

THUNDERSTONES AND SMOKESTICKS

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO MUNDANE ALCHEMY



A 5E RULES SUPPLEMENT BY THIEVES' CANT GAMES

MUNDANE ALCHEMY

So you've gotten your hands on your very own set of alchemist's supplies...now what? These tools are necessary for downtime activities like crafting potions, but they can also be used to craft a number of non-magical items as well. From thunderstones to smokesticks, this guide will get you started crafting some old favorites and inventing new formulae of your own!

PREREQUISITES

As described in the *Players Handbook*, *alchemist's supplies* are artisan tools which require a separate proficiency to use. Crafting any of the items in this guide requires both access to *alchemist's supplies* and proficiency in their use from a class feature, character background, or feat. In addition, you must know or have the *alchemical formula* for the item being crafted in your possession.

ALCHEMICAL FORMULAE

An *alchemical formula* is like a recipe. It lists both the materials and steps necessary to craft a mundane alchemical item. Documenting an *alchemical formula* is a non-magical process requiring only ink, parchment and time (normally 1 hour). However, most alchemists jealously guard these formulae as trade secrets to preserve their own livelihood. The DM determines the availability and final cost of any individual formula, but the starting point for these negotiations is typically at least 5x the purchase price of the alchemical item produced by the formula. An entire book of such formulae or the personal journal of an accomplished alchemist would be a near-priceless find to the right buyer.

EXPANDED ALCHEMICAL CRAFTING

The crafting rules given in this section can be used to expand upon the approach provided in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* and *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*, or you can use the material here to inspire your own systems.

MATERIALS COST

Similar to consumable magic items, such as potions or scrolls, the creation cost for alchemical items is typically half the cost to purchase the item.

CRAFTING CHECKS

The crafting rules included in the Downtime Activities sections of the official rulebooks do not require ability checks to produce an item. The assumption is simply made that characters with access to the appropriate proficiencies, time and materials are successful in their work. Instead, only the required investment of time (workweeks) and the expense of materials (GP) is specified.

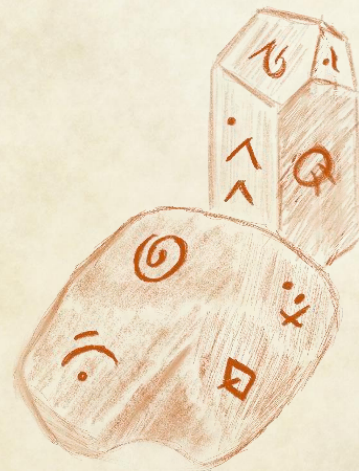
Due to their potentially imbalancing nature, however, the DM may determine the crafting of any mundane alchemical item while outside of a lab environment requires an ability check. Or perhaps, even within a fully stocked and dedicated lab, certain formulae might require ability checks due to the inherent volatility of the reagents involved.

Alchemist's supplies are portable (8 lbs per the *Player's Handbook*) and may be used in the field. As artisan's tools designed for the manipulation and combining of reagents, crafting checks using *alchemist's supplies* are normally made by adding a character's Intelligence modifier to their proficiency modifier.

Alchemy crafting modifier = your proficiency bonus + your Intelligence modifier



If required, the DC to craft an alchemical item is determined by the DM based on the circumstances under which the check is made and the complexity of the formula. Suggested DC's are listed in the table below, but may vary outside of a dedicated lab environment due to quality of ingredients, field equipment, camp conditions, or similar.



CRAFTING MUNDANE ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Item Name	Materials Cost*	Purchase Price	Crafting Time	Suggested DC**
Acid	13 gp	25 gp	1 day	10
Alchemist's Fire	25 gp	50 gp	1 day	10
Healing Draught	20 gp	40 gp	1 day	15
Smoke Stick	13 gp	25 gp	1 day	15
Swift Step Draught	25 gp	50 gp	1 day	20
Tanglefoot Bag	25 gp	50 gp	1 day	20
Thunderstone (common)	25 gp	50 gp	1 day	20
Thunderstone (crystalline)	30 gp	60 gp	1 day	20

*crafting cost for consumable items is typically half the purchase price.

**Crafting checks may or may not be required at the DM's discretion.

USING ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Using an alchemical item non-offensively, such as drinking a draught or pouring acid into a lock, requires using an action while in combat. Throwing an alchemical item at an enemy is considered a ranged attack with an improvised weapon that has a range of up to 20 feet.

ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

ITEM DESCRIPTIONS

See the Equipment section of the *Players Handbook* for descriptions of **Acid (vial)** and **Alchemist's Fire**.

Healing Draught. A creature that drinks a vial of this healing liquid as an action regains 1d8 hit points. Once a creature regains hit points from this alchemical formula, the creature can't do so again until it finishes a long rest.

Smoke Stick. Triggering this stick produces a thick plume of smoke. You can hold on to the stick or throw it up to 20 feet as an action. The area in a 10-foot radius around the stick is filled with thick smoke and becomes heavily obscured. The smoke persists for 1 minute then disappears and the stick cannot be used again once triggered.

Swift Step Draught. As an action a creature can drink a vial of this bubbling, brown liquid. Doing so increases the creature's speed by 10 feet for 1 minute.

Tanglefoot Bag. Hurling This bag of writhing, sticky black tar at a point on the ground or a creature causes it to burst on impact. The area in a 5-foot radius is covered with sticky goo and becomes difficult terrain for 1 minute. Any creature starting its turn on the ground in that area has its speed halved for that turn. A creature directly struck by a successful ranged attack with a tanglefoot bag must make a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be restrained. A creature restrained in this manner can use its action to make a Strength check against DC 10 to free itself.

Thunderstone (common). This stone shard can be hurled at a creature, object or hard surface. On impact, the shard shatters with a blast of concussive energy. Each creature within 10 feet of the point of impact must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be deafened and stunned for 1 round.

Thunderstone (crystalline). This crystalline shard can be hurled at a creature, object or hard surface. On impact, the shard shatters with a blast of concussive energy. Each creature within 10 feet of the point of impact must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be knocked prone and pushed 10 feet away from that point.



OPTIONAL RULES

FORMULA SCALING

As non-magical items that are available both for common purchase and crafting, the effects of the alchemical items in this guide are fairly low-powered by design. With additional time and expense, however, the DM may choose to allow the creation of *greater*, *superior*, and *supreme* versions of existing alchemical items.

Improving a formula, however, isn't just a matter of increasing one ingredient or another. Manipulating alchemical effects is an art of careful balance and timing. Further, if the DM so determines, crafting higher tier alchemical items may require the discovery of entirely new formulae, either by acquisition or experimentation, requiring an investment of time and successful crafting checks.

These advanced processes are even more time-consuming and complex than common alchemical formulae. Likewise, the cost of materials required to produce these more potent concoctions grows significantly as more ingredients are consumed by the increased duration and quantity of the reactions involved.

IMPROVED POTENCY ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Tier	Time	Cost Multiplier	Effect	DC Modifier	Radius Increase
Greater	1 workweek	4x	x2	+5	+5'
Superior	3 workweeks	40x	x4	+10	+10'
Supreme	4 workweeks	400x	x5	+15	+15'

If skill checks are required by the DM, the DC to craft a scaled formula increases by tier according to the below progression using the "DC Modifier" column. A successful roll must be made for each week of work. At the DM's discretion, recovery from a failed roll may be permitted with a second crafting check against a DC increased by +5 due to the extended duration of the alchemical process (a skilled alchemist might be able to recover an overly acidic distillation by the timely addition of an appropriate mitigating compound, for instance). Additionally, the DM may choose to rule that items produced by a recovered formula have unpredictable secondary effects!

IMPROVED FORMULAE

The successful crafting of an improved formula results in the creation of an alchemical item with one of the following improvements:

Increased radius of effect. Alchemical items that produce an effect within a defined radius can be improved to increase that radius by 5' per tier level according to the "Radius Increase" column in the above chart.

Increased duration of effect. Alchemical items that produce an effect over time can be improved to extend that time by tier level using the multiplier list in the "Effect" column in the above chart.

Increased saving throw. Alchemical items that produce an effect requiring a creature to make a saving throw can be improved to increase DC per tier level using the "DC Modifier" column in the above chart.

Increased damage or healing. Alchemical items that produce an effect which applies a die roll to determine damage or healing can be improved by tier level using the multiplier listed in the "Effect" column in the above chart to increase the number of dice rolled.

Only 1 improved effect may be applied per crafted item and the DM decides whether such an improvement is applicable for a given item. The improved effect applied must be declared before crafting is attempted and cannot be altered during the process.

POISONCRAFT

The 5e core rulebooks require proficiency with a *poisoner's kit* for the crafting or extraction of poison and proficiency with an *herbalism kit* to craft antitoxin. These are both separate proficiencies from alchemist's supplies. Previous editions however, utilized an Alchemy skill for checks to identify a poison. As DM, you may choose to allow similar checks.

A good rule of thumb for setting the DC level of these checks is to use the saving throw DC of the poison being identified, which tends to reflect to rarity of the toxin involved in its crafting. An extra +5 may be added to the DC for checks to identify *contact* or *inhaled* poisons, which are inherently more dangerous and must be handled carefully. Additionally, if a check to identify a poison of these types fails by 5 or more, the DM may choose to rule that that the alchemist suffers the *poisoned* condition themselves, as well as any additional effects or damage dice deemed appropriate by the circumstances.

DESIGN METHODOLOGY

The primary intent of this guide is to set forth crafting rules that are balanced within the 5e ruleset. To achieve this, the rules in this guide were derived from reasonable extensions of established content in official 5e core rulebooks or playtest material produced under *Unearthed Arcana*.

MUNDANE VS. MAGIC ALCHEMY

Based on the descriptions, low cost, and power level of items already introduced in 5e as standard equipment (*alchemist's fire*, *acid*) in the *Player's Handbook*, alchemical items are presumed non-magical. Additionally, crafting rules presented in the core rulebooks establish proficiency with artisan tools like alchemist's supplies and herbalism kits can be a requirement to craft potions, but are not sufficient to do so without the ability to cast spells associated with the potion's effect. However, proficiency with artisan tools can be taken without access to spellcasting. In this scenario, these artisan tools and proficiencies can presumably be used to craft non-magical items. Within this context, the close association of alchemy to official mechanics around brewing potions of healing still serve as a good model for derived crafting mechanics for mundane alchemical items without the spellcasting-based restriction. In particular, this is reflected in the model for materials costs and crafting times.

POWER OF ALCHEMICAL ITEMS

Although most of the items in this guide were introduced in previous editions of the game, several were first established as existing in 5e in any form in conjunction with the initial *Unearthed Arcana: Artificer* class rules. Although later altered, those playtest rules presented alchemy as a magical class ability which generated formulae using a class-specific magic item called an Alchemist's Satchel. As such, the power level of those formulae scaled with the Artificer class level of the PC producing them. For balance purposes, non-magical items that are available both for common purchase and crafting should not enable a character without the appropriate subclass to truly replicate a class feature.



Therefore, power levels for the products of mundane alchemical crafting are taken directly from the *Players Handbook* entries for those items or derived from the Level 1 properties of the corresponding formulae introduced in the original *Unearthed Arcana: Artificer* content. Optional rules for formula scaling, derived from the rules for brewing Health Potions presented in the Downtime Activities sections of the official rulebooks are included above for DM's looking introduce more high-powered alchemical items into their game.

DESIGNING NEW FORMULA

To stay closely aligned with official rulesets, the crafting rules presented in this guide include only alchemical items that have been established as existing in 5e in some form either in core rulebooks or *Unearthed Arcana* playtest material. Previous editions, however, included additional items which could be crafted utilizing the Alchemy skill. DM's wishing to introduce *sunrods*, *tindertwigs*, or custom homebrew alchemical items into their game can use the above methodology as guidelines. Similar to the items produced by the initial version of the Artificer's *Alchemical Formula* class ability, alchemical items replicating the effects of various cantrips and level 1 spells might be available in any given campaign (at the DM's discretion). In general, the effects created by these mundane consumables should rarely inflict more than 1 damage die per round. Likewise, they should be derived or reduced from the lowest possible range and durations possible under any spell being used as a model.ugh most of the items in this guide were introduced in previous editions of the game, several were first established as existing in 5e in any form in conjunction with the initial *Unearthed Arcana: Artificer* class rules. Although later altered, those playtest rules presented alchemy as a magical class ability which generated formulae using a class-specific magic item called an Alchemist's Satchel. As such, the power level of those formulae scaled with the Artificer class level of the PC producing them. For balance purposes, non-magical items that are available both for common purchase and crafting should not enable a character without the appropriate subclass to truly replicate a class feature.



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