Master & Apprentice

Gaining new levels with style

by Fletcher Haug

Does your game go something like this?

"After you kill the last ghoul, everyone gains enough experience points to go to the next level," the GM says. "Wizard, you learn two new spells of higher level and add them to your spellbook. Fighter, you learn three new attack maneuvers. Bard, you gain expertise with one of your skills. And ranger, you now have a beast companion."

If it seems unrealistic for a character to instantaneously learn and master complex abilities, then Level Training is the subsystem for you. Level Training is a new tool you can use as a GM can use to help bring realism into a game and heighten your players' immersion in the game world. How did the fighter discover his new maneuvers, and where did he gain a new tool proficiency? Answering this question allows you to introduce plot hooks, rivalries, allies, patrons, new locales, and important information to the players. The Level Training system also introduces *perks* and *mojo*—two ways to give players control over the story—which can be gained during the level up process.

Perks

Perks represent different things to a GM and to players. To players, perks are rewards and advantages awarded for completing Level Training. Leaning about a safe-house, befriending the quartermaster of a Fighting House, being owed a favor by a noble, and gaining the confidence of an innkeeper are examples of perks that a player can receive. Other examples might be learning the use of a specialized weapon, spell or skill, creating a potion, or being granted the use of a temple teleportation circle. Perks make a player feel connected to the game world.

To the GM, perks are an important tool that can be used to introduce NPCs, story lines, and game-world details. Players love to have a go-to guy or a local hangout, and perks can be used by the GM to introduce these game elements smoothly and eloquently. Even if a player scores poorly on the Training Table, they should still receive perks, but these perks may come with drawbacks. For instance, you are befriend by a local barkeep who is a reliable fence, but later you discover he suffers from lycanthropy, or a town guard who owes you a favor has made an enemy of the local thieves' guild.

Mojo

Mojo represents a moment of clear thought, an inspirational insight or perfect recollection of an event, conversation or text. Mojo allows players to guide the direction of the story and give themselves the edge in a roleplaying scene—at the GM's discretion, of course. For example, a wizard needs to decipher a difficult runic script before he can pass

through a portal. He uses a point of mojo and recalls seeing a similar script during his training studies and applies that knowledge to pass through the portal. A fighter uses a point of mojo and recognizes an emblem worn by the guard captain as one used by the dojo she trained in. This knowledge wins over the captain, thereby gaining entrance to the restricted inner city. Mojo works best in campaigns where collaborative storytelling is king, but any GM that wants his or her players to feel empowered can use Mojo in her campaign.

Level Training

Depending on the level attained, a PC may gain major benefits (new class features, spells, etc.) or only minor benefits like additional hit points. If the new level awards the PC with access to higher level spells, new class features, or other significant improvements, they will require a master to teach them new techniques. If this advancement includes only hit points, abilities increases, additional attacks or new spells of the same level, perhaps level training isn't needed. As the GM, you determine at what levels a character needs to seek Level Training. Note that sometimes a character will advance a level in the middle of an adventure. If this level provides major benefits to the player it is suggested that you allow the player to gain hit points, ability increases or other minor benefits, but require that they receive training before gaining the major benefits of that level.

A character's ability scores and related skills determine how quickly they train and what is gained from that training. Look at the skills the character possesses and determine which of these skills will be relevant to the training. For example, wizard training might require rigorous study

(Intelligence [Arcana]), long hours of preparing and labeling alchemical ingredients (Intelligence [Nature]), and deciphering complex and lengthy lectures (Wisdom [Insight]). Additionally, the wizard will have to interact with his mentor and any other apprentices in training (Charisma [Persuasion]). A Charisma-based skill should always be one of the skills used in the skill checks to represent the character's interaction with the mentor and other pupils. Be sure to choose some skills which the PC is not proficient with, since few players are experts in all areas of their training.

That's a total of four skills being used for the wizard's skill checks; Arcana, Nature, Insight and Persuasion. The player should now make five skill checks against these four skills. Since Arcana is central to most wizardly studies, two checks will be made against this ability. If you want to give the PC better odds of success, roll four times for each skill check and the average of these four rolls is the number used as the final result. This lowers the odds of a single poor roll ruining their training, as well as representing that these checks are the result of many days of training. Finally, total all the averages and compare that total to the Training Table to determine the results of training.

Here are our wizard's rolls:

Check 1: Intelligence (Nature)
9, 12, 15, 10 = 46 ÷ 4 = 11.5 (round up) = 12

Check 2: Intelligence (Arcana)
16, 17, 22, 12 = 67÷ 4 = 16.75 (round up) = 17

Check 3: Intelligence (Arcana)
17, 15, 10, 23 = 65 ÷ 4 = 16.25 (round down) = 16

Check 4: Wisdom (Insight)
18, 11, 7, 16 = 52 ÷ 4 = 13

Check 5 Charisma (Persuasion)
7, 11, 10, 8 = 36 ÷ 4 = 9

Total: 67

Training Table

Skill Check Training Total	Time	Cost*	Results
0-25	5 weeks	x5	Long and grueling. You learned new skills, but you still have a long way to go. Perks gained with drawbacks.
26-45	4 weeks	x4	Difficult and demanding. You seriously messed up at least once, but you made it through. Perks gained, some drawbacks.
46-65	3 weeks	x3	Hard but rewarding. Your mentor found you more than competent. Perks gained.
66-85	2 weeks	x2	Challenging, but you excelled. You learned well, and impressed your master with your progress. Perks gained. 1 mojo gained.
86+	1 week	x1	You are a natural. Your mentor believes you will quickly advance and become well-known in the craft. Perks gained. 1 mojo gained.

* suggested costs are 10-20 gp per character level x weeks of training time

If any of your players have clever ideas or roleplay well during the training process, add a +1 bonus to the skill check total of a relevant check. For instance, if a character spends twenty gold to present a nice gift to his or her mentor, that character should receive a bonus to a Charisma-based skill check. Always note the total of the Charisma-based skill check and use it as a way to gauge how well liked the player is by the training mentor or organization. A PC that excels in training might not necessarily make a good personal impression.

It's best to briefly and privately speak with a player to flesh out the details and rewards of training. You should devise a mentor and a location where he can be found and plan for how the character will find and be introduced to the mentor. This needn't be too complex. The Mad Wizard of the Black Tower located in the Bleak Hills would suffice. Give

some thought to the atmosphere and dynamics of your training session. Is it adversarial, academic, secretive, cordial, or demanding? What desires or goals does your player have for her character. Some players love to immerse in this kind of thing, while others are more reluctant roleplayers. As the GM, you know best what your players need. Keep it simple and don't force your players into intricate situations unless they enjoy them. Once you have the outline in place, run the game and try to blend the results of the skill checks into the narrative of your game session.

Below are the training summaries of two players, one a wizard named Daggoth and the other a fighter named Jasper. These summaries are based on the skill check results, Training Table score, and roleplaying from the side gaming session. Use these as examples for creating your own training session. In the end, Level Training provides players with a sense of accomplishment and details a realistic outcome to the important milestone of level advancement and it helps the GM create a believable game world.

Daggoth the Wizard (3rd level, based on skill checks above)

Daggoth discovers the whereabouts of a reclusive enchanter known as the Mad Wizard and secures the services of a local ranger to guide him to his tower. Once at the tower, he must find and return several herbs before he is allowed to enter the tower. He searches for these herbs for hours before finding and returning with them to the tower (Intelligence [Nature]). Daggoth meets the teacher and three other apprentices then begins his training immediately.

The next two weeks go quickly. Daggoth studies and scribes for days on end, leafing through tomes and etching on parchment under the light of a candle (Intelligence [Arcana]). He studies the night sky and learns the workings of the heavenly bodies and their effects on magic (Wisdom [Insight]). The teacher requires Daggoth to research his own magical formula, gather the ingredients, and then formulate them into inks, powders and tinctures (Intelligence [Arcana]). There is little conversation between the teacher and Daggoth and he never reveals his name. A straw mat and a crude desk are his only accommodations and stale bread, cheese and fish his only food (Charisma [Persuasion]).

When Daggoth departs from the tower, the wizard turns to him. "You have earned your rank, student," he says with a wry smile. "I will mention your name to the Master." With that, he closes the door.

Training Costs: 90 gp
Duration: 2 weeks
Mojo Received: 1
Perks:

> **1.** You gain the trust of your ranger guide who seems to know the area well.
> **2.** You gain 2 points of renown within the school of enchantment (your chosen school of magic) and with the other apprentices at the Mad Wizard's tower.
> **3.** You gain 150 experience points
> **4.** You create one scroll spell during training

Jasper the Fighter (3rd level)
Skill Check results: Athletics (2) 13, 9; Acrobatics 7; Intimidation 8; Perception 8; **Total** 45.

Jasper seeks training in town and finds a room at the Keepshade Inn. Jasper spends much time with Nine-finger, the proprietor of the inn. Jasper is accepted into House Brotan, an honored noble house whose knights are beyond compare. Sir Thurgin is the weapons master, a dour half-orc who greets you each morning with a surprise attack (Wisdom [Perception]).

Each day is filled with calisthenics and tough, physical combat exercises that strengthen muscle and bone (Strength [Athletics]). Maneuvering and balance techniques teach skills that deceive opponents (Dexterity [Acrobatics]). Jasper's training includes a regimen of fighting with and repairing dozens of exotic types of weapons and armor

(Strength [Athletics]). The mind is tested too, and the secrets of taming fear, anger, and aggression are learned (Charisma [Intimidation]).

The training was grueling and it took a full month. After many blisters and bruises, you just barely complete your study.

Training costs: 180 gp
Mojo: 0
Perks:

1. Nine-finger, the proprietor of the Keepshade Inn, considers you a friend.
2. Quartermaster Serg becomes your closest ally at House Brotan.
3. You learn about two other Fighting Houses in the region and of the competitions held between them each year.
4. You gain 100 experience points
5. At the Keepshade Inn you meet Karadan, the leader of an overland expedition. He is looking for skilled adventurers to help protect the expedition.