

# BY SKILL ALONE



**VENTURE**  
**4<sup>TH</sup>**

a collection of skill challenges for 4e



# BY SKILL ALONE

BY DAVID CAFFEE

ART BY SHAMAN'S STOCK ART  
SKORCHED UPF STUDIOS &  
GARETH MICHAEL SKAPKA

## INTRODUCTION

Skills make up an important part of any role playing game. A character's skills are what make him or her versatile and unique. A character's various aptitudes can aid greatly in combat situations as the party jumps, swings, climbs, and lock picks its way through a dungeon. Non-combat encounters are almost entirely skill based and without these situations an adventure would be nothing but one endless battle after another.

In 4E, skills are broken down into a small number of broad categories and each one can be used in a number of creative ways. The latest incarnation of the game has also introduced us to the skill challenge, a dramatic encounter where the situation is resolved through a series of skill checks instead of fighting. *By Skill Alone*



expands on these areas by providing more situations where the characters can excel through knowledge, expertise, and daring stunts. In this work you will find skill challenges suitable for parties of all levels, from the heroic to the epic tier. Also presented are new uses for every skill found in the core player's book.

## DESIGNING YOUR OWN SKILL CHALLENGES

When designing a skill challenge the most important consideration is integrating it into the rest of your adventure. A skill challenge should occur at an important juncture in the story. Never insert a skill challenge into an adventure just because you liked the idea. Like a combat encounter, a skill challenge should be a natural part of the story. Consider how the challenge fits into the larger context of your adventure. If your characters are a party of grave robbing treasure-seekers then feel free to insert as many skill challenges as you want that involve puzzle traps or ancient riddles. On the other hand, a skill challenge that involves negotiation and political discussion is much better suited for an adventure where the characters are attempting to unite the Twelve Baronies against an undead army.

The skill challenge represents a crossroads where the party is allowed to take an easier path if they succeed in completing the challenge. The easier path may be interpreted literally, such as a situation where a party of adventurers must unlock the secret door of Aldair in order to take a shortcut through the mountains. Or the characters can simply have a less dangerous way of getting where they are going, such as a group of PCs who fast talk their way past the king's guards instead of battling them. Failing a skill challenge knocks the party

off track but it shouldn't stop them dead. Never create a situation where the only way in or out of a dungeon is to pass a skill challenge. The PCs should always have at least two options. The old stand by answer is to give the party the choice between a skill challenge and a combat encounter. That way if one choice doesn't work out the party can back track and try the other option.

Consider the array of skills that your players have selected for their characters. If you can, gather up their character sheets and make a list of the skills in which at least one character is trained. If more than one character is trained in a skill, make a note of it. Once your list is complete you should have a decent idea of what the party is capable of in terms of a skill challenge. There is no point in forcing the PCs to make a bunch of untrained checks. If no one in the party is trained in Diplomacy then you should avoid creating a challenge where Diplomacy is a primary skill. The players are bound to be frustrated by a challenge where none of them have a decent chance of making a check with one of the main skills. However, if a character has a feat or racial bonus that increases a certain skill then that player probably can't wait for the opportunity to use it.

## RISKS AND REWARDS

A skill challenge is like a combat encounter in the fact that there must always be a suitable risk associated with the task as well as a reward that makes the task worthwhile. Balancing these two needs is critical to making the challenge fun and exciting for your players. Without a sense of danger the players won't care if their characters succeed or not. Likewise, putting too harsh a penalty on a skill challenge may cause the players to feel cheated, as if they had lost a battle without a chance to fight back. By the same token, the players will feel cheated if they complete a tough challenge without gaining any reward at all.

Assigning risk is often the easiest part of this equation. The penalty for failing a skill challenge may be as simple as not getting the reward that the PCs were after. If the PCs were trying to escape from a monster then they are forced to fight instead. If the party was using the skill challenge to unlock a treasure vault then the prize remains elusive. A failed skill challenge can lead to more serious consequences such as the loss of healing surges. As a rule of thumb, the PCs should never lose more than four healing surges as the result of a failed skill challenge. Four lost surges is the equivalent of a

character taking damage equal to his full hit points. If the skill challenge is designed in a way that causes individual characters to lose surges as the result of failed skilled checks then a DM should be even more hesitant to use lost healing surges as a consequence for failure.

### Examples of Risk

- Loss of healing surges.
- Initiating a combat encounter.
- Encountering a trap or hazard.
- Being forced to take a more dangerous route or being driven off course.
- Failure to obtain treasure.

### Examples of Rewards

- A treasure parcel of the appropriate level.
- Avoiding a combat encounter.
- Overcoming an obstacle or hazard.
- Taking a quicker or easier route to your destination.



# SKILL CHALLENGES

## - HEROIC TIER

### *A Game of Chance (XP 200)*

*The baron's parlor is filled with thick smoke and alive with the sounds of revelry. In the back corner a high stakes game is underway. Your quarry sits at the table, laughing rudely as he rakes in his winnings.*

This skill challenge deals with attempts to influence an NPC by taking his money at the gaming table. The reward may be in the form of information that the other person knows, a favor that the characters need done, or an item that they need to obtain. The characters have learned that the NPC in question is a serious gambler who often stays up all night engaged in games of chance. One way to get what they require is for the PCs to get the best of their mark during one of these marathon gambling parties.

This skill challenge may also be used if the characters are short on money. A skill challenge should only occur in situations when it is vital to the plot, so do not allow the characters to use this challenge to simply build up their wealth. The challenge should be a means to a specific end. Perhaps the PCs need to book passage on a ship that leaves in the morning but do not have quite enough coin to pay the fare. Or perhaps an ally is scheduled to be hanged and the characters don't have enough gold to buy his freedom.

**Setup:** To get what you need from an NPC, you must take all of his money at the card table.

**Level:** 1

**Complexity:** 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Bluff, Insight, Streetwise, Thievery, Unmodified Roll (luck).

*Bluff (DC 20):* You try to maintain an aura of extreme confidence, convincing your opponent that you possess the winning hand. A failed check indicates that your expression gives you away and reveals the true strength of your cards to the other players.

*Insight (DC 15):* You study the faces and mannerisms of the other gamblers, looking for signs of weakness or overconfidence. Using this skill doesn't count as a

success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +2 bonus or a -2 penalty to the next character's skill check.

*Streetwise (20):* Your familiarity with gamblers and card cheats allows you to catch another player cheating. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but a successful check can remove a single failure that has already been accumulated.

*Thievery (DC 20):* You attempt to use sleight of hand to cheat the other players. A failure means that the character is suspected of cheating and this skill can no longer be used for the rest of the challenge. A failure gained from the use of this skill can be negated with the use of either Diplomacy or Intimidate.

*Unmodified Roll (DC 18):* Sometimes luck is on your side. You simply play the hand that you are dealt and hope for the best.

**Secondary Skills:** Diplomacy, Intimidate.

*Diplomacy (DC 20):* You use flattery and charm to gain the trust of your fellow gamblers. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but a successful check can remove a failure that has been gained from the use of the Thievery skill.

*Intimidate (DC 20):* You use threatening body language and harsh stares to silence your critics. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but a successful check can remove a failure that has been gained from the use of the Thievery skill.

**Success:** The characters gain the favor of the NPC that they had been targeting. He or she will reveal one piece of useful information, give up an item that is important to their quest (no monetary value), or perform a simple task that aids them on their quest. In addition, the party gains 200 gp.

**Failure:** The PCs do not gain whatever they were after and word of their misfortune spreads throughout the vicinity. Attempts to use social interaction skills (Bluff, Diplomacy, etc) with the local NPCs are more difficult now, incurring a -2 penalty to the characters' skill checks.

## **Arcane Door (XP 250)**

*The stone face on the door barks in your direction, "Answer my riddle true and you shall pass. Answer it not and the way will remain sealed."*

This challenge has the characters attempting to solve a riddle in order to open an enchanted door. The door leads the way to a shortcut or protected route that will allow the characters to get to their destination faster and easier. Failing this skill challenge means that the door disappears and the characters must travel by a longer or more dangerous route. Riddle in question does not have to be a verbal contest like the riddle of the sphinx or other famous brainteasers. The challenge could just as easily involve getting a series of levers into the proper position or placing a group of symbols into the correct patterns. Other ideas include a musical riddle (the PCs must strike the proper tones on a series of gongs), a combination lock (a series of marked wheels must be lined up to match symbols along their outer rim), or a water lock (a series of valves must be activated in order to direct the water to the correct destination).

**Setup:** The characters must solve the riddle in order to unlock a magical doorway.

**Level:** 6

**Complexity:** 1 (requires 4 successes before 2 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, History, Perception, Thievery.

*Arcana (DC 22):* You study the construction of this magical device and attempt to decipher the markings and runes that surround it.

*Bluff (DC 28):* You use banter and double talk to trick the door's guardian spirit into revealing a clue about the riddle's answer. Only one success can be gained from the use of this skill.

*History (DC 22):* You call upon your mastery of ancient legends as you try to recall a similar riddle from antiquity.

*Perception (DC 18):* You try to notice a pattern or flaw in the design of the doorway that will help your party get past it. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the next character's skill check.

*Thievery (DC 28):* You attempt to force the door open or otherwise trick the mechanism into cooperating. A failed check with this skill closes it out and it cannot be used again for the rest of the encounter.

**Success:** The door unlocks and the PCs are allowed inside.

**Failure:** The door fades back into the stone and does not reappear.

## **Collapsing Bridge (XP 300)**

*Ropes snap and boards break as the ancient bridge gives way under your feet. The chasm looms threateningly beneath you as you race to the safety of the other side.*

In this challenge, the PCs are attempting to cross a bridge or catwalk only to watch it come apart under their weight. The structure may have been deliberately sabotaged or simply frail from age and neglect. If the PCs are successful in the challenge then they make it to the other side and continue on their way. If the PCs fail then they plummet from a dangerous height and end up face to face with an even greater threat.

**Setup:** In order to cross the rapidly decaying structure, you must move quickly and nimbly.

**Level:** 3

**Complexity:** 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics, Athletics, Perception.

*Acrobatics (DC 20):* You use your balance and agility to weave through the flailing wreckage and swing across gaps in the structure.

*Athletics (DC 20):* You run quickly, leaping across holes in the floor, climbing tattered ropes and smashing through any obstacles in your path.

*Perception (DC 15):* You point out the safest path and lead your comrades around obvious dangers. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the next character's skill check.

**Success:** The PCs get to the safety of the other side and continue on their journey.



**Failure:** The PCs do not make it across the bridge in time and their panicked actions cause the structure to collapse prematurely. All members of the party lose four healing surges and land in a monster infested river, moat, or other unpleasant location. This situation leads directly to a combat encounter at the party's level. After resolving this encounter, the PCs must now get back on track, possibly having to take a much longer route to get where they are going.

### ***High Crimes (XP 2,500)***

*The judges and councilors take their seats in the hearing chamber as the audience murmurs excitedly in the background. Boos and jeers erupt from the nobles in the balconies as you are brought down into the tribunal's holding area.*

This skill challenge deals with a legal hearing where the PCs have been charged with a serious crime. Whether or not they have actually done anything wrong is irrelevant for the purpose of this skill challenge. The exact circumstances of the charges and trial depend greatly on the adventure the DM is running. The party may have been framed, they may be the victim of circumstance, or they may be genuinely guilty of breaking the law. The charges at hand must be of a serious nature, such as treason, inciting rebellion, or the murder of someone important. This skill challenge assumes that the court is genuinely concerned with finding the truth. If this were merely a show trial then there would be nothing the party could do to convince the court of their innocence. However draconian and unjust the laws of the land might happen to be, the characters do have a hope of winning their freedom through the legal process.

If the PCs are successful then they will retain both their freedom and their good name. Failure results in the court finding the party guilty and issuing the harshest punishment allowed under the law. This skill challenge may play out over the course of a single judicial session where the trial and deliberations only last a few hours. On the other hand, the challenge might play out over a period of several days as the accused are given a limited amount of free reign to investigate the crime and prepare their arguments.

**Setup:** The PCs must prove their innocence in a court of law.

**Level:** 10

**Complexity:** 5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures).

**Primary Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Religion, Streetwise.

*Bluff (DC 26):* You lie through your teeth in an attempt to make yourself look better in the eyes of the court. You make false accusations against others and come up with countless excuses, deflections, and alibis. Because the party has already been accused of a crime anything they say will be viewed with suspicion. A failure with this skill means that the entire party will be branded as liars. Any further attempt to use this skill will result in an automatic failure.

*Diplomacy (DC 22):* Your way with words and grasp of social etiquette are perfectly suited for this task. You deliver an articulate and skillfully crafted argument designed to sway the hearts and minds of the court officials.

*History (DC 24):* You call upon legal precedent and the ideology of famous leaders to urge the court in your favor. A failure with this skill closes it out and you cannot use it again for the rest of the encounter.

*Religion (DC 24):* You base your argument on theological principals, invoking the gods themselves in your defense. A failure with this skill closes it out and you cannot use it again for the rest of the encounter.

*Streetwise (DC 19):* Crime and criminals are subjects with which you are quite familiar. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

**Secondary Skills:** Insight, Intimidate.

*Insight (DC 24):* You spot when a witness is lying or an officer of the court is acting suspiciously. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

*Intimidate (DC 26):* You badger witnesses and scare the truth out of liars. Only one success can be gained from the use of this skill.

**Success:** The PCs are cleared of all charges and set free.

**Failure:** The party is found guilty and sentenced. The punishment is severe; either execution or a lifetime of slavery in inhumane conditions. Naturally the characters aren't going to simply roll over and accept their sentence. The PCs have two choices in this situation, either fight their way free from the courtroom or attempt an escape from prison later. The former option immediately leads to a combat encounter; the latter leads to another skill challenge (see the Jail Break skill challenge). If the PCs choose to fight then you can use one of the following encounter groups for easy reference.

### BOUNTY KILLERS

#### Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,900)

- 1 hobgoblin hand of Bane (level 8 elite soldier)
- 3 minotaur warriors (level 10 soldier)
- 2 ogre skirmishers (level 8 skirmisher)

### MYSTIC SERVANT

#### Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,000)

- 1 adult black dragon (level 11 solo lurker)

### ROYAL GUARDS

#### Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,250)

- 5 dragonman gladiators (level 10 soldier)
- 5 spitting drakes (level 3 artillery)

### TEMPLE GUARDIANS

#### Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,300)

- 1 angel of battle (level 15 skirmisher) (leader)
- 6 angels of valor (level 8 soldier)

## ***Lost in the Swamp of Sorrow (XP 600)***

*They said that the swamp had a way of messing with your mind and making you lose your way. You didn't expect it to be this bad though. Perhaps you should just give up...*

This challenge pits the party against a cursed landscape that affects their mental state. The PCs are wandering through a location that by its very nature threatens their well being. This evil place has a way of playing tricks on the mind and sapping a person's will to live. Navigating through the Swamp of Sorrow will require that the party keep their wits about them and not succumb to the despair and hopelessness that is infused in the very terrain of this dreadful place. If the PCs are successful in this challenge then they pass through the swamp without incident.

**Setup:** You must keep your spirits up as you traverse a dangerous landscape.

**Level:** 5

**Complexity:** 3 (requires 8 successes before 4 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Endurance, History, Nature.

*Arcana (DC 22):* You use your knowledge of magic and arcane powers to recognize the mystical effect that the swamp has on your comrades. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the next Endurance check made by someone in the party. A failure closes out the use of this skill and you cannot use it again during the challenge.

*Endurance (DC 20):* You forge ahead relentlessly, ignoring both pain and exhaustion. At least two characters in the party must make an Endurance check each turn to avoid having their vitality sapped by the foul magic of the swamp. A failed check results in everyone in the party losing one healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the skill challenge.

*History (DC 22):* You use your knowledge of legends and ancient lore to recall a useful scrap of information about the Swamp of Sorrow. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the next Nature check made by someone in the party. A failure



closes out the use of this skill and you cannot use it again during the challenge.

*Nature (DC 25):* Navigating through the swamp is difficult because of the ill effect this place has on the mind. Landmarks are forgotten and the terrain begins to blur together until everything looks the same. At least one character in the party must make a Nature check each turn in order to avoid sinkholes, dangerous creatures, and the like.

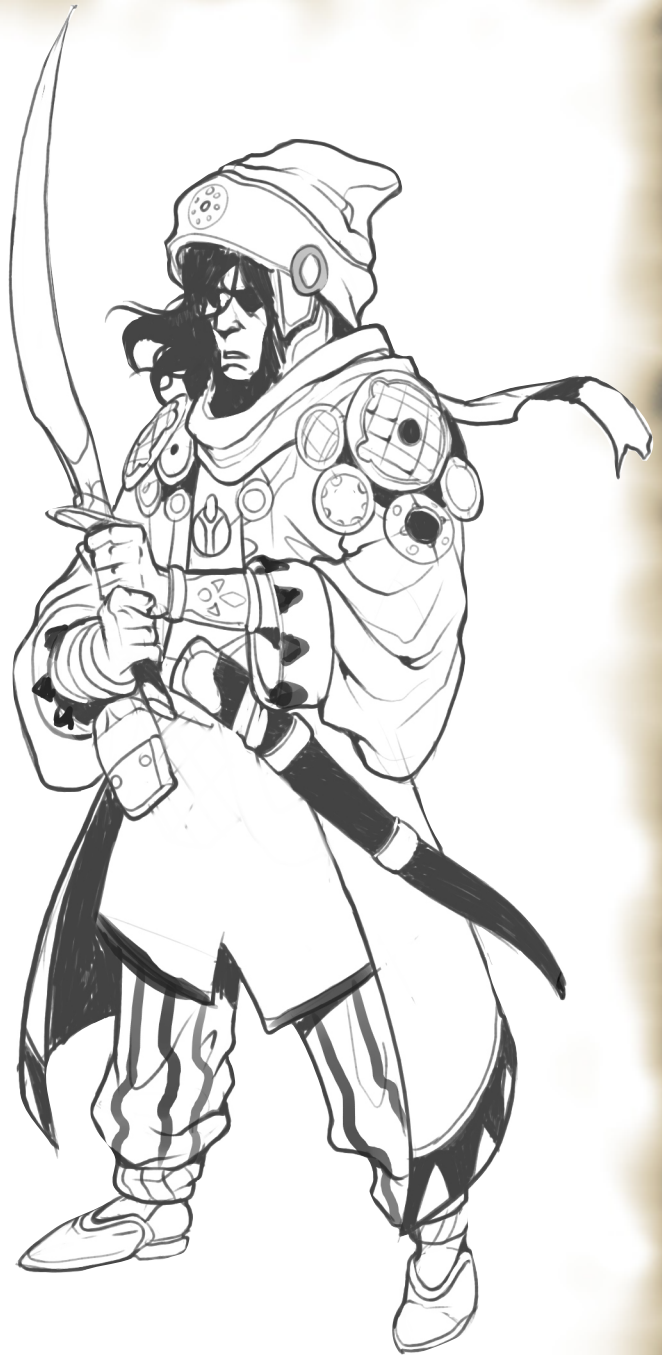
**Secondary Skills:** Diplomacy, Religion.

*Diplomacy (DC 22):* Your oratorical skill and social instincts allow you to lift the spirits of your comrades. Uplifting words and good cheer only go so far, however, and only one success can be gained through the use of this skill.

*Religion (DC 22):* Thorough study of religious texts and theological discourse has prepared you to give comfort to the hopeless. A failure means that a character becomes convinced that the gods have abandoned him and you cannot use this skill again during the challenge.

**Success:** The PCs navigate their way through the Swamp of Sorrow and continue on their journey.

**Failure:** The party wanders aimlessly in the swamp. As a result, all of the characters in the party are infected with a terrible malady known as Soul Sickness. The PCs must start the skill challenge over again and successfully complete it in order to find their way out of the swamp. Characters who take an extended rest while in the swamp do not gain the normal benefits associated with resting.



## SOUL SICKNESS

Level 7 Disease

*Soul sickness is a disease that drains the will from its victims and leaves them in a state of listless depression.*

**Attack:** +10 vs. Will  
**Endurance** improve DC 24, maintain DC 19, worsen DC 18 or lower.

- The target is cured
- **Initial Effect** The target takes a -2 penalty to all attacks and checks until cured.
- The target cannot gain or spend action points.
- **Final State** The target is dazed.



## ***Pit Fight (XP 125)***

*Blood and sawdust coat the floor as yet another opponent collapses unconscious at your feet.*

This challenge involves the characters in a sporting competition for the enjoyment of a blood thirsty crowd. The PCs have entered into a no-holds-barred battle royal and they must box and wrestle their way through multiple opponents in order to claim the prize. The party may have been forced into this contest by the whims of a local ruler or they may be trying to impress a person of influence in the local area. The player characters could also be involved in this pit fight because something that they need is being offered up as a prize. The prize in question could be an invitation to join a martial order or permission to pass through a temple, holy site, or sacred grove.

**Setup:** The characters must prove themselves in a brutal competition of might and stamina.

**Level:** 2

**Complexity:** 1 (requires 4 successes before 2 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Athletics, Endurance, Intimidate.

*Athletics (DC 20):* Your physical training pays off as you overpower your foes. A failed check means that you are either out muscled or out maneuvered.

*Endurance (DC 18):* Constant exertion combined with a physical pounding takes its toll on even the toughest competitors. However, there is something to be said for outlasting your opponents. At least one character in the party must make an Endurance check each turn to avoid running out of breath. A failed check results in everyone in the party losing one healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the skill challenge.

*Intimidate (DC 16):* You can use a frightening glare or well orchestrated show of strength in order to cow your opponents. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party. A failure closes out the use of this skill and you cannot use it again during the challenge.

**Success:** The PCs pummel their foes into submission and win the day. They achieve fame in the local area

and may gain other benefits, such as a physical prize (with a value of up to 60 gp) or the attention of a noble patron.

**Failure:** The PCs are wrestled to the ground or beaten to a bloody pulp. Everyone in the party loses two healing surges.

## ***Shipwreck! (XP 1,200)***

*The sea be a cruel mistress.*

This challenge deals with the PCs attempting to escape a sinking ship and find their way to safety. The party finds itself onboard a ship that is overtaken by a tragedy at sea. The vessel and crew are placed in peril and only the PCs can save the day. The ship may have fallen victim to foul weather, jagged rocks, or attacks by sea creatures. Alternately, a battle at sea may have damaged the vessel or caused it to catch fire. The player characters must evacuate the sinking or capsized ship and navigate their way toward friendly waters. Failure in this skill challenge means that the characters are swept up by the sea and left to the mercy of the current.

**Setup:** The PCs must escape from a sinking ship.

**Level:** 7

**Complexity:** 4 (requires 10 successes before 5 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Athletics, Endurance, History, Nature.

*Athletics (DC 25):* Crewing a ship requires a lot of raw muscle as you climb the rigging, smash open jammed doors, and dig people out of the wreckage. This skill can also be used to row a life raft or swim to safety.

*Endurance (DC 23):* Swimming and rowing are intensive activities that can sap the strength from almost anyone. Exposure to blistering sunlight and freezing waters can also take their toll. At least two characters in the party must make an Endurance check each turn to avoid the effects of exhaustion and exposure. A failed check results in everyone in the party losing one healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the skill challenge.

*History (DC 28):* Knowledge of old sea stories, famous shipwrecks, and the discoveries of ancient explorers can prove useful in this situation.

*Nature (DC 25):* You use your keen sense of direction and knowledge of sea creatures to guide your comrades to safety.

**Secondary Skills:** Acrobatics, Heal, Intimidate.

*Acrobatics (DC 28):* You use your agility to swing from the mast, dodge falling wreckage, and keep your balance on the lurching craft. A failed check results in you taking a nasty fall and losing a healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the challenge.

*Heal (DC 25):* You tend to wounded shipmates and treat those who succumb to exposure. Only one success can be gained from the use of this skill.

*Intimidate (DC 25):* Gruff commands and a threatening demeanor compel panicked crewmen to obey your orders. Your technique may be harsh, but you maintain order in a time of crisis. Only one success may be gained from the use of this skill.

**Success:** The party gets off of the ship relatively intact. The PCs may be on board a small boat, clinging to a piece of driftwood, or swimming in the open ocean but they are able to find their way to friendly shores. The party retains all of their adventuring gear and a majority of the ship's crew survives with them. A DM may rule that

some of the stores and provisions from the doomed ship are salvaged as well.

**Failure:** The characters wash up on the beach of a far away land or forbidding island. The PCs retain all of their weapons, armor, and magical items but they lose all non-magical gear including food and water. Not only are they far off course and trapped, but they must find a way to provide themselves with shelter and sustenance. Additionally the place where the party is stranded may be inhabited by monsters or hostile races.





## **Tavern Brawl (XP 350)**

*A crowd of thugs surrounds you, wielding chairs and bottles as weapons. In the distance, you notice that someone has barred the door.*

This skill challenge places the PCs in the middle of a good old fashioned bar fight. The player characters end up in hot water with a group of local toughs. Their opponents may be drunken street fighters, off duty soldiers, or members of a criminal gang. The fight may have started because the player characters started asking too many questions or tried to shake down the wrong informant. Alternately, the brawlers may have been paid to scare the PCs off or at least delay them. If the PCs are successful in this skill challenge then they are rewarded with a piece of valuable information or a clue that helps them on their quest. Failure means that the characters will be delayed on their journey or forced to take a different route.

A character can interrupt this skill challenge at anytime by making a normal attack against the brawlers. However, using lethal force in this case is not without consequences. Killing or grievously wounding someone in the middle of a tavern full of witnesses will not bode well with the authorities, nor will the victim's friends and family likely let this act pass unpunished. If a PC interrupts the skill challenge by attacking with deadly force then this immediately leads to a combat encounter. You can use one of the following encounter groups for easy reference.

### **LYNCH MOB**

#### **Level 3 Encounter (XP 760)**

- 10 human rabble (level 2 minion)
- 3 human guards (level 3 soldier)

### **CITY GUARD**

#### **Level 4 Encounter (XP 900)**

- 4 human guards (level 3 soldier)
- 1 human mage (level 4 artillery)
- 1 grey wolf (level 2 skirmisher)

### **CLAN AVENGERS**

#### **Level 5 Encounter (XP 1,025)**

- 4 human bandits (level 2 skirmisher)
- 3 human berserkers (level 4 brute)

**Setup:** The PCs must battle their way through a tavern filled with local tough guys.

**Level:** 4

**Complexity:** 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics, Athletics, Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate.

*Acrobatics (DC 20):* You swing from the rafters, tumble underneath tables and wriggle your way out of grapples. Your opponents cannot hit what they cannot catch. A failure with this skill results in you taking a spill or catching a lucky punch, causing you to lose one healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the challenge. The first success with this skill closes out the use of Bluff and Diplomacy and these skills cannot be used for the rest of the challenge.

*Athletics (DC 20):* Raw strength and athletic training make you into a formidable brawler. A failure with this skill means that the fight turns against you and you lose one healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the skill challenge. The first success with this skill closes out the use of Bluff and Diplomacy and these skills cannot be used for the rest of the challenge.

*Bluff (DC 24):* You attempt to distract your opponents with a clever lie or a well conceived story in the hopes that they will choose not to fight.

*Diplomacy (DC 22):* You use your silver tongue and people skills to smooth out rough feelings and apologize for the misunderstanding.

*Intimidate (DC 24):* Sometimes a threatening demeanor can end a fight before it begins. The first success with this skill closes out the use of Diplomacy and this skill cannot be used for the rest of the challenge.

**Success:** The tavern brawlers leave you alone and the PCs are free to go on their way. Additionally, the party gains privy to one clue or piece of information that aids them on their quest.

**Failure:** The PCs are beaten to a pulp and run out of town. Everyone in the party loses two healing surges.

## ***Under the Table (XP 500)***

*“You think this stuff is strong? You’ve never drank the firewater they serve at the Four Fiend Folio!”*

This skill challenge involves the PCs trying to drink an adversary unconscious. This ploy may be an attempt to render a target unconscious so that the party can steal something valuable from it. The characters might also be trying to disable a guard or potential adversary. The target of this drinking contest can’t be an ordinary person but a creature renowned for its hardiness and constitution.

**Setup:** The PCs must hold their liquor better than their foe.

**Level:** 10

**Complexity:** 1 (requires 4 successes before 2 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Bluff, Endurance, Heal, Thievery.

*Bluff (DC 26):* You use sly ruses and outrageous boasts to goad your adversary into drinking more. The first failure with this skill closes it out and it cannot be used again for the rest of the skill challenge.

*Endurance (DC 26):* Your staying power is tested to the limit as you ingest dangerous amounts of spirits. At least two characters must make an Endurance check each round. A failed check with this skill means that you succumb to alcohol poisoning, causing everyone in the party to lose one healing surge.

*Heal (DC 21):* You use your knowledge of medicine and physical anatomy in an attempt to keep your comrades healthy and awake. Using this skill doesn’t count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

*Thievery (DC 30):* You use slight of hand in order to trick the target into thinking that you are consuming more alcohol than you are, in fact you are trying to switch full glasses for empty ones.

**Success:** The target loses consciousness and will not be functional again until it takes an extended rest. The PCs may stumble away victorious.

**Failure:** The PCs make drunken fools of themselves, enraging the target and initiating a combat encounter.

You can use one of the following encounter groups for easy reference.

### **GANG BOSS**

#### **Level 10 Encounter (XP 2800)**

- 1 ogre warhulk (level 11 elite brute)
- 4 trolls (level 9 brute)

### **NIGHT WATCH**

#### **Level 10 Encounter (XP 2500)**

- 1 ettin marauder (level 10 elite soldier)
- 3 wyverns (level 10 skirmisher)



# SKILL CHALLENGES

## - PARAGON TIER

### *The Gauntlet (XP 6,000)*

*As you step onto the edge, the warrior statues turn their heads to look at you. Dozens of them line the stone railing of the bridge. They ready their clubs as if challenging you to step forth.*

This skill challenge has the characters testing their courage against a fearsome gauntlet. The only way for the PCs to cross a chasm or treacherous river is a bridge guarded by dozens of statues armed with stone clubs. This gauntlet is a test of courage as well as toughness. Making it all the way to the other side will be a grueling task indeed. Success means that the characters push their way through and get to the other side relatively unscathed. Failure means getting stuck in the middle of the gauntlet and being pummeled unmercifully by the animated statues.

If a PC interrupts the skill challenge by attacking the statues then this immediately leads to a combat encounter. Interrupting the skill challenge does not end it and party members can continue making skill checks on their turn as a standard action. Successfully completing the skill challenge ends the combat encounter as the statues go inert. The encounter area is a bridge 2 squares wide (4 squares including the stone guardrails) and 20 squares long. The entire bridge is considered difficult terrain due to the swinging clubs of the animated statues on the rails. Use the statistics for the *challenge statue* found below. At the beginning of the combat encounter, a number of challenge statues break free of their bases and attack the player characters. If the characters defeat all of the monsters they can either choose to continue the skill challenge or initiate another combat round by attacking the statues again. This second round of fighting is still considered part of the same encounter. If the characters successfully defeat two waves of challenge statues before completing the skill challenge then the skill challenge automatically fails. The remaining statues break free of their bases and rush toward the PCs. If the characters defeat this last wave of monsters, immediately begin a new encounter as soon as the PCs reach the far side of the bridge. For this second encounter use the statistics for the *shard swarm* listed below.

### ANIMATED STATUES

#### Level 18 Encounter (XP 3,000/3,000/4,000)

##### *1<sup>st</sup> Wave*

- 6 challenge statues (level 18 minion)

##### *2<sup>nd</sup> Wave*

- 6 challenge statues (level 18 minion)

##### *3<sup>rd</sup> Wave*

- 8 challenge statues (level 18 minion)

### SHARD SWARM

#### Level 18 Encounter (XP 10,000)

- 1 shard swarm (level 18 solo brute)

**Setup:** The characters must survive a hundred blows and make it to the end of the gauntlet.

**Level:** 18

**Complexity:** 3 (requires 8 successes before 4 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, Endurance, Perception.

*Acrobatics (DC 29):* You flip and tumble, slipping between the clubs and trying to avoid their blows altogether. Failing a check with this skill means that you get bashed by the gauntlet, causing you to lose a healing surge.

*Arcana (DC 29):* You utilize your knowledge of arcane lore in an attempt to recall something useful about this magically constructed challenge. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party. Checks with this skill can only be made during the first round of the skill challenge.

*Athletics (DC 25):* You plow through the gauntlet heedless of the dangers. You attempt to muscle your way through and let the clubs break against you as you pass. Failing a check with this skill means that you get bashed by the gauntlet, causing you to lose two healing surges.

*Endurance (DC 27):* The physical exertion of running the gauntlet combined with the physical pounding of the clubs takes its toll on even the toughest adventurers. At least one character in the party must make an Endurance

check each turn to avoid wavering under the stress. A failed check results in everyone in the party losing one healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the skill challenge.

*Perception (DC 29):* You notice a certain rhythm in the swing of the clubs and you attempt to use this knowledge to your party's advantage. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next character's skill check.

**Success:** The PCs make it to the end of the gauntlet and continue on their journey. Having defeated the gauntlet, the party may cross back and forth over the bridge without challenge from now on.

**Failure:** The characters are stuck in the middle of the gauntlet and are attacked by a *gauntlet bash trap* (see below). The PCs must complete another Gauntlet skill challenge in order to get off the bridge.

<b>GAUNTLET BASH</b> Trap	Level 18 Obstacle XP 2,000
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*You are surrounded by statues that are furiously swinging their stone clubs, pummeling you from all sides.*

**Trap:** Animated statues swing their clubs at anything that moves. The gauntlet covers 40 contiguous squares.

**Perception**

No check is necessary to notice the gauntlet.

**Attack**

**Standard Action Melee 1**

**Target:** Every creature that begins or ends its turn on a trapped square.

**Attack:** +21 vs. AC

**Hit:** 4d10+7

<b>CHALLENGE STATUE</b> <b>Small natural animate (construct)</b>	Level 18 Minion XP 500
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**Initiative** +16 **Senses** Perception +20; darkvision  
**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

**AC** 30; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 29

**Immune** disease, poison

**Speed** 7

m **Stone Club** (standard; at-will)

+21 vs. AC; 15 damage

M **Stonewall** (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves adjacent to the challenge statue)

The challenge statue makes a basic melee attack against the enemy.

**Form Shard Swarm** (when all of the challenge statues are reduced to 0 hit points)

The broken pieces of the challenge statues slowly form into a shard swarm.

**Alignment** Unaligned **Languages** -

**Skills** Perception +20

**Str** 25 (+16) **Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 22 (+15)

**Con** 20 (+14) **Int** 5 (+6) **Cha** 10 (+9)

**Equipment** stone club

**Description** These four foot tall statues are carved in the image of fearsome warriors.

<b>SHARD SWARM</b> <b>Huge natural animate (construct, swarm)</b>	Level 18 Solo Brute XP 10,000
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**Initiative** +13 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision  
**Swarm Attack** aura 2; the shard swarm makes a basic melee attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura.

**HP** 760; **Bloodied** 380

**AC** 30; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 25

**Resist** half damage from melee and ranged attacks;  
**Vulnerable** 10 against close and area attacks.

**Saving Throws** +5

**Speed** 8, fly 4 (hover).

**Action Points** 2

m **Shard Slash** (standard; at-will)

Reach 2; +21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage.

M **Grasping Arms** (standard; at-will)

Reach 2; +19 vs. Ref; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

C **Blinding Storm** (standard; at-will)

Close burst 5; +19 vs. Ref; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).



## Sea of Limbs

Every square within the shard swarm's aura is considered difficult terrain due to the grappling arms, kicking legs, and gnashing teeth of the broken statue pieces.

**Alignment** Unaligned **Languages** -

**Str** 24 (+16) **Dex** 18 (+13) **Wis** 16 (+12)

**Con** 22 (+15) **Int** 2 (+5) **Cha** 8 (+8)

**Description** A swirling mass of broken statuary writhes and dances like a serpent. Jagged shards of stone slash through the air as multitudes of dismembered limbs claw their way toward you. The broken pieces return to the bridge and form back into the gauntlet when the swarm is defeated.

## Infiltration (XP 6,000)

*Moving like a shadow, you quietly slip past the guard. A dagger is drawn, ready in case he spots you.*

This skill challenge pits the party in the role of spies, assassins, saboteurs, or thieves trying to slip into a heavily guarded fortress or other secure location. The object of this challenge is for the PCs to get in and out without detection and without witnesses. The target is a specific place within the installation such as a command center or treasure vault. Failure means that the characters are spotted and attacked. This skill challenge may play out over a manner of days or hours, depending on how the PCs decide to conduct the infiltration.

**Setup:** The PCs must sneak into a secure location.

**Level:** 15

**Complexity:** 5 (requires 12 successes before 6 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics, Athletics, Bluff, Dungeoneering, Perception, Stealth, Streetwise, Thievery.

*Acrobatics (DC 27):* You flip and swing your way past defenses and hazards, balancing on narrow ledges and running across rooftops. A failure with this skill results in a nasty fall, causing you to lose one healing surge.

*Athletics (DC 27):* You climb, swim, dig, and jump your way past walls and barriers. A failure with this

skill causes means that you fall a great distance, get buried alive or almost drown, causing you to lose one healing surge.

*Bluff (30):* You boldly approach guards with a skillful lie and an honest expression. A success or failure with this skill counts as three successes or failures for the skill challenge.

*Dungeoneering (DC 25):* You use your knowledge of caves, tunnels, and sewers to sneak your comrades into the fortress. A failure with this skill results in the party encountering a trap or hazard equal to their level. The first success or failure with this skill closes it out and it can not be used for the rest of the skill challenge.

*Perception (DC 27):* You scan the fortress' perimeter, searching for weakness. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

*Stealth (DC 25):* You attempt to sneak past the guards, quietly darting from shadow to shadow. Each failure with this skill increases the DC of further checks by 5. The guards are placed on heightened alert and more likely to investigate any flicker in the corner of their eyes.

*Streetwise (DC 27):* You use your knowledge of urban areas and illicit activities makes it possible for you to you to make contacts within the fortress. The question is whether or not they can be trusted. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

*Thievery (DC 25):* You pick locks, disable traps, and pry open windows. Breaking into places where you are not wanted just comes naturally to you. A failure with this skill results in the party encountering a trap or hazard equal to their level. The first success or failure with this skill closes it out and it can not be used for the rest of the skill challenge.

**Secondary Skills:** History, Intimidate.

*History (DC 25):* You scour your knowledge of history in an attempt to remember some obscure fact or detail that might led to a weakness in the fortresses

defenses. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

*Intimidate (DC 25):* You scare the crap out of someone in order to gather information about the fortress. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

**Success:** The party makes it inside the fortress and out again without incident. They arrive at the general's bedchamber, the central vault, or wherever place that the DM has ruled is the most sensitive part of the fortress. The target can be a person instead of a place, such as the intended victim of murder or kidnapping. The PCs have a short amount of time to accomplish their mission when the challenge is complete (a maximum of 2d4 minutes). If the party takes too long then they must complete another Infiltration skill challenge in order to make it out again without incident.

**Failure:** The party is discovered and attacked by the fortresses' inhabitants. The PCs have two choices in this situation, fight or surrender. The first choice leads to a combat encounter; the latter leads to another skill challenge (see the Jail Break skill challenge). If the PCs choose to fight then you can use one of the following encounter groups for easy reference.

## BODYGUARDS

### Level 15 Encounter (XP 6,800)

- 1 savage minotaur (level 16 brute)
- 4 war trolls (level 14 soldier)
- 4 ogre bludgeoners (level 16 minion)

## ATTACK DOGS

### Level 16 Encounter (XP 7,600)

- 1 stone golem (level 17 elite soldier)
- 2 thunderfury boars (level 15 brute)
- 2 warthorn battlebriars (level 14 controller)

## IRON GUARDIANS

### Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,000)

- 1 battle guardian (level 17 controller)
- 3 helmed horrors (level 13 soldier)
- 3 shield guardians (level 14 soldier)
- 4 iron cobras (level 6 skirmisher)

## WATCHERS OF THE CRYPT

### Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,000)

- 1 mummy lord (level 13 elite controller)
- 2 death knights (human fighter) (level 17 elite soldier)

## WIZARD'S GARDEN

### Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,000)

- 1 treant (level 16 elite controller)
- 4 stormrage shamblers (level 11 elite controller)
- 1 vine horror spellfiend (level 7 artillery)





## ***Jail Break (XP 2,800)***

*It took days to chip away at the mortar in your stone floor. It took weeks to dig the tunnel. But that first breath of fresh air made every second worth it.*

This skill challenge is triggered whenever the player characters are trapped in a tower, dungeon, or some other kind of prison complex. Success in the skill challenge means that the party escapes their captivity and slips away without drawing the attention of the guards. Failure means that they will have to fight their way out. The circumstances of the battle depend greatly on the number of successes that the PCs have gained during the challenge. This skill challenge may take place over the course of a few hours or it may be stretched over several weeks.

**Setup:** The party must escape from their captors without notice.

**Level:** 12

**Complexity:** 4 (requires 10 successes before 5 failures)

**Primary Abilities:** Strength, Intelligence.

*Strength (DC 22):* You use raw muscle power to break shackles, bend bars, and bust down doors.

*Intelligence (DC 28):* You devise a clever scheme to free yourself and your comrades. The quality of your plan can have a great effect on the party's efforts to escape. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to every subsequent skill check made by someone in the party during the course of the skill challenge.

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics, Athletics, Bluff, Dungeoneering, Thievery.

*Acrobatics (DC 26):* You flip and swing your way past defenses and hazards, balancing on narrow ledges and running across rooftops. A failure with this skill results in a nasty fall, causing you to lose one healing surge.

*Athletics (DC 26):* You climb, swim, dig, and jump your way past walls and barriers. A failure with this skill causes means that you fall a great distance, get buried alive or almost drown, causing you to lose one healing surge.

*Bluff (30):* You attempt a clever ruse to gain the trust of the guards or distract them at a crucial moment. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

*Dungeoneering (DC 24):* You use your knowledge of tunnels, caves, and underground structures to find a way to freedom. A failure with this skill results in the party encountering a trap or hazard equal to their level. The first success or failure with this skill closes it out and it can not be used for the rest of the skill challenge.

*Thievery (DC 26):* You pick locks, disable traps, and pry open windows. A failure with this skill results in the party encountering a trap or hazard equal to their level. The first success or failure with this skill closes it out and it can not be used for the rest of the skill challenge.

**Success:** The PCs make it beyond the outer perimeter of their prison. The party's escape will soon be discovered and they will no doubt be fugitives from justice, but they are free. In addition, the characters recover everything that was taken from them during their imprisonment, including magical items and treasure.

**Failure:** The party is discovered and attacked by prison's guards. Determine the total number of successes that the PCs have gained at this point. The situation in which the party encounters the guards is based on the number of successes they have earned. See battle conditions below.

### BATTLE CONDITIONS

- 1-3 Successes: The PCs are caught unarmed and armed with nothing but clubs and makeshift daggers.
- 4-6 Successes: The PCs have managed to capture a small number of mundane weapons and armor from their captors.
- 7-8 Successes: The PCs find and recover all of their mundane weapons, armor, and adventuring gear.
- 9 Successes: The PCs have recovered everything that was taken from them during their imprisonment, including all of their magical items, adventuring gear, and treasure.

The PCs have two choices in this situation, fight or surrender. Surrendering leads to the characters becoming separated, beaten savagely, and secured in even less humane facilities. A period of time equal to 1d12 months passes before the characters can attempt another escape. If the PCs choose to fight then you can use one of the following encounter groups for easy reference.

#### GUARD BEASTS

##### Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,500)

- 5 blade spiders (level 10 brute)

#### UNDEAD WARDEN

##### Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,325)

- 1 vampire lord (human rogue) (level 11 elite lurker)
- 3 skeletal tomb guardians (level 10 brute)
- 5 vampire spawn bloodhunters (level 10 minion)

#### INFERNAL SENTRIES

##### Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,000)

- 2 chain devils (level 11 skirmisher)
- 12 legion devil hellguards (level 11 minion)

#### KEEPERS OF THE LABYRINTH

##### Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,400)

- 1 balhannoth (level 13 elite lurker)
- 1 minotaur cabalist (level 13 controller) (leader)
- 2 minotaur warriors (level 10 soldier)

#### SWAMP HUNTERS

##### Level 12 Encounter (XP 3,600)

- 1 briar witch dryad (level 13 elite controller)
- 1 roc (level 14 elite skirmisher)

### ***Puzzle Trap (XP 1,200)***

*Sweat pours from your brow as you examine the glowing runes beneath your feet. Just as you think you've solved it, the floor tiles begin moving again. If only you had more time...*

This skill challenge deals with a situation where the party becomes trapped in a room and must solve a complex puzzle in order to unlock the doors. The floor of this trapped chamber is composed of fifteen interlocking ceramic tiles. The central tile is missing, giving the other tiles a space to slide into. When the PCs enter the chamber, the doors slam shut and seal tightly. The arcane runes inscribed on the tiles glow brightly before the tiles themselves start moving on their own accord. Success in this skill challenge means that the characters arrange the tiles in the appropriate sequence. Solving the puzzle opens the doors to the puzzle chamber and may provide other benefits as well. Failing to solve the puzzle leaves the PCs trapped in the room to face the consequences of their mistakes.

**Setup:** In order to escape the locked room, the characters must arrange the floor tiles in the proper pattern. After each success the runes inscribed on the tiles glow brightly. After each failure the tiles begin frantically rearranging themselves.

**Level:** 11

**Complexity:** 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

**Primary Abilities:** Intelligence.

*Intelligence (DC 21):* You use deductive reasoning, logic, and basic problem solving skills to work out a solution to the puzzle.

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, History, Insight.

*Arcana (DC 24):* You attempt to decipher the runes on inscribed on the floor tiles, realizing that their meaning gives you a clue to the appropriate pattern.

*History (DC 24):* You utilize your knowledge of history in order to recall some reference to a similar puzzle in the ancient texts.

*Insight (DC 26):* You recognize that there is a distinct order in the way that the tiles move. This knowledge gets you one step closer to a solution.



**Secondary Skills:** Thievery.

*Thievery:* Attempting to physically disable the floor tiles or move them out of their grooves is futile. Any attempt to use this skill during the challenge results in an automatic failure.

**Special:** If any of the characters in the party is fluent in Draconic, reduce the DCs of all skill checks by 2.

**Success:** The PCs slide the floor tiles into the correct pattern. The doors slide open and the party is free to leave. If this room is a treasure chamber then the hidden vault springs open and the characters are granted an appropriate reward, such as a 12<sup>th</sup> level magic item or a gemstone worth 5,000 gold pieces.

**Failure:** The puzzle deactivates and either triggers a trap equal to the party's level or teleports monsters into the chamber to initiate a combat encounter. If the DM decides to use the combat option then you can use one of the following encounter groups for easy reference.

#### DRAGON'S DEN

##### Level 9 Encounter (XP 2000)

- Adult White Dragon (level 9 solo brute)

#### PACK ATTACK

##### Level 9 Encounter (XP 2000)

- 5 displacer beasts (level 9 skirmisher)

#### SNAKE PIT

##### Level 9 Encounter (XP 2000)

- 3 crushgrip constrictors (level 9 soldier)
- 2 flame snakes (level 9 artillery)

## SKILL CHALLENGES – EPIC TIER

### *Escape from the Tempest (XP 9,600)*

*Peering out from the watch tower, you stand paralyzed as the horizon fills with lighting and rolling black clouds. This is a storm sent down from the gods and no mortal can contend with it.*

In this challenge the PCs are in the middle of an unnatural disaster and have to escape before it overwhelms them. A storm of mystical origin has descended upon the area and threatens everything within sight. The tempest moves with unnatural speed, consuming everything that it comes across. Cities, forests, and entire mountains may be ripped a sunder by the force of the tempest. Success in this skill challenge means that the party manages to escape from the maelstrom relatively unscathed. Failure results in the PCs experiencing the full brunt of the storm's fury.

**Setup:** The PCs must outrun a storm of cosmic power.

**Level:** 21

**Complexity:** 3 (requires 8 successes before 4 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, Perception.

*Acrobatics (DC 31):* You flip, swing, and slide as you try to stay one step ahead of the storm. A failed check results in you taking a spill and losing a healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the challenge.

*Arcana (DC 28):* The tempest is magical in nature and you use your knowledge of the mystical realm in order to discern the best way to escape it. Only one success may be gained from the use of this skill.

*Athletics (DC 31):* You use your physical training to jump across gaps, climb obstacles, and run for your very life. A failed check results in you smashing head first into a barrier and losing a healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the challenge.

*Perception (DC 26):* You mark the direction that the storm is moving and point out the safest path away from it. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure

for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next character's skill check.

**Success:** The PCs escape from the tempest relatively unscathed.

**Failure:** The members of the party are picked up by the storm and flung far apart from each other. Everyone in the party loses four healing surges.

### ***Dinner with a Dragon (XP 28,000)***

*"The centuries pass by so slowly when one is lacking suitable amusement. I must admit to suffering from the doldrums. Malaise would even be an appropriate description. Perhaps your droll little band could provide me with some form of distraction to save me from the tedium that has fallen upon my lair. Tell me, what stories do you have?"*

The PCs are obstructed by an ancient dragon that is bored and seeking entertainment. The great wyrm has decided that the party members must engage it in diverting conversation before it will let them go. Success in this skill challenge means that the characters will be granted permission to pass through the dragon's domain. Failure means that the party will have to return back the way they came and take a much more difficult route to their destination.

**Setup:** The character must amuse an ancient dragon in order to win their freedom.

**Level:** 25

**Complexity:** 4 (requires 10 successes before 5 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Insight, Nature, Religion, Streetwise.

*Arcana (DC 33):* The dragon is interested in the ways of magic and will intently listen to obscure bits of arcane trivia. You attempt to impress your host with a tidbit of information that it doesn't already know.

*Bluff (DC 30):* You tell tall tales in order to impress the dragon with your mastery of deceit and double talk. As a lover of bold lies and treachery, this act endears you to your host.

*Diplomacy (DC 33):* The dragon is more than susceptible to flattery and it has a fondness for formality and polite conversation. You use your skill and suavity to woo this arrogant creature.

*History (DC 35):* You attempt to impress the dragon with your knowledge of history. However, this ancient creature has seen many of the events that you have read about and will not be easily impressed. The first failure with this skill closes it out and it cannot be used for the rest of the challenge.

*Insight (DC 28):* You use your keen awareness and skill at observation to notice when the dragon seems interested and what subjects it would like to discuss. Using this skill doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

*Nature (DC 35):* Your host has an interest in the natural world and the creatures in it. You attempt to entertain the dragon with interesting facts of an environmental nature.

*Religion (DC 35):* Theological discussion and religious mysteries are something that your host has an interest in learning about. You use your mastery of these subjects to engage the dragon in a discussion of spiritual matters.

*Streetwise (DC 33):* The dragon has not had much chance to visit the big city, yet it is fascinated by the working of the great metropolises. You attempt to enthrall your host with tales of crime, punishment, and other details of urban life.

**Secondary Skills:** Acrobatics, Athletics, Thievery.

*Acrobatics (DC 38):* You try your hand at entertaining the dragon with tumbling and gymnastics. Only one success can be gained from the use of this skill.

*Athletics (DC 38):* You attempt to amuse your host with feats of strength and athletic prowess. Only one success can be gained from the use of this skill.

*Thievery (DC 40):* You perform sleight of hand and prestidigitation in an attempt to captivate the dragon.



**Success:** The dragon allows the PCs to go on their way.

**Failure:** The dragon becomes extremely irritated at the PCs failure to amuse it. The dragon continues to block their path and orders them to go back the way they came without delay. Failure to do exactly as the dragon says causes it to attack and initiates a combat encounter.

**Level 27 Encounter (XP 55,000)**

- 1 ancient green dragon (level 27 solo controller)

***Divine Intervention (XP 75,000)***

*“State your case and be brief. This council has little patience and we are not to be bothered with trivialities.”*

In this skill challenge, the PCs must call upon the gods themselves and plead for their aid. The action that the PCs desire must be one that is within the gods’ ability and inclination to perform. The PCs cannot ask for aid that solves all of their problems for them. What the party asks from the gods should be in the area of transport to a far away realm or permission to interfere with the plans of another god. Perhaps the party members desire godhood themselves in order to finish out a final task. Or maybe they are petitioning the gods to reverse a punishment handed down upon one of them. It is up to the DM to decide which god or gods the party has been granted an audience with and under what circumstances they are received. The PCs may have contacted a divine emissary in order to arrange this meeting or they may be arbitrarily summoned to appear before the celestial court.

**Setup:** The PCs must convince the gods to intervene in mortal affairs.

**Level:** 29

**Complexity:** 5 (requires 12 successes before 6 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Diplomacy, History, Nature, Religion.

*Arcana (DC 34):* You attempt to influence the gods with your knowledge of magic and the true nature of the universe.

*Diplomacy (DC 34):* Your tact and sense of protocol have never been put to a greater test. You attempt to sway the divine beings in your presence with the sheer eloquence of your words.

*History (DC 39):* The world has a long history and the gods have always been a part of it. You invoke historic precedents in your quest to sway the gods to your side.

*Nature (DC 39):* You use examples of the natural world to illustrate your point. You mention the favored creations of certain gods in order to gain their favor.

*Religion (DC 29):* You have studied the divine rites and immersed yourself in celestial mysteries. You use this knowledge to speak with the gods and petition them in the proper manner. Skill has the most relevance to the situation and may prove to be the easiest way to win the challenge.

**Secondary Skills:** Bluff, Insight, Intimidate.

*Bluff:* You cannot lie to the gods for they are masters of divination. Any attempt to use this skill automatically fails.

*Insight (DC 39):* You study carefully the forms that the gods have chosen for this appearance. You use the knowledge gained from this observation in order to aid your comrades. Using this skill doesn’t count as a success or failure for the challenge, but instead provides a +5 bonus or -5 penalty to the next skill check made by someone in the party.

*Intimidate:* The gods will not be bullied. Any attempt to use this skill automatically fails.

**Success:** The gods grant the PCs one favor.

**Failure:** The gods send the PCs back to the mortal realm with the full knowledge that they are on their own.

## NEW SKILL USES

The skills in **4E** are general rather than specific. As such, each skill covers a wide variety of uses. The following section details a few new ways to use each of the skills listed in the *PHB*. The DM should feel free to disallow or alter these skill uses according to the needs of the adventure.

### Acrobatics (Dexterity)

#### FANCY FOOTWORK

Make an Acrobatics check to dance in front of an opponent and confuse him. Once per encounter you can use Acrobatics to try to gain combat advantage against an adjacent enemy by using fancy footwork.

**Fancy Footwork:** Standard action

- **Opposed Check:** Acrobatics vs. Reflex
- **Success:** You gain combat advantage over an adjacent enemy until the end of your next turn.

#### SLED RUN

Make an Acrobatics check to slide down an appropriate surface using a sled, shield, or a plank of wood. The surface in question must be both inclined and slick enough to slide on. A sled run can be performed on a snow covered mountain, a smooth sided pyramid, a slimy sewer shoot, or any number of similar surfaces.

**Sled Run:** Move action.

- **DC:** Base DC 20
- **Success:** You move twice your speed down a slanted surface.
- **Failure:** You fall off of your sled and land prone in the square that you started on.
- **Opportunity Attacks:** Enemies that make opportunity attacks against you while you are sledding suffer a -2 penalty.

### Arcana (Intelligence)

#### INTERRUPT RITUAL

Make an Arcana check in order to prevent a spell caster from completing a magic ritual.

**Interrupt Ritual:** 5 minutes.

- **DC:** 25 + one half the ritual's level.
- **Success:** You prevent an opponent from completing a ritual. All components of the ritual are wasted. If the ritual was being performed from a scroll then the scroll disappears as if the ritual had been successful.
- **Failure:** The ritual is successfully cast. The caster gains immediate knowledge of your attempted interference as well as your general location.
- **Special:** In order to interrupt a ritual that is being performed you must be within one mile of the site where the ritual is being performed. You must also know which ritual is being performed as well as one of the following details; the name of the creature performing the ritual, the exact place it is being performed, or the specific intent of the ritual.

### Athletics (Strength)

#### DIG

Make an Athletics check to quickly burrow through the soil. You can also make an Athletics check to work your way through a pile of wreckage or free someone who has been buried by rubble.

**Dig:** Standard action.

- **DC:** See the table. If you are equipped with the appropriate tools (shovels, pry bars), you get a +2 bonus to your Athletics check.
- **Success:** You create a small, unstable tunnel that is one square long. This tunnel is considered a squeeze space. Each successful Athletics check allows you to increase the length of the tunnel



by an additional square. If you are digging through wreckage or debris then each successful check uncovers one square that had been previously blocked by the rubble.

- **Fail by 4 or Less:** You stay where you started and lose the rest of your actions, but you are not caught in a cave in.
- **Fail by 5 or More:** You are caught in a cave in as your tunnel (or pile of debris) collapses around you. See the DMG for more information on cave-ins.

Material	Athletics DC
Loose soil or sand	15
Packed dirt	20
Gravel or light debris	25
Rock or heavy debris	30

### CREW A SHIP

Make an Athletics check to row a boat or work the ropes of a small sailing vessel. Skill checks are not required for traveling across calm waters, only for struggling against storms, strong currents, and the like.

**Crew a Ship:** Standard action.

- **DC:** See the table.
- **Success:** You keep the vessel moving forward and on course.
- **Failure:** Your vessel makes no progress and drifts off course. The vessel moves its normal speed but in a direction determined by the DM. The vessel's new course may bring it in contact with water borne hazards and/or monsters.

Water Conditions	Athletics DC
Rough	10
Stormy	15
Rocks or sandbars	20
Magical Whirlpool	30

## Bluff (Charisma)

### SWINDLE

Make a Bluff check to cheat someone out of money, valuables, or favors.

**Swindle:** 1 hour.

- **Opposed Check:** Bluff vs. Insight
- **Success:** Once per day you can try and convince someone to give you something for nothing. The target is convinced to accept a worthless object in trade for something truly valuable. The details of the swindle are up to the player and the DM to work out. A swindle is more likely to involve favors or information than monetary reward. If the DM does allow you to work a swindle for pure profit then the treasure gained has a maximum value in gold pieces equal to your level x10.
- **Failure:** You cannot attempt to swindle this target again. The target will view you with suspicion from now on and you suffer a -5 penalty on any further Bluff check made against this target.

## Diplomacy (Charisma)

### NEGOTIATE TRUCE

Make a Diplomacy check to convince an enemy to accept a truce.

**Negotiate Truce:** Standard action.

- **Opposed Check:** 15 + target's level (see table for other modifiers). If you can't speak a language that the target understands, you take a -5 penalty to your check. If you attempt to negotiate with several enemies at once then make a separate Diplomacy check for each one. Each target must be able to see and hear you.
- **Success:** You convince an enemy to stand down and go his or her own way. The target leaves the battlefield by the quickest and safest route, fighting only if it attacked.
- **Special:** It is impossible to negotiate with non intelligent creatures or creatures that lack free will.

Diplomatic Situation	DC Modifier
Target is Hostile	+5
Blood has already been spilled	+10
Targets are outnumbered 2 to 1 or more*	-5

\*Does not apply to Solo or Elite monsters.

## Dungeoneering (Wisdom)

### NAVIGATE UNDERGROUND STRUCTURES

Make a Dungeoneering check in order to make your way beneath a city or structure by means of sewers, catacombs, forgotten tunnels, and natural caverns.

**Navigate Underground Structures:** 1 day.

- **DC:** 15 in an old or heavily developed area, 25 in a newly settled area.
- **Success:** You can travel undetected by your enemies, avoiding both natural hazards and minor obstacles. This skill cannot be used to circumvent major defensive structures such as city walls or a heavily guarded fortress.
- **Failure:** You get lost underground and must make another Dungeoneering check to get back to where you started.
- **Special:** Another character can cooperate with you and aid in your skill attempt by rolling a check with any of the following skills; Dungeoneering, Nature, or Streetwise. Any ally who gets a result of 10 or better gives you a +2 bonus to your Dungeoneering skill check.

## Endurance (Constitution)

### FORCED MARCH

You slug endlessly across the wilderness. You press on tirelessly, barely even stopping to eat or drink. Because of your great stamina, you can cover great distances quickly.

**Forced March:** 1 day.

- **DC:** 24 +2 per day.
- **Success:** You travel at a rate of 50 miles per day.
- **Special:** Every member of a traveling group must make succeed at an Endurance check in order for the entire group to travel at the increased rate. A group can choose to leave stragglers behind, effectively splitting the adventuring party.

## Heal (Wisdom)

### TREAT POISON

Make a Heal check in order to reverse the damage that has been done to a poisoned character.

**Treat Poison:** Standard action.

- **DC:** 20 + the level of the poison.
- **Success:** The subject automatically saves against any effect caused by the poison that a save can end. If the poison causes ongoing damage then the subject regains hit points equal to the ongoing poison damage.





## History (Intelligence)

### HISTORICAL AID

Make a History check in order to provide an ally with advice. While you may or may not be knowledgeable of the subject at hand, your knowledge of historical events, legends, and obscure trivia can come in handy at odd times.

**Historical Aid:** Standard action.

- **DC:** 15
- **Success:** You give an ally with a +2 bonus on a check with one of the following skills; Arcana, Diplomacy, Nature, Religion, Streetwise.

## Nature (Wisdom)

### FIND MEDICINAL HERBS

You make a Nature check in order to harness the healing power of the wilds. The Nature skill can be used to gather up herbs, mushrooms, and berries that have properties that aid a diseased character.

**Find Medicinal Herbs:** 1 hour.

- **DC:** 10 + the disease's level.
- **Success:** The diseased character gets a +5 bonus on his or her next Endurance check to resist the effects of a disease. Alternately, an ally who is tending to a diseased character may gain a +5 bonus to his or her next Heal check.

## Religion (Intelligence)

### PREACH

Make a Religion check to give a rousing sermon that stirs the hearts of the faithful. Any creature with the same alignment as you will receive your preaching well and you can gain their favor.

**Preach:** 5 minutes.

- **DC:** 20 (see chart for modifiers)
- **Success:** The initial attitude of any creature present improves by one step. The creature must be of the same alignment as you and must be able to see and hear your entire sermon. The creature must also be able to understand the language that you are speaking.

<b>NPC or Monster Attitude</b>	<b>DC</b>
Friendly	-5
Unfriendly	+5
Peaceful	+0
Hostile	+10

## Streetwise (Charisma)

### LAY LOW

You use your knowledge of urban settlements in order to keep yourself and your comrades from drawing any attention to yourselves. You know the best places to hide in a big city and which people you can deal with without answering too many questions.

**Lay Low:** 1 hour.

- **Opposed Check:** Streetwise vs. Insight when you are trying to stay anonymous. Streetwise vs. Streetwise if someone is actively searching for you and questioning the locals about your whereabouts.
- **Success:** You avoid the notice of the local authorities and other important people in the area. If someone is actively pursuing you, they lose the trail.
- **Failure:** Your presence in the city becomes common knowledge and anyone who is actively looking for you learns of your recent movements.

# NEW RITUALS

## DREADFUL BLIGHT

*The prince screamed in horror when he saw his sickly, pox marked face in the mirror.*

**Level:** 16                      **Component Cost:** 3,600 gp  
**Category:** Binding            **Market Price:** 9,000 gp  
**Time:** 1 hour                    **Key Skill:** Arcana  
**Duration:** Instantaneous

Dreadful Blight causes a single creature to become afflicted by terrible and lasting misery. The ritual can cause the subject to suffer from one of several different effects including madness, disease, or bad luck. Upon completing the ritual, make an Arcana check. The DC is equal to one of the subject's defense scores, either Fortitude, Reflex, or Will. The defense score you choose to attack determines the form of the blight being inflicted upon the subject.

*Fortitude:* The subject becomes infected with a disease of your choice. The level of the disease must be equal to or lower than your own level.

*Reflex:* The subject is struck by a bolt of bad luck. The subject suffers a -5 penalty on all defenses, attack rolls, skill checks, and saving throws for a number of days equal to your level.

*Will:* The subject is driven mad by visions that torment him or her. The subject believes it is being attacked by swarms of vermin, invisible spirits, or sadistic imps. The subject takes 20 ongoing psychic damage (save ends).

This ritual is physically taxing upon the person performing it, causing him or her to take damage equal to his or her bloodied value. Besides the material components, the person performing the ritual must have a physical sample of the subject; hair, scales, skin, and blood are the most commonly used samples.

A cherished object or even a physical location can serve as a sample as well.

## THORN WALL

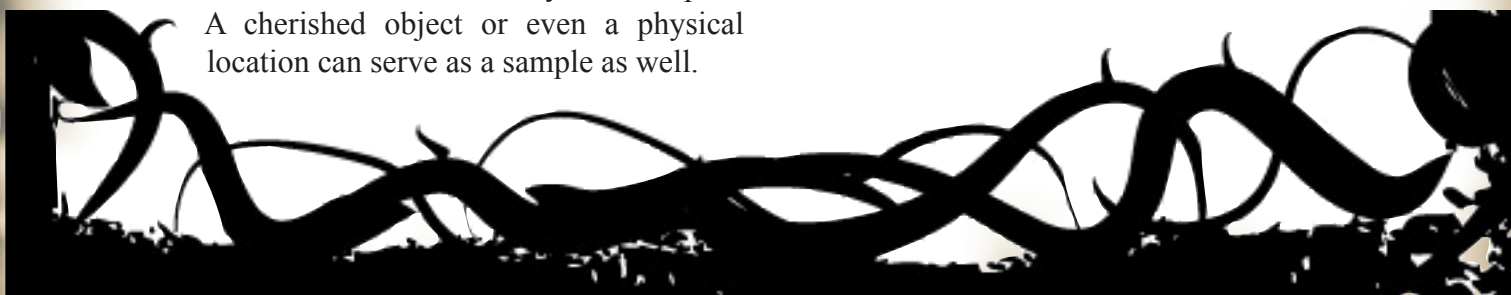
*Rare herbs are tossed on the fire. A pungent smoke rises from the flames as you enter a trance and begin chanting. Within moments, the plant life comes alive, slowly working its way into a formidable barrier.*

**Level:** 7                              **Component Cost:** 200 gp  
**Category:** Warding                **Market Price:** 680 gp  
**Time:** 30 minutes                **Key Skill:** Nature  
**Duration:** 24 hours

This ritual creates a protective wall that you can shape and form to suit your needs. The barrier is made from the vines and branches of native plants that have been enlarged and covered with wicked thorns. The wall cannot occupy any space that is more than 10 squares away from where you perform the ritual.

The length of the wall is determined by your Nature check result. The wall is a living creature and will actively harass any intruder who gets too close. Squares adjacent to the wall are considered difficult terrain for anyone other than yourself and up to five of your allies that you designate at the time of the ritual. Anyone attempting to cross over the wall must make an Athletics check; the wall is five feet high and has a climb DC of 20. Any enemy attempting to make a Stealth check within the area protected by the wall takes a -5 penalty to his or her check.

Nature Check Result	Result
9 or lower	12 squares
10-19	18 squares
20-29	24 squares
30-39	30 squares
40 or higher	36 squares





## PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS WARRIOR

*The scent of sanctified incense fills your nostrils and bolsters your resolve. An unearthly presence draws near as you head into battle.*

**Level:** 7

**Component Cost:** 280 gp

**Category:** Exploration

**Market Price:** 125 gp

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Key Skill:** Religion

**Duration:** Until discharged

You implore gods, spirits, or other powerful beings to watch over and guide your comrades. The Path of the Righteous Warrior ritual lets you designate up to five ritual participants, including yourself, who gain a bonus on their next saving throw versus death. If this saving throw is successful, then you may spend a healing surge. The ritual is discharged when the saving throw is rolled.

Religion Check Result	Saving Throw Bonus
9 or lower	+1
10-19	+2
20-29	+3
30-39	+4
40 or higher	+5

