

# CRAFTING MAGIC ITEMS

## A GUIDE TO ARTIFICE

**DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**

New rules for crafting magic items  
in the world's greatest roleplaying game

# INTRODUCTION

Fantasy is such a rich genre full of unexpected concepts that remain, nonetheless, familiar; the magic sword of flame, the cape of flight, the ring which grants invisibility. We love receiving these magic items, and many of us love even more to be able to make them ourselves.

This guide exists to expand upon the newest rules for crafting items introduced in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*. The rules outlined in this document are designed to work with those rules, not replace them entirely, and you will need a copy of *Xanathar's Guide* to fully understand everything here. In this guide you will find additional details for item creation such as exact methods of crafting, material components, and updated rules to speed up crafting times to more usable levels.

Throughout this guide we will be following Bruenor, the dwarf fighter from the opening pages of Chapter 1 in the *Player's Handbook*, as he sets about crafting himself a set of *dwarven plate*.

## ARTIFICE TECHNIQUES

The practice of making a magic item is known as artifice, and individuals who specialize in crafting and inventing such items are artificers. And just as there are many different martial art forms, there exist more than one way to craft an item. Two techniques in particular are most common.

The first is to construct the item from scratch, building and shaping the raw materials yourself and infusing them throughout the crafting process with the arcane energies needed for the magic to hold. Some magic items, such as *dragon scale mail*, must be made in this way; the materials involved in its creation are so integral to the final item that it has to be made from scratch. This is the technique most often used by smiths or other artisans with tool proficiencies, as they have the needed technical skill.

The second technique is to enchant an existing item with magical energies, infusing an already finished product with magic in just the right way to grant it new properties. This is as simple as purchasing an already-made suit of armor or weapon and incorporating magic into it. Many wizards or sorcerers use this technique, as they do not have the knowledge necessary to create the item themselves but do have the arcane proficiency to properly infuse the item later.

Both techniques have their advantages, and the exact methodology you employ will depend on your own knowledge and the kind of item you are trying to craft.

## GATHERING MATERIALS

Crafting items is an artform, and no artist can create a masterpiece without the proper tools.

## MUNDANE ITEMS

*Xanathar's Guide* expresses item creation in a gold cost to help simplify the crafting process; it costs coin to procure the material necessary for making something. Mundane items (items which are not magical) require 1/2 their gold cost in

various materials in order to be crafted.

A regular longsword, for example, normally costs 15 gp, and so to craft one would require 7 gp and 5 sp's worth of materials. These materials include the metal which will form the blade, hilt, and guard, leather for the grip, oil to quench and temper the blade, and perhaps even the fuel for the heat needed to work the metal. For mundane items, most DMs will be happy to allow you to simply deduct the final cost from your coin purse after a trip to the nearest supply shop, provided of course that logically required materials aren't in short supply.

Unlike with magic items, mundane items *must* be forged from scratch, and require the use of a tool.

## MAGIC ITEMS

Magic items are naturally complicated things, as you are attempting to bend the Weave around and within an object to create a magical effect. The rules concerning the material components for creating magic items in this document are nearly identical to the ones described in *Xanathar's Guide* (page 129). The differences lie in the use of residuum and the way formulas and exotic materials work.

## RESIDUUM

Existing in older editions of *Dungeons and Dragons*, residuum is quite literally magic dust; pure arcana crystallized into a physical form. It is most often traded as a sparkling, silvery powder. Residuum can be found naturally in some locations such as the Astral Plane, or it can be created by disenchanting (destroying) existing magical items. Residuum can be traded like any other currency, and is very valuable due to its use in artifice and its high cost-to-weight ratio (residuum is described in its gold cost, and even 10,000 gp worth of it weighs less than a gold coin while taking up just slightly more space).

The gold cost of a magic item specifically describes the amount of residuum needed to craft it, rather than the cost of various other materials as described for mundane items. Disenchanting a magic item produces 20% of its crafting cost in residuum, and the process of disenchanting may require specific tools (such as a magical furnace) or a special ritual to complete.

If you are constructing a magic item from scratch, you must provide both the gold cost of the mundane version of the item and the residuum needed for the magic item's rarity.

### GOLD AS RESIDUUM

In my own setting, money and magic are mysteriously tied. Breaking down coinage results in the appropriate amount of residuum being created, and this can be done on the fly as part of the casting of a spell. Magic users can thus use gold directly to cast spells with a gold cost or craft magic items, as the gold provided simultaneously functions as the residuum needed. Your game may use a similar system.

## FORMULAS

Because of their complexity, magic items require the artificer to have access to a formula, a recipe which details how the item can be created. A crafting formula can exist in many forms. One could be found as a blueprint in a book, while another could be passed on through a magical transference of knowledge. Magic items which confer only a bonus to AC or attack and damage rolls, such as *+1 armor* or a *+3 arrow*, do not require a formula to craft; they are simple enough to create.

If you wish to create a magic item you must have a formula of some kind to work from. If you do not, you can first make an Arcana check to try and determine if you can make the item from pure ingenuity, before any materials are even collected. This check represents not only your knowledge of the item (such as if you even know it could exist), but how you believe it could function and what materials you may need to acquire for it. The DC of this check is determined by the item's rarity; 5 for a common item, 10 for uncommon, 15 for rare, 20 for very rare, and 25 for legendary. You have advantage on the check if you've already used or inspected the same kind of item in the past. If you are successful, you are considered to have a workable formula in your head to begin crafting, including knowing the residuum cost of the item, any exotic materials, the tools needed, and how long it will take to craft.

Failure means the knowledge of the item is beyond you, and you must find a formula through research (see page 132 in *Xanathar's Guide*) or whatever other means your DM may see fit. If you attempt to research it, you must get a number of successes determined by the item's rarity to find a proper formula; 3 for a legendary item, 2 for a very rare or rare item, and 1 for an uncommon or common item.

## EXOTIC MATERIALS

Powerful magical items require the use of exotic materials, either collected from monsters or taken from areas charged with magical energy. Most minor common and minor uncommon magic items (see page 140-145 of *Xanathar's Guide*) do not require them, though there are exceptions (such as a *potion of hill giant strength*). As with formulas, magic items which confer a bonus do not require exotic components to craft.

If your DM decides that the magic item you want to craft requires an exotic material, there are potentially ways to acquire it that do not require you to actually face the monster in question yourself. You can attempt to buy the material from a seller, exactly as if you were trying to find a seller of a magic item as described on page 126 of *Xanathar's Guide* (the cost of the exotic material can be determined from the Magic Item Price table on the same page, based on the target magic item's rarity; just divide the result by 10). Or you could potentially hire someone else to try and track the item down for you, though there is no guarantee they will be successful. If all else fails, you will need to hunt down the material yourself. Whatever you do to get it, the cost of acquiring this material is not included in the magic item's gold (residuum) cost.

## CRAFTING AN ITEM THAT CASTS SPELLS

Some magic items can cast specific spells, such as a *medallion of thoughts*. When crafting such items, you (or at least one other person working on the item with you) must

know the spell or spells which the item will later cast, and must cast each spell into the item each day spent crafting it, expending a spell slot as normal. Potions are exempt from this rule, as their reagents and the exotic material which goes into them generally provides the magic for the one-time-use spell.

## LOCATION

Some items require special equipment which cannot be easily carried on the road. Smithing and glassblowing, for example, require a forge or furnace of some kind to create the necessary heat to work metal or glass. It is generally impossible to craft items in the back of a bumpy wagon or on a horse due to the fine nature of the work. At minimum, most crafting requires a solid surface to work on such as a bench or table, but your DM may decide that you need other equipment that is not included in your artisan's tool kit.

## CRAFTING BRUENOR'S ARMOR, STEP 1

Bruenor decides he wants to craft a set of *dwarven plate*. He doesn't have a formula to work from, nor the arcana knowledge to figure it out himself. Instead, he spends a week researching the item and comes back with 2 successes, giving him access to a formula. He learns that he will need 20,000 gp worth of residuum, and essence from the elemental spirit of an iron golem to forge the armor. A few days later Bruenor returns home with the essence after visiting his wizard friend, who owns such a golem and owed Bruenor a favor.

## THE CRAFTING PROCESS

Once all materials are gathered and you have a proper location to do your work, the crafting process can begin.

## THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

Your DM helps determine which tool will be used for the crafting process. Weapons and metal armor typically require one to use smithing tools, capes or clothing require weaver's tools, and leather armor requires leatherworker's tools. The following table expands on the one found on page 129 in *Xanathar's Guide* with suggestions for which tool to use for crafting specific items.

Tool	Item
Alchemist's supplies	Potions
Cobbler's tools	Boots
Glassblower's tools	Glasswork
Herbilism kit	Antitoxin, <i>potions of healing</i>
Jeweler's tools	Amulets, gemcutting, rings
Leatherworker's tools	Leather armor, bags, boots
Poisoner's kit	Poison
Potter's tools	Pottery, ceramics
Smith's tools	Armor, weapons
Tinker's tools	Wondrous items, clockwork
Weaver's tools	Cloaks, clothing, robes, bags

This table assumes that you are creating the item from scratch using raw materials. When enchanting an existing item you instead use the Arcana skill, as there is no longer a use for tools in the process as the item is already made.

When crafting an item, a character must have proficiency in the appropriate tool. If you are enchanting an existing object, the character needs to have proficiency in the Arcana skill. Multiple characters can work together to make an item if the item is large or complex enough to allow it, but all characters involved must have the necessary proficiencies to contribute. When collaborating in this way, the time each individual contributes to the item is deducted from the remaining time before the item is complete.

### MORE THAN ONE WAY TO HAMMER A NAIL

The table on the previous page is a rough guideline, and is not designed to be an exhaustive list nor a final word on tool use. *Goggles of night* could be crafted with tinker's tools, but it would make more sense to use leatherworker's tools to fashion a *bag of holding*, or smith's tools to forge *horseshoes of speed*, even though all of these are wondrous items. Your DM may even decide that multiple tools could be used for a particular item; *boots of levitation*, for example, could potentially be made by a leatherworker or a cobbler, and some rings can be forged by a smith.

### CRAFTING BRUENOR'S ARMOR, STEP 2

Bruenor knows how to use many kinds of tools, from smith's tools to woodcarvers tools. However, he does not have proficiency in the Arcana skill. Bruenor and his DM decide the dwarf will need to use his proficiency in smith's tools to make his armor from scratch; they make the most sense for a suit of heavy armor, and Bruenor does not have the arcane knowledge to enchant an existing suit.

### DETERMINE CRAFTING TIME

All items have a base crafting time, represented by the rules found on page 128 and 129 in *Xanathar's Guide*. Follow the rules as described to determine the time necessary for your item, and then convert that time to days (this makes the process easier to calculate later), where one workweek is equal to 5 days. A rare magic item, for example, has a base crafting time of 50 days, while a longsword would have a base crafting time of 5 days. If you are attempting to create a magic item from scratch, the base time for the item is the longest of the two options (in this case for a rare magic longsword, 50 days). Enchanting an existing object with your Arcana skill always uses the time giving for a magic item.

Once your DM has determined which skill or tool is used for the crafting process, divide the base crafting time by your proficiency bonus with that skill or tool. You do not include any ability modifiers; crafting an item often requires a complex combination of Dexterity, Intelligence, Strength, and Wisdom depending on the item in question, and so we focus solely on your proficiency overall. The final number is the number of days needed to craft the item, rounded up to the nearest whole number.

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### OVERTIME HOURS

Normally, you will only spend 8 hours per day crafting an item, leaving you time to sleep, eat, make camp if in the wilderness, and other necessities. However, you can choose to spend additional time crafting if you have the hours available.

Crafting time is separated into 8-hour shifts, each of which represents a day of work toward the completion of the item; less time wouldn't allow you to get any proper work done. You can work multiple shifts a day to try and get work done faster, but you must make a Constitution saving throw after each extra shift, gaining a level of exhaustion if you fail. The DC starts at 10 after 2 shifts spent crafting, and increases by 5 for each additional shift without taking a long rest. The DC resets to 10 once you finish a long rest.

Once you have a level of exhaustion it is recommended that you stop attempting to craft, as you are fighting to stay awake and could easily make a catastrophic mistake. If you continue anyway you must make a relevant skill or tool check (with no ability modifiers included) after every shift you continue to craft while exhausted. The DC is equal to the item's rarity; 5 for mundane items and common magic items, 10 for uncommon items, 15 for rare, 20 for very rare, and 25 for legendary, and increases by 5 for every additional shift after that. Note that, due to the effects of exhaustion, you make this check with disadvantage. If you pass the check then you've managed to continue work without any destructive results. Consult the Overworking Consequences table if you fail, suffering an outcome based on how much you failed the check by. You suffer the outcome of that level and all relevant previous levels (for example; if you fail the check by 5 you lose all the residuum needed for the item **and** the item is damaged).

### OVERWORKING CONSEQUENCES

Failure Severity	Outcome
<5	The item is cracked or damaged. Increase the time needed to craft it by 1/10 of its total (minimum one day), and its cost in materials by 1/10 to repair it
5	If a mundane item, the item is completely destroyed, and you must start your work over. If a magic item, the residuum used to craft the item is completely wasted, and you must acquire the full amount again before continuing
10	The exotic material is damaged or destroyed, and you must acquire it again before continuing
15 or more	The item explodes in an arcane backlash. It and all of its material components are completely destroyed. Each creature within 20 feet of the object must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the item would have dealt another kind of damage once completed, such as a <i>flame tongue</i> weapon dealing fire damage, your DM may decide that the damage is that type instead.

## CRAFTING IN BATCHES

It always takes a minimum of a day to finish crafting a single item, no matter what your proficiency bonus is. The exception is for consumable items, such as potions, ammunition (mundane ammunition is crafted in batches as described in the Equipment section of the *Player's Handbook*), thrown weapons such as handaxes, and any other items which your DM decides wouldn't require a full day's work to complete.

For these, the number of items that can be made must be able to fit wholly within an 8-hour day, and you can make a maximum number of items per day equal to your proficiency bonus with the associated skill or tool. You must have the materials needed for each item as normal.

## CRAFTING BRUENOR'S ARMOR, STEP 3

Bruenor has his 20,000 gp of residuum, 750 gp worth of metal and other materials to forge the armor, and the essence of his iron golem. He spent the time to gather the knowledge needed to craft his armor, and is now ready to begin work.

Bruenor has a +4 proficiency bonus with his smith's tools. *Dwarven plate* is considered "very rare" for a magic item, and so has a base time of 25 workweeks, or 125 days. However, a set of mundane plate armor costs 1,500 gp. Divided by 50, it has a base time of 30 workweeks, or 150 days. This is the larger of the two, so we divide 150 by Bruenor's proficiency bonus, and determine that Bruenor will need 38 days to craft his armor.

Bruenor starts working, spending one leisurely shift (8 hours) each day crafting his armor. After 38 days of work he is the proud owner of a powerful, self-forged magic item

## SPELL SCROLLS AND HEALING POTIONS

Scribing a spell scroll and brewing a *potion of healing* do not follow the same rules for other magic items described in this guide. The only change from the rules found in *Xanathar's Guide* for these items alters the crafting time. As with other items, simply convert the number of workweeks into days, and then divide that by your Arcana proficiency (for a scroll) or herbalism kit proficiency (for a *potion of healing*).

## VARIANT: HOURLY RATES

As a DM, you might decide that you don't want to limit crafting to full 8-hour shifts, instead opting to track crafting by the hour. Doing so gives characters more freedom with which to craft, as they no longer need to set aside full 8-hour shifts for the process. At the same time, tracking by the hour implies an extra amount of effort put into the work whenever the character is working.

If you wish to use this variant, simply calculate the number of hours needed to craft an item rather than the number of days (multiply the number of workweeks by 40), and then divide that result by the character's proficiency bonus. Bruenor's armor, for example, would require 300 hours to forge through this system, and Bruenor could spend any amount of hours a day to reach that goal. However, 8 hours remains the normal workday for most people, and working beyond that can cause fatigue. For each additional hour of crafting beyond 8 hours, the character must make a Constitution saving throw at the end of the hour. The DC is 10 for the first hour, and increases by 1 for each hour beyond that. On a failed saving throw, as before, the character suffers one level of exhaustion, and must stop crafting or roll on the Overworking Consequences table as normal. The DC for this table increases by 1 for each extra hour the character crafts while exhausted. DCs for overworking reset once the character finishes a long rest.

An item requires a minimum of 8 hours of work to be crafted using this variant, but you can still craft in batches. It takes a minimum of 8 hours to craft a batch of items, and the number of items you can craft per batch is still limited by your proficiency bonus. If, for example, a character could craft a single handaxe in 1.5 hours, then they could craft anywhere from 1-5 of them over 8 hours of crafting time (provided their proficiency bonus was high enough and they had enough materials for all of them). Over another 8 hours they could craft 1-5 more handaxes, and so on.

