



#02 - Monster Lore for 5th Edition

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The shambling figure that is coming up the road toward your party should be recognizable as a ghoul to just about everyone in your party. The current rules for 5th Edition however don't take into account the all-important knowledge skill of monster identification. Peek behind the scenes and see one easy way to give all of your player characters, regardless of class, a bit more knowledge, and role-playing opportunities with *5e Expanded Options #2 - Monster Lore!*

The **Expanded Options** product line brings you an assortment of ideas, homebrew rules, and various options from the talented pool of writers at Fat Goblin Games for use with the *5th Edition Dungeons and Dragons roleplaying game*. These short and low-priced products are perfect for Game Masters and Players who want to integrate unique new options to their games. We write Sidebars from the perspective of one game master talking to another. Do not expect a collegiate level thesis that dissects the concept. Instead, get ready for a conversation with another Game Master as they explain an interesting and hopefully fun way to run your game!

MONSTER LORE – A DERIVED SKILL

Actually, before we even get started with **Monster Lore** let us talk about the other term we have been throwing around a bit: Derived skill. What does that mean anyway and why is it so important that we keep mentioning it.

We explain by breaking down the Intelligence attribute into the skills that make it important. Those skills are *Arcana, History, Investigation, Nature, and Religion*. You will note that there is no **Monster Lore** skill in there, yet we are wrapping our whole concept here to the Intelligence attribute through a new system that we are calling a derived skill. This sub-skill takes a bit of each of those skills, and based upon the class of the character, makes it important to them. As you read through you will see how **Monster Lore** is truly a derived skill of Intelligence and understand the concept a bit better.

In addition we introduce a new concept called **Affinity** which basically means that each class has a “knack” for certain things that other classes do not. This ties into their skills and, as you will see, allows us to expand upon those skills that classes get bonuses in.

The Fat Goblin Games 5e team is looking at ways of bringing other derived skills to you by using the other attributes such as Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Wisdom, or Charisma. If you have an idea you want to throw our way hit us up at [fatgoblingames@gmail.com!](mailto:fatgoblingames@gmail.com) We would love to hear from you!

MONSTER LORE

The core concept behind Monster Lore is that each class knows a little about monsters that the class deals with on a regular basis. As such, each class can use their proficiency bonus when trying to identify and learn more about the creatures that they encounter. In addition, as the character gains power and experience, they should also gain knowledge and insight regarding creatures that they have faced before. We are exploring both of these concepts in the Monster Lore derived skill.

DERIVED SKILLS

Below is a system for using a derived skill called Monster Lore. First though, let's discuss what a derived skill is. This type of skill is one that comes from existing skills, but encompasses more than just one of the focuses of that skill. Monster Lore is more than just Investigation. It is more than just Arcana. Based upon the type of creature that you are attempting to get information about, it could be any of the five skill focuses that fall under the Intelligence ability score.

MONSTER LORE RULES

The standard DC for any Monster Lore check is **12**. INT is the primary ability score for Monster Lore so any bonus to the characters INT score will reduce this base number.

All creature types line up to a focus for an Intelligence skill as outlined below. This becomes important as certain class features allow for proficiency bonuses to be doubled when working with certain aspects/focuses of an ability score.

The Difficulty Class of 12 is modified by:

Monster Challenge Rating– The creature's challenge rating is a measure of its power and in this case, its notoriety. As such, add the challenge rating to the base DC for the Monster Lore check. The eight-legged basilisk has a challenge rating of 3 so the base DC to know information about the creature would be 15.

Class Affinity – Each class has a certain affinity for a monster type. This affinity is based upon how often the class would normally have contact and or interact with that particular creature type. For example, clerics would have more contact and deal with undead than any other class, therefore they have an affinity with that monster type. If the character class has an affinity, then they can add their proficiency bonus to their Monster Lore check. In the case of our basilisk, rangers are often called out to deal with unnatural monstrosities and so a ranger would gain their Proficiency Bonus when trying to remember information about the deadly beast.

A SIDEBAR FOR THE SIDEBAR – AFFINITY

Every character class in 5th Edition has certain natural tendencies that they lean toward when working out their class skills. You could say it is as simple as fighters fight, druids do forest stuff and the like. But if you look at the classes closely each of them have an affinity to do certain things. When creating the Monster Lore rules, we carefully looked at each class and tried to figure out how they would match up to our chart in regards to what monsters they should specialize in. Let's take a look at each of our classes and see why they have affinity for certain monster types.

Barbarian – Encountered frequently in the wilds, beasts are the natural enemy of those that roam the steppes, plains, and less travelled roads. The children of barbarian tribes are brought up listening to the stories of these creatures and how their legendary heroes defeated them.

Bard – Steeped in lore as part of their tradition, young bards are often regaled with stories regarding the strange and unusual creations of arcane and divine casters. Golems, animated items and other constructs fit prominently into these tales and so a fair bit of knowledge is transferred in the telling.

Cleric – Clerics of both weal and woe know undead creatures all too well. Those of weal seek to drive them off and destroy these menaces to their goodly communities while those of woe control these powerful creatures to do their bidding.

Druid – Attuned in a spiritual way to the world around them it is appropriate that druids have an affinity for Nature and the natural creatures that inhabit their territories.

Fighter – Brought out to fight the largest of humanoid monsters, fighters (especially dwarves) have an affinity for taking down the biggest of bullies, the giants.

Monk – Finding weaknesses in their enemies is one of the specialties of these fearsome hand-to-hand warriors. Despite aberrations sometimes-unique physiology it is only a matter of time before the monk will find their weakness.

Paladin – Whereas their clerical partners understand undead, paladins have a particular knowledge of the most evil of creatures, fiends. Their affinity runs as deep as their hatred for these foul creatures from the nether regions.

Ranger – Rangers are attuned to their environment and when foul monstrosities stalk the land, the rangers will no doubt be stalking them. Their affinity for these creatures comes from experience just as much as folklore.

Rogue – When the rogue goes looking for that perfect place to strike, it helps to know that no matter the size or shape, a humanoid is a humanoid and just about all of them have hearts, lungs, and other soft parts usually in the same places.

Sorcerer – The special link that many sorcerers share with dragons gives these mages a special affinity for the scaled giants; knowing their strengths, weaknesses, and lore.

Warlock – In tune with the primal forces that shape the universe, warlocks understand the ties that bind elementals not only to this plane, but to their very existence as an almost instinctive feeling.

Wizard – Fey and their natural affinity for magic have always fascinated those who study the arcane arts. Many of them dream of one day being able to cast spells with the ease and grace of these unusual and secretive creatures.

Once you have a Difficulty Class, the player will roll. Based upon how well that roll went they can gain information about the creature. For every two points above the minimum roll required, the player gains a bit more information about the creature as outlined in the Monster Lore Information Table.

Monster Lore Information Table

Roll	Information Given
+0	Name, Type, Challenge Level*
+2	History **
+4	Special Ability/Defense
+6	Weakness/Vulnerability
+8	Additional information of the Game Master's choice

*Challenge Level – This is a gauge that weighs how

powerful the creature is versus how powerful the character is. The scale ranges from Poor, Weak, Balanced, Dangerous, Overpowered. A 4th level cleric who correctly identifies a deva would also be told that they were a celestial and that the challenge would be Overpowered.

** History – This gives you, the Game Master, some leeway in regards to what you want to tell the players. You can give them a bit of interesting lore regarding the creature or possibly a story that might give them a hint as to how to defeat it.

WORKING EXAMPLE

Let's take a look at some examples and see how they would work in your game.

Our ranger is 6th level and has an Intelligence score of 14 (+2 bonus). Her base DC for Monster Lore is 10 (base

12 - 2 for Intelligence bonus). If she encounters a monster with the monstrosity descriptor, then she gains a +3 proficiency bonus due to class affinity for that particular creature type, reducing the DC to a 7.

Farmers have been complaining about their livestock turning to statues and our ranger is charged to investigate. Through careful tracking, she finally finds the horrible beast, a basilisk (monstrosity) roaming through the woods. Wanting to know more about the creature before she dives headfirst into battle the player asks for a Monster Lore check and rolls a 15. Let's see what that 15 gets her.

The ranger's DC for monstrosities is a 7 and the roll is 8 above it. She would gain the following information about the beast from the Game Master:

- +0 - Basilisk, Monstrosity, Challenge 3
- +2 - Basilisks are eight legged beasts normally encountered in subterranean lairs. The beasts act as guardians for treasure troves although they are terribly difficult to control.
- +4 - Their gaze will turn you to stone. If you avert your eyes you have a chance of avoiding this fate, however it is not certain.
- +6 - Fortunately basilisks are not known for their intelligence and they can be tricked into attacking their own reflections with their deadly gaze.
- +8 - Their bite is poisonous and it is important not to look directly into their eyes.

CLOSING

Characters SHOULD have knowledge of the creatures that they encounter based upon the monster's notoriety OR their commonality. In either case, a Derived skill check like Monster Lore is an easy way to incorporate that knowledge into your gaming sessions.

Monster Lore is a skill that can be made available as an optional rule in your gaming sessions. You may wish to increase or decrease the base DC of Monster Lore based upon your particular group or style of play.

EXPANDED OPTIONS EXPLAINED

Sidebar are not rules supplements nor are they full on books about a certain subject. They present a set of rules, an idea, a concept for game masters and their players to explore. Hopefully they expand your game, broaden some horizons, and get people to think around the gaming table!

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The Fat Goblin Games 5th Edition Team consists of Ismael Alvaraez, Michael Riter, and myself with input from the Fat Goblin Hoarde.

Do you have an idea that might make a good 5th Edition Expanded Options? Hit us up at fatgoblingames@gmail.com and your idea might be the next one that we explore in an Expanded Option!



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Based in South Carolina, USA, Fat Goblin Games was founded in 2011 to create Pathfinder Roleplaying Game compatible products. With a focus on high quality production values and providing a creative environment for our writers, Fat Goblin Games has quickly become a recognized force in the world of third party publishers.

With hundreds of support books, visual aids, campaign settings, and quality stock art, Fat Goblin Games continues to provide exciting content and fantastic worlds in which gamers can immerse themselves.

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