing with whoever charmed them. They still need to be hired and will

have to make loyalty checks, but whoever charmed them will gain a **Charisma +6** to their checks.

Jumping & Leaping

Jumping and Leaping is an **Agility** check made harder by the distance one needs to cover as well as just how intrepid the leap actually is. There is a big difference between jumping between puddles and jumping across roof tops.

Jumping & Leaping

Check: Agility

2: You make it in style, possibly with a backflip or two.

1: You make the leap.

½: You made it but are just barely holding onto the edge of the other side. It will take a Double Hard Muscle check to pull yourself up.

0: GAHhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-h!

Movement. A character's movement speed will make the leap easier with every 5 points of speed providing a +1 bonus. For example....

15: +3

10: +2

5: +1

1: +0

It's good to remember that you can double or triple your speed by running or sprinting, but making the leap is all you can do. If you try to make an action while making the jump the normal penalties for running and sprinting will apply to both it as well as the jump. Characters with the **Hop** form of movement automatically gain a **+4**.

Magic Items

Hooray! You just found the much vaunted *Wand of Fireballs +3*. Now what do I do? Many magical items are known as *Power Items* because they connect you to a power allowing you to cast it without having to learn a spell. Point the wand in the right direction (usually the crystalline thing goes forward) say a command phrase and BOOM!

It's a Luck Check. Gamewise, you should write the magic item in as a piece of Equipment and again as an Attack using the aspects of the power the item links to. For **Hit** use your **Luck** ability and any quality bonus the item possesses. That's it.

Hit = Luck + Quality.

The difficulty modifier of the power itself **does not** effect the performance of the magic item! Neither does any class bonus you may have when it comes to casting spells.

Fragile Things! Magic items break easily. When you make that hit check and create a little success roll a **1d6**. With a fail roll **1d4**. If either die rolls a **1** you broke it.

Quality Items. Quality items such as a Long Sword +1 may have been given their bonus by magical means but they are not actually magical items and do not require a Luck check. Something that is obviously magical such as a Flaming Long Sword +1 does require a luck check but only when you ignite the blade. You wouldn't check it every time you strike with it.

Potions & Scrolls. Potions and Scrolls are one-shot magic items, meaning they work once and are gone. It takes **3 rounds** of dedicated action to consume a potion or read a scroll and have the magic it contains kick in.

Just like any other magical item, potions and scrolls require a Luck check to use. Fail this check and there is no fragility roll. The potion or scroll is simply a dud.

Merlins

Merlins are a form of celestial currency players use as unacknowledged gods use to assert their divine presence on the universe and change reality in the character's favor. Gamewise they let you re-roll a bad die roll, but they can also do other things such as...

Rise Above. 1 Merlin. The character is filled with a brief flash of unearthly power. Gamewise you gain a **+2** for every merlin spent.

Divine Wind. 3 Merlins. A mysterious wind blows through the area, carrying away a character's fatigue. Gamewise it heals any exertion damage the character has taken.

Gift of the Gods. 6 Merlins. You bestow upon the party something they desperately need. This should be a general thing such as a picnic basket in the middle of a desert and not a specific thing like an important villain tied up in the town square.

Act of God. 12 Merlins. With an Act of God you change the world in some humongous way. For believability's sake, it is good to stay within the realm of the

possible. Of course earthquakes, volcanic explosions, and the occasional meteorite strike happen all the time in the broad scheme of things.

You can spend merlins on your own characters or your friend's characters or even the GM's creatures. They are yours to do with what you wish. You may even pool your resources with other players to pull off some big feat such as an *Act of God*. Just be sure to use them before you lose them. Saved merlins do not carry over between sessions. Merlins are also meant to be used only inside an adventure. They cannot be used when creating a character or leveling up.

Morale

A Morale check is essentially the ability to stand in the face of fear and continue doing whatever it is you are trying to do. It is a **Spirit** check made hard by just how alien or overwhelming or hopeless the situation seems to be. It is one made easier by way of having a good reason not to rout, having been in this situation before, or knowing a good outcome is soon to come.

Morale

Check: Spirit

1: You hold your ground.

½: Try the check again but with a -2 penalty.

0: Drop what you are doing and run for 1d6 minutes in a random direction.

Morale is normally tied to combat and is often checked...

- After being ambushed.
- When your character drops to a lower damage state.
- When an important ally is killed or knocked unconscious.
- When a situation suddenly goes from bad to worse, such as the arrival of enemy reinforcements.
- When something totally unexpected happens, especially if supernatural.

Multi-Classing

There are three kinds of classes in Dragonhead. **Existence** classes are the ones a character is born into such as the Elf, Halfling or Dwarf. Like it or not that is your existence. **Calling** classes are ones a character feels

called to pursue such as Cleric, Fighter or Wizard. These represent an obsession that defines a character's life.

Transformation classes are caused by something that has happened to a character during the game, transforming them into something like a Vampire, Lycanthrope or Valkyrie. A character can only have one existence, but through multi-classing you can have more than one calling or transformation.

For Callings. All you need to do is spend the XP needed to acquire the class at 1st level and your dwarf is on its way to becoming a Dwarven Rogue like Ralph Cabbagehammer from the Action examples. Of course, there are a number of stipulations that need to be heeded when multi-classing.

You Need To Be Smart. A character can only have as many callings as your Intellect score divided by 4 and rounded down. For example...

```
20: 5 classes
16: 4 classes
12: 3 classes
 8: 2 classes
 1: 1 class
```

If your intellect ever drops to where you can no longer multi-class you still hold onto your extra classes but can no longer advance them in level.

It Needs To Make Sense. Unless you have a compelling back-story to explain the arrangement, you should not be combining classes that are incompatible with each other. Wizards hate Warlocks and Barbarians despise them both. Unless you have an excellent reason as to why your character should be a Wizard / Warlock / Barbarian then you probably shouldn't be one.

Talk it over with your DM.

Transformation Classes are Different. They are also exceedingly rare. There is no limit to the number of transformation classes a character can have. Intellect holds no bearing on them. However you cannot simply become a Vampire. Something needs to happen during a game to justify the transformation. Gamewise, this grants you access to the class at **zero-level**. You have to pump XP into it to advance it in level just like any other class.

A character may use a transformation class as their sole class, but they still need to explain how the character got it and have the DM's approval.

Actual Level. Every now and then we need a single number to represent the character's actual level. What kind of multi-classed character can go on a 5th level adventure? Any whose various class levels add up to 5. A character with Dwarf 2 / Rogue 3 is considered a 5th level character.

Another use of actual level is with the **ability increases** that come from it. You gain a +1 to an ability of your choosing with every *actual level* you have.

Hit Points. The base hit point amounts of your different classes **do not combine**. Instead use the greatest value given by your classes.

Class Bonuses. Class Bonuses also **do not combine**. You get the best your classes have to offer. If Cleric gives you Melee +1 and Fighter gives you Melee +2 then you get Melee +2. They do not combine to Melee +3.

Magic & Spells. If you have more than one class providing magic and spells then you need to keep them separate. A Cleric / Wizard would have two magic scores, one for each class, as well as a spellbook for wizard spells and a way of praying for divine spells.

Arms & Armor. The most restrictive requirements apply. A Fighter / Wizard should still not wear armor.

Free Equipment. If your new class supplies you with something that your old class does not then you get it, providing you have a need for it. A Fighter / Wizard should not be getting any free armor if they are never going to wear it.

Movement. Go with the fastest movement provided. If your existence has a size-based movement modifier this applies to all of your character's movement speeds.

Level Advancement. Each class follows a different ladder of XP points. Keep track of them separately and put newly acquired XP where you want the points to go. *All sales are final!* You cannot move XP out of one class and put it into another.

Nutshell. Nutshell is a term that occasionally comes up in reference to multi-classing. It is a statement of all that your various classes adds up to. If your character has Elf 3, Fighter 4 and Rogue 2 then - in a nutshell - your character is a 9th level *Elven Fighter Rogue*.

Multiple Attacks

Watch any movie fight scene and you will see characters easily packing more than one punch into three seconds of time. In Dragonhead you can push your action to strike more than once but **each extra attack brings a -2 penalty to the entire action.**

DM: Three goblins rush at you.

Megan: I'm going to sweep my sword across their necks, popping off each ones head as I go. *Hopefully.*

DM: Are you sure? That's three attacks, a Hit -4 for the whole enchillada.

Megan: Yup!

DM: Roll the dice. The goblins have AC 10.

Megan: (Megan has Hit 14 and risk rolls a whopping +10) YES! That's, lemme see... (14 + 10 = 24 - 4 = 20 - 10 = 10) a terrific success against each of them. (She rolls 1d8 for damage three times, once for each attack, and triples the outcome) So that's 9, 18, and 21 sharp!

DM: (Goblins have 4 hit points and no armor.) Pop! Pop! Pop! You lop them off at the neckline. Orange heads go flying up into the air and then hit the ground, rolling around with terribly surprised expressions frozen on their faces.

It Happens When? No matter how many attacks your character makes you only get to risk roll once per action, so multiple attacks are handled all at the same time, even though they might represent different attacks made by the character at different times during the round.

Two-Fisted Fighting. If you are using a weapon in each hand it makes no difference. You get two unpenalized attacks and after that each extra attack brings on a -2 to your action no matter which weapon you use or how many times you use it.

To Recap. If you haven't figured it out by now, you get one action per round and inside that action your character moves and can make multiple attacks. The risk roll you make applies to the entire action, as does any penalties you take, including those that come from multiple attacks.

So if you pack three attacks into one action that is two extra attacks and a -4 penalty. If you risk roll a +6 then each of those attacks will take a +6 from the risk roll and a -4 from the multiple attack penalty.

Natural Casters

In the realm of magic-users, natural-casters make up that great swath of characters and creatures who were simply born with the ability to make magic work. Divine power had nothing to do with it nor are they learning to cast spells out of some old musty book. Natural-casters fix their minds on making something happen and it happens.

On the good side, natural-casters do not have to cater to the gods or acquire magic spells to do what they do. When their spell count increases their banger gets to pick a new power. When the use of a power fails nothing comes of it. It just fails. The characters themselves have little innate understanding of magic and no clear idea of why they can do what they do.

No Spell Swapping. On the not-so-good side, natural-casters have little to no control over the powers they have. Once a power is acquired it is there for life. Even if the character's spell count somehow decreases and they lose a power, once it bounces back up again the same powers will be regained.

Quality

A quality piece of equipment has a bonus attached to it, such as the classic *Long Sword +1*. The bonus is what separates it from all the other long swords out there. The cost of quality is not cheap. To find it multiply the item's **Price x Quality Bonus x 10**. Want to buy a Long Sword +2? If a normal sword costs \$70 then $70 \times 2 \times 10 = \$1,400$. *Ka-ching!*

Of course, prices will fluctuate depending on where you are and what is available. When it comes to frequency, for an item which is already common...

+5 = Mythical

+4 = Extremely Rare

+3 = Very Rare

+2 = Rare

+1 = Uncommon

Armor Quality. Where weapon quality adds to its hit score but does not effect the damage roll, armor does something of the opposite. Every +1 increases its armor value by 2 points.

Is It Magic? While magic can be used to give a piece of equipment its quality bonus the item itself is not inherently magical, simply better made. A talented smith could do the same thing using no magic whatsoever.

Items that were given their bonus by way of magic will inherit an invisible radiance of sort. When detect magic is used on it the item will glow with a faint light, but not nearly as much as an actual magical item.

Parrying

In combat you are always parrying your opponent in small ways. That is a good part of your FAC. When you declare that you are parrying a blow **as your attack** then you really are putting your all into it stopping it.

Gamewise, make your attack and roll for damage. These become **Parry Points** which reduce the damage like armor. The catch is that they disappear as they are used. Any not used by the end of the round are gone.

DM: The hobgoblin brings its halberd careening down towards Odd Kalis.

Ralph: I step in and parry it with my short swords.

DM: Give me a hit roll.

Ralph: (Ralph has Hit 15 with his short swords. He risk rolls a -3) 12. *Damn it!*

DM: Well, it's a parry you don't actually have to beat anything but a 10. That's a single so roll for damage.

Ralph: (Rolls 1d6, once for each sword, a 5 and a 5 turn up) 10 parry points.

DM: The hobgoblin swings and (rolls a 12 for the Hobgoblin which minus Kalis' AC 8 is a 4) hits Kalis with a single success doing (rolls 1d12s for the halberd) 8 points sharp, all of which are blocked by your parry with 2 points to spare.

Kalis: Thanks!

Fast & Slow. Some attacks are better at parrying than others. Any bearing the **Fast** aspect should gain a **Hit +2**. An attack with the **Slow** aspect should suffer a **Hit -2**.

Missile Parries. You may use a melee attack to parry a ranged attack but it won't be easy. The speed of the missile effects your ability to parry it. All of the parry points generated must be used against this one attack.

Slow = Hit -2 (thrown spear or rock)

Medium = Hit -4 (arrow or sling stone)

Fast = Hit -6 (crossbow bolt, etc)

Parrying with a missile against a melee attack is possible but it always takes a **Hit -4**.

Multiple Attacks. Parrying is an attack, not an action, so you can make multiple parries or even incorporate them in with other attacks. Of course, each extra attack will bring a -2 to the action. See *Multiple Attacks* for more on how this works.

Picking Pockets

Picking pockets is a **Hard Dexterity vs Wisdom** challenge. Beat your mark and you get to lift a small and presumably valuable item off their person. The more successful you are the longer it will be before the defender notices something is missing.

This check is made hard by just how well protected the item is (maybe it is chained to the character or hanging around their neck) and made easier by just how distracted the defender might be. Describing the scene and having other characters do things to somehow distract the mark is a good way of making the attempt easier.

Poison

Poisons come with an offensive strength that the poisoned needs to defend against, such as *Hemlock 14*. This is a **Poison vs Constitution** save. What happens next depends on the nature of the poison as well as its success. Here are some of the more common poisons a character may encounter.

Lethal Poison. The character will die in **1d6 minutes** minus 1 minute for each success. With less than a minute the character dies instantly.

Knock-Out Drug. This knocks a character unconscious for **1d6 hours** per success.

Paralytic Poison. The character will be immobilized yet still aware of all that is happening for **1d6 hours** per success.

Hallucinogenic Drug. The character trips through wild dreams, barely conscious of the actual world. It lasts **1d6 hours** per success.

Intoxicant. Each success saddles the character with a **Intoxication -1** hindrance. It takes 2 hours for each -1 to work its way out of the character's system.

Irritant. Typically a spray such as a stinging or stinking mist, characters defend using **Spirit** instead of Constitution. When the irritant succeeds it causes the character to flee and be unable to do anything for **1d6 minutes** per success.

Overdose! While some poisons are less lethal than others, there are no truly safe poisons. When a save crashes the character overdoses and dies.

Venom. Poisons are imbibed. Venom is injected. Snake bite, scorpion sting, a poisoned dagger - all of these need to do at least 1 tear of damage to deliver a dose of poison.

Antidotes. An antidote is a reverse poison. If administered within **10 minutes** of a poisoning and if its strength can **defeat the strength of the poison** it will neutralize the effect. In the case of lethal poisons, if the poison actually killed a character the antidote brings them back from the brink of death.

Range

Range describes just how far a missile weapon can travel and still be able to strike its target without problem. The big six and their maximum distance in steps are...

Long = 96

Medium = 48

Short = 24

Close = 12

Point-Blank = 6

Out Of Range. You can try to hit a target that is out of range but a -1 will be taken for being out of range and then another a -1 for every 6 steps beyond it.

The easiest way to handle this is to measure the distance and subtract from it the range count. Divide by 6, add 1 and turn it into a penalty.

A short bow has a range of 24. A target standing 32 steps away is out of range. $32 - 24 = 8$ and $8 / 6 = 1$. Add 1 point and that shot will take a -2 penalty.

Reactions

When characters and creatures first meet each other and don't know what to think, a Reaction check should be made. This is a **Charisma** check made by the first character to open their mouth and say something. It uses the table below where **Opposed / Neutral / Same** refers to the alignment of the characters in relation to the alignment of the creatures.

Opposed means one side is Good and the other is Evil.

Neutral is one step removed, such as Good and Neutral or Neutral and Evil. **Same** means that both sides have the same alignment. If alignments are not obvious then Neutral should be used.

Reactions

Check: Charisma

	Opposed		Neutral		Same
4:	Ecstatic		Ecstatic		Ecstatic
3:	Friendly		Ecstatic		Ecstatic
2:	Uncertain		Friendly		Ecstatic
1:	Hostile		Uncertain		Friendly
½:	Attack		Hostile		Uncertain
0:	Attack		Attack		Hostile
X:	Attack		Attack		Attack

Attack. The worst result. The creature immediately seeks to destroy you.

Hostile. The creature would like to destroy you but might be willing to let you go if you hand over your lunch money.

Uncertain. The creature doesn't know what to think and would prefer you go away.

Friendly. The creature likes you well enough but is not willing to bend or break any rules for you.

Ecstatic. The creature is enamored of you and might be willing to bend a few rules, but nothing crazy or suicidal.

Rest & Recovery

Adventure is an exhausting business and eventually characters will need to recover from it. Rest 10 minutes and make a **Constitution** check. Multiply your **Regeneration Rate** by its success and that is the amount of **wear damage** you can erase from your untorn hit points.

Rest Spots. You also need to mark a rest spot every time you do so. Each will bring a **-1** to your next rest check. Look for the number in the circle you are about to mark to figure out what this is.

Second Winds. During combat a character can force the issue by taking a moment to catch their breath and strengthen their resolve. Gamewise this is your action for the round. A **Hard Spirit** check is made in place of the Constitution check but otherwise it is just like resting to recover wear damage. *It just doesn't take as long.* A rest spot should be marked every time it is done.

Megan: (looks down at her sheet to notice that she is just three points away of being knocked unconscious) No attack this round. I take a second wind.

DM: Well, the captain of the guard isn't going to let up, but go ahead and make your roll.

Megan: (She has a 12 Spirit, the hard brings it down to 10. She rolls a +6) Yes! 16! (This is a double so she recovers double her regeneration rate of 3. She marks a rest spot and erases six points of wear damage).

Food & Sleep. Luckily characters completely recover all wear damage and clear out all rest spots with a full meal and eight hours of sleep. If you only get one or the other (the meal or the sleep) you only recover half of it. Get neither and you get nothing. Creatures that have natural attacks with an ammo count, such as the dragon's breath weapon, recover this in the same way.

It's good to keep in mind that a *Day* is not necessarily 24 hours. A day is defined by your ability to get some food and sleep at the end of it. Anything that can only be used *once per day* needs this regenerative experience before it can be used again.

Wounds & Scars. Healing tear damage is a far harder business. It requires a **Constitution** check made after 1 **week** spent doing nothing but taking it easy and trying to recuperate. Multiply your regeneration rate by your success and that is the amount of **tear** damage healed.

Fail this check and it will scar over one count of your regeneration rate in torn wounds. These wounds you blacken in. Scars cannot hold wear or tear damage and do not heal naturally.

Grudge: We're done here? I going to take a week off to bandage my wounds and recover from all of this.

DM: Alright, give me a Constitution check.

Grudge: (Grudge has Con 14 and a Regeneration Rate of 8. He risk rolls a +2. It's a double so he recovers 16 tears of damage) That works! I healed up all but three points so I'm going to take another week off.

DM: Give me another check.

Grudge: (He rolls the dice. This time the sign die turns up a 1. A stumble! It creates a -10 bringing his constitution down to 4 and a fail) Youch! *What'd I do wrong?*

DM: That's gonna scar.

Grudge: (By all means it should scar 8 wounds but Grudge only has 3 unhealed wounds so he blackens them in and dismisses the rest) well, consider it a reminder not to go ticking off frost giants, next time.

Magical Healing. Magic that heals damage typically works like a **blunt** attack in reverse. It will heal what you roll in damage as well as 1 tear for every 4 points.

Magic can be used to heal scar damage but not easily. It takes **10** points of wear damage to heal 1 scar.

Careful though! Armor does protect against magical healing! If you don't take it off your armor will reduce the amount of damage healed. The only exception to this are healing potions which work from the inside out.

Shields

Shields protect against the **front side** of your character. As a general rule, attacks that hit **FAC** receive shield protection and those that hit **SAC** do not. If you sling a shield over your back, it can be used to defend against SAC attacks coming at your backside, but it will only defend with half its armor value.

Shield As Weapon. The arm that holds the shield can do nothing except hold it against incoming blows. You may use the shield to bash an opponent but you lose its armor protection for the rest of the round (or the next time you go on defense in battle).

Shield Parrying. While it may seem strange, you may double down behind your shield and use it to parry blows. Unlike using your shield as a weapon this does not cause you to lose armor protection. It does however either count as your action for the round or as a multiple attack, bringing a -2

to everything you do. See *Multiple Attacks* and *Parrying* for more on this.

Slip-Thru

In combat you cannot move through an occupied space or a space adjacent to it if the occupant is unfriendly. Not without first making a **Slip-Thru** check. This is you ducking under them, sliding past them, or possibly even vaulting over them to move through the area.

Slip-thru is an **Agility vs Agility** challenge where if you win you get to move through the threatened space. Lose and you are stuck belly to belly with the creature with the rest of your movement gone.

Back Attacks. If slipping past an opponent is all you want to do then the Slip-Thru becomes your action for the round. If you want to incorporate it into an attack on the creature's backside then your entire action will take a **Hit -2**, treating the slip-thru like a Multiple Attack.

The advantage of this is that if your slip-thru is successful not only do you end up behind the creature but that creature will have to defend against your attack using their **SAC**. Otherwise FAC is used. Of course, this is meaningless against a creature that has no definable back.

Occupied Space. Even if a friendly character is blocking your way and not trying to stop your movement, you still need to make an **Agility Check** to get past them. They won't oppose it the way an opponent would, but the result is the same. Succeed and you move past the character without problem. Fail and you bump into them and lose the rest of your movement.

Spell Casters

Spell-casters traffic in what is often known as **Arcane Magic**. They are not granted their powers by divine forces or natural advantages. Instead they are reaching their minds into the spaces that exist between spaces, grabbing ahold of invisible currents of unfathomable power and spinning them into patterns that will hopefully cause a spell to function and not fry them to a cinder.

Spell Books. All spell-casters start the game with a Spell Book containing the written instructions for casting the spells they have selected. Gamewise this means that both

the book and the spells themselves are pieces of equipment that should be written down in your equipment list.

Once the game gets moving a spell-caster can only learn new spells by acquiring the physical pages of that spell. This could mean buying it in a magic shop, stealing it out of someone else's spell book or finding the pages stashed away in a treasure trove.

Purchased spells are not cheap! On the black market they often cost **1d6 x Spell Level in GP**. For this same reason, spell-casters are often hesitant to share spells. They paid heavily to discover what they have (in theory at least). Others should have to do likewise.

Lost Spells. If a spell-caster ever loses the pages of a spell they will take a **Hit -2** for each week the spell has gone missing. This accumulates until the spell can no longer be cast. A spell-caster without a spell book will soon be powerless.

Spell Wipe! Another complexity that spell-casters have to deal with is the occasional spell-wipe. Any time a casting **fails** that spell will be wiped from memory. It is not totally forgotten, the character just cannot remember how to make it work. This lasts until the character has spent at least an **hour** re-reading the spell in their spell book.

Gamewise, we mark wiped spells with an **X** to the left of its name in the Attacks list. This is much easier than erasing and rewriting whole lines.

Focusing Tools. These are typically wands, staffs, rods or crystal balls that carry a quality bonus given by way of the spell *Create Focusing Tool*. If you have a non-descript *Magic Wand +1* not tied to any power? That's a focusing tool, you gain a +1 to any spell cast with its assistance. Only **one** focusing tool can be used at a time. The work for spell-casters but not natural casters or divine power users.

Magic Items, such as a *Wand of Fireballs +3*, comes with a quality bonus that only works with the power the wand contains. You cannot use a focusing tool to help with a *Wand of Fireballs +3*, nor can you use this wand as a focusing tool for the spells your character knows how to cast.

Token Items. Some spells such as *Scry* and *Soul Jar* require a token item taken from the character or creature it is destined to effect. This is often a piece of clothing the person has worn, a piece of equipment they have used for a decent amount of time or something that once was a part of

their body such as cut hair, fingernail clippings, a scale or a lost tooth. Basically it is an item that connects the caster to that character and allows magic to effect them from afar.

Fear & Suspicion. There is no getting around it. Magic is a way of letting some people acquire power that others have no control over. The spell Magic Missile may seem quaint if not cute, but the reality of the spell is tantamount to an invisible crossbow which is quick to load, never runs out of ammo and cannot be taken away from those who know how to cast it. To everyday people, Magic Missile is a nightmare made real.

Because of this, magic-users often fall into one of two camps. The first keep everything they do a secret. The second trumpets the fact that they can cast magic spells, dressing and acting in a way that makes sure the world knows they are not to be messed with.

In a fantasy world where magic is quite common (which may or may not be yours) public opinion could be quite lax on the matter. Otherwise it is best to have a contingency plan for the next time a crop harvest fails and a torch and pitch-fork wielding mob comes looking for the cause of it.

Steeds

A steed is any creature you ride on the back of. If your character has a history of doing this then you just do it. Otherwise, you take a **-2** to everything you do in the saddle on that first day. This drops to a **-1** for the next seven days and nothing afterwards.

Qualifications. A steed should be at least one body size larger than its rider. The rider will encumber the steed, and by all means you should calculate the weight of the rider and the rider's equipment and figure out how this will effect the animal. Or you could just compare your body size to the steed. If the steed is...

- 1 body size larger = -3 bulk
- 2 body sizes larger = -2 bulk
- 3 body sizes larger = -1 bulk
- 4 or more sizes larger = -0 bulk

It also helps to have a saddle. Going without one will bring a -1 to everything a character does while riding.

Bucking Riders. The steed also needs to be willing to have you as its rider. Forcing yourself on an animal is never a good idea. It can attempt to buck you with an **Agility vs Hard Agility** challenge once per round. Win and you stay in the saddle. Lose and you go flying.

Flung From The Saddle. Being knocked out of a saddle is the equivalent of falling **3d6 feet** with a type depending on where you land. Damage may vary depending on the size of the beast. Being flung from a flying steed replaces this die roll with standard falling damage. If the steed is moving fast enough you may also take charging damage (see *Charging* above).

Combat. Once you have learned how to ride a steed, doing so in combat does not change anything except the amount of damage your attacks do. The speed of your steed determines the charging bonus that will be brought to your melee attacks.

If the steed is simply moving it will not effect your attack, but if running (galloping) or sprinting (charging) that will bring a **-2 or -4** to your attacks just as if you had been running or sprinting.

Staying in the Saddle. When you are stunned in combat make a **Luck** check. Fail and you will be thrown from the saddle. When knocked down do it again but with a **Hard Luck** check. In either case you still need to spend actions recovering from the shock.

When you make your steed perform some feat which is daring enough to require an Agility check (such as jumping over a fence), with a Little results you should make a **Luck** check to see if you remain in the saddle.

Surprise Attacks

A surprise attack is an ambush. One group hides in wait for the other and if they go undetected they get to launch a surprise attack. During the first round of combat....

- Initiative is lost.
- Surprised characters are stunned.
- SAC is used for defense.

If there is a second round of combat, it continues normally from there. A surprise attack is a **Wisdom vs Wisdom** challenge with the ambushers on offense and ambushees on defense (think *Hiders vs Seekers*, the same as in *Hiding &*

Sneaking). The catch is that normally groups are involved so it is actually the worst strength of the hidiers verses the best strength of the seekers.

Sneak Attack! If both groups are out stalking each other and trying to get to where they can launch an ambush, not much changes except a **Wisdom Competition** precedes it. The side producing the greatest strength gets to ambush the other. Then a normal **Wisdom vs Wisdom** challenge is made for the surprise attack.

Hiding Again. Once an ambush has been attempted, successful or not, that same group of characters or creatures cannot launch another until after the encounter is over and they have had the chance to hide again.

Swimming

If you have the **Swim** form of movement then swimming is not a problem. Otherwise, being dropped in the water will require an **Agility** check to suddenly remember or discover how to swim. This may be made hard by the turbulence of the water. **Bulk penalties double** and Packing takes a -1.

Sudden Swim

Check: Agility.

1: Swim with a speed equal to your success count.

½: You struggle in the water. Make the check again at -2.

0: Glug. Glug. Glug. You sink to the bottom.

If you sink or go swimming below the surface you take **1 point of wear** damage for every **5 rounds** you hold your breath. If knocked unconscious while down there you exhale your last breath and die.

DM: After falling off the cliff you hit the water hard and drop like a stone beneath its waves. For being so close to the shore this cove is surprisingly deep. Give me an Agility check.

Grudge: (Grudge has Agility 12 but also Bulk -2 from some sacks laden with treasure which turn into Bulk -4) Hmm. Am I still carrying those sacks of gold?

DM: I don't know. Are you?

Grudge: Ehhhh. *Awe Man!* I guess I can always go look for them later. I drop the sacks along with my shield (this gets rid of the Bulk penalty). So it's Agility 12 and (rolls the dice) a +1. Never thought I'd be grateful to see a single success.

DM: Although you are aching all over you find the strength to swim back to the surface and break through it to gasp some of that sweet sweet ocean air.

Grudge: Alright, I doggy paddle my way back to shore, and collapse on the sandy beach.

Traps

Where there is treasure there will often be traps. Most of the time these are mechanical traps such as pendulum blades, spring-fired spears or trip-wire crossbows hidden in the room.

Checking For Traps. What does it mean to declare you are "checking for traps?" It means you are protecting the group by looking for traps, as well as volunteering to be hit by any trap you fail to find. *Providing there is one.* It is a **Wisdom vs Secret** challenge where Secret is the strength at which the trap has been hidden. Because there may be no traps in the area, you will not know what that secret strength is until you beat it.

When the Trap Wins. Fail to detect a trap and it attacks just like a creature, but because you are on your guard you get to defend with **FAC**. If no one checks for traps, everyone in the party should make a **Luck** check. Whoever rolls up the lowest strength has just been hit by it and defends with **SAC**.

Pit Traps. Pit traps open a trap door under a character and drops them for damage (see *Falling*). A character who is looking for traps and gets sucked into one should be given a **Hard Agility** check. With one success or better they grab onto something or someone and is now dangling over its edge.

Disabling a Trap. Once a trap is found it can be disabled by setting it off - which is the proper use of a ten-foot pole! More complex traps may require a disable check. This is an **Intellect vs Complexity** challenge. Because a character needs to get close to the trap to disable it, losing the challenge will trigger the trap. Defend with **FAC**.

Describe What You Are Doing. On the whole, when it comes to traps, one of the last things you want to do is trust your luck to the dice. If you talk the matter over with your DM and truly interact with the place where the trap has been set, the DM might give you an easier roll or even let you detect and disable the trap without having to roll for it. Barge into a room, declare you are checking for traps,

blindly roll the dice and eventually you will find something but it won't be pleasant.

Trips, Throws, Tackles and Rushes

Not all combat is done with weapons. Sometimes you just want to push the other guy around.

Trips. With a trip you seek to drop someone on their butt. It is a **Hard Dexterity vs Agility** challenge. A tripped character will be knocked to the ground and have to spend an action standing back up. Trips do **1d4** damage per success where the damage type depends on the surface your opponent hits (see *Falling*).

Throws. A throw is where you seek to pick an opponent up and slam them down. It is a **Hard Muscle vs Agility** challenge that does **1d8** damage. Like a trip, the damage type depends on what one lands on and a thrown opponent will need to spend an action standing back up.

Tackles. A tackle is where you body check your opponent, slamming them with your shoulder. It uses **Muscle vs Agility** and does **1d8i** for damage. It only knocks an opponent aside and not down, not unless it stuns them so badly it knocks them down.

Rushes. With a rush all you want to do is push your opponent around. Use **Muscle vs Agility**. A single success or better lets you push the creature at **half speed**.

Scrum. A scrum is a rush between two groups of characters and creatures. Everyone on a side makes an **Muscle** check. Strengths are turned into **successes** and the side with the greatest number of them pushes the other side around.

The speed of the scrum is **half** the speed of the slowest member on the winning side with a minimum of 1 step per round. Characters caught in a scrum have to choose between participating in it or doing something else with their action.

To Sum It Up....

Type	Check	Damage
Trip	Hard Dexterity vs Agility	1d4?
Throw	Hard Muscle vs Agility	1d8?
Tackle	Muscle vs Agility	1d8i

Rush	Muscle vs Agility	none
Scrum	Muscle Competition	none

With all of these Agility is used by the defender. For someone trying to just avoid the attack **Dexterity** may be used. For someone trying stand against the attack **Muscle** can be used.

Body Size. Characters who are smaller than their opponent may use their **Size AC** bonus with Dexterity or Agility. Characters using Muscle get to multiply it by their **size index** but they do not get their sDMG bonus when on offense.

Vision

Unless something says otherwise, all characters come with color vision. It works fine in normal daylight but will suffer under lower light conditions.

Dim Light is like seeing by the light of a lantern, torch or full moon. You may need to make a Wisdom check to see what is there but you won't be penalized by the dim light.

Low Light is near darkness. It is the night as lit by a crescent moon or possibly a candle. Any action you make will take a -2.

No Light is perfect darkness. Absolutely nothing can be seen by normal vision. Anything you do takes a -6, and if the action depends on sight it automatically fails.

Dim Light = -0

Low Light = -2

No Light = -6

Vision Alternatives. While more on this is written about in *Monsters & Treasure*, there are two main ways most creatures and even some characters get around the problem of seeing in the dark.

Infravision is heat vision. It allows sight in all light conditions but it does not see colors and is generally not as good as normal vision causing a **-2** penalty. Most creatures with infravision can effortlessly switch back and forth between the two.

Ultravision lets creatures see by way of ambient radiation. It sees colors but they tend to be different and far more purplish and luminescent than normal vision. Ultravision carries no penalty in the dark but suffers a **-2** in dim

light, a **-4** in normal light and a painful **-6** in unfiltered daylight.

Permanent Blindness. It is assumed that a character who is permanently blind will have learned how to deal with their affliction and only suffer a **-4** to most activities. Those activities which absolutely depend on sight cannot be performed. Activities that make use of senses other than sight gain a **+2**.

Wilderness Survival

Wilderness Survival is not magic. It is an understanding of how to get along in inhospitable surroundings, how to find food and water, build a workable shelter, start a fire, know that moss grows on the north sides of trees, etc.

While some advice is worldwide, most of it is regional. Elves are going to know all about surviving in a forest or perhaps the fields that lie adjacent to it, but they will not know much about surviving the hot sands of a desert or on the frozen tundra. Others who call those lands their home will.

As a character becomes more worldly so will their sense of wilderness survival and where it may apply, so it is a good idea to keep track of where your character has been.

Zero-Level Characters

All characters had a life before they became adventurers, a time when they were still learning the ropes. Gamewise, these characters start the game with **no XP** and a level of **zero**. You have a class but just barely. Instead of a class bonus you take a **-2** to every special thing the class does, such as a Cleric's ability to turn unbelievers or a Wizard's ability to cast magic spells. Zero level characters start the game with **20 Iron** for starting coin.

You may try adventuring as a zero-level character but this is a very challenging proposition with a notoriously high mortality rate. Talk it over with your DM first.

The Cardinal Rules

Once you understand how the game is played you may make changes to it. This is your game, if you and your friends don't like something then change it! There are only three rules that cannot be changed or over-ruled in any way. These we call the **Cardinal Rules**.

Keep It Realistic. Reality is a big and beautiful thing. To capture it in all of its glorious detail with every single oddity and conundrum and contradiction perfectly set in place would require the creation of a gaming system as vast as the universe itself. As it is we have a small fast-moving system that runs on pencils, paper, dice and no small amount of imagination.

When you come across an absence in the rules, an oversight or something that just doesn't seem to make any sense? Go with your gut. Talk it over with the DM. *Follow your imagination!* Whatever seems the most real for us by way of the lives that we live is what should actually happen.

The DM is Always Right. Even when dead wrong. Deciding what is realistic about spaceships, magic and elementals is no small task, so no matter how off-center, irrational or glaringly bad a DM's decision may be the Dragonhead Master is always right. The DM's decisions are more important than the rule books. In every debate the DM has final say.

We do this not because we believe your DM to be infallible (far from it) but because games only suffer when people waste time arguing about how it should be played or what one thing or another *actually* means. The DM always has a good valid reason for doing whatever the DM has done and is under no obligation to explain it to you. Just take it on faith that it will all make sense in time.

Of course, any DM who abuses this privilege had better be prepared to find a new gaming group some time soon.

Always Play to Win. There are no winners or losers in an rpg. This sage-old advice is utter nonsense. These games can be won and they can be lost but not in the way that you might think.

You will know you are losing when people begin to get bored. When conversations stray from the adventure at hand. When people start to play with their smart phones rather than their characters.

You will know you are winning when the air crackles with laughter and excitement. When eyes widen and people find themselves wishing the adventure would never end. *That is winning.* Winning is the responsibility of everyone at the table.

We all win or we all lose.

Always play to win!

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Got tips, hints, advice, feedback? Now is the time to let us know about it! Tell us what you think by writing Jerry at biglizard@chameleondream.com.

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