Advanced Gamemaster's Guide

By Owen KC Stephens

d20 system

An Advanced Rulebook for the d20 System

The Advanced Gamemaster's Guide

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Introduction: Read this First!

Welcome to Green Ronin's *Advanced Gamemaster's Guide*. My name is Owen K.C. Stephens, and I'll be your host and author for this manual. I know introductions can be boring, so I'll keep this one short — but it *is* an important part of this tome. Like the description says, no matter what you're looking for, read this first.

This is not a book for players to look through hoping to find something to convince their Game Master (GM) to use. If you're a GM and a player is trying this, tell him to buy his own copy of the book to look over, and you'll let him know about his specific request later. Under no circumstances should you allow anything from this manual into your games without thoroughly considering it and reading the section on how it will change your game. In fact, a fair chunk of this book comprises advice on how to decide what to include in your campaigns and what to forbid.

Nor is this book merely a list of new ways to make character's lives difficult. Creating and running opponents is an important function of GMing, and we have advice on making memorable, effective, and even easily-run villains in here, but it's not the book's only focus. Being a GM involves a lot more than picking bad guys to slaughter, and this book assumes you already know that.

The elements of the *Advanced Gamemaster's Guide* can be broke into three broad categories: advice, alternate rules, and expansions. All of these elements are independent of one another — a GM can grab anything he likes and ignore the rest of the book. Not everything here will appeal to every GM, nor is it all appropriate for every campaign. When I say "Advanced Game Master," I mean someone who already knows the basics of running a d20 campaign. That runs the gamut from GMs who are still checking the core books regularly and have never put together a unique campaign, to masters of the craft who've built their own worlds, written their own rules, and designed their own adventures for decades. Hopefully, everyone will find something useful in here, but if a section doesn't seem to speak to you in particular, skip it and go on to the next section.

The advice is all designed specifically for GMs of d20 games who know the basic rules. Some of the tips and guidelines are pretty straightforward, and I tried not to spend too much time on anything too obvious. Yet running and modifying a d20 System game can be tricky, and I decided that covering the basics was better than assuming that everyone who picks up this tome already knows it all. Many of the rules I put forward I've used and playtested myself, either as a GM or a player. A lot of it I've modified from the form I used, drawing on experience of what worked and what didn't. I've spread sidebars throughout the book with peeks behind the GM's screen, showing how I came to particular conclusions, so even if you don't agree with me you can see what assumptions I did make and change them.

The rules presented in the *Advanced Gamemaster's Guide* are not new rules for the sake of new rules. They're designed to help GMs create specific effects and feels within their games. Rules affect what characters can do, and that affects what they try to do. The basic d20 rules make a lot of assumptions — about the nature of evil, the role of a hero, the nature of combat and injury, the frequency of magic, and the permanence of death. These assumptions encourage a particular style of play, popular with many people. It's not the only possible style of play, however, and changing a few rules can produce a very different game.

Expansions are elements that fit into the normal d20 game but have yet to appear anywhere I know of. They aren't so much designed to change the feel of a game as to expand options of a standard d20 campaign. GMs can combine them with any of the new rules, use them as is, or ignore them entirely without affecting other parts of the book. The expansions should put new life in old campaigns, thus they have sections that discuss how to work them into an ongoing game, how to build them into a new campaign, and how to gauge what results are likely.

This book doesn't assume any GM will decide to use every new rule and idea presented in it. In fact, doing so would likely create a real mess of a campaign. The ideas are presented as ways to achieve specific results, and GMs are trusted to be smart enough to make informed choices for their games. That's the real definition of an "advanced" GM: one who just needs the tools to accomplish a given campaign goal. I've tried to include the best tools I could in this book and arm you with the guidelines to take what you like from other books as well. Have fun and enjoy!

Owen K.C. Stephens
April, 2004

Chapter One: Running a Game

The most basic and important job of a GM is to run a game session. The GM is part storyteller, part referee, part social director, and part willing participant. This chapter looks at the aspects of this job that have the least to do with game rules: designing a world, managing information, setting mood and pacing, recognizing and dealing with styles of play, and narrative tricks. All these things have an impact on play and may suggest or support game rule decisions, but they are separate from such things as character classes, die rolls, skills, feats, and even the adventures themselves.

– Designing a World –

A roleplaying game takes place in a world under the control of the GM. While beginning GMs may not ever take the time to think about that world, advanced GMs know that their world is an important part of the game. It's like the biggest and most important NPC in the game, and its look, name, size, and biases have a strong affect on all games run in it. Deciding what a world is like and who and what are in it is known as world design or worldbuilding.

All GMs do some world design, even if they don't realize it. Even a GM who decides to use a pre-written commercial campaign setting will do some worldbuilding, as PCs go places sourcebooks don't describe or talk to NPCs with few if any notes on personality, goals, or outlooks beyond a simple alignment and short description. Every decision a GM makes about what is and isn't available, how NPCs (as individuals or groups) act or react, and which things PCs do or don't

notice has an impact on the world he presents to the players. Many of these decisions are easier if made well in advance of the game session, and there are several techniques a GM can employ to do so.

Starting Small

It's not necessary for you to know much about the world as a whole to start playing. This is especially true for games starting at 1st level, when characters can't travel very quickly anyway. One way for you to avoid doing a lot of work in advance is to describe only the world as a whole in the vaguest terms, focusing instead on the lands in which he plans to set the early adventures. As the campaign progresses and characters become competent enough to survive longer trips, you can design the areas just outside the beginning adventure sites. As the campaign grows, the world grows with it.

The trick to starting small is to describe enough for the players to feel they can interact with the world. If playing an urban game, the campaign's first adventures might all take place in one neighborhood of a large city. You obviously need to name that city and know something about the nations and lands around it, but you need not name every kingdom, king, and far-off forest. Instead, early world design should concentrate on the neighborhoods within the city, especially the location of the first adventure. If the players know where the rich and poor of the city live, what the local guilds and guards are like, and where they sleep at night, they have enough information to play for a few games. You should focus the rest of your efforts on the areas of the city you know the PCs will explore in the first few games. If you name streets, write up local personalities, and map out guildhalls and sewer systems the PCs are likely to explore, you're set for several levels of adventure.

If starting a game focusing on wilderness exploration and dungeon crawling, you shouldn't spend nearly as much effort on any single town's details. The players need a base of operations, but coming up with the name of that town and its major guilds and rulers are likely enough. You should instead focus on the area around town, where most of the adventures are going to take place. Common local threats, the nearby towns and nations, and what kinds of terrain can be found are far more important facts to work out. If the campaign settles into a single town for a longer duration, such as during the winter perhaps, you can then flesh out that specific locale.

This method offers numerous advantages. It allows a high level of detail where needed most — around the site of the first few adventures — without requiring too much work ahead of time. It also allows room for a campaign to evolve and grow naturally. A new campaign doesn't often develop its own unique spirit until after the first few games anyway, and this method puts off making too many decisions until you see how the players react to each other. For example, if the elf and dwarf PCs get along well, the campaign might be set up assuming these two races are ancient allies.

This method also works well when including a lot of player input. Since most of the world is only roughly sketched out, there are plenty of places for noble knights, perverse necromancers, noble amazons, and foppish royalty. Even if such characters and their backgrounds don't make sense for the starting campaign area, you can easily add distant lands where they fit in. This process can result in a campaign in which no PC is a local, but even having everyone be a foreigner can add an interesting twist to a game. It also has the advantage of not requiring any PC to be knowledgeable about the starting locale, allowing players and characters to explore and learn about it at the same time.

This style of world building has drawbacks as well. The most significant of these drawbacks are a lack of

Campaign Vignettes: Lands Based on History

Many GMs enjoy designing games with places based on different areas and times from real-world history. This can be an effective short cut for describing an area to players. If the kingdom of Devonisle is based on 1300s England, and Terre Natale is based on 1300s France, you need only mention this for players to get a feel for these regions. You can then focus on the differences and get quickly to exploration or adventure. Particularly for GMs new to designing their own world, this method can be faster and easier than designing from scratch.

If borrowing from places near each other in both time and place, this process also has the advantage of providing ready-made politics, prejudices, social conventions, names, myths, and interactions. Just a little research can easily fill in the details on how 1300s England and 1300s France treated each other, and what life was like in each. You need to make allowances for magic, and you may want to use pantheons of gods rather than a single monotheistic church, but such changes can be recognized and described far more easily than an entire new culture.

It's also possible to mix elements from history to create an easily described land with a very unusual feel. For example, you might decide to mix Norse aesthetics and terrain with ancient Japanese culture, creating a frozen land with warriors who act like samurai and look like Vikings. Different houses of samurai become different clans, and replacing katana with broadswords or greataxes. The resulting land isn't quite like any real-world place, but you can easily describe it (and if you needs ideas for it, you can easily borrow eastern-themed sourcebooks or adventures and translate them for your Norse looking territory).

Many d20 sourcebooks, such as Green Ronin's **Mythic Vistas** line of books, detail actual historic lands, and many more model their kingdoms on real-world places, such as *Testament*, *Medieval Player's Manual*, *Trojan War*, *Skull & Bones*, and *Eternal Rome*. One advantage of this system is that numerous non-gaming books can also serve as sources of information and inspiration, greatly broadening your research options (and reducing the chance a player has already read the book you use).

campaign flavor and a pervasive sense of incompletion. With only a small area of the world detailed, knowing what the world at large is like can be hard for your players. If you start in a civilized city, you need to address basic questions about what else exists in the world: Are there barbarians somewhere? Are they welcome here? If dwarves aren't from this city, from where do they come? Is this the largest city in the world, or a modest metropolis of limited importance? Where do the goods in the local market come from? Is the court wizard a powerful master of magic by this campaign's standards, or a minor trickster?

Most of these questions you can handle as they come up, but it's important you tell players enough to give them a feel for your world. If you plan for elves to be from a far-off land of decadent slavers and lotus-dealers, players need to know that before they decide to play elves. A game's tone is harder to determine with fewer details, and it's important for players to know if you plan an epic high-magic game, a standard fantasy genre with an emphasis on diplomacy, or a grim-and-gritty game where magic is rare, life is cheap, and resurrection unheard of.

The Seven Wonders

One development method for designing a game setting is the Seven Wonders, based on the famous Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Though several different lists of these wonders exist, one common set comprises

Table 1-1:
Wonders of the World

Dragonbone Chapel	Walking Tower
Hanging City	Arcane Quarter
Great Bridge	Endless Pit
Storm Falls	Demon's Hollow
Eternal Road	Dead Waste
Buried Ruins	Rotting Forest
Black Timbers	Swimming Isles
Shallow Sea	Rising River
Ivory Spire	Burning Ocean
Necropolis	Great Rift
Silent Temple	Golden Fane
Iron Cathedral	Emerald Ocean
Singing Forest	Signal Towers
God's Home	Sea Wall
Cloud Castle	Fire Canyons
Crawling Citadel	Menhir Trail
Bone Fortress	The Cross Timbers
Floating Gardens	Cyclopes Road

the pyramids of Egypt, the gardens of Semiramis at Babylon, the statue of Zeus at Olympia, the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Colossus at Rhodes, and the Pharos (lighthouse) of Alexandria. These were the greatest achievements of humanity at the time, and all great efforts were measured against these monuments.

People from lands far from these wonders knew of them and had some idea why they were famous. Anyone who went to the lands of these wonders visited them. They were famous the world over, despite traveling being time-consuming, costly, and dangerous. The Seven Wonders were so fantastic, so amazing, the most uneducated members of the civilized world could name a few of them. Even in the modern era, something designed to be amazing is often hyped as "the Eighth Wonder of the World."

Turning this idea toward world design, much of a game's tone can be set by describing its own Seven Wonders. By deciding what the inhabitants of the world see as the greatest and most amazing achievements, you set a baseline against which you can measure anything else. You also give players a glimpse into the type of world a particular campaign is set in and help them react properly to other "wonders."

For example, in a low-magic campaign, all the wonders might be accomplishments of engineering similar to those of the real world. Players told that the wonders of the world are the Bronze Domes of Auyx and the Flower Market of Easterness will have a very different view of the world than those in a game with the Floating Continent of Eld and the Crawling Forest. This kind of benchmark can be very helpful for players as an aid to role-playing. If the seven wonders of your campaign include the Floating Continent, players running across a flying castle know it's not the most awesome thing they've ever heard of or possibly seen.

Impressive natural features and massive edifices work well for this development method for numerous reasons. First, the very fact they are long lasting makes it believable for them to be well known worldwide. The inhabitants of a minor trading town may have never seen the Bronze Domes, but they've heard of them. This situation allows you to give some information about far-off lands, establishing details about foreign lands long before PCs get a chance to go there. Especially in games beginning at low levels, foreshadowing the flavor of other places and foes the PCs can't handle yet but you plan to introduce later is often useful.

This kind of starting point works well to build from as well. Once you know the basic culture of a given area, imagining what great structures or amazing scenery might be present is fairly easy. If the area isn't one you will be running games in immediately, you can leave it at that. When an area does demand more attention,

start with the existing wonders and work backwards. Once you know the most amazing thing about a place, it's easy to decide what's around that falls just short of it, how people respond to it, and why it was built in the first place. The famous Flower Markets might be a city designed and ruled by druids, a den of alchemists and apothecaries, or a slave market with thousands of stages, selling people stolen from every corner of the world.

There's no need to have a group name for a campaign world's wonders, nor do you need exactly seven of them. The idea is to know what the most famous features of the campaign world are and to give them intriguing and descriptive names. You may want to borrow from the various wonders of our world, changing them just enough to make them seem new and interesting. The Great Wall of China can become a country's greatest known fortification, called the Endless Fortress. The idea is the same, but a new name and slightly different spin make it seem unique. Once you know you have an Endless Fortress in your campaign, you can ask what it's built to keep out. Hordes of orcs, giants, or dragons are easy and obvious answers, but your campaign may dictate something else. Perhaps the Endless Fortress was built long ago, and no one knows why anymore. Maybe it's actually a giant temple, devoted to a god of defense and construction, on which priests continue work with each generation.

This same method can be used to begin outlines of regions within a campaign world. Most kingdoms, baronies, and wildernesses have points of interest. By deciding on the top seven places of interest in each

region, you set the stage for further development when and if needed. This method prevents you from having to design every aspect of a world at once, while still developing enough details for players to have a feel for faraway lands. Even the seven wonders of a single city can be useful for creating a unique and memorable location. Tourist guides of modern cities and vacation pamphlets often have lots of potential sights of interest you can adapt to your own campaign.

When choosing wonders for an area of a campaign world, think about how and why they were constructed, and why they're unusual features. Something anyone could and would build isn't much of a wonder. In a game with powerful and common magic, don't be afraid to have fantastic explanations for wonders. A city might be built around a huge waterfall because the people worship a water god. A floating castle might be unique because long ago, a group of wizards managed to dispel the magic holding up other castles, destroying them, and no one has risked making such vulnerable defenses since.

You can find thirty-six wonder names on **Table 1-1** on the previous page.. Add these to your game or use them as starting points for developing your own wonders. Some are clearly natural phenomena, while others were likely built by sentient creatures.

Top Down

The most ambitious way to tackle world design is from the top down: starting with a map of the world (or as

large a section of the world as you ever expects to allow PCs access to), and designing everything that goes into it before beginning the campaign. Some top-down design actually begins before a world map, with myths about the creation of the world, the gods who watch over it, and the ancient empires that ruled it long ago (see **Choosing a Cosmology** in **Chapter Five**). When working on a top-down campaign you answer all the questions you expect players to ask, as well as everything you can think of yourself. The level of detail varies depending on your style, but in general, the idea is to make all major world decisions prior to beginning the first game session.

This method works very well, but it's also extremely time consuming. You may spend weeks or even months designing a campaign world before beginning the game. Because it's a large investment of time and effort, it's also a risk. If the campaign isn't popular, or players' schedules change, or any of a myriad of other problems occur, the campaign may shut down after only running once or twice. You can of course always recycle the campaign world next time you run a game, but if the world is unpopular with players this is also a wasted effort.

Top-down design works very well if you enjoy world building as a hobby in its own right. For some, the process of mapping lands, creating kingdoms and religions, and populating cities is as much fun as running the game itself. At the extreme level, you can decide not just what nations exist and what monsters are common, but how many calendars are in use, what chess variants are common where, what bloodlines have intermarried, how languages have evolved, and what foods are most common where.

GMs looking for a campaign with strong thematic elements often turn to top-down design. For example, if a GM wants to run a game with exploration and the ethics of colonization as major themes, he needs a good idea of what new lands are to be explored and why nations send people out to explore them. Setting up potential conflicts at this stage is easy: for example, between a rapacious empire in desperate need of land to grow food and raw resources, and a smaller, richer theocracy that wishes to convert heathens to its religion. Such groups may well work together early on, but their different goals can be used as springboards for adventures

Behind the Curtain: Worldbuilding Resources

A whole world is a lot to populate, and often your main problem is not having enough ideas to fill it. The trick to avoiding idea-burnout is to have reference works available and fiction from which to borrow ideas. There's no reason for you to come up with everything yourself, and since there are few truly unique ideas left in the world, borrowing tried-and-true names, ideas, and plots can actually produce a more dynamic world than trying to reinvent the wheel. As long as you don't plan on publishing your world, you can take elements whole cloth from any source. (If you want to publish, restrict yourself to borrowing from history and public domain sources, and only being inspired by material under copyright.)

Every GM should have a thesaurus, dictionary (preferably a large unabridged one with words that have fallen out of common use), an encyclopedia set (again, preferably an older one), a baby-name book, a good history text, and a world atlas. If you don't own these books, they can all be found in any public library. Many of these resources can also be found through the internet. When low on ideas, you can look up anything you already have and use new information to expand on it.

For example, a GM who knows she wants a kingdom based on medieval France need only look up French history to gain a flood of ideas: the invasion by and eventual expulsion of an Ancient Empire; a noble king's attempt to recreate the glory of that empire; the long rivalry with a neighboring kingdom and a Hundred Years War; the rise of a common girl to be a divinely-inspired general; religious conflict; absolute monarchy, the Revolution, the rise of a soldier to be emperor, that emperor's fall, a new republic; and then two new invasions, both of which are repelled only with the help of other nations. This is an extremely simple sketch of a few important events, but it provides enough ideas for a dozen kingdoms.

Ideas can also be taken from commercial adventures, campaign settings, and works of fiction. If you don't care if players recognize elements of your game world from other sources, you can simply take anything that interests you with little effort to change it. With a bit more work, borrowed elements can be changed enough to seem new (or at least given a new twist). By changing names (for which a baby name book and atlas are particularly useful), motivations, and genres, you can take an old idea and mold it into a new form. For example, a western movie could provide a classic plot: a cattle baron stole the deed to a ranch so he can claim ownership and kick out the true owners. Molding this plot to a fantasy game, the GM decides a power-hungry baron has stolen the scepter of a small village, and if they cannot produce it when the king visits in four days, they lose their freedom. The plot is essentially the same, but few players will recognize its origin.

later. A GM is much less likely to get these kinds of theme-specific elements from a commercial campaign setting or through starting small campaign design.

Top-down design is also useful for campaigns designed to be different from a standard d20 campaign. For example, if you want to run a game with little or no access to spells, but with lots of magic items (scrolls, potions, wondrous items, and so on) and sentient wolves as a PC race, you're unlikely to find a commercial campaign that meets your needs. While you can try the starting small design method, players will probably have a lot more questions (where do smart wolves come from? do they have their own homeland? are they treated as people? are they treated as people by everyone? how do churches act when clerics have no spells? and so on). Answering enough of these questions to allow players to role-play accurately requires a fair amount of work, resulting in something pretty close to top-down design.

When working on a top-down world design, determining how different elements of the game world interact with each other and how PCs are expected to interact with them is important. For example, if designing a world with many city-states full of noble knights in plate armor who all worship a single god, you need to think about how they react to your Egyptianesque kingdom of Osyria, with Bronze Age technology and a vast pantheon of gods. The Osyrians may be seen as infidels and the subject of a crusade, in which case their Bronze Age technology places them at a disadvantage.

You should also be ready to explain obvious questions about your kingdoms, even the far-off ones. For example, you need to answer why, in a world with magic divination, the Osyrians are still stuck with Bronze-Age skills. Are the PCs expected to sympathize with the city-states, Osyria, or neither? Players are bound to ask such questions eventually, and it's best you have answers ready. Perhaps the Osyrian gods forbid their people to use any metal except bronze (and may give them special benefits to make up for this restriction); or Osyria may be very poor in natural sources of iron; or Osyria and the city-states may have just come into contact with each other, and the technology needs more time to spread. Each of these answers produces a very different campaign.

The two main drawbacks to top-down design are the amount of time it can take and player overload. A GM who spends more time designing the details of his campaign world than actually running his game is both spending a lot of time on a hobby and risking burnout from overexposure to his own creation. Similarly, giving players too much information to absorb at once can leave them feeling overwhelmed and confused. Handouts of common information can help, but in general, avoid requiring players to read more than about five pages of information before they play. Even if you know what

fashions are popular in the City of Bells, the players don't need that information until they're more involved — and more interested — in the world.

Including Player Input

A game world is more than a setting for you to put adventures in; it's the backdrop players use to build the characters that are their alter-egos. Many players enjoy writing extensive histories for their characters and include towns, families, guilds, evil foes, and even entire kingdoms in the process. For some GMs, this is an annoyance, as little of that information matches up with elements she already decided to include in her game. If handled carefully from the beginning, however, this sort of input not only allows players to help build a world they're interested in exploring, it reduces some of your workload.

You should talk to your players about what kind of input is welcome before they make their characters. It's best if you can do this after you have some idea of the game world's features, but before you've described every corner of it. One good way to do this is to design the core area the early adventures will take place in, but not surrounding areas or kingdoms. Doing so gives players some idea of the feel of the game world, while still allowing them to create new lands for their PC backgrounds that you can place in nearby undeveloped areas as needed.

It's important for you to let players know once they've designed something, they don't control it anymore.

Tips and Tricks: Stealing Maps

For many GMs, the hardest part of creating a world is mapping it. Few GMs are experienced cartographers, and a well-rounded campaign needs maps (at differing scales) of landmasses, kingdoms, countrysides, and individual cities and towns. Each map can take hours to design and draw, but may only be needed for a few seconds of play time. Mapping is extremely work intensive, and often GMs skimp on maps early on, only to have arguments with players later about where things are.

One good way to cut down on mapping time is to copy maps from elsewhere. A number of professional game products such as Green Ronin's *Dungeons of Doom* and *Todd Gamble's Cartographica* include good maps you can use for your games. Lesser-known game books and adventures are often good for this, since players are less likely to recognize such maps than those taken from major products. You can mix and match maps as needed — taking a country map from one-source and city maps from three or four others, renaming things as needed.

Of course, if you're willing to do a little more work, maps from any source can be used. Road atlases, almanacs, and encyclopedias are all good sources of maps, and if you trace or scan them and make what changes are needed (usually including renaming major features), there's little chance a player will recognize them. Another good trick is to change the scale on maps. A map of a small island at 1 mile to the inch can become a map of an entire continent at 100 miles to the inch. Changing what direction is north is another way to disguise maps. Even the map from the back of a telephone directory can be reused in this way.

Scanned maps are particularly useful because you can copy a section and re-create it on a different scale. You could copy out a small section of a continent and blow it up, then draw in things appropriate only to the new scale. In this way, you have one or two large-scale maps and make smaller-scale maps only when adventures take the PCs to new regions.

Nothing is wrong with a player suggesting his character be from an island nation that's little more than a haven for pirates and thieves, but once you accept his idea, the city is out of the player's hands. It may be his PC's home, but it's part of your game world. Try to get a good idea what the player expects from his home city and provide it, but ultimately, you decide who's in charge, how tough the local guards are, and what kind of punishments are dealt by the local authorities.

– Sensitive Subjects –

When building a new game world, you should think about how you will deal with sensitive subjects. These are topics, themes, and crimes are so emotionally charged they can ruin a gaming experience just by being present. Such matters as slavery, sex, drug use, bigotry, betrayal, brutality, crimes against women and children (especially rape), real-world religion, torture, and cannibalism must be handled delicately.

For many groups, there is no "right" way to handle these subjects — any inclusion of them is so uncomfortable for some players they can't enjoy the game. Other groups are fine with such things being understood to exist in the game world, but they don't want to have to deal with them. Even when a group is comfortable having PCs encounter such things, most get upset if their PCs are the victims of abuse along these lines. A group in which all players are both happy and comfortable dealing with such issues whenever they come up, regardless of who is the target, is extremely rare. A GM should never assume he has such a group without a lot of discussion and careful experimentation.

Making sure these issues never become the primary focus of a campaign is also important. A fight against evil may require examples of that evil to be witnessed or even described, but going too far turns heroic roleplaying into something else. You should try to find your group's comfort level for the best gaming experience, not pushing the boundary of what they find acceptable. If there's no need to delve into unpleasantness, don't.

The general guideline for these subjects is to get player input in advance and gear the game for the person comfortable with the lowest level of extreme elements. If nine out of ten players don't mind anything and everything on the sensitive subject list, the game should settle at the comfort zone of the 10th person. These subjects are emotionally charged enough that "majority rules" isn't a fair way to handle them.

You could shoot for different levels of intensity regarding these subjects. GMs who have experience with their players may be able to determine the appropriate level based on previous games, but as a general rule, discussing player interest in advance is best. You may even wish

Campaign Vignette: Fairyland Tales

Building a campaign setting to support your chosen intensity level can be done by simply including or excluding things likely to bring up sensitive subjects. For a truly minimum intensity game, though, that's harder, because totally avoiding subjects such as sex is impractical. If the king has a son, surely he and the queen had sex, right? Why would the goblins kidnap the queen if they have no horrid purpose in mind for her?

Supporting even this level of background innocence is possible, though doing so produces an unusual campaign. Essentially, the result is a fairy-tale game, where children are delivered by storks or found in cabbage patches (perhaps depending on race), goblins carve their young out of stone, and having a queen is important enough if you do kidnap one, you treat her well.

This approach actually works quite well for an adventure-themed campaign backdrop. Hags in gingerbread houses, trolls under bridges, creatures living under the bed, and black-bearded pirates can be just as dangerous to overcome as more serious fantasy foes. And many players accept a black-and-white world of morality if it's obviously not designed as a serious fantasy world. Campaigns set in worlds reminiscent of fairytale kingdoms, the land of Oz, or Wonderland are a clear sign that the normal evils of the real world may not be present.

Obviously, a minimum intensity game will not feel particularly realistic. Everyone knows that *some* bad, distasteful, or private things will occur in a world. Yet since a roleplaying game is primarily a game, there's nothing wrong with ignoring things that would make one or more players uncomfortable. That said, minimum intensity games often slide to low intensity in time. While you should always watch to make sure you don't increase intensity past a player's comfort level, most players don't have a problem with low intensity handled maturely.

Low Intensity: Off-Screen Presence

At low intensity, sensitive subjects are assumed to exist, and even get mentioned, but all such action happens off-screen. No effort is made to hide that bad things happen somewhere, but such events are never directly encountered or used as a theme of the campaign or as the focus of a specific adventure. This is the most common level of intensity for the touchiest of subjects (rape, cannibalism, child abuse, and drug use) and is the baseline of many published adventures and settings.

At this level, players may assume a half-orc is the product of a rape, but the issue isn't specifically discussed. Some campaign religions may fill the same roles as real-world faiths, but don't use the same terminology or mythology. It's a fairly safe place for you to set a campaign without discussing intensity with players. Often a campaign has at least a few subjects set at low intensity, if for no other reason than neither the GM nor the players bring up the issue.

to give players a questionnaire regarding their desired intensity level for each sensitive subject the GM wants to include in his campaign. A campaign, however, need not deal with all sensitive subjects at the same level of intensity — a group of players may have no problems with prejudice and cannibalism, for instance, but need low intensity when dealing with sex and slavery.

Minimum Intensity: No Presence

At minimum intensity, a sensitive subject isn't mentioned at all. This is a common level for beginning gaming groups: anything you wouldn't discuss with a schoolteacher, grandmother, senator, pastor, and a complete stranger doesn't get mentioned. No religion is similar to current real-world faiths, no race or nation keeps slaves, sex is never mentioned in any context, and no crimes against women or children are ever mentioned.

Medium Intensity: Limited Exposure

At medium intensity, sensitive subjects are broached as needed by theme and plot, but kept to a minimum and never experienced directly. The world is assumed to have bad things happen, and when appropriate the players may learn of them, but anything irrelevant isn't explored. Even when sensitive subjects are brought up, they're not done in an in-your-face way. The worst things may be encountered, in theory, during play, but only to a limited extent.

Half-orcs may mention their mothers were raped by their fathers, but PCs never see such a thing happening or deal with it having just happened recently. Campaign religions may closely follow the model of a real-world faith, but aren't actually presented as the same religion. Players may have to deal with more minor sensitive subjects, such as drug abuse, but only if they chose to do so.

Medium intensity is as high as many players are comfortable with, and you should never set your campaign higher without a good idea of how your players will react. That you don't belittle the consequences of these subjects in an effort to minimize their impact is important. This isn't a world in which abused children never have development problems. Instead, the problems can be focused on and the abuses revealed, without detailing the specifics of those abuses.

High Intensity: Full Exposure

At a high intensity, players deal with the full range of a sensitive subject when appropriate. Most games that move to high intensity do it for only one or two subjects — a game can too easily become grim if the full range of human depravity is brought up. Most groups are uncomfortable with high intensity on at least some subjects, and you should know your group well before even trying it.

In these campaigns, PCs trying to stop an orc raid might run into a rape in progress or see a child being beaten in the street. Real-world religions may be present and drawn from their worst point in history. The PCs, though, aren't subject to the same rules. They're the heroes, and even in a high intensity game they need a level of script immunity against the most horrid of events. Players may choose to have such events in character backgrounds (perhaps the cleric was once a lotus addict before he saw the light), but don't have them forced upon PCs, even as a consequence of failure.

Extreme Intensity: No Limits

At extreme intensity, no subject is considered taboo, and anything can happen to anyone. Almost no group is comfortable at this level for more than one or two subjects, and only very mature groups can handle it at

all. Never go here without both knowing your group well and discussing it in advance — even if everyone seems okay with it, tread lightly and gauge actual response. Friendships can be ruined over some of these subjects.

At this level, a PC might get raped by an orc, sold into slavery, and forced into cannibalism to survive. Of course, nothing of the sort should happen unless it's integral to an ongoing plot, and nothing like this should happen without express player approval. These things are just too sensitive for you to have carte blanche. People can and do get truly upset about events at this level, and you must check anything of the sort privately with a player beforehand.

That no one should tell a group how to play a roleplaying game is a truism, but extreme intensity pushes the limits of that philosophy. A campaign never *needs* to handle things this way, and there are few reasons to do so. A game might explore extreme intensity on a single subject, such as slavery, without doing much damage, but for the most part this description is here as a warning sign. If you hit extreme intensity, you've gone too far.

Dealing With Intensity Pushers

GMs aren't the only ones who have an impact on a campaign's intensity level. Players can impact a game's intensity both through their own character's actions (a shaman cannibal PC forces the campaign to deal with the morality and acceptability of eating thinking creatures) and how they react to the world around them. Even just asking questions can impact a game's intensity — if a PC looks for abused children in a big city, you and other players are forced to address the issue of abuse. Players who engage in this kind of activity are intensity pushers.

If everyone is comfortable with the higher intensity, including you, it's a non-issue. Often, intensity pushing is a sign that players are ready for a grittier, darker campaign. If anyone is uncomfortable, however, even you, the intensity pushing must stop. This is an issue that needs to be handled out of game time, likely by a discussion between you and intensity-pushing players, or among the group as a whole. While group discussions are often better, sometimes shy players won't stand up for their preferences if confronted by a group. You should decide how to handle such situations based on your experience with your game group.

You are ultimately responsible for the tone of your campaign. Most players are happy to dial it back a bit if asked. If a player objects to being stifled (and some will), you must decide if it's better to make someone uncomfortable or kick out an offending player. That answer is different for different groups, but a good principle is not to kick out the people who aren't bucking the system. Once a player learns he can act however he wants and *other* players leave as a result, he has the power to twist a game in ways you may not appreciate.

~ Running a Game Session ~

In addition to preparing a game world and adventures before a game session, you have to prepare a real-world location in which to run the game and manage things during the actual running of the game. Some of these tasks can be delegated to players, but you must be aware of what's available. The success of a game session can be strongly influenced by elements having nothing to do with the game world, rules, or planned adventure. These elements can be broken into three broad categories: the game environment, information management, and play styles.

The Play Environment

The success or failure of a d20 game session can hinge on factors completely outside the scope of the game itself. When a good mood is established and players are enjoying themselves, things go more smoothly. Bad rules calls get ignored, poor rolls are laughed off, and conflicts between PCs are viewed as heroic drama. When a bad mood is in place, the slightest setback can lead to complaints and annoyance. Similarly, a group of players may begin a game happy and excited, but become bored and disinterested before the game is over.

These are problems of mood and pacing, and they are the most difficult elements to control during a game session. A few tools can be used to encourage players to be relaxed and happy or to jog a group out of a bad mood, but for the most part the best you can do is create a good play environment and hope the players take advantage of it.

Choosing a Play Space

Where a game occurs strongly affects its mood and often its longevity. Roleplaying games are a leisure activity, and players are more likely to stick with a game if doing so isn't a hassle. A good gaming space should be large enough to accommodate all players comfortably (hopefully with no one sitting on the floor), enough table space for books and die rolling, a place for miniatures if the group uses them, and space for you to hide things you don't want players to see. It should also be conveniently located for everyone to get to (easier if everyone is driving) and preferably have room for pizza boxes and soda cans to be kept separate from game books and character sheets.

While many groups don't have access to a perfect play space, some things can be done to enhance what is available. First, don't assume you must play in someone's home or a game shop. Libraries, community centers, apartment clubhouses, and sometimes even utility co-ops often have rooms available for either free or for a very

small fee. The main limitation with such spaces is hours of operation, but a game played on a Saturday afternoon may be perfect for a public room. The things to look out for are privacy and noise restrictions. Games don't go as well if a group is constantly interrupted by passers-by, and an area with bad sound baffling can result in a rowdy group of players being asked to leave.

If you do need to game in a home, consider periodically moving which home hosts the game. A group of players can make quite a mess, and it's a bit much to ask one homeowner always to deal with that. Even if the group does its best to clean up before it leaves (always a good idea), chairs get moved, stacks of paperwork stowed away, trashes filled, and dishes used. A group that can share this burden over three or four homes is less likely to draw the ire of parents/spouses/siblings/neighbors, any of which can make a game session less pleasant.

If possible, a play space should match a campaign's mood. Taking a horror or suspense game seriously in the middle of a park on a bright, sunny afternoon is difficult. Similarly, a dreary basement doesn't lend itself well to a beer-and-pretzels or comedy game. Ideally, a game space has the same effect on player's mood as the game itself. Few people have access to a room with swords on the walls and a massive fireplace, but lighting, color, decor, odor, temperature, and layout can suggest such things without actually having them present.

For example, a room with concrete walls isn't attractive for most purposes, but it can be perfect for a dark and gritty fantasy game. Any room lacking a television, computer, and phone seems more fantasy-oriented than those with them. (It's best to have something to play music on, however). These concerns are secondary to space and comfort — a concrete room that gets sweaty-hot or freezing cold is still a bad choice, but when options exist, pick those with the most mood-setting elements.

Props and Music

Even a dull, mediocre play space can be improved with a few props and some appropriate music. Prioritize such efforts to ensure you don't squander game-playing time by trying to set up too much, but even a few props and decorations can help groups get into the right frame of mind, especially early in a campaign's history. The general idea is to minimize the things that remind players of the real world and to maximize clues to the kind of world their PCs are experiencing. Avoid sacrificing comfort for props, however. A roleplayer's imagination is much more powerful than any props, and being imaginative when cramped and uncomfortable is hard.

Art is an easy way to decorate a gaming space. If books or GM screens with images related to the campaign are available, they may be set up temporarily during the game as spot art. Many published GM screens have panels of campaign-specific art; game books also often have evocative covers and can be arranged around the room (within easy reach). If the group uses miniatures, having figures that come close to representing what PCs and major NPCs look like visible is helpful, even if the game play doesn't immediately require using them.

If the space can be permanently decorated, place campaign-appropriate objects around it. Maps of the campaign world, posters of fantasy art with similar themes, shelves of painted miniatures, sketches of PCs and important NPCs, and replicas of fantasy objects all make good mood setters. A GM shouldn't go overboard with decor, but even a few objects with a fantasy tone or some relevance to the campaign can help remind players to think in terms of a fantasy game. Such props can even be used in-game with careful set up, describing particular NPCs or monsters as matching the appearance of nearby art or having mock-up swords or jewelry as representations of treasure.

Lighting is one of the most effective mood setters. The darker the lighting, the darker the mood. Cheerful, upbeat games work best when an area is well lit and filled with cheerful colors. Suspense, noir, and horror games work better in dimmer settings, though players need enough light to read their character sheets without straining. You can treat lighting as props, altering the ambient light for each adventure to establish better the locale in which PCs find themselves. When an adventure takes place in a cave system, turn out the lights and let the players use flashlights. You may wish to discuss going this far with players in advance, but most groups are at least willing to experiment with mood-setting props.

Music is another subject you should discuss with players. Taste in music can vary wildly, and there's little that's as annoying as listing to a long list of songs you hate while trying to have fun. Consideration is important on this issue. Don't just expect players to live with your song choices, but players should show some consideration for your efforts to set a mood. Most groups can find music they're willing to listen to, even if it doesn't include everyone's favorite pieces.

Popular choices for campaign music include pop culture, rock, classical, and movie soundtracks. Soundtracks in particular can be good for setting a tone for a particular encounter. Some companies make theme soundtracks specifically for roleplaying games, though the quality of these efforts varies wildly.

Taking a Break

If a game session is going badly no matter what you try, it may be time to step back from the game. In the short term, a game session can break for everyone to stretch, get a glass of water, or even go get something to eat. Much like changing the focus within the game, getting everyone's attention off the game entirely can shake

things up and allow a fresh start later on. The length of the break should be carefully considered — doing something that takes too long may result in the group not wanting to go back to playing the game with just a little time left.

Sometimes, of course, giving up on the game for a session is the best solution. If all other efforts to set a positive tone have failed and no one is having any fun, suggest putting the game on hold until the next scheduled session. This should not be done lightly — especially in groups that can't meet very often, many players are upset by not getting to play. Just asking if people would rather not play can sometimes change a group's dynamic enough to start having fun. Taking this step requires consideration, but if you seriously believes no one is having a good time, checking to see if they'd rather not play is worthwhile.

Just because a group isn't playing a roleplaying game doesn't mean it can't spend time together. Something fun and simple such as a card game or seeing a movie may remind everyone they enjoy having fun together. Not all groups are comfortable spending out-of-game time together, but roleplaying games are social events and some socialization outside the game is common. Make sure any kind of out-of-game socialization is described as an invitation, rather than a requirement. Players should never feel they'll be punished in-game for not participating in another non-game social event.

If a campaign consistently has problems with player disinterest and poor moods, it's time for you to discuss the matter with your players. The players may be satisfied, but simply have an odd way of showing it. Other events in their lives may prevent them from enjoying the campaign to its fullest, and they need to postpone gaming for a few weeks. Some specific themes of the campaign may bother one or more players, in which case discuss making changes.

Or the game may just be wrong for a particular batch of players, or it has run its course. Most campaigns don't go on endlessly, and at some point you must close a game down. Many groups enjoy exploring new campaigns and just get bored with an old game. A group may want to put a game on hiatus for weeks or months while another game runs, or it may prefer to end the campaign entirely. This shouldn't be seen as a failure — like television or book series, campaigns eventually run to their end. You may interest the players in running a "wrap-up" plotline that closes dangling plot threads, but after that it's time to move on.

Information Management

One of the biggest hassles GMs face is keeping track of everything. While players must manage a single character and possibly a cohort or companion, you must literally do bookkeeping for a world. It's not hard to fall behind in the duties of a GM and discover you've lost track of treasure the party is just now casting *identify* on, the spells known by a friendly sage, the leader of a small country, or even just who's turn it is in combat. Keeping track is a chore, but it's an important one. The players depend on you to know what's going on, both on a small scale during a fight and on a larger scale with the world around them.

The most important advice for GMs who are often overwhelmed is to do as much as possible outside normal game time. In between games, you don't need to worry about keeping players entertained or hoping you'll remember to write something down at the end of a combat round. Keeping one or more notebooks is a good idea, with tabs for different sections of information. You can make quick notes on a pad of paper during a game and then transcribe your notes more completely into the notebook after the game is over.

The second general piece of advice is to spread out the bookkeeping work as much as possible, rather than try to do it all at once. If you're writing an adventure and deciding what treasure will be found, mark that information as you come up with it. Then you can note what treasure the PCs actually got after the adventure runs. If the PCs go back and try to Appraise or *identify* the treasure later, you'll already have the information written down and organized.

Vigilance saves you a lot of headaches later on. If possible, keep a journal open at each game session. Whenever anything significant happens, make a quick note about it. Don't describe the whole event — just jot down who, where, and what in the simplest terms. Try to note both the real world date and the game world date. Doing so acts as a reminder when you update your bookkeeping after the game. It also serves as a reminder of what has occurred in the past, which is especially helpful if your campaign lasts a while. Being able to look back and see what date a group met a pregnant duchess is great when you're trying to decide if she has a son yet when the PCs come back.

Advanced Stat Blocks

Some NPCs have ways to augment their combat stats, ranging from magic items and spells (of their own or those of allies) to special combat abilities, battle rage, or even shapeshifting. Whenever you have an NPC who is very likely to use one or more of these abilities, take the time before the game begins to write out a second, augmented stat black. Already having the adjusted attack, damage, and AC values saves time during the game itself. If a character is likely to use combat rules you're not intimately familiar with (such as grappling or trip attacks), write out a quick description of these rules on the advanced stat block as well.

Area Templates

If a PC or NPC has some area effect ability that comes up regularly, make a template that covers that area. Rather than counting out the effect's area every time it is used, you can now lay down the template and immediately see who and what is within it. This is best done only with abilities that get used at least once per game, rather than for every conceivable area-of-effect ability possessed by any character. The best templates are made of firm but clear, thin plastic, which allows players to see through the template. An easier and cheaper alternative is to use chipboard, such as the material most cereal boxes are made of.

With a lot more effort, you can create templates made of a thin gauge wire, such as the kind wire hangers are made from. Bending the wire with a pair of pliers, it's possible to create an outline of an area with nothing in the middle of it. Not only can the template be placed without obscuring figures (making it easy to see who's in and out of the area), it can be left on the play surface to represent areas with multi-round durations.

Failing the use of a full template, spell areas of durational spells can be indicated with small dice or other markers. Most hobby shops sell bags of small counters designed to replace missing game pieces. These counters are often in different shapes and colors, making them perfect for marking out the areas of walls, spheres, and fields created by spells. Clearly marking spell areas with something that's easily removed helps keep matters clear for the GM and players alike without slowing down game play while things are drawn in and erased.

Initiative Cards

This idea is designed to make keeping track of initiative order quick and easy. The GM has a 3" x 5" index card for every character, including NPCs. When a combat begins, write the current initiative for each character on the upper right hand corner and places the cards in initiative order. Then simply read each character's name as its card comes up, cycling through the cards until he reaches a new round.

The reason this method works better than just listing the initiative order is that moving characters around when their initiative changes is easy. If a character readies or holds an action, the GM can place her index card in the stack sideways. Then, when she takes her action, and therefore her initiative changes, the GM removes her card and puts it in the very back of the stack. On the next round, the card shows up in the new order automatically.

Example: Two PCs, a fighter named Karl and a sorcerer named Mikelle, face three goblin fighters and one hobgoblin shaman. When the GM decides it's time to roll initiative, he takes six index cards, one for each of the characters involved, and writes their name and initiative on the cards. Karl gets a 7 for initiative and Mikelle a 19. The three goblins get 4, 9, and 15, and the hobgoblin a 21. The GM places the cards in the following order: hobgoblin, Mikelle, goblin 1, goblin 2, Karl, and goblin 3. He places a card marked "new round" at the back of the deck.

Since the hobgoblin's card is on top of the deck, it goes first, trying to *charm* Mikelle unsuccessfully. The GM places that index card at the back of the deck, revealing

Mikelle's card. On her move, Mikelle casts *mage armor* on herself and moves away from the goblins. Her card goes in the back of the stack, revealing goblin 1's card. Goblin 1 charges Mikelle but misses, so his card is put in the back. Goblin 2 does the same thing, bringing up Karl's card. Karl decides to pull out his bow and ready an action to shoot the hobgoblin shaman when he starts casting again. The GM places Karl's card upright in the back of the stack. Then goblin 3's card is up, and he throws a spear at Karl, injuring the fighter.

When goblin 3's card is placed in the back of the stack, the "new round" card is revealed, and the GM lets everyone know a new round has begun (this generally makes very little difference in combat, but it is a good way to keep players updated about how ling the fight is taking). The next card is the hobgoblin shaman, who plans on casting a *charm* spell at Karl. Since Karl has a readied action, he gets to go first, interrupting the hobgoblin. The GM removes Karl's card from its current place in the stack and puts it in the back, no longer turned upright. Karl takes his action, shooting the hobgoblin, and his initiative is now changed to be just before his target. The GM continues cycling through the cards until the end of combat.

The same method of easily reshuffling initiative can be used for characters who delay or have their initiative changed through the use of some special ability.

Initiative cards are also a good place for a GM to put basic attack and skill information about NPCs, since he usually uses this information when that character's turn comes up. For characters with just a few attack options, this is particularly handy, since it keeps the GM from having to look up attack bonuses and damage dice on a character sheet. Defensive information, such as AC and hit points, should be kept on a separate sheet of paper since it's normally used when other characters or monsters act, and not shuffling through the index cards looking for an NPC's hit points is best.

The same cards can also be used to keep track of spell durations. If a wizard casts a summoning spell that lasts 5 rounds, the GM can give the spell its own index card. The card lists the name of the spell and its duration, and every time it comes up in the deck the GM marks off one round. Not only does this method keep NPC spells from being forgotten and make sure PC spellcasters are kept honest, it also allows the spell's duration to end on the initiative it was cast even if the caster has changed initiative through delay, refocus, or a similar action.

Modifier Chart

Many factors can change the attack, save, skill, and damage rolls characters make. Spells, fear auras, terrain, and special abilities can all affect not just one character, but an entire group. If several of these factors are in place at once (a group under the effects of a *prayer* and aided by a bardic

Initiative Cards by the Game Mechanics

The Game Mechanics, designers of excellent d20 System .pdf products and published in print by Green Ronin Publishing, produce a set of initiative cards. A copy of these can be found in **Appendix Two** and as a .pdf at their website: www.thegamemechanics.com. These cards contain pertinent information about the characters and monsters, covering everything from ability scores, specific skills, saves, and more.

song are all shaken due to dragon fear), a player may find keeping track of the final modifier to any given roll difficult. This problem often leads to missed attack rolls, incorrectly made saves, and inaccurate damage totals, all of which may be realized only a round or two later.

Modifiers that affect just one character should be tracked by that player's character (or the GM for NPCs). Writing down all the modifiers for a given character on a card that can be referred to before taking an action will prove helpful. If initiative cards are used, everything currently affecting a character can be jotted down on it and read off as a reminder before the character moves.

Things that affect an entire group can be written down in a place all the players can see it. If a white board or chalkboard is being used, it makes an ideal location, as does a vinyl battlemat. Otherwise, one player can be responsible for tracking group modifiers on a piece of paper and either posting it where everyone can see or making it available whenever anyone asks what's in effect.

Multiple Coded Dice

Some characters, especially at higher levels, can make many attacks in a single round. If a monk makes four unarmed strike attacks at +12/+12/+7/+2, it can slow down a game for the player to roll the same d20 four times, especially since the last two attacks are much less likely to hit. It can be also a problem for a player to roll four identical d20s at once, as confusion may arise over which die is using which attack bonus.

Two good ways are available to solve this problem and speed up the game. One is to get dice of different sizes and use bigger dice for attacks with larger bonuses. The die market now has a huge selection of unusually large and small dice, and finding several dice of different sizes is rarely a problem. If the monk player in the above example rolled two big d20s, one medium d20, and one small d20, the bigger dice would obviously represent attacks with bigger bonuses. If all four dice were different colors, the player could even roll damage at the same

time, rolling damage dice of the same color as the attack dice. Rather than wait for the player to make as many as eight die rolls (four attacks and four damage rolls), only a single roll is needed, with the results quickly and unambiguously determined.

Miniatures, Maps, and Props

If your gaming group is not using battlemats and miniatures, adding them can considerably speed up a game. Time is no longer wasted asking how far away the goblins are or arguing over whether the wizard is truly flanked or not. A number of companies produce flexible mats with a square or hex grid pre-printed on one or both sides. These mats can be written on with wet-erase markers. Such mats are an excellent way to keep track of relative positions (using miniatures, cardstock figures, or even boardgame pieces and dice). Some groups avoid using metal miniatures or vinyl grid maps due to cost, but the expanding selection of cardstock figures and counters, as well as paper maps, makes it cheaper every year to get involved in scale props for battles.

If using a wet-erase game mat, important features can be drawn on directly. Dungeon walls, pits, water features, and even furniture can be quickly sketched in for all to see. Wet-erase markers come in different colors, allowing scenes to use blue for water, black for buildings, green for bushes and vegetation, and brown for relative altitude of terrain. The height of objects can be written next to them, allowing players to distinguish quickly the 30-foot wall from the 50-foot tower.

This approach works well, though many groups prefer 3-D props for visual appeal. The advantages of such models are their heightened appearance, helping players more accurately visualize a scene, and the fact that they can't be missed. Two-dimensional maps sometimes become confused, with lines crossing each other and making a morass of shapes players can't make out. Models are simply generally clearer. The drawbacks to such accessories are cost and crowding. A 6-inch plastic tower may look impressive, but players can't see beyond it even if their characters run around it. You can use this fact to your advantage (placing players in positions similar to that of their characters, hiding models and large figures behind terrain features and so on), but too many tree figures on a board not only cut down visibility, they make grabbing figures to move them difficult.

Simpler props are sometimes a better option. A forest can easily be mapped out using coins for tree-trunks and boulders. A horde of opponents may be represented by dice, with each die turned to a different number. Most gamers have plenty of spare dice, allowing them to field large forces without spending much money. Using dice of different sizes and colors makes describing foes easy (for example, the GM can announce that red, blue, and white d6's are orcs, and the d12's are ogres). Since foes are numbered and colored, players can easily indicate which enemy they target with a spell or attack.

Miniatures, figures, and props can also slow a game if they get knocked over, accidentally moved, or even blown away by a sneeze. Paper counters are particularly vulnerable to this last threat. To prevent such problems, coat paper props with a light adhesive like the kind used in sticky-notes. A stick of this material can sometimes be found in office supply stores, and it allows paper items to be securely placed, removed, and replaced on a smooth grid map without any sticky residue or risk of accidental movement. Always try such material on a small corner to make sure nothing gets damaged before applying it to everything.

Metal and plastic props tend to be too heavy for sticky-note adhesive to hold them down effectively, but that doesn't mean they can't be similarly secured. Numerous reusable putties and clays are designed to hold posters up or keep china plates from rolling about when put on display. The right putty holds your miniatures firmly even when they are lightly jostled, but doesn't prevent them from being moved and removed over and over. There is a great deal more variance in these materials than sticky-note paste, so be sure to check their use instructions before applying them to anything valuable or irreplaceable.

White Boards/Chalkboards

A chalkboard or dry-erase board can be an excellent way to keep track not only of whose turn it is, but what characters are present and what their names are. The bigger a board you have room for, the better, and white dry-erase boards tend to be cheaper, easier to read, and less messy. Place the board at the side or behind the GM, where the most people can easily see it and the GM can easily reach it. When there's no fight, list all the PCs and major NPCs, along with the players running them and noteworthy features. Especially early in a campaign, doing so helps players and GM alike keep track of who's who. If the group breaks up, list who's in what group to help keep track. If a break scatters, a small note after each name listing where the character is can be helpful.

When a fight starts, list each PC and NPC involved in order of initiative, being sure to leave a space between each. This not only helps keep track of when each character acts, it lets players see how long they have before their character acts (useful if they need to run out of the room for a moment). If a character readies or delays, mark that action next to its name; when the character acts, write in its name at its new place in the initiative (which is why a space is left between names), and erase the old one.

A white board can also be used to keep track of movement in combat. If laid flat, it can have a map drawn out and miniatures placed on it. If hung on the wall near the GM, character's placement can be marked on a map with initials. This keeps players from needing miniatures, and works

well in areas without a tabletop big enough for everyone to get around. Constantly erasing and re-marking every character's position can be tedious, and the GM will need either a grid marked on the board or a ruler to mark distances, but the benefit in clear knowledge of who's where is worth the effort if other options don't work well.

Styles of Play

Two games can have the same rules, maps, and adventures, yet still have very different play styles. How you interact with players and how the players view each other and the game world are matters of play style. Different styles produce different kinds of game sessions and may work better with some kinds of campaign themes (see **Choosing a Campaign Theme** in **Chapter Five**). A GM who understands her own play style and those of her players has a better chance of avoiding problems. Some narrative tools allow you to change the feel of a game by changing how scenarios are presented to your players.

These tools and descriptions can be helpful for figuring out why a game doesn't seem to work or why certain players are causing trouble or complaining about the game. None of these styles are right or wrong in an absolute sense, but some groups and even individual players don't mesh well with some styles. Anything a group enjoys is a good style, and anything that causes problems needs to be examined.

GMing Styles

Different GMs approach their jobs differently. The following are a few common, simplified GM styles. Examine how and when you use styles and how players react to those styles. Sometimes a game's main problem is that players don't like the way you run things, which is something only you can change.

Adversarial Opponent

The adversarial opponent GM is one who tries to get the PCs into trouble. NPCs act with ruthless efficiency and are often designed specifically to overcome PCs. Adversarial opponent GMs tend to be very restrictive about what they allow — races, feats, classes, and spells from non-core books are unlikely to be allowed, and rules are enforced very much by the book. If this kind of GM has house rules, they're run how the GM interprets them, as are all core rules. Players are allowed to decide what actions their characters attempt and have little to no other input into the world. As well, the GM specifically arranges encounters and NPCs in such a way to put PCs at risk and doesn't back down from killing an entire party.

This style comes closest to being "wrong," despite the earlier claim that every style is valid. The number of players who enjoy a GM who's actually out to get them is extremely small. Logically, there's nothing a player can

do to "beat" a GM. No matter how tough PCs are, a GM can always have them attacked by 100 elder dragons who also happen to be epic level fighters, sorcerers, and clerics, each with an artifact. The idea that a GM would actually want to "defeat" players through any possible means is silly — the GM would always win, and the players would likely walk away and not play with her again.

Some players, however, enjoy games in which the GM *appears* to be out to get them. The sense of danger and risk is increased, and therefore the feeling of accomplishment is increased if the players do succeed. A GM trying to pull this off needs to establish some ground rules early in the campaign. First, she must make it clear that the game is one of harsh application of the rules: rerolls won't be granted unless a player has a special ability granting them, spells work exactly as listed in their descriptions and can't be used for anything else, and the cavalry won't suddenly show up to save a party in trouble. Any house rules should be clearly defined and explained in advance. Taking the role of opponent only works if the GM is scrupulously fair.

Adventures designed by this kind of GM must be within a reasonable power level of PCs. Having the PCs all poisoned by an epic assassin when they're 1st level is unfair. Making more dangerous adventures available is fine, but they should clearly be dangerous at the outset. The GM should stick to encounters that are within the group's possible EL to handle, or at least give the players the option to back down from more powerful encounters. A party that decides to attack the avatar of an evil god at 4th level makes its own doom, yet if the same characters are attacked out of thin air, it's ridiculous.

All that said, even the best and most fair adversarial GM is likely to rub players the wrong way. It's too easy for a GM of this style to seem to be having fun at the players' expense, and no one likes a bully. The only legit use of this style is to heighten the players' excitement, and that only works if they enjoy the high risk. Many players are more interested in telling a good story or enjoying the fruits of their labors than constantly risking the loss of their characters to a pit full of basilisks.

In most cases, the adversarial style should be reserved for only the most epic of climaxes, and then it must come with a warning. Fudging results and saving PCs through *deus ex machina* means most of the time and then throwing them to the wolves is unfair. If changing tone for a dramatic moment, make sure the players receive warning that this time there won't be any divine interventions, sudden changes of villain's heart, or second chances given for missed saving throws.

GM Biases

1. "It's the Thought that Counts" — If the PCs try their best, things will likely work out for them.

2. "Cruel World" — Every challenge is extreme; PC death is a regular possibility.

3. "Live by the Sword…" — Resorting to violence is discouraged and punished.

4. "There Ain't No Such Thing as a Free Lunch" — The PCs must earn or pay for anything good; random events are never happy surprises.

5. "Only if it's Funny" — Anything that can happen to cause a funny situation, will.

6. "Murphy Rules" — Anything that can go wrong for the PCs, will.

7. "Over-balanced" — All challenges are within the range to be a threat to PCs, without ever being overpowering.

8. "No Kind Act" — Anything the PCs do in an effort to be nice, especially to people they don't know, will likely have unfortunate consequences and/or costs.

9. "Genius is Without Measure" — If the PCs do something unexpected, the GM assumes her NPCs, who are smarter than her, thought of it and made specific plans to counter it.

10. "New is Good" — Anything that surprised the GM, from a cunning plan to an unusual character concept, is rewarded.

Benevolent Dictator

The benevolent dictator GM is an arbiter of the rules who's trying to make sure everything is both fun and fair. Like the adversarial GM, the benevolent dictator tends to play tight to the game rules, but she's not looking to find ways to create greater challenges for the players or to take advantage when they do something stupid. Game rules can be modified or even ignored if they conflict with logic, but exceptions aren't made just to help along a good story.

Done well, this style of GMing produces fun and flexible games in which everyone knows both how the world works (as there are consistent rules) and that the rules won't be used to enforce an unreasonable outcome. Benevolent dictators often fall prey to assumption clashes (see page 23) if they bend a rule once but refuse to do so under different circumstances. These GMs also often give their players too much free reign, allowing a game to devolve into dead-end quests and aimless wandering.

Director

A director tries to get players to act as she feels is appropriate to given situations and storylines. Most adventures have a "right" course of action, and players are rewarded if they find it. This style of play often puts the needs of the story told ahead of the rules of the game.

A director who successfully guides players without limiting their free choice and opportunity to have fun can produce the memorable story arcs and dramatic moments many roleplayers love. This type of game often has a very strong sense of style, setting it apart from less focused campaigns and allowing it to recreate dramatic moments form movies and other fiction. Heroic last stands to guard bridges, redemption of foul villains, martyred heroes inspiring their comrades to success, and apparently unbeatable foes being brought low by underdogs are all easier in games in which the GM gives subtle hints and gentle nudges as to the direction the story is going.

On the negative side, a director can easily steamroll players who are just trying to have some fun. A GM's biases become much more obvious in a director and can impact how she reacts to PC actions. Bad directors penalize players who take reasonable actions that simply don't fit into the GM's plans.

GM Biases

Aside from styles of play, many GMs have biases about how a game "should" work. A GM may not even be aware of such a bias, but it affects how she makes rules calls, when she bends the rules, and under what circumstances she fudges die results. Often, strong biases are the cause of assumption clashes (see page 23), bringing players to feel the GM is penalizing them for doing things she doesn't like. Though all GMs have biases, unless they are part

of the feel of a campaign, the GM should try to make rulings based on what's supported by reason and rules, not personal preference.

The following are biases many GMs hold. None are particularly good or bad, but a GM aware of her biases can warn players what they are, both allowing them to be used as campaign themes and helping to prevent later assumption clashes. A GM who intends to run a gritty, grim, and realistic game needs to warn players if violence is not the expected solution to most problems.

Knowing Your Group

To create a world for PCs to crawl around in and players to enjoy exploring, you need to know his players. Understanding how they're likely to react to situations, what sorts of games they enjoy, and how they interact with one another allows you to tailor the game world and its challenges to match your preferences, giving them foes they want to destroy and causes for which they want to fight. If that sounds a lot like being a therapist, there's a reason. Knowing a group of gamers well enough to predict their reactions and build adventures they'll enjoy is both the hardest and most important part of being a GM. With understanding of the players, everything else gets easier.

There are no real short cuts for getting to know a group of players. Although a few types of player personality crop up a lot, every player is a unique person with his or her own quirks and hot-button topics. You have to spend time with players before you really get to know them, leaving you with little to go on early in a group's history. The best route is to have initial games hit on common tropes — evil wizards, towns in needs, apparent allies actually having the PCs' best interests at heart — and save more complex plots for when you know your players better. Engaging in non-roleplaying game activities, such as seeing movies, can also be useful.

The focus in the following list is on problem players, because non-problem players are easy to deal with. Problem players tend to fall into a few broad categories, and these rough categories can help you understand how to handle these kinds of players — but they're just a starting point. Most players have a smattering of several different play styles. A player may be a rules-layer when paired with a junior thespian, but become a motivator when in a larger group of hack-n-slashers. You may need to try many different solutions before finding one that works with a particular player.

If one or more players are being disruptive, you must discuss the matter with them. You should not penalize PCs in-character for player transgressions made out-of-character. Instead, disruptive players should be talked to, possibly privately, depending on your feelings and your perception of the players' group dynamic. A player

shouldn't feel ganged up on, but sometimes a group needs to discuss matters together.

Avoid bullying or intimidating a player. Outside the game world, you have no real authority. It's your job to talk to disruptive players because you're essentially the host of the game. If problems continue, involve the whole group. No one should be lied to, ostracized, or mistreated, but if a player is causing problems, the group should address him directly and maturely. Moving game nights and not telling the offending player may seem easier, but ultimately this tactic causes bad feelings and more problems. Some people aren't meant to play together, and a mature group is willing to say so.

It's also worthwhile for you to see if you fall into any of these categories. A GM who knows his own biases and preferences can often see potential conflicts with players of other types before they even occur. A GM who is a hack-n-slash player can guess early on that a junior thespian may be dissatisfied with his campaign unless he adds numerous opportunities to roleplay and act out scenes. A good GM finds ways to accommodate his player's desires without sacrificing his own gaming style.

Griefer

A griefer enjoys upsetting other players and the GM. Thankfully, such players are rare. If a GM realizes he has a griefer, a polite but firm talk is needed. If the griefer can moderate his ways to no longer aggravate other players, allow him to stay. Otherwise, the gaming group as a whole should disinvite him from playing.

Hack-n-Slasher

The hack-n-slash player is most interested in killing things. Every challenge is likely seen in terms of what needs to be killed and how best to kill it. This player often gets bored with information encounters, expositions, traps, and pure roleplaying opportunities. The upside of the hack-n-slasher is that he enjoys something the game naturally focuses on, fighting, and that he's easy to please. The downside is that he may grow disinterested with anything else, talking to and distracting other players or even complaining loudly about any action that delays the next fight.

Sometimes the hack-n-slasher can be drawn out into non-combat sequences by discovering what's important to player and character. An up-front and honest conversation between GM and player about what sorts of non-combat events interest the player can be fruitful, as can appealing to his character's history or having NPCs talk in terms of how great a warrior the player's PC is. If information must be given in such a way the player pays attention, try having a foe slip into witty banter during a fight.

Ultimately, if nothing but fighting interests the player, simply be sure to provide plenty of fights. Most players
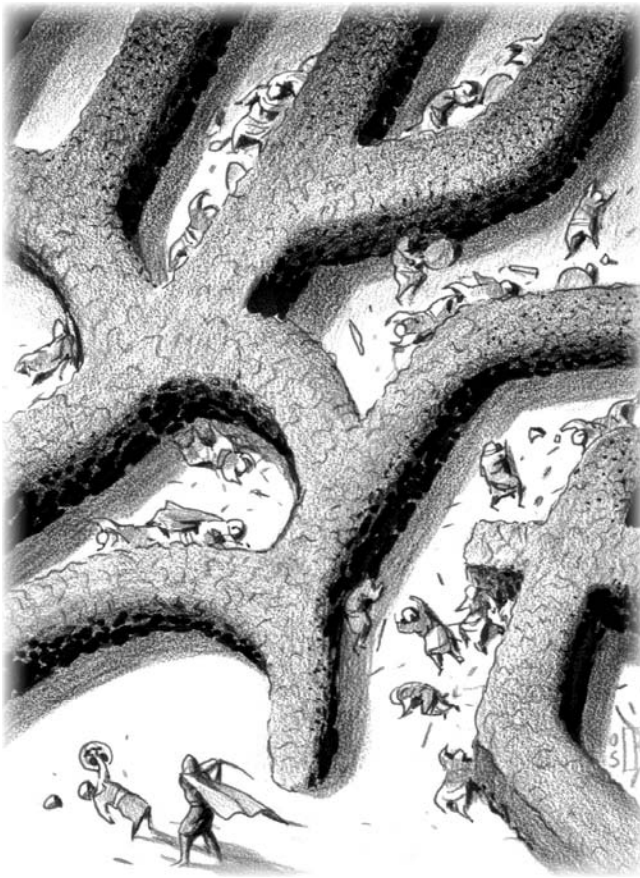
understand that the game is for the enjoyment of all, so interspersing fighting encounters with things appealing to other players can generally keep the hack-n-slasher from being disruptive and keep his interest level high enough to stay in touch with the campaign. Don't expect the hack-n-slasher to negotiate with NPCs, solve riddles, or get involved in great romances unless the player has indicated an interest in doing so. Setting up such situations is likely a waste of time and may actually annoy the player. Encourage roleplaying gently, but don't try to force it down the player's throat.

Hanger-On

A hanger-on isn't really interested in the game being run; he's just present to spend time with one or more other people. Hangers-on are usually the friend or significant other of another player. As long as a hanger-on isn't disruptive, simply leaving him alone is normally best.

You may occasionally try to get a hanger-on more deeply involved with the game, but if such efforts regularly fail, there's no point in trying harder. Check with a hanger-on to be sure he's not actually a wallflower who'd like to be more involved; otherwise, hangers-on are beyond your ability to get involved. Roleplaying games aren't for everyone, and some people are willing to play for convenience but just won't get deeply involved. There's no need to spend spare time and energy trying to change his campaign to draw in these players — they just aren't interested enough.

Junior Thespian

The junior thespian is most interested in playing the role of his character to the hilt. He may insist on acting out his PC's actions, talking through every conversation of every day, and staying in character even when other players don't. If the junior thespian isn't being disruptive, leave him alone — he's getting into the role and can add flair and detail to a game world. Sometimes, however, junior thespians take things too far. A player who insists on responding to someone asking if the group wants pizza with an in-character query about what pizza is has gone too far. So has one who's unwilling to skip through an uneventful ten-day trek through the woods because something important might be discussed.

A GM can sometimes reach a junior thespian by putting things in movie or television terms. Rather than stating a journey will not be played out, the GM says the scene cuts to ten days later. Explain minor events must be skipped not to get to the fight, but to allow for the scenes of important drama. A player who acts out everything may need boundaries about how much time is appropriate to describe a single action. Demonstrating how a fencer draws his sword with a flourish is fine, but taking two minutes to decide exactly which weapon the fencer puts in his off-hand is not.

Motivator

The motivator just wants to get things done. As long as the PCs are on track to accomplishing some goal, the motivator is happy, but side-treks, down time, and goofing off annoy him. Some motivators restrict themselves to keeping the PCs on track, while others want the players and GM to stay focused on the game as well. A motivator can be useful when a group strays too far from a game's plot (or gets distracted from gaming in general). If too demanding, however, motivators are often perceived as bossy, clashing with other players.

A bothersome motivator may be handled by scheduling down time, both in character and as a group of players. If the GM states he intends for a band of PCs to winter in a given city, the motivator knows there's no need to encourage everyone to get moving. If a group of players decides to begin actually playing within an hour of getting together, and the GM announces periodic breaks, the motivator may be satisfied. Failing that, make sure the motivator isn't annoying other players and to encourage him to remain polite and cordial when dealing with other players.

Rules Lawyer

The dreaded rules lawyer is one of the most common problem player types. The rules lawyer uses the rules of the game as a weapon. He abuses loopholes, designs min-maxed characters, and corrects other players and the GM when they make mistakes. The rules lawyer

often quotes rules and "official" interpretations of them as justification for his character's actions, and argues rules decisions he disagrees with.

A player familiar with the rules of a d20 campaign can be useful, helping you find relevant rules quickly and possibly even answering basic rules questions from other players to save you time. The problem comes when a rules lawyer takes up game time arguing rules, abuses rules to get away with something unreasonable or make an unbalanced character, derailing the fun of playing a game by bickering about the quality of other players' rules knowledge.

Often, a rules lawyer's motivation is one of fairness. If a player has been in games run by a GM who favored one or two players, the rules lawyer may see the even application of rules to all situations as the only way to keep a game fair. In this case, an evenhanded treatment of all players, even when deviating from the rules, is a good first step to dealing with the rules lawyer. Make sure everyone knows what exceptions to the rules you've made — if allowing a paladin to trade in his steed for a familiar, for instance, tell the group so everyone knows it's an option in the campaign

Other rules lawyers see knowledge of the rules as a way to compete with the GM. By pointing out your mistakes, these players try to score points and control the flow of a campaign. A roleplaying game is a cooperative effort, and you must work with players, but as the referee, you have final say on how the rules work. If a rules lawyer attempts to control how rules are interpreted, take firm actions to establish your authority without being rude or tyrannical.

The best way to do this is to establish rules about handling rules disagreements before they come up. Inform players you will run your game based on the rules, but not enslaved to them. A rules call should be made quickly to keep the action and pacing of a game going. Allow anyone who disagrees with a rules call one moment to explain his or her objection. If you agree, there's nothing wrong with changing a ruling; if not, state discussion is ended, and re-examine the matter after the session is over. If you later decide to run the rule differently, inform all players at the beginning of the next game session.

If a rules lawyer continues to be a problem, you are well within your rights to insist all questions about rules wait until the end of the session, when they can be handled without making everyone wait. The rules lawyer can write down any questions, and the two of you can hash them out on your own time.

Spotlight Hog

A spotlight hog wants to be the one doing whatever is being done. Spotlight hogs often want to play more than one character or play characters with something that definitely sets them apart. These players crave attention, both for themselves and for their characters. Spotlight hogs can be useful because they get excited and involved in a campaign, and that excitement can positively affect other players. A spotlight hog that actually manages to garner significantly more "on-screen" time than other players may be a problem, however, preventing others from enjoying the campaign fully.

There's not much that can be done with a spotlight hog who's a problem other than talk to him. If necessary, you can carefully craft plots to focus on other players' characters, but doing so is fair only if the spotlight hog gets his time in the sun too. It's also worthwhile to check with other players to see if they mind the spotlight hog's actions — a group of hack-n-slashers and wallflowers may be fine with a spotlight hog doing all the talking, for example.

Wallflower

A wallflower is the opposite of a spotlight hog. This player doesn't seem at all involved, barely speaks, and allows others to plan everything. Wallflowers are only disruptive if they stall a game's pacing by refusing to answer questions, make initiative checks, or take their turn. The most frustrating thing about such players is they often claim they greatly enjoy a campaign even though they hardly seem present when it's run.

If youcan discover the cause of a wallflower's silence, most wallflowers become active participants. Some wallflowers simply don't know the game rules well (especially in a game with many alternate rules), in which case assigning another player to help the wallflower plan actions and respond to your input can be helpful (this may be a great way to use a rules lawyer's talents). Other players of this type simply need time to become comfortable with a campaign or a particular group of players, while some never get more involved. Check periodically to see if wallflowers feel something is missing from a campaign, but failing that just leave them alone and make sure they don't slow down a game.

Assumption Clashes

One of the greatest risks any GM faces when running a game is that of an assumption clash. This problem occurs when a player assumes one thing and you another. For example, if a GM notes that five tough-looking men threaten a PC, the character's player may assume the men are unarmed thugs — that the description "tough-looking" means they look like "tough" unarmed thugs. The GM actually means the men look tough, like they will be hard to defeat, and is envisioning them in heavy armor and carrying masterwork weapons. Because neither GM nor player realizes a miscommunication has occurred, the player may make a decision about how to react that seems baffling to the GM and may lead to a bad game event.

The reason assumption clashes are so dangerous is that they often aren't recognized until long after they occur. In fact, sometimes assumption clashes never get ironed out, leaving hard feelings on both sides. In the case above, if a fight doesn't break out, the player may leave the encounter without ever realizing he had mis-visualized his opponents. He discovers the men are part of a large group of thugs holding the town hostage, but continues to see them as unarmed toughs. The player convinces his adventuring group to attack the thug stronghold, since he's sure the fight is winnable. The group plans and maneuvers for three game sessions before attacking the stronghold, only to find it manned by warriors in heavy armor and masterwork weapons. The player cries foul, only to be told the men have always been well armed and equipped. The player feels the GM changed the reality of the game, and the GM feels the player hasn't been paying attention.

Assumption clashes can happen on a larger scale as well. If a GM describes a campaign as sword-and-sorcery, players may envision a game in which powerful spellcasters are common, and most towns have a high-level sorcerer available to cast spells and make items. If the GM is actually thinking of classic pulp fantasy stories, he may decide arcane spellcasters are rare, and most are evil. Players who have designed their characters around the idea that arcane casters are common may not realize the error until many games have passed, and be surprised and irritated when they can't buy custom-made magic items.

There's no perfect way to avoid assumption clashes. Giving examples whenever possible and checking to see if your players understand the example helps. Also helpful is to know that assumption clashes occur and to keep a high degree of patience when a player seems to assume something wildly untrue. An occasional assumption clash can be fixed by allowing players to change past actions when a reasonable assumption is proved false. For minor issues, you can even change the game reality to match the false assumption (especially if you realize an assumption clash has occurred before the players do). If such clashes become common, find a way to communicate more clearly, possibly including using illustrations, distributing handouts, describing things in two different ways, and having a recap of events at the beginning of each game session.

Tricks of Pacing

One of the advantages a roleplaying game has over other games is that pacing can be controlled using numerous techniques. You need not always keep a group together, always play through every event, or focus on anything a group doesn't find interesting. Since the goal of the game is defined by the players (including you) rather than pre-set victory conditions, molding play to concentrate on

what entertains the group is possible. Many groups never take advantage of these options and get bogged down playing through every hour of every day, even when nothing interesting is occurring in the story.

There's nothing wrong with roleplaying mundane encounters if everyone is enjoying it. Indeed, especially early in a campaign, doing so can be a good idea to give PCs time to establish themselves — talking to one another, friendly villagers, slightly belligerent but not hostile guards, and even known foes in areas of truce. An occasional aside about entertainment available in a town or what kind of food an inn serves can help make a world seem real and stimulating. Yet if everyone has a good idea what their characters and the world are like, there's no need to play through every day, or even every week. A GM should try to hit the highlights of the PCs' lives, not the minutiae.

Multiple Action Points

The idea of multiple action points is to have things happening in more than one place at once. Adventuring parties often break up to scout ahead, check on more than one thing at a time, or take care of personal concerns. GMs often feel they lose control of a game when PCs split up, but the reverse is actually true. When PCs are separated, they are more easily handled, as they're more easily outnumbered. The biggest advantage players have over a GM is that they possess more brains running their side of an encounter — the fewer players involved in a scene, the fewer brains the GM must compete with.

Until the action points involve conflict, it's easy for a GM to hop from group to group, spending a little time with each. The GM can create mini-cliffhangers this way, letting a group get to a moment of drama (such as opening a locked door), then moving to the next group before resolving the drama.

Fights in multiple action points can be run in many different ways. A GM may run one turn of combat with one group, switch to run another turn with a second group, cycling through each section of PCs one at a time until all action scenes are over. This tactic works well with small groups, since each turn is fairly quick and no one has to wait too long for their turn. It's also possible to run the scenes simultaneously, keeping track of the initiative of all the characters as if they were together, even though the characters are in different locales. With larger groups, giving players something to do in each action point is a good idea, so they remain entertained and alert, and run each scene through before moving to the next one.

For example, a party hunts through a swamp with several native guides for a lost child. They break into three groups. The GM decides each group will run into an action scene separately (two fights, and one encounter with a suck

bog). The GM fears there are too many characters to cycle through the scenes quickly, and his players may grow bored. To maintain their interest, he gives each player a guide to run in the groups they don't have PCs in. Not only does this give the players something to do in each group, it relieves the GM from having to run all the native guides.

Even if multiple action points are run simultaneously, they may occur at different times. For example a GM might run one group of PCs through two hours of dull searching before they're attacked, then leave them before running the fight to deal with a second group. The second group is attacked immediately, however, and the GM then runs the two fights at the same time, even though they're occurring at different moments of game time. A GM can even keep the exact time each scene occurs vague, allowing him to have them interact if he wishes. For example, if one group wins its conflict early on, the GM can have it join in the second fight, running to the rescue, explaining that the other fight actually took place an hour earlier.

Cut Scenes

Sometimes, something important needs to happen, but you don't want to play it out at all. In these cases, using a cut scene (to borrow from video-game, and before that, movie, terminology) may be necessary — an encounter that takes place without much, if any, player involvement. This technique is also sometimes referred to as a narrative scene, as the GM describes what happens without using game mechanics. A GM running an epic war as part of his game, for example, might just declare to players, "The army you're with fights all night, and by morning you can see your side is losing. The general orders a retreat and asks you to help hold a final defense to give others time to escape." This kind of cut scene is designed to let the players know how they got to a particular point, so the fun part of the game can begin.

Cut scenes are also sometimes used if a group runs out of time, a campaign closes early, or everyone has grown bored with the current adventure. In these cases, the cut scene isn't designed to tell players how something started, but how it ended. This method allows the group a sense of closure (when running out of time or ending a campaign) or lets the players know how something turned out if it's no fun to play anymore. A group can, by consent, simply skip over anything that isn't fun, and let the GM give a quick description of what happened.

Two rules are key when deciding to use a cut scene: don't dictate the PCs' actions without their consent, and don't let the cut scene be more important than the parts of the game that get run. There's nothing wrong with telling players the *result* of their character's actions, but be sure not to penalize them for trusting you to do that outside the rules of the game. For example, if running the war described above, the GM checks to ensure the players

intend to fight through the night and that they have no extraordinary plan to turn the tide of battle. Further, even if they do plan to fight through the night, having them killed or maimed or lose valuable and irreplaceable resources is unfair during the cut scene. When you run a cut scene, the PCs are in your custody; treat them with respect. (Of course, there's nothing wrong with getting player permission for something bad to happen in a cut scene, even in secret. Many players enjoy having characters with scars or near-death experiences and happily allow a GM to arrange for such things in narrative play, surprising other players.)

By the same token, cut scenes should be used to enhance pacing, not skip the best part of a story. In the war example, the long fight through the night is little more than exchanges of weapon blows (which eventually get dull) over hours and hours (which would take forever to play through). Additionally, since the PCs can't really change the outcome (since they are massively outnumbered and represent only a small portion of the army as a whole). The cut scene gets to the point (the desperate fight to hold a final defense) without wasting play time.

Different groups of players have different tolerance levels for cut scenes. The better players know each other and the GM, the more likely they are to allow a cut scene to cover unimportant events. Some players, especially early in a campaign, don't want long periods of time to pass without roleplaying through them, because they need the time to get to know other players and their characters.
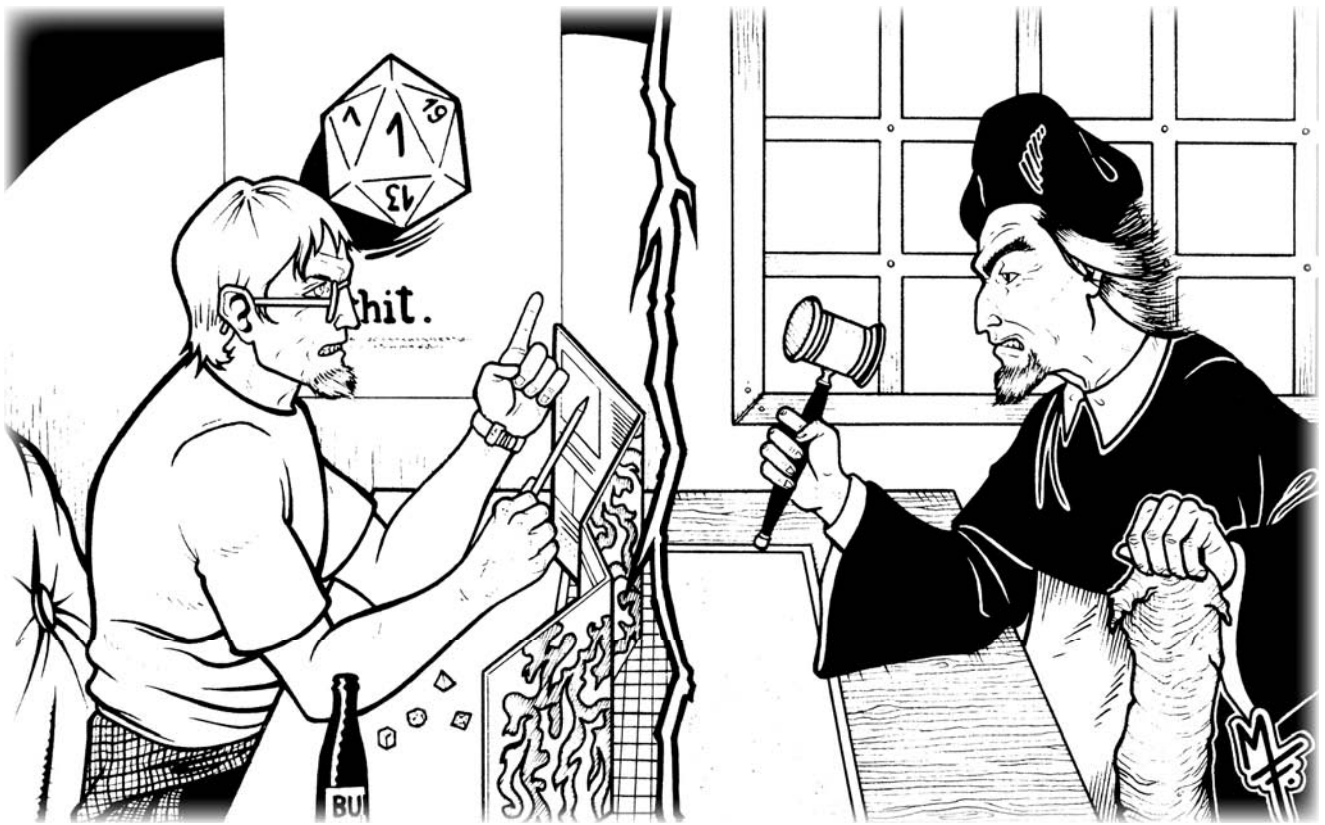
Chapter Two: Adjudicating Play

What a campaign rewards, it gets more of. This tenet is true in both the simple meaning (games that pass out experience points only for combat encourage PCs to kill things, while games that pass out experience points for roleplaying are likely to have more sessions with nary a sword swung) and in a more esoteric sense (house rules that make building castles and creating kingdoms easy are more likely to have characters doing so). If you want your d20 campaign to have a different feel, you may need to alter, add, or eliminate standard rules to encourage the tone you want. These changes are often referred to as house rules.

House rules are new rules created by GMs for use in their own campaigns. A GM may introduce house rules to fix something about the core rules that bothers her, to cover an oversight in the core rules, or to change the flavor of the game by altering its underlying assumptions. The best house rules are those that match a group's style of play and support the kind of adventures the GM plans on running.

House rules are very common with many groups and have a bad reputation with others. No game can cover every possible event and style of play, but bad house rules make the game less fun. Rule changes need to be carefully considered and playtested for balance. A new house rule may have unexpected consequences, changing a game in a way neither you nor your players like.

Used well, however, house rules allow a gaming group to change a campaign to match its style of play more closely. In a game that deals mostly with diplomacy and negotiation, you may want to simplify combat rules so fights take up less time. Of course, if your group loves getting into fights but doesn't like complex rules, you may also want to cut down on the combat rules you use.

Designing your own rules is an important part of being a GM. Even if you want to avoid changing the flavor of a game by altering its core assumptions, you'll eventually be asked to handle a situation the rules don't cover. Roleplaying games are, by their very nature, dependent on the GM to be ready to handle every possible contingency. No published set of rules can possibly do this, so eventually every GM must strike out on her own. The new rule may be a one-time decision about what to do if a goblin is convinced to drink oil and swallow a tindertwig, or it may be a sweeping change to allow socially inept players to have smooth, suave characters.

Off-the-cuff decisions regarding unusual situations can be rough, as they're unlikely to come up again. More permanent changes to the rules must be carefully examined to see if they have side effects you didn't expect and don't want. The best way to do this is extensive playtesting, but this often isn't a practical answer for casual gamers. Playtesting takes time, and most gamers

would rather spend that time actually playing their game than testing new rules for it. Failing a playtest, a rule needs to be looked at very closely. Try to imagine every possible use of the new rule, as well as consider who the rule benefits most.

For example, a GM might decide she wants small, fast weapons such as throwing knives to be more common in his campaigns. If she makes a house rule that allows characters to make twice as many attacks with light ranged weapons, assuming that their ease of use allows faster attacks, such weapons will certainly be most common. They'll appeal most, however, to characters with big Strength bonuses, since such characters can add that bonus to every ranged attack. A character with a +6 Strength bonus is better off making two knife attacks, even if they only deal 1–4 points of damage, than one spear attack. This means the stronger a character gets, the more likely he is to use a light throwing weapon, which is counter-intuitive. Barbarian hordes with bandoleers of shuriken seem wrong and likely aren't what the GM intended.

Further, a house rule must be well known to the players. Even if a GM designed a perfectly functional house rule, players will be understandably upset if they aren't aware of it before it comes into a play. Not only should you be sure to mention the rule, you should probably give everyone a handout with all new rules carefully explained. Players need access to all the rules to plan their character advancement and react reasonably to the events of the campaign. Since house rules aren't available in any rulebook, it's your job to disseminate them to players.

The other reason this is key is that players may not like a new rule. While it's important you're happy with how your game goes, the players need to be happy as well. A new proposed house rule is often well received by players, but it's a good idea for you to ask their input and make sure they're comfortable with new rules. Sometimes a player's style of play doesn't match yours, and working out such issues before they come up in game play is best.

All the following rules are designed to be easily added to a game, either to provide rules for situations that come up regularly or to change the feel of a campaign by altering the core d20 rule set. They're broken into three broad categories: combat rules (those dealing with fighting on a personal- or mass-combat scale); general (those dealing with simulating the world in one way or another); and magic (those providing additions and alterations to the normal rules of magic). Each section presents a new rule, discusses what kinds of campaigns it's best for, and explores possible variants and repercussions of the rule.

Additional new rules can be found throughout the *Advanced Gamemaster's Guide*, especially in **Chapter Seven: Treasure and Magic Items**. The rules found in other chapters are not so much changes in the core rules as additions to the normal set of options. They are less likely to have unexpected consequences and less likely to require changes in related rules. Even so, all these additions at least touch on how their inclusion will probably change the feel of a campaign.

– Combat Rules –

Combat is a major element of most d20 campaigns. The base combat rules are designed to encourage heroic action, to keep play detailed enough players have interesting choices in a fight but abstract enough not to bog down in details, and to allow players to face failure without characters being killed. Hit points, one of the most integrated elements of the rules, allow players to enjoy the give-and-take of combat without characters being quickly crippled (or constantly missed until a single blow drops them), while a few combat maneuvers and a slew of feats tweak the tactical concerns of a fight.

Since combat is so integral to most campaigns, it's one of the first things GMs seek to change when running certain types of campaigns. The following rules are designed to support a certain style of play as explained in the descriptions. Use any or all of these rules independently to create the style of combat your campaign theme demands.

Bushwhacking Rules

One common problem GMs have when trying to run games with urban settings, espionage, or assassination as

major themes is the difficulty in dropping a foe in a single blow when attacking from stealth. Obviously, characters with sneak attack get their bonus dice when attacking a flat-footed foe and assassins have their death attack, but some campaign styles require everyone to have a chance to drop a foe in one shot from ambush. Vast pools of hit points work well for general combat in such settings, but they make assassination attempts problematic at best. To overcome this drawback, try introducing the bushwhack rule.

The bushwhack rule applies only when a target is flat-footed and unaware of an attack against him. This second part is very important. A thief jumping out of the shadows to stab a guard in the chest isn't bushwhacking him — the guard sees the blade coming even if he doesn't have time to react to it. If the thief was stabbing the guard in the back or attacking him under cover of total darkness or while invisible, the situation would qualify as a bushwhack. Since the d20 rules assume no facing, a character must either declare he's attacking a target from behind (and reasonably be able to do so) or win an opposed skill contest of the worst of his Move Silently and Hide against the best of his victim's Listen or Spot.

If the target is both flat-footed and unaware, he must make a Fortitude save if successfully damaged (DC 10 + damage dealt) or die. If the damage is non-lethal, the target must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage dealt) or be knocked unconscious for 2d6 minutes. Creatures immune to critical hits or sneak attacks are immune to bushwhacks.

Games with a bushwhack rule can be surprisingly deadly. Characters have a fair chance to deal with foes far more powerful than themselves if they can bushwhack them. For the same reason, the PCs may find their characters killed or captured by lesser threats if ambushed. This possibility opens numerous potential plots (including PCs sneaking around to ambush a foe they cannot beat in a fair fight or having to escape from minor foes who managed to capture them from surprise). Yet it also means that any character, no matter how tough or well protected, can be killed in a single blow under the right circumstances. Tension can increase as a result (especially if PCs find themselves somewhere with low visibility or a high level of cover); however, it also increases caution, which can slow down a campaign and remove a level of heroic action. The rule is best used in campaigns with a gritty, life-is-cheap feel rather than over-the-top high adventure, like Green Ronin's *Black Company Campaign Setting*, for instance.

Class Dodge Bonus

The idea behind the class dodge bonus is that as characters get better at combat and hitting things

(represented by the increase in base attack bonus), they also get better at avoiding damage. Each class gains a dodge bonus based on level. Just like other class-based numbers, a multiclass character adds his bonus from each class to gain his total dodge bonus. This system works well for GMs who want campaigns in which heavy armor is less common and in which people have greater survivability in plain clothes.

To prevent this system from being too unbalancing, a slight change is made to how dodge bonuses, Dexterity bonuses to AC, and armor interact. A character's total dodge bonus is his dodge bonuses from all sources (dodge bonuses stack, unlike most bonus types), plus his Dexterity modifier. A suit of armor's maximum Dexterity bonus is changed to its maximum dodge bonus. Thus, a character with a 14 Dexterity and a +3 dodge bonus is considered to have a total dodge bonus of +5 (+2 Dex, +3 dodge). If wearing hide armor, however, he is limited by its maximum dodge bonus of +4, giving him an AC of 18 (+4 armor, +4 dodge).

Numerous things change when you add class dodge bonuses. First and most obviously, characters become harder to hit in combat. Combats take longer, and combat-based characters become slightly more powerful compared to non-combatants. This effect works well for GMs who feel spellcasters are slightly overpowered normally, but other GMs may want to consider giving them a slight power boost.

Second, armor becomes less critical to character success. Lightly armored fighting concepts, such as swashbucklers and savages, become more survivable. Fights that occur when characters are unarmored (such as nighttime attacks and fights in prisons or gladiatorial arenas) are less deadly, as characters aren't as penalized by a lack of armor. Since fewer characters will wear heavy armor, physical skill checks (those made with skills that suffer an armor check penalty) will be more easily made. Characters will generally be more mobile, with higher land speeds and better ability to make Balance, Climb, Jump, and Tumble checks.

Items providing an additional armor bonus without a higher maximum dodge bonus become more valuable as well. A ranger might be more interested in *bracers of armor +6* than a wizard, and light armor with magic enhancements to AC become more useful than mundane armor with the same total AC bonus. A paladin with a high Dexterity is better off wearing a *+3 breastplate* than masterwork full plate.

The chart below gives the dodge progression for every standard PC and NPC class, as well as classes found in Green Ronin's *Advanced Player's Manual* and the **Master Class** series. If using a class not listed here, give it the progression of the class with the closest concept or role. For example, most classes dependent on their divine spellcasting abilities will have fair dodge progression,

while warriors with heavy armor will have good and warriors proficient with only light or medium armor will have amazing dodge progression.

Remember a good dodge progression is as much about having the time to practice combat as it is about being nimble. Of course, every character wants to have as big a dodge bonus as possible, but fighters simply have more time to learn to avoid weapon blows than clerics. Rogues, though less effective in a fair fight, are equally likely to learn avoidance from the school of hard knocks. Barbarians and rangers not only fight on the front lines, they often do so without the benefit of heavy armor. Wizards also lack heavy armor, but do have defensive spells that both protect them and take up time needed to study and meditate.

Altering which progression a class gets is another way of changing the dynamics of a campaign. The assigned progressions are designed to change the roles each class plays as little as possible — fighters are still front-line combatants and bards are less likely to get into close combat than rogues. If you want to run a game with fewer front-line fighters or with a preponderance of arcane spellcasters, give better progressions to those classes you want to see more of. You could also design a new core class or a prestige class that grants a class dodge bonus even if other classes don't. This should always be a good progression at best, as good and amazing progressions are too unbalancing in a game with only a few classes gaining them.

Dodge Progressions By Class

Progression	Class
Amazing	Barbarian, duelist, elocater, ranger
Good	Aristocrat, assassin, blackguard, cavalier, fighter, holy/unholy warrior, monk, noble, paladin, psionic fist, rogue, scout, shadowdancer, slayer, war mind, warrior
Fair	Arcane archer, avatar, bard, dragon disciple, druid, dwarven defender, cleric, eldritch knight, evangelist, expert, hierophant, horizon walker, psychic, psychic warrior, pyrokineticist, shaman, slayer, soulknife, warpriest
Poor	Adept, arcane trickster, archmage, cerebremancer, commoner, eldritch weaver, loremaster, metamind, mystic theurge, psion, psion uncarnate, sorcerer, spellmaster, thanemage, thaumaturgist, thrallherd, wilder, witch, wizard

Table 2-1: Class Dodge Bonuses

	Dodge Bonus by Progression			
Level/HD	Amazing	Good	Fair	Poor
1st	+0	+0	+0	+0
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+0
3rd	+1	+1	+0	+0
4th	+2	+1	+1	+0
5th	+2	+1	+1	+1
6th	+2	+2	+1	+1
7th	+3	+2	+2	+1
8th	+3	+2	+2	+1
9th	+4	+3	+2	+2
10th	+4	+3	+2	+2
11th	+4	+3	+3	+2
12th	+5	+4	+3	+2
13th	+5	+4	+3	+3
14th	+6	+4	+4	+3
15th	+6	+5	+4	+3
16th	+6	+5	+4	+3
17th	+7	+5	+4	+4
18th	+7	+6	+5	+4
19th	+8	+6	+5	+4
20th	+8	+6	+5	+4

The same dodge bonuses should be given to NPCs as well. Those with class levels figure their dodge bonus just like PCs. Characters with multiple HD gain a dodge bonus based on their type, as noted below. Creature types that frequently wear armor (humanoids, giants, monstrous humanoids, and outsiders) have the same restrictions as PCs — limiting their maximum dodge bonus by armor type. Other creature types (aberrations, animals, constructs, dragons, elementals, fey, magical beasts, oozes, plants, undead, and vermin) are often balanced with natural armor. These types may not gain a dodge bonus greater than their Dexterity modifier before bonuses and/or penalties. Thus, a dire wolf, with a +2 Dexterity bonus, cannot gain more than a +2 dodge bonus from its Hit Dice, no matter how many Hit Dice it has.

Dodge Progressions By Creature Type

Creature Type	Dodge Progression
Dragons, magical beasts, outsiders	Amazing
Aberrations, constructs, elementals, giants, monstrous humanoids	Good
Animals, humanoids, oozes, plants, vermin	Fair
Fey, undead	Poor

Disabling Critical Hits

Critical hits in the core d20 rules are very straightforward: each critical does a multiple of damage based on the weapon used. This is easy, but not particularly cinematic. One element missing from most d20 combat is disabling blows and reduced effectiveness. Under the core rules, a character with 1 hit point is just as effective as one with 100 hit points. It's easy to see that a more flavorful (though more complicated) type of combat can be created by giving critical hits a chance to do more cinematic and disabling effects.

The normal process for determining critical hits remains the same in this variant until it's time to roll damage. When damage is rolled, the base damage (what the weapon would have done without the critical) is rolled separately from the additional critical damage. The target takes only the base damage in hit points. The total additional damage (not including the base damage) is used to determine which critical hit chart is rolled on. The target makes a Fortitude save with a DC equal to 5 + critical damage or take the effect rolled on the appropriate critical table.

Effects rolled as criticals last either a specified amount of time (stated with each definition) or until the character

is fully healed of all damage. If a target lacks the body part mentioned, it ignores the result of the critical. For example, an otyugh has no head and thus is immune to the minor critical hit result "dazed." Creatures immune to critical hit damage are also immune to critical hit effects.

For a deadly combat variant, you could have critical blows deal both additional hit point damage and a disabling effect.

Representative Battles

At its core, the d20 game is about heroic conflict on a personal scale. The level of detail provided is too granular to allow battles with hundreds or thousands of opponents on each side without slowing the pace of a game to a crawl. Sometimes, however, a campaign must deal with larger battles. Epic conflicts with huge armies are an important part of the fantasy genre, and some campaigns are based around military conflicts, desperate sieges, marauding hordes, and legendary battles. Options exist to use mass-combat rules to settle large-scale conflicts

Table 2-2:
Minor Critical Hits
(1-10 hp additional damage)

1d100	Result
01–10	Blow to leg. Target falls prone.
11–20	Blow to weapon arm. Attacker gets free disarm or sunder attempt without provoking an attack of opportunity.
21–30	Body blow. Target takes 1 point of Str damage.
31–40	Body blow. Target takes 1 point of Dex damage.
41–50	Body blow. Target takes 1 point of Con damage.
51–60	Target knocked off balance. –2 to AC until next move.
61–80	Painful wound. Target shaken for 1d4 rounds.
81–90	Cut above eye. –4 to Spot checks, –2 to ranged attack rolls, –1 to melee attack rolls.
91–100	Blow to the head. Target dazed for 1–4 rounds.

Table 2-3:
Intermediate Critical Hits
(11-49 hp additional damage)

1d100	Result
01–10	Blow to weapon arm. Attacker gets free disarm and sunder with a +4 bonus to each attempt without provoking an attack of opportunity.
11–20	Debilitating body blow. Target takes 1d6 Str damage.
21–30	Debilitating body blow. Target takes 1d6 Dex damage.
31–40	Debilitating body blow. Target takes 1d6 Con damage.
41–50	Hamstring to a leg, fin, or wing. Halve the base speed of one mode of movement.
51–60	Target knocked off balance. Attacker may make a free additional attack at full attack bonus.
61–70	Blow to head. Target flat-footed until its next move.
71–80	Blow to the head. Target takes 1d6 Int damage.
81–90	Blow to the head. Target takes 1d6 Wis damage.
91–100	Blow to the head. Target takes 1d6 Cha damage.
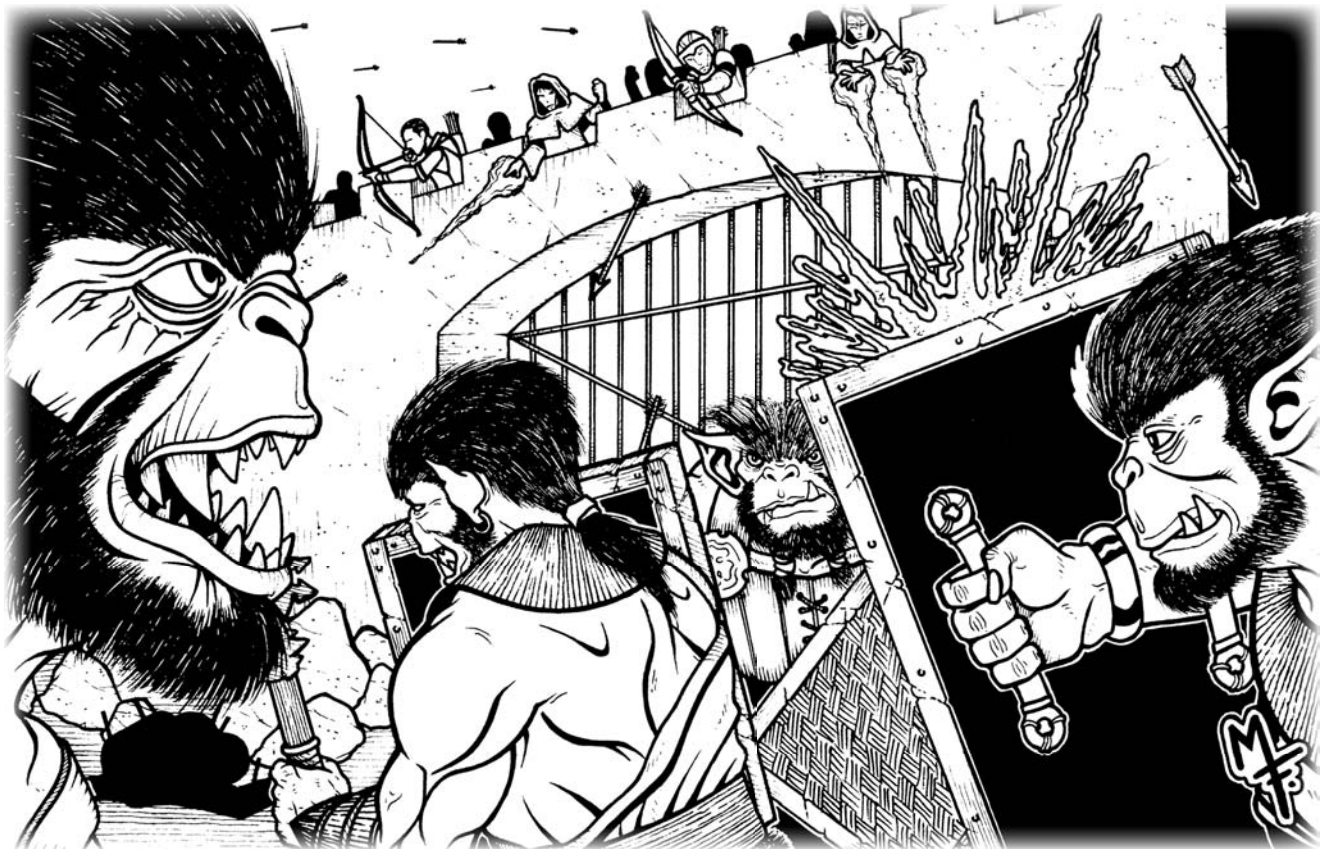
Table 2-4:
Major Critical Hits
(50+ hp additional damage)

1d100	Result
01–10	Blow to weapon arm, disabling it. No attacks can be made with that limb.
11–20	Debilitating body blow. Target takes 2d8 Str damage.
21–30	Debilitating body blow. Target takes 2d8 Dex damage.
31–40	Debilitating body blow. Target takes 2d8 Con damage.
41–50	Gut wound. Target nauseated.
51–60	Blow to the head. Target takes 2d6 Int damage.
61–70	Blow to the head. Target takes 2d6 Wis damage.
71–80	Blow to the head. Target takes 2d6 Cha damage.
81–90	Cut across eyes. Blinded.
91–95	Severed tendon in leg, fin, or wing. One movement rate dropped to 0.
96–100	Lethal blow. Target killed.

(such as that included in Green Ronin's *Advanced Player's Manual*), but not all groups find such rules satisfying. They remove some of the personal, heroic focus that appeals to many d20 gamers and refocus attention on numerous other characters.

An alternative to actually implementing and using mass-combat rules is to resolve large battles through representative conflicts run on a smaller scale. A simple set of skill checks is used to determine conditions in the early, middle, and late portions of a large battle, with climactic and important moments run as skirmishes with just the PCs and nearby NPCs. The results of these smaller-scale conflicts modify the rolls made to determine the conditions of the next skirmish and ultimately the outcome of the whole battle. Representative battles keep the focus on the PCs and what they're doing, rather than on the actions of hundreds or thousands of NPCs.

This system of battle resolution assumes that a knowledge skill exists to cover the art and science of warcraft. It may be Knowledge (tactics), Knowledge (warcraft), or even Knowledge (military). If no such skill exists (and you don't wish to add one), use one of the standard Knowledge skills instead. A force attacking or defending a fortification can be commanded with a Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check, while a force fighting in the open is commanded by a Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check. Military advisors can aid another on a command check using either the

EXAMPLE KEY SKIRMISHES

- Fight to kill a commander who's cut off from main forces.
- Fight over a defenses' main entrance.
- Fight to control high ground.
- Fight to reach support units/supplies/civilians.
- Fight to hold a breach in defenses until it can be patched.

appropriate skill for that battle or Knowledge (history), which includes information on ancient wars.

Each side in a conflict makes a command check using the appropriate Knowledge skill. If the PCs are in command, have one of them make the check; otherwise, whatever ally is commanding the force they're involved with can make the check. Each command check is modified by circumstances, as detailed below. Compare the two checks to determine which side gains an encounter level (EL) bonus. Then determine the EL of the PCs and a sample of their allies and run a skirmish against an opposing force with the listed EL shift. Do this three times, with each skirmish representing a stage of the overall battle. Whoever wins the third skirmish is considered to have won the whole battle.

When figuring what forces are present during a key skirmish, start with the PCs. If there's an important NPC ally who is likely to be the focus of an enemy attack, place him near the PCs along with whatever personal guard he has (which may well be the PCs).

TABLE 2-5:
COMMAND CHECK MODIFIERS

Circumstance	Modifier
Modest fortifications (wooden palisade, high ground)	+2
Heavy fortifications (stone walls, keep)	+4
Superior numbers	+2
Overwhelmingly superior numbers	+4
Great leader (Leadership feat)	+2
Support of major spellcasters	+2
Unprepared for battle	−4
Poorly trained or equipped troops	−4
Won last stage of battle	+2
Won last two stages of battle	+4

Figure the EL of that group using the rules found in the *DMG*. Then apply an attacking force of the EL determined by the command check. If there's an important NPC foe attacking, place him in at least one of the skirmishes fought over the course of the battle if the EL allows for it.

For example, assume four 9th-level PCs help defend a keep, with 40 2nd-level soldiers, four 5th-level knights, and one 7th-level commander against 1,800 hobgoblins warriors, 180 2nd-level hobgoblin barbarians, 18 6th-level hobgoblin barbarian, one 9th-level hobgoblin fighter chieftain, and one 9th-level hobgoblin adept shaman. The massive numbers of the attacking hobgoblins negates the fortification advantage of the defenders, and they manage a command check 11 higher than the defenders, giving them a +2 EL shift.

The GM decides to play out a skirmish for control of the keep's main gate. Neither the hobgoblin chieftain nor the keep's commander get involved in the battle this early, but a knight and four soldiers are present. The four PCs must be present as well, for a total of nine defenders with an EL of roughly 14. This is figured as EL 13 for four 9th-level PCs. The 5th-level knight and four 2nd-level soldiers qualify as an EL 7, which adds +1 to the PC's EL.

Looking at the EL charts in the *DMG*, the GM figures he wants mostly 6th-level hobgoblin barbarians as foes.

TABLE 2-6:
DETERMINING SKIRMISH EL

Result	Skirmish EL
Enemy check is 21 or more below PCs' or ally's	−4
Enemy check is 16–20 below PCs' or ally's	−3
Enemy check is 11–15 below PCs' or ally's	−2
Enemy check is 6–10 below PCs' or ally's	−1
Enemy check is within 5 of PCs' or ally's	0
Enemy check is 6–10 above PCs' or ally's	+1
Enemy check is 11–15 above PCs' or ally's	+2
Enemy check is 16–20 above PCs' or ally's	+3
Enemy check is 21 or more above PCs' or ally's	+4

He sees that 12 6th-level hobgoblins is only EL 13, which is 1 below what the command check calls for. He doesn't want to add more foes, since the battle will become unwieldy. Instead, he decides the PCs don't arrive until after a group of hobgoblins have smashed the gate open, with the knight and defenders still on the keep wall. This option negates the EL advantage the defenders have for the wall. To make up the additional +1 EL, the hobgoblins all have *potions of bull's strength* in effect, making them even more dangerous. If the PCs manage to hold the gate, they win the skirmish and gain a +2 bonus to their side's next command check. If they are forced to flee, they are considered to have lost. This doesn't mean the battle is over — reserves from the keep manage to re-take the gate. Yet the attacking hobgoblins gain a +2 bonus on their next command check, making it even more likely they'll have an EL bonus for the next stage of the battle.

Between each key skirmish are narrative periods, when the GM describes the action to the players. The GM should be sure not to describe the PCs' actions — the players should remain the masters of their characters' destinies. Instead, the GM should focus on events beyond the PCs' control: the ebb and flow of battle, the breaching of walls, the retreat of important allies, and so on. The narrative periods are designed to bridge the gap between key skirmishes, allowing players to have a sense for how the battle as a whole proceeds.

This is a very loose set of battle rules, but it allows for conflicts of thousands to be represented by the action going on around the PCs. It also awards bonuses for characters with high command skills, giving characters built around the idea of being military commanders or tacticians the chance to make a difference. Play with the basic rules as you wish — a truly overwhelming force, perhaps, might get to fight through five skirmishes before it's defeated. Also, PCs should be free to flee in between skirmishes; indeed, a tense story could be made out of an entire command deciding it must flee the field. This situation can even be run by a skirmish, with success determining how many defenders manage to fight again another day.

– Speeding Play –

All the following variant rules are designed to increase play speed. They can be used for a group that simply wants to get more done in an evening of play, or they can be brought in only when a particularly large or complex event occurs (such as a climactic battle with dozens of foes). All of these rules sacrifice some other element of game play, be it randomness, detail, or realism. The level of sacrifice is kept low, but a game using these rules will "feel different" from a standard d20 game.

Keep this fact firmly in mind: altering combat rules inevitably changes the balance of power between players and NPCs. For example, anything reducing the level of randomness in combat (such as the **Set Damage** rule on page 34) tends to favor whoever has more power in a combat. Since this is generally the PCs, such a change works in their favor. However, a fight designed to be a climactic final battle might involve foes slightly more powerful than the PCs, who would then have an even further advantage.

There's no need to use all these rules, and in fact doing so might well slow down a game until everyone is used to the new way of doing things. If you just want to speed things up for a single evening, it's best to stick with variants eliminating die rolls (see **Set Criticals** and **Set Damage** for example). If you want to speed up an entire campaign, experimenting with some of the other rules long enough to see how well players adapt to them becomes worthwhile.

Set Criticals

The Set Criticals variant does away with a confirmation roll for critical hits. Any attack within a weapon's threat range that hits a foe's AC is a critical hit. This rule speeds play in two ways. First, it removes the need for a secondary attack roll whenever a threat is scored. Secondly, it increases the total number of critical hits scored during most fights, causing damage to be dealt faster, and thus bringing the fight to a close quickly.

Preventing criticals from being too common or devastating necessitates two changes to weapon stats. First, all threat ranges are halved (with a minimum of a natural 20 always being a threat). Additionally, all weapons have their damage multiple for a critical hit reduced by 1, to a minimum of x2. Both these adjustments are made before all other calculations, such as a weapon being keen or a character having the Improved Critical feat.

For example, using these rules, a battleaxe and a longsword both deal 1d8 points of damage, have a threat range of 20 and a x2 critical multiplier. A *+1 keen scimitar* deals 1d6+1 points of damage, has a 17–20 threat range, and a x2 damage multiplier. Any blow with the keen scimitar that actually hits its target and is a natural 17 or higher automatically deals double damage.

Set Damage

The Set Damage variant replaces all damage die rolls with set numbers based on the average damage an attack deals (rounded down). Damage done by weapons, sneak attacks, spells, flaming enchantments, and any other source becomes a flat number, recorded on a character's sheet. All other values, including attack rolls, increased damage from a Strength bonus or Power Attack and critical multiples, are kept the same. Whenever an attack hits or a spell deals damage, the flat, average damage is dealt. In the case of attacks that do multiple dice of damage (such as a 10d6 *fireball*), multiply the average damage per the number of dice before rounding down. Thus, a longsword deals 4 points per blow (1d8 deals 4.5 points of damage on average, rounded down), while a greatsword deals 7 (each d6 of damage does an average of 3.5, and 3.5 x 2 = 7).

By reducing any damage rolls, game play speeds up substantially. While some players love the feel of damage dice or the chance of rolling maximum damage, the Set Damage variant produces faster fights and no possibility of rolling minimum damage. Additionally, tension is maintained because critical hits can still affect damage done, as can various feats (especially Power Attack and Combat Expertise). See the table below for average damage results.

Set Damage

Damage Die	Average Damage
1d2	1.5
1d3	2
1d4	2.5
1d6	3.5
1d8	4.5
1d10	5.5
1d12	6.5
1d20	10.5

Simplified Attacks of Opportunity

Attacks of Opportunity (AoOs) are an important part of the tactical feel of the d20 game. Without them, spellcasters can cast in the thick of combat, fast characters easily maneuver to advantageous positions (even running right by whole lines of foes), and many skills and feats (especially Tumble and Spring Attack) become significantly less useful. On the other hand, figuring out what provokes an attack of opportunity can slow down a game considerably.

The Simplified Attacks of Opportunity variant reduces AoOs to just two circumstances: when a character leaves a threatened space, or when a character casts a spell in a threatened space. Avoiding these AoOs is possible using the normal methods — by making a Tumble check, using Sneak Attack, taking only a 5-foot step, casting defensively, and so forth.

While this rule does not eliminate possible confusion and slower play, it does eliminate a whole slew of possible AoOs (such as standing from prone, firing a ranged weapon, making an unarmed attack, sheathing a weapon, and so on). This rule balances the tactical nature of d20 combat against the time-consuming process of looking up whether or not preparing material components for a spell provokes an AoO (it doesn't, even though retrieving any other stored item does).

Timed Turns

No matter how many rules you simplify and rolls you eliminate to increase speed of play, if a player takes 5 minutes to decide what he's doing, game play gets bogged down. There's nothing wrong with a player asking questions on his turn (in fact, that's the best time for him to do it), and occasionally an unexpected answer forces the player to re-think his plan, but in general a player should be paying attention to what's going on during the rest of the combat round and already know what he plans to do when his character gets to act.

The idea of timed turns involves each player having 60 seconds to decide what to do. If a player hasn't made a decision by the end of that time, his character is automatically assumed to delay his action. If the player decides what to do later, he can take his delay (at the end of the initiative he declares he's ready). At the end of the combat round, the player is given one last chance to take his delayed action (another 60 seconds), and after that it's lost.

If 60 seconds seem too long or too short a time for your group, change it. Many groups can easily make decisions in 10 or 15 seconds, while others regularly need more than a minute. The idea of the timed turn is to encourage fast play, not to prevent people from getting to take an action. If a player eats up too much time asking questions to which he should know the answers (items that have been covered by previous questions or in the GM's description), forcing him to have his character make a Spot or Listen check as his action in order to get the information again is not unreasonable.

Never count time you take against a player. If a rules question needs to be answered, or you have to consider something, don't penalize the player. Warn him you need a moment, and his time isn't elapsing. Similarly don't force yourself to act in 60 seconds if you really needs extra time (after all, you normally run more characters than the players), but having an NPC delay if you don't know what else to do with it is not a bad tactic.

~ General Rules ~

The following rules change some basic element of the d20 core rules, such as how to handle experience loss, movement and map grids, and what dice are rolled to determine character successes. Each of these changes produces a different feel of game, though most are actually fairly minor changes. You can use these rules just to shake up his group's expectations or because they better match her personal preferences. None of these rules is "better" than others; each is simply a different way of handling some game mechanic.

Experience Debt

The experience debt rule replaces normal experience costs and level losses. Instead of actually losing experience, characters must pay back experience costs from future experience gains. Any time a character would lose experience (be it from item creation, spell casting, or even death or level loss from a level drain), no actual experience is lost (and the character's level remains the same). Instead, a debt is accrued equal to the experience that would have been lost. Whenever that character gains new experience, half of it goes to paying off the debt.

For example, Jason plays Grimfal, a 6th-level fighter with 18,000 experience points. While facing a wight, Grimfal suffers a level drain, losing one level. After 24 hours, Grimfal must make a Fortitude save or have the loss be permanent. Grimfal fails and thus should be at the mid-point for experience between 5th and 6th level (12,500 XP). Because experience debt rules are in place, Grimfal doesn't actually lose a level (he's still 6th level), but he does incur a debt of 5,500 XP (18,000 – 12,500). From now on, half the experience Grimfal earns goes to pay off this debt, with only the remaining half adding to his 18,000. Once the 5,500 XP is paid off, Grimfal accrues experience normally.

Using this system, characters never lose experience and thus never lose what they have earned. They do pay a price for anything that has an experience cost, but that price is less painful. This system has several advantages. First, remembering exactly how many hit points a character gained at his last level is never necessary, since he does not lose XP. Secondly, a character can make magic items even if he just went up a level, since XP spent doesn't actually come off his total.

To keep things in check, a GM should disallow willing expenditure of XP if a character has a debt greater than half his current XP total. Thus, a character with 20,000 XP and a debt of 11,000 XP can't spend experience points to make items or cast spells, though if raised from the dead or level drained those XP costs would still go to his (now vast) debt.

More Average Rolls

In many d20 campaigns, the outcome of an encounter seems determined more by good rolls on a d20 than character skill, ability, or planning. Especially at low levels, luck has more impact on success than skill. Characters with a +4 attack bonus aren't much more accurate than those with +0, since the range on a d20 is 5 times greater than the value of the bonus.

To make rolls hit middle-range numbers more often, a GM can replace all 1d20 rolls (ability and skill checks, attack rolls, saving throws, and any other d20 roll that isn't for damage) with 2d10 rolls. This method has close to the same range of results (2–20, rather than 1–20), but the results tend to fall closer to the middle range. Results at the extreme high and low ends are less common and so have less effect on checks with low bonuses. Since rolling a natural 1 is impossible, a combined result of 2 on the 2d10 roll acts as a natural 1. A result of 20 on the 2d10 is still treated as a natural 20.

Anything that reduces randomness favors the more powerful character in a d20 campaign — which is normally the PCs, making their adventures easier. However, an important side effect of using this variant is that more powerful foes become *much* more powerful. A few points of AC and attack bonus can quickly push an opponent from a reasonable encounter to a total party killer. For example, consider a fighter with a +8 attack modifier facing an opponent with a 19 AC. With both 1d20 and 2d10 attack rolls, the fighter will hit about half the time. Against an AC of 24, the fighter hits 25% of the time on 1d20 — harsh but not unbeatable. The same 24 AC with a 2d10 roll results in hits only 15% of the time — about one blow in 6. The fighter must survive 50% longer in order to defeat his foe, who's likely hitting him considerably more often.

Another effect of this system is that extreme and wild results are less common. Critical hits, fumbles, magic items destroyed by fumbled saves, and improbable results in skill checks all happen less often. For some groups, this change produces more believable games in which rare criticals are cherished for their occasional appearance. For other groups, it unacceptably tones down the wild action they crave.

Cards

Another possible resolution mechanic is to give players cards instead of dice. The players decide when to use what card in their hand, giving them more control over the success and failure of their characters. Players can

time dramatic speeches to coincide with success and skew their character's results to match their character concept. For example, a player who wants her thief to be hard to hurt or capture can save high cards for saving throws and Escape Artist checks, spending lower cards on attack rolls.

Obviously, the GM must get a deck of cards that produces an even distribution of numbers from 1 to 20. This can easily be done with a standard deck of playing cards. Eliminate all jokers and face cards. Treat an ace as a "1." All red cards are worth the value shown; all black cards are worth the value shown +10. Some games designed around card mechanics have their own numbered decks that also work well, as long as there are enough cards for good, random distribution. A 52-card deck culled of face cards produces 40 cards, which is about right for 3 players and a GM. If more players are present, two decks may need to be shuffled together.

All players are dealt a 5-card hand. Whenever a d20 roll is called for, the player decides which card from his hand to use instead. Thus, a player having her character make an attack roll adds the value of one card played to the character's attack bonus to determine what AC is hit. Once a player has spent all the cards in her hand, she's dealt a new hand. This rule forces players to use all the cards in their hand, so characters don't escape bad results (though players have some control over when they do well and when they do poorly).

If players are allowed to spend cards whenever they want, this system can be abused. Players simply expend hands with lots of low cards on unimportant things (such as Perform or Profession checks made to earn money) and hoard hands with many high cards for combat and saving throws. There are three ways to handle these issues. The first is to ignore them: warn players you don't want to see abuse and trust them to be mature enough to respect that. The second is to forbid frivolous card spending: anytime a character can take 10 on a check, she must, and no card may be spent for unimportant actions (such as target practice). The third option is to gather all hands between scenes and deal out new ones — this way, there's no point in trying to get a good hand to save for a fight, as a new hand gets dealt out before each fight anyway.

Whatever system is used, it should apply to you and your players equally. You may be given a slightly larger hand (up to 8 cards), since you frequently run multiple NPCs in each encounter, and allied NPCs may draw from a separate deck than adversarial NPCs, but otherwise the same rules apply. Be careful not to "pick on" a particular PC, but otherwise play out your cards in whatever way that seems appropriate.

This system can be used to help set up a higher level of drama: villains who need to escape are given high card results to do so, and those designed as cannon fodder are stuck with lower results, without players feeling the GM decides everything by fiat. Everyone is generally more effective, which tends to favor PCs since they have more opportunity to maximize their card results than you. On the other hand, the system also tends to favor whoever is more powerful, so be careful if designing an extreme encounter even just a few ELs higher than the PCs.

A few other rules may be needed to deal with specific game mechanics (for example, a character who is allowed to reroll a d20 roll should instead be allowed to turn in his existing hand for a new one), but basic play remains the same.

Fortune Points

In lieu of the Luck mechanic as presented in Green Ronin's *Advanced Player's Manual*, you could use fortune points, which allow PCs to affect the die rolls that determine how well their characters do in any given activity. They are designed as a fail-safe, a way for players to overcome bad luck when doing so is really important to them. Groups that find it frustrating for characters to die as a result of a single failed save or miss a telling blow after making a good speech often enjoy the use of some dramatic device to prevent embarrassing moments. Fortune points skew things in favor of a good story, while placing more power over fate in the players' hands. While powerful, they are limited in number. They increase a character's power, but they also increase the number of risks players are willing to take with their characters. Games are more action-oriented and more cinematic in feel. Fortune points are thus not appropriate for campaigns attempting a high level of realism.

Players get a very limited number of fortune points, and they can use them only a limited number of times each session. Cheating fate is all right occasionally, but doing so too often takes the thrill of risk out of the game. For a campaign in which really bad things rarely happen to PCs, hand out a number of fortune points equal to a character's level each time the character gains a level. For a campaign in which only the worst fates are to be avoided, only give 1 fortune point at each level. In both cases, giving out a bonus fortune point for particularly heroic acts and as a reward for finishing a major plotline is appropriate.

A player may use fortune points in the following ways:

Avoid Death

A player can spend fortune points to prevent his character from being killed. This decision is made after a character is already declared dead. Whatever killed the character simply doesn't quite manage to finish him off. A deadly spell fizzles a split second before it's done, a lethal blow falls short by an inch, or a fatal fall

is miraculously survived. The character loses half the hit points he had before the lethal event and is injured badly enough to be exhausted until fully healed. A character may avoid death only once per game session.

Avoiding death takes half a character's remaining fortune points, which must be at least two. Using fortune points to make a saving throw or skill check than to wait until a character is actually dead is better.

Reroll an Attack or Check

A fortune point may be spent before an attack roll, ability check, skill check, saving throw, turning check, grapple check, or nearly any other d20 roll, to allow the player to roll twice. The better of the two rolls is then taken. A player may reroll attacks or checks as often as he wishes, until he runs out of fortune points.

A player may spend 2 fortune points to reroll any d20 roll after it's already failed. The second roll is used only if it's superior to the first (there's no point in forcing players to use fortune points to make matters worse). A player may use a fortune point to reroll a failed check only once per game session — using points before a roll is made if the result is important to the player is better.

Reroll Damage

A player may spend one fortune point to reroll the damage of one attack or spell his character makes. A player cannot force a reroll of attacks made against his

Fortune Points and Drawbacks

In a game using fortune points, a quick and easy option exists for allowing drawbacks. Rather than have a limited number of possible drawbacks that give PCs specific advantages, any drawback a GM doesn't feel damages the campaign's feel is allowed. Some drawbacks may have game effects (such as a character with no legs, who has at best a 5-foot land speed), or some may be flaws with no specific game effect. A character may be blind, a hedonist, take double damage from cold iron, cowardly, hunted by ninja, or have an irrational attraction to chocolate.

The PC gains no immediate advantage from these drawbacks, though they must be listed, defined if necessary, and approved by the GM. In play, whenever the drawback acts as a significant hindrance to the PC, the GM awards a fortune point at the end of the game. No matter how many drawbacks come into play in a given session, only 1 fortune point is awarded, and fortune points are awarded only when the drawback has a negative effect on the character with it.

For example, Brooke plays a hedonistic druid named Farrow. Brooke okays the "hedonist" drawback with her GM and defines it as a desire to do anything that's fun. Farrow can control herself, so no game mechanics are involved — the drawback is just a character flaw. Farrow is left to guard the rooms at an inn she and her friends are using to store their treasure. A handsome gypsy offers to take Farrow to a party, with much music, dancing, and revelry. Since Farrow is a hedonist, Brooke is tempted to have her go off and leave the rooms. The inn seems safe enough, and her friends are due back soon.

If Brooke decides Farrow stays to guard the rooms, the drawback has no effect. If Brooke decides Farrow gives in and goes to the party, but nothing bad happens as a result, the drawback has no effect. However, if Farrow goes to the party and as a result the PCs' rooms are robbed, the drawback has a negative effect on Farrow. At the end of that game session, Farrow receives 1 fortune point.

The advantage of this system is that players have a reason to give their characters drawbacks, which are often a fun part of character development, without acquiring additional powers that might unbalance the game. The drawbacks only reward the players for taking them when they actually come into play. Even a blind character might well not get any bonus fortune points if a game revolves around diplomacy rather than combat or if the character finds a way to compensate for the drawback.

As with any drawback system, make sure the PCs don't end up being freaks of nature who have no business taking the roles of heroes (unless that's the theme of the campaign). Since the drawbacks of fortune can even be an advantage (giving a PC opportunities to gain additional fortune points), you could even require PCs to take a feat in order to have a "useful" drawback, especially if it's a character flaw or other drawback without specific game effects (see **Appendix One**).

The same idea can be used with action points, development points, or any other reward system. You could even hand out bonus experience points to PCs who have a drawback come into play, though this type of reward shouldn't exceed 10%.

character. The second damage roll is used only if it's better than the first. Rerolling damage costs 1 fortune point.

Shrug It Off

A fortune point can be spent to allow a character to "shrug off" half the hit point damage currently on him, representing getting a second wind or even being driven by emotions that overcome mere injuries. A character may shrug off damage only once per encounter, and only on his move. A dead character can't shrug off damage (though he may be able to avoid death).

Hex-Based Movement

Most d20 games assume movement is tracked on a grid map. Because of this assumption, moving corner-to-corner to allow diagonal movement is often necessary. An alternative is to use a hex grid. Each hex is surrounded by six other hexes, allowing movement in six directions without resulting to moving from corner-to-corner. All movement on a hex grid is counted by moving from the starting hex to one sharing a side with it. Since each hex of movement counts as 5 feet, counting every other diagonal as 10 feet of movement is unnecessary, as "diagonal" movement isn't allowed.

Many gamers find hex grids allow for more satisfying tactical movement. There are a few effects upon how combat works. Each space is surrounded by only six spaces, rather than eight as on a square grid, meaning that no more than six Medium targets can move to attack a single Medium target, assuming no one has

reach. Flanking uses the same rule as in square grids: if a line drawn between two attackers goes through opposite sides of a target, it's flanked.

Areas must be re-mapped, of course. The basic rule for mapping areas of effect for hex grids is the same as those for square grids. All areas are centered on the intersection of three hexes, and count outward from there. Thus, a 5-foot radius covers three hexes, and a 20-foot radius covers 48 hexes, forming a shape with 3 sides 4 hexes long and 3 sides 5 hexes long. Areas thus cover a slightly different number of spaces than on a square map, but in general the numbers are close enough not to affect game play. Hex-based areas do tend to seem rounder than those mapped on a square grid and are less easily used to strike foes on one side of a melee conflict without striking allies on the other.

Hexes vs. Squares for Area Effects

Radius	Squares Covered	Hexes Covered
5 ft.	4	3
10 ft.	12	12
20 ft.	44	48
40 ft.	172	192

The same rules aren't used when determining the space and reach of creatures. Space isn't a radius in d20 games, and the ability to turn a figure in any direction without changing its "footprint" on the grid is an important consideration. As a result, space is essentially the length of

one side of the area the creature covers. Since creatures have only 4 sides on a square grid and 6 on a hex grid, the space of creatures is fudged a little, with a 10-foot space covering just 3 hexes and a 15-foot space covering 7 hexes, making a six-sided shape 10 feet on a side. Huge and Gargantuan creatures make a six-sided shape 5 feet shorter per side than their listed space, and Colossal creatures make a shape 10 feet shorter than their listed space. Most creatures cover a slightly smaller number of spaces on a grid map, though Gargantuan and Colossal creatures cover slightly more.

Hexes vs. Squares for Creature Sizes

Size	Space	Squares Covered	Hexes Covered
Medium	5 ft.	1	1
Large	10 ft.	4	3
Huge	15 ft.	9	7
Gargantuan	20 ft.	16	19
Colossal	30 ft.	36	37

Reach remains unchanged, with all creatures able to strike opponents a number of hexes away equal to their reach divided by 5. Since hex grids cover the same distance no matter how you move along them (since corner-to-corner movement isn't allowed, just side-to-side, there's no need to worry about "gaps" in a creature's reach).

An alternative to hex maps is offset squares. These are square-based grids with every other row offset by half a square. Movement on an offset square grid works just like one a hex grid (each square is surrounded by six other squares, so there's no need to worry about diagonal movement). The advantage of an offset square grid is that it has lots of right angles, making it easier to draw dungeon corridors and most buildings. The drawbacks are that some people don't like the look of offset squares

and that not many offset square grids are commercially available. A whiteboard can easily be turned into an offset square grid with a ruler, straightedge, and permanent markers. Use the rules for hex grids when determining areas, space, and reach.

Throwing

How far can you throw a rock? What about a goblin?

The only throwing rules in the standard d20 game are for thrown weapons (or improvised thrown weapons), which have a range increment. The farther you throw a weapon, the less likely you are to hit, but there are no rules for seeing *how far* you can throw it. All thrown weapons have a maximum range of five range increments. Improvised ranged weapons are given a range increment of 10 feet, meaning anything your character can pick up he can throw 50 feet. While that's fine for most things a character might use as a weapon, it's clearly not reasonable for a fighter with an 18 Strength to throw a 300-pound rock 50 feet.

Since stronger characters should logically be able to throw objects further, a minor change in maximum range increments is needed. For most characters, five range increments is fine. For characters with a +6 or greater Strength bonus, however, maximum range equals their Strength bonus in range increments. For example, a fighter with a 22 Strength can throw a dagger a maximum of 60 feet (six range increments).

To figure out how far a character can throw a non-standard, non-weapon object, use the rules below. Thrown weapons ignore these rules and stick with their standard range increments.

Objects weighing less than half the character's light encumbrance are treated as standard improvised thrown

Hex Map

Offset Square Map

For example, a wizard with a 6 Strength and a +6 ranged attack bonus picks up an attacking rat and tries to throw it over a cliff face 20 feet away. The GM decides the rat weighs less than 10 pounds, and thus less than half the wizard's light encumbrance value. The wizard makes a ranged attack roll at –6 (–4 for an improvised object, –2 for range) and rolls a 12. That hits the AC of 5 for a space, so the rat goes sailing over the edge.

Anything heavier than a character's light encumbrance value is too heavy to be consistently thrown any real distance. For objects in a character's medium encumbrance value, a Strength check is made. Subtracting 5 from the total Strength check determines the distance thrown in feet. For objects in a character's heavy encumbrance value, a Strength check is made and 10 subtracted to determine the distance thrown in feet. To determine if such objects can be thrown somewhere specific, make a ranged attack roll at a –8 penalty with a 5-foot range increment. Anything heavier than a character's heavy encumbrance can't be thrown, though if a character can lift it, he can drop it in any adjacent space.

A character can throw an object up half the distance he can throw it horizontally. It's possible to take 10 on these rolls when out of combat. Taking 10 on a throw check is always a full-round action. A character can take 20 only if he can retrieve the object if he misses a throw (such as a grappling hook connected to a rope) or if he is willing to waste 20 thrown objects (such as trying to break a window by throwing a pile of rocks at it).

Special Throwing Maneuvers

All the rules above assume a character simply throws an object from a standing position. Increasing the distance thrown through special maneuvers is possible.

Running Throw

A running throw is a full-round action that requires the character to run at least 20 feet before his throw. A running throw may only be attempted with standard thrown weapons and objects that weight less than the

weapons, with a range increment of 10 feet with a –4 penalty to attack rolls. Objects weighing more than half a character's light encumbrance but less than his medium encumbrance have a range increment of 5 feet and are at an additional –2 penalty to attack rolls (for a total of –6). In both cases, a character trying simply to throw an object into a particular 5-foot space (as opposed to hitting a creature or object) must make an attack roll against an AC of 5 (base 10, –5 for 0 Dexterity). If the attack fails, the object is one range increment short for every 2 the attack roll failed by.

Table 2-7: Throwing Chart

Object's Weight Is…	Attack Penalty	Range Increment	Distance Thrown
1/2 light encumbrance	–4	10 ft.	Up to 5* range increments, based on attack roll
More than 1/2 light encumbrance, but less than medium	–6	5 ft.	Up to 5* range increments, based on attack roll
Medium encumbrance	–8	5 ft.	Strength check –5 in feet
Heavy encumbrance	–8	5 ft.	Strength check –10 in feet

*Or a number of range increments equal to the character's Strength bonus, if that is greater than +5.

character's light encumbrance. A running throw doubles the thrown object's range increment, and the character takes a –2 AC penalty. A character can't make a running throw while balancing or tumbling or in terrain that reduces his movement rate.

Spin Throw

A spin throw involves a character spinning in place before throwing an object. A spin throw is a full-round action that applies a –3 penalty to attack rolls and AC. Characters can spin throw objects weighing up to their light encumbrance, gaining a 50% increase to their range increment. An object weighing as much as the character's medium encumbrance may also be spin thrown, adding a +4 circumstance bonus to the Strength check made to determining throwing distance.

Whirl Throw

A whirl throw involves tying a rope or chain to an object and whirling it above the character's head before throwing. A whirl throw is a full-round action that applies a –2 penalty to the character's attack roll and AC (–1 for characters with 6 or more ranks in Use Rope). The total weight of the object to be thrown and the rope or chain it's attached to must be less than the character's light encumbrance. Whirl throw doubles the object's range increment.

– Magic Rules –

Next to combat, magic is the most common element in fantasy d20 games. The feel of magic in a campaign has a strong impact on a game's overall tone. The more flexible magic is the more high-fantasy feel a game has; the more limited, the grittier the overall feel. In addition to the rules here, some magic rules are presented in **Chapter Seven** (especially **Levin** and **Lystic Locales**) and **Chapter Five** (**Magic Free or Low Magic Campaigns**).

Metamagic Points

Metamagic feats allow spellcasters to modify and improve the power of their spells at the cost of using higher-level spell slots. Many players and GMs dislike using metamagic feats, as they limit the number of more powerful spells a character can use in a day. Metamagic feats also require careful planning, making spellcasters more thought-intensive. Characters with many weak metamagic feats can also produce unexpected surprises for GMs, by loading up low-level spells with many metamagic abilities.

An alternative to the normal metamagic system is the use of metamagic points. Each metamagic feat the character takes gives him one metamagic point. Whenever a character wishes to cast a spell with a metamagic feat, the level adjustment of the feat is taken from the metamagic points. The spell is cast using its normal spell slot. The character regains metamagic points at the same time he regains spells (with the same requirements of rest, study, and/or prayer). When the character runs out of metamagic points, casting spells with metamagic feats is no longer possible.

Obviously, this system grants spellcasters more versatility, as they can use any metamagic feat with any spell, regardless of what they've prepared. It also allows them to use metamagic feats with their most powerful spells — a 6th-level sorcerer could cast a stilled *fireball*, despite the fact that *fireball* takes a 3rd-level slot, the highest he can cast.

This additional versatility comes at a price, however. Characters are severely limited on how often they can use metamagic feats. A 6th-level human sorcerer has 4 total feats. If they're all metamagic feats, she has only 4 metamagic points. If she does cast a quickened *fireball*, that's all the metamagic she can do for the whole day. Characters that take only one metamagic feat will be able to use it at best once a day, and some metamagic feats are useless by themselves (for example, Quicken Spell requires four metamagic points to use, but provides only one). A GM may wish to give spellcasters access to feats that add metamagic points (see **Appendix One**).

Self-Limited Spells

If magic is the force of will channeled through actions and rituals, the spellcaster should be able to alter his magic by an act of will. Metamagic feats allow spellcasters to enhance their spells, but no rules exist to allow spellcasters to limit them. While the idea at first seems odd, there are dramatic and tactical reasons why a spellcaster might wish his spells to be less effective than usual.

The most obvious example of wanting a less effective spell is to avoid catching friends and allies in an area attack. So common is this desire that it's best handled by a feat (see **Single Target Spell**, in **Appendix One**). You can easily develop similar feats to deal with other tactical reasons to reduce effectiveness — feats to allow a spellcaster to exclude friends, not affect inanimate matter, not affect living matter, or even have an area reduced but not quite to a single target. Anything a player finds himself wishing his spellcaster could do occasionally can easily become a metamagic feat.

However, a spellcaster might still wish to reduce his spell's effectiveness against a given group for dramatic reasons. For example, a dwarven wizard captured by elves might promise his spells will never harm an elf (to earn their goodwill). This is beyond the scope of a

metamagic feat, as such a vow must be permanent to be effective. It also doesn't work well as a feat, since few characters will take such a feat and advance or earn a feat just as they need it.

If you want to play with this option, you could include mystic vows. A mystic vow is an oath a spellcaster takes to limit his spell power. The vow is binding on an arcane level, making it impossible for the spellcaster to break it even if he wishes. The actual act of taking the vow is simple and requires only a single standard action. To be successful, the caster must succeed at a DC 15 Concentration check. Observing spellcasters can confirm the vow is in place by making a DC 15 Spellcraft check. This can also be done later, to confirm a vow not actually witnessed, though it requires a DC 20 Spellcraft check.

The details of a mystic vow are a bit more complicated. Each vow must be all or nothing — a spellcaster can swear to have his magic never affect an individual or group, but he can't limit only some of his spells or just reduce the power somewhat. Secondly, the group to be made immune must be describable in absolute, objective terms. For example a spellcaster could swear not to affect dwarves, or priests of the Church of Light, or even creatures of neutral good alignment. A spellcaster could even vow not to affect a specific individual. The spellcaster can't swear not to affect thieves, since theft is less concrete in its definition. Once the vow is taken, all members of the excluded condition act as if they had unbeatable spell resistance against any spell the sworn spellcaster casts, even harmless or beneficial spells.

Once the vow is made, it's nearly permanent. It can be lifted only by the power of a *wish*, or by an *atonement* spell cast after the spellcaster has gained the permission of those he took the oath in front of to break it. Thus, our sample dwarven wizard can never affect elves with any of his spells unless he gets a *wish* or gains the permission of the elves he made the promise to and has *atonement* cast on him.

This option opens up many interesting plotlines. Evil overlords might capture spellcasters and force them to swear not to affect their forces in return of their lives. Spellcasters convicted of crimes might have to swear never again to affect a class that includes their victims. Kingdoms might require certain oaths from arcane spellcasters, and churches might require them of clerics. Of course, a spellcaster unable to affect a group cannot aid it in many ways, which could leave a cautious nation open to attack by rebel wizards who are perfectly capable of boosting the abilities of their own troops.

Spell Points

Spell points are a common idea in many fantasy roleplaying games. Rather than have to prepare spells in advance or only know a limited number of spells, a spell point system allows spellcasters to know as many spells as they wish and power them with a set of points. From a story point of view, this kind of system carries many advantages. Wizards and clerics using spell points act more like their counterparts in most fantasy fiction, able to produce the effects they need whenever they need them. This system limits the number of total spell levels a caster can use per day (necessary to preserve game balance), which also makes spellcasters less likely to use magic frivolously — another common behavior of mages in fiction.

Some people feel no spell point system can be truly balanced – that anything with more casting versatility than a sorcerer and greater spell selection is inherently overpowered. This is an issue GMs need to settle for themselves. The following rules are reasonably balanced, as such rules go, but are specifically designed to allow spellcasters with unlimited spell selection and no need for preparation. Certainly, advanced GMs can be trusted to know if the results are balanced within their own campaigns.

The system itself is simple. To cast a spell, a spellcaster must expend its level in spell points. Spells of 0-level cost 1/2 a spell point (just allow spellcasters to keep track of 1/2 spell points, rather than rounding). Characters that prepare their spells in advance still do so, but they may prepare spells of any level they know, allocating spell points to the spells they wish to cast. For example, instead of preparing a 9th level spell, a wizard could prepare 9 first level spells instead.

Spontaneous spellcasters such as bards and sorcerers still use spell slots for determining what spells they know, but may expend spell points on the fly. These spellcasters can use any spell they knows as long as they have the spell points and can meet all the normal requirements (components, targeting, and so forth).

To determine how many spell points a spellcaster has, total the number of spell levels worth of spells he can cast in a day, including bonus spells from ability score bonuses. Treat 0-level spells as 1/2 a level each. Cut this total in half. This is how many spell points the character gets. Spell points are restored in the same way spells are for the class (i.e., after 8 hours of rest, or at a set time each day, or however the core class recovers spells normally).

Spellcasting classes that don't have spell preparation (such as bards and sorcerers) don't gain as much from this system. To compensate, they need not take a full-round action to cast metamagic spells (allowing them to use Quicken Spell, for example), and their spells known are doubled. This change allows sorcerers and wizards both to exist in a campaign, with sorcerers still having fewer spells known but more total spell castings compared to wizards.

Chapter Three: Preparing Adventures

The entire point of playing a roleplaying game is to have adventures. The type of adventure can vary wildly based on the group, GM, and campaign, but be it political intrigue, heroic quests, academy high jinks, or romantic courtship, some sort of interesting event will take place. The GM must provide hooks to get characters interested in such adventures, as well as have the events, settings, and NPCs of the adventure ready to interact with. Many options for being prepared like this are available, several of which are discussed in this chapter.

In many campaigns, there comes a point at which the adventures practically write themselves. PCs often have to choose between different adventures and note down the ones not taken to be "looked at later." A group might decide it wants to explore the Black Forest, seek the lost *Helm of Andracles*, or hunt down two slavers who got away to ensure they don't start a new trade ring — once they've taken care of other concerns. When a game reaches this point, a GM doesn't need to keep adding new things: he can just let a lull hit and remind the PCs there are concerns they want to address.

– The Basics –

Some basics of adventure preparation are relevant no matter what type of adventures you plan to run. These tasks are often the easiest to describe in a few paragraphs, but the hardest actually to implement. They're all variations of a single theme: design adventures for players to have fun. This theme applies differently to different groups, as some players enjoy challenges so tough their characters die every few sessions, while others prefer to have characters survive nearly anything. The only way to get better at knowing what kinds of adventures a particular group enjoys best is to get to know the players and to experiment with different options. The following guidelines can be helpful when going through this process.

An adventure should revolve around the PCs. Even if the adventure involves the problems and actions of NPCs who are far more powerful and important to the campaign world than the PCs, the PCs should be the focus of the adventure. In this regard, keeping the overall plot and the adventure separate is important.

For example, the plot of an adventure might be the invasion of the Widow Knight's army of gargoyles into the Kingdom of Ald, and the King of Ald's desperate bid to stop the Widow Knight at Dragonbone Pass. If the PCs are high enough level to be directly involved in this conflict, making them the focus is easy — they may stand with the King or go to defeat the Widow Knight in a daring midnight raid.

However, even if the PCs are 1st level, the actual adventure should be focused on them, not the King. Having the PCs be squires to mighty knights and heroes and thus watching as NPCs do everything important is a bad idea. If the PCs are squires, they should be entrusted with the defense of a small keep no one expects to see any fighting. Then when a force of minor gargoyles does attack, the adventure focuses on how the PCs handle it. If the keep is important for some reason (a supply depot, a signal tower, home to an ailing but important wizard), the adventure becomes even more heroic. The players know other events of note are happening, but their own adventure is both exciting and relevant to the larger context of events.

An adventure should have a beginning (a way for PCs to get involved), a middle (a series of challenges and encounters), and an end (both a climactic final encounter and a denouement — a final wrap-up of any lose ends). These elements help players keep track of their adventures and gain the satisfaction of accomplishment when a specific plotline is over. They can be handled in finite installments (like movies or stand-alone books) or with a more ongoing episodic structure (like a television or book series), but a regular climax-and-denouement cycle is important to player satisfaction.

– Readying Pre-Written Adventures –

A vast number of pre-written adventures are available. In addition to full-length adventures published on their own, there are magazines dedicated to adventures, free adventures on game company web sites, and fan adventures posted on various gaming web sites. Pre-written adventures are a great resource, and most GMs begin their career running them. They can't be run without some preparation, however, and some specific techniques will help a GM get the most out of them.

Reading for Comprehension

The first thing to do when preparing a pre-written adventure is to read it thoroughly. You must be able to handle situations the adventure's author didn't make allowances for, and doing so requires a strong grasp of where things are, what's going on, and what motivates NPCs and monsters. The best adventures cover the most likely PC actions and provide guidelines for handling the unexpected, but nothing can replace you knowing what's going on well enough to adjudicate how the adventure responds to weird, unexpected, or brilliant PC actions.

If the adventure doesn't already cover NPC motivations and a timeline of important events, creating one is useful. You should also look for elements the adventure assumes that may not be true for your group. For example, if you've increased or decreased the amount of magic or treasure in your game, characters may lack the weapons needed to penetrate a tough foe's damage reduction, or they may be able to overcome easily something designed to be a major challenge. A GM who has a group of PCs who can fly or go ethereal should also see how those abilities might affect their approach to an adventure.

Scaling Adventures

Pre-written adventures are often set for a range of levels and number of characters that do not match your PCs. Re-scaling an adventure up or down to allow a different group of PCs to be challenged without being

overwhelmed is not too difficult, but it does require some extra work. Scaling an adventure should always be done before game time, and the changes can be noted on sticky-notes within the adventure or kept on index cards to be referenced as needed.

When changing opponents to be more appropriate, the easiest strategy is replacing monsters and NPCs with appropriate CR opponents of the same type. Thus, if an encounter involves four CR 9 undead, the GM can scale the encounter down by using four CR 5 undead. Sometimes, creatures of the same type at the appropriate CR are unavailable; generally, though, finding a combination that comes to roughly the right EL for any PC level is possible. Adding or removing a number of foes may prove necessary, but never take multiple foes down to less than two or increase the number of foes above 12.

Especially when scaling an adventure up, creature size can be an issue. Many higher-CR creatures are larger than less dangerous monsters of the same type, and an adventure's map may not have room for them (or they may not make sense in the context of the adventure). This problem can usually be overcome by picking creatures of the appropriate size and advancing their Hit Dice or giving them class levels until they reach the right CR. Templates can also boost a creature's CR without making it hard to fit into an adventure, but try to avoid templates that change the creature's type.

If the adventure requires specific abilities the PCs don't have, either remove the requirement or add the ability. In some cases, the special ability can easily be ignored by relocating things (placing treasure in an unlocked chest rather than a highly secure vault; eliminating underwater encounters or placing them in pools only 4 feet deep).

The GM also needs to change the adventure's rewards up or down to match its new ELs. In most cases, just adding or removing one or two items, or scaling up or down the bonuses on major items, is easiest. If an adventure gets

changed to a wildly different EL, writing up new treasure from scratch may be simpler.

Personalizing Pre-Written Adventures

Most likely even if an adventure is written for exactly the level and size of group you plan on running through it, it won't be set in your campaign world. (Obviously, if you use a published campaign world, the adventure may be set there, but even so it won't take account of other adventures the PCs have experienced.) Even if the your campaign is not very involved, a few personalized touches can greatly increase PC enjoyment without adding much work on your part.

The easiest of such touches is changing allies and locations to match those PCs have encountered in the past. In most adventures, the location isn't particularly important — one mountain range is as good as another and so on. You can easily transplant these adventures to the areas your players are already exploring (or nearby, if you want to move on to a new area). For example, an adventure set in a small keep on a borderland can be moved to the edge of any civilized area. If no such border exists near the campaign area, the GM can set it in the center of a wilderness, explaining that it was a border when the keep was built, but the area has since been abandoned.

Be careful, however, not to create an area so dangerous no sane person would stay in it. After a certain number of orc invasions, haunted castles, wandering mad wizards, and evil cultists have been encountered in one town, it's time to move on for a bit. The alternative to this situation is to provide some explanation for why the town is constantly under siege and why people still live there. If it sits on an important mystic nexus, is a major trading town on a river and near a gold mine, or has a critical, strategic location, the town can reasonably see more than its fair share of trouble.

Villains can also be customized to match a campaign better. Changing an NPC with class levels from one race to another is a simple matter. If an adventure has hobgoblins as the primary enemy and your campaign generally uses gnomes as villains, the hobgoblins can be replaced by gnome fighters and rogues. Villains can also have their motivations changed — the hobgoblins might be the bad guys, but only because a gnome lord hired them. This way, you can introduce a mastermind who manipulates things behind the scenes, without making any significant changes to an adventure's game mechanics.

Treasure is an easy and useful way to personalize adventures. You can quickly calculate the treasure in an adventure and replace it with items geared for your players. For example, if everyone in the party has a +2 magic weapon, a masterwork longsword isn't of much use. The value for it can be changed to healing potions or combined with other minor items to create a more major treasure haul.

– Designing Adventures –

If you choose not to use pre-written adventures, you must design your own. Doing so is time consuming and often boring, but the results are worth it. An adventure designed from scratch can more easily carry the themes of a campaign forward, tie in to overarching plots, and take advantage of the specific composition of the PCs.

At their heart, every adventure has three elements: the introduction, when PCs are involved in the adventure; the challenge, when PCs must overcome obstacles; and the climax, when PCs defeat the source of the problem. This structure is very simplistic, of course, but each element presents its own challenges.

Starting an Adventure

It's a running joke in fantasy roleplaying games that most adventures start with a stranger approaching PCs in a tavern and hiring them. This approach to starting adventures actually holds a lot of advantages. It lets the players know exactly what you intend for them to be doing, and thus what you have prepared — there's no confusion about which trail to take and no time wasted getting to "the good parts." This method works

for many groups, and there's nothing wrong with it if it satisfies everyone.

It is, however, pretty silly. At the very least, if a campaign world assumes there are so many potential adventures PCs can consistently find work by hanging out in bars, it stands to reason someone would put together a better method of getting villages with stolen damsels in touch with strapping heroes. This line of thought leads to the adventuring guild, which is also popular with many fantasy gaming groups. Instead of meeting at a bar, heroes gather in halls designed for them to meet people with problems. There may be guild dues, but they are easily paid out of a group's recovered treasure, and the guild offers a safe place to sleep and possibly other services such as sages, vaults, training, and even magic shops.

In fact, guilds and organizations for heroes make a fair amount of sense in most fantasy campaigns. Groups with talents that bring in a good income and specialized needs are very likely to band together for companionship and collective bargaining, though they may not describe their goals in those terms. Wizard's guilds, clerical churches, fighter schools, organized crime gangs, cults,

knighthoods, and explorer's societies can all function as "adventurer guilds," providing an easy way for PCs to hear about potential adventures as well as adding roleplaying opportunities and campaign flavor.

Of course, ruling nobles may want to control how, where, and when powerful individuals gather. They may even set up royal academies and guilds that are the only legal forums for such gatherings. Again, this direction steps up the supposed realism by a degree (realism being a relative term when dealing with any setting that includes magic and heroes). You could even set up a game in which adventurers are considered in the employ of a local noble or king as enforcers of the peace. Because they tend to be free spirits, the relationship is arms-length, but the adventurers actually wield some authority as long as they follow a code of conduct (no raiding of places or groups under the lord's protection, no setting up of strongholds without the lord's permission, no stealing from common citizens, no fighting in civilized areas, and so on).

Short of some kind of official organization, setting up a series of contacts and information brokers the PCs begin play already knowing is useful. A young PC sorcerer may be recommended to a village in need by his old master, or a budding paladin may be sent on minor quests by his pastor to test his mettle. As the PCs gain success, they become better known and more in touch with this network of contacts. Bartenders offer to let them have messages sent to the tavern for them to collect when they're in town; bards promote them as the people to go to if you have a problem. An adventure may still begin

with the group being approached in a tavern, but at least the players have some idea of how their prospective employer found them.

Many groups of adventurers don't need to be approached — their characters go out looking for trouble. A combination of rumors and legends can allow you to put several possible adventures in front of a group and let the players pick what interests them. This is a more free-form system, and it takes more work on your part as you must be prepared to handle different possible responses.

Sometimes, though, only the illusion of free choice is needed. If a GM wants to set an adventure on a ship, he can provide numerous interesting possibilities to the players, all of which are overseas. Once the PCs are on a boat, the real adventure begins. After the initial adventure is finished, the GM may prepare the adventure the PCs were heading towards — or he may reveal the rumor they followed is false. This last tactic shouldn't be pulled too often, as players get upset if they regularly feel tricked.

The simplest type of adventure to introduce when short on ideas is a site-based adventure. This is an encounter that doesn't assume anything more than the PCs being present. In a pinch, the site can be mobile and come to where the PCs are (such as a ghost ship or abandoned caravan still pulled by starving mules). Of course, PCs don't always investigate a new site, but most will show some interest. An unusual occurrence or kidnapped villager or two, along with the promise of reward, may nudge otherwise reluctant groups.

Don't railroad players into an adventure that doesn't interest them or expect them to look for a particular solution to the challenges you present. Be ready to deal with unexpected responses from players: that's the core of being a good GM. Having one or two "floating" adventures ready can be handy — short and sudden opportunities that can fill a night's gaming when the PCs do something unexpected. An assassin trying to kill a village girl for no apparent reason, a rampaging, maddened monster, or a challenge by old foes the PCs thought defeated are all are good examples. Whenever you need time between games to figure out what to do next, you can turn to these "distractions." Once the floating encounter is dealt with, you can plan your next move between games.

The Challenge

The heart of an adventure is the challenge that the players must overcome. Most of the time, you should start with this challenge and work backward to figure out how it is most likely to be overcome and where the PCs will encounter it. A good challenge can be summed up in a single sentence, such as "A town is threatened by the recent arrival of a dragon." From this basic summation,

you can add complications and details. Why is the dragon moving in? What have the townsfolk done about it? Does the dragon have any agents or allies? Where has it holed up? What used to be there? Why isn't someone else doing something about it?

A good challenge should feel dangerous, but possible to overcome. No 1st-level characters in their right mind will take on a dragon. They might, however, take on a 3-foot long flying lizard that's started terrorizing sheep, even if it's already killed two town guards. If the lizard turns out to be a hatchling dragon, so much the better (and if the hatchling's mother shows up in a year, when the PCs are high enough level to face her, that's yet better).

FORTY BASIC PLOTS

Often what a GM needs most is a starting point. Presented below are 40 basic plots to serve as the skeletons on which adventures can be hung. Obviously, not every campaign will be appropriate for all these plots, but reading through them can spark your imagination for other possible plots. Your style, the campaign's themes, the PCs' power level, and the players' styles all determine the details on exactly how the PCs get involved and what challenges they'll face.

In order to keep these plots generic, they're simplistic. Most GMs won't use any exactly as-is. Changing, mixing, and expanding on them is a good idea. Many can be simplified to a single night's entertainment or stretched out to a long-term campaign arc. The important goal is to match the aims and villains of any adventure to a style appropriate to your players. A hack-and-slash group will not likely enjoy a plot of high intrigue, unless they quickly figure out who needs to be beaten for them to win.

If none of these plots seems appropriate, you can turn to any story from any medium for a basic plot. Books, movies, television shows, and even video games can often provide a basic framework for adventures, though changing enough details that friends playing in the game don't immediately recognize the source is important (or if they do, they don't feel they know the outcome just because they recognize the source). Even a local newspaper can provide a plot — most stories interesting enough to be written up as news are interesting enough for a plot to revolve around them. Just look at the sports page: by changing referees to clergy, football teams to rival clans, and mascots to relics, a simple high school prank becomes a quest to steal a rival clan's religious icon, thus ending a long-standing rivalry.

1. A lord wants to expand his territory, but to do so a dangerous place must be explored and tamed. It may be a forest, an old castle, or an ancient city, but wherever it is, the lord wants the PCs to scout it out and clear away the greatest dangers.

2. A fortress the PCs operate out of is attacked from an unexpected direction. It may be a plague of wererats boiling up from the sewer, unspeakable astral creatures springing forth from every mirror in the city, or water elementals emerging from the local wells and moats. The PCs must first help hold the fortress against a surprise foe, and then find and deal with the source of the new attackers.

3. An ally or patron of the PCs is poisoned by a magic substance that cannot be cured through normal medicine or magic. The PCs must gather the only material that can neutralize the poison, obtaining it from a dangerous locale.

4. One of the PCs is the last of a bloodline that defeated a great evil long ago. Now the evil prepares to return and wants to ensure the destruction of the bloodline that once overcame it.

5. A relative of someone the PCs killed seeks revenge. This relative may decide to kill them or make their friends and families suffer. First, the PCs must discover the identity of their enemy; then, they must hunt him down and stop him.

6. A powerful and evil tyrant rules the lands the PCs are in and has decided to kill all those with the power to oppose him. He outlaws those with magic power and weapons, forcing the PCs to escape his realm while dodging his agents — or try to overturn him.

7. An important personage is killed, and clues left suggest the PCs killed him. The PCs must now hide from authorities while trying to solve the crime in order to prove their innocence.

8. A young and inexperienced ally or friend of the PCs turns out to be the last legitimate heir of a powerful throne. The PCs must take him to the capital of his nation and see him crowned king, while protecting him from usurpers who wish to claim the kingdom.

9. A long-lost heirloom important to the PCs or their patrons or allies is spotted in a dangerous locale. The PCs must go find it and determine if it is real or bait for some trap.

10. A town is constantly threatened by raiders or creatures that attack it for food. The villagers cannot defend themselves. They need the PCs to protect them from attack and eventually to defeat the raiders.

11. An ancient prophecy states a great evil will arise in a few weeks' time if an object is not retrieved from a place it was put for safekeeping. The PCs must get the item, but they must contend with another

band of adventurers who wish to take the item to control the evil when it arises.

12. An ally or patron of the PCs wishes to end an ancient feud and needs the PCs to carry her message of treaty to her old enemy. The journey is long and dangerous, and the PCs must deal with those on both sides who would prefer the feud continue.

13. Rebels fighting against a tyrant have a plan to overcome him and free his people, but they need heroes able to defeat the champions guarding the tyrant.

14. People have begun mysteriously disappearing from their homes, and the PCs discover an old friend or ally is among the missing. Any creature with high Hide and Move Silently scores may be responsible, from goblins with rogue levels to phase spiders.

15. One part of an artifact once believed mythic is discovered, leading to a rush of adventurers seeking the other parts. An ancient riddle may give clues to their location, or the owner of one may be magically guided to the next. The PCs could stumble across a piece and be caught up in events, or they could be hired to locate at least one piece.

16. A powerful foe tests a kingdom's defenses to see if it is ripe for conquest. The normal defenders of the kingdom discount the attack as a minor raid, leaving the PCs to hold one old fortress against the probing attack with their home kingdom doomed to years of warfare if they fail.

17. A natural disaster (an earthquake perhaps) opens access to a long-lost tomb of an evil god incarcerated there centuries before. The tomb is supposedly filled with riches that may draw the PCs, or the PCs may be sent to deal with a cult that wishes to restore the dead god to power.

18. A once peaceful and prosperous city is being corrupted by organized crime. Murder and thievery becomes widespread. The PCs must either find the mastermind behind the new crime guild and destroy him or convince the city's people to stand up for themselves.

19. A foolish wizard's experiments accidentally created monsters that wreak havoc on the countryside. The PCs may stumble across his crossbreeds or be hired to deal with them. Even after the immediate threat is handled, the wizard must be convinced to stop or forced to mend her ways.

20. Multiple competing factions move toward open warfare. None of the factions are evil; they simply compete for the same resources, or each believes it has the best claim of ruling a contested area. The PCs are asked by more than one side for support, possibly as spies.

21. Someone kidnaps an important person. The kidnappers may wish a ransom, or need his blood for a dark ritual or for some other nefarious purpose. In any event, the PCs are involved because the victim is important to a friend or ally of theirs, or they are hired to return him.

22. An ancient and evil artifact must be destroyed, which can only be accomplished in one remote locale. The PCs may not be able to trust anyone else with the artifact, or they may actually be the best people to take it to its destruction.

23. A trader from a far away land arrives with maps revealing how to reach her homeland. She may hire the PCs to escort her through dangerous places to escort her home. The PCs may be asked to explore this new land, or they might just go there in hopes of finding a profit.

24. One of the PCs bears a striking resemblance to someone important who died long ago. An elven or undead lord who loved that person may woo the PC or even attempt to kidnap him.

25. A powerful ruler died with no heir, leaving a power vacuum. The PCs may try to take over a kingdom themselves, aid a patron or ally who wishes to do so, or be swept up in events as factions start hiring thugs to kill each other off.

26. A natural disaster strikes a locale at least one of the PCs considers home. Earthquake, wildfire, or hurricane, it forces the PCs to try to save the wounded, fight off looters, and earn enough money to rebuild their home.

27. A minor outpost, distant from the kingdom that theoretically protects it, has discovered something of great value (gold, magic plants — any resource will do). It is seized by foes of the PCs, who are asked to free the captured outpost inhabitants and, if possible, to reclaim the outpost.

28. While the PCs take a break from adventuring in the middle of what is normally a peaceful land, a haunted locale appears. It may be the burial city of a dead demigod, a ship of the damned, or a cursed tower that appears only for one month every 100 years. It's dangerous and disrupts life nearby, however, and the PCs are the only heroes close enough to deal with it.

29. Normally friendly and peaceful creatures turn dangerous because of possession, disease, or an evil enchanter. The PCs must find the cause of this sudden transformation, preferably without killing any of the innocent attackers.

30. One of the treasures the PCs recover during an adventure turns out to be a gateway to another realm, possibly another whole plane, full of places to explore and the potential for great riches.

31. Expansion and exploration into a new territory has stumbled across a new and dangerous monster. A variant on any of the creatures that petrify (cockatrices, basilisks, or medusas), its victims do not respond to the normal methods for restoring flesh to those turned to stone. A PC's friend or ally may be a victim, or even one of the PCs. In order to discover a cure, a live specimen must be captured and transported to a wise sage too old to come look for herself.

32. A traditional foe of the PCs comes to them, claiming to have mended his ways. He offers to show them a way to defeat other foes once allied with him. It may be a cunning trap, the foe may have fallen in love with one of the PCs, or he has been subjected to an *atonement* spell and truly repented.

33. The keeper of something powerful (a secret magic, an artifact, even a kingdom) has decided it's time to find a new keeper. One or more PCs are in the running for this role, but they must first prove their worth by undertaking and completing a dangerous quest.

34. A trade route goes through very dangerous territory. It may be beset by pirates or full of intelligent monsters. The PCs may be hired to guard a caravan or cargo ship, wish to find a new, safer route and sell its secret, or need something from the other end of the route to accomplish another goal. If the PCs aren't powerful enough to survive the route on their own, they must convince others to assist them, possibly talking their way onto a merchant's expedition.

35. A new ruler has taken over a land and needs brave, honest agents. Even if the PCs are not powerful, they have somehow earned this ruler's trust. (He may have adventured with them in disguise earlier in his career or be a family friend.) The PCs must assess his kingdom, determining who's loyal, who's honest, and who needs royal help.

36. The PCs are stuck in an evil realm from which only the ruler can release them. Unfortunately, the ruler is long dead. The characters must find a way to become rulers and then decide to release themselves, or perhaps they can try to reclaim the realm for the forces of good.

37. A supernatural threat begins attacking a town or kingdom. Its only weakness is something one of the PCs is talented at (a style of song or riddle, a unique spell or tradition of magic, or even a fighting style). The threat may be far beyond the PCs' normal power level, but they must sneak their one effective member close to its stronghold so it can be ultimately defeated.

38. A group is inspired by the actions of one or more of the PCs and begins an organization to spread their fame and glory. This organization may be a religion, a knightly order, or just a popular movement. The organization causes trouble (insulting allies of the PCs, attacking foes they can't defeat, and so forth). The PCs must repair the damage done in their name and either reform or disband the fanatics who idolize them.

39. One of the PCs inherits a stronghold in a land rich with natural resources. The stronghold is considered cursed and haunted, however, and no one is willing to live there. This may be true, or it may be a myth spread by brigands or monsters that use the stronghold as a base of operations.

40. A monster of power is discovered to have something one or more PCs want. The monster won't surrender the thing while alive. (Essentially, this plot is a variant on an orc holding a pie the PCs' desire.) If a PC has expressed a desire in a particular spell, magic item, or volume of treasure, these work well as incentive.

FORTY FIGHT SCENES

Fights are important parts of any d20 adventure. A well-designed fight scene is an opportunity for combat-oriented characters to shine, and good fight scenes add risk and drama to an adventure. Unfortunately, no matter how creatively players describe their character's actions or how inventively you designed your villain's tactics, all too often the sense of adventure gets lost after a series of fights in bars, forests, and buried temples. If the players have lost their appetite for fight scenes in your game, you need to shake things up.

Below are 40 ideas for unusual, different, dangerous, and even bizarre fight scenes. Many require extensive set-up to arrange, but that's a benefit rather than a drawback. How to get PCs interested in coming close enough to a cave of bats for a fight to occur there marks the beginning of plotting out an adventure. A scenario can be made new and interesting by playing with the locale (fighting on a frozen lake), the goal (trying to capture a foe alive), the opponents (jesters who want to humiliate the PCs rather than hurt them), or the PCs' resources (a fight in a royal chamber where weapons and magic items are forbidden). Combined with the 40 plots, above, and a villain (see **Designing Antagonists** in **Chapter Four**), these fight scenes can form a very basic adventure with only one or two other elements.

1. Fights on ships can go very differently than land-based battles. If a ship attacked by aquatic creatures capsizes and traps the PCs inside, they must worry about escaping before the ship sinks. Characters falling overboard may be too heavily armored to swim. They might also need to consider sharks being attracted to blood in the water. Make sure you consult the *DMG* for details on underwater fighting before beginning this combat.

2. If a fight takes place in the mouth of a bat cave, just as the cloud of bats flies out for the night, the characters must deal with a zone of no visibility thanks to the flying horde, total negation of most ranged attacks, and possibly even damage from the bats themselves.

3. In a similar vein, fights on airships, planes, and flying carpets can add excitement to a game. The heroes might find themselves battling flying opponents while clinging to an airship's rigging hundreds or thousands of feet above the ground. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the rules on maneuverability for flying creatures in addition to climbing and falling rules.

4. A fight against a much larger and more powerful force can often add excitement to a game, but it must be handled carefully to be fun. If the PCs must defend a pass against an attacking army or keep a boarding party from getting into the bridge or control room, they might be able to hold at a narrow point where the enemy can come at them only two or three at a time.

5. Fighting outside during a massive rainstorm will cut visibility (even darkvision) to half the normal range and reduce damage from fire (be it *fireballs* or flamethrowers, give everyone fire resistance 3). Snowstorms, hurricanes, and even tornadoes will all add a new element to a fight as well. A blizzard can drop visibility to zero and has the added risk of characters freezing to death. Familiarize yourself with the rules for environmental damage for these scenes.

6. Battling around or over a natural geyser with an irregular schedule forces characters to worry about when it goes off next — and whom it scalds. Beforehand, decide how big a radius the geyser has (it may be variable) and how much damage it does.

7. Any fight can be spiced up by an earthquake, especially those involving volcanoes or sinking islands. Although the exact effects of an earthquake vary with its size and locale, in general assume the shock lasts 1 round, during which time creatures on the ground can't move or attack. Spellcasters on the ground must make Concentration checks (DC 20 + spell level) or lose any spells they try to cast. The earthquake affects all terrain, vegetation, structures, and creatures in the area. A DC 15 Reflex save is needed to remain standing, and anyone caught in a collapsing building or rockslide is likely to take 8d6 points of damage.

A fight in an area prone to mudslides or avalanches could either force the PCs to try to be quiet and

avoid area-effect spells and explosives (lest they set off a mudslide) or might result in characters fighting in a shack as it slides down the side of a mountain.

8. A fight on the side of a volcano forces characters to avoid streams of molten lava and may also restrict the use of spells or equipment that could aggravate or accelerate an eruption. Be familiar with rules for extremely hot environments and lava damage for this scene.

9. A fight taking place in a slaughterhouse has many complicating factors. Rows of meat hanging from hooks provide cover and reduce visibility. The stench might be overpowering. And, of course, there would be lots of sharp implements laying around. A typical beef carcass has a hardness of 1 and 8 hp.

10. A noble hires the PCs to make sure his coronation ceremony at a local cathedral is not disturbed under any circumstances. Just as the coronation begins, in front of a crowd of hundreds of the faithful, the PCs notice assassins sneaking forward through the rafters of the church. The PCs must stop these killers without distracting anyone from the ceremony, possibly leading to a silent fight in the beams of the church above the oblivious crowd below. The same idea can be used to protect a senate before an important vote or even prevent a stage production from being shut down.

11. If the PCs can't fly and must climb down a tall cliff face, they might have a very difficult time fighting an airborne opponent while halfway down. If they can fly, forcing them to travel down a very narrow ravine or trench (no more than 20 feet wide) might allow creatures with natural climbing ability to fight the PCs without being airborne.

12. Any fight that takes place in a town that's slowly flooding could prove interesting. Some buildings might already have 3 feet of water running through them, while others are temporarily protected by sandbagging. Of course, the sandbags won't hold out the water forever, and the nearby dam may break with little or no warning. Characters should be fighting the water's current, which can be treated as a Strength 10 bull rush every round that automatically hits.

13. PCs who stumble across some brigands in the woods and easily defeat them are likely to run after the stragglers who try to escape. In the process, they could run smack into an ambush set up for them, with rows of archers behind wall shields (or gunmen behind riot shields), pit traps, trip wires, and pre-set spells or explosives.

Conversely, if the PCs find themselves needing to take out a much more powerful opponent, they may wish to set an ambush of their own. Allowing PCs to pick the time and place for a fight makes them able to deal with creatures 2 or 3 CR higher than usual (though look out for special abilities such as damage reduction).

14. A fight in an abandoned tower (or any ruined structure) is complicated by weak floors giving way, walls toppling over, and ceilings caving in. The same can be true of a fight in a locale still under construction. For variations on this theme, have the fight in an only partially marked graveyard, with undead attacking anyone who steps on their grave (the same idea can use an unmarked minefield instead).

15. Not every fight is one the PCs must win. If they are trapped in a room with an overpoweringly powerful opponent, they may only need to hold it off long enough for the rogue to pick the locked door or security expert to bypass the computer. Of course, the rogue may need to take 20 to pick the lock, which takes even longer.

16. Changing the goal of a fight is often the best way to spice it up. For example, if a wealthy weakling hired the PCs to follow him around and make him look heroic, they are forced to worry about defeating enemies while keeping him alive and making it look like he's responsible for the victory.

17. If a fight gets boring and the PCs are clearly going to win, sometimes having the NPCs just give up is best. Not only does it save time, but it can make the PCs feel important, and it saddles them with the problem of dealing with prisoners. If the PCs have a powerful reputation, you might have a very large group of opponents surrender to them, forcing them to deal with hundreds of prisoners.

18. If the PCs are forced to fight in a short and narrow tunnel, they might find it difficult to swing weapons or even make the arm movements required for spellcasting or using complicated equipment. This could also be a wonderful opportunity for smaller characters to enjoy an advantage for once. An Escape Artist check might allow larger characters to act more normally, depending on how small a space you decide on.

19. You can spice up city fights by including some weather and odd locales. A fight taking place on a dock at night in fog might have poor visibility, lots of cover in barrels and crates, and the possibility of falling off the dock into the water. In a more technological setting, thick smog and a cesspool or water drainage ditch can have much the same effect.

20. Any situation from a disaster movie can make for an interesting fight scene. Imagine shooting it out with a group of brigands in the middle of a forest fire, with burning trees falling randomly, heat waves singeing everyone, and all escapes quickly blocked by the spreading conflagration. Before the game, figure out the hardness and hit points of your trees and how much damage the fire itself does to those caught in it. For tips, see **Chapter Three: Adventures** in the *DMG*.

21. Sometimes a powerful group of PCs needs to be saddled with a problem in addition to its enemies. Imagine a group charged with carrying the 8-foot-tall holy clay pots of an old temple to safety. The pots must not be damaged under any circumstances or the temple's god will be angered (even if the PCs later fix the pot). Even extremely competent characters might have trouble winning a fight if they're trying to protect a huge and breakable piece of pottery.

22. Confront the PCs with a charmed horde of peasants loyal to one of the heroes or an angry mob of innocent bystanders who have mistaken them for the villains. Even if the PCs just kill them, there'll be repercussions for killing loyal or innocent bystanders.

23. If you're just looking for something different, shrink the PCs down to the size of insects in their own backyard. Suddenly, every bug they encounter is a major threat. Use statistics for Gargantuan-sized vermin to simulate the effect of normal bugs fighting the reduced heroes.

24. Set a fight on top of a runaway carriage, speeding train, or logs floating down a river. Depending on the game, this scene might work with stampeding cattle, flying dragons, runaway trucks, or small prop planes. The characters have to jump from conveyance to conveyance to fight, may want to take over a vehicle, and must worry about falling and possibly avoiding oncoming obstacles. Since all the vehicles are moving roughly the same speed and direction, you need only concern yourself with their relative positions, rather than moving them each their full speed each turn.

25. A fight in a crowded bazaar, marketplace, or mall adds the complications of boxes, crates, baskets, barrels, stalls, flammable dry goods, valuable breakables, sticky foodstuffs, and hundreds of innocent bystanders.

26. Using an old adventure standby, have a fight occur on a canoe, raft, or ship headed for a waterfall. Swimming and balance are then important, made even more dangerous by the limited time.

27. A fight in a steamship's engine room, a windmill, or a giant clock adds the complication of avoiding the moving, slicing, and grinding machine parts. The fight is complicated further if it's important the machine not be damaged.

28. Any subterranean setting can become more dangerous by making it unstable. Characters must avoid explosions or hitting the ancient braces

holding up the ceiling, and dust drifting down from the roof may reduce visibility. If things get slow, have a collapse start, and see how fast the characters can get out of the mineshaft while fighting.

29. If your players have become too used to employing all their abilities to maximum effect, put them in a situation in which they must voluntarily restrict their own options. For example, if the PCs must infiltrate a band of beggars by disguising themselves as cripples and unskilled vagrants, they can hardly use their heroic skills and powers to fight off a group of law officers trying to run them out of town.

30. Rather than make the fight the most important thing, set up a scene in which getting somewhere first is critical. Chariot races, mad dashes to a hospital/temple, and escapes from collapsing buildings are all good examples. Fighting is only one way of trying to slow characters down, as racers jockey for the best position and try to take out their competitors.

31. If the opponent is nearly as tough as the heroes, the fight can be made more difficult by requiring the PCs to capture her alive. They might be on a zoological expedition, hunting down a refugee who has critical information, or they may need a criminal alive to collect the bounty on her head.

32. If a fight becomes much too staid and boring, have several black-clad assassins suddenly show up and try to kill everyone on both sides. Assuming they all have sneak attack, the assassins can attack targets in pairs so they're always flanking opponents. For extra credit, you may even have them relate to the ongoing plot somehow.

33. Set up situations in which the heroes must deal with an entire organization of lower-power creatures. Killing one goblin is easy. Killing a hundred is time-consuming. Killing the entire 6,000-strong Shadowstepper tribe of goblins (or guild of assassins, or terrorist organization) is a challenge — especially if it's important that none escape.

34. Whether it's a wizard's tower, a petty dictator's fortress home, or a galactic crime lord's hive of scum and villainy, you can challenge characters by making them assault a stronghold. A battle against opponents with 75% cover is hard enough, but adding giant rocks thrown from catapults (or howitzers or blaster cannons) can really tip the scale.

35. The characters may be great at killing things, but can they carry a pigskin across a line? If characters need a prize that can only be won in a competition, they may find themselves on a national sports team, entered in a tournament, or competing in a county fair. The important thing is, the goals they must meet are non-lethal and likely not something they're used to.

36. Another common adventure trope is to have two groups with members filling similar niches come into competition. Make up NPCs that are as powerful and varied as the PCs, using the PCs themselves as your guideline. Then place them into conflict, perhaps over who earns a valuable contract or as agents of opposing empires vying for the same relic. This works best if the NPC team isn't evil, just working for someone else, allowing them to develop an ongoing rivalry with the PCs.

37. This one can take a lot of work on the part of the GM, but it can also be a great climactic encounter to end a long-running plot: instead of the PCs being one of two sides in a conflict, have a 5-way battle with each side trying to overcome the other four. If you have more than one group of players in different games, you might even be able to bring them together to face off with each other and numerous groups of NPCs.

38. Set up a near-impossible fight, but have the consequences of losing be merely long-term annoyance, rather than death or serious loss. For example, have the PCs fight from a set of bamboo poles sticking out of a magic lake that *polymorphs* anyone who touches it into a random animal whenever they get wet, but allows them to *polymorph* back automatically once dry. The PCs are almost sure to touch the water, but that just gives them further motivation to go adventuring (to seek a cure to their curse).

39. Fantasy characters in an anti-magic zone or high-tech characters right after an EMP are both forced to deal with problems without their favorite equipment. To tip the scales further, force them to get past trained martial artists and psychics.

40. The ultimate difficult environment is zero-g. Whether the PCs fall into an unusual magic trap or actually travel beyond the planet's gravity field, zero-g environments prevent walking without velcro or magnetic aid (or a *spider climb* spell), make even a small amount of recoil important, and give everyone access to movement in three dimensions. Some quick rules must be decided — such as jumping giving characters velocity rather than just allowing them to go a certain distance, and every time characters hit a far wall their velocity translates to damage (unless they make DC 15 Jump or Tumble checks, each check negating 10 feet of velocity). In general, though, let characters go everywhere, and just keep the bullets (or *magic missiles*) flying too fast for anyone to worry about exact physics.

ADDING THE LITTLE DETAILS

A good GM adds little details to an adventure now and then, just to keep things fresh and give PCs a chance to deal with encounters that aren't life-or-death situations. These details can be thought of as set dressing: background details that help set the stage, not items of importance. Use set dressings sparingly, adding one or two in each evening of play, but so used they can add a high level of interest.

Set dressing for dungeons are well covered in other d20 products, but few have presented set dressing for urban and wilderness settings. Below are 100 minor details that can be dropped into the description of a town, city, forest, or desert, either when PCs first reach (or travel through) such areas or as a side-trip during an adventure set in one of these environments.

URBAN SET DRESSINGS

1 Abandoned merchant wagon
2 Wishing fountain (with 1d100 cp at the bottom)
3 Drinking fountain
4 Public square
5 Small park
6 Large park
7 Private, walled garden
8 Beggar
9 Street gutter for sewage
10 Gazebo
11 Wandering food vendor
12 Wandering vendor of illicit narcotic plants

13 Merchant selling out of a wagon
14 Statue of local historical figure
15 Statue of local deity
16 Statue of local folklore character
17 Public shrine
18 Alley concealed behind a banner
19 Crier shouting out local laws
20 Crier shouting out employment opportunities
21 Priest publicly preaching
22 Column with handwritten banners stuck on with tar
23 Large sundial
24 Lamplighter on stilts
25 Walled and gated community of affluent citizens
26 Empty building for sale suitable for a business
27 Empty house for sale
28 Musicians or poets performing for donations
29 Open market
30 School (magic, unarmed combat, swordplay, languages, or woodcraft)
31 Orphanage
32 Poorhouse
33 Shipyard, cartwright, or wainwright
34 Business that acts as "front" for an illegal activity or guild
35 Guardhouse or barracks
36 Arena (fencing, sports, bear baiting pit, gladiatorial games, possibly now defunct)
37 Public stage
38 Bank
39 Food shop (bakery, butcher shop, brewery, dairy, fish monger)
40 Craft shop (tannery, blacksmith's, joiner, ceramics, cooper's, instrument maker's, chandler's)
41 Tea house, coffee shop, or similar social gathering place
42 Warehouse
43 Sewer entrance (fouled well, drain, open sewer pit)
44 Public baths
45 Public dump
46 Public punishment (flogging, execution)
47 Criminals in iron cages
48 Burned-out inn
49 Lines of hung laundry
50 Smokehouse
51 Library (public, private, or associated with a guild)
52 Stray cat
53 People dumping sewage into the streets
54 Small jail with lone guard
55 Bell tower
56 Docks
57 Dock house
58 Pack of rats
59 Playhouse
60 Professional courtesan
61 Unmarked courtesan house
62 Unconscious mugging victim
63 Graveyard

64	Sick house
65	Dance hall
66	Entertainment establishment (gambling house, fortune teller, theater)
67	Cistern
68	Pack of wild dogs
69	Street urchins seeking temporary employment
70	Carnival performers
71	Canal traveled by punts
72	Street busker
73	Vandalized shop
74	Graffiti indicating gang boundary
75	Landmark of local holy man
76	Bridge (over canal, river, or lower street)
77	Tunnel under poor section of town
78	Tannery (smelly section of the town)
79	Catacombs (for burial of citizens only)
80	Cattle pens
81	Crematorium
82	Public auction
83	Marble main road
84	Ragman (buys and sells scrap fabric)
85	Rubbish man (carts garbage away from town)
86	Shepherd with flock blocking path
87	Guard post
88	Building under construction
89	Building being torn down
90	Subterranean old city, ruined
91	Icehouse
92	House under quarantine for plague
93	Crier declaring a new law
94	Historical marker
95	Statue of local ruler
96	Windmill
97	Water wheel
98	Shop closed for foreign holiday
99	Public art/murals
100	Abandoned section of town (believed haunted or cursed)

Wilderness Set Dressing

1	Blighted area of dead plants
2	Hot spring
3	Small stream
4	Beehive (or termite hill, ant mound, or spider web)
5	Animal not native to the terrain
6	Old mine (long since mined out)
7	Rabbit snare
8	Tree stumps painted with targets and covered in arrows
9	Dry river bed (1% chance to have grounded barge or canoe)
10	Decrepit water mill and stone foundations of other buildings
11	Several rusting iron cages for Medium creatures, hanging from limbs of a tree
12	Tattered tents and dented, rusted cooking gear scatter around clearing
13	Decomposed bodies in rusting armor (site of old skirmish)
14	Broken-down wagon
15	Carcass of Large or Huge native animal covered by small scavengers
16	Junk pile or refuse
17	Rare or unusual plants of no real value (four-leaf clover, black roses)
18	Thorn bushes across path
19	Old, hidden still
20	Rainbow in the distance
21	Stump of tree struck by lightning
22	Hidden crop of illicit narcotic plants
23	Cloud of Fine flying, biting vermin (mosquitoes, gnats, etc.)
24	Pit trap (10% chance of animal caught in trap)
25	Campfire and roasting-spit scaled for a Large creature
26	Old stone border marker for long-lost kingdom
27	Animal trail (leading to watering hole)
28	Abandoned tree house
29	Wounded Medium or Large animal native to the terrain
30	Slightly rusted steel bear-trap
31	Small shrine to nature deity
32	Stagnant pond
33	Ragged topiary bushes
34	Curious raccoon or similar creature (may attempt to get into tents or packs)
35	Oddly-shaped wall of stone (left over from a *wall of stone* cast during a fight)
36	Pond formed by an animal dam (beaver or some form of snake or vermin)
37	Large evergreen tree with a hollow space within its branches, with old firepit
38	Broken well (75% likely to be dry)
39	Angry native Small or Tiny venomous creature
40	Den of deceased native creature
41	Berry bush or fruit tree (may bear fruit even out of season)
42	Dead monstrous humanoids in a pile, obviously looted
43	Herd of passive local animals
44	Rocks arranged to form an arrow
45	Hunting blind
46	Hammock
47	Neatly stacked firewood
48	Skeleton hanging from a tree by a noose
49	Hidden path
50	Empty, broken chest
51	Orphaned infant animal native to terrain
52	Small river with old fishing net and bucket
53	Large clearing with piles of rotting, cut lumber (25% chance of incomplete construction, such as houses or siege weapons)

54	Initials within a heart carved into a tree
55	Dried flower garlands
56	Circle of menhirs used for astrological calculations
57	Fog bank
58	Abandoned cabin (hunter, poacher, or outlaw)
59	Small waterfall
60	Natural cave system
61	Ancient tomb or barrow
62	Herd of native wild cattle
63	Herd of local native riding beasts
64	Ring of toadstools
65	Mud pit or quicksand (likely too shallow to threaten Medium creatures)
66	Wetland (bog, swamp, flooded river bank)
67	Cliff
68	Field of wildflowers
69	Local fey with indifferent attitude
70	Ancient watchtower or signal tower
71	Unusual raise in ground (lone hill or unusually tall mountain)
72	Mild storm
73	Severe storm
74	Deep chasm
75	Small salt flat
76	Small mesa with a single tree
77	Volcano, hot spring or hot mud, or geyser
78	Dense copse of vegetation surrounding a clearing with spring (in desert, an oasis)
79	Abandoned quarry of hard rock (basalt, granite, marble, or slate)
80	Rare herbs (10 gp worth if used as material component; or one use of a healer's kit if gathered with a DC 15 Profession [herbalist] check)
81	Ground breaking for a mill, never built
82	Fishing poles at a pond (or hole in the ice)
83	Natural spring feeding a small reflecting pool
84	Vampire skeleton staked down atop a hill, facing east
85	Field of aromatic flowers
86	Field filled with butterflies (or old caterpillar cocoons)
87	Crop circles
88	Cattle wallow (site where cattle roll in the dirt or mud, flattening the area)
89	Trail markers cut into tree
90	Ancient stone road marker (no sign of road)
91	Skunk
92	Rotting heads on pikes
93	Guts and unused sections of a large game animal
94	Remains of a picnic
95	Rock outcroppings in shape of people or animals
96	Remains of a pyre, with humanoid bones within
97	Edible mushrooms
98	Shallow graves (of previous adventurers or travelers)
99	Vast area of silkworm-infested vegetation
100	Injured predator in need of healing

Wrapping it All Up

At the end of an adventure, you need two things: a climax of the adventure's themes and plot threads, and a denouement to allow players to settle down and get ready for their next adventure.

An adventure's climax should bring with it a sense of resolution, at least for the time being. Whatever the main challenge of the adventure is, the PCs should deal with it in the climax. If delving through a dungeon, the most dangerous monster on the last level can serve as the climax. If stealthily rescuing a princess, actually getting her free from her cell without being spotted can serve as the climax. In a game of political intrigue, the climax might be a tense scene of negotiation in which secrets are at last revealed and a rival faction loses face or is forced to lend support to the PCs' cause.

Generally, a game's climax should have the same tone as the majority of the adventure (turned up a notch of intensity) and successfully cover at least the most important plot points. If the adventure has been combat oriented, the climax should involve a fight. If the adventure has focused on stealth and espionage, the climax should require particularly difficult and critical sneaking around. Sometimes, a climax shifts tone either accidentally (when the PCs reach the princess they blunder their stealth, and she ends up being held threateningly by her captor, who demands the PCs negotiate her release) or intentionally (while digging around for secrets to discredit the king's cousin, the PCs discover that an assassination plot against the king is coming to a head in less than an hour and rush to fight off the assassins). There's nothing wrong with this development as an occasional change of pace, but remember if the players are enjoying the type of adventure being run, they probably don't want a major shift in tone at the most critical moment.

Deciding how tough to make a climax is one of the trickiest jobs a GM faces. If a climax isn't harder than the other challenges PCs faced in the adventure, it's often a letdown. If it's too difficult, the PCs may fail, and the players become unhappy about all the time they've spent on the adventure. Especially since it's at the end of a series of other encounters, knowing what resources and health the PCs will have left by the time they reach a climactic encounter is difficult. A foe only slightly above their normal difficulty might be much more than they can handle after going through all the challenges to reach it.

One solution is to have the final, climactic challenge involve graduated levels of success. For example, if a band of PCs tries to save a princess from a dragon, the GM needn't make sure the dragon is weak enough that the PCs are sure to kill it. He might set things up so the PCs only must hold off the dragon for a few rounds of combat while they free the princess, and then allow them to flee

down a tunnel too small for the dragon to follow. This is the minimum level of success for the encounter, and if done properly the PCs feel they have overcome, just barely, a much more powerful foe.

If the PCs are determined to fight the dragon and use their resources well and work as a team, they might hurt it badly. The GM could decide that after taking half or more of its hit points, the dragon flees. If it has an escape route handy, the PCs are hard-pressed to follow it. Yet in this case, they have managed a higher grade of success: they've driven off their foe and can collect at least some of his treasure.

At the highest level of success, the PCs actually manage to kill the dragon. Doing so may require they burn all their expendable resources, get a little lucky, and are willing to pursue him if he flees (likely continuing the fight while airborne or underwater, in circumstances that favor the dragon's size and speed). The GM doesn't need to pull any punches for this fight — if the PCs want the largest share of glory, they need to earn it. Even if they begin to lose the fight, at this point the PCs can back out at any time simply by allowing the dragon to escape. If they do defeat him, not only should they earn greater prestige and experience, but also the creature's most valued possessions that it keeps with it always.

Another option is to set up the climax to be the most dangerous encounter of the adventure, but make sure the PCs have time to recoup their resources before facing it. If the adventure is designed to make sure the heroes are well rested and supplied when they face its conclusion, judging how tough to make it is much easier. Indeed, the heroes may even pick up items in the course of the adventure that make the final encounter easier (potions of healing, weapons that are bane against their foe, new spells or lore that help them prepare). A prepared group that knows what challenge lies ahead can handle a much more powerful encounter, allowing them to gain a great sense of accomplishment if they succeed.

Always have some idea what to do if the climax of a game doesn't go as planned. An escape route for defeated PCs or an idea of what happens if they're defeated and captured is helpful if die rolls and bad planning lead to their defeat. Don't make it impossible for PCs to fail (there's no sense of adventure if it becomes obvious there's no risk), but an opportunity to flee rather than everyone dying man can turn a total party kill into an opportunity to rest, take stock, and try again.

Similarly, if the PCs defeat the final foe too easily, you should already have the next encounter ready. For the most part, an easy victory shouldn't be taken away from the players (don't suddenly decide the main bad guy had two equally-tough brothers who unexpectedly burst in). Just file the information away for later and make sure

the next foe is more dangerous. However, if the players seem unconvinced the adventure is truly over, you can add a new climax as an additional encounter. Perhaps the dragon who kidnapped the princess was actually taking orders from an evil necromancer, or the plot to kill the king was easily discovered because it was a distraction from the *real* evil plot.

The Denouement

After the climactic final encounter, the PCs need a moment or three to catch their breath and enjoy their success. If they've gone on a mission for someone, this is the time to announce success and receive praise and rewards. If they've done something particularly public and heroic, they should receive accolades and possibly even a tickertape parade. While the main reward for the players is the fun of facing and overcoming challenges, most players also enjoy having their characters be thanked and rewarded for doing something worthwhile and dangerous. Arrange for praise, respect, and a growing reputation to be part of the rewards, and make the reaction of NPCs clearly demonstrate this rise in status.

Most importantly, you need to give the PCs a place where they can feel safe. Players don't want to worry about their characters constantly, and a secure base of operations — be it a tavern that they frequent regularly, a church that respects them, or rooms at the castle of an allied lord — allows both players and PCs to relax. Since most d20 games have rules for activities that can be done easily only when not adventuring (learning new skills or spells, buying new equipment, or crafting weapons or magic items), the players should be given an opportunity to do these activities. A few days spent somewhere with a large market (or mail-order service, or matter duplicators, or whatever), a secure bed, and ample opportunity to study or get work done allows players a chance to take advantage of new wealth, skills, or ideas.

It also serves as a good place for some less dramatic roleplaying – heroes getting a chance to talk to merchants and townsfolk and becoming acquainted with some less heroic NPCs. If the players want more than just combat and treasure, this is the time for them to work on their PCs' relationships with allies, rivals, foppish dandies, and barmaids. You can also use this time to set up threads for future adventures. The news and rumors the PCs gather from a friendly port can easily set the stage for problems they face in upcoming games. You can also let the players know how their characters' actions have affected the condition of the world. If the PCs saved a princess, they might get invitations to her wedding or learn she's making alliances with strong neighboring kingdoms to help keep the peace. The more connected the players feel to the world of their PCs, the more they'll become involved with future adventures.

Chapter Four: Non-Player Characters

NPCs are a GM's main tool for all forms of interaction. A GM who wants to give PCs someone to love, hate, save, fight, or just buy a fried piece of bread from needs to have an NPC ready to go. Most GMs face two main challenges when designing NPCs: one, lack of realistic details and interesting hooks for PCs to remember them by; two, lack of time to do full write-ups of even the major NPCs that might be encountered.

– Designing Antagonists –

Although designing adventures pitting players against challenges without any thinking motivation is possible, such as survival against the elements or a search for a lost city that's now abandoned, most often a GM needs to design antagonists to go along with the adventures. A well-designed antagonist is one of a GM's greatest assets. An interesting, challenging, and creative foe can capture players' attention quickly, getting them more involved in the campaign. Often, the villains of the story are remembered long after other details are forgotten.

The design work on an antagonist should be well underway before any game information gets decided on. Race, class, skills, and feats aren't even needed for some foes. A dark god of hate who is trying to bring about an age of fear, pain, and chaos may not need any game information — he's a god! The more important questions are why does he want to bring about this dark age; how are the PCs expected to stop him; and if they do, why won't he strike them down with divine power? Similarly, an annoying court functionary who tries to keep the PCs from speaking to the king may not need much more than a Will save and Bluff and Sense Motive values. If she isn't supposed to fight the PCs, and couldn't possibly win even if she did, her class is irrelevant.

Thinking about what an antagonist is supposed to do and how he'll go about trying to do it serves three important purposes. One, it lets you design the NPC to accomplish a specific task in advance. Two, it gives you a firm grasp of how the NPC should act, allowing you to make the character more memorable and interesting. Three, it prevents you from doing unneeded design work that wastes time and effort. While these recommendations are specifically geared for antagonists who oppose the PCs in one capacity or another, much of the advice applies to major NPCs designed to be neutral or even allied with the PCs.

Role

The first question that needs to be answered about any antagonist is what role he or she fills in a campaign. An antagonist need not be a classic "villain" in the sense of working to do evil or trying to take over the world. Anyone you use to place obstacles in the PCs' path, from troublesome guards to annoying servants, qualifies as an antagonist. Many antagonists make trouble for PCs not out of malice, but from ignorance, incompetence, or a desire to get ahead themselves. A group of adventurers competing for the same fame and fortune as the PCs are a potential threat to the PCs' long-term success, even though morally they may be on the same side.

Defining an antagonist's role helps you develop its other traits. A foil need not have the same level of combat ability as a level boss, and a living weapon can do without the resources of a mastermind. Try to vary what kinds of antagonists you throw at a group of PCs. Even if a campaign is heavily combat oriented, the occasional change of pace in foes is good. As a campaign develops, some antagonists will prove more popular than will others and can be reused or act as templates for future adversaries. Even if a villain can't possibly come back, she may have a sister, old master, or ally who takes her place.

An antagonist can combine roles. A foil might also be a mastermind, such as the head of a Bardic Guild that disapproves of the PCs and has his guild spread songs painting them as buffoons or idiots. Of course, a multi-role antagonist will likely be more dangerous and have access to more resources. Sometimes, antagonists switch roles as a campaign moves on: for instance, an orc shaman might be a lethal weapon early in a campaign, but become a level boss after a demon enlists his service to help deal with the increasingly powerful PCs. A few common roles follow.

Foil

A foil is an adversary who's only around to make the PCs' lives more difficult, not to kill them or do them real harm. A foil may be a person in a position of great power who dislikes the PCs, a rival who tries to take jobs and rewards from them, an annoying bard who follows them around, or even a powerful goddess who thinks she's doing them a favor by making their lives interesting.

A foil needs either not to mean the PCs real harm or to be constrained from hurting them. For example, a courtier who dislikes the PCs and speaks ill of them to her king is troubling, but she doesn't want the PCs killed or even physically hurt — just disgraced and embarrassed. A general might blame the PCs for his son's death and truly wish to kill them — but be ordered by his king not to. Because the general is loyal to his king,

he won't try actually to kill the PCs, but he will hinder them whenever he can get away with it.

A foil normally hinders PCs in just one aspect of their lives. A romantic foil tries to steal loved ones away, but doesn't make trouble for them politically. A political foil may spread rumors and lies, but isn't actually physically around the PCs much. A comedic foil may actually try to be helpful, but is so incompetent his constant presence causes problems.

A foil will not likely be the focus of an adventure in a combat-oriented game, but can take center stage in games with more social or political interaction. A foil works best as a consistent irritation rather than a serious threat. If a foil does take center stage for an adventure, the result should turn the foil into a neutral party (or even an ally) or push him into true enemy status.

Lethal Weapon

A lethal weapon is an antagonist who is physically (or magically) dangerous and accomplishes her goals through direct action. Obviously, to be a threat to the PCs, she must be at least as powerful as they are (and if there are multiple PCs, the lethal weapon must be a threat to all of them or have enough allies to make up the difference). Lethal weapons are a very common form of antagonist and include anything the GM expects the PCs to interact with primarily through combat. A lethal weapon is essentially a superior version of a thug (see page 60).

Lethal weapons may have a group of thugs to back them up, which can work well when designing encounters against PCs with a wide range of combat abilities. While the most powerful characters face off against the lethal weapon, other characters mop up the thugs and keep them from swarming the frontline fighters. Everyone thus has something to do during a fight, and the PCs are prevented from being able to gang up on the lethal weapon all at once.

Evil dragons are excellent examples of lethal weapon adversaries. They are strong, greedy, spellcasting powerhouses that have both the motivation and the ability to go gain wealth and power through direct force. There's little hope of negotiating for an evil dragon to leave its home (though other goals might be met through diplomacy) — and no hope of threatening one. If PCs want to get an evil dragon to leave a town alone, they'll have to fight it.

Level Boss

A level boss is a sub-antagonist, someone who is a credible threat to the PCs on his own but ultimately works for another adversary. An evil baron working for an evil emperor is a good example of a level boss, as is the captain of a ship or a senior apprentice to a necromancer. The important element of a level boss is that he takes

orders from and tries to further the goals of another antagonist of the PCs. An evil baron who supposedly works for a good king isn't a level boss, since the baron isn't trying to further the king's goals.

PCs may not realize a level boss isn't their ultimate foe until they defeat him, and possibly not even then. Indeed, a level boss' master may not be aware of the PCs until they defeat his servant, which brings them to his attention. Turning a major foe into a level boss is a good way to continue a plotline and move the PCs up to more dangerous opponents. It's also a great way for a GM to deal with PCs killing off a major NPC before he puts into motion plans the GM has carefully designed for further adventures.

For example, a GM might have a series of adventures planned that call for a necromancer to start raising all the bodies from nearby cemeteries to form an army. The GM has already written up warrior-zombies and painted figures for the encounters. The PCs figure out what's going on before the GM expects them to and confront the necromancer. A lucky critical hit does so much damage the GM has to accept his necromancer is dead. Rather than give up on the plot, the GM has the necromancer gasp out that his master will make the PCs pay for their interference. Now, the GM can design a lich who was, it turns out, giving the necromancer his marching orders. The plotline is saved, and the PCs realize they have an even greater foe to face.

Not using level bosses too often is important, or players end up feeling nothing they do can make a difference in the world. Sometimes when a foe is defeated, the threat he represented should just end. When a level boss seems called for, letting players know early that he's not their ultimate adversary can be a good idea. A few references to another master or a well-known relationship with a greater power make obvious to players that even if they overcome the dragon Ultheax, his infamous mother and six brothers still present a problem.

Mastermind

A mastermind is a foe who is behind the schemes, plots, and deathtraps PCs face rather than appearing as a direct threat. Masterminds often have other people doing the dirty work and may not be a match for their main foes (likely the PCs) in direct combat. Characters can run into a mastermind's ongoing plans several times before they realize one person organized them all. Masterminds often run vast organizations that may be underground (a thieves' or assassins' guild) or more out in the open (a small but critical country or wizard's school). Much of the threat posed by this kind of mastermind is based on the resources she can bring to bear and her ability to strike from afar. Before the heroes can defeat her, they must find out who she is and where she hides out.

Of course, masterminds can also rule through sheer might, and may be the most dangerous foe around. A death cult's chief necromancer may also be a mighty lich, or an orc clan may be led by a powerful war chief. This kind of mastermind doubles as a lethal weapon, likely working through level bosses. Moreover, this kind of structure works well for plots designed to take PCs through many levels. A group of 1st-level PCs have no chance of defeating a master assassin. Yet if they first run into the assassin's spy ring, run by beggars, then a thieves' guild, then a slaver ring, and only when they reach 12th level uncover her assassin's guild, they may be ready for her by the time they encounter her. Since they defeat smaller plots along the way, the PCs get the satisfaction of defeating the master assassin (by proxy) before they ever directly encounter her. This kind of mastermind is normally eventually confronted directly.

A mastermind may also work through agents because she has no choice. A villain who's in jail, or trapped in a pocket dimension, or has dissolved into thinking but inactive dust has little option but to work through others. Such villains have a built-in goal (gain freedom/a new body), and likely still seek to accomplish whatever got them put away in the first place (their original motivation and crime). Even a god might fall into this category, unable to take direct action because it's forbidden (so to prevent gods from coming into direct conflict), or just because the god is too busy with real problems to take that much effort to make trouble for PCs. (Poseidon's vendetta against Odysseus is a good example of a god-as-mastermind adversary, as well as an untouchable.) While this mastermind may be overcome in a direct confrontation, she's equally likely to be defeated by PCs destroying her organization or forcing her to flee.

Thug

A thug is any foe the GM expects the PCs to fight and defeat without much risk of losing. A thug may be able to drain resources from PCs (spells, hit points, healing, uses of special abilities), but has no real chance of defeating them. In a typical d20 game, most combat encounters are with one or more thugs, though obviously enough thugs can start to present a more significant threat. Despite the name, thugs need not be humanoids or criminals. Animals, monsters, undead, and really any fighting threat qualifies as a thug.

When using thugs, vary what kinds the PCs encounter and how they react. The smarter a thug, the more intelligently it should plan for combat and react to PC actions. A giant scorpion is likely just to attack the creature closest to it (though it might be drawn to sounds of pain and the smell of blood, thus moving around healthy opponents to attack wounded ones). Orcs are more likely to try to drop spellcasters first, knowing

they are less hardy and capable of great damage. More intelligent foes are also likely to flee if badly damaged unless there's some pressing reason not to — NPCs want to live, too! Since a thug's job is to be defeated, a GM shouldn't go to great lengths to prevent PCs from easily overcoming one. If a thug proves too easy, letting it be overcome and making the next one harder is better than straining to challenge the PCs with thugs they already have on the ropes.

Always have some idea what intelligent thugs know about the local area and the plans of their masters, and what it'll take to get that information out of them. Since thugs are not as great a threat, they are more often captured than other kinds of antagonists.

Untouchable

An untouchable antagonist is one the PCs can't realistically expect actually to defeat. They can overcome his level bosses, stop his plots, even destroy his organizations, but the untouchable himself is beyond their reach. An untouchable should be obvious in his immunity, to prevent player frustration, though the source of his immunity may be secret for some time. A villain who reappears no matter how thoroughly he's killed may be some form of demigod or greater mummy, but the first few times he's brought down all the players know is that he will come back eventually.

Not having too many untouchable antagonists in a campaign is important, or players will grow frustrated. There's nothing wrong with having an evil god or two and possibly even a king's childhood friend who's in fact a psychopath, but such elements must be used sparingly. An untouchable should have some drawbacks as well, to explain why he hasn't already taken over the world (unless he has, which makes for a dark campaign). An evil god might be banned from direct action by other gods, or a king's childhood friend might have to guard his actions so the king never realizes how vile he is.

Additionally, don't have an untouchable be the source of all the PCs' troubles. An untouchable is best used sparingly, as a reoccurring theme rather than the source of all action. If PCs manage to defeat an untouchable's current plan, they should be able to rest easy for a few games, knowing the untouchable was weakened or at least inconvenienced. If nothing the PCs do ever seems even to slow the untouchable, the players soon grow weary of dealing with him, even indirectly.

If a campaign goes on long enough, you may decide to provide a chink in an untouchable's armor. Perhaps an evil god can be defeated with a special sword the PCs must go on a quest to create, or the king's advisor can be revealed for what he is through a complex scheme. If the untouchable has been presented well, players will leap at the chance to bring him down, and doing so can provide an excellent climax to the campaign. An untouchable that the players have grown actually to dislike — to the point that their enjoyment of the campaign is diminished — may be made vulnerable just so you can realistically get rid of him.

Personality

An antagonist's personality has a great deal of influence on how he does what he does. A vengeful villain will likely punish underlings that fail him and seek to harm PCs who have foiled him, even if other goals are within his grasp. A conservative, organized foe will probably keep her eye on her goals, noting who has wronged her to deal with later. An honest but blunt warlord sends ultimatums to the kingdoms he plans to conquer, while a sneaky, traitorous one makes alliances to get his troops close enough to strike by surprise. Having at least a sketch of the personalities of antagonists allows a GM to set NPCs apart from each other and make them seem more vivid.

Portraying all villains as filled with negative traits is an easy trap. This method tends to produce two-dimensional characters that no one cares about. An evil priest who wants to take over a kingdom and is willing to lie, steal, and betray to get his way, and who mistreats his underlings and kicks puppies, is certainly villainous, but who cares? He's the kind of over-the-top foe that often shows up in Saturday morning cartoons. If the same priest is honest to a fault, happily declaring his intent to take over, and a caring and considerate overlord who

treats his underlings with compassion and respect, he becomes more interesting and memorable. He may still be evil, willing to kill innocents and to serve dark gods, but his personality is basically genial and friendly, like a twisted grandfather.

Table 4–1 provides a list of possible personality traits — each with an antonym — that a GM can use to design memorable NPCs. A GM may select one or two traits to be most obvious (an impatient, pragmatic sorcerer who demands his underlings do whatever is needed to follow his orders, and that they do so immediately), and a few additional traits to keep in the background (though vicious, the sorcerer is generous to those who serve him well and honest to those he intends to punish).

Table 4-1:
Common Personality Traits

1	Polite/insulting
2	Sneaky/blunt
3	Patient/impatient
4	Anxious/calm
5	Bold/cautious
6	Open minded/conservative
7	Stubborn/compromising
8	Affectionate/shy
9	Generous/stingy
10	Sensitive/inconsiderate
11	Honest/deceitful
12	Vengeful/forgiving
13	Assertive/reserved
14	Moody/constant
15	Critical/accepting
16	Decadent/chaste
17	Organized/disorganized
18	Romantic/pragmatic
19	Suave/coarse
20	Diligent/lazy
21	Secretive/open
22	Trusting/suspicious
23	Loyal/traitorous
24	Ambitious/satisfied
25	Witty/dry
26	Confident/insecure
27	Social/solitary
28	Modest/aggrandizing
29	Brave/fearful
30	Curious/indifferent

Motivation

Motivation is an important part of any antagonist, whether she is just the overbearing noble who doesn't like a band of merry adventurers or a dark necromancer bent on the destruction of all living things. Without a sense of an antagonist's motivation, sustaining the actions of the villain in a believable way can prove difficult. An antagonist's motivation is the reason she does what she does, the driving force behind her actions.

Even GMs who are excellent at planning the foul plots and heinous crimes of their master villains all too often overlook a simple but important question: Why? Not why as in "to make the king suffer," but as in "why does he *want* to make the king suffer?" Although many villains from legend and literature may seem simply to be the epitome of unspeakable evil, a close examination will usually reveal that they have goals and desires just as the good guys do. Those goals just tend to be more self-centered and placed in higher importance to the villain than minor concerns such as laws and the lives of other creatures.

One useful tool for determining motivation is to define the antagonist's basic goals as stemming from one of the seven deadly sins (avarice, envy, gluttony, lust, pride, sloth, and wrath). This tactic goes back to personality in many ways, but is more of a driving force than a sense of style. An antagonist can have a vicious, uncaring personality and still be driven by gluttony more than wrath (producing a villain who enjoys tearing down the works of others violently). Knowing what a villain really wants, even if it's just to see others suffer for her own sick pleasure, helps a GM portray her consistently and gives players a handle on trying to understand their enemy. A foe that can be comprehended is often more interesting than an unreasoning monstrosity.

For a truly well-rounded antagonist, the GM may also want to decide what drives the motivation. For example, an antagonist might be driven by avarice because she grew up poor, with even food being scarce. Having sworn never to go hungry again and learning that the poor have few friends, the antagonist decides she's earned the right to gain wealth and security through any means necessary. This character is far more interesting (and potentially sympathetic) than the rich lord who simply wants a bigger palace and brighter gems.

The classic seven deadly sins are defined below, and the nature of antagonists driven by each briefly explored.

Avarice

Inordinate desire for getting and hoarding wealth; an insatiable longing or desire for items of value.

Avarice, or greed, is a common motivation for antagonists. Some creatures, such as dragons and

demons, may be purely motivated by avarice. Of course, avarice can drive creatures to be diligent and thrifty, depending on what course seems most likely to gain wealth. An overzealous tax collector or workaholic father may be driven by avarice. A truly evil sorcerer might work as court magician for a good king if paid well enough — but if made a better offer, his loyalty would be to gold.

Envy

A longing for another's advantages; ill-will caused by contemplation of another's superior advantages.

Antagonists motivated by envy have two main objectives: raise themselves up above the level of those around them, and tear down the very people they look up to. This is among the most mean-spirited of motivations, as envy causes villains to hate the success of others. Strong envy causes antagonists to be jealous of anything that seems superior to what they possess — for example, a rich prince envies the love a commoner has from his wife, a powerful wizard hates that he can't heal despite being able to grant wishes.

Envy is often less obvious than other sins, as an NPC wishing to be well regarded by others may conceal all his envious actions to ensure no one is better liked than he.

Gluttony

The vice of excessive consumption; the act of destroying objects thoughtlessly for one's own pleasure.

While gluttony is normally seen as eating too much, it is at its core a sin of consumption. In addition to food, an antagonist might easily be gluttonous regarding alcohol or drugs. Less obviously, an NPC could consume resources thoughtlessly — for example, the pharaoh who bankrupts his kingdom and drives slaves to the death to construct a mighty tomb has consumed his people's wealth and labor for his own pleasure. On a more primitive scale, a monster might literally eat the landscape around it, despoiling forests and leaving a wasteland in its efforts to fill itself.

Lust

Desire, appetite, relish, or inclination for something; lawless and passionate desire of or for some person, place, or thing.

While lust can revolve around sex, any pleasure or obsession can be involved. A demon who kidnaps the maiden with the sweetest voice in the world may have a lust for song, while a giant might take over a town because it has a lust for pies baked in the way only local halflings know how. Lust is separate from gluttony only in that lust is about experiencing something at any cost, and gluttony is about consumption. The two sins are often connected (along with pride).

Pride

A high or overweening opinion of one's own qualities, attainments, or estate; inordinate self-esteem; the exhibition of this quality in attitude, bearing, conduct, and so on; arrogance, haughtiness.

Campaign Vignettes: Seven Deadly Foes

Rather than simply using seven deadly sins as potential motivations, in this campaign world they are real supernatural powers that drive certain kinds of creatures. Demons, devils, aberrations, magical beasts, and dragons are all attuned to one of the seven sins and gain powers (and weaknesses) from their connection. In fact, if you use Green Ronin's The Book of Fiends, there are dozens of daemons whose essential nature builds upon the concept of the Seven Deadly Sins. In addition to these game mechanical changes, these creatures are all strongly motivated by their listed sin, though they may be driven by other sins as well.

Most creatures can have only one supernatural sin connection, but creatures with multiple heads may have one per head.

Avarice

Creatures of avarice have a 25% bonus to their typical equipment or treasure. They suffer a −4 penalty to all Sense Motive checks made to oppose Bluff checks regarding making money or gaining wealth.

Envy

A creature of envy may choose to be fixated on an item of value if it's not already. It gains a +2 bonus to all checks made to gain the item of fixation (including attack rolls against someone who has it). If the creature fails to acquire the item of fixation within one day per level or Hit Die, it suffers a −2 morale penalty for the same time period. At the end of this time, the creature is no longer fixated and may fixate on a new object.

Gluttony

Creatures of gluttony are one size class larger than typical members of their species (as if they had gained advanced Hit Dice and gained a size class with all the ability score adjustments that entails), but actually have only 2/3 their normal base speed.

Lust

All those half-dragons have to come from somewhere, right? Creatures of lust all gain +2 bonus to Dexterity and a +4 bonus to Charisma, and the ability to cast *charm monster* once per day per point of Charisma modifier (minimum of 1). A creature that saves against this spell-like ability is immune to it for 24 hours.

Lust creatures are not as powerful as others of their kind, taking a −2 penalty to Strength. Additionally, they take a −2 penalty to all attack and damage rolls, skill, checks, and saving checks against targets they have unsuccessfully tried to charm in the past 24 hours.

Pride

Creatures of pride have a +4 bonus to Charisma and a −4 penalty to Wisdom. They gain a +2 morale bonus to all attacks, saves, and checks until they roll a natural 1 after which they suffer a −2 penalty until the end of the current encounter and for 1 hour afterwards.

Sloth

Creatures of sloth are lazy and indolent, but surprisingly tough. They gain a +8 bonus to Constitution scores and a +4 bonus to natural armor, but take a −4 penalty to Dexterity and a −2 penalty to all Listen, Search, and Spot checks. These creatures must sleep 50% more than typical members of their race or be fatigued. They must either rest for 1 minute or make a DC 15 Constitution check after being active a number of minutes equal to their Constitution, or become fatigued. Creatures of sloth are never immune to sleep affects, and take a −4 penalty to all saves against sleep.

Wrath

Creatures of wrath can go into a rage, just like a barbarian. They may do this once per hour, and once the rage ends, they remain fatigued until 1 hour has passed. Further, creatures of wrath must go into a rage if they can when insulted or injured, unless they succeed at a DC 25 Will save.

This campaign could have a different set of sins, potentially also adding cowardice, apathy, or malice as supernatural forces. Heroes in this campaign do better against sin-driven foes if they can reveal their supernatural connection and develop tactics designed to take advantage of each sin's weakness.

Pride influences all an NPC's actions. The defining trait is a sense that the prideful NPC is better than everyone else, which means her concerns should come before those of others. Pride is often connected to gluttony and lust (the prideful NPC sees no reason why her own pleasures shouldn't come at the cost of others), and crossing a prideful NPC frequently leads to a wrath motivation. Foes of pride often expect others to be able to see their superiority and may not understand why others don't view them as entitled to whatever they want. These are the evil warlords who offer PCs jobs or positions within their rising empire and are confused and insulted when PCs decline.

Sloth

Physical or mental inactivity; disinclination to action, exertion, or labor; a preference for leisure over rigorous activity.

Being lazy may not seem like much of a motivation for a character, but it can be great. A slothful wizard, for instance, might be constantly using those "shortcut" spells that are always forbidden. Demon summoning, charm, necromancy: like the dark side of the arcane, the "quick and easy path" may well lead an antagonist into horrid villainy even if he was originally a nice guy. Similarly, a king who can't be bothered to pay attention to the affairs of his kingdom or a guard captain who doesn't want to send out patrols into the wilderness

can be antagonists who cause trouble for PCs through laziness. Sloth can also drive NPCs to violate the rights of others to save themselves effort — an enchanter who charms entire towns to serve him is motivated by sloth, for example.

Wrath

Vehement or violent anger; intense exasperation or resentment; deep indignation; anger displayed in action; the manifestation of anger or fury, especially by way of retributive punishment; vengeance.

There are at least two possible takes on wrath. The standard motivation of revenge is well represented in literature, as villains seek retribution on those who they believe have wronged them, rightly or not. Even if using some other sin as the villain's original motivation, the desire for vengeance can easily be added on, especially if the PCs have already thwarted her original plans. An antagonist may have led such a harsh life that she's angry with the whole world, which is where many dark-god worshiping cultists come from.

The other option is simple madness. An NPC who couldn't control her anger could quickly become a villain, and psychopaths are often portrayed as angry at everything and everyone. Even if PCs can come to understand such a foe, they can never calm or reason with her, making her a particularly implacable foe.

– Allies –

In many roleplaying games, the GM usually has an NPC that is more powerful, or at least more important, than the PCs. This character serves as a leader or advisor to the PCs, guiding them to find the adventures the GM has prepared. In some cases, the NPC is simply a trusted ally who is well connected, perhaps a minor noble or guild leader. Sometimes, the NPC is a powerful force in the campaign world, knowing what evils are most dangerous and sending the PCs to deal with matters he's too busy to handle personally.

NPCs of this sort are a great GM tool. They can guide PCs to adventures, take care of problems the GM doesn't want to spend time on, and heap rewards on PCs when they succeed. They can also serve as fonts of lore and information, resources for buying and selling gear or getting specialist work done, and causes of PC motivation. A well-liked NPC ally in need can often get PCs to go places they'd never travel to for mere profit.

Such NPCs can be problematic in some games, because they represent a potential source of considerable power. If the PCs do tasks at a patron's behest, they can reasonably expect him to do favors for them periodically. A powerful wizard might be asked to cast *analyze dweomer* or a baron used as an easy way to get rid of prisoners or sell

recovered treasure. Even worse, if the PCs decide they really can't handle a villain, they may expect their mentor to take care of the problem.

In some games, this development isn't a problem. If the PCs can't defeat a villain, their patron gives them aid and advice to increase their chances — or takes over altogether. If you and all the players are satisfied with this failsafe, don't worry about it. Especially if the PCs have earned a patron's trust through extensive good deeds, allow them to gain a benefit from their work if no one is bothered by it. Yet for most players the idea that their success or failure doesn't matter because a powerful friend will fix all their mistakes removes much of the heroic storytelling and dramatic tension from the game. In this case, find a way to restrict or make the patron a less attractive option for the PCs to turn to.

One common answer is to have the ally be tied to duties and other allies that leave him little time to help PCs (or at least prevent him from dealing with a specific problem). The baron of a land bordering a dangerous wilderness may be so busy defending his people, meeting with foreign dignitaries, and providing troops for his liege, he simply can't spare the time or resources to aid the PCs if they fail at some task. He can offer them a safe

haven in which to rest and train, maps and lore about his lands and neighboring regions, a thriving market to buy and sell goods, and use of his court wizard to identify magic items, but not troops or powerful magic if they get in over their heads.

Another possibility is to have allies be under the constraints of some legal or mystic rules. An angel might be able to give a group of crusaders advice and lore, but be forbidden by the rules of outsiders to intervene directly in mortal affairs. A bardic guild member might be willing to act as a sage and information source, but if her guild leader dislikes the PCs, she can hardly go with them on adventures for fear of losing her position. A paladin might be sworn to defend a particular temple from all threats, and thus not be free to go deal with problems elsewhere.

Finally, allies might deal with the PCs' failures — but only at a cost. A retired mercenary might raise an army, but the army must be paid. A king's court wizard can give the PCs minor aid, but if she helps them too much, the king will claim anything they find as royal property. This method is similar to the idea behind the *planar ally* spells: help is available, but it isn't free.

MENTORS

A mentor is a powerful character that teaches and guides a PC. Mentors are often old family friends, retired uncles or aunts, or paid experts who value the PC as a favored student. They start at a higher level of expertise than the PC they instruct, but not necessarily a higher power level. As they generally aren't adventuring anymore, mentors are likely to fall behind the PC they assist. That's not a problem, for even a lower-level NPC can assist a PC by teaching a few tricks up his sleeve, giving good advice, and making introductions to important contacts.

Any player can write a mentor into his character's history, and depending on the GM, may be able to go back to such an NPC for advice. An exceptional mentor is a valuable resource, however, and requires the expenditure of a feat. A character with the Mentor feat (see **Appendix One**) has access to a skilled, trustworthy NPC to give advice, teach, and act as a contact. Though the PC gets only one mentor when taking the feat, that mentor can change as needed for the PC's advancement. Handling such transitions is up to the GM, but one mentor will commonly pass the PC onto someone more experienced or skilled in a different field if the PC needs something else from a mentor.

A PC can establish a mentor as part of his character history or find a mentor later in his career. A common saying is, "when the student is ready, the master will appear," and this is the case for PCs that take the Mentor feat at later levels. A mentor may be drawn to a PC to pass on secret skills, may see a PC in action and sense a kindred spirit, or may simply be hired to teach advanced techniques of the PC's chosen path. A mentor doesn't take orders from the PC he's associated with, but does have a friendly attitude and feel a responsibility to advise and train the PC.

You should at least sketch out the mentor, though frequently, exact game stats aren't necessary. The mentor should be appropriate to the chosen path of the PC taking the feat, including future plans the player may have. If the player has expressed interest in a particular prestige class or multiclass combination, make the mentor a member of that class or combination if possible.

Mentors, Training, and Advice

A mentor doesn't go adventuring with PCs, instead teaching them and training with them during their downtime. In games that require training time and/or costs to gain levels or special abilities, a mentor meets those requirements (see **Alternate Advancement** in **Chapter Six**).

Mentors freely give advice and training to the PCs they're associated with (if using the training rules presented in **Chapter Six**, a mentor provides training for free and in 75% of the normal time). Mentors should be considered to have an Intelligence of 14 or greater and maximum ranks in one or two Knowledge skills associated with a PC's chosen path. For example, a wizard's mentor is likely to have Knowledge (arcana) and Knowledge (the planes) at maximum ranks, while a fighter's mentor has maximum cross-class ranks in Knowledge (nobility and royalty). A mentor may not know the answer to a question immediately (if a Knowledge check is failed), but has access to archives and contacts of his own. Given a month's time, a mentor can essentially "take 20" on a Knowledge check, gaining information and passing on information to the PC.

Mentors and Favors

A mentor can also be expected to do minor favors for a PC, as long as they don't require risk or cost on the mentor's part. For example, a mentor might cast *analyze dweomer*; watch over an orphaned child while the PC seeks out another family member for the child; write a letter of introduction to a member of nobility; or allow the PC and her friends to rest in his stronghold, as long as they aren't hiding from authorities. A PC should be able to count on gaining one minor favor from a mentor at each character level.

A PC can always ask for more major favors, which you're free to grant or not depending on the situation, the relationship with the mentor, and the risk or cost involved. If a PC abuses this privilege, a mentor warns that another favor of any magnitude ends their relationship. The mentor will grant another reasonable request, but anything major causes the mentor to sever ties with the PC (after the favor is granted), causing the PC to lose the benefits of the Mentor feat. No new mentor is found, and the feat is lost.

Mentors and Prestige Classes

A mentor with a prestige class can train a PC to gain that class more easily. Having a mentor with a given prestige class qualifies as being accepted or trained by a member of the prestige class (as required by some prestige classes). Additionally, the mentor allows the PC to forgo one skill or feat requirement of the class's prerequisites. For example, a hierophant mentor can train a druid to become a hierophant without 15 ranks of Knowledge (religion) *or* without a metamagic feat (though not both). The PC still must be able to cast 7th-level divine spells, as that prerequisite is not skill or feat based.

A GM shouldn't allow PCs to gain prestige classes at a significantly lower level than would normally be possible, even with a mentor's help. As a general guideline, characters shouldn't be able to take prestige classes if they *couldn't* qualify for it at their level, even if a mentor allows them to overcome a prerequisite. The mentor's aid is designed to allow PCs to enter classes they may not have carefully prepared for, not to gain powerful classes earlier in their career.

Mentors and Secret Training

Mentors should provide some secret training to PCs, making new spells or feats available as a result of their training. This can be an excellent opportunity to introduce new elements into a campaign, and the plethora of d20 rule books available are an excellent resource for secret spells and feats. If a player seems to want his character to do something the rules don't quite allow, a GM may decide to write a new feat or spell to meet the player's desire. Mentors are tools for allowing PCs to gain such bonuses, and since they must expend a feat to gain them, balance is preserved (as long as the spells and feats granted through secret training are themselves balanced).

PCs should receive about one such secret every three levels they have their mentor. The spell must be learned and the feat taken with a free slot using the normal rules. Secret training doesn't provide "bonus" spells and feats, just new options PCs can take or not at their next opportunity.

A GM who doesn't want to go through the trouble of writing up or adopting new feats or spells can instead make available existing spells or feats for which a PC wouldn't normally qualify. This must be done carefully, and no more than one secret should be revealed per three levels gained after a PC takes the Mentor feat. For example, a sorcerer with a wizard mentor might be given access to an arcane version of *detect undead*, or a ranger with a fighter mentor might gain access to the Weapon Specialization feat with a single weapon despite not being a fighter himself.

Mentors should not unbalance a game or steal the glory of other PCs. A ranger with Weapon Specialization may make a player with a fighter character feel diminished — make sure the ranger doesn't get the opportunity to outshine the fighter. If the fighter is specialized with the greataxe, allow the ranger to specialize with longbows but not greatswords is probably all right. Never give spellcasters access to spells iconic to other classes: wizards, for example, should never get *cure* spells, nor should druids gain *magic missile*.

Mentor Feat

The Mentor feat appears in **Appendix One**, but the most important rules for its use are presented here. A character with the Mentor feat has a student rating, representing how good a student she is, and thus how prestigious a mentor she attracts. A character's student rating is equal to her character level (representing her overall competence), plus her Intelligence modifier (representing her ability to learn), plus her Charisma modifier (representing likeability). This rating is compared to the chart below to determine the mentor's starting level. If the mentor is not an adventurer, the PC should always be able to get a hold of the mentor by going to his base of operations, but the mentor gains only one level for every three levels the student gains. If the mentor is still adventuring, there's only a 50% chance of getting a hold of him on short notice, but the mentor gains one level for every two the student gains.

Obviously, a character may seem better off taking the Mentor feat later in her career. A 1st-level PC with a student rating of 5 gets an 8th-level mentor. If the mentor is not an adventurer, when the PC is 13th level,

Table 4-2: Mentor Level

Student Rating	Mentor Starting Level	Student Rating	Mentor Starting Level
0 or less	5	16	16
1	6	17	16
2	6	18	17
3	7	19	17
4	7	20	17
5	8	21	18
6	8	22	18
7	9	23	18
8	9	24	19
9	10	25	19
10	11	26	19
11	12	27	10
12	13	28	20
13	14	29	20
14	15	30+	21
15	16		

the mentor will only be 12th level, while if the PC waited until 12th level to take the Mentor feat (with a student rating of 16, 11 better due to higher levels), the mentor received would be 16th level. However, the character who takes a mentor at lower levels gains the benefit of that mentor — asking favors and receiving secret training — for 11 more levels, balancing the benefit of a higher-level mentor later in life.

– Simplified NPC Design –

One of the constant problems a GM faces is generating NPCs. There are extensive aids to assist with this in various books, ranging from pre-written NPCs to character creation computer programs. Unfortunately, no system can give exactly the right numbers for every aspect of every conceivable character. Eventually, every GM will run into a situation in which the game stats of an NPC come into play and no pre-generated character is close enough. Without taking time out from the game, the GM has no way of running the character perfectly.

The thing is, the players don't get to see an NPC's game stats. As long as the results of interacting with the NPC seem reasonable, the players have no way of knowing that it wasn't generated "correctly" in exact accordance to the rules. Especially for NPCs that aren't likely to be dealt with extensively, approximating an NPC's abilities is perfectly appropriate and can be quite a time saver. Approximating applies to the character's saving throws, attack rolls, and skills. Sketching out an NPC's abilities in the roughest

form is good enough to run the character without taking the time to make sure each number is perfectly accurate.

The advantage this approach has over depending on pre-generated NPCs is that any class (including those you take from unusual sources or make up yourself), at any level, can be quickly approximated. This isn't the best way to create major foes for a party, but it does the trick if the PCs unexpectedly pick a fight or go off the planned course of your adventure. The main drawback is that the numbers won't be quite right, and rules-savvy players may realize as much if they interact too much with the sketched-out NPCs.

Ability scores for sketched NPCs are one 16, two 14s, and the rest 10s. This array isn't realistic or exciting, but it does well enough to make ability checks if needed and to figure save DCs for special abilities or spells. The ability bonuses are ignored when figuring skills, saves, and attack bonuses. Instead, these stats are all assigned a flat number based on

being a major, intermediate, or minor focus of the NPC (as determined by **Table 4–3**). This method saves time adding all possible variables to the NPC's final numbers and produces results close enough to what's believable.

A sketched NPC gets a number of class skills equal to one-half its skill points per level as major focuses; the rest of its class skills are intermediate focuses, and cross-class skills are minor focuses. NPC with a good base attack bonus progression (as a fighter) are given a major focus for their attack roll, while those with an average progression (as a cleric or rogue) gain an intermediate focus and those with a poor progression (as a wizard) gain a minor focus.

Table 4-3:
Sketched NPC Bonuses

Character Focus	Sketched Bonus
Major	NPC level +3
Intermediate	2/3 NPC level
Minor	1/2 NPC focus −2 (minimum 0)
No	+0

Table 4-4:
Sketched NPC Bonuses by Level

Character Level	Major Focus	Intermediate Focus	Minor Focus
1st	+4	+0	+0
2nd	+5	+1	+0
3rd	+6	+2	+0
4th	+7	+2	+0
5th	+8	+3	+0
6th	+9	+4	+1
7th	+10	+4	+1
8th	+11	+5	+2
9th	+12	+6	+2
10th	+13	+6	+3
11th	+14	+7	+3
12th	+15	+8	+4
13th	+16	+8	+4
14th	+17	+9	+5
15th	+18	+10	+5
16th	+19	+10	+6
17th	+20	+11	+6
18th	+21	+12	+7
19th	+22	+12	+7
20th	+23	+13	+8

If the NPC is multiclassed, just pick a number of major focuses from all its class skills equal to half the skill points per level of its most favorable class. All other skills are treated as minor focuses. Its attack progression is treated as major if all its classes have good progression, minor if all its classes have poor progressions, and otherwise intermediate.

All characters gain two saves as intermediate focuses, with the third save a minor focus.

For example when sketching an 8th-level rogue, the NPC gets 4 major focuses (half its 8 skill points per level). Picking from it's class skills list, Hide, Move Silently, Spot and Tumble are chosen as major focuses, giving the NPC a bonus of (8th level + 3) +11 to those skills. All remaining class skills are treated as having a (2/3 of 8th level = 5 1/3) +5 bonus. Any other skill has a ([8th level / 2 = 4] − 2) +2 bonus. As rogues have average base attack bonus progression, the NPC gets a +5 bonus to all attack rolls. It gets a major focus in two saves, obviously Reflex being one. Making a quick assessment, the character ends up with +2 Fortitude, +5 Reflex, +5 Will.

For a 4th-level fighter/4th-level rogue, the NPC still gets 4 major focuses (half the rogue's more favorable 8 skill points/level). Choosing from the combined skill lists, the NPC is given Balance, Disable Device, Intimidate, and Search, which are major focuses (+11 bonus). All other skills are minor focuses (+2 bonus).

Table 4-5:
Sketched NPC Feats

Character Type	Feats
Arcane spellcaster	Combat Casting, Heighten Spell, Spell Focus
Divine spellcaster	Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Spell Penetration
Melee combatant (Str)	Cleave, Improved Critical, Power Attack, Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization (if a fighter)
Melee combatant (Dex)	Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse
Ranged combatant	Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Fire
Sneak	Dodge, Improved Initiative, Quick Draw

Since only one of the two classes has a good base attack progression, the character has a +5 bonus to all attack rolls. Since Fortitude and Reflex are the two best saves of its two classes, the character ends up with +5 Fort, +5 Reflex, +2 Will.

Assume that half a sketched NPC's feats go to things that don't show up in an encounter. These might be feats that add to skills (already counted in their sketched skill totals) or that apply to situations that don't come up. Suggested feats, in the order they should be taken, are listed in **Table 4–5** for typical character types. In some cases, prerequisites are ignored — that's fine, as players don't need to know exactly how an NPC got a particular feat.

100 NPC Quirks

Sometimes, all an NPC needs to be interesting and memorable is a "hook" — a noticeable, unusual trait that sets him apart from other NPCs. Anything can be a hook: a style of dress, a mannerism, a deformity, or even an attitude. A list of 100 potential hooks are listed below, allowing you to search for a hook appropriate to a given NPC or just to roll 1d100.

Many of these hooks can be over-the-top or played down. While there's nothing wrong with the occasional comic relief in a game, it's not a good idea for all NPCs to seem outlandish. Even if a trait suggests it is a major part of an NPC's make-up, alter it to be no more than a quirk.

1. Has multiple piercings (nose, ear, lip, etc.)
2. Has unusual facial hair (split and braided beard, huge moustache, or any if female)
3. Unusual hair style (bald on half of head, tonsure, etc.)
4. Falls in love with a random PC
5. Dislikes a random PC
6. Mistakes a random PC for someone known in childhood
7. Talks to a pet (without speaking pet's language)
8. Has an unusual pet (insect, monkey, baby basilisk, etc.)
9. Has no interest in money (may be interested in information, sexual favors, food, or some other non-monetary recompense)
10. Has an obvious or unusual sexual orientation
11. Constantly hums or sings
12. Constantly plays a game (cards, chess, or even a drinking game)
13. Constantly fiddles with a small object (coin, dagger, wand, etc.)
14. Constantly sharpens a weapon
15. Constantly whispers and checks to make sure is not being spied on
16. Speaks only in rhyme
17. Drunkard
18. Drug addict
19. Devoutly religious and pious
20. Finds everything funny
21. Makes threats with no intent of carrying them out
22. Missing an eye (may have decorated eye patch)
23. Wears cheap, obviously fake jewelry
24. Wears clothing inappropriate to gender, station, or job
25. Smokes a pipe and blows smoke rings
26. Chews tobacco
27. Covered in scars
28. Missing a hand (may have a hook)
29. Missing a leg (may have a peg)
20. Missing both legs
31. Pretends to be missing both legs
32. Kleptomaniac
33. Delusional
34. Sensitive to criticism
35. Tells unfunny jokes
36. Enjoys an unusual and potentially disgusting food or drink
37. Sleeps more than usual, and constantly looks tired
38. Constantly complains
39. Has a facial tick (nervous habit)
40. Paranoid
41. Speech impediment
42. Thick foreign accent
42. Limps
44. Has a humped back
45. Talks to an imaginary friend
46. Not symmetrical (one oversized or undersized limb, eye, ear, etc.)
47. Skin rash

48	Missing several or all teeth
49	Missing nose
50	Extremely bad breath
51	Has an animal-like appearance (big and burly as a bear, thin and lispy as a snake, etc.)
52	Wears a monocle
53	Sensitive to light (possibly albino)
54	Easily distracted
55	Arrogant
56	Air-headed
57	Disgusted by the sight or smell of something common (meat, flowers, etc.)
58	Only wears a particular color (green, black, red, etc.)
59	Constantly sweats
60	Deaf (or nearly deaf)
61	Odious personal habit (picks nose, cleans ear wax with a splinter, bites fingernails)
62	Diseased (minor, unless the GM wants to turn it into a more dangerous encounter)
63	Has fits
64	Takes no responsibility for own actions, blames everything wrong on others
65	Distinctive birthmark or blemish
66	Distant relative of one of the PCs
67	Extremely old
68	Surprisingly young
69	Dresses provocatively
70	Bowlegged
71	Very chapped or scaly skin
72	Oily skin and greasy, flaking scalp
73	Pockmarked skin (acne scars or similar affliction)
74	Serious burn scars
75	Distinctive nose (hook, broken, missing, long and narrow, bulbous, always ruddy, always runny)
76	Club footed
77	Heavily calloused hands
78	Wears metal finer-caps
79	Goes barefoot; has thick, calloused feet
80	Pigeon-toed
81	Bug-eyed
82	Squints
83	Lazy eye (wanders independently of its mate)
84	Slack-jawed, constant dumbfounded expression
85	Always tardy and easily distracted
86	Constantly eating
87	Disguises gender or species (not necessarily well)
88	One obvious facial mole with a hair
89	Thickly freckled
90	Knock-kneed
91	Unusual eye color (yellow, red, bloodshot, black, metallic, milky white), or false eyes (glass or wood)
92	Unusual hair color (blue, green, gold, dull red, streaked, pink) or decoration (feathers, beads, silver comb with jewels, etc.)
93	Unusual skin color (alabaster white to midnight black, grey, greenish, yellowish, bluish)
94	Unusual teeth (wooden, gold, bejeweled, crooked, huge canines)
95	Smaller than normal for species (may even be a smaller size category)
96	Larger than normal for species (may even be a larger size category)
97	Has an imaginary friend
98	Pyromaniac (constantly burning something)
99	Poker-faced (apparently emotionless)
100	Stunningly beautiful in a way that's hard to describe

– NPCs with APM Classes –

The *Advanced Player's Manual* introduced six new core character classes: eldritch weaver, evangelist, scout, spellmaster, thanemage, and warpriest. GMs wishing to use these classes in their games shouldn't let players have all the fun. NPCs of new classes are a great way to surprise players used to standard classes and to provide examples of how the new classes work in the GM's campaign. In general, NPCs of these classes can replace any NPC with standard classes (replace clerics with evangelists and warpriests, sorcerers and wizards with eldritch weavers and spellmasters, fighters and paladins with thanemages, and rogues and rangers with scouts).

Of course, writing up numerous NPCs is time-consuming. To assist GMs in introducing NPCs of these new classes, a number of stat blocks are provided below. Basic information (hit points, melee and ranged attack bonuses, AC, saves, skill points, feats, and equipment) is given for levels 1–20 of all six classes. You can use these stat blocks to generate NPCs quickly and easily

by defining skills and feats taken and details about equipment. You still need to total up skill points spent and modify the basic stats depending on the NPC's race, but most of the math is already done for you.

Each class also has three full stat blocks, presenting the class at 5th, 10th, and 15th level. These complete stat blocks can be used for quick encounters or as the starting point for major, long-term NPCs. Though skills and gear are selected for these NPCs, you can easily personalize them with unspent gold or by swapping out skill ranks or feats.

The stat blocks are easily read, as defined below.

Hp: Typical hit points for the given class and level, including Con modifiers and max hp at first level, but otherwise based on average rolls.

AC: Total AC, including special abilities, armor and ability scores.

Melee and Ranged: Total attack bonus for a character of the given class and level with the ability scores and equipment listed.

Saves: The total save bonuses for an NPC of the given class and level with the ability scores and equipment listed.

Skill Pts./Feats: Total number of skill points and feats earned at each level.

Gear: The gear listed at each level shows the gp unspent, and the equipment change for that level. For example, a 7th level eldritch weaver has 2,800 unspent gp. By looking at the equipment gained at each level before 7th, a GM can determine the eldritch weaver has am mundane melee weapon, a +1 magical ranged weapon, *bracers of armor +1*, and a *ring of protection +1*. Upon reaching 8th level the eldritch weaver's unspent cash changes to 1,000 gp and he gains a *headband of intellect +2*.

Starting Ability Scores: These are the ability scores the character has at 1st level, not counting any modifiers for race. These are the ability scores of an elite character – a more run of the mill character has 10s and 11s, and likely doesn't reach higher than 9th level.

Increased Ability Scores: This shows what the character's ability scores increase to as he gains levels. Increases from magical items (listed in the gear column) are noted in parenthesis.

NPC Eldritch Weaver

Starting Ability Scores: Str 8, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Increased Ability Scores: 4th, 16 Int; 8th, 17 Int (19); 12th, 18 Int (20); 13th, 18 Int (22);16th, 19 Int (25); 20th, 20 Int (26).

Sample 5th-Level NPC Eldritch Weaver

Human eldritch weaver 5; CR 5; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d4+8; hp 23; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d8–1, morningstar) or +5 ranged (1d10+1/19–20, *+1 heavy crossbow*); Full Atk +1 melee (1d8–1, morningstar) or +5 ranged (1d10+1/19–20, *+1 heavy crossbow*); SA eldritch weaving (caster level increase—thread of the rogue), minor thread power (evade foe, harmonic performance, lesser draconic adept, ward against blows), spells; SQ summon familiar; AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +9, Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Listen +5, Spellcraft +15 (+17 deciphering spells on scrolls), Spot +6 (+9 in bright light), Survival +1 (+3 on other planes), Use Magic Device +10 (+12 using scrolls); Combat Casting, Magical Aptitude, Toughness.

Threads: Thread of cantrips, thread of the rogue, thread of the skald, thread of wards, thread of the wyrm.

Eldritch Weaver Spells Prepared: (6/4/3/1; save DC 13 + spell level) 0 — *detect magic* (x2), *detect poison*, *flare*, *ghost sound*, *ray of frost*; 1st — *alarm*, *hypnotism*, *mage armor*, *protection from evil*; 2nd — *blindness/deafness*,

resist energy, *see invisibility*; 3rd — *fly*, *protection from energy*.

Spellbook: 0 — all; 1st — *alarm*, *endure elements*, *hypnotism*, *jump*, *mage armor*, *protection from evil*, *sleep*, *slip bonds**, *unseen servant*; 2nd — *blindness/deafness*, *cat's grace*, *eagle's splendor*, *knock*, *protection from arrows*, *resist*

Table 4-6: NPC Eldritch Weaver

Level	hp	AC	Melee	Ranged	Saves	Skill pts./ Feats	Spells per Day	Gear
1st	5	12	−1	+3	+1/+2/+3	24/1	5/2	Mundane melee, mwk ranged, 500 gp
2nd	8	12	+0	+4	+1/+2/+4	30/1	6/3	As 1st level, except 1,600 gp
3rd	12	13	+0	+4	+2/+3/+4	36/2	6/3/1	Mundane melee, mwk ranged, *bracers +1*, 1,100 gp
4th	15	13	+1	+5	+2/+3/+5	43/2	6/3/2	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +1*, 900 gp
5th	19	13	+1	+5	+2/+3/+5	50/2	6/4/3/1	As 4th level, except 1,900 gp
6th	22	14	+2	+6	+3/+4/+6	57/3	6/4/3/2	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +1*, *ring +1*, 1,200 gp
7th	26	14	+2	+6	+3/+4/+6	64/3	6/4/3/3	As 6th level, except 2,800 gp
8th	29	14	+3	+7	+3/+4/+7	71/3	6/5/4/3/2	Mundane melee, +1 ranged, *bracers +1*, *ring +1*, *headband +2*, 1,000 gp
9th	33	15	+3	+7	+4/+5/+7	78/4	6/5/4/3/3	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +1*, *amulet +1*, *ring +1*, *headband +2*, 1,600 gp
10th	36	15	+4	+8	+5/+6/+9	85/4	6/5/4/4/3/1	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +1*, *amulet +1*, *ring +1*, *headband +2*, *cloak +1*, 4,600 gp
11th	40	16	+4	+8	+5/+6/+9	92/4	6/5/5/4/3/2	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +2*, *amulet +1*, *ring +1*, *headband +2*, *cloak +1*, 6,600 gp
12th	43	16	+5/+0	+9/+4	+6/+7/+10	100/5	6/6/5/4/4/3/1	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +2*, *amulet +1*, *ring +1*, *headband +2*, *cloak +1*, *lesser Extend metamagic rod*, 9,600 gp
13th	47	16	+5/+0	+9/+4	+6/+7/+10	108/5	6/6/6/5/4/4/3	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +2*, *amulet +1*, *ring +1*, *headband +4*, *cloak +1*, *lesser Extend metamagic rod*, 5,500 gp
14th	50	18	+6/+1	+10/+5	+6/+7/+11	116/5	6/6/6/5/4/4/3/1	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +2*, *amulet +2*, *ring +2*, *headband +4*, *cloak +1*, *lesser Extend metamagic rod*, 3,500 gp
15th	54	18	+6/+1	+10/+5	+9/+10/+13	124/6	6/6/6/5/5/4/4/2	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +2*, *amulet +2*, *ring +2*, *headband +4*, *cloak +3*, *lesser Extend metamagic rod*, 9,500 gp
16th	57	18	+7/+2	+11/+6	+9/+10/+14	132/6	6/6/6/6/5/4/4/1	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +2*, *amulet +2*, *ring +2*, *headband +6*, *cloak +3*, *lesser Extend metamagic rod*, 7,500 gp
17th	61	20	+7/+2	+11/+6	+9/+10/+14	140/6	6/6/6/6/5/4/4/2	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +2*, *amulet +3*, *ring +3*, *headband +6*, *cloak +3*, *lesser Extend metamagic rod*, 10,500 gp
18th	64	24	+8/+3	+12/+7	+10/+11/+15	148/7	6/6/6/6/5/5/5/3/1	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +6*, *amulet +3*, *ring +3*, *headband +6*, *cloak +3*, *lesser Extend metamagic rod*, 8,500 gp
19th	68	26	+8/+3	+12/+7	+10/+11/+15	156/7	6/6/6/6/5/5/5/3/2	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +8*, *amulet +3*, *ring +3*, *headband +6*, *cloak +3*, *lesser Extend metamagic rod*, winged boots, 4,500 gp
20th	71	28	+9/+4	+13/+8	+10/+11/+16	165/7	6/6/6/6/5/5/5/5/3	Mundane melee, *+1 ranged*, *bracers +8*, *amulet +4*, *ring +4*, *headband +6*, *cloak +3*, *lesser Extend metamagic rod*, winged boots, 26,500 gp

energy, see invisibility, spider climb; 3rd — *displacement, fly, gaseous form, nondetection, protection from energy, shrink item, tongues.*

*New spell, see Green Ronin's *Advanced Player's Manual* for details.

Hawk Familiar: CR —; Tiny magical beast; HD 1; hp 11; Init +3; Spd 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 20, touch 15, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +0; Grap –10; Atk +5 melee (1d4–2, talons); Full Atk +5 melee (1d4–2, talons); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA deliver touch spells; SQ alertness, empathic link, improved evasion, low-light vision, share spells, speak with master; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Listen +2, Spot +14; Weapon Finesse.

Possessions: Morningstar, *+1 heavy crossbow*, 10 bolts, *bracers of armor +1*, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Sample 10th-Level NPC Eldritch Weaver

Elf eldritch weaver 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 10d4; hp 26; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d6–1/18–20, rapier) or +9 ranged (1d6+1/×3, *+1 shortbow*); Full Atk +4 melee (1d6–1/18–20, rapier) or +9 ranged (1d6+1/×3, *+1 shortbow*); SA eldritch weaving (caster level increase—thread of fire, spontaneous casting—thread of fire), minor thread ability 2/day (call air elemental, call fire elemental, enhance spell, heal self, precision shot), spells; SQ elf traits, summon familiar*; AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 17 (19), Wis 12, Cha 10.

*This Eldritch Weaver does not have a familiar.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +13, Decipher Script +17, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (geography) +17, Knowledge (nature) +17, Listen +5, Search +6, Spellcraft +19 (+21 deciphering spells on scrolls), Spot +5, Survival +1 (+3 avoid natural hazards and getting lost, and in aboveground natural environments), Use Magic Device +13 (+17 with scrolls); Alertness, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow, longsword, rapier, shortbow)^B, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Scribe Scroll.

Threads: Thread of air, thread of cantrips, thread of the archer, thread of the thread of fire, thread of the healer, thread of the mage

Eldritch Weaver Spells Prepared: (6/5/4/4/3/1; save DC 14 + spell level) 0 — *daze, detect magic* (x2), *flare, ghost sound, read magic*; 1st — *burning hands, cure light wounds, identify, mage armor* (x2); 2nd — *cure moderate wounds, acid arrow, protection from arrows, scorching ray*; 3rd — *arcane sight, dispel magic, fireball, greater magic weapon*; 4th — *cure critical, mnemonic enhancer, wall of fire*; 5th — *mass cure light wounds.*

Spellbook: 0 — all; 1st — *burning hands, cure light wounds, deathwatch, feather fall, identify, mage armor, magic stone, magic weapon, produce flame, shocking grasp*; 2nd — *cure moderate wounds, delay poison, fog cloud, gust of wind, knock, lesser restoration, acid arrow, protection from arrows, pyrotechnics, scorching ray*; 3rd — *arcane sight, dispel magic, fireball, flame arrow, fly, greater magic weapon, quench, remove blindness/deafness, remove disease, wind wall*; 4th — *cure critical, fire trap, fire shield, locate creature, mnemonic enhancer, restoration, scrying, searing light, wall of fire*; 5th — *baleful polymorph, break enchantment, control winds, mass cure light wounds, telekinesis.*

Possessions: Rapier, *+1 shortbow*, 20 arrows, *ring of protection +1*, *bracers of armor +1*, *cloak of resistance +1*, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *headband of intellect +2*, adventurer's outfit, backpack..

Sample 15th-Level NPC Eldritch Weaver

Dwarf eldritch weaver 15; CR 15; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 15d4+30; hp 69; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +7; Grap +6; Atk +6 melee (1d8, heavy mace) or +10 ranged (1d8+1/19-20, *+1 heavy repeating crossbow*); Full Atk +6/+1 melee (1d8, heavy mace) or +10/+5 ranged (1d8+1/19-20, *+1 heavy repeating crossbow*); SA dwarf traits, eldritch weaving (caster level increase, minor metamagic, save DC increase, spontaneous casting), major thread power (create/destroy earth, enhance/diminish items, ray of nausea, resist death, shadow form), minor thread power (arcane creation, call earth elemental, lesser shadow form, resist fear, sickening touch); SQ dwarf traits, summon familiar; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +10, Will +13; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 18 (22), Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +6 (+8 weapons, +8 stone or metal, +10 stone or metal weapons), Concentration +20, Craft (weaponsmithing) +24 (+26 stone or metal weapons), Decipher Script +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Listen +12, Spellcraft +26, Spot +12; Exotic Weapon Proficiency (heavy repeating crossbow), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Silent Spell, Spell Penetration, Still Spell.

Threads: Thread of the artisan, thread of blight, thread of cantrips, thread of earth, thread of the executioner, thread of shadows.

Eldritch Weaver Spells Prepared: (6/6/6/5/5/4/4/2; save DC 16 + spell level) 0 — *daze, detect magic, flare, ghost sound, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st — *cause fear, chill touch, color spray, grease, pass without trace, sleep*; 2nd— *blindness/deafness, daze monster, earthmaw*, invisibility, scare, touch of idiocy*; 3rd — *deep slumber, displacement, hold person, meld into stone, still daze monster*; 4th — *contagion, crushing despair, minor creation, silent displacement, stoneskin*; 5th — *feeblemind,*

slay living, wall of stone, waves of fatigue; 6th — *circle of death, disintegrate, harm, silent slay living*; 7th — *finger of death, insanity*.

Spellbook: 0 — all; 1st — *affect flames*, cause fear, chill touch, color spray, grease, magic weapon, pass without trace, sleep*; 2nd — *blindness/deafness, darkness, daze monster, earthmaw*, invisibility, make whole, scare, touch of idiocy*; 3rd — *deep slumber, displacement, hold person, meld into stone, slow, stone shape*; 4th — *contagion, crushing despair, minor creation, phantasmal killer, shadow conjuration, stoneskin*; 5th — *feeblemind, mind fog, passwall, slay living, wall of stone, waves of fatigue*; 6th — *circle of death, disintegrate, harm, move earth, shadow walk, wall of iron*; 7th — *finger of death, insanity, power word blind, simulacrum*.

*New spell, see Green Ronin's *Advanced Player's Manual* for details.

Rat Familiar: CR —; Tiny magical beast; HD 1/4; hp 34; Init +2; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.; AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +0; Grap −12; Atk +4 melee (1d3–4, bite); Full Atk +4 melee (1d3–4, bite); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA deliver touch spells; SQ alertness, empathic link, improved evasion, low-light vision, scent, scry on familiar, share spells, speak with animals of its kind, speak with master, spell resistance 20; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +10, Climb +12, Hide +14, Move Silently +10, Swim +10; Weapon Finesse.

Possessions: Heavy mace, *+1 heavy repeating crossbow*, 20 bolts, *ring of protection +2, amulet of natural armor+2, bracers of armor +2, cloak of resistance +3, headband of intellect +4, lesser Extend metamagic rod,* adventurer's outfit, backpack.

NPC Evangelist

Starting Ability Scores: Str 8, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Increased Ability Scores: 4th, 16 Wis; 8th, 16 Wis (18), 15 Cha; 10th, 15 Cha (17); 12th, 16 Cha; 13th 16 Cha (18); 14th, 16 Wis (20); 16th, 17 Wis (21); 17th, 17 Wis (23); 18th, 16 Cha (22); 20th, 18 Wis (24).

Sample 5th-Level NPC Evangelist

Human evangelist 5; CR 5; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d6+5; hp 25; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk +3 melee (1d6–1, masterwork quarterstaff) or +4 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6–1, masterwork quarterstaff) or +4 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); SA divine touch I, divine touch II, rebuke undead (8/day, +4, 2d6+6), shake the infidel; SQ aura of evil, detect infidel, embolden the faithful +1; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +6; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +10, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Intimidate +12, Knowledge (religion) +8, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +8; Combat Casting, Extra Turning, Skill Focus (Concentration).

Evangelist Spells Prepared: (3/4/2; save DC 12 + spell level) 0 — *cure minor wounds, detect magic, light*; 1st — *bane, cure light wounds, inflict light wounds, sanctuary*; 2ndd — *hold person, owl's wisdom*.

Possessions: Full plate armor, masterwork quarterstaff, heavy crossbow, 10 bolts, *amulet of natural armor +1*, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Sample 10th-Level NPC Evangelist

Half-Elf evangelist 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 10d6+10; hp 47; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +7; Grp +6; Atk +10 melee (1d6/18-20, *+1 rapier*) or +8 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6/18-20, +1 rapier) or +8 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SA divine touch I, divine touch II, divine touch III, divine voice (suggestion), shake the infidel (daze), turn undead (6/day, +5, 2d6+10); SQ aura of good, detect infidel, embolden the faithful +2, half-elf traits; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +11; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 16 (18), Cha 15 (17).

Skills and Feats: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +18, Gather Information +6, Jump −4, Knowledge (religion) +13, Listen +7, Search +3, Spellcraft +13, Spot +7, Use Rope +3; Combat Casting, Martial Weapon Proficiency (rapier), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Evangelist Spells Prepared: (3/4/4/3/1; save DC 14 + spell level) 0 — *cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance*; 1st — *bless, cure light wounds (×2), weapon blessing*; 2nd — *augury, bull's strength, cure moderate wounds, resist energy*; 3rd — *cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic circle against evil*; 4th — *cure critical wounds*.

Possessions: *+1 full plate*, *+1 rapier*, light crossbow, 10 bolts, *ring of protection +1, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of Charisma +2, periapt of Wisdom +2,* adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Sample 15th-Level NPC Evangelist

Elf evangelist 15; CR 15; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 15d6+15; hp 70; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +11; Grp +10; Atk +12 melee (1d8+1/×3, *+2 spear*) or +14 ranged (1d8+1, *+2 spear*); Full Atk +12/+7/+2 melee (1d8+1/×3, *+2 spear*) or +14 ranged (1d8+1/×3, *+2 spear*); SA divine touch I, divine touch II, divine touch III, divine touch IV, divine voice (greater command, mass charm monster, suggestion), shake the

infidel (blindness, daze), turn undead (8/day, +7, 2d6+17); SQ aura of good, detect infidel, elf traits, embolden the faithful +3, shielding prayer (1/day); AL CG; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +14; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 16 (20), Cha 16 (20).

Skills and Feats: Concentration +19, Decipher Script +18, Knowledge (religion) +18, Listen +16, Search +2, Spellcraft +20 (+22 to decipher scrolls), Spot +16, Use Magic Device +25 (+29 scrolls); Augment Summoning, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Lightning Reflexes, Magical Aptitude, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow, longsword, rapier, shortbow)B, Spell Focus (conjuration).

Evangelist Spells Prepared: (4/6/4/4/4/3; save DC 15 + spell level) 0 — *cure minor wounds, detect magic, detect poison, light*; 1st — *command* (x2), *cure light wounds* (x2), *remove fear, weapon blessing*†; 2nd — *aid, bear's endurance, resist energy, zone of truth*; 3rd — *daylight, dispel magic* (x2), *prayer*; 4th — *cure critical wounds* (x2), *death ward, divination*; 5th — *break enchantment, flame strike, mass cure light wounds, true seeing*; 6th — *greater dispel magic, heal, word of recall*.

†Spell described in the *Advanced Player's Manual*.

Table 4-7: NPC Evangelist

Level	hp	AC	Melee	Ranged	Saves	Skill pts./ Feats	Spells per Day	Gear
1st	7	16	+0	+0	+1/+0/+4	24/1	2	Splint mail, mwk melee, 300 gp
2nd	11	17	+1	+1	+1/+0/+5	30/1	3/1	Half-plate, mwk melee, 1,000 gp
3rd	16	19	+2	+3	+2/+2/+5	36/2	3/2	Full plate, mwk melee, 600 gp
4th	20	20	+3	+4	+2/+2/+7	42/2	3/3/1	Full plate, mwk melee, *amulet +1*, 400 gp
5th	25	20	+3	+4	+2/+2/+7	48/2	3/4/2	As 4th level, except 1,500 gp
6th	29	21	+4	+5	+3/+3/+8	54/3	3/4/3	*+1 full plate*, mwk melee, *amulet +1*, 2,600 gp
7th	34	22	+5	+6	+3/+3/+8	60/3	3/4/3/1	*+1 full plate*, mwk melee, *amulet +1, ring +1*, 1,200 gp
8th	38	22	+6/+1	+7/+2	+3/+3/+10	66/3	3/4/4/2	*+1 full plate,* mwk melee, *amulet +1, ring +1, periapt +2*, 200 gp
9th	43	22	+6/+1	+7/+2	+4/+4/+10	72/4	3/4/4/3	*+1 full plate, +1 melee, amulet +1, ring +1, periapt +2*, 1,000 gp
10th	47	22	+7/+2	+8/+3	+4/+4/+11	78/4	3/4/4/3/1	*+1 full plate, +1 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +2, ring +1, periapt +2*, 7,500 gp
11th	52	22	+9/+4	+9/+4	+4/+4/+11	84/4	3/4/4/4/2	*+1 full plate, +2 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +2, ring +1, periapt +2*, 10,000 gp
12th	56	23	+10/+5	+10/+5	+5/+5/+12	90/5	3/4/4/4/3	*+2 full plate, +2 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +2, ring +1, periapt +2*, 6,000 gp
13th	61	23	+10/+5	+10/+5	+5/+5/+12	96/5	3/4/4/4/3	*+2 full plate, +2 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +2, ring +1, periapt +4*, 8,000 gp
14th	65	23	+11/+6	+11/+6	+5/+5/+14	102/5	4/5/4/4/4/2	*+2 full plate, +2 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +4, ring +1, periapt +4*, 8,000 gp
15th	70	24	+12/+7/+2	+12/+7/+2	+6/+6/+14	108/6	4/6/4/4/4/3	*+2 full plate, +2 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +4, ring +2, periapt +4*, 16,000 gp
16th	74	24	+13/+8/+3	+13/+8/+3	+6/+6/+15	114/6	4/6/5/4/4/3	*+2 full plate, +2 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +4, ring +2, ring of counterspells, periapt +4*, 27,000 gp
17th	79	24	+13/+8/+3	+13/+8/+3	+6/+6/+16	120/6	4/6/6/5/4/2	*+2 full plate, +2 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +4, ring +2, ring of counterspells, periapt +6*, 30,000 gp
18th	83	24	+14/+9/+4	+14/+9/+4	+7/+7/+17	126/7	4/6/6/5/5/4/3	*+2 full plate, +2 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +6, ring +2, ring of counterspells, periapt +6*, 46,000 gp
19th	88	24	+15/+10/+5	+15/+10/+5	+7/+7/+17	132/7	4/6/6/5/5/5/4	*+2 adamantine full plate, +2 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +6, ring +2, ring of counterspells, periapt +6*, 61,000 gp
20th	92	27	+19/+14/+9	+16/+11/+6	+7/+7/+19	138/7	4/6/6/6/5/5/5	*+5 adamantine full plate, +5 melee, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +6, ring +2, ring of counterspells, periapt +6*, 48,000 gp

Possessions: *+2 full plate, +2 spear, ring of protection +2, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of Charisma +4, periapt of Wisdom +4,* adventurer's outfit, backpack.

NPC Scout

Starting Ability Scores: Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Increased Ability Scores: 4th, Dex 16; 8th, Dex 17; 9th, Dex 17 (19); 12th, Dex 18 (20); 13th, Dex 18 (22); 16th, Dex 19 (23); 20th, Dex 20 (24).

Sample 5th-Level NPC Scout

Halfling scout 5; CR 5; Small humanoid (halfling); HD 5d6+5; hp 25; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grap −1; Atk +5 melee (1d6/19-20, Small masterwork longsword) or +10 ranged (1d6+1/19-20, *+1 Small light crossbow*); Full Atk +5 melee (1d6/19-20, Small masterwork longsword) or +10 ranged (1d6+1/19-20, *+1 Small light crossbow*); SA favored weapon (light crossbow), halfling traits; SQ greater wildcraft, improved sharp senses, sharp senses, wildcraft; AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Escape Artist +10, Handle Animal +5, Hide +14, Jump +1, Knowledge (nature) +10, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Ride +5, Search +4, Sense Motive +2, Spot +8, Survival +8 (+10 aboveground natural environments, +9 to follow tracks), Use Rope +3 (+5 bindings); Track, Weapon Focus (light crossbow).

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt,* Small masterwork longsword, *+1 Small light crossbow,* bolt case with 10 bolts, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Table 4-8: NPC Scout

Level	hp	AC	Melee	Ranged	Saves	Skill pts./Feats	Gear
1st	7	16	+2	+3	+1/+4/+0	32/1	Mwk chain shirt, mwk melee, mwk ranged, 100 gp
2nd	11	17	+3	+4	+1/+5/+0	40/1	*+1 chain shirt,* mwk melee, mwk ranged, 200 gp
3rd	16	17	+4	+5	+2/+5/+1	48/2	As 2nd level, except 700 gp
4th	20	18	+5	+7	+2/+7/+1	56/2	As 2nd level, except 1,500 gp
5th	25	18	+5	+7	+2/+7/+1	64/2	*+1 chain shirt,* mwk melee, *+1 ranged,* 500 gp
6th	29	18	+6	+8	+3/+8/+2	72/3	*+1 chain shirt, +1 melee, +1 ranged,* 1,800 gp
7th	34	18	+7	+9	+3/+8/+2	80/3	As 6th level, except 1,400 gp
8th	38	18	+8/+3	+10/+5	+3/+9/+2	88/3	*+1 chain shirt, +1 melee, +1 ranged, handy haversack,* 1,600 gp
9th	43	19	+8/+3	+11/+6	+4/+10/+3	96/4	*+1 chain shirt, +1 melee, +1 ranged, gloves of Dexterity +2, handy haversack,* 200 gp
10th	47	19	+9/+4	+12/+7	+4/+11/+3	104/4	As 9th level, except 4,200 gp
11th	52	19	+10/+5	+13/+8	+4/+11/+3	112/4	*+1 mithral chain shirt, +1 melee, +1 ranged, gloves of Dexterity +2, handy haversack,* 8,200 gp
12th	56	20	+11/+6	+16/+11	+5/+13/+4	120/5	*+1 mithral chain shirt, +1 melee, +2 ranged, gloves of Dexterity +2, handy haversack,* 8,200 gp
13th	61	21	+11/+6	+17/+12	+5/+14/+4	128/5	*+1 mithral chain shirt, +1 melee, +2 ranged, gloves of Dexterity +4, handy haversack,* 4,200 gp
14th	65	21	+13/+8	+18/+13	+5/+15/+4	136/5	*+1 mithral chain shirt, +2 melee, +2 ranged, gloves of Dexterity +4, handy haversack,* 8,200 gp
15th	70	24	+14/+9/+4	+19/+14/+9	+6/+15/+5	144/6	*+4 mithral chain shirt, +2 melee, +2 ranged, gloves of Dexterity +4, handy haversack,* 7,200 gp
16th	74	24	+15/+10/+5	+21/+16/+11	+6/+16/+5	152/6	*+4 mithral chain shirt, +2 melee, +3 ranged, gloves of Dexterity +4, handy haversack,* 15,200 gp
17th	79	27	+15/+10/+5	+21/+16/+11	+6/+16/+5	160/6	*+4 mithral chain shirt, +2 melee, +3 ranged, ring +3, gloves of Dexterity +4, handy haversack,* 10,200 gp
18th	83	27	+16/+11/+6	+23/+18/+13	+7/+17/+6	168/7	*+4 mithral chain shirt, +2 melee, +4 ranged, ring +3, gloves of Dexterity +4, handy haversack,* 22,200 gp
19th	88	27	+17/+12/+7	+25/+20/+15	+7/+17/+6	176/7	*+4 mithral chain shirt, +2 melee, +5 ranged, ring +3, gloves of Dexterity +4, handy haversack,* 44,200 gp
20th	93	28	+20/+15/+10	+26/+21/+16	+7/+18/+6	184/7	*+5 mithral chain shirt, +4 melee, +5 ranged, ring +3, gloves of Dexterity +4, handy haversack,* 55,200 gp

Sample 10th-Level NPC Scout

Human scout 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d6+10; hp 47; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +7; Grap +8; Atk +12 melee (1d12+3/×3, *+1 greataxe*) or +12 ranged (1d8+2/×3, *+1 composite [+1] longbow*); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d12+3/×3, *+1 greataxe*) or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+2/×3, *+1 composite [+1] longbow*); SA canny fighting, favored weapon (greataxe) +2, greater canny fighting; SQ greater sharp senses, improved sharp senses, sharp senses, uncanny dodge; AL LG; SV Fort +4, Ref +11, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 17 (19), Con 13, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +5, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +8, Heal +9, Hide +14, Jump +13, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Listen +13, Move Silently +14, Search +14, Sense Motive +10, Spot +10, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks), Tumble +17; Combat Expertise[B], Dodge, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt, +1 greataxe, +1 composite [+1] longbow, handy haversack, gloves of Dexterity +2,* adventurer's outfit, 50-ft. rope.

Sample 15th-Level NPC Scout

Half-Orc scout 15; CR 15; Medium humanoid (orc); HD 15d6+15; hp 70; Init +6; Spd 40 ft.; AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +11; Grap +14; Atk +21 melee (2d4+6, *+2 spiked chain*) or +20 ranged (1d10+2/19-20, *+2 heavy crossbow*); Full Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (2d4+6, *+2 spiked chain*) or +20 ranged (1d10+2/19-20, *+2 heavy crossbow*); SA canny fighting, favored weapon (heavy crossbow) +1, favored weapon (spiked chain) +2; SQ greater sharp senses, greater mobile fighting, half-orc traits, improved sharp senses, mobile fighting, sharp senses, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +15, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 18 (22), Con 13, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +26, Climb +12, Gather Information +10, Hide +14, Jump +23, Knowledge (local) +8, Listen +3, Move Silently +14, Search +1, Sense Motive +3, Spot +12, Tumble +26; Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack[B], Stealthy[B], Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (spike chain).

Possessions: *+4 mithral chain shirt,+2 spiked chain, +2 heavy crossbow*, 20 bolts, *gloves of Dexterity +4, handy haversack*, adventurer's outfit, 50-ft. rope.

NPC Spellmaster

Starting Ability Scores: Str 14, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Increased Ability Scores: 4th, 16 Wis; 8th, 17 Wis (19); 12th, 18 Wis (20); 13th, 18 Wis (22);16th, 19 Wis (25); 20th, 20 Wis (26).

Sample 5th-Level NPC Spellmaster

Gnome spellmaster 5; CR 5; Small humanoid (gnome); HD 5d6+5; hp 25; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grap +0; Atk +6 melee (1d10+2/19-20, Small masterwork greatsword) or +6 ranged (1d6+2/×3, *+1 Small composite [+1] longbow*); Full Atk +6 melee (1d10+2/19-20, Small masterwork greatsword) or +6 ranged (1d6+2/×3, *+1 Small composite [+1] longbow*); SA gnome traits, spells; SQ counterspell, gnome traits, hold spell (1, 2), low-light vision, magic savant, sense magic; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +9, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +5, Spellcraft +11 (+13 to decipher scrolls), Use Magic Device +11 (+13 scrolls); Combat Casting, Spell Focus (illusion).

Spellmaster Spell Slots: 3/3/1 (save DC 13 + spell level; illusion save DC 15 + spell level).

Base Spell Awareness: 0—*acid splash, cure minor wounds, detect magic, flare, light, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*burning hands, cause fear, charm person, color spray, cure light wounds, doom, lesser confusion, mage armor, magic missile, protection from good*; 2nd—*align weapon, barkskin, blur, command undead, heat metal, inflict moderate wounds, owl's wisdom, rope trick, web*.

Possessions: Small masterwork greatsword, *+1 Small composite [+1] longbow, bracers of armor +1*, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Sample 10th-Level NPC Spellmaster

Human spellmaster 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d6; hp 37; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +7; Grap +9; Atk +11 melee (1d8+3/×3, masterwork spear) or +9 ranged (1d10+1/19-20, *+1 heavy crossbow*); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+3/×3, masterwork spear) or +9 ranged (1d10+1/19-20, *+1 heavy crossbow*); SA spells; SQ counterspell, hold spell (1, 2, 3), improved magic savant, magic savant, sense magic, spell resistance 19; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 17 (19), Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +13, Gather Information +1, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (local) +14, Profession (scribe) +17, Spellcraft +16 (+18 decipher scrolls), Use Magic Device +17 (+19 scrolls); Cleave, Combat Casting, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (glaive).

Spellmaster Base Spells: 3/3/3/2/1 (save DC 14 + spell level).

Base Spell Awareness: 0 — *acid splash, detect magic, guidance, lullaby, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*; 1st — *bane, cause fear, disguise self, divine favor, doom, entangle, jump, longstrider, magic missile, obscuring mist, pass without trace, sanctuary, summon monster I, summon nature's ally I*; 2nd — *bear's endurance, blindness/deafness, bull's strength, cure moderate wounds, daze monster, death knell, hold person, invisibility, knock, owl's wisdom, silence, sound burst, web, whispering wind*; 3rd — *animate dead, blink, deeper darkness, dispel magic, fireball, invisibility purge, lightning bolt, protection from energy, slow, wind wall*; 4th — *cure critical wounds, dimension door, ice storm, phantasmal killer, stoneskin, tongues.*

Possessions: Masterwork spear, *+1 heavy crossbow*, 20 bolts, *ring of protection +1, amulet of natural armor +1, bracers of armor +1, periapt of Wisdom +2*, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Sample 15th-Level NPC Spellmaster

Half-elf spellmaster 15; CR 15; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 15d6; hp 54; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +11; Grp +13; Atk +15 melee (1d6+4/18-20, *+2 rapier*) or +13 ranged (1d8+3/×3, *+1 composite [+2] longbow*); Full Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+4/18-20, *+2 rapier*) or +13/+8/+3 ranged (1d8+3/×3, *+1 composite [+2] longbow*); SA dispel magic, spells; SQ counterspell, greater magic savant, half-elf traits, hold spell (1, 2, 3, 4), improved magic savant, improved spell resistance, magic savant, sense magic, spell resistance 26, turn spell; AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +18; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 18 (22), Cha 8.

Table 4-9: NPC Spellmaster

Level	hp	AC	Melee	Ranged	Saves	Skill pts./ Feats	Spells per Day	Gear
1st	6	11	+3	+2	+0/+1/+4	20/1	2/1	Mwk melee, mwk ranged, 500 gp
2nd	9	11	+4	+3	+0/+1/+5	25/1	3/1	As 1st level, except 1,600 gp
3rd	13	12	+5	+4	+1/+2/+5	30/2	3/2	Mwk melee, mwk ranged, *bracers +1*, 1,100 gp
4th	16	12	+6	+5	+1/+2/+7	35/2	3/2/1	Mwk melee, *+1 ranged, bracers +1*, 900 gp
5th	20	12	+6	+5	+1/+2/+7	40/2	3/3/1	As 4th level, except 1,900 gp
6th	23	13	+7	+6	+2/+3/+8	45/3	3/3/2	Mwk melee, *+1 ranged, ring +1, bracers +1*, 1,200 gp
7th	27	13	+8	+7	+2/+3/+8	50/3	3/3/2/1	As 6th level, except 2,800 gp
8th	30	13	+9/+4	+8/+3	+2/+3/+10	55/3	3/3/3/1	Mwk melee, *+1 ranged, ring +1, bracers +1, periapt +2*, 1,000 gp
9th	34	14	+9/+4	+8/+3	+3/+4/+10	60/4	3/3/3/2	Mwk melee, *+1 ranged, ring +1, amulet +1, bracers +1, periapt +2*, 1,600 gp
10th	37	14	+10/+5	+9/+4	+4/+5/+12	65/4	3/3/3/2/1	Mwk melee, *+1 ranged, ring +1, amulet +1, cloak +1, bracers +1, periapt +2*, 4,600 gp
11th	41	15	+11/+6	+10/+5	+4/+5/+12	70/4	3/3/3/3/1	Mwk melee, *+1 ranged, ring +1, amulet +1, cloak +1, bracers +2, periapt +2*, 6,600 gp
12th	44	15	+13/+8	+11/+6	+5/+6/+14	75/5	3/3/3/3/2/1	*+2 melee, +1 ranged, ring +1, amulet +1, cloak +1, bracers +2, periapt +2*, 9,600 gp
13th	48	15	+13/+8	+11/+6	+5/+6/+15	80/5	3/3/3/3/3/1	*+2 melee, +1 ranged, ring +1, amulet +1, cloak +1, bracers +2, periapt +4*, 5,500 gp
14th	51	17	+14/+9	+12/+7	+6/+6/+16	85/5	4/3/3/3/3/2/1	*+2 melee, +1 ranged, ring +2, amulet +2, cloak +1, bracers +2, periapt +4*, 3,500 gp
15th	55	17	+15/+10/+5	+13/+8/+3	+8/+9/+18	90/6	4/4/3/3/3/3/1	*+2 melee, +1 ranged, ring +2, amulet +2, cloak +3, bracers +2, periapt +4*, 9,500 gp
16th	58	17	+16/+11/+6	+14/+9/+4	+8/+9/+20	95/6	4/4/4/3/3/3/2	*+2 melee, +1 ranged, ring +2, amulet +2, cloak +3, bracers +2, periapt +6*, 7,500 gp
17th	62	19	+16/+11/+6	+14/+9/+4	+8/+9/+20	100/6	4/4/4/3/3/3/2	*+2 melee, +1 ranged, ring +3, amulet +3, cloak +3, bracers +2, periapt +6*, 10,500 gp
18th	65	23	+17/+12/+7	+15/+10/+5	+9/+10/+21	105/7	4/4/4/4/3/3/3	*+2 melee, +1 ranged, ring +3, amulet +3, cloak +3, bracers +6, periapt +6*, 8,500 gp
19th	69	25	+19/+14/+9	+16/+11/+6	+9/+10/+21	110/7	4/4/4/4/4/4/3	*+3 melee, +1 ranged, ring +3, amulet +3, cloak +3, bracers +8, periapt +6*, 4,500 gp
20th	72	27	+20/+15/+10	+17/+12/+7	+9/+10/+23	115/7	4/4/4/4/4/4/4	*+3 melee, +1 ranged, ring +4, amulet +4, cloak +3, bracers +8, periapt +6*, 4,500 gp

Skills and Feats: Concentration +15, Diplomacy +16, Gather Information +1, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Listen +7, Search +2, Spellcraft +20 (+22 deciphering scrolls), Spot +7, Use Magic Device +16 (+18 scrolls); Combat Casting, Enlarge Spell, Heighten Spell, Silent Spell, Spell Penetration, Still Spell.

Spellmaster Base Spells: 4/4/3/3/3/1 (save DC 16 + spell level).

Base Spell Awareness: 0 — *acid splash, arcane mark, disrupt undead, mage hand, open/close, read magic, resistance*; 1st — *bless, burning hands, color spray, command, cure light wounds, divine favor, enlarge person, expeditious retreat, feather fall, mage armor, magic missile, reduce person, shield, summon monster I*; 2nd — *align weapon, barkskin, continual flame, cure moderate wounds, daze monster, fog cloud, glitterdust, owl's wisdom, resist energy, scorching ray, spider climb, summon monster II, summon swarm, web*; 3rd — *clairaudience/clairvoyance, cure serious wounds, daylight, deep slumber, dispel magic, displacement, fireball, haste, invisibility purge, lightning bolt, protection from energy, suggestion, wind wall*; 4th — *charm monster, confusion, cure critical wounds, divine power, greater invisibility, greater magic weapon, ice storm, polymorph, rusting grasp, shadow conjuration, tongues, wall of fire*; 5th — *cloudkill, commune, cone of cold, dismissal, flame strike, insect plague, major creation, plane shift, scrying, telekinesis, tree stride, wall of stone*; 6th — *acid fog, banishment, blade barrier, disintegrate, find the path, greater heroism, heal, mass cure light wounds, mass bull's strength, mass suggestion, repulsion, word of recall*.

+2 rapier, +1 composite [+2] longbow, 20 arrows, *ring of protection +2, amulet of natural armor +2, bracers of armor +2, cloak of resistance +3, periapt of Wisdom +4,* adventurer's outfit, backpack.

NPC Thanemage

Starting Ability Scores: Str 13, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Increased Ability Scores: 4th, Dex 15; 8th, Dex 16; 12th, Dex 17; 16th, Dex 18; 20th, Str 14.

Sample 5th-Level NPC Thanemage

Half-Elf thanemage 5; CR 5; HD 5d8+3; hp 29; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +5; Grap +6; Atk +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20, *+1 longsword*) or +7 ranged (1d8+1/×3, *composite [+1] longbow*); Full Atk +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20, *+1 longsword*) or +7 ranged (1d8+1/×3, *composite [+1] longbow*); SA initiate ability (spiritbolt), spells; SQ evasion, half-elf traits; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +8, Decipher Script +10, Diplomacy +1, Gather Information +1, Jump +8,

Knowledge (arcana) +10, Listen +2, Search +3, Spellcraft +12, Spot +2, Survival +9; Combat Casting, Combat Expertise[B], Toughness.

Thanemage Spells Prepared: (3/1; save DC 12 + spell level, 20% arcane spell failure in armor) 0 — *detect magic, mage hand, ray of frost*; 1st — *shield*.

Spellbook: 0 — *dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*; 1st — *identify, magic weapon, mount, protection from good, shield, true strike*.

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt, +1 longsword,* composite *[+1] longbow,* 10 arrows, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Sample 10th-Level NPC Thanemage

Human thanemage 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d8; hp 48; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +10; Grap +11; Atk +14 melee (1d12+3/×3, *+2 greataxe*) or +13 ranged (1d10/19-20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d12+3/×3, *+2 greataxe*) or +13 ranged (1d10/19-20, heavy crossbow); SA adept ability (scourging aura), spells; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +13, Concentration +13, Heal +14, Jump +13, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Spellcraft +17, Survival +14; Blind-Fight[B], Cleave, Combat Expertise[B], Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Still Spell[B], Weapon Focus (greataxe).

Thanemage Spells Prepared: (3/2/2; save DC 12 + spell level, 20% arcane spell failure in armor) 0 — *dancing lights, detect magic, prestidigitation*; 1st — stilled *ray of frost* (x2); 2nd — stilled *magic missile,* stilled *true strike*.

Spellbook: 0 —— *dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*; 1st — *burning hands, expeditious retreat, identify, magic missile, protection from evil, ray of enfeeblement, shield, true strike*; 2nd — *acid arrow, cat's grace, continual flame, glitterdust, invisibility, resist elements*.

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt, +2 greataxe*, heavy crossbow, 10 bolts, *amulet of natural armor +1*, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Sample 15th-Level NPC Thanemage

Dwarf thanemage 15; CR 15; Medium humanoid (dwarf); HD 15d8+15; hp 86; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +15; Grap +16; Atk +19 melee (1d10+4/19-20/×3, *+3 dwarven waraxe*) or +18 ranged (1d10/19-20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d10+4/19-20/×3, *+3 dwarven*

waraxe) or +18 ranged (1d10/19-20, heavy crossbow); SA apprentice ability (aura of dread, spiritstrike), dwarf traits, initiate ability (spiritshield), spells; SQ evasion, improved evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +12, Will +10; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +2 (+4 metal or stone objects, +6 metal or stone weapons), Concentration +19, Craft (weaponsmithing) +22, Escape Artist +3 (+5 bindings), Knowledge (arcana) +20, Spellcraft +27, Survival +19, Use Rope +21; Combat Expertise[B], Craft Magic Arms and Armor[B], Eschew Materials, Greater Spell Penetration,

Table 4-10: NPC Thanemage

Level	hp	AC	Melee	Ranged	Saves	Skill pts./ Feats	Spells per Day	Gear
1st	8	16	+3	+3	+0/+2/+2	24/1	2	Mwk chain shirt, mwk melee, mundane ranged, 100 gp
2nd	12	17	+4	+4	+0/+3/+3	30/1	2	*+1 chain shirt*, mwk melee, mundane ranged, 200 gp
3rd	17	17	+5	+5	+1/+3/+3	36/31	2	As 2nd level, except 700 gp
4th	21	17	+6	+6	+1/+4/+4	42/3	3/1	As 2nd level, except 1,500 gp
5th	26	17	+7	+7	+1/+4/+4	48/3	3/1	*+1 chain shirt*, *+1 melee*, mundane ranged, 500 gp
6th	30	17	+8/+3	+8/+3	+2/+5/+5	54/52	3/2	As 4th level, except 1,800 gp
7th	35	17	+9/+4	+9/+4	+2/+5/+5	60/5	3/2	As 4th level, except 3,400 gp
8th	39	18	+10/+5	+11/+6	+2/+6/+6	66/5	3/2/1	As 4th level, except 5,600 gp
9th	44	19	+12/+6	+12/+7	+3/+6/+6	72/73	3/2/1	*+1 chain shirt*, *+2 melee*, mundane ranged, *amulet +1*, 200 gp
10th	48	19	+13/+8	+13/+8	+3/+7/+7	78/7	3/2/2	As 9th level, except 4,200 gp
11th	53	19	+14/+9/+4	+14/+9/+4	+3/+7/+7	84/7	3/2/2	*+1 mithral chain shirt*, *+2 melee*, mundane ranged, *amulet +1*, 8,200 gp
12th	57	19	+16/+11/+6	+15/+10/+5	+4/+8/+8	90/94	3/2/2/1	*+1 mithral chain shirt*, *+3 melee*, mundane ranged, *amulet +1*, 8,200 gp
13th	62	21	+17/+12/+7	+16/+11/+6	+4/+8/+8	96/9	3/2/2/1	*+3 mithral chain shirt*, *+3 melee*, mundane ranged, *amulet +1*, 4,200 gp
14th	66	22	+18/+13/+8	+17/+12/+7	+4/+9/+9	102/9	4/3/2/1	*+3 mithral chain shirt*, *+3 melee*, mundane ranged, *amulet +2*, 8,200 gp
15th	71	23	+19/+14/+9	+18/+13/+8	+5/+9/+9	108/115	4/3/2/1/1	*+4 mithral chain shirt*, *+3 melee*, mundane ranged, *amulet +2*, 7,200 gp
16th	75	26	+20/+15/+10/+5	+20/+15/+10/+5	+5/+10/+10	114/11	4/3/3/1/1	*+4 mithral chain shirt*, *+3 melee*, mundane ranged, *amulet +4*, 15,200 gp
17th	80	29	+21/+16/+11/+6	+21/+16/+11/+6	+5/+10/+10	120/11	4/3/3/2/1	*+4 mithral chain shirt*, *+3 melee*, mundane ranged, *ring +3*, *amulet +4*, 10,200 gp
18th	84	29	+23/+18/+13/+8	+22/+17/+12/+7	+6/+11/+11	126/136	4/4/3/2/1	*+4 mithral chain shirt*, *+4 melee*, mundane ranged, *ring +3*, *amulet +4*, 22,200 gp
19th	89	29	+25/+20/+15/+10	+23/+18/+13/+8	+6/+11/+11	132/13	4/4/4/3/2	*+4 mithral chain shirt*, *+5 melee*, mundane ranged, *ring +3*, *amulet +4*, 44,200 gp
20th	93	31	+27/+22/+17/+12	+24/+19/+14/+9	+6/+12/+12	138/13	4/4/4/3/3	*+5 mithral chain shirt*, *+5 melee*, mundane ranged, *ring +4*, *amulet +4*, 44,200 gp

1 One of these feats must be Armored Caster* Combat Expertise, or Weapon Focus. *See Green Ronin's *Advanced Player's Manual* for details on this feat.

2 One of these feats must be Spell Penetration or Still Spell.

3 One of these feats must be Blind-Fight or any item creation or metamagic feat.

4 One of these feats must be Improved Counterspell or Improved Feint.

5 One of these feats must be Spring Attack or any item creation or metamagic feat.

6 One of these feats must be Whirlwind Attack or any item creation or metamagic feat.

Improved Counterspell^B, Improved Critical (dwarven waraxe), Magical Aptitude, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Penetration^B, Spring Attack^B, Still Spell.

Thanemage Spells Prepared: (4/3/2/1/1; save DC 12 + spell level, 10% arcane spell failure in armor) 0 — *dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, open/close*; 1st — *enlarge person, expeditious retreat, magic missile*; 2nd — *invisibility, mirror image*; 3rd — *fireball*; 4th — *lesser globe of invulnerability*.

Spellbook: 0 — *dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*; 1st — *burning hands, comprehend languages, enlarge person, expeditious retreat, identify, magic missile, shield, shocking grasp*; 2nd — *acid arrow, fog cloud, invisibility, locate object, mirror image, protection from arrows, resist elements, see invisibility, web*; 3rd — *dispel magic, displacement, fireball, fly, haste, lightning bolt*; 4th — *arcane eye, lesser globe of invulnerability*.

Possessions: *+4 mithral chain shirt, +3 dwarven waraxe*, heavy crossbow, 10 bolts, *amulet of natural armor +2*, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

NPC Warpriest

Starting Ability Scores: Str 14, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Increased Ability Scores: 4th, 16 Wis; 8th, 16 Wis (18), 14 Cha; 10th, 14 Cha (16); 12th, 17 Wis (19); 13th 17 Cha (21); 14th, 14 Cha (18); 16th, 18 Wis (22); 17th, 18 Wis (24); 18th, 14 Cha (20); 20th, 19 Wis (24).

Sample 5th-Level NPC Warpriest

Human Warpriest 5; CR 5; Medium humanoid (human); HD 5d10+5; hp 37; Init −1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 9, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +3; Grap +5; Atk +7 melee (1d8+3/×3, masterwork battleaxe) or +2 ranged (1d10/19-20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +7 melee (1d8+3/×3, masterwork battleaxe) or +2 ranged (1d10/19-20, heavy crossbow); SA divine power (light 2/day), spells; SQ divine deflection +2; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Climb −1, Concentration +4, Handle Animal +4, Heal +6, Jump −1, Knowledge (religion) +3, Ride +2, Spellcraft +3; Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Warpriest Spells Known: (Spells per Day 4/5/3; save DC 13 + spell level) 0 —*daze, detect magic, flare, message, read magic, resistance, virtue*; 1st — *astute fighting†, cause fear, divine favor, expeditious retreat, magic weapon, missteps†*; 2nd — *bull's strength, deathchant†, resist energy, spiritual weapon, summon monster II*.

†Spell described in the *Advanced Player's Manual*.

Possessions: Full plate, masterwork battleaxe, heavy crossbow, 10 bolts, *amulet of natural armor +1*, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Sample 10th-Level NPC Warpriest

Half-Elf Warpriest 10; CR 10; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 10d10+10; hp 69; Init −1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +7; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (1d8+6, *+1 heavy mace*) or +6 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+6, *+1 heavy mace*) or +6 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); SA divine power (moderate 3/day), spells, turn undead (6/day, +5, 2d6+7); SQ divine deflection +3; AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16 (18), Cha 14 (16).

Skills and Feats: Climb +0, Concentration +4, Handle Animal +6, Heal +7, Jump +0, Knowledge (religion) +5, Ride +2, Spellcraft +3; Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (heavy mace), Weapon Specialization (heavy mace)^B.

Warpriest Spells Known: (Spells per Day 4/5/5/4/2; save DC 14 + spell level) 0 — *cure minor wounds, daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, flare, guidance, resistance, virtue*; 1st — *astute fighting†, bless, bless weapon, command, divine favor, missteps†, protection from evil*; 2nd — *aid, bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, lifechant†, resist energy*; 3rd — *crown of valor†, greater magic weapon, magic vestment, prayer, smite foe†, wind wall*; 4th — *divine power, furious assault†, restoration, spell immunity*.

†Spell described in the *Advanced Player's Manual*.

Possessions: *+1 full plate, +1 heavy mace*, light crossbow, 10 bolts, *ring of protection +1, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of Charisma +2, periapt of Wisdom +2*, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Sample 15th-Level NPC Warpriest

Elf warpriest 15; CR 15; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 15d10+15; hp 102; Init −1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +11; Grp +13; Atk +16 melee (1d8+7/19-20, *+2 longsword*) or +12 ranged (1d8+4/×3, *+2 spear*); Full Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (1d8+7/19-20, *+2 longsword*) or +12 ranged (1d8+4/×3, *+2 spear*); SA divine power (serious, 4/day), elf traits, spells, turn undead (8/day, +7, 2d6+14); SQ divine deflection +5, elf traits; AL CG; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +14; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 18 (24), Cha 14 (20).

Skills and Feats: Climb +3, Concentration +6, Handle Animal +10, Heal +12, Jump −1, Knowledge (religion) +5, Ride +4, Spellcraft +5; Cleave, Combat Casting, Great Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Warpriest Spells Known: (Spells per Day 5/7/6/5/5/4/1; save DC 17 + spell level) 0 — *cure minor wounds, daze, detect poison, flare, guidance, light, message, resistance*; 1st — *astute fighting†, bless, bless weapon, cause fear, divine favor, endure elements, protection from evil, summon monster I*; 2nd — *bull's strength, cat's grace, lifechant†, see invisibility, shield other, spiritual weapon, true strike*; 3rd — *confusion, crown of valor†, dispel magic, greater magic weapon, magic vestment, summon monster III, wind wall*; 4th — *control water, death ward, divine power, neutralize poison, status, summon monster IV*; 5th — *battlelink†, greater crown of valor†, flame strike, righteous might, spell resistance, wall of fire*; 6th — *animate objects, blade barrier, heal*.

†Spell described in the *Advanced Player's Manual*.

Possessions: *+2 full plate, +2 longsword, +2 spear, ring of protection +2, amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of Charisma +4, periapt of Wisdom +4*, adventurer's outfit, backpack.

Table 4-11: NPC Warpriest

Level	hp	AC	Melee	Ranged	Saves	Skill pts./ Feats	Spells per Day	Gear
1st	11	15	+3	−1	+3/−1/+4	8/1	2/1	Splint mail, mwk melee, 300 gp
2nd	17	16	+4	+0	+4/−1/+5	10/1	4/2	Half plate, mwk melee, 1,000 gp
3rd	24	17	+5	+1	+4/+0/+5	12/2	4/3/1	Plate, mwk melee, 600 gp
4th	30	18	+6	+2	+5/+0/+7	14/2	4/4/2	Plate, mwk melee, *amulet +1*, 400 gp
5th	37	18	+6	+2	+5/+0/+7	16/2	4/5/3	As 4th level, except 1,500 gp
6th	43	19	+7	+3	+6/+1/+8	18/3	4/5/4/1	*+1 plate*, mwk melee, *amulet +1*, 2,600 gp
7th	50	20	+8	+4	+6/+1/+8	20/3	4/5/4/2	*+1 plate*, mwk melee, *ring +1, amulet +1*, 1,200 gp
8th	56	20	+9/+4	+5/+0	+7/+1/+10	22/3	4/5/5/3	*+1 plate*, mwk melee, *ring +1, amulet +1, periapt +2*, 200 gp
9th	63	20	+9/+4	+5/+0	+7/+2/+10	24/4	4/5/5/4/1	*+1 plate, +1 melee, ring +1, amulet +1, periapt +2*, 1,000 gp
10th	69	20	+10/+5	+6/+1	+8/+2/+11	26/4	4/5/5/4/2	*+1 plate, +1 melee, ring +1, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +2, periapt +2*, 7,500 gp
11th	76	20	+12/+7	+7/+2	+8/+2/+11	28/4	4/5/5/5/3	*+1 plate, +2 melee, ring +1, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +2, periapt +2*, 10,000 gp
12th	82	21	+13/+8	+8/+3	+9/+3/+12	30/5	4/5/5/5/4	*+2 plate, +2 melee, ring +1, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +2, periapt +2*, 6,000 gp
13th	89	21	+13/+8	+8/+3	+9/+3/+12	32/5	4/5/5/5/4/1	*+2 plate, +2 melee, ring +1, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +2, periapt +4*, 8,000 gp
14th	95	21	+14/+9	+9/+4	+10/+3/+13	34/5	5/5/5/5/5/2	*+2 plate, +2 melee, ring +1, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +4, periapt +4*, 8,000 gp
15th	102	22	+15/+10/+5	+12/+7/+2	+10/+4/+13	36/6	5/6/5/5/53	*+2 plate, +2 melee, +2 ranged, ring +2, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +4, periapt +4*, 16,000 gp
16th	108	22	+16/+11/+6	+13/+8/+3	+11/+4/+16	38/6	5/7/7/5/5/4/2	*+2 plate, +2 melee, +2 ranged, ring +2, ring of counterspells, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +4, periapt +4*, 27,000 gp
17th	115	22	+16/+11/+6	+13/+8/+3	+11/+4/+17	40/6	5/7/7/6/5/5/3	*+2 plate, +2 melee, +2 ranged, ring +2, ring of ounterspells, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +4, periapt +6*, 30,000 gp
18th	121	22	+17/+12/+7	+14/+9/+4	+12/+5/+18	42/7	5/7/7/6/6/5/4	*+2 plate, +2 melee, +2 ranged, ring +2, ring of counterspells, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +6, periapt +6*, 46,000 gp
19th	128	22	+18/+13/+8	+15/+10/+5	+12/+5/+18	44/7	5/7/7/6/6/6/5	*+2 adamantine plate, +2 melee, +2 ranged, ring +2, ring of counterspells, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +6, periapt +6*, 61,000 gp
20th	134	25	+23/+17/+12	+16/+11/+6	+13/+5/+20	46/7	5/7/7/7/6/6/6	*+5 adamantine plate, +5 melee, +2 ranged, ring +2, ring of counterspells, amulet +1, cloak of Charisma +6, periapt +6*, 80,000 gp

Chapter Five: Running a Campaign

An adventure, even if it takes several game sessions, is basically just a single event. A game world is the backdrop in which the events (adventures) take place. A campaign is more than either of them individually. It's a series, combining multiple adventures and locations in an ongoing story. Where an adventure can be seen as a movie, a campaign is more like a television or book series, giving greater opportunities for character development and growth, as well as for complex stories and themes.

Not every game group runs campaigns. Some prefer to see each adventure as a separate event, changing characters, players, and GMs in between each adventure. There's nothing wrong with playing this way, but it limits the kind of complications and consequences the group can experience. Even if a campaign is little more than one adventure coming on the heels of the last, maintaining continuity allows for greater exploration of themes, PCs, and the game rules. A campaign also takes some additional work on the GM's part, which we look at in this chapter.

– Defining a Campaign –

A lot of the work that goes into running a campaign involves defining it in game terms (as opposed to worldbuilding, which is covered in **Chapter One**). You must decide what to allow in his game and how those elements combine to make a play environment.

For example, if a GM decides he doesn't want elves in his game, he must either decide not to allow *cloaks of elvenkind* or decide who else is allowed to make them. If a GM decides undead are extremely common in his campaign, he skews things in favor of clerics and paladins, and away from rogues (since sneak attacks don't work on undead). Both decisions are valid, but they strongly affect the feel and balance of a campaign in ways that may not be immediately obvious.

Because campaigns are meant to last longer than just one or two adventures, there are many uncommon issues to consider. Questions of cosmology, technology, and sociology are bound to arise at some point, and while you can handle them when they do arise, having some solid groundwork done in advance is best. The more you define up front, the faster and easier it is to answer the bizarre questions PCs inevitably ask.

Choosing a Campaign Theme

A campaign can be as simple as a series of published adventures run for roughly the same group of players and characters over a span of time. For many groups, this approach is all the effort they have time for, and the

opportunity to get together and kill some orcs is enough to make the campaign time well spent.

However, a campaign can be a great deal more involved than a string of disconnected adventures. A campaign can be an experience in worldbuilding, social commentary, and exploration of themes and roles. These elements should never be allowed to overshadow the most important function of a game — having fun — but taken in moderation, they produce a more complex and fulfilling gaming experience.

A campaign theme is an idea or element that reoccurs in the adventures of the campaign. It is often introduced early in a campaign and then explored by players and GM alike in different forms. In many ways, a campaign theme is like the melody of a piece of music: it's not all there is to the campaign, but variations of it recur throughout the campaign. A theme helps set the tone of a campaign and helps set it apart from campaigns with similar physical trappings.

A campaign theme needn't be determined in advance. Many campaigns develop themes naturally during play, the types of adventures you prepare and the normal responses of the players lead to themes that grow organically. Yet when you know you're interested in a given theme, support it early on in world design. Many themes work best when coupled with specific kinds of societies, monsters, and adventure plots, making them easiest to implement from the start of a campaign. A good idea of the campaign theme can also help you describe your new game world to players, avoiding assumption clash.

Nearly anything can be a theme, but some themes work better than others. Below, you will find a list of 40 common and proven campaign themes. Pick one or two themes, or use them as inspiration for developing your own. As campaign themes often evolve or even change, you might also wish to pick new themes to move a campaign towards, changing its tone mid-stream to keep it fresh and interesting.

Forty Campaign Themes

1 **Good vs. Evil:** A conflict game, in which evil is a constant, tangible, overwhelming force. Evil must be fought, and PCs must not turn to evil tactics during their war. The forces of evil often have one or more supernatural patrons, such as a wizard, deity, or sentient prophecy to drive them, though darkness itself may be a motivating force.

2 **Law vs. Chaos:** A conflict game, with order and anarchy opposing one another. This uses the same basic set up as Good vs. Evil. Law is often cast as a positive force and chaos a destructive one, but the campaign could equally well cast law as tyrannical and stagnant, with chaos being the power of freedom and rebirth.

3 **Tyrants vs. Rebels:** A handful of malevolent empires hold a large part of the world in sway, and rebels fight against them. The campaign assumes the tyrannical empires should be brought down or at least forced to reform. Conflict is often with members of "civilized" races, though certainly an empire of dragons or other monsters could hold sway.

4 **Civilization vs. Barbarism:** The reverse of Tyranny vs. Rebellion, this theme assumes the empires are a good thing to be defended from crude (often orc or goblin) hordes of savages. Conflict is often with members of races not normally allowed as PCs.

5 **Dungeon Stomp:** The entire point of the game is to find isolated areas with high concentrations of monsters and treasure. PCs kill the former and take the later. The campaign world may be set up to explain carefully why dungeons are common, or it may ignore the question in favor of getting in as much combat and trap disabling as possible.

   A dungeon stomp need not always have "dungeons" be underground complexes, nor is the motivation always wealth. Any location rich in threats and rewards with little nearby help counts as a dungeon, including mysterious islands, haunted castles, dread forests, and even evil kingdoms of supernatural horrors. The heroes may undertake such missions to save loved ones, find cures for curses, and stop powerful evils. Yet the underlying action focuses on combat and exploration of dangerous locales rather than political movements, philosophical ideas, or romance.

6 **Exploration:** Exploration games place an emphasis on going to new places and surviving their dangers while discovering what's there. This campaign can become similar to a Dungeon Stomp, but in principle an exploration game is more about discovery than combat. Finding new trade routes, learning to operate in foreign cultures, and enjoying the strangeness of new lands is the focus of an exploration game, rather than killing things.

7 **Destined Heroes:** In this campaign, the heroes really are something different. They have destinies that set them apart from even major NPCs of the same level. Destined heroes often have a long period of self-discovery, followed by power accumulation, and then a showdown with whatever they are destined to overcome. Special heritages, powers, and bloodlines are common elements of destined hero games, which often use one or more of the rules for boosting power levels (see **Boosting Power Levels** in **Chapter Six**).

8 **Conversion:** The focus of a conversion campaign is to bring others to the PCs' way of thinking. This is the kind of game in which baby orcs are taken in and raised properly by allied monks, good churches face

off against corrupt kings (and the reverse is true), and convincing arguments and opportunities for atonement are as important as combat and monetary rewards. These campaigns work best if the players and GM can share a philosophy to espouse or at least be comfortable enough with to roleplay espousing it.

9   **Accumulation of Power:** This theme encourages PCs to gain as much power as possible. Finding rare magic items and artifacts, making friends and allies, commanding vast armies, and serving deities directly are all common elements of this kind of campaign. The action can be as much political as physical, and rewards tend to escalate as the campaign continues. Accumulation of power campaigns are common in games with evil, or at best non-good, PCs.

10   **Keeping the Peace:** Often set in a city or very civilized territory, the thrust of the campaign is not to establish or save civilization, but to patrol it. Solving crimes, capturing convicts, and uncovering corruption are more common than fighting dragons or delving through dungeons. Conflict may be much more social than physical, though fighting is certainly possible, and problem solving is focused on resolving crimes and social ills rather than running armies and disabling traps.

11   **Uncovering Conspiracy:** A secret is hinted at early in the campaign, and investigation suggests it is vast in scope. Enemies are hidden and sly, with many lairs of contacts and agents taking secret orders. Suspicion and caution are kept at high

levels, and even allies may be suspected. Often the ultimate goal is to steal power from a rightful ruler or bring about a terrible mystic ritual.

12   **Dambusters:** In this kind of campaign, one moderate act can lead to major changes in the world. The PCs find that taking out a single enemy fortress can open an entire border to expansion by a kingdom friendly to their cause, and destroying one evil wizard frees whole communities from his influence. In a dambusters campaign, the heroes' actions cause ripples that can improve (or worsen) a much larger area.

13   **Great Romance:** The main element of a great romance game is to find true love, overcome whatever challenges keep lovers from being together, protect loved ones, and eventually *Live Happily Ever After*. Though the action may be similar to other campaigns, the motivations and rewards can be very different.

14   **Horror:** A horror-themed game is designed to frighten both players and their characters. Threats are often unspeakable monsters from beyond human experience, and may well be beyond the ability of any PC to overcome. The most important element is a threat that cannot be defeated, regardless of its source. Action often revolves around discovering just what the threat is and how to prevent it from coming about (since it's beyond defeat once it has fully materialized). Games with a horror theme may include gruesome details and disturbing descriptions of bloody events, or they may try to heighten fear by keeping details off-stage to allow the players' imaginations to fill in any details.

Horror themes are very unpopular with some players and should not be run without some warning to the nature of the game and the kind of horror it tries to emulate. Some games take horror elements, such as Lovecraftian elder gods and zombies, but run them as more a Good-vs.-Evil game with gritty undertones.

15   **Suspense:** Suspense-themed games are similar to Horror games, in that they involve delving into the unknown and dealing with the fear and trepidation uncertainty brings. A theme of suspense doesn't necessarily mean dealing with something horrid, evil, and otherworldly, however. Players might find themselves trying to unravel a murder mystery before a killer strikes again or investigating unusual occurrences that turn out to have a purely mundane explanation.

16   **Espionage:** An espionage game assumes the PCs are gathering information and undertaking covert operations more than opposing foes directly or stomping through dungeons. Such games may promote the well-being of a single nation the PCs

work for, or the PCs may be freelance sneaks and assassins working for anyone. Espionage games are more about getting in and getting out than killing things and taking their stuff, and they have many opportunities for witty banter and double entendre.

17 **Comedy:** The most important element of a comedy-themed campaign is making people laugh. The comedy can be understated, with wry in-jokes and humorous situations, or it may be more over-the-top with silly names, comic parodies of common fantasy elements, and anachronistic items added for comedy value. The most important consideration when running a comedy theme campaign is to make sure the players are all aware of and interested in the plans for humor.

18 **Beer-and-Pretzels:** A beer-and-pretzels game is simply something to pass the time in a friendly and entertaining manner. Its main theme is a lack of a theme, with no serious effort to maintain continuity or have things make sense. It's an "anything goes" environment in which players feel free to do anything, including getting their characters killed, and the GM's main function is to come up with new things for them to face, no matter how off-the-wall challenges may be. Like comedy games, everyone should be aware of the nature of a beer-and-pretzels game.

19 **Philosophical Exploration:** This is a theme of mental exploration, with players encountering moral and ethical challenges and deciding how their characters resolve them. Such issues as the nature of evil, the end justifying the means, and the moral authority of vigilantes (or lack thereof) are common areas for a philosophical exploration campaign to dwell on. Games often involve considerable debate between players, and sometimes NPCs, and experience rewards are more focused on roleplaying than defeating challenges. Some players hate this kind of game, and it can more readily lead to out-of-game arguments, so a GM thinking of adding such a theme should be well aware of his players' temperaments.

20 **Genre Emulation:** Some games try to recreate the kinds of stories and characters common to a particular genre or even a specific line of stories. Such games are often explicitly billed by the GM as being like a particular author's works and may include extensive house rules to help emulate the desired genre. Not all such games attempt to emulate common fantasy dramas — drawing themes from westerns, film noir, horror, and drama series and placing the elements in a fantasy setting are perfectly possible.

21 **The Quest:** A quest game presents a major, world-shattering undertaking that must be accomplished despite great trials and challenges preventing it. If beginning at low levels, it often has a minor quest (the recovery of a holy relic) lead to a major quest (returning the relic to its ancestral home, in the center of an evil overlord's territory) and then to an epic quest (using the boons granted when returning the relic to find an even older relic that can destroy the evil overlord). The strength of quest games is that PCs have a clear direction to guide them; the drawback is that constantly striving for a single goal can eventually get dull. A quest theme can be taken to cover multiple smaller quests, which at least breaks up the monotony.

22 **Gritty Realism:** A campaign with gritty realism minimizes over-the-top cinematic action in favor of realistic limitations and consequences. Even if fantastic elements such as magic and monsters are present, they are handled in a realistic way. Injuries can easily be fatal, people are often fearful and/or greedy, and making a significant, permanent, or noticeable difference to the world is very difficult.

Games of gritty realism often focus on the cost of heroism and the struggle to survive. Many groups feel the harder it is for characters to take a stand, the more heroic they are for doing so (and the more interesting playing them is).

These games aren't for everyone. Many players find them oppressive and too realistic to serve as good escapism. Gritty games are also usually more lethal, leading to higher character turnover and failure. Many players dislike losing frequently and thus dislike games with both high difficulty and serious consequences.

23 **Technological Revolution:** This theme places change and advancement at center stage. Technological advancement need not be a game with science-fiction elements, though it certainly can be. Any advance in technology or science brings change to the political balance of power and the societies involved. In a Bronze Age game, the discovery of methods for working iron, or even steel, is a technological advancement. The development of flintlock weapons is a common advance for this theme, as is the entire evolution of a renaissance.

24 **Survival:** A survival theme regularly pits PCs against elements, environments, and conditions that threaten them. Games set in deserts or frozen wastes fall into this category, as do games set in areas where civilization has broken down and an existence must be carved out of the wilderness. Threats should be more than the attack of dangerous creatures (though that's certainly part of a survival theme) and have an emphasis on gathering and maintaining resources and creative problem solving.

25 **Historical:** A historical theme tries to bring in elements of real-world history to a game.

A campaign may actually be set in a period of our history or a close approximation of our history (such as Green Ronin's *Eternal Rome* and *Testament*), or it may simply have analogs to recognizable historical periods (such as Green Ronin's *Egyptian Adventures: Hamunaptra*). The game may even replay historic events or use them as inspiration for adventures, allowing PCs to take part in the Crusades or try to prevent their own religion from beginning an Inquisition.

26 **Nature's Way:** This theme focuses on the cycle of nature and civilization's balance with it. Conflicts between any civilization and the natural resources it consumes are common elements, as are talking animals and councils of wise druids.

27 **Free-for-All:** A mixed theme drawing from any element that seems interesting. Games with portals to other times and places, dimension- or plane-hopping, and elements from any genre or theme the GM and players find interesting is a free-for-all. If not carefully monitored, a free-for-all is likely to become a beer-and-pretzels game.

28 **War:** A war-themed campaign has a major conflict that everyone is aware of and that affects most people's lives. The PCs may be soldiers or mercenaries involved in the war, or they may simply experience the social upheavals and uncertainty that war brings.

29 **Mature:** A mature-themed game takes an unflinching look at what happens during war, what kinds of things villains and madmen do to their victims, drug use, prostitution, and where half-orcs come from. A mature-themed game need not dwell on these subjects, but it doesn't avoid them either. A GM should make sure everyone is comfortable with a mature-themed game and watch for players becoming uncomfortable. Mature games must be closely monitored or they may in fact become extremely immature.

30 **Lost Empires:** A lost empires game includes in its history ancient kingdoms with wonders (and possibly magic or technologies) now lost. The empires may be gone, but they still impact the world around them. Ancient bloodlines can be traced back to these kingdoms, adventurers seek out their buried cities, and scholars try to unlock their secrets. Ancient evils may come back, or new villains and rulers may base their plans on the examples of the past.

31 **Dark Comedy:** A dark comedy campaign includes elements that are both funny and dreadful. This is a tricky line to walk, and not something most groups try, but a skilled GM can create a memorable campaign with these elements. Wars fought for stupid reasons, horrid demons that are somehow also ridiculous, and things going cartoonishly awry without a cartoon's happy ending are all examples of dark comedy.

32 **Adventure:** Most roleplaying game campaigns include an adventure element (indeed, the whole hobby is often referred to as adventure gaming), but it's worth mentioning and exploring. Adventure themes focus on doing noteworthy, difficult, and

exciting deeds. Elements include fights, exotic locales, heroic figures, death-defying stunts, and driven foes. Adventure campaigns often overlook the possible problems of heroic plans and possible consequences of bold actions, or at least have a tendency for everything to work out in the end.

33 **Thriller:** A thriller campaign strives for excitement and tension, often focusing on games revolving around a race against time. Often the challenge is not simply to accomplish something, but to do so before timed consequences hit. A group of heroes may have no fear of dying if they go into the Black Marsh, but can they get in and find a rare herb before the queen dies of a mystic poison?

Thriller games usually have hidden agendas and secretive foes, leaving PCs unsure of who are their real enemies and allies until late in a particular plot. Such information is eventually revealed, but perhaps not in time for the PCs to act on it. Thriller-themed games require downtime between plots set at breakneck speed, so both players and characters have a chance to catch their breath.

34 **Dialectical:** These campaigns, in theory similar to Good vs. Evil or Tyranny vs. Rebellion, but focuses on any two competing forces or beliefs, and the birth of something new. PCs may be bystanders as the world changes, undergoing another campaign style adventure, and placing the change in the background, or take part in the resistance to the change, or as agents of change. In this campaign, the players may have an active role in the development of an altogether new era.

35 **Redemption:** A redemption theme revolves around a person or group who either is truly fallen or is viewed as fallen by society as a whole. PCs may be convicted criminals given a chance to prove their worth or members of a race/bloodline/nation mistrusted by the rest of the world. In this case, the PCs are examples, and their actions have repercussions not just for them but for the entire class of people they represent.

A redemption-themed game may also have PCs trying to redeem a fallen NPC. The blackguard villain who still has a mote of good, the lich who was once a magician of life and love, the cultist who made a deal with the devil without knowing what he was doing are all good examples of NPCs that could potentially be redeemed — if the PCs are willing to have faith and take risks. An NPC might also simply have failed at something important, such as the guard who allowed his king to be assassinated or the priest who lost faith.

In a particularly dark campaign, redemption may be needed for everyone. The whole world may have been abandoned by the gods themselves as hopeless, until and unless some group proves noble, brave, loyal, and kind. The PCs aren't just redeeming themselves — they have a chance to redeem everyone.

36 **High Seas:** A high seas theme places much of the action on ships. Often swashbuckling and/or pirate elements are included, along with a flintlock level of technology (or magic simulating it). For ideas, see Green Ronin's *Freeport: City of Adventure* or for a historical example, see *Skull & Bones*.

37 **Lost Worlds:** Essentially a hollow earth, dinosaurs on a giant plateau pulp-style game. Similar to both exploration and lost empires, a lost worlds game assumes that there are secret and hidden places were things thought long gone are present. In addition to dinosaurs, such games often have forgotten empires of lizardmen, temples to dead gods, and stores of dangerous magic or technology.

38 **Vengeance:** A vengeance game is all about getting even. Wrongs are remembered and much of the action is an effort to punish wrongdoers. Both heroes and villains can be driven by vengeance, and the entire plot of a campaign can revolve around a person's or even an entire kingdom's desire to see justice done.

39 **In the Rafters:** This theme shows players what's going on behind the scenes, in places that wouldn't be obvious to most folks. Such an approach often appears in games with unusual player characters, such as children, barnyard animals, familiars, or fairies who find themselves having secretly to aid more "normal" protagonists who may not even be aware of them. It can also become a "power behind the throne" kind of game, where the real action is the struggle of secret societies and power brokers who make deals and wage underground wars in the shadows of normal society.

40 **Apocalypse:** This theme looks at what happens in a devastated world (or region), be it by natural disaster, arcane explosions, divine wrath, or war. The ravages of a fallen civilization form the backdrop, and the campaign can focus on survival, rebuilding, or exploration. An apocalypse theme need not be all-encompassing; a game could include just one recently-ruined region (such as the broken continent of Atlantis) or be set so far after the holocaust that its only impact is felt when old ruins are discovered.

Choosing a Cosmology

A cosmology is a set of rules that define and run the universe. In the context of a campaign, the cosmology decides how the world was created, where different races and monsters came from, how and why (and if) magic and psionics work, who and what are the deities and

outsiders, and what other planes of existence are out there and how they can be reached and traveled through.

Most d20 campaign rulebooks have an assumed cosmology. The names of the inner and outer planes, the spells that use and manipulate the planes, what deities exist and what powers they grant their priests are all part of that cosmology. You can take parts of cosmologies you like and weave them together (or even just stick with one) or make up your own cosmology whole cloth. Be careful about taking too much mythology from current real-world faiths (see **Sensitive Subjects** in **Chapter One** for why this could be offensive), but in general borrowing interesting bits from other sources is a great way to build a cosmology.

A campaign's cosmology can influence what kinds of plots make sense for the game, as well as how many spells and abilities work in specific circumstances. For example, many clerical spells allow the caster to ask questions of an outsider or deity. In some campaigns, it's assumed the answers given are absolutely correct, no matter how they affect a deity's interests. Thus, if a cleric of a god of poverty asked if his party would do well to look for secret doors, and a vast treasure is hidden behind one, the answer given is yes. In other campaigns, it's assumed that deities give answers designed to promote their own interests. Not only may gods of poverty steer the faithful away from riches, a god of war might get his clerics into more battles for his own glory, even if the result kills the clerics. These are important cosmological differences, and a cleric with a +15 or greater modifier in Knowledge (religion) has a right to know which is closer to the truth.

Other bits of cosmology are unlikely to have any impact on the campaign unless the GM goes out of her way to use them. For example, the source of magic isn't important as long as it works in a consistent way. A GM could decide it's the leftover energy from the creation of the universe, mystic radiation given off by certain rocks, the power of dead gods long since dissolved, or a kind of science that finds loopholes in the physical rules of the universe. As long as a *fireball* is a *fireball*, the power source doesn't matter much (though players may be interested in knowing the details).

However, a solid cosmology allows a GM to introduce plots using it when and if she feels the need. If magic *is* mystic radiation from certain rocks, what happens if a lot of that rock is gathered in one place? The GM can then introduce areas of no magic and zones of powerful spell boosts (see **Mystic Locales** in **Chapter Seven**) based on how much rock lays in the area. A villain could even start gathering vast quantities of the rock, becoming an increasingly powerful wizard with no upper limit in sight. If magic is the power of a dead god, what happens when a cult tries to restore that god to power? If PCs know the risks of these plots in advance because they're familiar with the campaign's cosmology, they're more motivated to get involved.

Arcane Power

The source of magic can be anything, since it need not follow any laws of science. This doesn't mean you can't try to make magic logical, you're just not restricted to things that match players' real-world experiences. People don't throw *fireballs* or cast *wishes* in the real world, so players have fewer expectations on how such things "really" work.

Common cosmologies include magic drawing from the power of nature (making druids and sorcerers close cousins), flowing through the world in invisible rivers (ley lines or geomantic flows), leaking from the gods (making clerics and wizards natural enemies), coming from other planes (leading mages to seek power from outsiders, especially fiends), the stars (making astrology popular whether or not it actually works), or being a mystery even wizards don't understand (causing most arcane spellcasters to hoard carefully any secrets they do master and avoid answering questions that would reveal their own ignorance). A GM wanting to drive home the source of magic can do so in little ways, such as changing material components to be crystals for geomancy or fetishes for nature magic.

Another important question is who can learn magic. While there's no need to restrict PC choices, many cosmologies present arcane magic as a gift that only a few possess. You might not allow characters to multiclass into arcane classes if they don't start in one at 1st level. Many games also restrict magic to certain races, forbidding dwarven wizards or halfling sorcerers. If you take this route, consider the implications for the societies she builds. If dwarves can't be arcane spellcasters, they're likely to lean heavily on divine classes (needing magic power to compete, and leaning to more religious societies) and mistrust wizards and sorcerers.

Divine Power

A very basic question is, "Where do the gods get their power from?" Some cosmologies dispense with deities entirely. Clerics draw power from the force of an ethos, which may be nothing more than Good or Evil. Campaigns may also replace deities with great spirits or even a bureaucracy of outsiders who are charged with keeping the universe running smoothly. Regardless of what form divine powers take, a good cosmology at least gives some clues to how and why they operate.

Deities are often presented as gaining power from worshipers. The more worshipers a deity has, the more power it gains. In this cosmology, the most popular deities are the most powerful. This situation creates a lot of incentive for deities to protect and guide their churches and for those churches to expand their membership. If all a deity needs is for a worshiper to give service and obey the rules of worship, many churches are likely to convert new worshipers through

force. Theocracies and state-mandated religions become common, as do crusades of conversion. In fact, attacks on the faithful become direct attacks on their gods, one of the few ways mortals could threaten deities.

A related idea is that deities draw power from actions within their domains of influence and lose power from actions opposed to their domains. Thus, a god of smithing gains power whenever anyone smiths something, and a god of deception gains power whenever anyone lies. In this cosmology, each religion defines those things that give power to its god as virtues and those things that take away power as sins. A church dedicated to a god of law and community might forbid pre-marital sex because it's a chaotic act that can lead to children with just one parent; a church devoted to a goddess of freedom and love will promote the same act as a virtue.

Situational ethics will be common in such a cosmology. Even good-aligned churches are frequently in disagreement about sin and virtue, but have less incentive to attack each other (except for a church of war). Since acts themselves empower the deities, unfaithful worshipers aren't particularly useful. This system also has the advantage that evil or distasteful deities need not have organized churches — a god of murder draws power from all murderers, without them specifically revering him.

In both these cosmologies, new deities may be created and old ones fade away if their sources of power are grown or shrunk, respectively. If mathematics becomes commonplace, a new god of math might be born. If Bronze Age technology ends, the god of bronze may fade away. This process allows for cults of "forgotten gods" to be found in ruined shrines or even for fallen gods themselves to be found wandering the world. Of course, even if no longer a god, the fallen lord of dinosaurs may be quite powerful by mortal standards.

If gods draw power from worship, belief, and action, so too can philosophies. If many people believe in any particular ethos, it draws enough power to allow its clerics and priests to access the same kind of powers as deities rant. A campaign can have both ethos-driven and god-driven religions, though the two groups will not likely see eye-to-eye.

Another common idea is that deities are primal forces of the universe, with no need for external sources of power. The domains of influence deities choose are either their private interests or simply part of the universe's natural order. These deities have less incentive to be directly involved with their worshipers (though if they care about some particular ethos or activity, they're likely to defend those who promote it). In this case, churches and religions are much more than petitioners, trying to do a god's will in return for protection or favor. This condition produces more churches with at most an arm's-length relationship to their gods and is perfect for monolithic religions filled with priests who care more for their own power than the good of their flock. Even schisms and holy wars may not draw a deity's attention, since they has no impact on his or her power.

Some cosmologies allow mortals to become deities under the right circumstances. The mortals may have to be elevated by existing deities as a reward for great service, earn enough worshipers to focus divine energy onto themselves, or discover some secret that sets deities apart from mortals. Any system can be used, but allowing mortals to become deities provides a great incentive for all sorts of villains.

Finally, setting up a game so there truly are no gods nor anything to replace them is possible. Divine magic is simply a different tradition than arcane magic, but in principle, it works the same way. Any spell that claims to be contacting an outsider is in fact just another instance of divination or summoning magic. Mortals may or may not know deities aren't real, but if it's a secret, it's one even a basically good church might kill to keep from becoming common knowledge.

Monsters

A cosmology that defines the origins of some monsters can have an effect on what monsters get used in the campaign (see **Choosing Monsters,** page 93). For example, if each race of monsters was created by a deity, be prepared to define what the god of chimeras is. Though this is a lot of work, it also gives you a built-in rogues' gallery of mastermind villains and allies in the form of priests of the many racial gods.

Monsters can also come from wild magic. This cosmology assumes some force (possibly transstorms; see **Chapter Eight**) blends and combines different "mundane" races to create most monsters. Thus, centaurs are actually descended from a blending of humans and horses, while chimeras combine multiple creatures. Any magical creature can be extrapolated from the effects of arcane power on a normal creature — snakes become dragons, lions become sphinxes, and rock itself becomes xorns. One advantage of this idea is that ecologies are constantly in flux. Since PCs know new monsters can be created at any time, they aren't surprised if they run into a laundry list of creatures over the course of their careers, or if a new horror overruns a once-safe wilderness.

Another common idea is to have many races be descended from deities and outsiders. These otherworldly creatures can take on any form and imbue their crossbreed offspring with various powers. All giants may trace their heritage back to one titan who spread his blood widely, resulting in many different species of children. A similar idea is to have many breeds descend from some mythic super-creature, such as the mother of all dragons or the first aberration.

Cosmologies can easily combine these elements for different races. The core groups of humanoids and a few intelligent monsters may each have been created by their own deities, while other creatures come from a combination of crossbreeding and wild magic alterations. This kind of set-up can lead to races without deities, bigotry between the god-born and the mystically evolved, and still have new monsters show up suddenly where needed.

Psionic Power

The most important question regarding psionics in a cosmology is whether it exists at all. Many groups dislike psionics, considering it more appropriate for modern and science fiction games than fantasy. Excluding psionics generally produces a more traditional fantasy feel. However, psionics can be included in a game without sacrificing fantasy trappings. For example, many settings include mystics and wise ones from far off (often eastern) lands with strange and unique powers. Psionics can easily be used to fill this role, making it a rare power from foreign lands. Especially if psionics are defined as just another form of magic, they need not bring a sci-fi tone to a game.

If psionics is included, it must be defined as being the same as or different from other magic. The easiest cosmology treats psionics as mind-magic, and like divine magic and arcane magic, it operates in essentially the same way despite having a different source. For example, *dispel magic* cast as a divine or arcane spell has the same chance of success, and if psionics are treated as magic, the spell can affect those powers as well. Used this way, psionics can even be given a different name (theurgy, shamanism, mind magic, chi, occultism, eastern magic, mysticism, and so on) to help maintain a fantasy theme.

If psionics is treated as non-magical, it has a greater affect on the campaign. Defenses designed to aid against magic attacks and divinations designed to locate magic threats won't work on psionics, making it more powerful. Of course, logically, psionics cannot affect magic either in this case, which can lead to very violent conflicts with powerful attacks and few defenses.

Most cosmologies assume psionics (whatever it's called) is powered by force of will, but this need not be the case. Psionics can draw on the same kinds of sources as arcane magic (see Arcane Power), though most campaigns give arcane and psionic power different sources. Psionics can also draw their power from crystals or lines of psychic force flowing freely from all living things. The more esoteric the power source for psionics is, the less like a traditional fantasy setting a campaign feels.

Choosing Monsters

Most GMs don't give much thought to what monsters exist in their campaign worlds (and how common each is). Hundreds of monsters are detailed in the various d20 rulebooks, but few campaigns make use of all of them. One reason is a simple matter of time: few games go through enough sessions to use each possible foe even once. Many GMs also feel a game world with too many different monsters in it isn't believable. Since few games use more than a fraction of the total monsters available to them anyway, giving some thought to what will be common in advance can be useful.

A game in which certain monsters are more common can give PCs an edge, because they can take steps to be prepared for those creatures. For example, if red dragons are the only common evil dragon and they show up a lot, not only can PCs arm themselves with weapons that are effective against dragons, they know that magical defenses against fire will be unusually useful. Rangers are likely to take dragons as favored enemies, and everyone probably carries a ranged weapon of some kind.

This kind of campaign has some advantages. First, it tends to feel more unified than a game world in which everything goes. Red dragons are the most powerful of evil dragons, and it seems reasonable they'd spread to fill numerous positions of power. Second, allowing classes such as rangers know at least one monster type that's will be common allows players to gear their characters' class abilities to be useful at least some of the time. A ranger who takes animals as a favored enemy and then never runs into an animal is likely to feel cheated.

Also, a campaign with a few iconic monsters can be more fun, as players get to see how they mach up against the same kinds of enemies multiple times. A game in which ogres and ogre magi rule an evil empire trying to conquer the world has a strong theme to it, and as PCs gain levels they go from dealing with a single ogre scout, to squads

of ogre soldiers, to facing down elite ogre mage warlords. On top of using ogres as a benchmark for players to measure their PCs with, the campaign has a unique spin that sets it apart from other games.

Some creature types have a greater impact on play than others. In particular, carefully consider the balance issues of having higher or lower than normal numbers of constructs, giants, oozes, plants, undead, and vermin. The reasons why aren't always obvious. For example, dwarves and gnomes gain a +4 AC bonus against giants, making them far more effective in games with lots of giants.

Constructs, oozes, plants, and undead are immune to sneak attack and critical damage, which makes them tougher for rogues to deal with, as well as for fighters who depend on a weapon with a high critical threat range (such as a rapier) rather than a weapon that uses a larger damage die. Undead are particularly vulnerable to clerics and paladins, which means those characters get more spotlight time in games featuring hordes of the walking dead.

Constructs, oozes, plants, undead, and vermin are immune to mind-affecting effects. This makes them difficult for bards, illusionists, and enchanters to deal with. Most are also immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and polymorphing, but few classes depend on these abilities to be effective.

Numerous spells and magical items are geared to deal with plants and undead, so while including a large number of them in a campaign makes some classes (clerics, druids, paladins, and rangers) more useful than normal, it doesn't make life difficult for PCs in general. Other creatures immune to both critical hits and mind-affecting attacks (constructs and oozes) don't have as broad a selection of vulnerabilities. Although their CRs are balanced for their immunities, a game that uses a lot of these creatures is frustrating for players whose characters can't affect them. It's best to use constructs and oozes in moderation, or to include feats, spells, or magic items to help PCs deal with them.

Choosing PC Races

Most campaigns focus on a few core races that are common as PC races, with a few additional races that may be taken as a PC race only occasionally. GMs, however, can restrict PC races for any number of reasons. A GM might dislike a race (if you have halflings and dwarves, do you really need gnomes?), wish to restrict a race to villains (perhaps gnomes are evil dwarves, steeped in necromancy and demonology, who rule their own vile empire), not like the idea of a race (half-elves and half-orcs may seem to blur the lines between races too much — why aren't there half-gnomes if crossbreeds exist?), or just not want to deal with developing anything for a given race (humans, dwarves, elves, half-elves, half-orcs, halflings, and

gnomes come with a fair amount of material for use as PCs; centaurs, kobolds, goblins, and blink dogs don't).

One matter you should keep in mind is how a PC of a given race will be treated in the areas in which you plan to run games. A dwarven kingdom constantly struggling against giant clans will not look kindly on a half-ogre barbarian. As a result, the game's tone game may be changed by allowing one. Time will be taken up dealing with the prejudice and fear the half-ogre faces, leaving less time to delve into dungeons and fight evil raiders. If that's something you want to explore, fine; if not, the campaign is better off disallowing the half-ogre as a PC race.

Power level is another potential concern. Most games focus on races with no ECL shift, allowing 1st-level characters to start a game together. Adding ECL races can make early levels difficult (though there are ways to handle this by boosting the entire power level of the game; see **Boosting Power Levels** in **Chapter Six**). A game starting at higher than 1st level can more easily incorporate ECL races, but as a general rule, no race should be allowed with an ECL of more than half the starting game level (*i.e.*, if beginning a game at 6th level, allow no races with an ECL higher than +3).

Also consider the effect of unusual or bizarre PC races on the tone of your campaign. The further from traditional races the campaign gets, the more trouble players have understanding how the races act and interact. The attitudes of dwarves, elves, and orcs are well understood by most players (and even if you change those attitudes, you need describe only how the race is different in your games). Few players have experience with non-humanoids, and allowing monsters, giant insects, or slime molds as PCs will provoke a lot more questions from players.

You can modify races by using the background rules (see **Chapter Six**) . You can "sell" racial abilities and buy new background abilities to create a new race or sub-race. Ability score modifiers can be changed as well, as long as the total bonuses and penalties balance (Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution are considered to be worth twice what Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma are, so a +2 Strength needs a −2 Dexterity or Constitution, or a total of −4 to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma), and all ability score modifiers are even numbers.

For example, you could decide that in addition to traditional dwarves, your game will include desert dwarves, a slightly smaller and more cordial sub-race of surface dwellers. You eliminates darkvision, the ability to treat dwarven exotic weapons as martial weapons, and the +4 AC bonus against giants, gaining 8 background points. You then give desert dwarves low-light vision, Survival as a permanent class skill, immunity to sleep effects, and a +2 racial bonus to saves against enchantment spells or effects. You change the favored class to sorcerer and the ability score adjustments to −2 Strength, +2 Wisdom, and +2 Charisma. All other

particulars remain the same. (Some racial abilities aren't on the background element list; give them a cost based on their usefulness compared to other background elements).

Choosing Technology

A campaign should have a logical and consistent level of technology. The rules assume a roughly medieval tech base, with steel and sailing common, but few clockworks and no gunpowder. Many fantasy settings play with this assumption, adding steam engines, gear-based machines, wind power, flintlocks, modern clothing, advanced architecture designs or even giant spring-driven robots. Others prefer to maintain a classic level of technology, with bronze or iron the metal of choice and steel unknown, or a prehistoric Stone Age technology.

In some cases, changing a game's tech level has game consequences. For example, a game set in the Bronze Age is unlikely to have cold-iron weapons, making creatures with damage reduction vulnerable to that material particularly powerful. Similarly, a game eliminating crossbows as too high-tech removes the most effective ranged weapon for sorcerers and wizards. To maintain game balance, replace anything eliminated with a lower-tech equivalent (ash wood for cold iron, atl-atls for crossbows, and so on).

A consistent level of technology need not be a uniform level of technology. You can set up a campaign in numerous ways so a particular group or region has a higher tech base than others. The technology could depend on natural resources not available elsewhere (such as needing particular metals or minerals). It could be new to a region, and thus not have spread too extensively yet. Isolated groups can simply have a different tech base because they don't trade or communicate much with outsiders (an isolated group having a lower tech base rather than a higher one is just as easy to justify). Come up with some reason why differing tech levels exist if you want to maintain them, however. Otherwise, players are sure to carry high tech to lower tech areas and set up shop making and selling it.

When deciding on one or more tech levels, look at what you can easily support. Unless writing up dozens of higher-tech gadgets sounds like fun, stick with a technology level you have rules to define. Luckily, rules for everything from the Stone Age to futuristic technology are available, so you will have little difficulty getting rules for what you want. The second potential problem is players who wish to push the level of technology higher than you're comfortable with. Many players, when faced with flintlocks, decide their gnome inventor should be able to invent fully automatic machine rifles for instance.

If you allow these kinds of advances, all you need is to modify some set of rules to cover invention. Spell research and Craft rules are both likely candidates, assigning an effective "spell level" or Craft (inventor) DC and gold piece value to various designs. You're well within your rights, however, to forbid major advances in technology. Although things advance quite quickly in our modern world, progress is much slower at lower technology levels. The prevalence and power of magic also draws resources away from technology. (Why would a noble spend his money on researching guns when he can just hire wizards?)

Another option is to have the trappings of a more advanced technology without actually advancing the overall tech level. For example, if you want to allow flintlock firearms, you may not want the rest of the advances present in real-world history during the period when flintlocks were common. Rather than decide your campaign has all the technology flintlocks need, you may opt to have the weapons be special magical devices built by dwarves. Instead of black powder, the weapons use a powdered magic rock (*boompowder*) only dwarves know how to mine, and the barrels may need to be made of adamantine to withstand the force of the *boompowder* charge. Not only does this choice avoid real-world advances of chemistry and metallurgy, it allows limitations of the weapons to a few numbers and specific regions. (Also, the weapons logically wouldn't work in an *antimagic field*, since *boompowder* is magic — giving high-level wizards some defense against the technology.)

Similarly, the role of technology can be filled by obviously magical devices. Bracelets that tell time, wands of *magic missile* that can be used by anyone, amulets that allow those holding them to communicate over great distances, and magic books that store and manipulate information can all replace watches, guns, cell phones, and computers. In fact, you could create a campaign world with no advanced technology *per se*, but full of magical equivalents. Such a game might have a very modern or futuristic look, with democracy spreading (driven by the fact most peasants don't need to work all day nor require a lord's direct protection, and information can be freely and quickly disseminated) and kingdoms forced to use diplomacy to settle their differences to avoid the use of weapons of magical destruction. This campaign could follow the model of anything from gritty noir detective films (with hard-luck adventurers hired by fat merchants to find their missing torch-singer wives, who just happen to be cultists) to cyberpunk games, with mega-guilds wielding more power than kingdoms and golem-like replacement limbs commonplace.

Finally, you could opt to have just a few pieces of high tech exist and treat them like rare magic items. Indeed, characters in worlds with a single laser pistol may well treat it like a minor artifact — a wand used by anyone that cannot be dispelled. Such items might come from dimensional travelers from other realities, crashed starships from other worlds, or leftovers from advanced civilizations that destroyed themselves. As long as the items are rare and so advanced that they can't be duplicated, they should have little more impact than powerful magic items.

Campaign Vignettes: Technology Zones

The technology zones campaign lets the GM and players both play with higher-tech items without having them run rampant throughout the campaign world. Essentially, different areas of the campaign have differing maximum levels of technology, and powerful magic from the gods keeps it that way. Most games may take place in a middle-zone that follows traditional tech guidelines, but for a change of pace, players may have adventures with clockwork robots, primitive stone spears, or even plasma rifles.

Thus in the primitive jungles of evil humanoids, nothing more advanced than Stone Age technology functions. Steel weapons simply cannot be brought in (striking an impenetrable barrier and just staying behind if someone teleports there), and advanced weapons don't function. The humanoids' deities wish their worshipers to grow stronger by pitting themselves against the environment with little aid. The primitive humanoids aren't much of a threat to more advanced kingdoms (though they may make occasional raids), but more advanced nations are unwilling to march into the jungles without their technology to aid them, keeping the humanoids safe.

Most lands are stuck at the default fantasy medieval tech level, though the god of one land may allow steam engines while another encourages clockworks. Yet if these things are taken to lower-technology lands, they simply stop working. Dwarves have mountain kingdoms with extremely advanced clockwork and steam technologies, but cannot progress beyond this level of tech, leading perhaps to crude tanks and robots that can't leave the dwarven homelands. Races living in the subterranean kingdoms may have access to psionic technologies that don't work elsewhere, as well as biotech based on breeding specialized creatures to serve as weapons (acid-spitting slugs and living knives), armor, and appliances — but only at certain depths.

Adventures in this world often include foes who have a home-turf advantage. PCs become experts at dealing without their own tech and getting their hands on local devices quickly. The PCs may even be exceptions to these rules. They could be the chosen of the gods, allowed to carry any tech anywhere; or they might get hold of minor artifacts, such as a flintlock rifle that works in all technology zones.

~ Campaign Styles ~

The Evil Campaign

Even beyond the choices of what to include in a campaign, a GM can alter the type of game he runs by changing core assumptions common to the d20 rules. The alignment of the heroes, the accessibility of magic, and the availability of various feats, spells, and prestige classes can all be tweaked to give a campaign its own unique feel.

The Evil Campaign

One obvious idea for an unusual campaign with a strong theme is to play evil vs. good, with the PCs taking the roles of villains and the GM running the heroic forces trying to oppose them. The game-mechanical benefits for a different feel are obvious: PCs are suddenly fighting creatures classically defined as good and allying themselves with those normally reserved as antagonists. This sort of campaign allows the GM to access a whole range of foes the players may never have fought against. Additionally, plotting such a game seems straightforward: if the PCs are the bad guys, they need little incentive to steal, raid, and kill — they are, after all, evil.

Evil campaigns have numerous pitfalls, however; so many, actually, that most players and GMs consider them a universally bad idea. A number of GM's guides and articles have looked at the main arguments for and against evil characters in roleplaying game campaigns. The most common conclusions are that evil PCs should be avoided altogether, or that evil characters can work for one-shot or short-run scenarios but cannot be integrated into long-running campaigns without creating ill will and player strife.

If players are interested in exploring the heroic fantasy genre, heroes and heroic actions should be at the heart of roleplaying games. Certainly, there are a number of heroic games on the market, and their popularity suggests a fair number of gamers agree with this idea. Yet a number of games are not as obviously designed around a heroic ideal. In fact, books dealing with some of the least heroic creatures, vampires, seem most popular. Obviously, many vampire games are based on long-term campaigns filled with PCs that could safely be described as evil without resulting in endless player conflict. The reason evil PCs don't regularly disrupt the darker games in which they are common is that all the players expect other PCs to be evil. With that level of acceptance of evil within a game, a character dedicated to wiping out all foulness everywhere might actually be more disruptive and likely to result in hard feelings.

Like so many problems in long-term roleplaying game campaigns, the main problem with evil characters in heroic settings seems to be one of clashing expectations. If most of the players want a game that revolves around noble characters and heroic actions, a single player who

prefers grim intrigue and treachery even among his allies will be unhappy, make the other players unhappy, or both. A good GM can avoid many of these problems by outlining what he's looking for in his game in advance and have players go over their desires as well. Not everyone may be able to agree on how they want the game to run, but if the issue has been discussed, the chances of the game running smoothly are much higher.

Even the question of evil characters may sometimes be resolved in this way. Most players who enjoy heroic games don't want to deal with another player stealing from them or slipping poison into their drinks. Yet not every evil character is a thief or a murderer, and not every player who prefers them is looking to do his companions wrong. Some players want to be free to treat NPCs harshly, but assume their character is still human enough to have the PCs be his friends or smart enough to realize the usefulness a group that will defend you. Often, the evil anti-heroes so popular in fantasy fiction fit this second category, with loyalties and codes of conduct no less rigid than their good counterparts.

Of course, some players really do want their characters to be blackhearts who will happily kill, maim, or enslave their fellows if it gains them even a minor momentary advantage. Characters of this kind are more like sociopaths than anti-heroes and should rightly be banned from any game not specifically designed to accommodate them. Yet their evil does not so much make them undesirable as characters, rather it's their lack of consideration to other party members and PCs. In many ways, a tremendously narrow-minded crusader for good who insists on everyone obeying his gods and following his moral code is just as disruptive to long-term group play, and should also be disallowed if he causes problems among the players.

In a healthy, long-running roleplaying game campaign, no one player tries to have fun with his character at the expense of other players — even if his character is evil.

The second main concern for running evil games is how to handle acts of evil and player discomfort with describing unpleasant acts. While some of this can come up in any campaign (see **Sensitive Subjects** in **Chapter One**), some of it also must be handled through campaign goals. Evil characters need not be vile. They can just be greedy or unprincipled, and no more willing to resort to torture than the good guys. A single evil character can actually be a realistic ally, an individual who lacks the morals of his fellow, but otherwise agrees with their goals.

Evil campaigns are sufficiently uncomfortable for many players that you should carefully discuss your plans for one before doing any other work on it. Since most roleplaying game supplements are geared towards good

characters, you actually set out to do a lot of work to run such a game. If even one player is unhappy with the idea, giving up the idea for something more traditional is best. Even if all players seem comfortable initially, your job is to make sure they don't become too uncomfortable during the course of the campaign. If anyone thinks an evil character or game has gone too far, it's time to reconsider running it.

If you just want access to traditionally good-aligned creatures to use as foes, try setting up a world with corrupting influences that can change good creatures to evil, providing him with black unicorns and fallen angles to use as villains against good or neutral PCs. For example, see the **Fallen Angel** template in Green Ronin's *The Book of Fiends*.

Magic-Free or Low-Magic Campaigns

The core d20 fantasy rules assume a certain level of magic, both in power and in availability. This assumed level works with many other assumptions, including what level PCs get access to magic items, what kinds of abilities foes have at various CRs, and how classes maintain balance with each other. You can alter the power, frequency, or cost of magic to decrease its effect on the campaign, focusing more attention on combat styles, skills, and good planning.

Requiring Spellcasters to Multiclass

One way to allow spellcasters in a low-magic game without doing a lot of redesign work is simply to require all spellcasters to multiclass, with no more than half their levels going into any one spellcasting class (or possibly no more than half their levels in any spellcasting class). This rule allows spellcasters to exist, but limits their spells per day and access to higher level spells. Such limitation is partially alleviated by the fact the spellcaster has the abilities of another class to fall back on: for instance, a 4th-level fighter/4th-level wizard may only have 2nd-level spells, but she also has the option to take Weapon Specialization; similarly, a 3rd-level sorcerer/3rd-level wizard can't cast *fireballs*, but has access to a fair number of 1st- and 2nd-level spells.

This option works, but only if magic items are equally rare. A spellcaster who multiclasses half her levels is not an optimal character design using the standard game assumptions, so to maintain balance her magic abilities must be more useful than usual. If magic items remain as common, characters can more easily depend on them for magic power. Instead, a multiclass campaign should increase the cost of magic items (generally to double the listed values), automatically making them less common. Alternatively, use-activated magic items can be priced

at 150% standard, and items requiring the user to have appropriate spells on her spell list left at normal prices. This rule allows characters with spellcasting levels access to additional power in the form of wands and staves, helping to offset their limited spell power.

Changing Spell Lists

Another simple way to lower the impact of magic on a campaign is to alter spell lists to make flashy spells higher level or even remove them entirely. Doing so reduces the obvious impact of magic in a game, but permits spellcasters to remain balanced by having them rely more heavily on other spells. Magic items using such spells should be increased in price using the formula for the spell's new level.

A few categories of spells that can be boosted in level or eliminated are discussed below.

Damage

Spells that deal direct damage are the least subtle and the least interesting. Raising them a level or two forces spellcasters to become more creative, while eliminating them entirely is a much more serious blow. Spellcasters can still be balanced, but need to be given a wide range of non-damaging spells (thus, combining this option with other spell-limiting options described in this section will likely cripple spellcasters). If damaging spells are entirely eliminated, spells with durations of 1 minute per level should be boosted to 10 minutes per level, to allow more varied use of remaining magic.

Divination

Any divination can be removed without making spellcasters useless, though doing so requires a GM to be ready to deal with bardic lore, Knowledge checks, and research efforts designed to gain the same kind of information. On the other hand, eliminating the alignment-detecting spells from a campaign world opens a broad range of possible plots, as evil NPCs can more easily hide in the open.

Force

Spells with the force descriptor are both particularly effective and particularly flashy. Raising their level or even eliminating them causes few problems except when dealing with ethereal or incorporeal foes (which should gain a new weakness, similar to those used to balance damage reduction, below).

Healing

Eliminating healing makes a game much more dangerous and reduces the number and difficulty of encounters a group can take on. Even just making healing spells higher level significantly impacts play. A somewhat less severe route is to change magic healing so it converts lethal damage to nonlethal damage. Another option is

to limit characters to receiving the benefits of one of a particular type of healing each day. Under this option, a character who receives a *cure light wounds* can't gain more hit points from that particular spell until 24 hours have passed, though other *cure* spells, as well as potions or a paladin's lay on hands, still work.

Transportation

Spells that allows characters to run quickly, fly, teleport, or go to other dimensions can easily be cut from a game, as long as adventures don't require their use. This change tends to increase the time spent traveling at higher levels, but rarely in a disruptive way. Being unable to go to different dimensions limits adventure options somewhat and can make ethereal or incorporeal creatures more difficult to defeat, but not severely so.

Resources

Without magic, the resources available to characters are greatly reduced. The GM must either accept characters will have fewer options or provide additional nonmagical resources for PCs to draw on and players to plot with. (A number of nonmagical materials and qualities are presented in **Chapter Seven** to help with this issue.) With fewer resources, characters have fewer options during game play, which can make a game less exciting. You can add in new resources (such as psionics, new and unusually powerful feats, or rules variants such as the fortune points presented in **Chapter Two**), or try to create situations providing multiple options naturally (a fight taking place in a tavern, for example, has more things for characters to throw, jump over, and hide behind than a fight in a desert).

Damage Reduction

Damage reduction (DR) is one of the trickiest elements to handle in a low-magic game. Most damage reduction is bypassed with magic or aligned weapon, and aligned weapons normally require magic to create. Simply eliminating DR makes many creatures too easily killed, but leaving it as-is (requiring items not in the campaign) is unbalancing as well. A number of potential options for altering DR for low-magic games are presented below. In most cases, creatures with DR that can't be bypassed need not be changed. Creatures that have DR bypassed by something still available in the campaign (such as cold iron, silver, or adamantine) also need not be changed.

Conditional DR

Conditional DR changes the creature's defenses to work only in certain circumstances. For example, an iron golem might have a shield that worked only against attacks from a 180-degree arc, or a gargoyle might have DR that worked only at night. An appropriate Knowledge check (DC 13 + creature's CR) reveals under what circumstances its DR doesn't apply.

This rule creates mythic-feeling monsters, which must be lured into traps or hunted down during certain times. They're nearly invulnerable when at their strength, but cunning heroes can find a way to defeat them.

Increased CR

Rather than weakening the creature's DR, increase it's CR. As a guideline, increase the creature's CR by 1 for every 3 points of DR it has that can't be bypassed. Thus, a gargoyle with DR 10/magic goes from CR 4 to CR 7. This rule can also be used in high-magic campaigns if a creature's DR is changed to be resistant to all attacks, though access to magic (allowing more damaging attacks and spell attacks) means the CR boost should be only +1 per 5 points of DR.

Material DR

Change all DR that requires a magic element to DR bypassed by some material. All DR ends up being vulnerable to alchemical silver, cold iron, or a similar material. DR against alignments is bypassed by any attack from someone with the appropriate alignment, regardless of what weapon they use.

The potential side effect of using this variant is that it encourages characters to carry a "golf bag" of different weapons to use against different monsters. You can overcome this issue by limiting the number of different materials that bypass DR (only wood, cold iron, and silver, for example) or by using a few special materials that qualify against multiple DR types (see **Sovereign Materials** in **Chapter Seven**).

Reduced DR

Rather than make DR more easily bypassed, just reduce its value. This means DR creatures are among the toughest to beat in the campaign (as they reduce the damage dealt by almost every blow), but that can give the game a harsh, dangerous feel that some groups enjoy. The DR reduction must account for both the fact it can't be readily bypassed and that there are no magical augmentations that help combatants deal more damage.

Reduced DR

Old DR	New DR
1	1
2–5	2
6–10	3
11–15	5
16+	8

Weaknesses

This rule is similar to conditional DR, except it's not only the DR that applies under certain circumstances but some other weakness you add to the monster. The weakness should be at least as common and effective as

those of a vampire (garlic aversion, daylight, running water), and allow the heroes to harm or weaken the creature without weapon blows or spells. For example, a pit fiend might be left with its DR intact, making it nearly invulnerable in games lacking aligned magic weapons. If the pit fiend cannot stand to hear the name of a particular deity, however, the PCs still have options for dealing with it. The name might actually harm the pit fiend (characters do 1d4 hit points per two levels when they speak the word, the fiend getting a Will save for half damage) or maybe just stun it for a round.

High-Magic Campaigns

You may decide you want magic to be more common than the standard rules assume, making spellcasters and magic items powerful forces in your campaign. Most options for expanding the role of magic also boost a game's overall power level and are covered in **Chapter Six** (see **Bonus Special Abilities**). A few other options are presented here.

Increased Magic Items

The easiest way to make a high-magic campaign is to increase the number of magic items in it. There are two basic ways to do this: expand which characters can make magic items, and decrease the cost of magic items.

To expand who can make magic items, you could give two item creation feats for every feat slot expended (as well as doubling bonus item creation feats, giving wizards both Scribe Scroll and Brew Potion, for example). You can eliminate caster level prerequisites for items (though maintaining other prerequisites). You can allow non-spellcasters to make magic items, granting them one spell-like prerequisite for each rank of Knowledge (arcana) they possess. (Thus, for example, a fighter with the Brew Potion feat and 6 ranks of Knowledge [arcana] could pick six spells he would use only for the purpose of making potions.)

You can also make magic items cheaper. One-shot items are generally cheap enough even for a high-magic campaign, but you can cut the price of other magic items by –25% or even –50%, just as long as the same costs are used when figuring NPC gear. This adjustment results in a high-powered but balanced campaign and expands the total options each character has available.

Spells as Feats and Skills

If you want to make magic more common, allow characters to gain access to it through skills and feats. Doing so maintains game balance (as the characters could use the skill points and feats for non-magic benefits) and increases options for characters.

To run spells as skills, you need to create a new skill for each path of magic listed in the eldritch weaver class

description in the *Advanced Player's Manual*. These are cross-class skills for every class. A character can have a total number of spell levels prepared equal to his ranks in the appropriate path of magic, uses his total ranks as his caster level, and must make a successful skill check (DC 10 + spell level) actually to cast a spell. On a failed roll, the spell is lost. All spells are Intelligence based, and characters have normal chances arcane spell failure chances for wearing armor. A character must get 8 hours of rest before preparing spells again and must take 1 hour to prepare his allotment of spells.

For example, Jayne the Small is a 7th-level halfling bard with a 14 Intelligence. She buys 5 ranks of the skill Thread of Destruction, allowing her to prepare up to 5 levels worth of spells as a 5th-level caster (limiting her to 3rd-level spells). She takes 1 hour to prepare *scorching ray* and *fireball*. When she decides to cast *fireball*, she must make a Thread of Destruction skill check with a DC of (10 + 3) 13.

This rule allows non-spellcasters a limited level of magic ability and allows spellcasting classes to augment their existing selection of spells. Since the additional spell power is so limited, game balance is preserved.

Adding spells as feats can be done one of two ways. You can allow spellcasting characters to gain new spells by taking a feat (see the Expanded Spell Choice feat in **Appendix One**), or allow any character to gain limited spellcasting ability by expending multiple feat slots (see the Spell Power feat in **Appendix One**).

– Campaign Rules –

A campaign is a discrete environment. Once you define what elements are present within your game, you can work within the rules to create character options balanced for your game. The most common elements to add are new feats and prestige classes, which are among the most powerful tools for customization in the d20 rules. By adding and creating feats and prestige classes, you can fine-tune the feel and tone of your game.

When adding and designing these elements, ensure they are balanced for your specific campaign. Often, powers and options that would be out of place in a typical game are perfectly reasonable within a specific campaign. For example, if undead are very rare, creating a feat that adds +10 to turn checks may be balanced. Although wildly overpowered for a typical game, in a low-undead setting, this feat may simply make turn abilities worth having.

Feats in a Campaign

Feats constitute one of the most effective means to personalize and give a campaign a unique feel. They are designed to allow characters to bend the rules, to ignore restrictions, and to improve various abilities. By controlling what feats players have access to, you can heavily encourage the type of characters and action you wants for your game. There are two main ways to do this: carefully considering what existing feats to allow, and create altogether new feats.

Allowing Feats in a Campaign

A dizzying number of feats are available in scores of supplements and rulebooks for d20 roleplaying games. While this wealth of choice allows players a great variety of options when building and personalizing PCs, it also provides numerous opportunities for unbalancing combinations and adding poorly designed mechanics. Keep strict control of what feats are allowed in your games. As long as players are warned ahead of time, there's no reason any given feat must be included. Players expect all the feats from the core rules of a campaign to be available, and generally they should be, but the final decision rests with you. Part of your job as adjudicator of a campaign involves deciding which rules are appropriate for your setting and theme. Never give in to a player trying to bully him into allowing a feat that's unbalanced, badly defined, or just inappropriate for the game.

If possible, make a master list of the feats you intend to allow into a campaign before character creation occurs. This list gives all players equal access to the feats and allows them to design characters around useful or powerful feats that have extensive prerequisites. When deciding what feats to accept, consider the goals and themes of your campaign. Feats are the best way to modify a campaign's feel simply and easily. To encourage social interaction, find social-based feats and make them easily accessible. In addition to skill bonus feats and the Leadership feat, the GM may want to allow feats that represent titles, such as knighthood or nobility, and those producing social favors or symbolizing membership in guilds and political groups or social standing. Likewise, if designing a campaign to focus on battle and exploration, concentrate on combat options and survival feats.

Eventually a player will ask to allow a new feat from some sourcebook he owns. If you wish to consider new feats from new sources, certain steps should be taken. First, insist on getting a copy of the feat and being allowed to consider it outside of game time. A player doesn't need to provide a whole sourcebook, but he should loan out his copy or jot down the feat's details. Your job is not to keep track of every d20 product on the market; realistically, doing so is not even possible. While a character cannot normally "save" a feat for later, telling a player to wait one game before choosing a new feat is fine, so you can decide whether or not to approve it.

Compare any proposed feat to existing feats to ensure it's not significantly more powerful. A feat that gives a character 5 bonus hit points may not seem unreasonable, but if a campaign already has Toughness, the new feat is universally better. Players who gave their characters Toughness or assumed there were no better options

General Design Concerns

Many of the concerns and issues about feats also apply to other elements of the game. When considering new spells, equipment, base or prestige classes, skills, or races, you should go through much the same process as described for adding new feats. Use the advice presented here for adding and creating feats whenever he creates any new element for his campaign. The sections on adding and creating feats are the largest in this chapter because they are used to address concerns common to many aspects of the d20 game. Because feats are among the most common elements GMs add to campaigns, they receive the most attention, but the advice applies equally well to other elements.

For example, the advice for naming a feat applies equally well to naming a spell or prestige class. Using anything that has a game mechanical definition or anything a GM may want to use when describing a situation is not a good idea. An archery-based prestige class shouldn't be called an archer, for example, because then if you want to tell players there are four men with bows on a hill, he can't just say "You see four archers" without the players wondering if he means members of the prestige class, much as if he'd said "You see four blackguards." If the class is "archers of the true way," however, no confusion is likely to occur.

Remembering that any element of the d20 game can become unbalancing if it isn't carefully compared to similar items and checked to see how it combines with other items is important. If possible, try to duplicate the effect of your new game element with existing rules, to see if the new item is too good. For example, you might decide a race of evil humanoid raiders needs a new weapon. In general, this is a good idea, as it makes the humanoids memorable and interesting foes. Inspired by a curved sword-like weapon from a science-fiction television show, the GM decides this new weapon is called a *kaeleth* and combines the best features of a longsword and a battleaxe; it deals 1d8 points of damage, has a threat range of 19–20, a ×3 critical multiplier, and weighs 10 pounds. Since it's obviously an unusual weapon, the GM decides to have it require the Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat and assumes that the feat requirement makes it balanced against less effective weapons.

However, this weapon has some striking advantages. It's effectively a battleaxe with double the threat range. This means the same effect can be gained by taking Improved Critical with a battleaxe, something that can't be done until a character gets a +8 base attack bonus. This new weapon can be used by a 1st-level fighter, who also needs to spend only one feat but can do so well before gaining a +8 base attack bonus. Further, once the fighter does qualify for Improved Critical, she can take it as well, giving her a weapon with a threat range of 17–20 and a ×3 critical multiplier, which can't be done with a battleaxe. The *kaeleth* is thus superior to a battleaxe when closely examined.

You can take any of a number of steps to solve this problem. He may decide the *kaeleth* is a two-handed weapon, but still just deals 1d8 points of damage. Now it compares to greatswords and greataxes, which don't have as good a critical value, but deals more damage. Or you might decide to keep it as a one-handed weapon, but reduce its damage to 1d6. You might even decide the awkward *kaeleth* has an inherent –2 penalty to attack rolls, but otherwise leave it unchanged. Any of these steps makes it more balanced — able to produce savage criticals with some frequency, but not clearly superior to any other weapon.

than Toughness will likely be annoyed if a superior feat suddenly shows up. Also, see how the feat interacts with existing feats. Start by checking the character's feats— there may be a particular reason he wants a seemingly innocuous feat. Compare the power level of the new feat to that of existing feats, and then compare prerequisites and special notes. If the new feat seems too powerful or too easily attainable, it likely needs to be changed.

If you decide a feat is too good or too dangerous, either disallow it or modify it. Often, a minor change to how a bonus is defined (or isn't) and under what circumstances it applies can change an overpowered feat into a reasonable option for a campaign. A feat that adds +1 damage to all damage a character deals theoretically applies to spells, weapons, and possibly even attacks with siege weapons. Redefining the feat to apply to a specific weapon or a class of weapons limits the damage it can do to a campaign. Sometimes, a feat needs prerequisites to fall in line with existing feats. Our theoretical +1 damage feat might require a character to have Weapon Specialization, allowing him to deal +2 damage with one weapon and +1 damage with all other weapons in the same class. This prerequisite also restricts the feat to fighters, which helps preserve their role as primary combatants.

Once you approve a new feat, each of a campaign's players should be made aware of it. A feat that only seems appropriate for one character probably isn't a good feat, unless its limited appeal is a result of reasonable

prerequisites. Allowing "secret" feats only one or two players get to know about is unfair. Even if characters are unaware of feats limited to members of a particular organization, the *players* should know about them. If a feat is taken by everyone shortly after being made available, it's probably too good, and you should consider modifying it.

Designing Feats

In addition to choosing feats to set a game's tone, you can design new feats. You may find a hole in the core rules of a game, wish to expand play into new areas, or want to change the entire feel of a game by making new options available. Trying to balance feats is important, but remember that a feat may be balanced for one style of game but totally inappropriate for another. Always check new feats against the abilities and standard spells and equipment of the campaign's core classes, and look to see if they combine in unexpected ways.

Feat Concepts

Any aspect of a character that can be defined in either plain speech or game mechanical terms is appropriate for augmentation by or change as a feat. Most feats revolve around skills or combat because those are obvious areas to adjust. When looking to design a feat, try to visualize what kinds of characters you want in your game and create feats appropriate for them. For example, if you want to encourage PCs to consider seriously their religious beliefs and moral duties, even if not playing clerics and priests, having some feats based on religious doctrine and ethical considerations is a good idea. A feat that grants a +1 morale bonus to all saves for a week after a character confesses her sins (in the manner her religion requires) forces a player to consider her character's sins and look for appropriate locations to confess them.

One of the core uses of feats for players is to set their characters apart from those of other players. Thus, never create feats that will likely make characters more similar or generic. For example, the evasion ability is extremely useful and could easily be added to a line of speed- and Dexterity-based feats that included Dodge and Improved Initiative. This is a bad idea, however, because only characters who don't get evasion already would be attracted to the feat. Moreover, they would become more similar to the rogues and monks, who get evasion as part of their class abilities, and so decrease rather than increase differentiation among characters. As benchmarks, try not to turn class abilities into feats or create feats that affect more than one or two closely related things, even if the new feats have difficult prerequisites.

As examples, we'll design two different ideas for feats from concept to final form. The first idea is to represent the ways that different fighting styles use weapons. The feat is specifically geared to be useful for monks, since fighting styles seem very much a part of monk characters, but it should be at least potentially useful to other classes as well. The second idea is a social feat that minor nobles take to represent their legal standing in society and potential advantages in social settings.

Once you have an idea for a feat, you need to define its name, prerequisites, benefits, and any special notes.

Feat Names

Often a name for a new feat comes at the same time as the basic concept, but there are some guidelines to keep in mind. First, a name should be both short and evocative. Feats often need to be brought up during play, and no one wants to say she is using her Great Crane Flying Through the Willows Kick every other round of combat. On the other hand, names that are too generic or too boring don't help set the atmosphere, so Improved Kick or Big Kick aren't much better. A short, evocative name such as Great Crane Kick strikes a good balance between game feel and practicality. When in doubt, err on the side of simple, descriptive feat names.

Try not to use a name similar to any other feat, special ability, or spell if at all possible. The d20 rules have game-related meanings for many terms, and if you create a Mental Dodge feat that has nothing to do with dodge bonuses, it may lead to confusion. Similarly, you don't want to have Skill Focus, Skill Emphasis, Skill Synergy, and Skill Bonus feats in the same game — no one will remember which feat does what. On the other hand, when modifying an existing feat, a related name can remind players what the new feat replaces. If you decide to disallow Power Attack and replace it with a feat that allows character to subtract 5 (and only 5) from attack rolls and add 5 to damage rolls, there's nothing wrong with calling the new feat Power Strike.

For our first example feat, we'll use the name Weapon Kata. It's certainly descriptive, since the feat is supposed to represent specific weapon fighting styles. It also avoids any game-related terms that might lead to confusion. It's not the most evocative name in the world, but that's okay since it meets our most important criteria. Certainly, anyone designing a character with a martial arts concept should find the name intriguing enough to look up.

For our second example feat, we have a lot of options. The more general the feat, the more useful it is, but also the more carefully it needs to be named. A name like Noble or Lord doesn't make the feat appealing to commoner politicos, guild leaders, and senators even if the campaign allows for them. It also seems likely the feat will be a gateway feat much like Dodge — not that useful by itself, but the prerequisite for a broad range of feats. Looking through a thesaurus at Noble, we come across Peer, which has a nice ring to it and is more generic.

Type

Feats fall into a few broad categories. General, metamagic, special, and item creation are the most common; some rules add background, bloodline, fighter, martial, social, and similar categories. The advantage of categorizing similar feats is that other rules can easily refer to them. If you want to ensure a new prestige class is available only to serious spellcasters, you can simply make any two metamagic feats prerequisites. You don't need to list every feat, and if you add a new metamagic feat, it's automatically included as a possible prerequisite just because of its category. On the other hand, having too many categories can create confusion.

The most useful additional categories are those for which you already have rules. For example, you could define all feats that fighters can take as bonus feat as fighter feats. If he then creates a new fighter feat, players with fighters automatically know they can take it as a bonus, without having to re-write the fighter's list. You can then also create a prestige class that gains access to bonus feats taken from the fighter feats, making the classes compatible without compiling a whole new list of feats. If you design a new set of feats that may be chosen only at 1st level, calling them background feats separates them neatly. There's also nothing wrong with a feat having more than one category — Weapon Focus, for instance, can be both a fighter and general feat.

For simplicity, we'll restrict our examples to the four normal categories and add combat feats, defined as those from which a fighter may select bonus feats. Weapon Kata becomes a fighter and general feat, while Peer is just a general feat. In a campaign with an emphasis on social interaction, defining a set of social feats would be a good idea, in which case the Peer feat would fall into that category.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites serve three main functions: they keep a feat from being too common; they prevent feats from being taken until mid or high levels; and they make powerful feats less attractive by saddling them with numerous less useful feats. The more useful and powerful a feat is, the more prerequisites it needs. No feat should be so powerful every character wants it, but feats with many prerequisites can certainly give more benefit than those available at 1st level or with little effort.

If a feat has a minimum ability score as a prerequisite, the score should be at least 13 and *always* be an odd-numbered value. Feats should reward high ability scores, and a score lower than 13 doesn't qualify as notably high. The score should be odd, because ability modifiers all occur at even values; by making all feat ability prerequisites odd, a distinction is made between a 12 Intelligence (a +1 modifier, but not smart enough

for Combat Expertise) and a 13 Intelligence (still a +1 modifier, but now qualifying for the feat).

A single ability score of 13 or more is a mild prerequisite, but requiring multiple high scores or scores of 15, 17, or even 19 or higher is much more restrictive. Unless you intend for a feat to be taken only by epic level characters, a feat shouldn't require an ability score higher than 19 as a prerequisite and no more than two ability scores at any level. A feat requiring Strength and Intelligence of 19 or greater will be taken so rarely, there's little point in designing it.

Having other feats as prerequisites is fine, but considering how useful those feats are is important, especially when depending on them to make a new feat less attractive. If you design a feat that's useful for fighters wielding large weapons with a high damage output, requiring Power Attack, Cleave, and Great Cleave doesn't make the feat much less appealing, since those are feats the target characters are very likely to want anyway. On the other hand, if the feat requires Toughness and Improved Initiative, it isn't as easily taken by heavy combat characters. Toughness and Improved Initiative are acceptable feats, but they have little to do with big weapons in particular and are much less common choices for character who wield them.

Of course, a feat's prerequisites may not be designed to force players to make a major investment. Prerequisites can include a large number of feats just to delay how soon a character can take a feat. A feat designed to allow wizards to get more out of their spells when using magic items

may well just require any two metamagic feats and any two item creation feats. Certainly such broad requirements will likely be easily met by any character interested in the new feat, but not until 6th level or so at the earliest. When deciding what ability to make a feat's prerequisite, think about what kinds of characters you want to take the feat.

You can also use minimum scores for attributes other than abilities. A combat feat with a minimum base attack bonus of +5 won't be taken by anyone before 5th level, and characters with less combat ability will be a much higher level. This is a useful way of delaying a feat until its power level won't unbalance a campaign. Similarly, requiring a minimum base save bonus or a minimum number of ranks in a skill are sure-fire ways to delay feats. Just make sure your prerequisites make some kind of sense. There's nothing wrong with having a combat feat require a minimum base attack bonus or an item creation feat require a minimum number of Craft ranks, but having a feat designed to make the character harder to hit require 8 ranks of Appraise just doesn't make any sense.

Using skills and similar elements as prerequisites can both help make a feat limited in scope and more flavorful. For example, an Improved Dodge feat that grants a +1 dodge bonus against all attacks is fairly dull, though if it has Dex 17, Tumble 8 ranks, and Dodge as prerequisites, it may well be balanced. On the other hand, a feat called Dance of Avoidance with the same benefit but prerequisites of Dex 15, Tumble 5 ranks, Perform (dance) 5 ranks, and Dodge is far more interesting.

Prerequisites can also be purely roleplaying concerns. A feat might only be available to characters of good alignment or those that have been faithful to their deity. If using the alternate alignment rules in Green Ronin's *Advanced Player's Manual*, a feat might require a minimum Good or Law value. Feats restricted to people raised in a particular country, or those that have killed a dragon, or those that have been knighted by a recognized king are all perfectly reasonable. Again, the key is to make sure your prerequisites make sense. Is a feat really only available to characters raised in a particular kingdom, or is it just most common there? If there's a good reason for a prerequisite, add it, but don't make absolute requirements that aren't necessary.

For our example feats, Weapon Kata and Peer, we have two very different sets of needs. Weapon Kata is supposed to represent martial arts styles and their use of weapons. To indicate a level of mastery, Weapon Focus with the weapon in question is a good idea. To make it martial arts relevant, we also add Improved Unarmed Strike. Since a fighting style would probably take a high level of Intelligence to master, we tack on a minimum Intelligence of 15. That's three requirements, but all ones that could be met at 1st level. To keep it at higher levels, we finally add a base attack bonus of +4. Now fighters can take the feat at 4th level and monks at 6th level.

For the Peer feat, it should not be too hard to get. A young noble or well-loved artisan could certainly have a position in society while being at best a 1st-level character. On the other hand, the character should be likeable, have leadership potential, and have a community. For game mechanics, a minimum Charisma of 15 seems reasonable. As a roleplaying concern, we add a requirement that the character have a community that considers him a native. That doesn't do anything but prevent character concepts of hermits, loners, or the last survivor of Atlantis taking the feat, but that's okay. We want any high-Charisma character with an appropriate character concept to be able to take Peer.

BENEFIT

The crux of a feat is the benefit it offers. Feats range from those granting minor benefits to those that have major effects on the way a character performs. There are no hard-and-fast rules on feat balance — there are simply too many variables for any formula to produce accurate results. Additionally, not all feat concepts will give benefits that can be easily measured in any objective way. The most important factors regarding feat benefits are that they should be balanced with existing feats and should be well defined.

A feat can reasonably be seen as part of a class level. If adding to something common and useful (such as an attack roll or hit points), it should grant less benefit than a single level in a class strong in that area. For example, adding to attack rolls is very useful and powerful. Therefore, a feat should add less benefit than taking a level in a fighting class. Since the fighter class already increases a character's base attack bonus by +1 at every level, Weapon Focus must be less useful than that. Thus, the Weapon Focus feat adds a +1 bonus to only a single weapon chosen by the character. This is useful, but less so than an increase in base attack bonus that applies to all weapons. Similarly, the Toughness feat adds 3 hit points, close to the average amount a character will likely get when gaining a level.

Feats granting benefits that aren't as powerful or aren't as likely to come into play regularly may need to provide multiple levels' worth of benefit, though rarely more than four. Improved Grapple grants a bonus to a specific maneuver, but only comes into play when that specific attack is a good idea. It removes a drawback (negating the attack of opportunity a grapple attempt normally provokes) and gives a +4 bonus to the grapple check — about the amount that would be gained by 4 levels in a fighting class. Similarly, the Extra Turning feat adds to a useful ability, but only comes into play when the GM decides to use undead. Its bonus of +4 turn/rebuke attempts a day is high, but not likely to come up all that often. These are all good benchmarks of appropriately powered feat benefits.

When defining a feat's benefits, try to come up with a clear definition of what bonuses or abilities it grants

or augments, and when they apply. A feat that sounds impressive, but doesn't define its application exactly, leads to assumption clashes between GMs and players. If possible, design the feat so the player decides when it applies, rather than the GM. For example, a feat called Born Lucky could be defined as having things work out well for the character when the GM determines is appropriate. The GM expects he'll allow the PC with this feat to find things by pure chance occasionally, while the player thinks his character can wander though the wilderness alone, since he's too lucky to run into random encounters. Eventually, this difference in opinions will lead to an argument or at least dissatisfaction on the player's part.

If instead Born Lucky allows a player to require the GM to re-roll any one roll made regarding the player's PC each game session, the benefits are both clearly defined and in the player's hands. The player's character can avoid a critical hit (at least possibly) or even dodge a poor random encounter roll, but only once per game. This feat makes the character lucky (possibly too lucky — to be balanced, there must be more limitations or high prerequisites) and avoids potential misunderstandings about how the feat works.

Looking at the Weapon Kata feat, it obviously needs to allow characters to do something with weapons they normally can't. Since it's designed to be most appealing to monks, the feat's main benefit is to allow a character to deal his unarmed damage with the selected weapon, as well as deliver ranged touch attacks with it. To make the feat useful to other characters, it also allows a PC to make trip and grapple attacks with the selected weapon.

For the Peer feat, we need two minor benefits. To represent the increased ability to lead, it grants a bonus to a character's leadership score (relevant when and if he takes the Leadership feat). To make the feat useful by itself, a bonus to some skills when used on a member of the character's community seems reasonable. Charisma-based feats are certainly appropriate, and Sense Motive is added to help the character when negotiating with his own people. The Peer feat doesn't do much by itself, but it's not useless and can easily be a lead-in to a whole tree of social, leader-type feats.

Additional Notes

If there's anything else that needs to be noted about your new feat, it should be covered in the Special or Normal entries. Special notes include such things as the ability to take the feat more than once (and what benefit is gained by doing so), whether a given class may take the feat as a bonus feat (though this may be covered by the feat's type; see above), whether the feat won't work in specific circumstances (such as a bard's inability to augment spells with Silent Spell), and notes on any character class that begins with the feat for free. Anything else a GM feels is important to mention regarding the feat can be noted here as well.

The Normal entry in a feat's description is a place to note down how the campaign's rules work for characters without the feat. For example, our Weapon Kata feat allows characters to use weapons to make various forms of attack. It's worth noting that these attacks can't be made with weapons normally, so a player looking at the feat knows why he might want it. Since the Peer feat is supposed to be for all sorts of well-liked people, the Normal section is used to note that the feat can represent being a minor noble, a junior knight, or even a local celebrity.

~ Prestige Classes ~

Prestige classes (PrCs) are character classes with prerequisites designed to simulate a level of specialization, a particular group or style, or an advanced level of skill. Characters shouldn't qualify for prestige classes before 5th level (or possibly 3rd level for 3- to 5-level classes), because they haven't learned enough really to distinguish themselves from the core character classes.

PrCs are wonderful tools for GMs to personalize campaigns and reward PCs. Any group a GM wishes to distinguish from the norm — especially if it has access to resources, secrets, training, or techniques not available to others — can be given its own PrC. Doing so helps define the important groups within a campaign and gives PCs a tangible clue that a given group is special. Since PrCs can be designed to grant nearly any power, you can use them to define groups that are difficult to create with the core classes of the campaign. For example, a group of shapeshifting arcane mages isn't easily done with the core rules; a multiclass druid/sorcerer might qualify, but is a

poor design choice. Instead, the GM can find or create a new PrC (perhaps the skin-shifter), which is most easily qualified for by wizards and grants shapeshifting abilities.

PrCs can also be used to cover characters that are more specialized than the core classes. For example, a GM might wish to have an archer PrC that has less woodcraft and magic than the ranger and less versatility than the fighter. Such a class need not represent any particular group and may be common in many different lands. This kind of PrC helps support the themes and style of the campaign. A GM who wants many characters to be specialized in specific military-style roles can make scout, heavy infantry, and siege engineer PrCs available, giving players specific ways to fill roles he wishes to promote.

When looking for PrCs to fill any of these roles, you can turn to nearly any d20 sourcebook and find options. PrCs are perhaps even more common than feats, and thousands are available in game books and online sources. The good news is that you have lots of options. The bad

news is that many PrCs are poorly designed, geared for a specific campaign style, or ill-defined. Many GMs either limit their games to a few PrCs from publishers they trust or those they design themselves.

Allowing Prestige Classes in a Game

Most of the concerns regarding PrCs are the same as those regarding feats. Consider the implications of a new prestige class, how it works with rules already allowed, and how it might unbalance a game. Many of these issues are addressed under Allowing New Feats.

Designing Prestige Classes

You must be comfortable determining the balance of PrCs, both so you can vet existing PrCs and so you can design your own (or radically redesign one that is close to what you want, but not quite right). A PrC should be good enough to be worth waiting for and not so good, it invalidates base classes. As with feats, the more prerequisites a PrC has, the more power it can grant; however, a PrC should never be better than a core class in all regards. Creating a PrC that grants slightly better spellcasting ability than a wizard is fine, but it should lack the core class's familiar and bonus feats. If a character is always better off taking a PrC than sticking with a core class, the PrC is too good.

The same basic rules of design apply to new base classes. If you feel a PrC you're designing should be available to 1st-level characters, it's really a new base class. New base

classes must be at least as carefully balanced as PrCs and should be able to model more than one character concept (otherwise, the class is too limited and should in fact be a PrC and not available to beginning characters).

Spellcasting Prestige Classes

One of the trickiest issues to deal with when designing prestige classes is how to handle spell progression. Most spellcasting classes have little other than their spells to support them. This situation causes a twofold problem. There's not much you can take away from such classes other than spells, so giving spellcasting PrCs neat abilities without making them overpowered is difficult, unless you do restrict spell ability. Since they're so dependent on their spells, however, restricting their spellcasting advancement even a little can seriously undermine a prestige class's power and appeal.

Spellcaster Level

A +1 spellcaster level in a PrC essentially means you add the levels of the core spellcasting class and the PrC together to determine everything about the character's spells. Essentially, gaining +1 spellcaster level in a PrC acts exactly like gaining a level of the core spellcasting class in regards to spells. You use the combined number to determine the spells the caster knows, what level spells she can cast, and what her caster level is. If the character is a bard or sorcerer, she gains both spells known and spells per day; if a wizard, she may select two new spells to add to her spellbook; if a cleric or druid, she gains access to all the spells of the level she can cast. Non-spellcasting features — such as turning or rebuking undead, animal companions, familiar progression, wild shape, and bardic lore — are unaffected by an increase in spellcaster level.

Most published spellcasting PrCs grant +1 spellcasting level at every level or every other level. These two extremes are most appropriate for PrCs that have few other benefits and those that grant extensive benefits, but the balancing act is difficult. A PrC with a +1 spellcasting level at every PrC level should have other benefits not significantly more useful than familiars or turning undead, as that's the majority of what's given up. A class designed to work only for wizards might be slightly more powerful, since it also excludes a few bonus feats. A PrC that gives a spellcasting level only half the time needs to have extensive other benefits, as it cuts out five spellcasting levels. For example, an 11th-level character with 5 wizard levels and 6 levels of a PrC with +1 spellcasting level only at 2nd, 4th, and 6th casts as an 8th-level wizard. Compared to an 11th-level wizard, she's lost 3 spellcasting levels (meaning her *fireballs* do 8d6 rather than 10d6, for example) and is missing a number of spells (one 6th-level, two 5th-level, one 4th-level, one 3rd-level, and one 2nd-level). If the PrC doesn't have some pretty extensive bonuses, the character will be seriously underpowered.

If a PrC will have gaps in its spellcaster level progression, the first gap should preferably be at 1st level. A character taking the class thus has an immediate cost to pay — the loss of a spellcasting level compared to her peers who remain in the base class. Characters are prevented from taking a single level in the PrC to gain a small benefit without losing any spell ability and then leaving the class. If a PrC has few other benefits, losing a single spellcasting level may be enough to balance it. More powerful PrCs may need to grant a spellcasting level increase only three out of four, two out of three, or every other level. These increases should be evenly spaced, as shown in **Table 5–1: Spellcasting Progressions**. If a class won't grant a spellcasting increase in at least half its levels, it probably shouldn't grant any, instead using some other method to increase spellcaster power.

Some spellcasting classes, including the bard and druid, have more special abilities than clerics, sorcerers, and wizards. For example, the loremaster PrC makes a poor choice for a bard despite the obvious appeal. The bard loses advancement in all his special abilities in return for a few modest abilities. Even if the Lore ability is considered to stack with bardic lore (allowing the bard to add his loremaster and bard levels when determining his bonus), the bard doesn't gain additional uses of bardic abilities or access to higher-level abilities.

One way to make PrCs more attractive to bards and druids is to specify new spells they gain access to by taking the PrC. If the loremaster class gave the bard access to spells from the sorcerer/wizard list (which includes many more offense-oriented spells), the PrC would be much more appealing. The bard could choose from either bard or sorcerer/wizard lists when selecting spells gained upon taking loremaster levels. A druid would be allowed to swap out a single druid spell for a sorcerer/wizard spell for each level of loremaster taken.

If designing a PrC specifically for spellcasting classes with many special abilities, either grant an advance in class abilities (*wild shape* and bardic music are good examples) or give enough other bonuses to make up for the loss.

Caster Level

Rather than gain access to a full spellcaster level, a PrC can give characters an increase in caster level. This option does not increase the character's spell access, but when casting spells she already has, her caster level is figured by adding her core spellcasting class levels to the caster level increase granted by the PrC. Thus, an 11th-level character with 5 wizard levels and 6 levels in a PrC that grants +1 caster level each level gained casts *scorching ray* as an 11th-level wizard, gaining three rays. She doesn't have access to 4th- or higher-level spells, but she can still deal damage and penetrate spell resistance as a higher-level spellcaster.

Increases to caster level are a good way to design a PrC class with many special abilities that would be too powerful if it gave any increase to spellcaster level. By adding to a character's caster level, the class prevents the spells a character already has from becoming useless. An 11th-level character casting *magic missile* at 5th level of effect almost might as well not bother, but if she casts at 11th level, it's still a useful spell.

There's no need to have too many different caster level progressions — they're already much weaker than a full spellcaster level. PrCs that grant caster level boosts should do so either at every level or every other level. While combining spellcaster levels and caster levels in the same prestige class is possible, doing so is also pretty confusing. Unless there's a pressing reason to do so, stick with one or the other.

New Spell Progression

Rather than add anything to spell access, a prestige class can add a new progression with its own spell list. This

Table 5-1: Spellcasting Progressions

	Distribution of Spellcasting Levels				
PrC Level	9/10	4/5	3/4	2/3	1/2
1st	0	0	0	0	0
2nd	1	1	1	1	1
3rd	1	1	1	1	0
4th	1	1	1	0	1
5th	1	1	0	1	0
6th	1	0	1	1	1
7th	1	1	1	0	0
8th	1	1	1	1	1
9th	1	1	0	0*	0
10th	1	1	1	1*	1
11th	0	0	1	1	0
12th	1	1	1	1	1
13th	1	1	0	0	0
14th	1	1	1	1	1
15th	1	1	1	1	0

* The normal progression would have a spellcaster increase at 9th level and not at 10th level. Yet this progression makes the very last level of a 10-level PrC less appealing, which often discourages players from taking it. This "hiccup" in the normal progression has the same number of spellcasting levels, but delays one to 10th level. In a PrC with more levels, or one with a very powerful 10th-level ability, going ahead and using the normal progression rather than the one shown here makes sense.

option works well for PrCs designed for non-spellcasters or classes with minor spell ability (such as paladins and rangers). Such classes should have a progression similar to a ranger or paladin: a caster level based on its own levels (rather than adding to a previous class's CL) and spells of no more than 4th or 5th level.

Alternatively, a PrC could have its own spell list that replaces or adds to the list of a spellcaster that takes the class. For example, a storm lord PrC could require the ability to cast 2nd-level spells as a prerequisite. The PrC grants +1 spellcaster level at each level, but instead of gaining new spells of the original spellcasting class, the character gains access to a mix of 3rd- to 7th-level druid and wizard spells dealing with storm and weather-related subjects. Alternatively, a PrC might give access to a small list of additional spells (such as a cleric's domains or an eldritch weaver's paths) that the caster adds to her normal spell list.

Bonuses and Abilities

A PrC needs to have progressions for attack bonus, skill points, and saving throws, which should follow the same basic progressions of core classes. These progressions are standardized, and all classes should conform to them to keep game balance preserved. Classes with good attack progression fight as well as the primary fighter classes and thus must be balanced against them. A fighter, for example, has few skill points, only one good saving throw,

and basically a feat every other level. If a fighting prestige class is notably better than this, it overshadows characters who stick with fighter class levels.

Giving sub-par progressions is one way to balance a PrC against core classes. For example, a GM making an archer PrC might decide to give it a specific bonus feat (relating to ranged attacks) at every odd level and a special ability every even level. If the class has even d8 Hit Dice and only 2 skill points per level, it's pushing the effectiveness of fighters and rangers, who don't get as many combined feats and abilities. If the class progresses at only an average attack bonus, however, it's clearly inferior to both fighters and rangers in one regard (base attack bonus) and can grant feats and abilities — and possibly even d10 Hit Dice and 4 skill points per level — without being unbalanced.

There's no hard and fast rule for what abilities a PrC should grant. Look at the general level the PrC will likely be taken at and base powers off what base classes gain at similar levels. Thus, a PrC that can't be taken until 6th level can begin with powers similar to what base classes gain at 6th level. A PrC should never be simply a better version of a base class, though it may be better in one or two limited areas. Players can be encouraged to take PrCs, but should never feel that sticking to core classes isn't a viable design choice. PrCs that are popular with everyone are likely overpowered and should be downgraded. Beyond these guidelines, you should eyeball balance and suitability based on your own campaign.

- Bringing It All Together -

Once you know what a campaign will be like, communicate that information to your players, along with any other important game details.

Campaign Worksheets

A campaign worksheet is a reference for you and players alike that defines how a specific campaign differs from the core d20 rules. Ideally, a campaign worksheet lists everything players need to know about a campaign, allowing them a glimpse into what you have in mind and make plans for their characters' advancement.

Obviously, a worksheet needs to cover rules differences from typical d20 books. These differences should include variant rules, allowed races, core classes, feats, prestige classes, backgrounds, spells, and equipment, and any restrictions on who within the campaign has access to each. For example, certain classes and spells may be available only to starting characters from one race, guild, or nation. Even if you plan to allow PCs to be exceptions to some of these limitations, listing them is a good idea. If dwarves normally aren't arcane spellcasters in a campaign, a player thinking of playing a dwarf sorcerer needs to know his character will stand apart.

Basic information about the world itself should also be included. A map can help players visualize the new world, and a brief description of major areas saves you a lot of questions. A game with a firm theme tells players what kind of game you're planning and helps them make appropriate PCs. If you want PCs to be linked in some way, such as all being in a given town at the beginning of the game or all working for the same organization, the worksheet is the place to say so.

If there are any table rules (see **Table Rules** on page 109 they definitely ought to be included in the campaign worksheet, especially those dictated by the play space. A schedule of when the game is supposed to happen is useful, along with what you intend to do if someone can't show up for a game. Having these matters in a written format can save a lot of grief later on.

A campaign worksheet is often a living document, changing as the campaign evolves and new sourcebooks come out. Update the worksheet any time a major change is made, so players are aware of the current state of the game. You may also want to keep note of rules calls and changes to the game world as they happen, so when you do pass out an updated worksheet it's complete and up-to-date.

While a campaign worksheet sounds like a lot of work, it's not too bad if you design it as you make the decisions it's based on. As you consider the tone of your campaign and choose appropriate feats and so on, write them down in a first draft of the worksheet. You may well wish to have more extensive notes you don't share with the players, but the worksheet can be culled of any such information before it's passed out.

Table Rules

Table rules are guidelines on how players should act during a game, rather than rules related to game mechanics. For example, some groups limit out-of-character conversations, require everyone to sit at the same table, and take food and bathroom breaks at set intervals, restrict smoking to outside the house, and demand anyone who will be more than 15 minutes late should call to warn the GM. Usually, table rules are codifications of common sense and common courtesy, and some groups never spell out any table rules. Groups that have played together often likely don't need codified table rules, but a GM putting together a new group may want to discuss such rules to avoid unpleasant disagreements later on.

Some common table rules include requiring dice to be rolled in clear view (just for PCs, or for both PCs and GM), requiring die rolls to be observed by the GM (or observed by another player) to count (including Hit Die rolls), forbidding players from accessing any book other than the *PHB* during a game session, or even deciding players may not access any rules without the GM's permission.

While you should take the initiative on outlining table rules, all the players in a group should agree to them as well. Flexibility and reasonable trust are requirements of having fun. If someone dislikes a rule, discuss why and see if a compromise can be found. Some rules, especially regarding die rolling requirements and limitations on accessing rules, can slow down game play.

Table rules may also be rules of the playing space. If playing at someone's house, the group may need to respect the owner's rules about smoking, drinking, eating, being loud, or a curfew. Rules of this type should be taken seriously and outlined occasionally (or written down) to make sure the gaming space isn't lost.

References

If there are any sources you used for inspiration of tone and theme, make players aware of them (as opposed to sources used for plotlines, which you should keep to yourself). If you want to recreate the feel of a particular movie, television series, or book line, giving players a list of such sources can help. Even if there are only elements taken from each source ("The world and characters tend to look like those from the *Barbarian King* movies, while the actual action and politics are more similar to the *Lord of Swords* books"), players can be inspired to help you manage the campaign you want if they're in on its inspirations. This knowledge can help avoid assumption clashes (see **Chapter One** page 4) and demonstrate campaign themes better than can any loose descriptions. For a sample campaign worksheet to get you started, see page 188.

Chapter Six: Characters

Characters are the focus of any good roleplaying game. The rules a campaign uses to create and advance characters determine a great deal about the feel and themes of its games. Though you don't control the PCs' actions, you do decide what rules are used to create them (and in some cases, do the write-ups yourself). Changing just how character rules work is the most obvious way of making a campaign distinct, as players deal with their characters more than any other part of the rules system.

The most important consideration to keep in mind when developing character rules is to strike a balance between giving players what they want and giving them a reason to go on adventures. Players who can't make characters they like won't enjoy playing in your game, while those who can make characters already matching their ultimate vision have little incentive to go on adventures, since they have no need to improve.

This is an extremely tricky balance to maintain. Often players claim they want something, but if it's given to them, they don't actually enjoy having it. Distinguishing between what a player wants (as elements of a fun game) and what a character would realistically want is frequently important. To take matters to an extreme, a player whose character is offered a weapon that makes the character invincible

and allows him to dispatch any foe with a thought might well accept it; however, while the character will likely be pleased with his newfound power, the player will quickly grow bored with no real challenges.

As a guideline, strive to allow any appropriate character concept, but be ready to enforce a lower level of competence or power than the player wants. For example, if a character wants to play the son of a god in a game of ancient Greek themed fantasy, accommodate him. Having a god for a father is very appropriate to such settings and a reasonable character concept. That doesn't mean the PC must be a half-celestial, however. A normal human can be the son of a god, especially if the god wants to have his son grow up with the experiences of common people. You may wish to make a special background available (see **Character Backgrounds** on page 116) or design a prestige class later that plays on the character's divine blood, but for starters, the character gets no power-boost for his concept, even though the concept is allowed.

This chapter outlines various ways you can use characters to promote a particular kind of gaming experience. Some are ideas for plots and organizations, while others are game mechanical ideas to promote differentiation between characters and allow for a broad range of character and campaign ideas.

~ Group Dynamics ~

A roleplaying game is a social activity, and you are essentially the activity director. Like a chipper counselor at a good summer camp, you give the group direction on what's happening and deals with potential problems (preferably before anyone notices them). If this sounds like a big responsibility, it gets worse — you must juggle two sets of related, but different group dynamics. You must deal with the players in your group (with advice for doing so starting in **Chapter One**) and with the PCs, who may have totally different relationships.

Yet a GM who understands why PC groups are put together the way they are is already part way to keeping everyone happy. The core d20 rules encourage differentiation through specialization. No one class is good (or even fair) at everything, instead focusing on one or two categories of ability. As a result, a PC has holes in certain areas of competence and must work with other PCs to overcome the wide variety of obstacles a typical adventure includes. Not only does this situation encourage cooperation, it gives each character that takes a different class a protected niche within the group. The wizard knows the most arcane spells; the sorcerer has the most arcane firepower. The cleric is best when dealing with undead; the druid is best against creatures of nature. Fighters can master the most combat methods; barbarians can crank out the most damage; paladins do the most harm to evil foes; rangers handle specific foes the best. The bard has access to the most information; the monk is the most mobile; the rogue is the sneakiest. As long as the PCs are all if the same level, the class system goes a long way to ensuring they're all equally useful to a group, though each in different ways.

If dealing with a smaller group, each character is called on to do more. Multi-classing becomes more common, and you can be more relaxed when giving out abilities that are similar to other classes. With more characters, niches are less protected, and you need to be more cautious about crossing class lines. Groups are most powerful when they have multiple abilities to draw upon, so larger groups are often more potent than raw numbers might suggest. In a group of four PCs, a druid may have to double as a healer, in which case he has fewer spell slots available to augment other characters. In a group of eight PCs, the same druid can more likely cast spells on himself and heavy combatants to produce a more effective fighting line.

As PCs find niches, consider ways to let them develop those niches. A fighter who focuses on heavy armor and shields and maximizing hit points is obviously looking to soak damage. This is a useful function and makes the fighter different from the greataxe-wielding barbarian who just wants to kill things quickly. If you invent a feat that allows barbarians to get a higher AC when raging is making it easier for the barbarian to steal the fighter's niche. (The same idea applies to treasure: giving the barbarian a *+3 defending greataxe* is just about as bad.) When looking at what rules and options to allow, or when designing your own, constantly consider the effect the rule has on the PCs' ability to be different from one another.

Characters with Disparate Power Levels

In a typical gaming group, each player runs one or more characters, all of which are at approximately the same power level. This system has many advantages, including preventing jealousy among players, ease of developing challenges for all players, and having the same treasure items be appropriate for whichever characters want them. The adventuring party develops naturally out of this organization — since each character is of the same power level, the PCs naturally gravitate toward different roles, so each character is best at something but needs other characters to be well-rounded.

Yet this organization is far from the most common in adventure fiction. In fact, it's far more common for one or more characters to be notably more powerful than the rest, and several characters to take the same roles at differing power levels. Wizards who guide troops of less powerful adventurers, masters training young apprentices, supernatural guardians with powers unmatched by their allies, and lone heroes with abilities far in excess of anyone they know are all more common group compositions in fiction.

If you want to try a more unbalanced group, you have several options. If the players are not prone to jealousy, simply suggest one player gets to run the higher-level character. If going this route, either have the position rotate (playing multiple games, for example, and giving a different player the more powerful PC each time, or literally having a different player run the high-level PC every few games). You can also make lower-level characters more important for in-game reasons. For example, a group of 1st-level PCs might be destined to save the world in a few years, and a 9th-level PC is tasked with getting them trained and keeping them alive. The 9th-level PC has more power, but NPCs of all stripes are more interested in the lower-level characters.

You can also develop some compensating advantage for players of lower-level characters. If a single PC is a legendary slayer of undead, with a powerful template that gives her much more power than other characters of her level, the remaining PCs can be given an extra fortune

points (see **Chapter Two**). The less powerful PCs can't compete with the legendary slayer in terms of raw power, but they have more favorable turns of good fortune, allowing the players to have as much fun, even if their characters feel constantly in over their heads.

You can also make the overpowered character an NPC, but focus on the actions of the PCs for adventures. A mighty king might have many young lords and ladies fostered with him. While the king goes off to deal with dragons and demon lords, the PCs play fostered youths dealing with the intrigues and betrayals of his court when he's away (see **Chapter Three** for more information on the focus of adventures).

– Playing with Power Levels –

A d20 campaign that starts PCs at 1st level automatically takes as one of its themes the growth of young heroes into more powerful champions. This path is inherent to the system, and it's a compelling and popular theme. It can become tiresome, however. Many popular characters from fiction are already noteworthy heroes by the time we're introduced to them, and players often want to emulate these characters. The struggle to survive lower character levels can also reduce the fun of playing exceptional, heroic individuals.

Even if a group does want to play through the accumulation of power, they may not want to hit exactly the power levels the game normally supports. Groups often wish to have more or less powerful characters as a change of pace. You can make changes to a campaign's rules to support characters of differing power levels.

Regardless of a campaign's power level, you must balance encounters to provide a challenge to players without overwhelming them and killing an entire group of PCs. While guidelines are given below, every group is unique in the kinds and number of encounters it can handle. Learn your group's ability through trial and error. The CR system is very useful for this, even if it doesn't apply directly to the PCs' levels. A GM who has boosted the power level of a group of 5th-level characters may not know what they can handle, but she can be confident a CR 5 monster or EL 5 encounter won't be too much for them. If she starts with CR 6 monsters, she can judge the PCs' results and decide whether or not to move up to CR 7. Even though the CRs don't correspond exactly to her group's level, she can use them to gauge relative threat.

Boosting Power Levels

Playing more powerful characters can open new themes to a campaign. If the PCs are bar none the most powerful mortals in existence, they can explore the moral and ethical uses of their great power and the consequences of each of their actions. They may even explore the differences between mortals and gods. At a less extreme level of power, the heroes are themselves patrons and allies of note, powerful enough to change the course of history without being able to dictate it.

The simplest way to increase the power level of a game is to begin at higher than 1st level. Nothing restricts campaigns from beginning at 5th, 9th, or even 16th level. The higher the starting level, however, the more work it is for both players and GM to create a fulfilling backstory for the campaign and its major characters. And no matter what level a campaign starts at, all the characters are essentially balanced against every other character of the same level, including NPCs and characters played in other campaigns. Sometimes, you need a way to boost the PCs' power without just pumping up their starting level.

There are a number of options for doing just this. Combined with options such as heroic ability score arrays (see **Ability Scores** on page 118), you can set a campaign's power level anywhere from slightly above normal to staggeringly higher than a standard d20 campaign. If the PCs are supposed to be truly exceptional heroes, these rules should be reserved for the PCs and NPCs on a similar level of heroic (or villainous) importance. If the campaign assumes everyone is heroic, the rules should apply to all PCs and NPCs.

Bonus Effective Character Levels

A campaign can grant a bonus ECL shift to all characters, allowing them to play powerful races without being lower level. This option allows half-dragons, and half-celestials — even giants, fey, and outsiders — to become viable PC races. If all players are interested in races with the same ECL shift, this is easy; ignore the shift and have the players make characters normally. The characters are considered to have no ECL shift despite their extensive powers. In a game like this, a 1st-level half-dragon needs only 1,000 XP to become second level, despite a level adjustment of +3.

Usually, however, players wish to play races with different level adjustments. In this situation, two options exist. You could simply begin the game at some higher level and allow characters to subtract a race's level shift from their starting level. The problem with this option is that many players want to be as high level as possible, so they'll take races with no level adjustment, invalidating the whole point of making it available. Alternatively, you can declare a set level adjustment to be in effect and grant generic level adjustments to characters that play lower-powered races.

Generic level adjustments are boosts to a character's power that aren't dependent on race. For every +1 level adjustment, a character gains *three* of the following bonuses: +4 bonus to one ability, +2 bonus to two abilities, +2 natural armor bonus, darkvision, low-light vision, scent, a bonus feat, or +8 bonus divided among your skills. Thus, if the campaign has a level adjustment of +3, a character can either be a half-dragon or play a human and take a +3 generic level adjustment and gain (for example) +4 Strength, +4 Dexterity, +2 Intelligence, +2 Wisdom, three bonus feats, low-light vision, +2 natural armor, and +8 bonus to Climb checks.

Bonus Special Abilities

An easy way to run a higher-powered game is to grant all characters bonus special abilities. This option can be as simple as giving characters access to powerful races (see Bonus Effective Character Levels) or a number of bonus starting feats, or it can involve a more complex set of rules taking on new class abilities.

In a high-magic campaign, all characters can gain the spellcasting ability of a spellcasting class of half their character level. For example, an 8th-level fighter can choose to cast as a 4th-level bard, cleric, druid, sorcerer, or wizard (though once this decision is made, it cannot ever be changed). Even spellcasting classes are given access to another spellcasting class's power at half their level, though their caster level and spell slots must be tracked separately. Since many special abilities are linked to skills, such characters get the skill points and class skills of both their core characters class and their spellcasting class.

As an alternative, any special abilities can be granted at half the character's level. For example, a new character can choose to gain a monk's special abilities. When the character is 12th-level, regardless of what classes she takes, she gains all the abilities listed under the "special" column of a 6th-level monk. Characters shouldn't be allowed to gain the exact same ability twice (*e.g.*, a character can't decide to play a paladin who gains the special abilities of another paladin, gaining additional bonuses to saving throws and lay on hands healing), and all normal restrictions to the special abilities granted apply (*e.g.*, a fighter who can cast as a wizard still faces arcane spell failure in armor).

Characters of this kind are significantly more powerful than standard characters, but not as much as 50% more powerful. Each has access to far more abilities, but none have abilities restricted to higher-level characters. As a guideline, assume a group can face encounters one or two ELs higher than usual without making it an extreme encounter, but don't try to make extreme encounters with higher CR monsters. Instead, increase the number of lower-CR foes such groups face or grant foes their own set of additional special abilities.

You can also simply grant special abilities that function similarly to magic items, but are innate powers (see **Innate Abilities** on page 132 of **Chapter Seven**). A group that has extra innate abilities worth no more than their average gold per level (see **Table: Character Wealth by Level** in the *DMG*) are about as powerful as those with additional special abilities from a secondary class.

Combined Ability and Feat Progression

Rather than grant a character a feat every three levels and an increase to an ability score, a campaign can give players the choice of either. Whenever a character would normally receive a feat or ability score increase, the player may choose one or the other option (not both). This option has the advantage of increasing character flexibility, without radically increasing total power level. The progression can either be left the same (resulting in a pick at 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 8th, 9th, two at 12th, and so on), or it can be smoothed out to granting an increase two out of every three levels (1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th, 10th, 11th, and so on).

Feats and ability scores gained from classes, templates, or other sources are not affected by this change. A fighter must still choose fighter feats for her bonus feats granted by class, and half-dragons can't choose to gain 8 bonus feats rather than +8 Strength.

This change has two potential side effects that may not be obvious. First, it allows for very high ability scores at mid- and high levels. For example, a wizard who begins

with an 18 Intelligence at 1st level can increase it up to 26 by 12th level. While she has done this at the cost of any additional feats, if combined with an Intelligence-increasing item (such as a *headband of intellect +6*), she can get a staggeringly high Intelligence score (32), making her spells extremely difficult to resist and receiving numerous bonus spells.

Second, characters may gain access to prestige classes more quickly, as they can select needed feats more easily. While it would be rare for a character to access a class before 3rd or 4th level as a result of this rules change, characters in classes that normally wouldn't qualify for a class until 9th level might well access it by 5th level.

Increased Feat Progression

With the proliferation of feats in d20 products, many GMs and players want more opportunities to explore feat combinations. Feat progression can be increased to one feat every odd level (1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and so on). If used with the Combined Ability and Feat Progression options, this change results in gaining a feat or ability increase at every character level, and two such increases every third level (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 6th, and so on).

The highest rate of feat acquisition that should be considered is granting a feat at every level. While this rate does make characters more powerful, flexible, and complex, it still prevents them from gaining the most powerful feats at low levels (as their base attack bonuses and caster levels are still restricted). If used with the Combined Ability and Feat Progression options, this change results in gaining a feat or ability increase at every character level, and two such increases every other level (1st, 2nd, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 4th, 5th, 6th, 6th, and so on).

Increased Skill Points

Character classes are designed to have a limited number of skill points, forcing GMs and players alike to consider carefully what skills to buy. This element works well in standard d20 campaigns, as it forces players to work as a team. Since no single character has enough skill points to be good at everything, characters have protected niches of skill.

However, this limitation is frustrating for gamers who want to buy numerous skills to represent backgrounds, hobbies, and areas of secondary study. Especially given that such skills are cross-class to a majority of classes, having a character learn to play a fiddle or cook at even a mediocre level of mastery is very expensive. One solution for this problem is to increase the skill points characters receive.

One method is to give all characters an additional 16 skill points at 1st level. Doing so allows characters to buy skills representing full and varied backgrounds,

without allowing them to buy up those skills to heroic levels later in life.

Another option is to give all classes an additional 2 skill points per level. Doing so adds 8 skill points to 1st-level characters (as initial skill points are multiplied by 4) and allows them at least partially to maintain those skills at higher levels.

A more extreme option is to increase skill points per level by 50%, with a minimum of +2. Doing so gives some classes as many as 12 skill points per level, but those classes often have more than twelve class skills.

If the only desired effect is to increase non-combat skills, characters can be given a number of skill points per level to spend only on Craft, Knowledge, Perform, Profession, and Speak Language. To keep scholarly characters from being outwitted by fighters and rogues, characters with a poor Will save progression should receive 2 limited skill points per level, while those with a good Will save progression gain 4 limited skill points per level.

Reduced Power Levels

Sometimes, you might want to play a game set below the default power level. There are several fairly easy ways to do this (cut treasure values in half or double magic items costs; require characters to use only NPC classes; reduce magic item chakras or ability scores, or both; eliminate the most effective feats, spells, and magic items), each of which requires some trial-and-error balancing of challenges. If you're looking for a very grim and lethal game, you can run encounters of the same EL, but generally you'll have to run encounters between 1 to 4 ELs lower in order not to overwhelm the reduced PCs.

Strive not to limit diversity or creativity while reducing power level. For example, reducing the skill points or feats characters receive is a bad idea, as this pushes all characters closer to the same core useful abilities. With some work, other character stats can be reduced to make a game lower in overall power, as described below.

Reduced Bonus Types

You can downplay the effects of magic and special abilities in a campaign by reducing the number of bonus types in existence. Because bonuses of the same type don't stack, ruling all bonuses not specifically unnamed to be enchantment bonuses reduces the characters' overall power level dramatically. Suddenly, characters can't gain the benefits of an *enlarge* and a *bull's strength* or, for that matter, both a *bless* and a *prayer*. Nor will the AC gained from a *ring of protection* stack with the magic bonuses of armor.

Keep two main issues in mind when going this route. First, some bonuses logically must stack: armor and shield bonuses, and at least one form of magic. You may decide to

lump natural armor bonuses in with either enhancement or armor bonuses, for example, but circumstance bonuses should remain separate. The second issue is that whatever bonus rules the PCs follow should also be used by monsters and NPCs — everyone should be on a level playing field.

The fewer bonus types, the more the overall power level is reduced. Changing deflection bonuses to shield bonuses has little affect, but changing deflection and natural armor to shield bonuses, and then morale, divine, profane, equipment and nearly everything else to enhancement bonuses has a much more serious effect, especially at middle and higher levels. It also encourages characters to acquire more varied spells and magic items, since so many "standard" choices don't work together.

Reduced Hit Points

One common complaint with the d20 rules revolves around hit points, and the way they increase as characters gain levels. Hit points are not supposed to represent actual ability to suck up more damage and survive, but that's how they act. Many groups find this gets ridiculous, as high-level characters grow unafraid of great falls or being stabbed multiple times by minor opponents. Many suggest that anything beyond 1 Hit Die is simply unreasonable for Medium creatures.

Running games in which hit points are kept much lower is possible, but it requires some work. Each character gets maximum hit points at 1st level and rolls a Hit Die normally at second level. Afterward, characters gain a hit point only when their base attack bonus goes up by one (thus, fighters gain 1 hit point every level, while wizards gain one hit point only every other level). Moreover, after 2nd level, characters do not gain additional hit points for their Constitution bonus. Under this system, even a 20th-level fighter will likely have only 38 or so hit points. Anything that grants bonus Hit Dice instead grants +1 hit point per die normally granted.

With this method, all creatures with racial Hit Dice (as opposed to class Hit Dice) have their total hit points chopped in half. Creatures that have advanced in Hit Dice gain 1 hit point per additional die. If a creature actually advances up a size category, it gets one additional full HD (since it is actually bigger). Thus, a winter wolf has 26 hit points (half its normal 52), and a winter wolf that's advanced to have 9 HD has 29 hit points (1 additional hit point for its 3 new HD). A 10-HD winter wolf is size Huge and gets another full HD, which on average means it'll have 33
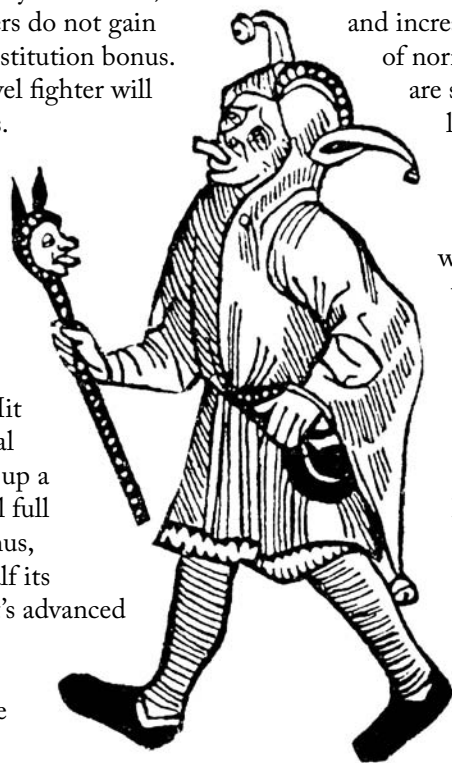
hit points.

To offset this reduction in hit points, damage must also be reduced. All non-weapon damage automatically deals its minimum. Thus, an 8d6 *fireball* does only 8 hp. All healing is also reduced to its minimum, and all healing valued in points rather than dice (such as a paladin's lay on hands) is halved. All weapon damage (including natural weapons) is limited to damage bonuses no greater than one-half a weapon's maximum base damage. Thus, a longsword dealing 1d8 can't have more than a +4 damage bonus, regardless of what modifiers and bonus types are added to it. All damage reduction is cut in half. This change may seem restrictive, but considering that an 8th-level fighter is likely to have just 26 hit points, losing 8 to a *fireball* is a serious blow.

In this system, hit points really do represent how much damage a character can take. Most monsters end up with considerably more hit points than heroes, and you should be very cautious about using high-CR creatures even against PCs of the appropriate level. Despite the changes to damage, this is a lower-powered, grittier rules set that's likely to result in more frequent character death. Critical hits in particular become far more devastating. If you're kind, you may decide to allow characters with high Constitutions to live until they reach negative hit points equal to their Constitution score.

Non-Heroic Characters

As an extreme option, you could run a game in which all players are restricted to making characters using non-heroic classes (adept, aristocrat, expert, and warrior). While characters with these classes still gain hit points and increased bonuses, they lack the special abilities of normal PC classes. Because such characters are so much less powerful, consider them 2 levels lower than their true rank when figuring ELs for them. For example, a group of four 5th-level non-heroic characters can take an EL 3 encounter with little difficulty, but an EL 6 encounter will likely present an extreme encounter.

A similar idea is artificially to create non-heroic classes by limiting characters to the special abilities of half their class level. Thus, a 6th-level wizard casts spells and has a familiar as if 3rd level (though his caster level is still 6th), and he has not yet earned the bonus feat normally gained at 5th level, while a fighter must be 8th level before he can take Weapon Specialization. This change allows classes with no good non-heroic counterpart (such as bards and monks), but still lowers the overall power of characters.

– Ability Scores –

Ability score generation is one of the most influential parts of character creation. Nearly all a character's abilities, and all her skills and combat options, are influenced by ability scores. How you allow players to generate their ability scores not only affects the power level of the characters, it sets the tone for the campaign as a whole. Players given more say over their characters' ability scores expect more input in other aspects of the game and are more likely to get involved in other aspects of the game. Players given more options are also more likely to come up with more original (and potentially more powerful) character concepts.

Auction

An ability score auction ensures one character has the highest rating in any given ability score. For some groups, this kind of definitive role and inter-player competition is considered helpful in determining character roles, while other groups find it antagonistic and disruptive.

Each player is given 10 auction points. The GM names each ability in turn, auctioning off an 18 value and then a 16 value for that ability. Players bid auction points, with the highest in each round getting that score. Once all the abilities have been auctioned off, players may buy scores for abilities they didn't win auctions for, with 1 unspent auction point equaling a +1 modifier. Players may grant themselves an ability score of 8 or

6 to gain 1 or 2 additional modifier points, but these points can't be used during the auction. No ability score bought after the auctions may have a base higher than 14 (though racial modifiers could raise an ability to a 15 or more).

For example, Marc, Tom, Ian, and Jacob are making new characters for a game Jane is starting. Jane begins the auction with Strength, offering up an 18. Marc and Ian both plan on playing fighting characters, so they begin bidding. Ian is willing to pay 4 auction points, while Marc is only willing to spend 3, so Ian gets the 18 Strength. Jane now repeats the process for a 16 Strength. Since Jacob and Tom don't care to have Strength scores that high, Marc manages to spend just 1 auction point for his 16. Now Ian has 6 auction points left, Marc has 9, and Tom and Jacob both still have 10.

Jane repeats the auction process for all five remaining ability scores. When all is said and done, Marc bought a 16 Strength for 1 point and a 16 Constitution for 2 points. That leaves him 7 auction points with which to buy ability scores. He can't buy anything above a 14, so he spends 2 points on Dexterity (a +2 modifier is a 14 score), 2 points on Intelligence, and 2 points on Charisma, leaving 1 point for Wisdom. His final scores are Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 10, and Cha 12.

Ian spent 4 auction points on an 18 Strength and 5 auction points on an 18 Dexterity. That leaves him only 1 auction point for his remaining 4 abilities, but he knows no one else will have 18's in his two primary stats. He gives himself a 14 , 10 Int, 10 Wis and 8 Cha, totalling his +1 remaining auction point.

Heroic Arrays

Many groups prefer characters to have even more heroic scores than provided by any of the standard ability generation methods, but are unhappy when one or two players' characters end up with significantly better ability scores. Groups such as this should consider using the two heroic arrays, a set of pre-determined ability scores the players may arrange as they see fit. The heroic arrays are much more powerful than standard ability

Table 6-1: The Heroic Arrays	
Heroic Array 1	18, 16, 16, 12, 12, 10
Heroic Array 2	18, 18, 16, 14, 10, 8
Heroic Array 3	14, 14, 14, 14, 14, 14

Table 6-2: Ability Score Rolls by Class

	Barbarian	Bard, Sorcerer, or Wilder	Cleric, Druid, or Warpriest	Fighter	Monk	Evangelist or Spellmaster
Str	7d6	3d6	4d6	7d6	4d6	3d6
Dex	5d6	6d6	3d6	5d6	6d6	5d6
Con	6d6	4d6	4d6	5d6	4d6	5d6
Int	3d6	5d6	4d6	4d6	4d6	4d6
Wis	4d6	3d6	7d6	3d6	5d6	7d6
Cha	3d6	7d6	6d6	4d6	5d6	4d6

	Paladin or Thanemage	Psion	Psychic Warrior or Soulknife	Ranger	Rogue or Scout	Eldritch Weaver or Wizard
Str	6d6	3d6	6d6	5d6	4d6	3d6
Dex	3d6	5d6	4d6	6d6	7d6	6d6
Con	4d6	5d6	6d6	4d6	4d6	5d6
Int	4d6	5d6	4d6	4d6	5d6	7d6
Wis	5d6	5d6	4d6	5d6	4d6	4d6
Cha	6d6	5d6	4d6	4d6	4d6	3d6

	Adept	Aristocrat	Commoner	Expert	Warrior
Str	3d6	4d6	3d6	3d6	5d6
Dex	4d6	3d6	3d6	4d6	4d6
Con	3d6	4d6	4d6	3d6	4d6
Int	4d6	4d6	3d6	5d6	3d6
Wis	5d6	4d6	4d6	4d6	3d6
Cha	4d6	4d6	3d6	4d6	4d6

generation methods, but still within the range of what's theoretically possible.

When using the heroic arrays, each player decides which set of ability scores she wishes to use, then assigns each score to an ability of her choice. Racial modifiers are added in after the ability scores have been assigned. Resulting characters are powerful, but not so much to unbalance a game. Feel free to use more extreme encounters when running a group using the heroic arrays, which is exactly what such groups generally prefer.

Rather than require players to use one of the listed heroic arrays, you may allow them to determine any stats that have a total modifier of +12, as long as no ability score is lower than 8.

Player's Choice

You can opt to allow players to decide what ability scores their characters start with. This method tends to result in very powerful characters, but that's not a problem with all groups. Obviously, characters need to have some limits, but you may allow any ability scores possible for starting characters (*i.e.*, any score of 18 modified by race).

The advantage of this method is players get exactly the kind of characters they wanted. The drawback is that there's no penalty for deciding you want to play a character with straight 18's (and if anyone actually does this, it's a good sign that player doesn't get the point). Yet among mature groups that are more interested in playing specific roles than struggling to maximize characters, this can be a very fulfilling option.

Random Rolls by Class

The idea behind random rolls by class is to ensure a player making a fighter has a good chance at getting high Strength and Constitution scores without allowing him to determine exactly what scores he gets. This option allows the unexpected results that many groups prefer, while maintaining player choice and influence over character type. It's also useful for GMs wanting to determine NPC ability scores randomly — using this system, most NPC fighters are stronger than NPC wizards, but occasional exceptions do occur.

For each class, players roll the indicated number of dice and take the highest three results, discarding the rest.

Thus, a player making a fighter rolls 7d6 for his Strength score. If his results were 6, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, he takes the highest three and ends up with a 16 Strength.

Characters made using this system end up being slightly more powerful than those of the standard method of roll 4d6 and drop the lowest die. This difference is intentional, as it helps produce a more extreme range of ability scores, which helps differentiate characters. Players also have no choice over assigning their ability scores: whatever is rolled for a given stat must be taken, making it more difficult for players to min/max characters and encouraging roleplaying the unusual combinations that result. If a set of ability scores doesn't have at least one ability score of 14 or higher, or has a total combined modifier of +2 or less, the player may re-roll all the ability scores.

Though dice are given for NPC classes as well, they produce less exceptional results. If you want more heroic NPC-classed character, use one of the die combinations for a related heroic class (rolling fighter dice for a warrior, for example).

If you use classes from Green Ronin's **Master Class**™ series, treat shamans as clerics, assassins as rogues, witches as sorcerers, avatars as sorcerers, unholy warriors as paladins, nobles as bards, psychics as psions, and cavaliers as paladins.

– Character Backgrounds –

A character's background is a representation of things he learned as a child and apprentice, the influence of his culture and bloodline, and the natural tendencies that set all thinking creatures apart. It is both more and less than a class, as the changes made by a background are permanent, but they never improve. Often everyone from a given region shares similar backgrounds, and GMs may require characters from some kingdoms or regions to choose from a selection of appropriate backgrounds.

Backgrounds can also represent inherited traits, special destinies, or physical changes between sub-races. For example, humans living in a kingdom ruled by dragons might have darkvision as part of their backgrounds. This is not a learned skill, but the result of a tiny trace of draconic blood running through their veins. Alternatively, it might be that only certain bloodlines, perhaps the human noble houses that rule under the dragon lords, have the draconic blood.

Backgrounds are not tools for players to make their characters more powerful. Instead, they are a tool, designed to set regions of a campaign apart. They're of great use to players, but that's a side effect of their ability to make a campaign more interesting. Ideally, you shouldn't allow players to write up their own backgrounds; rather, provide a number of background options for players to choose from. At the very least, approve all backgrounds after careful examination, and any background approved for one character should be made available to all players.

As well, backgrounds allow characters to take skills as permanent class skills, regardless of class. When designing backgrounds, provide a list of benefits, allowing players to select which ones a character with that particular background takes. To help balance backgrounds, a list of common background elements and a point cost for each are provided below. A background should have approximately ten to twelve points of elements, though those may be selected from a broad list.

Sample Backgrounds

A number of sample backgrounds are presented here. Each allows players with the background a number of options totaling approximately 10 background points. These backgrounds include career-based (apprentice, squire, and so forth), region-based (river folk, rovers, steppes nomads, and the like), and bloodlines (blessed blood, dragon kith, and so forth) themes. You can make all of these backgrounds available to all characters or restrict them to certain regions, races, or even certain starting classes.

Apprentice

An apprentice has studied to be an arcane spellcaster. Most apprentices are wizards-in-training or bards-in-training, but rarely an academy is set up to teach sorcerers how to use their natural talents better.

- Choose any three 0-level arcane spells. You may cast each 1/day as a 1st-level bard or sorcerer (player's choice).

- Take Concentration, Spellcraft, and Use Magic Device as permanent class skills; or gain a +1 racial bonus to those three skills and start with 4 ranks in Concentration and Use Magic Device.

Blessed Blood

A character with blessed blood is a member of a holy bloodline, descended from a saint, holy man, or even deity. Though the bloodline is not strong enough to change the character's type, it does provide an innate talent for divinely oriented activities.

- Choose any three 0-level divine spells. You may cast each 1/day as a 1st-level cleric, or take Extra Turning as a bonus feat if you qualify for it.

- Take Knowledge (religion), Knowledge (the planes), and Sense Motive as permanent class skills.

- Add one of the following classes as a favored class: cleric, druid, paladin.

Dragon Kith

Dragon kith have the blood of dragons in their veins. They're not half-dragons or even quarter-dragons, but a trace of draconic heritage still flows through their ancestry. Dragon kith have at most a single feature that reveals their dragon blood, such as yellow eyes or a black tongue.

- *Racial Blood — Dragon:* Count as being of the dragon type, in addition to starting type, for all magical effects and prerequisites.

- Choose either Knowledge (arcana) and Spellcraft (as one pick) or Use Magic Device as permanent class skills.

- Choose either darkvision 60 ft. or low-light vision.

- Choose three 0-level arcane or druid spells, casting each of these spells 1/day as a 1st-level sorcerer or druid; or add +1 to Strength.

Giant Kith

Giant kith have giant or troll blood in their distant ancestry. Giant kith tend to be tall and broad compared to others of their kind (though not big enough to be a different size).

- Gain +1 to starting Strength.

- Choose either darkvision or 4 starting skill points in Climb and Intimidate.

- *Racial Blood — Giant:* Count as being of the giant type, in addition to starting type, for all magical effects and prerequisites.

Noble

Though likely lacking a title or lands of their own, noble characters were raised in a noble's house and trained to serve as noble warriors. While their later career may have strayed from that path, their early years were spent preparing for jousts and ruling (or at least aiding an elder sibling or cousin to rule).

- Begin with double gp for 1st level or an extra 100 gp.

- Treat the bastard sword as a martial instead of exotic weapon.

- Gain +1 to attacks with bastard swords and light crossbows.

- Either gain all Knowledge skills as permanent class skills, or select two of Climb, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Jump, Ride, or Survival as permanent class skills.

Table 6-3: Background Element Costs

Background Trait	Cost
Take one Knowledge skill as a permanent class skill	1 pt.
Take all Knowledge skills as a permanent class skills	3 pts.
Take any other skill as a permanent class skill	2 pts.
Additional automatic language	1 pt.
Start with 4 skill points in a skill (4 ranks if a class skill, 2 ranks if cross-class)	2 pts.
Gain an additional +1 skill point per class level (total of +4 at 1st level)	8 pts.
Start with a bonus feat that has no prerequisites	4 pts.
Start with a bonus feat for which you qualify	6 pts.
Wield a particular exotic weapon as a martial weapon	2 pts.
Weapon proficiency with 4 specific martial or simple weapons	2 pts.
Change favored class	1 pt.
Add a favored class	2 pts.
Ability to cast three 0-level spells, 1/day each as a 1st-level caster	5 pts.
Increase a starting ability score by +1	6 pts.
Darkvision out to 60 ft.	4 pts.
Low-light vision	3 pts.
Immunity to sleep magic and a +2 racial bonus to saves vs. enchantment spells or effects	3 pts.
+2 racial bonus on three specific skills	5 pts.
+1 racial bonus on three specific skills, or +2 to one specific skill	2 pts.
Ability to make a Search check to find a secret door just for passing within 5 feet	5 pts.
+1 to the DC of spells the character casts from one specific school	5 pts.
+1 attack bonus against creatures of one type (or two humanoid subtypes)	2 pts.
+1 to attack with one or two specific weapons	2 pts.
+4 dodge bonus to AC against attacks made by creatures of one racial type	2 pts.
Racial blood (count as a member of a specific other race for all prerequisites)	1 pt.
Extra starting gp (+100 gp or double class starting gp)	3 pts.

River Folk

River folk are simple country people who live and work along the banks of a great, well-traveled and secure river. They are an open and caring folk who enjoy pleasant lives with little risk. The blood of several races has mingled in river folk families, until they're nearly a race onto themselves.

- Gain Elven and Halfling as bonus languages.

- Choose any three 0-level arcane or druid spells. You may cast each of these spells 1/day as a 1st-level sorcerer or druid (player's choice).

- Gain Use Rope as a permanent class skill.

- Add two of the following bloodlines as racial blood: elf, halfling, or human.

Rover

Rovers are wanderers and traders who journey vast distances in caravans of brightly-colored wagons. Each rover caravan is a mobile town, moving from place to place and trading goods, offering entertainment, and doing simple repairs. Rovers are critical to the economic survival of many towns, but are often mistrusted as thieves and layabouts.

- Gain rogue or wizard as a favored class.

- Choose three of the following skills to be permanent class skills: Appraise, Bluff, Diplomacy, Forgery, Handle Animal, Gather Information, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Perform, Ride, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand, Speak Language, Spellcraft, or Survival.

- Gain Knowledge (geography) and Knowledge (nature) as permanent class skills, or gain weapon proficiency with the short sword, longsword, shortbow, and whip.

Squire

A squire has spent time training to be a knight and serving in a knight or lord's household (possibly as a page or stable boy prior to being a squire). A squire may be a professional knight's aid, or he may be a young lord expected to achieve knighthood himself. Not all squires become warriors, but they all have some familiarity with the art of war.

- Take Knowledge (architecture and engineering) and Knowledge (nobility and royalty) as permanent class skills.

- Take one of Climb, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Intimidate, or Ride as a permanent class skill.

- Familiarity with four of the following weapons: battleaxe; crossbow, light; crossbow, heavy;

flail; flail, heavy; hammer, light; handaxe; lance; longsword; mace, light; mace, heavy; warhammer. Or wield bastard sword as a martial weapon one-handed.

- Choose one feat you qualify for: Armor Proficiency (light), Cleave, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, or Toughness.

Steppes Nomad

Steppes nomads are wandering horsemen clans that survive in a land of harsh conditions. Many are barbarians, but even those who follow other paths learn something of fighting and surviving in the wilderness.

- Take Survival as a permanent class skill.

- Choose two of the following skills as permanent class skills: Climb, Handle Animal, Heal, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (geography) and Knowledge (nature) (together as one pick), Listen, Ride, Spot, Swim. Or take one of the following feats: Endurance, Run, Self-Sufficient, Toughness, or Track.

- Gain a +1 attack bonus with one of the following weapons: javelin, longspear, punching dagger, shortspear, sling, or shortbow.

Yeoman

A yeoman is a commoner, but not a serf. A free man who may own his own land, a yeoman is a respected member of society, trusted to act honestly, and expected to aid in his nation's defense. The weapon of choice for most yeoman is the longbow, which allows them to engage heavily armed foes from range, as well as hunt for food outside of war time.

- Gain Point Blank Shot as a bonus feat.

- Pick any three of the following skills as permanent class skills: Appraise, Climb, Gather Information, Handle Animal, Heal, Hide, Jump, Knowledge (local) and Knowledge (nature)(both as one pick), Listen, Ride, Sense Motive, or Survival. Or take one of the following feats you qualify for: Far Shot, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow), Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Run, Stealthy, or Track.

Allowing Unusual Backgrounds

For many players, a roleplaying game is most fun when they get a lot of "spotlight time." Being powerful or successful is less important than having attention paid to the player and her PC. This type of player often wants to have unusual features for a character

(silver eyes, great height or girth, unusual accent, six fingers, whatever) or an unusual history (son of a saint, raised by wolves), even if there's no game mechanical advantage to doing so. Indeed, many players enjoy playing characters with distinct disadvantages, as their failings and foibles draw even more attention. There's nothing wrong with allowing such things (see **Fortune Points and Drawbacks** in **Chapter Two**), but too many unusual characters can both steal the feeling of being unusual and make a campaign seem like a collection of freaks rather than realistic people.

One way to handle this matter is to require players to take a feat to be distinctive. The feat can be allowed as part of any background if the GM is using backgrounds, or it can be required as the character's first normal feat. The Distinctive feat (see **Appendix One**) allows characters to be odd and unique, but at a price. Players with more traditional character concepts are less likely to feel cheated when the unusual characters take up roleplaying time, since the bonus to spotlight time has been paid for.

Alternatively, you may decide to write specific backgrounds that anyone can take which include unusual elements. For example, a dragon kith may well have red or yellow eyes as normal for their kind. This option puts more pressure on you to provide interesting backgrounds, but it also encourages players to stick to concepts you've approved for your campaign.

- The Passage of Time -

PCs don't generally spend all their time on adventures. They periodically need downtime, an opportunity to rest, make Craft goods and magic items, study and research spells, and learn about current events. Characters may take a few days off between each adventure or may decide to spend their whole winter in some friendly town. Most downtime can be handled in a single game session — everyone agrees how much time passes uneventfully and calculate how they spend that time. Many groups spend considerable time roleplaying conversations (catching up with allied NPCs, discussing future plans, or even going to see a play), none of which needs special rules for you to handle. There are game elements, however, that come up during downtime.

Downtime involves three main game aspects: creating or researching things; earning or spending money; and advancing levels and training. The rules for creating and researching are well covered in the core d20 rulebooks. New rules for earning money through resources and advancing levels and training are presented here.

Calendars

Though a calendar is not a requirement of a campaign, it's a useful way to keep track of how much time has passed. Not only is it useful when PCs take downtime, it's a good way to keep track of how long NPCs need to build castles, craft magic items, deliver messages, and gain their own levels. A calendar also makes keeping track of holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and the seasons easy. Even an occasional mention of such events tends to give a campaign a more realistic feeling and expands the roleplaying opportunities for PCs.

The simplest way to use a calendar is to pick one up at an office supply store. It need not even be for the current year. Then pick a date and make up a year (since the campaign likely doesn't occur in the 2000's), and mark off days as the campaign's timeline advances. Important dates can be noted in advance (having PCs choose birthdays, for example), and any time something will take several days (such as making magic items), the completion date can be marked down once work has begun.

You can also make up his own calendar, naming your own months and even days of the week. It's easiest if your calendar is 365 days long and broken into 12 months, since that's what players are used to, but it's not mandatory. As long as players get a copy of the calendar (so they don't have to remember 12 imaginary months), you can do anything you want with it. Naming months after emperors in the campaign's history, noting the holy days of major religions, and even charting out the phases of the moon all add a level of depth to a campaign and can easily be worked into future adventures. If the players have a resource that tells them when the next full moon is, they take werewolf hunting more seriously.

Table 6-4:
Income and Value of Resources

Resource Rank	Income/ Week	Value
1–2	20 gp	1,000 gp
3–4	25 gp	1,250 gp
5–6	30 gp	1,500 gp
7–8	35 gp	1,750 gp
9	40 gp	2,000 gp
10	45 gp	2,250 gp
11–12	50 gp	2,500 gp
13	55 gp	2,750 gp
14	60 gp	3,000 gp
15	65 gp	3,250 gp
16–17	70 gp	3,500 gp
18	75 gp	3,750 gp
19	80 gp	4,000 gp
20	85 gp	4,250 gp
21	90 gp	4,500 gp
22	95 gp	4,750 gp
23	100 gp	5,000 gp

Table 6-5:
Resource Events

1d100	Event
01–03	Major setback. Resource produces no profit for 2d4 weeks and loses half its value.
04–08	Intermediate setback. Resource produces no profit for 1d4 weeks and loses 10% of its value.
09–15	Minor setback. Resource produces half its normal profit for 1d4 weeks
16–25	Unexpected cost. Resource requires 105% of its value to keep running. (This may be taken out of weekly profits if they're great enough).
26–75	Normal operations.
76–85	Minor opportunity. Resource can grow by +25% value if money equal to its new value is added.
86–92	Major opportunity. Resource can grow by +50% value if money equal to its new value is added. If investment is made, resource gains a +20 to resource event rolls for 1d4 weeks.
93–97	Good week. Resource produces +50% more profit than usual.
98–100	Good fortune. Resource produces double profit for 1d4 weeks.

Resources

When PCs are in downtime, they often turn their attention to their income or lack of it. PCs are often important people (at least eventually) who have little means of support other than killing foes and taking their valuables. Eventually, most wish to know if being a knight or a king's ranger or a prelate of the church carries any financial benefits. This is a reasonable question and one most GMs are unprepared for. The following resource rules are designed to allow you to handle such issues quickly without taking too much time or effort.

These resource rules are extremely simple. They rate resources based not on what they are, how they work, or what costs are incurred running them, but purely on how much profit they earn the PC that possesses them. This system is intentionally simple, as most players don't want to spend their leisure time balancing a budget. The system allows you to hand out resources (rated by rank and value) simply and allows PCs to gather their weekly profits. As a general rule, characters should have resources of a rank no higher than their level, but you can make exceptions if you want.

A resource can be defined as anything you desire. A small business, a farm or barony, a share of church donations, a noble's stipend, a patronage, a toll road, a brewery, town taxes, or even a royal commission to keep an area safe are all examples of resources. Many of these resources have real estate as well, which you should value separately only if useful. For example, a knight PC is given a small stone tower as a reward by his king. The stone tower has a real value (it's a stronghold), so you figure its value based on the rules in the d20 core rulebooks. It also has a working farm and a few fields, and controls a toll road. You rule that these features make it a rank 5 resource, earning the PC 30 gp a week. A wizard who buys into a trading company gains no real tangible benefits from the real estate involved (the company isn't going to let him use its resources for personal gain anyway), so its value is purely based on its weekly profit.

You can pass out resources as treasure, counting the value against treasure the PCs have earned. This method works well for adventures with little tangible treasure, such as clearing a wilderness of dangerous animals and minor undead (which generally don't have valuables). You may also refer to these rules if a PC asks about buying a resource. For example, if a rogue's player decides he wants

Behind the Screen: Calculating Resources

When looking at resources, the defining rule used as a guideline is the Craft skill, because it already allows a PC to "create" wealth. Keeping the resource rules in line with Craft helps preserve game balance. Making major changes to how Craft works may necessitate changing the numbers for resource income per week.

When using the Craft skill to make an item, a week's progress is measured as the skill check multiplied by the Craft DC. This progress is rated in silver pieces (sp). With the ability to make high-DC items and make multiple items if the first one is finished quickly, a character can essentially always make things in a week as expensive as his Craft check's maximum take – 10 DC. A character must spend one-third the cost of an item to make it. Thus, a character is capable of making wealth equal to two-thirds of the result of his Craft check squared.

If we assume characters max their ranks in Craft as a class skill and gain a +3 bonus from some source (ability score modifiers, Skill Focus, masterwork tools, or circumstance bonus), that produces a Craft check ranging from 7 to 26 (as shown on **Table 6–6**). Two-thirds of that value is potential profit. This tells us how much a character of the given level could reasonably expect to make in a week of work. Of course there are some variables we're not taking into account (high ability scores combined with Craft-enhancing feats, cost of living, flooding the market, rashes of good or bad luck), but the numbers below are a reasonable baseline.

Table 6-6: Typical Weekly Wealth from Craft

Level	Typical Craft Bonus	Take 10 DC	Sp/Week *	2/3 **
1st	7	17	289	193 (19.3 gp)
2nd	8	18	324	216 (21.6 gp)
3rd	9	19	361	240 (24 gp)
4th	10	20	400	267 (26.7 gp)
5th	11	21	441	294 (29.4 gp)
6th	12	22	484	323 (32.3 gp)
7th	13	23	529	353 (35.3 gp)
8th	14	24	576	384 (38.4 gp)
9th	15	25	625	417 (41.7 gp)
10th	16	26	676	451 (45.1 gp)
11th	17	27	729	486 (48.6 gp)
12th	18	28	784	523 (52.3 gp)
13th	19	29	841	561 (56.1 gp)
14th	20	30	900	600 (60 gp)
15th	21	31	961	641 (64.1 gp)
16th	22	32	1,024	683 (68.3 gp)
17th	23	33	1,089	726 (72.6)
18th	24	34	1,156	771 (77.1 gp)
19th	25	35	1,225	817 (81.7 gp)
20th	26	36	1,296	864 (86.4 gp)

* Check Squared
** Equal to Profit, Rounded Down

The final numbers in gp/week were rounded to make math easy, then placed on **Table 6–6**. This calculation allows a resource of the same rating as the character's level to make as much money in a week as the PC could by himself (if he was designed to do so). Of course, the PC couldn't go adventuring if he stayed at home and did Craft all day, but that's why the resource is a benefit and gains a value as potential treasure.

The values of these resources were calculated as 50 times the weekly income, based on the idea that most campaigns don't last all that long and likely don't cover much more than a year (52 weeks) of campaign time. Thus, a resource pays for itself over the course of a campaign. This is a good thing, as otherwise a character is always better off keeping money rather than investing in a resource. It is, however, a ridiculously high rate of return for realistic economics. While this is rarely an issue (few d20 campaigns have anything like realistic economies), a GM interested in greater realism should likely value resources at 500 times the weekly income, which produces a 10% annual return on investment — a far more believable figure, though still high.

to buy a tavern, simply figure the cost of the building (since a rogue can use it as a base of operations), plus the resource value for its rank, and charge the rogue the total of those two costs.

You may decide to allow all PCs to buy resources whenever they want, in which case income per week is always 1/50 of the money invested. However, you could also decide resources are hard to come by and restrict when PCs can invest, even in resources they already own. (You might also mix these rules, depending on the resource. A monthly stipend for the king can't be "invested in," while a bakery potentially could be.) If you restrict when PCs may invest in resources, you can use **Table 6–5: Resource Events**, rolling once each month for each resource, to determine how it's doing and if new opportunities arise.

It's important to note resources have no associated costs (except as allowed for on **Table 6–5**). Costs such as repairs to buildings, materials, taxes, and payroll are covered automatically, with the listed weekly income representing profit. Of course you can play with this assumption as the focus of an adventure — a cleric's church donations might be way down because a new cult has moved into town. Don't vary resources too much, however, unless they are the focus of an adventure, as PCs are likely to investigate immediately any threat to their income. It's also important to note the money earned doesn't magically teleport into a PC's pocket; rather, it sits at whatever location the resource is based until the PC comes and gets it.

– Character Advancement –

One of the linchpins of any d20 campaign is character advancement. As characters gain experience, they go up in levels, improving old abilities and gaining new ones. Though each level is only a small improvement over the one before it, by the time a character has gained five or more levels, she's at a whole new tier of power. A 1st-level party rightly trembles at a single ogre, but four 6th-level characters scoff at such a threat. This is part of the heroic advancement built into the system, and it helps make the game interesting, but it also drives home the cinematic style of the base d20 rules. The following section provides rules to change the basic assumption of character advancement, allowing you to tone down or rev up the effect of gaining levels on your campaign.

Activating Potential

Level advancement is normally seen as characters gaining new skills and abilities. It can, however, be viewed as activating powers that already existed, but were lying dormant. Characters may be considered all to come from powerful bloodlines that grant them their abilities or to have some special spark or bright soul that common people lack. In this kind of game, characters need not train or even wait for downtime to gain a level. You could end a game in the middle of a day and hand out experience, and characters that gain a level have full access to their new abilities, feats, and spells at the next game. You could even give out experience after each encounter, allowing characters to level up during a game session (though only if you can calculate the experience quickly; otherwise, doing this slows game pacing).

One side effect of this idea is that anyone without this potential simply doesn't gain levels. You set a "ceiling" for normal creatures, and no matter how much experience they accumulate they cannot gain more levels than the ceiling. For example, you could decide there's a 5-level ceiling for normal folk. A common town wizard, even one who's gone on dozens of adventures over the years, can't be higher than 5th level. This restriction works well for campaigns in which the PCs are supposed to be special and super-heroic. Of course, you can make major NPCs be of the same special origin as the PCs, allowing them to gain as many levels as their experience allows. (Alternatively, you may decide NPCs can gain unlimited levels, but place a ceiling on how many levels grant hit points and special abilities. Thus the town wizard could be 9th level and cast spells at caster level 9th, but only have 5 HD and access to 3rd-level spells.)

Faneways

A faneway is a mystic location with a connection to some source of power (see **Mystic Locales** in **Chapter Seven**, for more ideas along these lines). In order to gain the powers of their new level, characters must go to a faneway appropriate to their class and undergo a mental journey or test. Unless faneways are extremely common (which tends to lower the impact of having them at all), characters shouldn't be forced to go to faneways more than every odd level, and every three or four levels is even better.

Essentially, going to a faneway represents the character trying to attune herself to the powers of her class through a vision quest. This process depends on a cosmology in which the powers of every class have at least some spiritual or mystic element to them. Going to a faneway periodically can be the basis for adventures in their own right, especially if some faneways are more efficient than others (granting bonuses to the checks needed to gain the powers of a level).

When a character reaches a level that requires a faneway, she gains the saving throws, hit points, and skill points of her new level, but nothing else. Feats, spells, and special abilities are not gained until the mental journey at a faneway is complete. Once a character is ready for

a faneway, she knows the direction to the nearest one that will suit her purposes (though not the distance or power of the faneway). Depending on the campaign, you may make faneways well-known permanent places of pilgrimage or ever-changing locales never used by the same character more than once.

When a character reaches a faneway, she must undergo a vision quest, which takes a day (8 hours) of uninterrupted meditation. What happens during the vision quest varies, as each spiritual journey is unique. Make up visions to give the character (a great opportunity to slip in hints of future adventures) or roll on **Table 6–7**.

Campaign Vignette: Sinners and Saints

In a sinners and saints game, characters must go to a faneway every third level (as they qualify for a new feat). As they pass faneway tests, they gain visible auras, and eventually even halos, marking them as creatures of greater spiritual power. These auras are distinctive and impossible to reproduce; even a high-level illusion is not up to the task of properly duplicating the spiritual aura of an ascended character (it'll always be obviously fake).

After going to a faneway once, a character has a light nimbus that's only obvious in dark environments. A second time results in the nimbus being bright enough to see in dim light, and a third time makes it as bright as a candle — a distinctive aura that's clear even in daylight. A fourth time results in a halo forming around the character's head that sheds light as a *light* spell. The fifth and sixth times add a halo each, resulting in the character walking around with three bright halos. A character that goes to a faneway seven times has a pair of light-wings and is marked as an epic level character (though she can't actually fly). While all epic level characters look the same to those below 21st level, among themselves the brightness and intensity of the light-wings is a clear sign of how many additional trips to a faneway they have taken. Characters with a good alignment have silver auras and halos; those of neutral alignment have green, and evil alignment red.

In this campaign, power level and at least some alignment information are obvious among higher-level characters. Heroes can be spotted walking down the street and are treated as something more than mortal. Not all threats can be gauged by the light they give off (dragons have no need for faneways, nor do most monsters, though outsiders might match the glow of a character with levels equal to their Hit Dice). Subtlety is low in a game of this kind, but it can be a refreshing change, allowing white-hats and black-hats to be obvious in a fantasy setting.

If a character's vision quest fails, she cannot try again until she has earned an amount of experience equal to 100 x her current level. Once that moment comes, the character again feels drawn to the nearest faneway and gains a +20 bonus to her vision-quest roll. Only after a successful vision quest does a character gain all the benefits of her new level.

One of the advantages of using faneways is that they make a clear distinction between lower-level and higher-level characters. People who have gone to a faneway several times are clearly more powerful, having achieved a higher state of spiritual power. A society might even have ways of marking those who have experienced faneway rituals more than once — tattoos, special clothing, or particular decorations may be reserved for those who have been to a faneway a given number of times. This element allows you to give PCs direct information regarding an NPC's level and thus his potential threat level. Of course, unless the markings are somehow automatic and impossible to duplicate, people can attempt to disguise their true power (up or down) by claiming marks they haven't earned or by leaving off some they have.

Pick a Level, Any Level

One option is to do away with traditional level advancement entirely. Instead, set the game at a particular starting level, and it stays there. Rather than gain experience points and go up a level, characters buy skills and feats directly with their experience. This method leads to characters being much broader (as they can continue to buy into new skills and take feats), but not a lot more powerful. The exact cost of skills and feats should be based on how quickly you wants character to advance. As a basic guideline, a feat should cost as much as 5 ranks of a class skill, and a character should pick up between 1 and 3 skill ranks' worth of experience each game session.

The advantage of this system is that power creep is kept to a minimum. Characters starting the game worried about ogres are still worried by them ten sessions later. Characters do gain in power (as they can gain new skills and augment existing abilities with feats), but do so more slowly, and with an upper limit. Base attack bonuses, spells per day, save bonuses, hit points, and max skill ranks never increase, so characters are limited to a given range of power

The system has two major drawbacks, however. First, characters tend to become more similar over time. Since they max out their most important skills early, characters soon begin overlapping on secondary skills, leading to fighters having a few ranks of Spellcraft and wizards picking up Disable Device. As skills overlap, so do roles, and many players prefer to have a game in which their specific contribution to a group is something no one else can match.

Table 6-7:
Faneway Vision Quests

1d100	Quest
01–10	Character is given a quest by a dead relative. If it is not completed before the character again visits a faneway, the next vision quest automatically fails.
11–40	Character faces a spirit-foe, a creature of the same CR as his previous level. Though the combat seems real, no actual resources are used, nor is any real damage done. If the character beats his foe, he ascends; if not, his vision quest fails.
41–60	Character finds himself in a maze. He must make a Will save (DC 5 + character level) to find his way out. Each save represents a day of real time. If he hasn't succeeded after three tries, his vision quest fails.
61–80	Character has a religious experience. He may choose to change alignment with no penalties (even if a cleric) or gain the benefits of an *atonement* spell if needed. The character may choose to make his next level monk or paladin, even if he previously left those classes. The vision quest automatically succeeds.
91–100	Character feels a great peace settle over him and awakes with no need to sleep for a week. The vision quest automatically succeeds.

Second, there's less reward, and thus less incentive to play. A player who knows his fighter can't get a better attack bonus may feel there's not much reason to keep playing. You may be able to offset this limitation by occasionally upping the game's "default" level (granting everyone the benefits of one more level in their chosen class). He may also be able to provide enough other options to keep players interested (even if the fighter can't increase his attack bonus, he can learn new weapons and fighting techniques, making him more effective even with the same bonus).

Training

You may decide to require PCs to train before they gain the benefits of a new level. Training helps prevent characters from gaining levels in the middle of an adventure (which can skew the challenge of the adventure, especially at low levels), helps control PC funds (as you can tweak the training cost up or down as

needed to balance available treasure), and places a more obvious mechanism in place for you to control what skills, feats, and classes the PCs gain. It also provides another roleplaying opportunity, as PCs must find instructors and convince them to teach specific skills. Convincing instructors may require a proof of talent, and possibly even the giving of gifts and doing of favors. A cunning GM can turn a quest to learn a valuable feat into an adventure in its own right.

Common Complaints about Training Rules

It's worth noting many players *hate* training rules. In some cases, they object to being limited in what they can do with their characters — they feel their character is their purview, and anything legal within the rules should be allowed. This kind of attitude doesn't help keep a game fun or balanced and should be discouraged. While you shouldn't take over PCs, it's perfectly reasonable for you to ask players to avoid certain decisions or to disallow some options. A good d20 campaign is a cooperative venture, and players must trust you to know what will and won't work for the adventures you have planned.

A second complaint is that training rules are boring and time consuming. Certainly, few groups find it exciting to calculate time and money needed to learn a new feat or gain another rank of a skill. The following rules are kept simple for exactly this reason, but even so, they may take the fun out of a campaign. If you decides to use training rules, keep them from being too obtrusive. If a character won't be able to find a trainer in a given locale, simply inform the player of that — don't waste time asking where and how he looks.

Training Options

There a number of approaches for introducing training concepts to your campaign.

Linear Class Training

Basic training rules require a character be taught by a member of the same class at least 1 level higher than his newly gained level, or a character of a related class (one with some similar abilities) at least 4 levels higher than his new level. Thus, a character who just became a 5th-level fighter can learn from a 6th-level fighter or a 9th-level barbarian, ranger, or paladin. Training takes 1 day per level and costs 1,000 gp per level (so, our 5th-level fighter must train for 5 days and spend 5,000 gp). Until a character has trained, he cannot use any of the things gained at the new level, not even hit points or saving throw bonuses.

Open Training

A more realistic, but more complex, system is to allow a character to gain training from anyone who has what he wants to learn. A 5th-level fighter can learn fighting from anyone with a +5 or greater base attack bonus and learn Power Attack from anyone who has that feat. The cost for training is still 1,000 gp per level, but is divided into skills, feats, attack bonus, and hit points, as well as
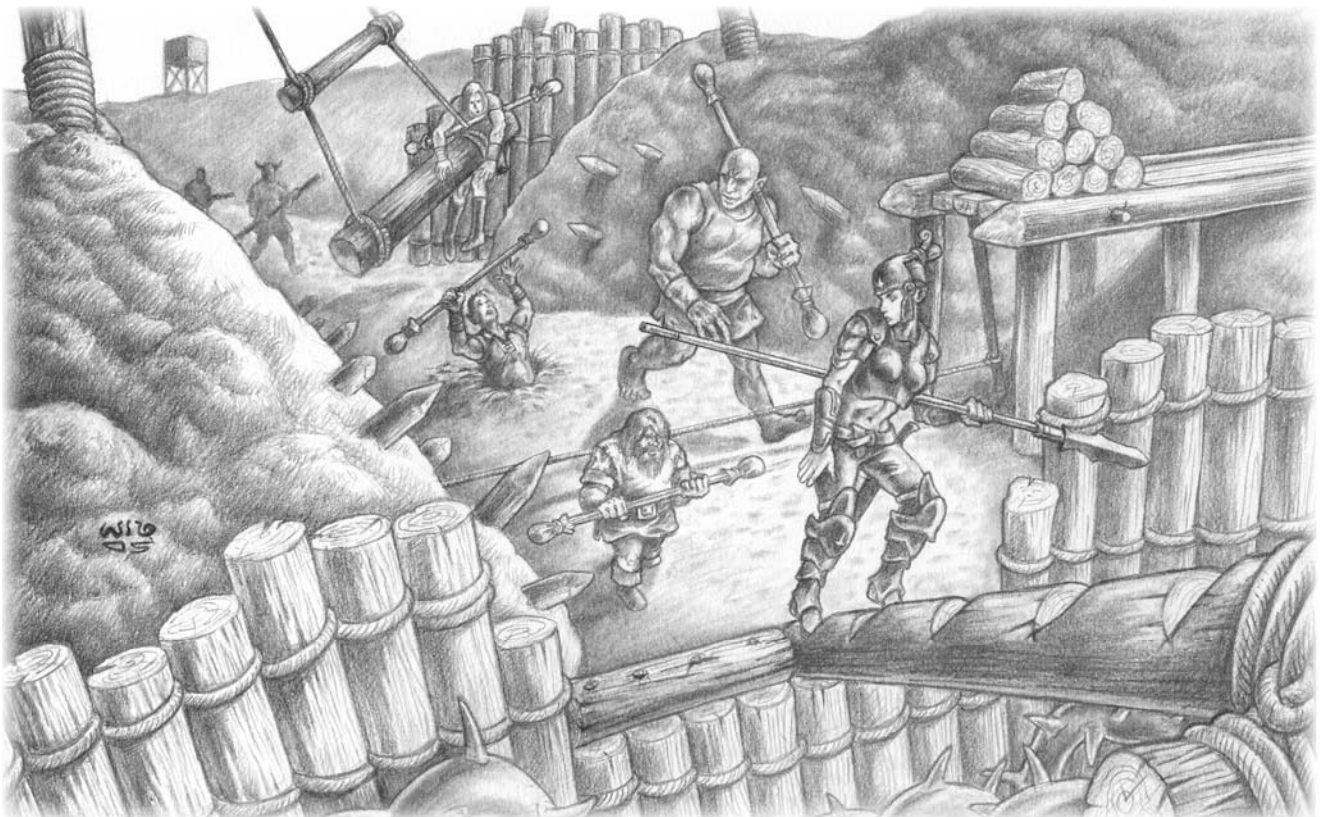
all saving throws, special abilities, and spells. A class that has all these features must spend 167 gp per level gained to increase one area (such as learning new skills). A class lacking some of these features divides the 1,000 gp base cost per level by the number of features the class has. Thus, our 5th-level fighter has these features: skills, feats, attack bonus, hit points, and all saving throws. Learning his feats for the level cost ([1,000 / 4 = 250] x 5 = 1,250) 1,250 gp. Training time is also reduced by the number of features that must be learned.

As a compromise, you may decide to require training only when PCs are picking up new abilities, skills, or feats. Thus, characters need not spend money to buy up skills they have at least one rank in or for increased attack bonuses, hit points, saving throws, or spells of a class they already have one level in. This method reduces how often training must be undertaken and allows characters stuck far from civilization to advance in their existing abilities even if they can't gain new ones.

In this case, training costs and times vary by the skills or abilities gained. Skills cost 100 gp and take half a day per rank, and can only be taught by characters who have more ranks in the skill. For example, a character wanting to buy 5 ranks in Spot must spend 500 gp and 2 1/2 days training. Feats cost 500 gp + 100 gp per prerequisite, take half a day per 100 gp cost, and can only be taught by someone who has the feat. Picking up the spells of a new class costs 1,000 gp and takes 5 days, and may only be taught by someone of at least caster level 5th. Special abilities (such as a monk's quivering palm) should not normally require special training, since it represents a natural development of previous abilities (stunning blow). If you want to require training for such abilities should treat each special ability as a feat with a number of prerequisites equal to one-third of the level the ability is gained at (thus, learning quivering palm is the same as gaining a feat with 5 prerequisites: 1,000 gp and 5 days).

Under this system, characters may have to keep unspent skill points and feat slots as they look for a trainer. Require the player to assign unspent development and not change what he wishes to gain later.

New Class Training

At the least intrusive level, decide to require training only for characters gaining a new class. Be it a new base class or a prestige class, you can require PCs to pay a character who already has the desired class for training. This training costs 2,000 gp and takes 2 weeks for a base class, and 5,000 gp and 4 weeks for a prestige class. A character may do half the training for a prestige class before he qualifies for it, but the final cost and 2 weeks must be taken after the character qualifies.

In any of these systems, you may allow another PC who qualifies to do the training. Successfully training another PC requires a DC 15 Profession (instructor) check or a DC 20 Intelligence check. Also, you may decide to have characters learning something as part of their favored class be able to pick it up more easily, dividing cost and training time in half.

Training as Experience

A different way to handle training is to allow characters to earn experience points by spending time and money training. While this method goes counter to normal experience rules, which requires risk and accomplishment to gain reward, it does allow characters to learn things by spending time under a teacher. Not only does this make sense, it gives characters other than spellcasters and item creators something to do during downtime.

Costs and teacher requirements are the same as for the standard training rules (above). Time is considerably different, however. For each 8-hour day spent training, a character gains experience points equal to 5 x character level x Intelligence modifier (minimum 1). At a given level, a character can't earn more experience training than 200 x his level. (Alternatively, simply cut experience earned per day in half after this much has been earned, cutting it in half again after another 200/level has been earned, then in half again, and so on, not resetting until a new level is gained.)

Players must choose what their characters are training for, and characters must take those choices as soon as they legally can. For example, a 1st-level fighter with a 14 Intelligence trains to learn Exotic Weapon Proficiency with spiked chains. He spends 600 gp (500 for a feat, +100 for one prerequisite) and spends 10 days training. He earns 10 XP per day (5 x 2 for his Intelligence modifier), earning 100 XP (half his legal maximum for this level). When the character reaches 2nd-level, he earns a bonus fighter feat and must take Exotic Weapon Proficiency with spiked chain. If the fighter had been 4th level, he wouldn't have gained a feat at 5th level and would have been forced to take the feat when he reached 6th level.

You may decide to allow a character to gain the benefits of training before reaching the next level. A character can gain a single feat or as many skill points as his Intelligence modifier (+1 if human) in this way. The feat or skills aren't free, as the character is still required to buy them normally at the next level, but the character gains the benefits of them immediately after earning a number of XP equal to 200 x character level. Using this system, characters can learn the orc language while staying with a tribe of orcs or pick up Profession (sailor) while traveling on a ship.

CHAPTER SEVEN: TREASURE AND MAGIC ITEMS

Treasure and magic items are the primary forms of reward in a d20 campaign other than experience points. The treasure that PCs gather has a strong effect on their development and capabilities, and thus on a campaign's tone. Players enjoy gaining new and unique treasures, driving GMs into searches for new wonders not drawn from the core d20 rules. Numerous new treasures are presented here, designed to expand your options and to help build a campaign with a different and entertaining feel.

The new treasures and magic items are divided into several categories. They can be mixed in with standard items or can replace them to create campaigns with a totally different tone. Rules are provided for creating all the effects within the realm of mortals. Additional rules to add to standard magic items are also provided, including artifact creation rules. Use as much or as little of this chapter as he wishes, adding only those treasures appropriate for your campaign.

– MAGIC CHAKRAS –

In the context of the d20 rules, a chakra is a point of power on a creature that allows it to access the power of magic items. Most magical items that are worn require a chakra to work, including rings, clothing, armor, bracers, gloves, helms, headbands, and so on. Each chakra can be accessed only by a single magical item, which is why a character cannot use more than one magical ring on each hand — only a single chakra exists on each hand.

Not every item requires chakras — swords, rods, wands, and staves, along with numerous hand-held wondrous items, function without chakras. However, even these items must normally be held to function, limiting the number a character can realistically use. A very few items, such as ioun stones, don't need to be held or linked to a chakra to function.

The core rules assume a character has 12 chakras spread across the body. These chakras are listed below, along with the types of items that normally access each chakra. Since the defining trait of a magic item is what chakra it uses, not what form it takes, there's no difference between

a mantle and a cap from a mystic standpoint — each accesses the chakra of the shoulders, and thus a character can use only one such item.

You can alter both the power level and tone of a game by playing with chakras. In simple terms, increasing available chakras boosts a game's power level (and the overall level of magic), while decreasing character chakras lowers both magic level and power level.

Changing Chakras

Adding chakras is a quick and easy way to increase a game's power level. However, additional chakras are useful mostly to high-level characters (as lower-level characters rarely have more items than they can wear anyway). You could grant an additional chakra every five levels, for example, allowing players to decide what additional chakra to take. This option boosts a game's power level only slightly, but does grant an additional level of personalization among characters.

Alternatively, you may allow characters to add chakras as they gain levels by taking a feat. A new chakra feat forces players to decide if additional magic items are worth the price of not having more directly useful feats. A chakra-related feat might also allow a player to change where his character's chakras are, without changing the total number. Two such feats, Additional Chakra and Change Chakra, are presented in **Appendix One**.

Characters who have multiple chakras can use multiple items of the same type, within the limits of realism. A character can reasonably wear both a suit of light armor and a suit of heavier armor, or a suit of armor and a robe, but wearing two medium or heavier armors, or even light armor with medium armor, is not possible. When wearing two suits of armor, the armor bonus of the suits does not stack, the worst maximum Dexterity bonus is used, and the armor check penalties and arcane spell failures do stack.

For most other items, wearing two of the same kind of thing (but no more) if chakras allow is reasonable. A character can easily put on three or even four belts, and one ring per finger is reasonable, but no more than two pairs of gloves or two pieces of footwear should be allowed at once. Having multiple chakras of the same type does not affect stacking rules; bonuses of the same type still don't stack.

A game can also limit the total chakras available to characters. If you wish to run a lower-magic game, you could set total chakras at any number below 12. A game could even restrict characters to one chakra each, severely limiting the effect magic items have on game play without needing to change the effectiveness of individual items.

To give characters more control over chakras without affecting game balance, allow characters to assign chakras as they go up in levels. Characters start with one chakra

Table 7-1: Standard Chakras

Chakra	Typical Magical Items
Crown (of Head)	Headband, hat, helmet, phylactery, or tiara
Face	Goggles, masks
Neck	Necklace, amulet, brooch, periapt, scarab, or cameo
Sternum	Shirt, vest, or vestment
Back	Armor or robe
Shoulders	Cloak, cape, or mantle
Navel	Belt or belly gem
Wrists	Bracers or bracelets (weak chakras, normally takes a matched pair to access)
Hands	Gloves or gauntlets (weak chakras, normally takes a matched pair to access)
Fingers	Rings (one per hand)
Feet	Boots, shoes, sandals, stockings (weak chakras, normally takes a matched pair to access)

and gain an additional chakra at every even-numbered character level. Characters may assign the chakras however they wish as they are gained (or leave chakras unassigned until they gain an item that needs one). This method has little effect on low- and mid-level play, since characters often have fewer than 12 magic items at these levels anyway. While higher-level characters do have less access to items with chakras, they can gear their characters to use the items most useful to them, preserving game balance.

Chakras by Class

One way to make classes more distinctive is to give each its own set of chakras. While these sets overlap quite a bit, and each still has a total of 12 location-specific item slots available (except the commoner), each class has a different specific set. Arcane spellcasters can thus use more rings, for example, at the cost of belts and boots.

If a character multiclasses or takes a prestige class, he does not gain additional chakras (though he may qualify for the Additional Chakra feat). Instead, he gains the ability to change one of his existing chakras to one normally accessed by the new class. Thus, a fighter who takes a level of rogue may change one of his existing chakras to an extra hand chakra. Classes marked with an "*" can be found in Green Ronin's *Advanced Player's Manual*. Classes marked with a "†" are from Green Ronin's **Master Class** series.

Table 7-2: Chakra Costs

Additional Chakra	Base Cost
Of the same type as item granting	Bonus chakras x bonus chakras x 20,000 gp
Of different type than item granting	Bonus chakras x bonus chakras x 40,000 gp

Adept, druid, hierophant, shaman†: Crown, face, neck x2, back, shoulders, wrists x2, hands, fingers x2, feet.

Arcane trickster, assassin, assassin†, bard, duelist, elocater, expert, rogue, shadow dancer, slayer, soulknife: Face x2, neck x2, sternum, shoulders, navel, hands x2, fingers x2, feet.

Arcane archer, barbarian, horizon walker, ranger, scout:* Neck x2, sternum, back x2, shoulders x2, navel, wrists, hands, feet x2.

Archmage, cerebremancer, eldritch weaver, loremaster, metamind, mystic theurge, psion, psionic uncarnate, psychic†, spellmaster*, sorcerer, thaumaturgist, thrallherd, wilder, witch†, wizard:* Crown, face, neck, sternum, back, shoulders, wrists, hands, fingers x4.

Aristocrat, dwarven defender, fighter, noble†, thanemage, warrior:* Crown x2, face, neck, sternum, back, navel, wrists x2, hands, finger, feet.

Avatar†, blackguard, cavalier†, eldritch knight, paladin, pyrokineticist, unholy warrior†: Crown, neck, sternum, back, shoulders x2, navel x2, hands, fingers x2, feet.

Cleric, evangelist, psychic warrior, slayer, war mind, warpriest*:* Crown, neck, sternum x2, back x2, shoulders, wrists, hands, fingers x2, feet.

Commoner: Neck, back, shoulders, hands, feet.

Dragon disciple, monk, psionic fist: Crown, neck, shoulders, navel x2, wrists, hands, fingers x4, feet.

Chakras as Treasure

A magic item can grant additional chakras as one of its powers. As long as a character wears or holds the items in question, he gains additional chakras. An item that grants bonus chakras of the same type as it uses has a base price of (bonus chakras granted x bonus chakras granted x 20,000 gp). An item that grants bonus chakras of a different type than it uses costs twice as much. Thus, a ring that grants two additional finger chakras costs (2 x 2 x 20,000) 80,000 gp, while a ring that grants two additional navel chakras costs (2 x 2 x 40,000 gp) 160,000 gp.

The total number of additional chakras a character has count as enhancement bonuses, and thus they don't stack. For example, a character wearing a ring that grants +2 finger chakras and a belt that grants +1 navel chakra may choose to use two additional items on his fingers or one on his navel and one on a finger, but not two on his fingers and one in his navel. His total number of additional chakras is limited to the highest bonus he receives (two, from his ring). While he can mix and match from his bonus chakras, he cannot exceed the highest bonus in total chakras used.

– Innate Abilities –

Innate abilities can be granted as treasure, allowing characters to pick up special powers that require no item or spell to use. These abilities can be as simple as bonus feats (see **Ars Vitae** following) or as complex as suites of powers that are nearly the match of true spellcasting. A character may be granted a special boon as a reward for serving her deity, gain amazing powers after performing intricate rituals, be imbued with magical talents as a result of some arcane accident, or be transformed into something not-quite-mortal after defeating a demon lord.

Innate abilities are a fun way for you to change a game's feel, and they are a reward the players feel truly become part of their characters. A cool magic item can be lost, sold, or destroyed — an innate power is much less likely to go away.

As a guideline, innate abilities should be priced two to three times more expensive than an item acting similarly. (Essentially, double the cost for not taking up an item chakra, and double it again for not being removable or even obvious to search, for a total of ×3 cost. You can modify this cost for abilities with limited usefulness, but it's a good starting point.) Innate abilities should rarely be charged, since that violates the whole concept of a permanent change. Never allow PCs to gain the power to grant unlimited innate abilities (there should *not* be a Craft Innate Ability feat for instance), since it can quickly become unbalancing.

ARS VITAE

Ars vitae is a magical material that contains the mystic essence of craft and cunning. Appearing to be a glowing fluid similar to levin (see page 140), *ars vitae* grants bonus feats to characters that drink it. Drinking a dose of *ars vitae* grants a character an additional bonus feat to the total number of feats gained from her character levels (from seven feats to eight) or to her number of bonus feats gained from a class such as a fighter or wizard. The character immediately gains this feat. The feat must be a feat for which the character qualifies.

Characters with bonus feats from classes may qualify to gain a bonus feat to the number of bonus feats they ordinarily receive. If the character has received at least two bonus feats from a class, and those feats were selected from a specific list (rather than being any possible feat or only one specific feat), that character may take a bonus feat on top of the number of bonus feats she receives from that class. This bonus feat must be taken from the class's list of bonus feats.

Feats gained through *ars vitae* are permanent, extraordinary abilities. Characters can receive only a single bonus feat of each type (total character level or class bonus feats) from *ars vitae*.

For example, a 5th-level rogue drinking one dose of *ars vitae* gains a bonus feat to her total number of feats according to her character level. Drinking a second dose does her no good, for she gains just a single bonus feat from *ars vitae* in this manner. A 5th-level fighter drinking a dose may take either a bonus feat on top of his total number of feats for his character level or take a bonus feat on top of the number of bonus fighter feats he gains. Assuming the fighter takes a bonus feat for his character level, he could still benefit from another dose of *ars vitae* by taking a bonus feat for his fighter bonus feats. A 5th-level wizard doesn't qualify to take a bonus feat to his bonus wizard feats, as one of his two class bonus feats is Scribe Scroll, rather than selected from a list. A 10th-level wizard, however, would qualify to take a bonus feat to his bonus wizard feats.

Strong transmutation; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, *limited wish*; Price 10,000 gp per dose.

BOONS

Boons are special powers faithful worshipers gain through dedication, ritual, and sacrifice. A character's class does not matter when taking a boon, only her adherence to the precepts of her religion and proper performance of the required rituals. Many boons require a character have a minimum rank within her church, though ultimately a deity may grant a boon to anyone. Boons grant special abilities relating to a religion's goals and domains. Most boons operate constantly or can be invoked at will by the priest; a few work only once per day or so many times each week (as defined in their description).

Boons are a useful way to differentiate priests from lay folk without resorting to using a cleric/priest class. Even in settings with low or no magic, low-rank boons can be taken to represent the power of faith and mind-over-matter training some churches give their priests. Of course, there's nothing wrong with clerics gaining boons as well, augmenting their existing granted powers and domain abilities with talents restricted to their own religion.

Gaining a boon requires a timely and expensive ritual, but the power of the boon doesn't come from the ritual. The ritual merely prepares the recipient for the boon and channels the power of the boon into her. The boon itself comes from the power of a deity and is only granted to the deity's faithful servants. Not all such servants need be priests; paladins and monks frequently receive boons as well, as might a priest who was a fighter or wizard. Boons are powerful rewards granted by gods and are excellent treasure for church-affiliated PCs who undertake dangerous and lengthy quests against foes with few valuables.

A church can focus on an infinite number of possible themes, so only a few boons are presented below. While an effort is made to cover several major archetypes, you may well wish to create your own boons, either to augment those available to a powerful church or to custom fit a few for an unusual church.

Boons are magic effects, and any character with a boon has a magic aura of the transmutation school. Boon abilities work at the character's level or 8th level, whichever is greater. If a boon includes the ability to cast a spell that has an expensive material component or XP cost, that cost must be paid each time the spell is cast. Boons can be suppressed with a *dispel magic* spell, much as magic items can. A *disjunction* can negate a boon permanently, though the recipient of the boon is allowed a Will save to have his boon merely repressed for 1d4 rounds.

Behind the Curtain: Pricing Boons

The rituals needed to receive a boon are priced as if the boon was a magic item with ×3 the gold piece cost and no XP cost. The ritual is defined as not being the source of the boon, so PCs can't expect to grant the same boon to other characters — a boon only comes when a god decides to give it out. The pricing is kept the same as for other innate abilities both to maintain game balance and to allow you to know when to grant what level of boon as treasure. If the boon is a reward, simply treat the ritual cost as treasure value and assume the church of the god granting the boon pays the gold piece cost. You could allow a character access to a boon ritual before a difficult adventure, but require her to pay for it, essentially allowing her to take the boon if you feel it's more desirous than an equal value in magic items.

Many of the boons grant a number of power points, which recharge monthly. This feature is designed to allow a boon to have limited resources without ever running out. These prices assume that 20 uses per month is worth the same as 50 charges; eventually, the monthly uses will result in more than 50 total times the power is used, but the character doesn't have the option to burn 10 charges on 3 consecutive days during a particularly rough adventure. Pricing is triple that of a staff with the same spells, multiplied by the number of uses above or below 20 (*i.e.*, 50% cost if only giving 10 uses per month, 150% if giving 30 uses per month).

Boons are priced with a caster level 8, even though they function at the level of the character with the boon. This figure is also based on staff pricing, which allows characters to use their own ability scores and level but can be priced as low as CL 8. Boons for which no caster level is relevant are priced at the minimum caster level for creating the listed effect.

When giving boons to NPCs, simply count their value against an NPC's starting wealth. Generally, not granting an NPC a boon worth more than the standard starting wealth used in your campaign is best, even if that particular NPC is rich. This limit helps keep boons within reasonable power levels and allows you to use boons to grant very powerful NPC priests and crusaders special powers.

If you wish to turn boons into rites, the XP cost is easily calculated as half the boon's "ritual cost," and the rite materials cost half the same cost. A boon turned into a rite takes 1 day to perform per 1,000 gp of the boon's ritual cost.

MINOR BOONS

Minor boons are common among the faithful of many gods. They're powers that can only be used once in a while or are extremely minor. Gods often grant them to minor clergy and faithful non-priests as rewards for good service.

DIVINE GIFT

The *divine gift* is a minor boon granted to non-clerics in the service of a god — often, for examples, fighters, monks, and wizards as ordained priests or trusted agents of the church.

- *cure minor wounds* (1 point)
- *guidance* (1 point)
- *mending* (1 point)

Ritual Cost: 5,063 gp

FORGEMASTER

This minor boon is granted to smiths and forge-priests of craft gods. It grants fire resistance 1.

Ritual Cost: 3,600 gp

MINOR ARCANA

The *minor arcana* boon imbues the recipient with slight mystic powers. This ritual is often given to priests of gods of magic, as well as witch-hunters working for gods who distrust arcane spellcasters.

The boon gives the recipient 10 points of arcane power each month (normally recharging at each new moon, though the time varies by religion). These points can be used to perform a number of arcane spells, each using 1 point, as detailed below. The spells are as cast by a sorcerer of the same level as the character's total level.

- *detect magic* (1 point)
- *mage hand* (1 point)
- *ray of frost* (1 point)

Ritual Cost: 5,063 gp

TONGUES

The gift of *tongues* is generally given to missionaries and monks serving a god of information or rulership. It gives the recipient the power to speak and understand one to four specific additional languages (and, if literate, read them).

Ritual Cost: 300 gp (1 language), 1,200 gp (2 languages), 1,800 gp (3 languages), 4,800 gp (4 languages)

VIGOR

Warriors who uphold the safety of the faithful, as well as fighting priests and monks, are often rewarded with a boon of *vigor*, which grants them 1 additional hit point.

Ritual Cost: 3,600 gp

WITCHLIGHT

This minor boon is often used among druidic circles and covens of witches. It's most common in human religions, though gods of other races certainly have been known to grant it. The boon allows a character to create, as a standard action, a light that sheds illumination as a torch. The light remains with the character and lasts for a number of minutes equal to his Charisma score before it must be summoned again.

Ritual Cost: 900 gp

MODERATE BOONS

Moderate boons are reserved for the most faithful and most trusted of the faithful, as well as individuals with similar ethical outlooks (an alignment no more than one step away from the god granting the boon) who perform great services for a god.

In addition to the moderate boons listed, feats and the granted powers of domains are frequently given as boons. Moderate boons of this kind have a ritual cost of 15,000 gp.

ASCETIC

The *ascetic* boon is most often given to monks and missionaries to aid them in their meditations and harsh journeys. In rare cases, crusaders and guards are also given access to this boon. The boon continually provides its wearer with life-sustaining nourishment. The recipient needs no food or water and must sleep only 2 hours per day to gain the benefit of 8 hours of sleep.

Ritual Cost: 7,500 gp

SHADOWWALKER

This boon is most common among churches closely allied with rangers or those that have druids. It is whispered that some death cults also have access to this boon. As a free action, the recipient of this boon can gain the ability to blend in with the surroundings. This effect provides a +10 competence bonus on Hide checks. As a standard action, the character can also utilize the spell *disguise self* at will as a spell-like ability.

Ritual Cost: 38,100 gp

SPELL ARMOR

The boon of *spell armor* is common among churches with access to the Magic domain and is given to the most active members of its upper echelons. The recipient of this boon may have a single spell of 1st through 6th level to be cast onto her. Should that spell ever be cast upon the recipient, the spell is immediately countered as a counterspell action, requiring no action (or even

knowledge) on the recipient's part. Once so used, the spell cast onto the recipient is gone. A new spell (or the same one as before) may be cast on the recipient to protect her again.

Ritual Cost: 12,000 gp

Witchhunter's Touch

This boon is most common among religions that mistrust and fear arcane spellcasters. It is given out more freely than most moderate boons, as its use can only further the cause of reducing the total available magic.

This boon allows the recipient to touch magic items and drain them of all magical properties. The item touched must make a DC 23 Will save to prevent the drain. If a creature is holding it at the time, then the item can use the holder's Will save bonus in place of its own if the holder's is better. In such cases, contact is made by making a melee touch attack roll. Unlike most boons, the *witchhunter's touch* can be used only once — the boon is then lost.

Ritual Cost: 33,000 gp.

Epic Boons

Epic boons are extremely rare, and most religions don't have access to any epic boon rituals. A single epic boon makes a character significantly more powerful, and you should never give an epic boon to an NPC of less than 10th level. Characters cannot benefit from more than one epic boon; in the rare instances a character gets hold of and performs two epic boon rituals, the benefits of the first are lost when the second is completed.

Additionally, only one member of an organized religion can hold a given epic boon at a time. This person is generally either the head of the church or the master of some segment of the church. These boons are the most closely guarded secrets, often kept hidden even from other senior priests within a church. The death of a priest with an epic boon often sparks an internal power struggle as potential successors strive to learn the secrets of the boon's ritual and perform it for themselves.

Legendary miracles and mighty heroes are often the result of epic boons. These rituals are too complex for a mortal to develop individually and are either gifts from the gods or the result of groups of scholars working together for years. The ritual of an epic boon is an appropriate subject for major quests, and it's not unknown for all the knights of an entire kingdom to seek such a ritual over the course of generations.

To make a new epic boon, put together a number of spells with a common theme appropriate to the god granting it. Normally, the boon grants 20 power points per month and gives access to two 1st-level spells, two 2nd-level spells, two 3rd-level spells (all costing

1 power point), and four 5th-level spells (all costing 2 power points).

Archmage

The boon of the *archmage* is among the most powerful boons ever granted. It is generally given to only one creature at a time, and that creature is the chosen of the deity of magic. The power is much sought after, and many who worship the deity of magic do so purely in hopes of someday becoming the archmage.

This boon is useful only to spellcasters. The recipient's 1st-level and 2nd-level spells per day are doubled. Bonus spells from high ability scores or school specialization are not doubled, nor are domain spells.

Ritual Cost: 240,000 gp

Hand of Darkness

The *hand of darkness* epic boon is granted by gods of chaos, evil, and destruction. Generally, the first priest of such a god able to perform the ritual is granted this boon, as he has proven his ability to overcome enemies. Blackguards also commonly gain this boon, often after killing the priest who possessed it.

The boon gives the recipient 20 points of divine power each month (normally recharging on the first day of each month, though this date varies by religion). These points can be used to perform a number of divine spells, each using 1 or 2 points, as detailed below. The spells are as cast by a cleric of the character's total level.

- *bane* (1 point)
- *death knell* (1 point)
- *desecrate* (1point)
- *bestow curse* (1 point)
- *magic circle against good* (1 point)
- *mass inflict light wounds* (2 points)
- *slay living* (2 points)
- *symbol of pain* (2 points)
- *unhallow* (2 points)

Ritual Cost: 77,250 gp

Major Arcana

The boon of *major arcana* imbues the recipient with great mystic powers. This ritual is normally known only to religions with a strong tie to arcane magic, such as gods of wizards and sorcerers.

The boon gives the recipient 20 points of arcane power each month (normally recharging at each new moon, though this date varies by religion). These points can be used to cast a number of arcane spells, each using 1 or 2 points, as detailed below. The spells are as cast by a sorcerer of the character's total level.

- *magic missile* (1 point)
- *ray of enfeeblement* (1 point)

- *continual flame* (1point)
- *detect thoughts* (1 point)
- *fly* (1 point)
- *lightning bolt* or *fireball* (1 point)
- *teleport* (2 points)
- *hold monster* (2 points)
- *wall of force* (2 points)
- *greater dispel magic* (2 points)

Ritual Cost: 77,250 gp

Mercy's Touch

This epic boon is granted by gods of healing, peace, and harmony. Rather than grant this boon to the highest ranking member of a church, these gods often give the boon to a faithful priest in a land ravaged by plague and war.

The boon gives the recipient 20 points of divine power each month (normally recharging on the first day of each month, though this date varies by religion). These points can be used to cast a number of divine spells, each using 1 or 2 points, as detailed below. The spells are as cast by a cleric of the character's total level.

- *aid* (1 point)
- *bless* (1 point)
- *cure light wounds* (maximized) (1 point)
- *remove blindness/deafness* (1 point)
- *remove disease* (1 point)
- *remove paralysis* (1 point)
- *heal* (2 points)

- *mass cure light wounds* (2 points)
- *neutralize poison* (2 points)
- *raise dead* (requires material component) (2 points)

Ritual Cost: 77,250 gp

Storm Lord

A storm lord is normally a powerful druid or priest of a storm god. The storm lord is granted vast powers over the weather and often controls a large area with lightning, sleet, and even tornados.

The boon gives the recipient 20 points of divine power each month (normally recharging at each full moon, though this date varies by religion). These points can be used to perform a number of divine spells, each using 1 or 2 points, as detailed below. The spells are as cast by a cleric of the character's total level.

- *call lightning* (1 point)
- *faerie fire* (1 point)
- *fog cloud* (1point)
- *gust of wind* (1 point)
- *obscuring mist* (widened) (1 point)
- *sleet storm* (1 point)
- *air walk* (2 point)
- *control weather* (2 points)
- *control winds* (2 points)
- *ice storm* (2 points)

Ritual Cost: 77,250 gp

- Rites -

Rites are special rituals that grant power to those who perform them. Essentially, rites are boons (see page 133) driven by arcane power rather than divine will. A rite must be designed to grant a particular power to a creature, after which the rite is useless. A rite takes three times the time, money, and XP cost as creating a magic item with the same power. The powers granted by rites are permanent and can be destroyed or suppressed only by things that can destroy or suppress magic items (*disjunction*, for example). Rites are often the focus of quests by wizards and powerful lords as a way for them to gain additional powers.

Researching an entirely new rite is a time consuming and expensive process undertaken by only the most skilled scholars. A rite takes a base time of 4 weeks to research, plus an additional week per caster level of the rite. Research costs 1,000 gp per week, which is spent on experiments, access to libraries, and experts. A character cannot research a rite unless he has access to these things, which are normally available in any city. At the end of the research period, the researcher makes a Spellcraft check against a DC 20 + caster level of the rite. If the check is successful, a new rite has been created; if not, the research process must be started anew.

Rites only work once; that is their nature. Once performed, the exact same set of incantations, gestures, and sacrifices produce nothing. However, modifying a known rite to work for a new target is reasonably easy. A character wishing to re-use a rite he's successfully understood before must take 1 week and pay 1,000 gp to research the rite's new requirements. At the end of the week, the researcher must make a DC 20 Spellcraft check. On a successful check, he has re-created the rite; on a failed check, the research must be started anew.

Like creating magic items, a rite has requirements that must be met by the character to perform the rite. Generally, this requirement is a spell the performer must be able to cast during the rite. There is also a cost in gold pieces and experience points that must be paid by the character performing the rite. Though a rite must be performed by a character that meets its requirements, it can benefit anyone. The beneficiary is known as the recipient, and the power gained is his to command. The character performing the rite must pay the listed XP cost and then may grant the powers to any other character present, and the decision is permanent once it is made. All powers granted by a rite operate at the stated character level. A recipient cannot gain the powers of a rite that operate at a higher caster level than his own level or Hit Dice — any such rite fails (though it is not expended and can still be used for another character).

The price of a rite is the payment demanded by an NPC caster to perform it for a character (as well as its value for purposes of determining a character's total wealth). The cost is the amount of material and XP expended by a character casting the rite himself.

You may decide rites also require specific levin (see page 140) or can be performed only at particular mystic locales (see **Chapter Eight**).

Common Rites

Blessed Touch

This rite grants a character able to turn undead the ability to do so one additional time per day.

Faint conjuration; CL 1st; *disrupt undead*; Price 4,500; Cost 1,875 gp, 150 XP.

Bloodhound

The recipient of the *bloodhound rite* gains the scent ability.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; *alter self*; Price 18,000; Cost 7,500 gp, 600 XP.

Elf-Eyed

The recipient of the *elf-eyed rite* gains low-light vision.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; *alter self*; Price 18,000; Cost 7,500 gp, 600 XP.

Dwarf-Eyed

The recipient of the *dwarf-eyed rite* gains darkvision out to 60 feet. If the character already has darkvision, the range is increased by +30 feet.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; *alter self*; Price 18,000; Cost 7,500 gp, 600 XP.

Fey Style

A character receiving a *rite of fey style* may change his clothing to be of any style and type he wishes, including cleric's vestments, or an artisan's, cold weather, courtier's, entertainer's, explorer's, monk's, noble's, peasant's, royal, scholar's, or traveler's outfit. Jewelry and similar non-clothing items are not added or changed, but the style, cut, color, and decoration of the clothes are entirely at the will of the rite's recipient. If an item is put in a pocket that ceases to exist, it falls to the ground. Though this process does not add any bonus to a character's Disguise check, it may prevent the character from taking any penalties.

Faint conjuration; CL 1st; *alter self*; Price 6,480 gp; Cost 2,700 gp, 216 XP.

Firestarter

As a standard action, the recipient of a *firestarter rite* can cause a tiny spark of fire to appear at his fingertip. This spark can be used to light easily flammable materials (such as prepared fires, candles, torches, and lanterns). A character may use the spark to make a touch attack, which deals 1d4 points of fire damage.

Faint evocation; CL 1st; *burning hands*; Price 3,240 gp; Cost 1,350 gp, 108 XP.

Heartiness

The natural heal rate of the recipient of a *rite of heartiness* is increased as if she were one level higher. Thus, the character recovers 1 additional hit point after 8 hours of rest, and 1 additional point of nonlethal damage per hour. If the character gets 24 hours of bed rest, she gains 2 additional hit points.

Faint conjuration; CL 1st; Heal 5 ranks; Price 1,620 gp; Cost 775 gp, 54 XP.

Master Crafter

This rite grants the recipient a competence bonus to one Craft or Profession skill of the recipient's choice. Most rites grant only a +1 bonus, but some grant a +2 bonus instead.

Faint transmutation; CL 1st; *guidance*; Price 360 gp, Cost 150 gp/12 XP. (+1 to one skill); 1,200 gp/48 exp (+2 to one skill).

Porter

The recipient of a *porter rite* has his carrying capacity increased as if his Strength were 3 higher. This is an enhancement bonus, and does not stack with additional carry capacity gained by a standard enhancement bonus to Strength.

Faint conjuration; CL 1st; *bull's strength*; Price 9,000 gp; Cost 3,750 gp, 300 XP.

Spans

The recipient of a *rite of spans* always knows what time it is (to the nearest second), how many hours it is to dawn or sundown (whichever is next), and the date (according to the calendar of the spellcaster who cast the rite). The recipient may choose to be alerted when a set amount of time has passed. This alert is silent to anyone except the recipient, though it is loud enough to awaken him from mundane slumber.

Faint divination; CL 1st; Wis 15; Price 1,570 gp; Cost 675 gp, 54 XP.

Spell Power

A character benefiting from a *rite of spell power* gains a +1 inherent bonus to her total number of spell slots at a given level. The character must be able to cast spells of the given level in order to gain an additional slot at that level. (For example, a 5th-level sorcerer gains an additional 0-, 1st-, or 2nd-level spell slot, but not a 3rd-level or higher as she cannot cast spells of that level.)

Strong transmutation; CL 17th; must be able to cast spells of the level to be granted; Price 3,600 gp (1st level), 14,400 gp (2nd level), 32,400 gp (3rd level), 57,900 gp (4th level), 90,000 gp (5th level), 129,600 gp (6th level), 176,400 gp (7th level), 230,400 gp (8th level), 291,600 gp (9th level); Cost 1,500 gp/120 XP (1st level), 6,000 gp/480 XP (2nd level), 13,500 gp/1,080 XP (3rd level), 24,000 gp/1,920 XP (4th level), 37,500 gp/3,000 XP (5th level), 54,000 gp/4,320 XP (6th level), 73,500 gp/5,880 XP (7th level), 91,000 gp/7,680 XP (8th level), 121,500 gp/9,720 XP (9th level).

Stoutheart

The recipient of this rite gains a +1 inherent bonus to the following checks and saves: Swim checks made to resist nonlethal damage; Constitution checks made to continue running; Constitution checks made to avoid nonlethal damage from a forced march; Constitution checks made to hold his breath; Constitution checks made to avoid nonlethal damage from starvation or thirst; Fortitude saves made to avoid nonlethal damage from hot or cold environments; and Fortitude saves made to resist damage from suffocation.

Faint abjuration; CL 3rd, *bear's endurance*; Price 4,500; Cost 1,875 gp, 150 XP.

Swift

The recipient of this rite gains a +10-foot bonus to one movement type it already possesses.

Faint transmutation; CL 3rd; *alter self*; Price 18,000; Cost 7,500 gp, 600 XP.

Tainted Touch

This rite allows the recipient to ascertain if a creature or object touched is poisonous.

Faint divination; CL 1st; *detect poison*; Price 3,240 gp; Cost 1,350 gp, 108 XP.

Watersniffer

The recipient of a *watersniffer rite* may smell out water within 440 feet (including underground springs, but only if the actual water of the spring is within range). If no natural source of potable water is within range, he sniffs out the largest concentration of potable water in range (including water in barrels, waterskins, and so on).

Faint divination; CL 1st, *create water*; Price 3,240 gp; Cost 1,350 gp, 108 XP.

~ LEVIN ~

Levin is magical material that can be used in place of experience point costs when casting spells or making magic items. It can best be described as potential magical energy, dormant by itself but able to empower rituals and ceremonies in much the same way a spellcaster's own life-energies can. Levin is measured in points, with 1 point of levin able to replace 1 experience point of cost for item creation or spellcasting. Levin isn't actually character experience — "absorbing" levin to gain more experience points is not possible. Levin also can't be used to replace XP lost as a result of losing a level. It only replaces the XP cost for item creation or those spells that have an XP cost. These costs are referred to as mystic experience costs.

Levin comes from magically infused places, creatures, and items. Levin is never common, though exactly how rare it is depends on what version of levin you decide to add to your campaign. A game can use unlimited levin, specific levin, scavenged levin, or a combination of the three depending on the feel you want.

Unlimited levin means that any levin can be used for any purpose — levin is generic and can replace any mystic experience cost. This is the simplest levin rule, but also the least interesting. Such games normally allow levin to be taken only from creatures, though it can be combined with scavenged levin easily. The exact rules for taking levin from a creature are detailed below. In unlimited

levin games, levin is actually a thick, bluish liquid that glows dimly which is distilled from creatures with mystic energies. Levin can be carried in vials, with 500 points of levin taking up and weighing 1 ounce.

Specific levin means that levin from any given source can be used only for specific mystic experience costs. Decide what sources of levin work for each mystic experience cost, and then PCs must research this information. For example, when making a *phylactery of faithfulness*, levin taken from a specific kind of outsider or gathered on a specific holy day could fulfill the mystic experience cost, but not levin from any other source. In games with only specific levin, levin tends to retain a crude appearance taken from the source. For example, levin taken from a dragon might be in the form of a few teeth and one eye. In this type of campaign, the weight of levin varies wildly, but it is generally 1% of the weight of the creature it is taken from, or 1 pound per 500 points of levin for material taken from other sources.

Scavenged levin is taken from existing magic items, destroying them in the process. Levin scavenged is equal to half the mystic experience cost paid to create an item, times the percentage of charges the item has left (if charged). For example, a character decides to scavenge levin from a *staff of fire* with 27 charges left. It took 686 XP to make the staff, so the most that could be scavenged is half that amount, or 343 levin. However, the staff only has 27 charges left, which is 54% of its total. Thus, the most levin that could be scavenged is 54% of 343, or 185 points. Levin can never be scavenged from artifacts.

You can use several methods to allow characters to scavenge levin. The simplest is to allow any character with the feat and prerequisites necessary to make an item scavenge levin from it. This method allows characters to scavenge levin easily from items they have made in order to upgrade to better magic equipment. It also prevents characters from trying to destroy powerful magic items used by their enemies, unless the characters are so powerful they could make such items themselves.

Allowing levin scavenging only by characters that take an appropriate feat is also possible. Rather than require a feat for each type of magic item, the scavenging feats are broken into one-shot magic items (potions, scrolls, and similar items), charged magic items (staffs, wands, and the like), and permanent magic items (including most rings, rods, and wondrous items). See **Appendix One** for example feats.

TAKING LEVIN FROM CREATURES

Taking levin from a creature requires that it be dead. Only creatures of the aberration, dragon, elemental, fey, giant,

magical beast, monstrous humanoid, ooze, outsider, and undead types produce levin. The amount of unlimited levin drawn from a creature is equal to its CR multiplied by 5.

For specific levin campaigns, levin is taken from creatures using the same rules, but particular conditions must be met. You decide the limits of these conditions, but generally they include levin for a given purpose coming from only one specific creature (*i.e.*, only hill giants) and requiring the creature to be killed in a specific manner (*i.e.*, by a silver sword or by drowning). Once this is done,

Table 7-3: Example Levin Sources

School or Descriptor	Creature	Death Requirement
Abjuration	Outsider, archon	Natural causes, from an attack of opportunity
Acid	Black dragon, ooze	Smothered, stone weapon
Air	Fey, sprite	While grappled, net or whip
Calling	Outsider, demon	When blinded
Chaotic	Aberration, athach	While bound
Charm	Fey, dryad	When mute
Cold	Elemental, water	Without fire, acid, or spells
Compulsion	Outsider, devil	On its home plane
Conjuration	Outsider (any)	While away from its home plane
Creation	Phase spider	While grappled
Darkness	Night hag	Fire
Death	Undead, ghoul	Freezing, bludgeoning weapons
Divination	Naga	Sneak attack
Earth	Xorn	While not in contract with the ground
Electricity	Blue dragon	While in contact with the ground
Enchantment	Hag, nymph	Cold iron weapon
Evil	Outsider (good)	While helpless
Evocation	Elemental	Non-magic weapon
Fear	Mummy	Place it was mummified
Figment	Shadow	In sunlight
Fire	Red dragon, salamander	Drowned
Force	Any incorporeal	On its home plane
Glamer	Dryad, hag	In front of a mirror
Good	Outsider (evil)	In one-on-one combat
Healing	Troll, unicorn	Without magic
Illusion	Gnome, rogue	In broad daylight
Language	Any dragon	While silenced
Lawful	Outsider (chaotic)	While in chains
Light	Fire elemental	In darkness
Mind-Affecting	Any fey	While blinded
Necromancy	Wight, wraith	In a graveyard
Pattern	Sphinx, minotaur	In a maze
Phantasm	Invisible stalker	Death magic
Scrying	Eagle	While flying
Shadow	Shadow	With silver
Sonic	Banshee	While able to make noise
Summoning	Fey, satyr	By sonic attacks
Teleportation	Magic beast, blink dog	In a magic circle vs. its alignment
Transmutation	Shapeshifter, doppleganger	In its true form
Water	Dragon, dragon turtle	Out of the water

the levin is removed in the form of trophies, such as bones, eyes, scales, or blood. Specific levin taken from a creature is equal to its CR squared multiplied by 5. A list of possible creature types and specific creatures, as well as methods for killing them, follows to give GMs a starting point for specific levin requirements.

In both cases, successfully removing levin from creatures requires a Spellcraft check, with a DC of 10 + the creature's CR. Each failed try ruins half the potential levin a creature has. Killing a creature with an Intelligence of 3 or more solely to gain levin from it is an evil act, just as killing such creatures purely for profit or experience is evil. By the same token, a group that chooses what evil to oppose based in part on their levin value is mercenary, but not explicitly evil.

Taking Levin from Places

You may decide to allow levin to be gathered from a location. The location may have something to do with the magic type (a sacred glade for druid spells, a volcano for fire magic; see **Mystic Locales** in **Chapter Eight** for more suggestions on what kinds of places are attuned to specific magic types). Such locations are almost always both isolated and guarded by powerful wards and creatures.

Once a character has managed to get to the location and secure it, he can go about gathering specific levin from it. The ritual includes such acts as gathering mistletoe by moonlight, finding mushrooms growing in rings, chipping off particular crystals, and gathering rare herbs and minerals. Doing so requires a ritual that takes 8 hours of preparation and another 16 hours undisturbed to be complete. On the first day it is performed, the ritual gathers specific levin equal to the character's Spellcraft check multiplied by his Wisdom bonus (minimum of 1). Thus, a character with a 16 Wisdom and a Spellcraft modifier of +10 rolls a 15 and gathers ([10 + 15 = 25] × 3) 75 points of specific levin on the first day.

The ritual may be performed additional times, but each time the Spellcraft check takes a cumulative −3 penalty. Thus, on the fourth day performing the ritual, if the same character rolled a 15, he'd gather only ([10 + 15] − 9 = 16 x 3) 48 points of specific levin. If the character ever rolls a natural 1 on his Spellcraft check or gets a total Spellcraft result of 0 or less, the location's supply of levin is tapped. No new levin can be gathered from that site for at least a season.

– Mundane Item Characteristics –

GMs expand on the variety and usefulness of mundane objects for many reasons. If running a campaign with low access to magic, a wider range of mundane objects both gives PCs something to spend their money on and adds bonuses that would normally be gained from magic. While this change doesn't entirely replace the role of magic, it reduces the amount of re-balancing one must do for mid-level adventures. Alternatively, you might also want to use high quality or unusual mundane items to differentiate cultures. If masterwork winter blankets are made only in a single city, that city is likely to be more memorable to players, even if their characters don't end up getting new blankets.

Qualities

Weapons, armor, and some other items already have two qualities: standard and masterwork. To add to the diversity of a world, try adding superior qualities beyond masterwork, allow for lower quality items (perhaps made in a rush, from questionable materials, or by primitive cultures), and embrace a range of different design philosophies. These options are all handled as a range of qualities that work like masterwork items but give different benefits or impose minor penalties.

The drawbacks of adding such items are increased bookkeeping and complexity. A character with a renowned dwarven rope must keep track of not only its potential benefits (+3 to Climb checks), but also its increased hardness and hit points. For some groups, this extra bookkeeping is a minor effort, but for others it's a major slow-down to game pacing. Campaigns with few or no magic items likely won't suffer as much, as the qualities of mundane items replace the shopping list of arcana found in typical games. In games already tracking magic items, think carefully about how well your players manage character notes before adding a slew of new qualities.

One way to minimize the disruption new qualities can add is to keep their numbers low. If there's only one legendary item in a game, keeping track of what it is and does is not too difficult. Since most PCs won't take the time to craft such items themselves, you need only limit the number for sale. Since the profit margin for these items is no greater than anything else, and the increased price keeps demand low, it stands to reason that few items with valuable qualities exist. Even if a PC has the money to buy such items, he may not be able to find one for sale.

Another way to keep down quality item numbers is to require that characters take a feat to be able to make them. With this option, each quality has an associated feat (for instance, Proficiency with Dwarven Craft, Proficiency with Elven Craft, Proficiency with Legendary Craft, and Proficiency with Renowned Craft). These feats have no prerequisites, but a character can't craft items with the given quality without taking the appropriate feat. In such a game, these qualities are the result of carefully hidden techniques, which

must be learned from a master before work on items incorporating them may even be attempted.

An item can include multiple qualities, though the benefits do not stack (there's no point in an object being both renowned and legendary). Price multiples are figured separately, so a dwarven legendary portable ram costs 520 gp.

Balanced

Balanced weapons are those carefully weighted to allow them to be swung easily or thrown precisely and forcefully. A balanced weapon doesn't take as much strength to attack with despite its weight, and thus it allows a more powerful blow to be landed. Balanced weapons gain a +1 enhancement bonus to damage rolls. Since this is an enhancement bonus, it doesn't stack with the damage bonus granted by magic weapons. Only melee weapons and thrown weapons may be balanced.

Balanced weapons cost 300 gp more than normal weapons of the same type. The Craft DC for the balanced quality is 20, and a separate Craft check is made for constructing this quality.

Barbed

Only piercing ranged weapons (including thrown weapons) may be barbed. A barbed weapon has multiple points, designed to damage a target both when entering and when leaving or being removed. Barbs break off, so a weapon loses this quality after one attack. As a result, mostly only arrows and bolts are barbed. A barbed weapon gains a +1 enhancement bonus to damage rolls. Since this is an enhancement bonus, it doesn't stack with the damage bonus granted by magic weapons.

Barbed weapons cost 100 gp more than normal weapons of the same type. This price covers one thrown weapon or 50 bolts or arrows. The Craft DC for the barbed quality is 15, and a separate Craft check is made for constructing this quality.

Blunt

A slashing or piercing weapon may be made blunt. This quality causes it to do bludgeoning damage rather than its normal damage type. Blunt weapons may be used to deal nonlethal damage with only a –1 attack penalty (rather than the normal –4). However, blunt weapons are –1 to hit on all attacks (a total of –2 if dealing nonlethal damage) and have their damage dice reduced by two steps (see the following chart). Blunt weapons are normally used for practice or by characters who have some benefit when using a specific slashing or piercing weapon (such as Weapon Focus), but want to have a bludgeoning weapon as well.

Blunt Weapon Damage

Original Damage	Blunt Damage
1d3	1
1d4	1d2
1d6	1d3
1d8	1d4
2d4	1d4
1d10	1d6
1d12	1d8
2d6	2d4

Blunt weapons cost 25 gp more than normal weapons of the same type. The Craft DC for the blunt quality is 15, and a separate Craft check is made for constructing this quality.

Crude

Crude items are constructed or designed poorly, so they do not perform as well as typical versions of the same items. Crude weapons take a –1 penalty to attack and damage rolls, and crude armor offers 1 less armor bonus and has 1 lower max Dexterity than normal armor of the same type. Any other crude object weighs +25% more than a normal item and has 1 less hardness (minimum of 1).

Crude quality items cost only 75% of a normal item's cost, and the Craft DC for constructing them is 3 lower. An item cannot be crude and have any other quality.

Dwarven

Dwarven items are built to a more rugged standard. Though no more functional than a typical item,
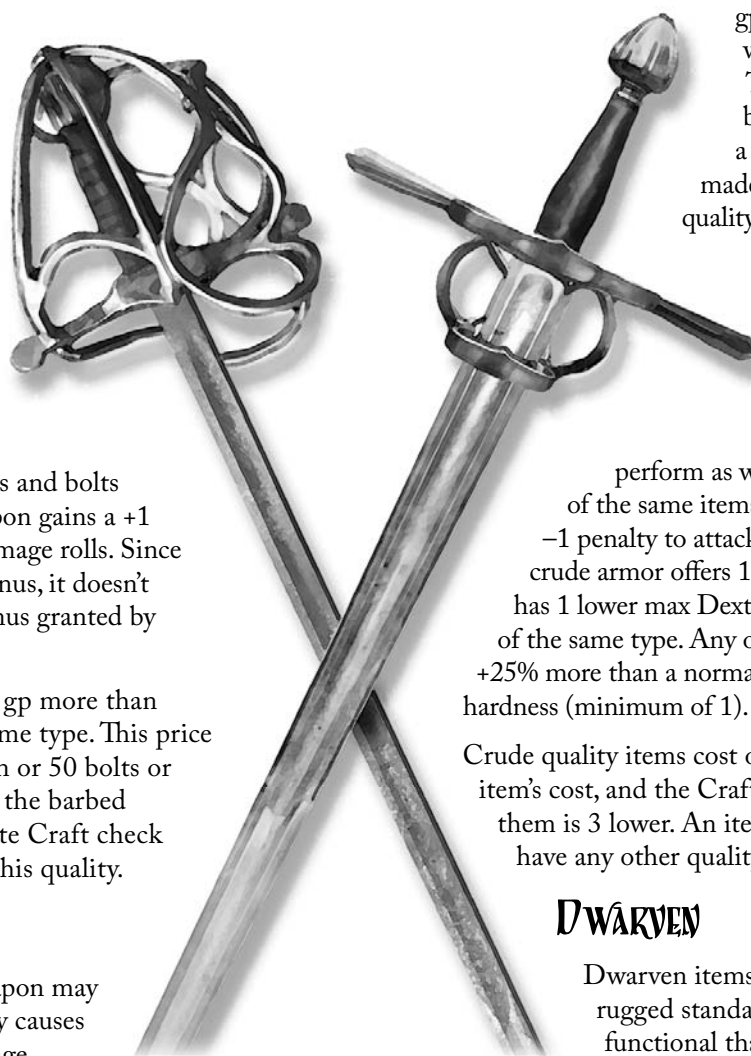
something with the dwarven quality gains +1 hardness and +25% hit points (minimum of +1). Anything can be made dwarven, which has no affect on the object's function — dwarven weapons do no more damage, and dwarven armor does not give any additional armor bonus. Only when an object is subjected to damage does its dwarven quality come into play.

Change the name of this quality to any race or group portrayed as tough and stout. You can also change it to "sturdy," making the quality a generic design of increased hardiness that anyone can attempt.

Dwarven items cost twice the base cost of an object. The Craft DC for the dwarven quality is 20, and a separate Craft check is made for constructing this quality.

Elven

Elven items are made of tough, light materials and cunningly designed to reduce unneeded weight without reducing function. Objects with the elven quality weigh –15% less than standard versions. Anything can be made elven, which has no effect on the object's function — elven weapons do no less damage, and elven armor does not have a reduced armor check.

You can change the name of this quality to any race or group you wish to portray as clever, nimble, and concerned by equipment weight. You may also change it to "light," making the quality a generic design of decreased mass that anyone can attempt.

Elven items cost twice the base cost of an object. The Craft DC for the elven quality is 25, and a separate Craft check is made for constructing this quality.

Masterwork

Masterwork items are those that have been designed and constructed at a high level of quality, giving them advantages over regular equipment. Rules already exist for masterwork weapons and armor, as well as artisan's tools, musical instruments, tools, and thieves' tools.

Using these rules, anything can be made masterwork. A masterwork item grants a +1 enhancement bonus to skill or ability checks made with it. For example, a masterwork rope adds +1 to Climb checks, and a masterwork spyglass adds +1 to Spot checks. Some items are clear about when they apply to skill checks: a masterwork crowbar adds a +3 bonus to Strength checks, for example, and a masterwork grappling hook adds +1 to Use Rope checks.

Obviously, some items are only involved in skill checks under specific circumstances (*i.e.*, masterwork flint and steel adds +1 to Survival checks to start a fire in rainy or wet conditions), and others are almost never involved in a skill check (*i.e.*, a masterwork clay pitcher). You should decide if an item is the primary thing being used for a skill

check, in which case the +1 enhancement bonus applies. If an item is secondary, or merely present, no bonus is granted. It's reasonable for a masterwork winter blanket to add +1 to Constitution checks made to rest in cold or uncomfortable situations or even to Fortitude saves against the effects of severe weather, but not to Balance checks made as a result of a *sleet storm* spell, even if it's worn.

Additionally, some items have special features when made as masterwork items, as described below.

Backpack: A masterwork backpack halves the weight of up to 20 pounds of materials placed in it, for purposes of encumbrance. Thus, a masterwork backpack with 32 pounds of equipment only counts as 22 pounds of gear when figuring encumbrance.

Bell: A masterwork bell adds +1 to the Listen check of characters trying to hear it.

Block and Tackle: A masterwork block and tackle allows up to four characters to aid another character trying to lift or move something. If lifting, add their combined maximum encumbrance to determine how much they can lift. If making a Strength check, each character able to make a DC 10 Strength check adds +2 to the primary character's Strength check.

Candle: A masterwork candle illuminates a 10-foot radius for 2 hours.

Case, Map, or Scroll: Items within a masterwork case gain a +1 enhancement bonus to Fortitude saves.

Ink: Masterwork ink adds a +1 enhancement bonus to Forgery checks.

Lantern, Bullseye: A masterwork lantern of this type illuminates clearly in a 70-foot cone and sends shadowy illumination out to 140 feet. It burns for 7 hours on a pint of oil.

Lantern, Hooded: A masterwork lantern of this type illuminates clearly in a 40-foot radius and sends shadowy illumination out to 80 feet. It burns for 7 hours on a pint of oil.

Oil: There is a 75% chance masterwork oil lights when thrown as a weapon with a fuse. A pint of masterwork oil burns 1/6th longer than standard oil.

Pouch, Belt: Removing an object from a masterwork belt pouch does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Signal Whistle: A masterwork signal whistle adds a +2 enhancement bonus to the Listen checks of characters trying to hear it.

Torch: A masterwork torch illuminates clearly in a 30-foot radius and sends shadowy illumination out to 60 feet. It burns for 1 hour and 10 minutes.

The Craft DC for making a masterwork item is always 20. This is treated as a separate Craft check against the additional cost to make the item masterwork. The additional cost is 50 gp or 400% of the item's base cost, whichever is greater. This additional cost makes many masterwork items too expensive for practical use (i.e., masterwork oil at 50 gp and 1 sp per pint). Of course, you may design adventures or monsters that require such materials (a vampire that is immune to daylight, but takes the same effect from holy lanterns lit with masterwork oil).

Renowned

Renowned items are non-magical items crafted to an amazing degree. In many ways, these are items that are to masterwork as masterwork is to standard quality. Renowned items give double the benefits as a masterwork item of the same type (see masterwork items). Thus, a renowned weapon grants a +2 enhancement bonus to attack rolls, but none to damage, and a renowned set of artisan's tool grants a +4 circumstance bonus to appropriate Craft checks. Renowned items are extremely difficult to make and generally only crafted by the most skilled and famous of artisans.

Renowned armor is an exception to the normal rule. Instead of giving double the bonus of masterwork armor, it increases an armor's maximum Dexterity bonus by +1 in addition to the normal masterwork bonus (lowering the armor check penalty by −1). Renowned armor costs 1,000 gp more than a typical suit. Thus, a renowned chain shirt costs 1,100 gp, gives an armor bonus to AC of +4, has a maximum Dexterity bonus of +5, and an armor check penalty of −1.

When crafting a renowned item, treat the renowned component as a separate item that is constructed after the base element of the item is made. The Craft DC for a renowned item is 30. Renowned items other than armor cost as much as an average item, plus 4 times what it costs to make that item masterwork. Thus, a renowned longsword costs 1,215 gp, and a renowned silk rope costs 210 gp.

Legendary

Legendary items are non-magical items crafted to a truly astounding degree. Legendary items normally give triple the benefits a masterwork item of the same type would give (see masterwork items), though some legendary arms and armor have different benefits. Legendary items are extremely difficult to make, often beyond the skill of living artisans. Only the very best smiths, weavers, and armorers can ever hope to make legendary items.

Legendary armor is an exception to the normal rule. Instead of giving double the bonus of masterwork armor, it increases an armor's maximum Dexterity bonus by +2 in addition to lowering the armor check penalty by −2. Legendary armor costs 4,000 gp more than a typical suit. Thus, a legendary suit of full plate costs 5,500 gp, gives an armor bonus to AC of +8, has a maximum Dexterity bonus of +3, and an armor check penalty of −4.

Rather than the normal legendary bonus, legendary weapons and armor can gain the benefits equal to masterwork armor and a +1 magic enchantment without being magic. Legendary weapons can be bane (only against creatures with a vulnerability to materials it is made from, such as a cold iron weapon being bane against fey), distance, keen, flaming (requiring a standard action and a pint of oil to light, and a standard action to put out), ki focus, mighty cleaving, or throwing. Legendary armor can be bashing or have light fortification. These are all considered enhancement bonuses and do not stack with magical versions of the same enhancements.

When crafting a legendary item, treat the legendary component as a separate item that is constructed after the base element of the item is made. The Craft DC for a legendary item is 35. Legendary items other than armor cost as much as an average item, plus 10 times what it costs to make that item masterwork. Thus, a legendary greatsword costs 3,050 gp, and a legendary bell costs 501 gp.

– Sovereign Materials –

Sovereign materials are presented to allow for truly powerful, best-possible weapons and armor. They are designed to be the very best of their category, superior to cold iron, silver, mithral, and even adamantine. Rare and expensive, sovereign materials are used to make only the most important and most powerful of items. As a result, they are very expensive, but more importantly they are seen as symbols of great power and authority. A player character with a weapon made of a sovereign material is more than just wealthy: he's declaring himself to be a hero of the highest standards.

Always consider the effects of sovereign materials carefully before adding them to your campaign. Their benefits are extensive and may cause balance problems. For the most part, the cost of these materials is so high they'll only ever affect high-level play, but even then these materials give characters options they did not possess before. A character with a dragonsteel blade, for instance, can cut through practically anything and has no need to fear any creature's damage resistance (DR).

Adding these materials carry some benefits, however. Without them, no one weapon can be the "best" weapon against any creature (no matter its DR), and characters with limited material or weapon selections (such as druids) often have no way to beat DR. Many GMs and players don't like the idea of a hero carrying a "golf bag" of back-up weapons to deal with every possible foe, but the existing DR rules, combined with magic that can either easily store items or increase a character's Strength to the point where weight isn't an issue, encourage just this kind of multiple-weapon mentality. By adding sovereign materials, you can run a game in which a true hero, rather than seek five different longswords, strives to earn some day a dragonsteel sword, knowing it will serve him equally well against any foe.

Sovereign materials are used to make the armor of grand champions, the swords and scepters of kings, and the staffs of archdruids. They are too rare and far too expensive to be available to commoners, and no shop, sorcerer, or smith can make items from these materials to order just because a PC happens to have the money. Prices are given for these materials so a GM knows their value as treasure and how difficult they are to craft into items, but these prices should never be used to determine "market value." Raw sovereign materials may be used in mid- and high-level treasure hoards, and finished sovereign material items may be taken from arch-villains or offered as epic rewards, but simply buying them should never be possible.

Sovereign materials can be enchanted or have qualities added to them, as with any other material. In addition to giving the game effects of using sovereign material, each entry below describes where these materials can be found and in what amounts.

Celestrum

Celestrum is a holy metal smelted from the raw stuff of the good-aligned planes. It can be silver or gold in color, though it is vastly more valuable than either metal. Celestrum is extremely light and strong, allowing armors made of it to be thin without losing strength and easily maneuvered in. Angels and messengers of the gods are often clad in full suits of celestrum, but it's much rarer for any mortal to acquire a suit. Silver celestrum has 40 hit points per inch and hardness 15. Gold celestrum has 45 hit points per inch and hardness 18.

Armor made of silver celestrum has a maximum Dexterity bonus +6 higher than normal, an armor check penalty –3 lower (to a minimum of 0), and arcane spell failure –15% lower (to a minimum of 0%), and it weighs half as much as normal armor. Armor made of gold celestrum has a maximum Dexterity bonus +8 higher than normal, an armor check penalty –4 lower (to a minimum of 0), and an arcane spell failure –20% lower (to a minimum of 0%), and it weighs a quarter as much as normal armor.

Armor made of celestrum acts as one category lighter (light armor as no armor, medium armor as light armor, and so forth) and can appear to be two categories lighter (medium armor can be concealed under clothes and appear unarmored; heavy armor can be thin and light enough to conceal most of it, resulting in the appearance of light armor).

Weapons made of celestrum are holy and weigh half as much (if silver) or one-quarter as much (if gold) as normal weapons of the same type. Items without metal parts cannot be made from celestrum. An arrow could be made of celestrum, but a quarterstaff could not. Weapons made of celestrum are good-aligned. Gold celestrum weapons also act as both silver and cold iron when used against outsiders (but not against other targets).

Only good-aligned characters may work, refine, forge, or enchant celestrum. Non-good characters that hold or wear celestrum gain one negative level. The negative level remains as long as the weapon is in hand or the armor is worn, and it disappears when this condition is no longer the case. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while the weapon is wielded or the armor worn.

Celestrum is found only on the planes that serve as the home of good-aligned gods. Even there, the material is rare, existing only where the plane has a natural portal to the plane of earth or in areas where the plane itself has been damaged. A vein of celestrum is thin and small, and the material must be removed without being broken or it becomes tainted by the tools used to retrieve it. It must also be constantly surrounded by holy scripts and song, in order that its removal from the plane that made it does not taint it. (Tainted celestrum is much less valuable, and acts as mithral). Doing this requires a DC 30 Craft (blacksmith) check and a DC 35 Knowledge (religion) check. Once celestrum has been safely removed, it can be forged and moved without risk of taint.

Dragonsteel

This black, nearly indestructible but very light metal adds to the quality of a weapon or suit of armor. Dragonsteel weighs half as much as steel, but is harder than even adamantine. It is an arcane material that always detects as magic (overwhelming abjuration and transmutation) and is extremely difficult to work into usable objects. Objects made of dragonsteel cost significantly more than their normal counterparts (as detailed in **Table 7–6**). Also, any magical enhancements cost an additional 5,000 gp. Thus, making a *+1 keen dragonsteel longsword*, for example, would cost 30,000gp base, +8,000 gp for the enchantment, +5,000 gp for enchanting dragonsteel, for a total of 43,000 gp.

Weapons fashioned from dragonsteel have a natural ability to bypass hardness and penetrate DR. Dragonsteel weapons ignore the first 30 points of hardness of any object and penetrate any DR that can be bypassed, even if it requires a specific material (such as cold iron), an alignment (such as good), or a weapon type (such as bludgeoning). Even DR with no weakness is halved against dragonsteel weapon attacks. So light and perfectly balanced are dragonsteel weapons that they act as one class lighter (*i.e.*, one-handed weapons as light weapons, two-handed weapons as one-handed weapons, and weapons normally one size too large to wield as two-handed weapons).

Table 7-4:
Silver Celestrum Weapons and Armor

Type of Item	Item Cost Modifier
Ammunition	+60 gp
Light armor or shield	+5,000 gp
Medium armor or tower shield	+10,000 gp
Heavy armor	+15,000 gp
Weapon	+6,000 gp
Other Item	+1,000 gp/lb.

Table 7-5:
Gold Celestrum Weapons and Armor

Type of Item	Item Cost Modifier
Ammunition	+90 gp
Light armor or shield	+7,500 gp
Medium armor or tower shield	+15,000 gp
Heavy armor	+22,500 gp
Weapon	+9,000 gp
Other Item	+1,500 gp/lb.

Table 7-6:
Dragonsteel Weapons and Armor

Type of Item	Item Cost Modifier
Ammunition	+600 gp
Light armor or shield	+50,000 gp
Medium armor or tower shield	+100,000 gp
Heavy armor	+150,000 gp
Weapon	+30,000 gp
Other Item	+10,000 gp/lb.

Armor made from dragonsteel grants DR to the wearer and has an innate level of fortification (allowing it to negate critical hits and sneak attack damage). Light armor made from dragonsteel grants its wearer damage reduction of 2/− and has 25% fortification; medium armor has a DR of 4/− and 50% fortification; and heavy armor has a DR of 6/− and 75% fortification. Dragonsteel armor is one category lighter than normal for purposes of movement and other limitations — heavy armors are treated as medium, and medium armors are treated as light, but light armors are still treated as light. Spell failure chances for armors and shields made from dragonsteel are decreased by −15%, the maximum Dexterity bonus is increased by +3, and armor check penalties are lessened by −4 (to a minimum of 0).

Dragonsteel is so costly that weapons and armor made from it are always of masterwork quality (the masterwork cost is included in the prices given). Thus, dragonsteel weapons and ammunition have a +1 enhancement bonus on attack rolls. (While dragonsteel armor does have the check penalty lessened by −1 compared to ordinary masterwork armor, that's already included in the effects of dragonsteel armor.). Items without metal parts cannot be made from dragonsteel. An arrow could be made of dragonsteel, but a quarterstaff could not. Only weapons, armor, and shields normally made of metal can be fashioned from dragonsteel. Weapons, armor, and shields normally made of steel that are made of dragonsteel have twice as many hit points as normal. Dragonsteel has 60 hit points per inch of thickness and hardness 30.

Dragonsteel can be found only under very specific circumstances. Raw iron ore that is exposed to the fire of an ancient dragon's breath weapon before being excavated has a small chance of becoming dragonsteel. For ore to absorb enough innate dragon magic and be annealed with trace elements from the fiery breath to become dragonsteel takes decades at least. Only the highest quality iron ore veins manage this transformation, and those are rarely exposed to enough ancient dragon's fire to be changed. Normally, this happens only if a dwarven iron mine is taken by a dragon as a lair and then kept for a long period of time. Obviously, even then, only small amounts of dragonsteel are produced, and the material cannot be retrieved without dealing with the dragon that produced it. Since only a little of a vein is exposed under the best of circumstances, no more than 10–20 pounds of it is ever found in one locale (enough to make a greataxe or a suit of chainmail or banded mail, but not enough for a suit of full plate).

Heartwood

Heartwood comes in four main varieties (blue, grey, red, and white), each mimicking the mystic qualities of a special metal. Blue heartwood has the same mystic qualities as alchemical silver, grey heartwood as adamantine, red heartwood as cold iron, and white heartwood as mithral. This quality allows these woods to penetrate DR and hardness as if they were the metal in question. Thus, a red heartwood staff penetrates the DR of fey with DR against cold iron, while blue heartwood works against lycanthropes. White heartwood weights half as much as normal wood, and grey heartwood ignores 20 points of object hardness. Despite these properties, heartwoods have the same hardness and hit points per inch as normal wood. Heartwood also always qualifies as wood for all DR and mystic purposes.

When treated with the *ironwood* spell, heartwood actually gains all the properties of the metal it mimics, including gaining the hardness and hit points of that metal. An *ironwood* spell cast on heartwood can be made permanent with a *permanency* or *miracle*, at a cost of 2,000 XP.

There also exists golden heartwood, a far rarer material that duplicates the effects of orichalcum (see below). Golden heartwood always has the full properties of orichalcum, but is very difficult to work with, increasing all wood-related Craft DCs by +15.

Heartwood of any kind is rare. It is literally the center wood of a particularly ancient tree brought to thinking life with the *awaken* spell cast by a druid of at least 16th level. The creature must have at least 32 Hit Dice at the time it is animated. For blue heartwood, the creature must go on to be a cleric and have a 15 or
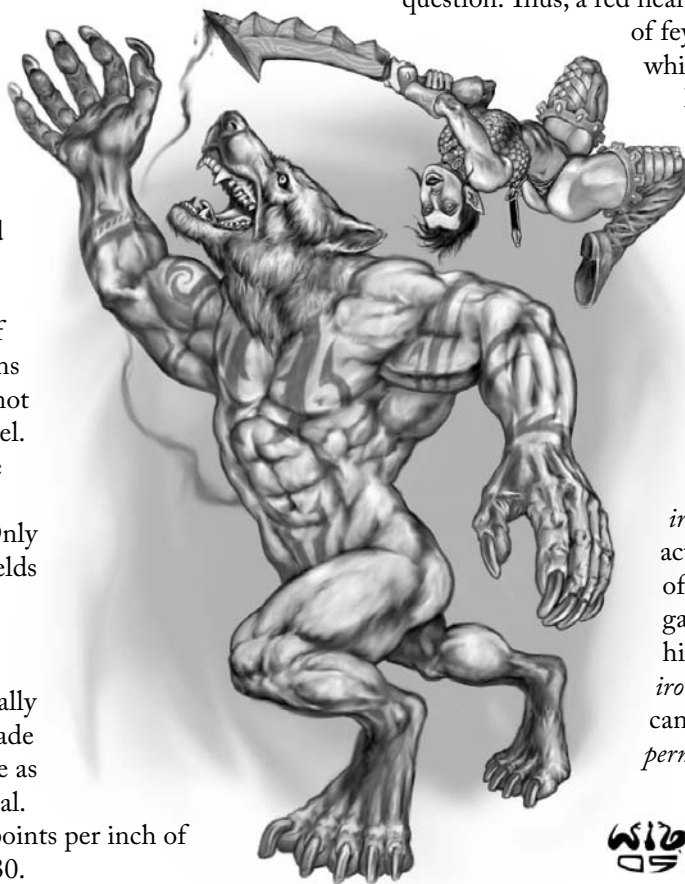
better Wisdom; for red heartwood, the creature must be a fighter with a 15 or better Charisma; for white heartwood, the creature must become a wizard with an 18 Intelligence; and for grey heartwood, the creature must have an 18 in Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, though it can pursue any life-path. If such an awakened tree is allowed to live to the end of its natural life span, it may, if it wishes, generate 1 pound of heartwood per HD it has upon its death. This act is one of selfless generosity and is taken only to make a gift to an old friend or to help an ally overcome some great foe. The cost of each of these heartwoods is given in **Tables 7–7** to **7–9**.

Golden heartwood comes only from the most massive and ancient of trees, which must have been *awakened* through the direct action of a creature of at least demigod status. It is far rarer than other heartwoods and is jealously guarded by those few archdruids and fey kings who possess it.

Blue and red heartwood items cost 10 times as much as regular items. Grey, white, and golden heartwoods cost significantly more than other kinds and have their own tables.

Orichalcum

Orichalcum, also known as blood-silver, is a mystic combination of cold iron, alchemical silver, and adamantine. The crimson red metal is literally an alloy of these metals, as well as gold and tin, and combines the benefits of these materials. Orichalcum weighs half as much as iron and is as hard as adamantine. Objects made of orichalcum cost more to make than their normal counterparts (see **Table 7–10**). Also, any magical enhancements cost an additional 2,000 gp. Thus, making a suit of *+1 slick orichalcum full plate*, for example, would cost 30,000 gp base, +1,000 gp for the enchantment, +3,750 to be slick, and +2,000 gp for enchanting orichalcum, for a total of 39,750 gp.

Weapons fashioned from orichalcum have a natural ability to bypass hardness, ignoring the first 20 points of hardness of any object. Additionally, orichalcum weapons penetrate DR as if they were alchemical silver, cold iron, or adamantine.

Armor made from orichalcum grants DR to the wearer, has a −10% reduction in arcane spell failure (minimum of 0%), has a maximum Dexterity bonus increased by +2, has armor check penalties reduced by −3 (minimum 0), and counts as one class lighter for purposes of movement, encumbrance, and special abilities. Light armor made from orichalcum grants its wearer damage reduction of 1/− and still qualifies as light armor, medium armor grants DR 2/− and qualifies as light armor, and heavy armor grants DR 3/− and qualifies as medium armor.

Orichalcum must be cold-forged to retain its special abilities and is so difficult to work with that weapons and

Table 7-7:
Grey Heartwood Weapons and Armor

Type of Item	Item Cost Modifier
Ammunition	+90 gp
Weapon	+4,500 gp
Light armor or shield	+7,500 gp
Medium armor or tower shield	+15,000 gp
Heavy armor	+22,500 gp
Other Item	+1,000 gp/lb.

Table 7-8:
White Heartwood Weapons and Armor

Type of Item	Item Cost Modifier
Ammunition	+40 gp
Light armor or shield	+1,500 gp
Weapon	+4,500 gp
Medium armor or tower shield	+6,000 gp
Heavy armor	+13,500 gp
Other Item	+200 gp/lb.

Table 7-9:
Golden Heartwood Weapons and Armor

Type of Item	Item Cost Modifier
Ammunition	+160 gp
Weapon	+7,500 gp
Light armor or shield	+12,500 gp
Medium armor or tower shield	+25,000 gp
Heavy armor	+37,500 gp
Other Item	+2,550 gp/lb.

armor made from it are always of masterwork quality (the masterwork cost is included in the prices given in **Table 7–10**). Thus, orichalcum weapons and ammunition have a +1 enhancement bonus on attack rolls. (While orichalcum armor does have the check penalty lessened by −1 compared to ordinary armor, that's already added in to the effects of orichalcum armor.). Items without metal parts cannot be made from orichalcum. An arrow could be made of orichalcum, but a quarterstaff could not. Only weapons, armor, and shields normally made of metal can be fashioned from orichalcum. Weapons, armor, and shields normally made of steel that are made of orichalcum have +50% more hit points than normal. Orichalcum has 40 hit points per inch of thickness and hardness 20.

Making orichalcum is very tricky. It requires a DC 35 Craft (alchemy) check in conjunction with a DC 30 Craft (smelting) check. To make one pound of orichalcum, raw materials of cold iron, mithral, adamantine, gold, and tin totaling 2,000 gp must be obtained (400 gp worth of each material), rather than the normal 1/3 raw material cost. Additionally, the crafting must be finished on a week with a full moon, and the item must be worked on continuously until that time. Thus, the crafters must estimate how long it will take to alloy the materials into orichalcum and ensure they complete the process on a specific week. Failure to do so ruins the alloying and wastes 1/3 of the raw materials. At the end of this process, a pound of raw orichalcum is created, ready to then itself be crafted into another item.

Table 7-10: Orichalcum Weapons and Armor

Type of Item	Item Cost Modifier
Ammunition	+120 gp
Weapon	+6,000 gp
Light armor or shield	+10,000 gp
Medium armor or tower shield	+20,000 gp
Heavy armor	+30,000 gp
Other Item	+2,000 gp/lb.

– Armor and Shields –

Some of the armor and shield properties listed here are taken from specific magic armors and shields in **Chapter Seven** of the *DMG*. They are presented in this format to make them easy for you to add to other armor types, rather than being restricted to a few rare items. Others are new properties designed to open new plot possibilities and heighten player interest with non-standard magic.

Absorbing

Absorbing armor or shield is flat black and seems to absorb light. Once every two days, on command, it can

disintegrate an object that it touches, as the spell, but requiring a melee touch attack.

Strong transmutation; CL 17th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *disintegrate*; Price +49,000 gp.

Animated, Greater

A greater animated shield automatically hovers near its owner while in effect, protecting him as if he was carrying it. The shield does this even if the owner is asleep or incapacitated, and prevents him from qualifying as "helpless."

The greater animated shield hovers at a sufficient distance such that the owner does not suffer the penalties for carrying a shield, including armor check penalty, arcane spell failure, and any non-proficiency penalties.

A character must wear a greater animated shield for a full 24 hours, suffering all normal penalties for it, before he is considered its owner. If anyone else puts it on, the shield doesn't function for anyone until that person has worn it for 24 hours.

Only shields can have the greater animated quality.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *telekinesis*; Price +4 bonus.

Aquatic

The wearer of aquatic armor is treated as unarmored for purposes of Swim checks. The wearer can breathe underwater and can converse with any creature with a language that breathes water.

Shields may not have aquatic quality.

Moderate abjuration; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *freedom of movement, water breathing, tongues*; Price +22,000 gp.

Table 7-11: Armor Special Abilities*

Minor	Medium	Major	Special Ability	Base Price Modifier
01–10	01–04	01–03	Attacking, melee	+1 bonus
11–20	05–08	04–06	Attacking, ranged	+1 bonus
21–30	09–12	07–09	*Fortification, light*	+1 bonus
31–52	13–15	10–12	*Glamered*	+2,000 gp.
53–62	16–19	13–15	Lucky	+2,500 gp
63–72	20–23	—	*Slick*	+3,750 gp
73–82	24–27	—	*Shadow*	+3,750 gp
83–92	28–31	—	*Silent moves*	+3,750 gp
93–96	32–35	—	*Spell resistance (13)*	+2 bonus
97	36–39	16–18	*Slick, improved*	+15,000 gp
98	40–43	19–21	*Shadow, improved*	+15,000 gp
99	44–47	22–24	*Silent moves, improved*	+15,000 gp
—	48–51	25–27	Flying	+16,200 gp
—	52–55	28–30	*Acid resistance*	+18,000 gp
—	56–59	31–33	*Cold resistance*	+18,000 gp
—	60–63	34–36	*Electricity resistance*	+18,000 gp
—	64–67	37–39	*Fire resistance*	+18,000 gp
—	68–71	40–42	*Sonic resistance*	+18,000 gp
—	72–75	43–45	Command	+19,050 gp
—	76–79	46–48	Aquatic	+22,000 gp
—	80–83	49–51	Speed	+22,000 gp
—	84–86	52–54	*Ghost touch*	+3 bonus
—	87–89	55–57	*Invulnerability*	+3 bonus
—	90–93	58–60	*Fortification, moderate*	+3 bonus
—	94–96	61–63	*Spell resistance (15)*	+3 bonus
—	97–99	64–66	*Wild*	+3 bonus
—	—	67–69	*Slick, greater*	+33,750 gp
—	—	70–72	*Shadow, greater*	+33,750 gp
—	—	73–75	*Silent moves, greater*	+33,750 gp
—	—	76–77	*Acid resistance, improved*	+42,000 gp
—	—	78–79	*Cold resistance, improved*	+42,000 gp
—	—	80–81	*Electricity resistance, improved*	+42,000 gp
—	—	82–83	*Fire resistance, improved*	+42,000 gp
—	—	84–85	*Sonic resistance, improved*	+42,000 gp
—	—	86–87	*Spell resistance (17)*	+4 bonus
—	—	88–89	*Absorbing*	+49,000 gp
—	—	90–91	*Etherealness*	+49,000 gp
—	—	92	*Undead controlling*	+49,000 gp
—	—	93	*Fortification, heavy*	+5 bonus
—	—	94	*Spell resistance (19)*	+5 bonus
—	—	95	*Acid resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
—	—	96	*Cold resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
—	—	97	*Electricity resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
—	—	98	*Fire resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
—	—	99	*Sonic resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
100	100	100	Roll again twice	—

* Italicized special abilities are detailed in **Chapter Seven** of the *DMG*.

Attacking, Melee

The ornate suits of armor and shields of this type always have some form of weapon or creature worked into them as part of the design. Three times per day as a free action, the weapon or creature can be commanded to attack with a 5-foot reach (independently of the wearer), slashing, stabbing, smashing, or biting with the wielder's base attack bonus (including multiple attacks, if available) and dealing 2d6 points of damage. This attack is in addition to any actions performed by the wielder.

Moderate conjuration; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *summon nature's ally IV*; Price +1 bonus.

Attacking, Ranged

These suits of armor and shields have spines and sharp blades protruding from their surface and must be part of a suit with armor spikes or a spiked buckler. On command up to three times per day, the wearer can fire one of the shield's or armor's spines. A fired spine has a +1 enhancement bonus to attack and damage, a range increment of 120 feet, and deals 1d10 points of damage (19–20/×2). Fired spines regenerate each day.

Moderate evocation; CL 6th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *magic missile*; Price +1 bonus.

Charging

Charging armor and shields add +2d6 points of damage to a wearer's charge, including mounted charges. A charging shield only adds this bonus to damage done with a shield bash while charging, but does add +6 to all Strength checks the wielder makes when initiating or defending against a bull rush.

Moderate transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bull's strength*; Price +1 bonus.

Table 7-12: Shield Special Abilities*

Minor	Medium	Major	Special Ability	Base Price Modifier	Minor	Medium	Major	Special Ability	Base Price Modifier
01–11	01–05	01–04	*Arrow catching*	+1 bonus	—	—	79–80	Electricity resistance, improved	+42,000 gp
12–22	06–10	05–09	*Bashing*	+1 bonus	—	—	81–82	*Fire resistance, improved*	+42,000 gp
23–33	11–15	10–13	*Blinding*	+1 bonus	—	—	83–84	*Sonic resistance, improved*	+42,000 gp
34–44	16–20	14–17	*Fortification, light*	+1 bonus					
45–60	21–25	18–21	Lucky	+2,500 gp	—	—	85–86	Animated, greater	+4 bonus
61–72	26–30	22–25	*Animated*	+2 bonus	—	—	87–88	*Spell resistance (17)*	+4 bonus
73–87	31–40	26–28	*Arrow deflection*	+2 bonus	—	—	89	Absorbing	+49,000 gp
88–98	41–45	—	*Spell resistance (13)*	+2 bonus	—	—	90	*Etherealness*	+49,000 gp
99	46–50	29–32	Flying	+16,200 gp	—	—	91	*Undead controlling*	+49,000 gp
—	51–55	33–36	*Acid resistance*	+18,000 gp	—	—	92	*Fortification, heavy*	+5 bonus
—	56–60	37–40	*Cold resistance*	+18,000 gp	—	—	93	*Reflecting*	+5 bonus
—	61–65	41–44	*Electricity resistance*	+18,000 gp	—	—	94	*Spell resistance (19)*	+5 bonus
—	66–70	45–48	*Fire resistance*	+18,000 gp	—	—	95	*Acid resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
—	71–75	49–52	*Sonic resistance*	+18,000 gp	—	—	96	*Cold resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
—	76–80	53–56	Command	+19,050 gp	—	—	97	*Electricity resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
—	81–85	57–60	Aquatic	+22,000 gp					
—	86–90	61–63	Speed	+22,000 gp	—	—	98	*Fire resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
—	91–93	64–66	*Ghost touch*	+3 bonus	—	—	99	*Sonic resistance, greater*	+66,000 gp
—	94–95	67–69	*Fortification, moderate*	+3 bonus					
—	96–97	70–72	*Spell resistance (15)*	+3 bonus	100	100	100	Roll again twice	—
—	98–99	73–74	*Wild*	+3 bonus					
—	—	75–76	*Acid resistance, improved*	+42,000 gp					
—	—	77–78	*Cold resistance, improved*	+42,000 gp					

* Italicized special abilities are detailed in **Chapter Seven** of the *DMG*.

Command

When used, the armor or shield bestows a dignified and commanding aura upon its owner. The user gains a +2 competence bonus on all Charisma checks, including turning checks and Charisma-based skill checks. The user also gains a +2 competence bonus to her Leadership score. Friendly troops within 360 feet of the user become braver than normal, gaining a +4 morale bonus against all fear and spell affects.

Since the effect arises in great part from the distinctiveness of the armor or shield, the wearer cannot hide or conceal herself in any way and still have the effect function.

Strong enchantment; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *mass charm monster*; Price +19,050 gp.

Flying

This armor or shield allows the wearer to *fly* on command (as the spell) once per day. Because the power of flight comes from the armor or shield itself, the wearer does not count the weight of the armor or shield against his encumbrance for the purposes of flying speed and flies as if wearing light armor.

Faint transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *fly*; Price +16,200 gp.

Lucky

Lucky armor or shield allows the wearer to force an attack roll against her to be re-rolled once each week. This decision must be made before damage is rolled for the attack, and the second roll's result is used even if it is worse.

Moderate transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bless*; Price +2,500.

Speed

Armor or shield of speed allows its wearer, when activated as a free action, to act as though affected by a *haste* spell for up to 10 rounds each day. The duration of the *haste* effect need not be consecutive rounds.

Table 7-13: Specific Armors

Minor	Medium	Major	Specific Armor	Market Price		Minor	Medium	Major	Specific Armor	Market Price
01–35	01–15	—	*Mithral shirt*	1,100 gp		—	—	43–49	Armor of command	24,700 gp
36–55	16–25	—	*Dragonhide plate*	3,300 gp		—	—	50–56	Archmage's bulwark	25,180 gp
56–69	26–37	—	*Elven chain*	4,150 gp		—	—	57–63	Armor of the merman	25,350 gp
70–84	38–47	—	Bear hide	4,175 gp		—	—	64–70	*Breastplate of command*	25,400 gp
85–100	48–58	—	Chain of charging	4,250 gp		—	—	71–76	Swift justice	26,170 gp
—	59–67	—	*Rhino hide*	5,165 gp		—	—	77–82	*Mithral full plate of speed*	26,500 gp
—	68–75	—	Safe skin	6,655 gp		—	—	83–88	Swift skin	31,165 gp
—	76–83	01–06	*Adamantine breastplate*	10,200 gp		—	—	89–93	Silent warrior	36,180 gp
—	84–90	07–13	*Dwarven plate*	16,500 gp		—	—	94–97	*Demon armor*	52,260 gp
—	91–97	14–21	Sky defender	17,950 gp		—	—	98–99	Armor of doom	53,300 gp
—	98–100	22–28	*Banded mail of luck*	18,900 gp		—	—	100	Golden champion	169,250 gp
—	—	29–35	*Celestial armor*	22,400 gp						
—	—	36–42	*Plate armor of the deep*	24,650 gp						

* Italicized special abilities are detailed in **Chapter Seven** of the *DMG*.

Faint transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *haste*; Price +22,000 gp.

Specific Armors

The following specific armors have all been made with the rules in this chapter and those found in **Chapter Seven** of the *DMG*.

Archmage's Bulwark

This *+1 greater animated tower shield* is 7 feet tall and etched in the image of an actual wizard's tower.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *telekinesis*; Price 25,180 gp.

Armor of Command

This suit of *+2 full plate of command* is distinctive and impressive, though each suit is unique and usually tells a story.

Strong enchantment; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *mass charm monster*, Price 24,700 gp.

Armor of Doom

The *armor of doom* is a black suit of *+2 absorbing ranged attacking chainmail*, covered in jagged spikes and bones.

Strong transmutation, moderate evocation; CL 17th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *disintegrate, magic missile*; Price 53,300 gp.

Armor of the Merman

This *+1 aquatic glamered breastplate* is constructed of blue steel and etched with wave and shell patterns.

Moderate abjuration and illusion; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *disguise self, freedom of movement, water breathing, tongues*; Price 25,350 gp.

Bear Hide

This suit of *+1 melee attacking studded leather* is made of bear fur and studded with bear teeth and claws.

Moderate conjuration; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *summon nature's ally IV*; Price 4,175 gp.

Chain of Charging

This *+1 charging chain shirt* is made of steel rings edged with brass or copper rings at the arms, neck, and skirt edge.

Moderate transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bull's strength*; Price 4,250 gp.

Golden Champion

The golden champion is a suit of *+5 flying legendary dragonsteel full plate of command*. Though made of dragonsteel, it has been gold-washed to give it a gleaming, heroic appearance. It grants DR 6/– and 75% fortification.

Medium armor; armor bonus +5; max Dexterity bonus +6; armor check penalty –1; arcane spell failure 10%.

Strong enchantment; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *fly, mass charm monster*; Price: 169,250.

Safe Skin

This suit of *+2 lucky leather armor* is finely tailored and trimmed. It has the appearance of a nice suit that a noble might wear.

Moderate transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bless*; Price 6,655 gp.

The Silent Warrior

The *Silent Warrior* is a *+1 greater animated tower shield of bashing*. It is a large plate of iron bearing a bas relief of a fierce, mace-wielding warrior.

Strong and moderate transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bull's strength, telekinesis*; Price 36,180 gp.

Sky Defender

This gleaming silver suit of *+1 flying half-plate* produces a set of translucent white wings on command.

Faint transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *fly*; Price 17,950 gp.

Swift Justice

Swift Justice is a *+1 charging heavy steel shield of speed*. The surface of this teardrop-shaped shield changes to match the heraldry of the wielder (remaining black when no heraldry is appropriate).

Moderate and faint transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bull's strength, haste*; Price 26,170 gp.

Swift Skin

This spotted animal pelt is *+3 hide armor of speed*.

Faint transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *haste*; Price 31,165 gp.

– WEAPONS –

The following special abilities are designed to allow you to model specific weapons from the *DMG*, as well as some magic weapons from popular fantasy literature. Many of the abilities added in this chapter are very powerful, and you should think twice before allowing them in her campaign. Though designed to be balanced against other weapon bonuses, they do expand the kinds of abilities available to magic weapons, which can make both NPCs and PCs more versatile and thus harder to predict.

Magic Weapon Special Abilities

Desiccated

A weapon with the desiccated property is surrounded in a dull mist of dehydrating magic. This mist has no effect on damage dealt to most creatures, but the magic can penetrate oozes when the weapon deals a particularly well-placed blow. This effect dries out

Table 7-14: Melee Weapon Special Abilities*

Minor	Medium	Major	Special Ability	Base Price Modifier	Minor	Medium	Major	Special Ability	Base Price Modifier
01	01	01	Racefriend**	+200 gp	—	87–88	52	*Shocking burst*	+2 bonus
02–06	02–03	02–03	*Bane*	+1 bonus	—	89–90	53–54	*Unholy*	+2 bonus
07–12	04–06	—	*Defending*	+1 bonus	—	90–91	55–56	*Wounding*	+2 bonus
13–17	07–08	04–05	Desiccated	+1 bonus	—	92–93	57–58	Fortune	+14,000 gp
18–22	09–10	—	Enhancing, +1	+1 bonus	—	94–95	59–60	Sworn	+17,000 gp
23–27	11–12	06–07	Featherlight	+1 bonus	—	—	61	Enhancing, +3	+3 bonus
28–34	13–15	08–09	*Flaming*	+1 bonus	—	—	62	Infectious, moderately	+3 bonus
35–41	16–18	10–11	*Frost*	+1 bonus	—	—	63	Spectral, minor	+3 bonus
42–48	19–21	12–13	*Shock*	+1 bonus	—	—	64–65	*Speed*	+3 bonus
49–53	22–24	14–15	*Ghost touch*	+1 bonus	—	—	66	Venomous, mildly	+3 bonus
54–60	25–27	—	*Keen*	+1 bonus	—	—	67–68	Smiting	+3 bonus, +3,000 gp
61–63	28–30	16–17	*Ki focus*	+1 bonus	—	—	69	Subtle	+20,000 gp
64–66	31–32	—	*Merciful*	+1 bonus	—	—	70	Iced	+22,000 gp
67–71	33	18–19	*Mighty cleaving*	+1 bonus	—	—	71	Terror	+30,000 gp
72–76	34–35	20–21	Shieldbreaker	+1 bonus	—	—	72–73	*Brilliant energy*	+4 bonus
77–81	36–38	22–23	*Spell storing*	+1 bonus	—	—	74	*Dancing*	+4 bonus
82–86	39–41	24–25	*Throwing*	+1 bonus	—	—	75	Infectious, extremely	+4 bonus
87–90	42–44	26–27	*Thundering*	+1 bonus	—	—	76	Venomous, moderately	+4 bonus
91–94	45–46	28–29	*Vicious*	+1 bonus	—	—	77	Fortune, 1 wish	+54,000 gp
95–97	47–48	30–31	Skilled	+2,000 gp	—	—	78–79	Invincible	+5 bonus
98	49–51	32–33	Elemental	+2,400 gp	—	—	80–81	Spectral, major	+5 bonus
99	52–54	34–35	Potent	+1 bonus, +4,000 gp	—	—	82–83	Venomous, extremely	+5 bonus
—	55–57	36–37	*Anarchic*	+2 bonus	—	—	84–85	*Vorpal*	+5 bonus
—	58–60	38–39	*Axiomatic*	+2 bonus	—	—	86	Soul stealing	+5 bonus, +6,000 gp
—	61–63	40–41	*Disruption*	+2 bonus	—	—	87	Fortune, 2 wishes	+94,000 gp
—	64–65	—	Enhancing, +2	+2 bonus	—	—	88	Slaying	+111,750 gp
—	66–68	42	*Flaming burst*	+2 bonus	—	—	89	Fortune, 3 wishes	+134,000 gp
—	69–71	43–44	Force	+2 bonus	—	—	90	Greater slaying	+200,500 gp
—	72–75	45	*Icy burst*	+2 bonus	100	96–100	91–100	Roll again twice	—
—	76–77	—	Infectious, mildly	+2 bonus					
—	78–80	46–47	*Holy*	+2 bonus					
—	81–83	48–49	Shieldbreaker, greater	+2 bonus					
—	84–86	50–51	Shining	+2 bonus					

* Italicized special abilities are detailed in **Chapter Seven** of the *DMG*.
** Roll again for a minor special ability to which the racefriend trait applies.

part of an ooze's mass, damaging it greatly. As a result, oozes are vulnerable to critical hits from desiccated weapons.

Desiccated weapons destroy mundane, non-magic liquids within which they are placed, to a limit of 11 gallons each day.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

Moderate conjuration; CL 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *death ward*; Price +1 bonus.

Elemental

Once per day, an elemental weapon can blast forth a magic ray at any target within 30 feet as a ranged touch attack. The ray deals 4d6 points of acid, cold, electricity, or fire damage on a successful hit. The type of damage done by the ray is chosen when the weapon is made and cannot be changed.

Table 7-15: Ranged Weapon Special Abilities*

Minor	Medium	Major	Special Ability	Base Price Modifier		Minor	Medium	Major	Special Ability	Base Price Modifier
01	01	01	Racefriend**	+200 gp		—	94–95	54–55	Sworn	+17,000 gp
02–09	02–04	02–03	*Bane*	+1 bonus		—	—	56–57	Enhancing, +3	+3 bonus
10–17	05–08	—	*Distance*	+1 bonus		—	—	58–59	Infectious, moderately	+3 bonus
18–25	09–11	04–05	Desiccated	+1 bonus		—	—	60–61	Spectral, minor	+3 bonus
26–34	12–14	—	Enhancing, +1	+1 bonus		—	—	62–63	*Speed*	+3 bonus
35–42	15–18	06–08	*Flaming*	+1 bonus		—	—	64–65	Venomous, mildly	+3 bonus
43–50	19–22	9–11	*Frost*	+1 bonus		—	—	66–67	Smiting	+3 bonus, +3,000 gp
51–58	23–25	12–15	*Returning*	+1 bonus		—	—	68–69	Subtle	+20,000 gp
59–66	26–29	16–18	*Shock*	+1 bonus		—	—	70–71	*Brilliant energy*	+4 bonus
67–84	30–33	19–21	*Seeking*	+1 bonus		—	—	72–75	Infectious, extremely	+4 bonus
85–90	34–36	22–24	*Merciful*	+1 bonus		—	—	76–79	Venomous, moderately	+4 bonus
91–98	37–40	25–27	*Thundering*	+1 bonus		—	—	80	Fortune, 1 wish	+54,000 gp
99	41–43	28–30	Potent	+1 bonus, +4,000 gp		—	—	81–82	Invincible	+5 bonus
—	44–47	31–34	*Anarchic*	+2 bonus		—	—	83–84	Spectral, major	+5 bonus
—	48–50	35–38	*Axiomatic*	+2 bonus		—	—	85–86	Venomous, extremely	+5 bonus
—	51–54	39–41	Enhancing, +2	+2 bonus		—	—	87	Fortune, 2 wishes	+94,000 gp
—	55–60	42	*Flaming burst*	+2 bonus		—	—	88	Slaying	+111,750 gp
—	61–65	43–44	Force	+2 bonus		—	—	89	Fortune, 3 wishes	+134,000 gp
—	66–70	45	*Icy burst*	+2 bonus		—	—	90	Greater slaying	+200,500 gp
—	71–75	46–47	Infectious, mildly	+2 bonus		100	96–100	91–100	Roll again twice	—
—	76–80	48–49	*Holy*	+2 bonus						
—	81–85	50–51	*Shocking burst*	+2 bonus						
—	86–90	52–53	*Unholy*	+2 bonus						

* Italicized special abilities are detailed in **Chapter Seven** of the *DMG*.
** Roll again for a minor special ability to which the racefriend trait applies.

Moderate evocation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, any spell of at least 2nd level that deals damage of the chosen type; Price +2,400 gp.

Enhancing

An enhancing weapon increases the DC (by +1, +2, or +3) of a specific special ability that can be delivered through it with a successful attack. For example, a *+1 enhancing (quivering palm) quarterstaff* increases the save DC of a quivering palm attack a monk makes through it. It has no effect on any attack other than a quivering palm and does not grant the ability to make a quivering palm attack. Attacks that cannot be delivered through a weapon blow or that do not have a save DC cannot be aided with an enhancing weapon.

Alternatively, an enhancing weapon can enhance the DC of another of its magic properties. For example, a *+2 enhancing (disruption) mace of disruption* has a DC 16 Will save.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired and applies only to special attacks made at range and to abilities of the weapon itself.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *permanency*; Price +1 bonus (+1 enhancing), +2 bonus (+2 enhancing), +3 bonus (+3 enhancing).

Featherlight

A featherlight weapon can be used as the weapon type it is or as a single weapon that deals the same kind of damage one category lighter (*i.e.*, a two-handed featherlight weapon can also be used as a specific one-handed weapon, and a featherlight one-handed weapon can also be used as a specific light melee weapon).

For example, a *+1 featherlight bastard sword* can be made to act as a short sword with respect to weight and ease of use. The weapon appears to all viewers to be a bastard sword and deals bastard sword damage, but the wielder feels and reacts as if the weapon were a short sword.

Any individual able to use either a bastard sword or a short sword with proficiency is proficient in the use of a *+1 featherlight bastard sword*. Likewise, Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization in short sword and bastard sword apply equally, but the benefits of those feats do not stack.

If using weapon size rules, rather than the light melee, one-handed melee, and two-handed melee categories, a featherlight weapon acts as if one size category smaller for purposes of how it is wielded, but not for damage or any other reason.

Only melee weapons may be featherlight.

Moderate transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *feather fall*; Price +1 bonus.

Force

A weapon with the force ability is covered in a field of force energy. Damage from the weapon is treated as if it had the [Force] descriptor, allowing it to affect creatures on the Ethereal Plane. The field also protects the weapon, giving it +20 hardness.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

Moderate evocation; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *wall of force*; Price +2 bonus.

Fortune

A weapon of fortune gives its possessor a +1 luck bonus on all saving throws. Its possessor also gains the power of good fortune, usable once per day. This extraordinary ability allows its possessor to reroll one roll that she just made. She must take the result of the reroll, even if it's worse than the original roll.

Rarely, a weapon of good fortune also contains one, two, or three wishes. Once the wishes are used, the weapon retains its other magic properties.

Moderate evocation; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *heroism* or *prayer*; Price +14,000 gp. (If containing wishes: Strong evocation; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *wish*, *heroism* or *prayer*; Price +40,000 gp for 1 wish, +80,000 gp for 2 wishes, +120,000 gp for 3 wishes.)

Iced

An iced weapon sheds light as a torch when the temperature drops below 0°F. At such times, it cannot be concealed when drawn, nor can its light be shut off. Its wielder is protected from fire: the weapon absorbs the first 10 points of fire damage each round that the wielder would otherwise suffer.

An iced weapon extinguishes all nonmagical fires in its area. As a standard action, it can also *dispel* lasting fire spells, but not instantaneous effects, though the wielder must succeed on a dispel check (1d20 +14) against each spell to dispel it. The DC to dispel such spells is 11 + the caster level of the fire spell.

Strong evocation; CL 14th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *ice storm, dispel magic, protection from energy*; Price +22,000 gp.

Infectious

A weapon with this ability infects those injured by it with a disease. There is no incubation period for the disease of an infectious weapon — targets must make a Fortitude save every time they are dealt damage by it. If the save is failed, the target immediately takes the listed damage and is now diseased. (Diseased characters must make an additional save every day or take the listed damage again. If a successful save is made two days in a row, the disease is cured.)

Once a character is diseased, the infectious weapon just deals normal damage. It is not possible to suffer the same disease more than once. A *remove disease* spell cast on an infectious weapon requires a caster level check. If the check exceeds the weapon's caster level, it loses its infectious ability for 1d4 hours.

An infectious weapon cannot also be defending, merciful, or holy. A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

Infectioous Effects

Infectious Type	Fort DC	Disease Effects	Base Price Modifier
Mildly	14	1d4 Con	+2
Moderately	19	1d4 Con	+3
Extremely	22	1d6 Con	+4

Strong necromancy; CL 6th (mildly infectious), CL 11th (moderately infectious), CL 16th (extremely infectious); Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *contagion*; Price +2 bonus, +3 bonus, or +4 bonus.

Invincible

An invincible weapon has at least a chance to harm any creature. It ignores 10 points of hardness and DR (even DR without a vulnerability); half the damage done with it is always lethal (even against creatures with regeneration); and if it misses a target because of a percentile roll (regardless of what forced the percentile roll, including being incorporeal or having cover), the weapon's wielder is allowed a second percentile roll to determine success. An invincible weapon even has a 50% chance of striking an ethereal target (though this percentile roll is not checked twice).

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *miracle* or *wish*; Price +5 bonus.

POTENT

A potent weapon deals an additional 1d8 points of damage with every blow. This damage acts as weapon damage, but is not multiplied by a critical hit.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

Moderate evocation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor; Price +1 bonus and +4,000 gp.

RACEFRIEND

A racefriend weapon has one or more special abilities that can be used only by a member of a particular race. For example, a *+2 elffriend orc bane longsword* might act as only a *+1 longsword* in the hands of anyone except an elf. At least a +1 enhancement bonus must be left available to anyone, but any other bonus or property of the weapon can be limited to a single race.

Rarer are classfriend weapons, which act in the same way except only members of a given class (with at least one level in the class) may access their limited powers.

Moderate evocation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be of the race or class the weapon is friend to or of at least 10th level; Price +200 gp per property limited to a single race.

SHIELDBREAKER

A weapon with the shieldbreaker property can damage any magic weapon or armor with a +5 or less enhancement bonus. Normally, magic weapons and armor are damaged only by weapons with an enhancement bonus at least equal to their own. A greater shieldbreaker weapon can damage any weapon, regardless of its enhancement bonus. Only melee weapons may be shieldbreakers or greater shieldbreakers.

Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *disintegrate*; Price +1 bonus (shieldbreaker), +2 bonus (epic shieldbreaker).

SHINING

A weapon with the shining property is surrounded in a bright nimbus of positive energy. This energy has no effect on damage dealt to most creatures, but the energy can penetrate undead when the weapon deals a particularly well-placed blow. This effect burns out part of the dark energies that drive undead, damaging them greatly. As a result, undead are vulnerable to critical hits from shining weapons.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

Additionally, any character holding a shining weapon is treated as two levels higher when attempting to turn (but not rebuke) undead. This effect both increases the highest level undead she can turn and adds to her turning damage. Shining weapons automatically illuminate brightly out to a 30-foot radius when drawn and cast shadowed illumination out to a 60-foot radius. A shining weapon cannot also be vicious; flaming, icy, or shocking burst unholy; or wounding.

Strong conjuration; CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *death ward*; Price +2 bonus.

SKILLED

A skilled weapon is keyed to one of the following feats: Improved Disarm, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip. When used by a wielder without the keyed feat, the skilled weapon has no special property. In the hands of a wielder with the keyed feat, the weapon gives the bonus listed below.

- **Improved Disarm:** +4 to opposed attack rolls made to disarm an opponent.

- **Improved Sunder:** +4 to attacks made to strike a foe's weapon, +4 to damage dealt to weapons.

- **Improved Trip:** +4 to Strength checks made to trip an opponent.

Strong evocation; CL 13th; Strength 13, Craft Arms and Armor, keyed feat; Price +2,000 gp.

SLAYING

A slaying weapon is keyed to a particular type or subtype of creature, just like a bane weapon. If it strikes such a creature, the target must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or die (or, in the case of unliving targets, be destroyed) instantly. Note that even creatures normally exempt from Fortitude saves (undead and constructs) are subject to this attack. When keyed to a living creature, this is a death effect (and thus *death ward* protects a target).

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

A greater slaying weapon functions just like a normal slaying weapon, but the DC to avoid the death effect is 23.

Strong necromancy; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *finger of death* (slaying weapon) or *heightened finger of death* (greater slaying weapon); Price +111,750 gp (slaying weapon) or +200,500 bonus (greater slaying weapon).

SMITING

A weapon of smiting acts as an adamantine weapon for all purposes. It also gains an additional +2 enhancement bonus against constructs, and any critical hit dealt to a construct completely destroys it (no saving throw). A critical hit dealt to an outsider has its multiplier increased by +2 (*i.e.*, from x2 to x4, x3 to x5, or x4 to x6).

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

Moderate transmutation; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *disintegrate*; Price +3 bonus and +3,000 gp.

SPECTRAL, MAJOR

A major spectral weapon is imbued with the powers of undeath and darkness. Any creature struck by a major spectral weapon must make a DC 18 Will save or take energy drain, gaining one negative level. After 24 hours, the creature must make a DC 18 Fortitude save. If the save is successful the negative level goes away; if not, the creature permanently loses one level. A character who takes one more negative level than he has levels or Hit Dice is killed and has a 10% chance to rise immediately as a wraith under the control of the creature wielding the major spectral weapon.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

A creature immune to energy drains is immune to the effects of a major spectral weapon. A creature must save against a major spectral weapon ever time the weapon deals damage to it and can suffer multiple negative levels and multiple lost levels. Each negative level forces its own Fortitude save 24 hours after it is gained.

A character who loses a level to a major spectral weapon has a scar that never heals and can always feel the wound on the anniversary of its infliction. A spectral weapon cannot also be defending, merciful, or holy.

Strong necromancy; CL 18th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *energy drain*; Price +5 bonus.

SPECTRAL, MINOR

A minor spectral weapon is imbued with the powers of undeath and darkness. Any creature struck by a minor spectral weapon on a natural attack roll of 19 or 20 must make a DC 15 Will save or take energy drain, gaining one negative level. After 24 hours, the negative level goes away (there's no chance of the negative level being permanent).

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

A creature immune to energy drains is immune to the effects of a minor spectral weapon. A creature must save against a minor spectral weapon every time the weapon deals damage on a natural attack roll of 19 or 20 and can take multiple negative levels. Each negative level fades 24 hours after it is gained.

Strong necromancy; CL 18th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *energy drain*; Price +3 bonus.

SOUL STEALING

A soul stealing weapon drinks in the immortal spirit of any creature it kills. If the blow that ends a creature's life comes from the soul stealing weapon, that creature's soul is stolen. The creature cannot be restored to life through any means (including *clone*, *miracle*, *raise dead*, *resurrection*, *reincarnation*, *true resurrection*, or *wish*), and its body is immune to the *speak with dead* spell.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

Once per day, the wielder of a soul stealing weapon can name one creature killed by the weapon and ask it two questions, as if casting *speak with dead* on the creature's complete corpse.

If the soul stealing weapon is broken, those killed by it can be restored to life through all normal means, and their bodies become vulnerable to the *speak with dead* spell.

A soul stealing weapon cannot also be defending, merciful, or holy.

Strong necromancy; CL 18th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *soul bind*; Price +5 bonus and +6,000 gp.

SUBTLE

A subtle weapon grants a +4 bonus on its wielder's attack and damage rolls when making a sneak attack with it.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

Moderate illusion; CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *blur*; Price +20,000 gp.

SWORN

A sworn weapon makes a whispered oath each time it is drawn or fired. The oath varies by weapon, but it is generally a promise to kill the wielder's enemies. Once per day as a free action, if the wielder swears aloud to slay her target, the weapon's whisper becomes a low shout.

Against such a sworn enemy, the weapon has a +2 enhancement bonus and deals an +2d6 points of damage (and critical multipliers are increased by +1). However, the weapon is treated as only a masterwork weapon against all foes other than the sworn enemy, and the wielder takes a −1 penalty on attack rolls with any weapon other than the sworn weapon. These bonuses and penalties last for 7 days or until the sworn enemy is slain or destroyed by the wielder of the sworn weapon, whichever comes first.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

A sworn weapon may have only one sworn enemy at a time. Once the wielder swears to slay a target, she cannot make a new oath until she has slain that target or 7 days have passed, whichever occurs first. Even if the wielder

slays the sworn enemy on the same day that she makes the oath, she cannot activate the sworn weapon's special power again until 24 hours have passed from the time she made the oath.

Strong evocation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, creator must be an elf; Price +17,000 gp.

TERROR

A terror weapon causes the wielder's clothes and appearance to transform into an illusion of darkest horror such that living creatures in a 30-foot cone must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or become panicked as if by a *fear* spell. The wielder may use this ability up to three times per day.

Strong necromancy; CL 13th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *fear*; Price +30,000 gp.

VENOMOUS

A weapon with this ability is always envenomed, poisoning those injured by it. The poison acts as normal injury poisons do and deals initial damage after a failed Fortitude save and secondary damage 1 minute later after a second failed save. The exact details of the poison vary, as listed in the table below. A target can take the effects of a venomous weapon several times.

A venomous weapon cannot also be defending, merciful, or holy. Some venomous weapons can invoke their poison only once each day, rather than with every blow. The wielder may decide to invoke the poison of such a weapon as a free action after any successful hit.

A ranged weapon with this ability confers it on ammunition fired.

VENEMOUS WEAPON DAMAGE

Poisonous Type	Fort DC	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Base Price Modifier
Mildly	12	1d2 Con	1d2 Dex	+3
Moderately	17	1d4 Str	1d4 Con	+4
Extremely	20	1d6 Dex	Unconsciousness*	+5

* Unconsciousness lasts for 1d3 hours.

Strong necromancy; CL 6th (mildly poisonous), CL 11th (moderately poisonous), CL 16th (extremely poisonous); Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *contagion*; Price +3 bonus, +4 bonus, or +5 bonus. A venomous weapon that can use its power only once a day has a bonus price 2 lower (i.e., +1, +2, or +3).

SPECIFIC WEAPONS

The following weapons have all been made with the rules in this chapter and those found in **Chapter Seven** of the *DMG*.

Arrows of the Assassin

This sheaf of 50 arrows is full of *+1 invincible subtle arrows*. Each arrow is flat black and fletched with raven feathers.

Strong transmutation, moderate illusion; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *blur* and either *miracle* or *wish*; Price 92,350 gp.

Bow of Balance

This red wood *+1 composite longbow of smiting* is strung with fine steel strings and strikes a single, clear note each time an arrow is fired.

Moderate transmutation; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *disintegrate*; Price 35,400 gp.

Demonbane

Demonbane swords are often carried by angels and other good-aligned outsiders, though one occasionally finds its way to the hands of a mortal paladin or cleric. Made of gold celestrum, they are finely crafted longswords with white-wrapped hilts. Demonbane weapons are *+1 featherlight holy evil outsider bane bastard swords* that can be wielded as either bastard swords or short swords.

Moderate conjuration, evocation, and transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *feather fall, holy smite, summon monster I*, must be good; Price 59,035 gp.

Dwarven Guardhammer

These finely crafted weapons are commonly given to dwarven guards who hold the entrances to their mountain fortresses. They are almost never made for or sold to outsiders.

No aura (nonmagical); Balanced dwarven masterwork warhammer (1d8+1; 5 lb.; hardness 6; 6 hp); Price 624 gp.

Dwarven Lordhammer

These finely crafted orichalcum weapons are commonly made for dwarven nobles and kings when they take their title. They are almost never made for or sold to outsiders.

A guardhammer is a warhammer that deals 2d8+3 points of damage, weighs 5 lb., has hardness 21, and has 8 hit points. In the hands of a non-dwarf it deals only 1d8+3 points of damage.

Moderate evocation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, must be a dwarf; Price 40,524 gp.

Ghost Killer

This weapon is a *+1 undead bane light crossbow of force* that appears to be slightly out of time, shifting in the wielder's hand as if it were somehow out of phase.

Moderate conjuration and evocation; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *summon monster I, wall of force*; Price 32,335 gp.

Nagaunt Blade

A *nagaunt blade* is a terrible and dark weapon approaching the power of a minor artifact. Carried by the most powerful undead, half-dragons, and avatars of evil gods, a *nagaunt blade* attacks flesh and soul equally, striking fear into the hearts of even the noblest heroes. The flat black weapon seems to glow with evil energy, and it actually negates the effects of a *light* spell (though no other forms of illumination).

A *nagaunt blade* is an orichalcum *+3 unholy slaying soul-stealing longsword*. Most are slaying against some kind of humanoid, usually humans, elves, or dwarves.

Strong necromancy; CL 18th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *finger of death, soul bind*; Price 326,065 gp.

Shattershield

This *+2 shieldbreaker heavy mace of fortune* is strait-lined and sturdy. It is flanged with simple triangular pieces and has only a plain, leather-wrapped handle. The *wishes* that were once attached are long since used.

Moderate evocation and transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *disintegrate*, and either *heroism* or *prayer*; Price 32,312 gp.

Slime Stalker

The *slime stalker* is a *+1 ooze bane desiccated guisarme*, with a long haft of black wood and a heavy steel blade swirling with etched green patterns.

Moderate conjuration; CL 8th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *death ward, summon monster I*; Price 18,309 gp.

Spear of Retribution

The *spear of retribution* is a *+2 potent javelin of returning* with a long, reddish wooden haft and a gold-washed blade.

Moderate evocation and transmutation; CL 12th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *telekinesis*; Price 32,300 gp + 5 sp.

Thinsword

The *thinsword* is an elven weapon similar to a human rapier. Carried only by nobles and holy champions, thinswords are marks of high status. A single thinsword can take months to craft and is generally kept as a family heirloom.

No aura (nonmagical); Legendary balanced elven longsword (+3 bonus to attack; 1d8+1 Medium, 1d6+1 Small; 19–20/x2; 4 lb.); Price 3,330 gp.

Viper Tooth

This leaf-shaped *+1 anarchic extremely venomous dagger* is incredibly thin and easy to conceal.

Strong necromancy, moderate evocation [chaotic]; CL 16th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *chaos hammer, contagion*; Price 128,302 gp.

– Spell Lenses –

A spell lens is a magic item that allows a spellcaster to convert energy from a prepared spell or open spell slot into a spell stored within the spell focus. This effect works much like a cleric or druid's spontaneous casting ability, but rather than convert a prepared spell into a healing or summoning spell, the energy is converted into whatever magic is within the spell lens. There are two types of spell lenses, set and bonded, and a small percentage of spell lenses are also open.

Physical Description

All types of spell lenses are small gems, generally translucent, to which loops of silver, gold, or rarely iron have been connected by fine chains. They are worn on the hand, with the gemstone fitting snugly against the palm. Wearing rings and carrying items normally is possible while using a spell lens, but no other magic glove or gauntlet may be worn. (Characters can wear two different spell lenses, however, one on each hand.) Spell lenses weigh between a 1/10th and 1/2 a pound. A spell lens has AC 13, 5 hp, hardness 10, and a break DC of 26.

Activation

A spell lens is activated by casting a spell that fuels the magic of the lens. All vocal, somatic, and material components of the spell within the spell lens must be completed, and any required spell focus must be present. Using a spell lens acts exactly as if the user was actually casting the spell within the lens, and provokes and attack of opportunity.

Special Qualities

Roll 1d100. A result of 69–78 indicates the spell lens is open (see below); 79–98 indicates the spell lens has a design, rune, or lettering that gives some clue to the spells contained within it. A roll of 99–100 indicates the spell lens is intelligent (see the rules for intelligent items in **Chapter Seven** of the *DMG*). A roll of 01–68 indicates nothing unusual about the spell lens.

Set Spell Lenses

A set spell lens is essentially a spell trigger item that has one or more spells stored in it with a casting level already determined. Only characters that have the spells stored within the lens on their class spell list may activate them. A character must expend a spell slot of the same or higher level to trigger the stored spell, which is cast at its set level. For example, a *lens of fire* is a set spell focus item with *burning hands* (CL 1st) and *fireball* (CL 7th). Wizards and sorcerers can use the lens, as both those spells are on their spell lists. Regardless of a wizard's or sorcerer's level, if a 1st-level spell slot is expended to activate *burning hands*, the spell is cast at 1st level; as well, if a 3rd-level or higher spell slot is expended to cast *fireball*, the spell is cast at 7th level.

The cost of a set spell lens is spell level x caster level x 500 gp. The second spell in the same spell lens costs 75% of the full cost, and each additional spell costs 50% of the full cost. Thus, the *lens of fire* costs (3 x 7 = 21 x 500 =10,500 for the *fireball*, plus 1 x 1 x 500 x 0.75 = 375 for the *burning hands*) 10,875 gp.

Bonded Spell Lenses

A bonded spell lens is a spell trigger item that casts all spells at the caster level of the character activating it. Bonded lenses must be worn for 24 hours before they begin to function, and if removed, they must be worn for another 24 hours before working again. For example, a *lens of storms* is a bonded spell lens with *call lightning storm* and *control weather*. A druid may expend

a 3rd-level or higher prepared spell to cast *call lightning* at her caster level and a 7th-level or higher prepared spell to cast *control weather* at her level.

The cost of a bonded spell lens is spell level x 4,000 gp. The second spell in the same spell focus item costs 75% of the full cost, and each additional spell costs 50% of the full cost. Thus the *lens of storms* costs (7 x 4,000 =28,000 for the *control weather*, plus 3 x 4,000 =12,000 x .75 = 8,000 for the *call lightning*) 36,000 gp.

One in ten spell lenses are open, and both set and bonded spell lenses can be open. These spell lenses are not spell trigger items, in that any caster may expend a spell to activate the stored spell, rather than just those character with access to those spells on their spell lists. Open spell lenses otherwise function as normal. An open spell lens has double the cost of a normal spell lens.

Creation

Spell lenses may be treated as wondrous items, in which case any character with the Craft Wondrous Item feat and access to the spells to be stored within the spell lens may create one, using the normal magic item creation rules. Alternatively, you may decide to require a character take the Attune Spell Lens feat (see **Appendix One**) before making spell lens items.

Since a spell lens requires any material components or spell focuses to be present when it is used, the cost of these items is paid only once as part of item creation.

Specific Lenses

The following lenses are examples of what can be done with the spell lens rules.

Battle Lens

These simple bonded lenses have a sliver of sapphire cat's-eye set in a collection of hinged rings. These lenses give access to the following spells:

- *magic missile* (1st)
- *shield* (1st)
- *shocking grasp* (1st)
- *true strike* (1st)

Minor divination; CL 1st; Attune Spell Lens or Craft Wondrous Item (depending on campaign), *magic missile, shield, shocking grasp, true strike*; Price 11,000 gp.

Lens of Fire

These set lenses have a bright red agate with streaks of yellow running through them, set in wire loops of iron connected to finger-caps. These lenses give access to the following spells, cast at the listed levels:

- *burning hands*, cast at 1st level (1st)
- *fireball*, cast at 7th level (3rd)

Moderate evocation; CL 7th; Attune Spell Lens or Craft Wondrous Item (depending on campaign), *burning hands, fireball*; Price 10,875 gp.

Lens of Peace

These set lenses have a polished white marble button run through with golden veins, hooked to hinges and rings. They give access to the following spells, cast at the listed levels:

- *lesser restoration*, cast at 3rd level (2nd)
- *remove disease*, cast at 5th level (3rd)
- *neutralize poison*, cast at 7th level (4th)

Moderate conjuration; CL 7th; Attune Spell Lens or Craft Wondrous Item (depending on campaign), *lesser restoration, neutralize poison, remove disease*; Price 21,125 gp.

Lens of Sages

These bonded lenses have a cat's-eye set in a web of steel chains. They give access to the following spells:

- *identify* (1st)
- *augury* (2nd)
- *zone of truth* (2nd)

Minor divination; CL 3rd; Attune Spell Lens or Craft Wondrous Item (depending on campaign), *augury, identify, zone of truth*; Price 18,000 gp.

Lens of Storms

These bonded lenses have a cloudy quartz crystal with chains and finger-rings of etched silver. They give access to the following spells:

- *call lightning* (3rd)
- *control weather* (7th)

Moderate evocation; CL 13th; Attune Spell Lens or Craft Wondrous Item (depending on campaign), *call lightning, control weather*; Price 36,000 gp.

Lens of the Wanderer

These set lenses have a cluster of several gem chips mounted in a bronze disk, which is attached to the fingers by leather straps with bronze buckles. These lenses give access to the following spells, cast at the listed levels:

- *plane shift*, cast at 9th level (5th)
- *teleport*, cast at 9th level (5th)

Strong conjuration; CL 9th; Attune Spell Lens or Craft Wondrous Item (depending on campaign), *plane shift, teleport*; Price 39,375 gp.

– Making Artifacts –

In most d20 games certain objects of magic exceed the power limits of normal magic items. Known as artifacts, these incredibly potent devices are beyond the capabilities of normal mortals to create. No matter how powerful a wizard, regardless of a cleric's devotion or the size of his congregation, irrespective of a psion's mental acuity, no normal mortal can make an artifact.

There do exist, however, beings able to craft artifacts. They are rare, with often no more than one per world. The price for such creation is high, even for these powerful beings, so they create artifacts very infrequently. Not even demigods and demon princes can afford to make such items lightly, and those they do create are often closely guarded tools. Rarely, a mortal manages to reach the levels of cosmic power needed to create artifacts, though never easily or quickly.

You can use the artifact creation rules in one of two common ways. Most commonly, they are guidelines for how powerful an NPC must be in order to create such objects. For example, a famous half-dragon, half-dwarven artificer might be legendary for having forged two *hammers of thunderbolts*. Because of the great personal cost involved in doing so, the artificer isn't likely ever to do so again, but PCs may seek him out for advice or be hired by him to recover the weapons he forged a century ago. Because you have solid rules for what it takes to create the hammers, he can present a consistent and believable NPC to his players. If the players are aware of these rules, they have a sense of the powers such a character must wield.

The second, and much less common, use for artifact creation rules is to allow PCs to make such items. Obviously, this use is relevant only in the most epic of campaigns. Even in such high-powered games, making artifacts is a costly, time-consuming, and dangerous endeavor. The most appropriate use for PC artifacts is to change the tone of a campaign from one of heroic action to behind-the-scenes manipulations and the construction of a legendary object for one specific purpose.

If you allow PC artifact creation just because you feels it adds to the cosmic powered feel of his campaign, limit creation to minor artifacts. Minor artifacts are far and away more powerful than even epic magic items, but they have powers and abilities in keeping with the general capabilities of epic characters. An archwizard with a *staff of the magi* is extremely powerful, but he's still in the same ballpark as other 21st-level and higher characters. Major artifacts are not only more potent, but the requirements for making them are so restrictive no PC should ever want to do so just for power gain. Besides, allowing epic characters to make minor but not major artifacts is a nice way to differentiating between the two.

If using artifact creation as a way to allow PCs to do something normally beyond them, make sure that the process of creation is as much of a quest as what will be done with the artifact. In games such as this, the entire theme of the campaign may revolve around seeking out the means to create an artifact as the only possible way to achieve a goal. There may be an actual evil god ruling a land as a despot, and only an artifact sword can kill him; or perhaps it reduces his power to that of a mere 30th-level mortal, making him at best theoretically vulnerable. A cursed land might require its king be given a holy artifact to be cleansed, or a dead god might be resurrected with an artifact crown.

In essence, this is the basic quest game, jumped up a level of difficulty. Rather than simply find a lost artifact, the PCs must make one. Doing so may involve a reforging of an old artifact or the creation of a brand new object that is only theoretically possible. The GM should draw out the creation process as an adventure of high-level characters. Don't allow the feats needed to be taken until ancient tomes of lore and lost masters are consulted, requiring that a certain amount of specific levin (see page 140) be gathered from various sources, and have foes try to stop the heroes at every turn. Under these conditions, allowing epic characters actually make a major artifact is not unreasonable, but it should certainly be the most epic event to occur within the campaign.

Artifact Rules

Artifacts have a few universal powers. They are immune to divination spells and spell-like abilities of 9th level or less. Efforts to use *identify*, *detect magic*, or even *locate object* on an artifact simply fail. Minor artifacts are extremely resilient, with hardness ranging from 10 to 50 and 10 times the hit points of mundane objects of the same size and manufacture. Major artifacts are nearly indestructible, with only one specific method available to destroy such an item; the method is always decided by you (never the player, even if a PC creates the artifact), and it should be related to the artifact's theme or the method of its creation.

Numerous spells and magic effects specify they do not function on artifacts — this condition is true of both major and minor artifacts. If scavenged levin rules are being used, artifacts are immune to them. Minor artifacts are the most powerful of magic items, and major artifacts are essentially mindless gods. If in doubt about a spell's or power's ability to affect an artifact, give it a power level check (1d20 + caster level) against a DC of 40 for minor artifacts and a DC of 50 for major artifacts.

Artifact Creation

To create a minor artifact, a character must take the Create Minor Artifact feat (see **Appendix One**). This feat allows her to make one specific kind of minor artifact, which you must approve. The character may make this minor artifact

multiple times, though the personal cost is huge. If the character cannot meet the prerequisites for the feat after taking it (if she loses too many levels as a result of making artifacts, for example), she cannot make minor artifacts until she once more meets the prerequisites. You may require half the XP cost of minor artifacts be paid with specific levin, often location and creature levin.

A character creating a minor artifact must spend gold pieces equal to the artifact's caster level multiplied by 50,000. (The minimum CL for a minor artifact is 16th.) She must work on the artifact for one day per 10,000 gp spent. This working time may be interrupted for one day per week (*i.e.*, the work must be done in six-day increments, and only a day may pass between work periods), but any further interruption causes the artifact to be ruined. Half the money spent is lost, and all work must begin anew. Additionally, the character must make an appropriate DC 30 Craft check at the end of the creation process. If the check fails, half the money spent is lost, and the time to create is extended by 50%.

Normally, making a minor artifact requires the creator to cast either *miracle* or *wish*, or use the psionic power *genesis*. The creator must do this herself; she cannot have someone else do it for her. Additionally, a 9th-level spell or power of the same school as the minor artifact must be cast, again by the creator. These spells or abilities can come from items used by the creator. You can allow these two requirements to be bypassed in favor of the creator undertaking a quest appropriate to the theme of the artifact to be created. The quest isn't completed until the creator has earned experience points equal to one-quarter those expended creating the artifact.

The personal cost for creating an artifact is significant. Upon completion, the creator loses 2,000 XP per CL of the artifact. As well, the character takes a permanent loss of 1 point of Constitution, and 1 point of Intelligence or Wisdom or Charisma (whichever of these abilities is highest). Nothing can prevent these ability losses (if they are somehow prevented, the minor artifact is not created and all money and work is lost), nor can these losses be restored by any means, including *miracle* or *wish*. The magic that makes artifacts, even minor ones, goes beyond the power of even the most powerful spells to restore.

Thus, the creator of a *deck of many things* must spend 1,000,000 gp and devote 100 days to working on it. If she fails her Craft check, she must spend another 500,000 gp and 100 days, at the end of which she must make another Craft check. She must be able to cast or manifest *miracle*, *wish*, or *genesis*, as well as one 9th-level spell or power of every school (as the *deck of many things* radiates magic of all schools). Once these requirements are all met, she loses 40,000 XP, 1 point of Constitution, and 1 point of the highest of her Intelligence or Wisdom or Charisma. After all that, the minor artifact is successfully created.

Creating a major artifact is an even lengthier and more dangerous undertaking. Firstly, a character must take the Create Major Artifact feat for each major artifact she wishes to make (not for each type but for each individual artifact, as all major artifacts are unique; see **Appendix One**). Secondly, she must go through the process described above, treating the major artifact as a minor artifact with a CL of 30th. The Craft check has a DC of 40; failing the check leads to the setbacks as listed for minor artifacts.

Once the major artifact is created, the creator loses 60,000 XP and 1 point of all six ability scores. Nothing can prevent these losses (if the losses are somehow prevented, the artifact is not created and all money and work is lost), nor can these losses be restored by any means, including *miracle* or *wish*. Further, the creator must make DC 30 Fortitude and Will saves, with failure resulting in her permanent, irreversible destruction (though her destruction does not prevent the artifact from being completed).

Even taking the Create Major Artifact feat can change a creature. Any character who dies after taking the Create Major Artifact feat but before using it to create an artifact may, if it wishes, turn itself into an artifact. If the creature does this, it is permanently destroyed forever and cannot be restored through any means. The creature makes DC 30 Fortitude and Will saves (using the bonuses it had while alive). If the saves are successful, a major artifact is created out of the creature's remains (often a hand or eye, but sometimes some other object on her body is imbued with the artifact's power). If either save fails, only a minor artifact is created.

Chapter Eight: Conditions and Environments

Conditions and environments are the basic tools from which the rest of a campaign is built. You need definitions for effects, places, and even biological needs in order to use them to craft more three-dimensional adventures. The basic terms and settings defined in the core rules handle most common possibilities, but this chapter adds new possibilities to help you expand your options.

Most of the ideas in this chapter run a little further off the beaten track of adventure themes. They should either be highlighted as major elements of the campaign (specifically mentioned to players as well-known possibilities before they're encountered) or used sparingly. There's nothing wrong with having a transstorm show up without warning once or even having some plot revolve around such a phenomenon's sudden appearance, but you should not just randomly begin adding them to a game without reason. Players need to feel they can come to understand a campaign world, and sudden shifts in how things work can be jarring.

– New Conditions –

One of the ways a d20 campaign keeps its rules consistent is to have a set of conditions with specific game mechanical meanings. If a spell or situation states a character is dazed, dazzled, or dying, those terms refer to a particular condition that's defined in advance. Regardless of the source of a condition, the result on the character is the same. The conditions are designed to be consistent, so a character that is blinded has the same difficulty hitting a foe as one striking at an invisible target. Nor are all of the conditions purely physical. Mental states ranging from fear-based conditions (cowering, frightened, panicked, and shaken) to confusion and being fascinated are covered, allowing related mind-affecting spells to remain as consistent as physical effects.

If you wish to explore a physical or mental theme regularly, you may find defining new conditions and making your players aware of them worthwhile. New conditions can be used in many ways. If you expect to deal with angst and worry regularly in your games, create the worried condition and then refer to it when

writing up other rules. You may decide to use it just for NPCs, or he may give players the option to decide if their characters are "worried" in the game mechanical sense. He can even then create poisons that cause worry, worry-based-spells, and magic items that can be used only when a character is worried (encouraging players to self-penalize their characters with the worried condition).

A number of new conditions are presented below for you to add to your games as needed. These conditions are referred to by other rules in this chapter (see **New Environments and Hazards** starting on page 168). Rules elsewhere in the *Advanced Gamemaster's Guide* also occasionally refer to them, but only as an option (so you don't need to use these rules to use anything else in the book). You can also use these conditions when designing new spells, poisons, diseases, and magic items, or as a benchmark when designing your own conditions.

The only real drawbacks to new conditions are questions of complexity. If every descriptive word is a form of condition, it becomes difficult to describe character emotions without stepping into rule mechanics (see the **General Design Concerns** sidebar and the **Feat Names** section in **Chapter Five**, pages 101 and 102 respectively). Too many conditions can also add confusion and make players lose track of their total bonuses and penalties. A character who is shaken, stupefied, groggy, and starving is a lot for a player to manage. In general, use only those conditions that advance the themes, plot, and storyline of your campaign, and try not to mix too many conditions into one encounter.

Besotted

A character that is besotted has strong positive feelings toward another creature. If the creature is of the appropriate type and gender, the besotted character feels romantically interested. If not, the besotted character treats the creature as a close and trusted friend (the character's attitude toward the creature is friendly).

Being besotted does not mean the character obeys any order from the object of his affections, but the character perceives the creature's words and actions in the most favorable way. The creature can try to give the character orders, but it must win an opposed Charisma check to convince the character to do anything he wouldn't ordinarily do. (Retries are not allowed.) A besotted creature never obeys suicidal or obviously harmful orders, but it might be convinced that something very dangerous is worth doing.

Bewildered

A bewildered character is perplexed and has difficulty thinking and acting clearly. Bewildered characters take a −2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.

A bewildered character that suffers an effect that would normally cause him to become bewildered is stupefied.

Enamored

A character that is enamored has positive feeling toward a creature and is at a disadvantage when interacting with that creature. An enamored character is considered to have a friendly attitude toward the creature, and suffers a −2 penalty to all opposed Bluff, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive checks made against the object of his infatuation, as well as to attack rolls and AC if attacking or being attacked by the creature (even to nonlethal attacks made in self-defense).

An enamored character that suffers another enamoring affect toward the same creature is instead besotted.

Furious

A furious character is overtaken with anger, no longer able to think or act rationally. A furious character gains a +2 morale bonus on Will saves, but he takes a −2 penalty to Armor Class. While furious, a character cannot use any Charisma-, Dexterity-, or Intelligence-based skills (except for Balance, Escape Artist, Intimidate, and Ride), the Concentration skill, or any abilities that require patience or concentration, nor can he cast spells or activate magic items that require a command word, a spell trigger (such as a wand), or spell completion (such as a scroll) to function. He can use any feat he has except Combat Expertise, item creation feats, and metamagic feats.

After 1 round of being furious, a character with the rage ability may make a DC 15 Will save to stop being furious. When a character stops being furious, he becomes fatigued (see **Condition Summary** in **Chapter Eight** of the *DMG*) for the duration of the current encounter (unless he is a 17th-level barbarian, at which point this limitation no longer applies).

Groggy

A groggy character is sleepy, but far from fatigued. A groggy character takes a −2 penalty to Dexterity and to all saves against sleep effects.

Starving

A starving character is suffering from malnutrition and is constantly exhausted. The character additionally must make a DC 20 Concentration check to cast spells or use any extraordinary, spell-like, or supernatural abilities.

A starving character that suffers an effect that would normally cause him to become starving is wasted.

Stupefied

A stupefied character is so overwhelmed with disarray that others cannot depend on him to act rationally. A stupefied character cannot cast spells or use any skill, feat, or extraordinary, spell-like, or supernatural ability that uses Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma, or has them as prerequisites, or any abilities that require patience or concentration, nor can he cast spells or activate magic

items that require a command word, a spell trigger (such as a wand), or spell completion (such as a scroll) to function.

A stupefied character that suffers an effect that would normally cause him to become stupefied is *confused* (see **Condition Summary** in **Chapter Eight** of the *DMG*).

Wasted

A wasted character is on the verge of death from starvation or wasting magic or disease. The character is so enfeebled, she cannot use innate abilities and is vulnerable to all other effects. A wasted character takes a –5 penalty to all checks (including all skill checks, saving throws, turn checks, and ability checks), as well as attack and weapon damage rolls. The character cannot use any spell-like, supernatural, or extraordinary abilities and must make a DC 25 Concentration check to cast a spell successfully.

A wasted character is always exhausted and falls unconscious if she takes any action that would normally result in being fatigued or exhausted. Any time a wasted character takes damage, she becomes staggered regardless of her hit point total and remains staggered until all damage is healed.

A wasted character that suffers an effect that would normally cause her to become starving or wasted is dead.

– New Environments and Hazards –

Challenges and threats need not always take the form of thinking foes. Striking stories can be built pitting characters against the elements. Struggles to survive crossing a desert may focus more on conserving water than fighting giant scorpions. Even more traditional threats can be given a new twist with an interesting environment — a fight with a troll during a rainstorm, for instance, has a different set of potential problems and solutions.

Some of the environments and hazards listed below are designed to allow you to have characters suffer in ways that aren't easily healed. An NPC found in the

bottom of a dungeon may well have received so little care he's starving or possibly wasted. Even fairly powerful characters cannot simply wave their hands and fix him (though a *miracle* or *wish* certainly has the power to do so). This situation opens a number of possible plots, including having characters rescue NPCs much more powerful than themselves, without having the option of drawing upon such an NPC's resources once he's found.

Be cautious about applying many of these hazards to PCs. Certainly, the risk of starvation should be spelled out before a party is allowed to set out on a trek across a vast desert without the proper preparation. Starvation is a realistic threat in the adventure genre, but it's not much fun.

Inconveniences

Much like random encounters, inconveniences are events you may periodically roll for. Unlike random encounters, inconveniences are unlikely to take much time or seriously hinder a group of adventurers. They do, however, bring a new level to the lives of adventurers and encourage creative planning and on-the-fly solutions. Don't overuse inconveniences, but they make a fine interlude between more threatening problems.

As a general rule, check for inconveniences no more than once per week of travel or staying away from home. The rougher the terrain, the more serious an inconvenience will likely be. Characters staying in a foreign city won't likely find their food spoiled (though it's possible), while those crossing a murky swamp are plagued by numerous small problems.

Starvation

Starvation does more than make characters easily knocked unconscious. Characters require food and water daily to avoid starving. A character that goes 24 hours without food and water is automatically fatigued. Every additional 24 hours that a character goes without water (or food high

in moisture) requires a DC 15 Constitution check. The DC of the check increases by 5 every 24 hours without water. A character that fails this check is starving.

A character with ample access to water but no food makes a DC 15 Constitution check every 3 days. The DC increases by 5 with each successive check. A character that fails this check is starving.

A starving character must continue to make saves if without food and/or water. A second failed save indicates the character is wasted, and a third indicates the character is dead.

A character that receives some food and water, but not enough to sustain him, makes checks half as often (every 2 days if without enough water; every 6 days if without enough food).

A starving or wasted character cannot be healed of these conditions magically; instead, he must be given access to food and water and time to recuperate. Once the character has access to the proper sustenance, he may make a DC 20 Fortitude save once every 24 hours. Each successful save improves the character's condition by one step (from wasted to starving, from starving to normal).

Table 8-1: Determining Inconveniences

Environment	Inconveniences
Friendly city	10% chance per week, roll 1d6 on **Table 8–2**.
Unfriendly city	10% chance per week, roll 1d8 on **Table 8–2**.
Settled outdoors	20% chance per week, roll 1d8 on **Table 8–2**.
Minor wilderness	20% chance per week, roll 1d10 on **Table 8–2**.
Major wilderness	20% chance per week, roll 1d12 on **Table 8–2**.
Extreme wilderness	30% chance per week, roll 1d12 on **Table 8–2**.

Table 8-2: Inconveniences

Roll Result

1 Bad hair day. Despite all efforts, one or more members of the party can't manage to look presentable. Mud gets on cloaks, birds drop waste on shirts from above, and/or hair simply snarls or falls limp and lifeless.

2 1d4 × 10% of the group's food has spoiled, due to mildew, mice, vermin, mold, or rot.

3 1d4 × 10% of the group's water supply has become infected, likely from rodent droppings or poorly-cured storage items.

4 Group pestered by a non-dangerous annoyance such as a raccoon, a cloud of gnats, a pushy salesman, an impish fairy, or a nosy bard wanting to write bad poetry in the group's honor.

5 One randomly determined minor mundane item has been damaged (strap breaks on a shield, glass in a lantern cracks, a sack develops a small whole, and the like).

6 A familiar, animal companion, hunting beast, or steed comes down with a minor illness, resulting in a –2 penalty to all its actions and half speed until it is cured (DC 15 Handle Animal check and a week of care, or magic to *remove disease*).

Roll Result

7 Trail, path, or street is blocked. A river may have flooded, a cart overturned, a tree fallen, a rockslide happened, or even a jam of traffic may have slowed progress to a standstill.

8 Inclement but not dangerous weather — light rain or snow, thunder without ground-strike lightning, fog, or even an unseasonable heat wave or cold front.

9 One randomly determined minor mundane item kept on a pack animal has been misplaced in the past 24 hours.

10 Small biting vermin (gnats, ticks, fleas, mosquitoes, leaches). Though these creatures can't do more than a total of 1 point of damage per day, they have a 25% chance of being diseased (see below for potential injury-based diseases, or choose one from the core rules).

11 A danger not meant for the group threatens them anyway. A hunter's pit trap or bear trap may be stumbled across; a spell or ranged attack from a battle hundreds of feet away may strike a PC; an old spell, rune, or symbol may be discovered (possibly in something basically harmless, such as a recently bought book).

12 Really bad day. Roll twice, and use both results.

Transstorms

Transstorms are terrible, arcane storms infused with transmutation magic. They may be caused by rituals gone awry, stagnating pools of ancient magic, overuse of powerful spells by legions of mages, or simply be a natural part of a world with magic. Transstorms must be rare in any campaign that will have normal civilizations, or at least limited to areas of wastelands and wilderness (possibly as a result of a mountain range or other weather-influencing terrain).

A transstorm appears to be a technicolor thunderstorm. Multicolored lightning strikes, clouds of metallic-tinted gas, and pearlescent hailstones make a transstorm visible and obviously magical from miles away. Thinking creatures flee the sight, as the power of a transstorm can change any creature, place, or thing into a twisted or altered version of itself. The changes wrecked by a transstorm are permanent, and while incorporeal and gaseous creatures are immune, creatures with the shapechanger subtype cannot automatically revert to their true form (the change is apparent in all their possible forms).

When a creature first enters a transstorm, and after each hour of exposure, it must make a Fortitude save. The DC varies by the power of the transstorm, from 13 (a weak change-rain) to 33 (the most powerful transstorm

hurricanes), with an average transstorm having a DC of 23. On a failed save, the creature suffers one or more changes (major or minor, as determined on **Table 8–3**). Seventy-five percent of all changes are harmful, with only 25% being beneficial. Even beneficial changes are often of little use, though at least they don't make trouble for the target.

A transstorm can be used as a plot device even if the PCs aren't caught by it. In the wake of a transstorm, monstrous humanoids, magical beasts, and aberrations are common, for example, turning a safe wilderness into a dangerous land of twisted rocks, horrid monsters, and ruined ecology.

A change is permanent and cannot be dispelled. It can be removed with a successful *break enchantment* or *disjunction* spell. In the case of *break enchantment*, the change is treated as being cast at the same level as its save DC. *Disjunction* has a flat 2% chance per level of the caster to reverse all changes on the target successfully.

Minor Harmful Changes

The following section details the results of minor harmful changes on a character.

Twisted Form

The target has been twisted into an unrecognizable form that doesn't match any existing creature. One arm may be too long, features aren't symmetrical, and elements from other creatures (such as bug eyes or dog ears) are present. The target gains no benefit from these changes and takes a −4 circumstance penalty to initial Diplomacy checks to determine NPC attitudes. Additionally, the target takes a −4 penalty to all Disguise checks.

Frail

The target becomes impossibly thin, appearing as though starved. The target takes a −2 penalty on all Fortitude saves.

Clumsy

The target's form morphs to be gangly and uncoordinated. Though the target can manage most tasks with experience, it always suffers a bit when forced to move quickly, taking a −2 penalty to all Reflex saves.

Susceptible

Though physically unchanged, the target's mind becomes more easily influenced. The target takes a −2 penalty to all Will saves.

Phobia

The target gains a phobia, as determined below. The first time each day the target is forced to face the subject of its phobia, it must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or become shaken for 1d6 × 10 minutes. On a natural roll of 1 on the save, the target is panicked for 1d6 minutes.

Table 8-3: Transstorm Qualities

Transstorm Power	EL	DC	Effect
Change-rain	3	13	1 minor change
Minor transstorm	6	18	1–3 minor changes
Moderate transstorm	9	23	1 major change
Major transstorm	12	28	1–4 minor changes, 1–3 major changes
Transstorm hurricane	15	33	1–6 major changes

Table 8-4: Minor Harmful Changes

1d100	Result
01–30	Twisted Form
31–45	Frail
46–60	Clumsy
61–75	Susceptible
76–90	Phobia
91–100	Unnatural Attraction

PHOBIAS

1d4 Result

1 **Fear of some creature type.** Randomly determine one type (and subtype, if appropriate) or creature that causes fear in the target.

2 **Fear of some magic type.** Randomly determine one school of magic that causes fear in the target.

3 **Terrain.** Randomly determine one type of terrain that causes fear in the target.

4 **Object.** Randomly determine one piece of common adventurer's equipment that causes fear in the target.

UNNATURAL ATTRACTION

The target is drawn to a type of creature. randomly determine species, class and gender. Whenever the target is in the presence of a creature that matches this combination, it must make a DC 15 Will save or act as though the creature had cast a *charm person* on the target.

MINOR BENEFICIAL CHANGES

The following section details the results of minor beneficial changes on a character.

BITE

A character with this change has its teeth grow sharper, acquiring either tusks or fangs as well. The target gains a natural weapon attack. Using this attack replaces a weapon attack or unarmed attack and is made at the character's full attack bonus. A character may add a bite attack to a full attack action, but all attacks including the bite suffer a −4 penalty. The damage done by bite attacks is based on the character's size, as listed below.

BITE

Character Size	Claw Damage
Fine	1d2
Diminutive	1d3
Tiny	1d4
Small	1d6
Medium	1d8
Large	1d10
Huge	2d6
Gargantuan	2d8
Colossal	2d10

CLAW

A character with this change has long sharp claws grow out of her hands. The target gains a natural weapon attack. The target may make two claw attacks instead of her normal attack routine, and such attacks are made at the character's full attack bonus. The damage done by claw attacks is based on the character's size, as listed below.

CLAW

Character Size	Claw Damage
Fine	1
Diminutive	1d2
Tiny	1d3
Small	1d4
Medium	1d6
Large	1d8
Huge	1d10
Gargantuan	2d6
Colossal	2d8

MINOR ADAPTATION (EX)

The target has a minor physical change that makes a skill easier for her. Such chances include changing color to match surrounding materials, lengthened fingers to find better climbing grips, growing a tail to improve balance, or even enlarged ears to catch a faint sound. A target gains a +2 circumstance bonus to any one of the following skills (determined randomly): Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Sleight of Hand, Spot, and Swim.

NEW TYPE (EX)

The creature's appearance changes to be closer to that of another type of creature (determined randomly). Although the target does not gain any of the abilities or weaknesses of that type, it does qualify as a creature of that type for spell, feat, and prestige class prerequisites, as well as magic item use.

SIZE CHANGE (EX)

The creature is shifted up or down one size (50% chance of either). A creature that gets larger gains +2 bonus

TABLE 8-5:
MINOR BENEFICIAL CHANGES

1d100	Result
01–20	Bite
21–40	Claw
41–60	Minor Adaptation
61–80	New Type
81–100	Size Change

Table 8-6: Major Harmful Changes

1d100	Result
1–20	Deficiency
21–40	Sensory Reduction
41–60	Sense Loss
61–80	Mismatched
81–99	Poor Adaptation
100	GM's Choice

Table 8-7: Major Beneficial Changes

1d100	Result
01–15	Animal Skin
16–30	Fox Cunning
31–40	Full Body Change
41–50	Monster Hide
51–65	Partial Body Change
66–70	Primitive Rage
71–85	Scent
86–100	Form Shift

to Strength and Constitution and takes a –2 penalty to Dexterity. A creature that gets smaller takes a –2 penalty to Strength, but gains a +2 bonus to Dexterity. Movement is not affect in either case.

Major Harmful Changes

The following section details the results of major harmful changes on a character.

Deficiency (Ex)

Randomly lower one ability score by –1d6. The target's appearance changes to match the lowered ability score. A target that has its Intelligence lowered to 3 or less becomes animalistic, driven by nothing but primal urges.

Sensory Reduction (Ex)

The target is morphed such that one or more senses are weakened. The target takes a –4 penalty to Listen, Search, or Spot (determined randomly).

Sense Loss (Ex)

The target loses its eyes or ears, becoming blind or deaf (determine randomly).

Mismatched (Ex)

The target grows mismatched features, such as one long horse leg or a single large wing. All its natural movement rates are halved.

Poor Adaptation (Ex)

The target changes to appear to be a creature native to a different environment (such as growing gills or thick, burrowing claws). Although the target can now exist in that environment (breathing underwater and gaining a Swim rate, for example), in any other environment it suffers a –4 circumstance penalty to all skill and ability checks and attack rolls and saving throws.

GM's Choice

The GM may make any change he wishes to the target, drawing from the harmful and beneficial changes listed or anything in a similar vein. This option is often used to create half-breeds, aberrations, and magical beasts, or monstrous humanoids.

Major Beneficial Changes

The following section details the results of major beneficial changes on a character.

Animal Skin (Ex)

The target's skin is covered in thick fur. He gains a +2 natural armor bonus to AC. If the target already has

natural armor on his own (not as the result of a magic item or spell), his natural armor bonus increases by +1.

Fox Cunning (Ex)

The target takes on a fox-like appearance, including ears and a tail. The target also gains a +2 racial bonus to Bluff, Intimidate, Sense Motive, and Survival checks. This change may be gained only once.

Full Body Change (Ex)

The target's whole body changes to be that of another species, as if the target had been *reincarnated*.

Monster Hide (Ex)

The target's skin becomes thick and tough, similar to either a lizard or rhino. This change grants the target DR 1/–. If the target already has natural DR on its own (not as the result of a magic item or spell), the DR increases by +1/–.

Partial Body Change (Ex)

The target gains the features of some other creature. Randomly determine one creature with no more Hit Dice than the target, and grant the target one feature and one extraordinary ability of that creature.

Primitive Rage (Ex)

The target gains a thick ridge on its forehead and generally has thicker features. Once per day, the target can fly into a rage, but only when wounded (suffering damage). The rage lasts 1 round per level of the target. The target cannot willingly end the rage early, though it ends immediately if the target is fully healed. During the rage, the target gains a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution, and takes a –2 penalty to AC. The target is fatigued for 1 hour after the rage ends.

This change may be gained more than once, with each additional time increasing the number of times per day the target may enter a rage by +1.

Scent (Ex)

The target gains an animalistic nose, granting it the scent ability. If it already has the scent ability, it gains improved scent, receiving a +4 bonus to all Search and Spot checks in which smell might play a part. A creature that already has improved scent can't gain this change again.

Form Shift (Ex)

The target's body and even its mind are twisted into a new form. Randomly determine an ability score from which to remove 1d6 points. Add these points to a different randomly determined ability of the target. The target's appearance changes to match the new ability scores.

Waking Up

Waking up to loud stimulation (the sounds of combat, people yelling, thunderstorms, and so forth) can be disorienting. A sleeping character subject to conditions that clearly preclude sleep must make a DC 18 Will save. On a successful check, the character may roll initiative (if appropriate) and take a full action on her turn. On a failed save, the character may still make an initiative check, but she may take only a move action on her first turn, and is groggy (see **New Conditions** page 166) for 2d6 rounds.

- Diseases & Poisons -

New Diseases

There are a bewildering number of magical diseases found in fantasy literature, but the core d20 rules provide only for diseases with incubation periods of a day or more and that deal ability damage or drain, and that may cause blindness. The following diseases give more options and include numerous supernatural diseases. These new diseases can be used to spice up existing encounters, give healers more to do (and players more to fear), or actually become the center of a plotline. By having more ways to weaken characters, you can incapacitate powerful NPCs, knock down PC power levels, and require heroes to find cures to esoteric ailments.

Many of these diseases have "damage" stated in the form of some limitation or condition that affects the target until it's cured of the disease. For example, the black waste prevents its victims from gaining any benefit from food or water; until the victim is cured, he risks starvation (see **New Conditions** page 166).

Diseases listed as extraordinary are essentially "mundane," while supernatural diseases are magical and radiate a moderate universal magic aura (and may affect characters immune to mundane disease).

New Poisons

The poisons available in the core d20 rules all deal ability drains or damage (or rarely hit point damage) or cause unconsciousness. Those interested in more varied poisons can choose from one of those listed below or use them as a guideline for creating new poisons. Many of these poisons produce conditions, either those standard to the core d20 rules or new conditions defined earlier in this chapter. Unless specified otherwise, conditions last 2d6 minutes (except unconsciousness, which lasts

Table 8-8: Diseases

Disease	Infection	DC	Incubation	Damage
Black waste (Su)	Contact	18	1d3 days	Gain nothing from food or water*
Chills (Ex)	All	15	1 day	Sickened
Devil's shakes (Ex)	Contact	17	1 day	Cannot cast divine spells
Ear mold (Ex)	Contact	23	6 hours	Deafened
Eye blight (Ex)	Injury	16	1 day	Blinded
Fey affliction (Ex)	Ingested	21	6 hours	Cannot cast arcane spells
Grave rot (Su)	Injury	18	6 hours	1d4 Con**
Green plague (Ex)	Inhaled	11	1 hour	1 point Con
Health bane (Ex)	Contact	21	12 hours	Nauseated
Ravenous fever (Ex)	Inhaled	16	1 day	Gain nothing from food*
Red scale (Ex)	Ingested	16	1 day	Exhausted
Scab rash (Ex)	Contact	17	4 hours	1d6 hp†
Sleep sores (Su)	Inhaled	17	1 hour	Unconscious
Thought scourge (Su)	Injury	18	1 day	Confused

* A character that gains nothing from food, or from both food and water, must deal with the rules for starvation presented earlier in this chapter.

** A character that dies of grave rot rises as zombie, gaining the zombie template. The character is a carrier of grave rot, and can infect victims it injures.

† After incubation, character must make a fort save every 4 hours or suffer 1d6 hp of damage. Two successful saves in a row indicate the character is cured.

Table 8-9: Poisons

Poison	Type	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Price
Blue lotus extract (Ex)	Contact DC 20	Bewildered	Stupefied	2,500 gp
Veroshia (Ex)	Contact DC 30	1d6 Int and Cha drain	Cannot cast spells (1d6 hours)	5,000 gp
Coward's ale (Su)	Ingested DC 16	1d6 Wis drain	Cowering (1d6 hours)	300 gp
Guthole (Su)	Ingested DC 20	Starving	Wasted (1d3 hours)	500 gp
Succubus venom (Su)	Ingested DC 23	Enamored (1d4 days)	Charmed (1d4 days)	1,500 gp
Midnight fungus (Ex)	Ingested DC 26	Groggy (2d4 hours)	Exhausted (2d4 hours)	2,250 gp
Glitter sand	Inhaled DC 21	Dazzled	Blinded	400 gp
Red rage (Su)	Inhaled DC 18	1d6 Int drain	Furious	2,100 gp
Bloodfire (Ex)	Injury DC 17	1d6 hp	2d6 hp	50 gp
Mind block (Ex)	Injury DC 25	1d4 Int, Wis, and Cha drain	Cannot use psionics	3,500 gp
Stone blood (Ex)	Injury DC 25	1d4 Dex drain	Dazed	500 gp

1d3 hours). Ability damage is temporary, while ability drains are permanent. Poisons listed as extraordinary are essentially "mundane" poisons, while supernatural poisons are magical and radiate a moderate universal magic aura.

Most of these poisons are a complex combination of oils, extracts, and alchemical substances — they cannot be simply taken from the poison sacks of a monster or found growing in dense forests, though their core ingredient may come from such a locale. They're also illegal in most civilizations, though apothecaries still sometimes carry them clandestinely.

Special Poisons

Two new poisons need special rules, described below.

Succubus Venom

A target that fails his Fortitude save is enamored (see **New Conditions** page 166) of the first member of the same creature type (but not subtype) of the opposite sex he sees. If the target fails his second save, he is instead besotted by that same creature. For example, an elven lady who failed her save would be enamored of the first

male humanoid she saw, even if it was a dwarf or orc. She would not be enamored with a minotaur, as it's a monstrous humanoid.

The exception to this rule is that if a target rolls a natural 1 on its saving throw, it becomes enamored of the first creature of the opposite gender it sees, regardless of type.

Veroshia

A target that fails its secondary save against this poison cannot cast spells, use spell-like abilities, or spell-completion items for the rolled duration.

Detecting Poisons

Though many magical means to detect poisons exist, poisons may also be revealed through mundane means. It's possible to detect poisons with a Craft (alchemy), Craft (poison) or Heal check if the poisoned instrument (a weapon for injury poison, food or drink for ingested poison, and nearly anything for contact or inhaled poison) can be carefully examined. The DC to determine a poison is present equals the save DC of the poison minus 5. If the Heal check beats the save DC, the character can identify the exact poison used. For example, a priest examines a cup for poison. The cup is laced with veroshia, so the Heal check to detect some poison is 30. If the priest manages a DC 30 Heal check, he identifies the exact poison and is aware of its properties.

Identifying a poison carries a risk. A character has a flat 5% chance of poisoning himself when investigating a poison. A character that has no chance of poisoning himself when preparing a poison (such as an assassin) may ignore this chance. Characters who do run the 5% risk cannot take 20 when identifying poisons, since there is a potential penalty.

You may wish to determine what a given poison looks or tastes like, especially if will be used more than once. A guild of assassins that uses four different poisons can be made even more interesting if one tastes like cinnamon, one has a smoky smell, one is oily and black, and one is clear but feels cool to the touch. Even if players don't know exactly what the poisons do, they can learn how to react to the sensory information you give them when attacked with the same poisons repeatedly.

– Mystic Locales –

In a world of magic spells, creatures, and items, it stands to reason mystic locales would exist as well. Such places might be the nexus of natural magic (perhaps the crossroads between multiple ley lines), the site of an ancient rite designed to create a magical location, or a somewhere permanently marked by powerful spells once released there. The use of magic locations allows you to change the EL a party can face, either by giving foes an advantage or allowing PCs to take on enemies in a place where their own magic is strong. They also serve as interesting surprises (a sorcerer casting *fireball* in the smoking ruins of a wizard school and being told to roll 3 extra dice) and possible plot points (a group of PCs may need to reach a magical location before accomplishing some otherwise simple goal, such as destroying a magic item or removing a curse).

In many cases, a magical location is actually an event, though normally either a rare event or an event that attunes only a particular location. For example, blizzards can be attuned to cold spells. Not every blizzard will actually have an effect on cold magic, however. You may decide to have a particularly epic blizzard (perhaps a famous, named blizzard that occurs only once every 7 years and is at its worst every seventh time it comes), or she may decide that a particular rocky outcropping high up in a mountain is attuned when hit by a blizzard, but not at other times.

Magic Locations

Magical locations come in three power levels: minor, moderate, and major. The standard powers of each are listed below, but feel free to grant additional powers to a particular location. For example, a major location of healing might give all who come there an additional save against any disease they suffer from, or a minor site of necromancy might allow the creation of zombies with an Intelligence score of 2. This kind of customization is good for future plot lines, expanding the adventures you can run for your group.

Though the energies that power a magic location are not divine in nature, they do affect arcane and divine spells of the appropriate type or subtype equally. Clerics are less likely to make use of such sites, as churches are often suspicious of power not granted by their own god, but they have equal access to their powers. Any character can detect a magic location by taking a full-round action to make a Spellcraft check. The more powerful the site, the more easily it can be detected. The DC is 30 for a minor location, 25 for a moderate location, and only 20 for a major location. Each additional power you give such a site lowers the DC by 2.

A minor magical location acts as a Heighten Spell feat for all spells of the appropriate type, increasing their effective level by +2. This effect increases the save DCs of such spells, as well as possibly allows them to bypass some defenses (such as *minor globe of invulnerability*). It has no effect on spells prepared there but cast elsewhere.

A moderate magical location increases the caster level of all spells by +3. Thus, a 6th-level wizard casting a *lightning bolt* at a location attuned to evocation or lightning magic does 9d6 rather than 6d6 points of

TABLE 8-10: MAGIC LOCATIONS

School/Descriptor	Attuned Locations and Events	School/Descriptor	Attuned Locations and Events
Abjuration	Old mountains, old fortifications that have never fallen, heroes' tombs	Figment	Fog banks, dust storms
Acid	Swamps, stagnant lakes, acid rainstorms	Fire	Volcanoes, wildfires
Air	Eye of a hurricane, treetops, windstorms	Force	Portals to nearby planes, ruins of wizard schools
Calling	Cliffs, the moments of dusk	Glamer	The far edge of civilization, colonies, major trading posts and sea ports
Charm	Forests at night, old cities, pleasure houses	Good	Groves, lone and old trees, ancient temples to good gods
Chaotic	Ocean storms, ancient battlefields	Healing	Springs, waterfalls, anyplace growing back after a wildfire
Cold	Glaciers, icebergs, blizzards	Illusion	Deserts
Compulsion	Ancient prisons, borders of subjugated kingdoms	Language-dependent	Ancient libraries, tombs of holy missionaries, ancient bardic schools
Conjuration	Geysers, ancient military training grounds	Lawful	Ancient courts, tilled fields, the solstices and equinoxes
Creation	Forges, lava flows, the moments of dawn	Light	Plains and grasslands, noon
Darkness	Dense forest, deep caves, midnight	Mind-affecting	Mines of valuable metals (especially gold)
Death	Slaughterhouses, evil temples, the lairs of ancient and mighty predators	Necromancy	Unhallowed graveyards, moors, lairs of powerful undead
Divination	The tallest point in an area (from which nothing taller can be seen)	Pattern	Ancient craft halls and guilds, spider webs
Electricity	Mountaintops during storms, lightning storms, reefs	Phantasm	Abandoned towns and villages, dusk
Enchantment	Underground, in the center of ancient inhabited cities	Scrying	Calm lakes, mines of gems and crystals
Evil	Ancient temples to evil gods, abandoned ruins, portals to lower planes	Shadow	Eclipses, the hours of twilight and false dawn
Evocation	Ancient but still functioning wizard schools, locations hit by lightning	Sonic	Breakwaters, thunderstorms
		Summoning	Highlands, islands
		Teleportation	Crossroads, natural trails
Fear	The center of dark forests, underground, leading edge of a severe storm	Transmutation	Anywhere two types of terrain meet, especially beaches

electricity damage. It has no effect on spells prepared there but cast elsewhere.

A major magical location allows spells of the appropriate type to be cast or prepared as if they were one spell level lower. Thus, a sorcerer in a location attuned to fire magic could cast a *fireball* as a 2nd-level spell, and a wizard at such a location could prepare *fireball* with a 2nd-level spell slot, even if he doesn't cast it until later. A major location has so much power, however, that any spell cast within it (whether cast at the location or prepared there and cast later) has a chance of getting out of control. The caster must make a Concentration check (DC 20 + double spell level) to control this power. If the check fails by 5 or less, the spell is cast, but the caster takes 1d4 points of magic damage per level of the spell. If the check is missed by 6 or more, the spell is wasted without creating the desired effect, and the caster still takes 1d4 points of magic damage per level of the spell.

All these benefits are cumulative (*i.e.*, a *fireball* prepared at a major magical location attuned to fire acts as a 2nd-level spell, with a caster level increased by +3 and heightened by 2 levels).

Alternatively, in a low-magic campaign you may decide some spells can be cast only at attuned magical locations. Sorcerers and clerics may have long lists of spells available, from *burning hands* to *raise dead*, but they cannot use any of them except at specific locations. Be sure that these locations are fairly common, that spellcasters have other options, or that all players know spellcasters are an underpowered option to make such a game balanced and fair (see **Magic-Free or Low-Magic Campaigns** in **Chapter Five**).

A list of possible attuned magical locations is given below. These are only possibilities; not every location need be attuned to a type of spell. You can decide to place an attuned location anywhere, and to attune spells by some category other than school or descriptor. The site where an ocean god once stopped a forest fire may be attuned to all spells of the water domain, even though it's miles from the nearest body of water.

Holy Sites

A holy site is similar to a magic location, but its power is tied directly to some divine source, and its effects may be used even by non-spellcasters (depending on the site). Holy sites are often places where important events of a religion occurred (the place where a saint was born, the location of a battle between good and evil gods, the mountain where a martyr was executed, the forest where elves were created, and so forth), or areas that have special meaning to a deity (the holy swamp of an orc god, the blessed river of a kingdom's patron deity, the mountain that serves as a dwarf forge god's holy symbol).

Holy sites are frequently the home of a shrine, church, or cathedral of an associated god. Occasionally, a holy site is held by a church opposing its associated god, such as a church of healing holding a plain that is a holy site of death to prevent its use by a death god's worshipers. Ownership of a holy site is often in contention, with jihads and crusades mounted regularly to reclaim some holy land or divine emplacement.

A holy site may be minor, moderate, or major. The powers of each stack, with a major site offering all the benefits (and hindrances) of minor and moderate sites as well. The powers of a holy site are generally tied to a single ethos or philosophy, granting bonuses to related creatures and powers and penalties those opposed to it. For simplicity, the holy site powers listed below are defined by the same domains available to clerics in the core d20 rules, but you can easily use these examples as the basis for developing holy sites attuned to any idea, philosophy, or god appropriate to your campaign.

Holy sites can be attuned to more than one concept, possibly at different power levels. An ancient and holy druid's tree might be a moderate animal site and a major plant site. Holy sites can also be of any size, depending on your needs. Anything from a single stone with room for a single person to stand to an entire continent can be defined as a holy site. Additionally, holy sites may be empowered only on certain days (often annual or quarterly holidays) or have their power level and size fluctuate. The holy tree might have the power to affect a small clearing most days, but spread its power through a whole forest on the solstices and equinoxes.

Like magical locations, holy sites make good plot devices. Especially when dealing with creatures, curses, or objects created by or devoted to a particular deity, PCs may be required to find an opposing holy site to rid themselves permanently of some encumbrance. For example, a ghost cleric that worships a god of death may not be permanently destroyed unless the PCs can find its body and bury it in a holy site attuned to good.

A list of potential powers for holy sites is presented below.

Air

Minor: All spells with the Air descriptor are cast at +2 caster level.

Moderate: All creatures' flying abilities have their maneuverability increased by one class. Creatures that already have perfect maneuverability have their fly speed increased by +10 feet.

Major: All creatures with the Earth descriptor take a –2 morale penalty to attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Animal

Minor: All animal-related skill checks (Handle Animal and Ride for example) and wild empathy checks gain a +1 bonus.

Moderate: All creatures of the animal type increase their natural armor bonus by +1.

Major: All creatures of the animal type gain a +2 bonus to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Chaos

Minor: All spells and abilities that have a listed percentile chance to be effective (such as *displacement* or *confusion*) add +10% to all percentile rolls.

Moderate: All creatures with lawful alignments take a −1 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Major: All spells cast from magic items (including wands and staves) have a +10% chance of acting like an ability from a *rod of wonders* instead.

Death

Minor: All spells of the necromancy school are cast at +1 caster level.

Moderate: All creatures of the undead type gain a +1 bonus to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Major: All undead gain turn resistance +4 against turning checks, but not rebuke checks.

Destruction

Minor: All objects have their hardness reduced by −2.

Moderate: All saving throws made to avoid hit point damage take a −1 penalty.

Major: All weapon damage rolls gain a +1 bonus.

Earth

Minor: Creatures with the earth descriptor and worshipers of an earth god have their DR increased by 2/−. Such creatures with no existing DR gain DR 1/−.

Moderate: All creatures' burrowing movement rate is increased by 50%.

Major: All creatures with the Air descriptor take a −2 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Evil

Minor: All spells with the evil descriptor are cast at +1 caster level.

Moderate: All good-aligned creatures take a −1 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Major: All evil-aligned creatures gain a +2 morale bonus to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Fire

Minor: All spells with the Fire descriptor are cast at +1 caster level.

Moderate: Existing fires take twice the normal time to extinguish, to a maximum of an additional 10 minutes.

Major: All mundane and magic fire attacks deal +2 points of damage.

Good

Minor: All spells with the good descriptor are cast at +1 caster level.

Moderate: All evil-aligned creatures take a −1 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Major: All good-aligned creatures gain a +2 morale bonus to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Healing

Minor: All creatures' chance to stabilize when bleeding to death is increased to 50%.

Moderate: All *cure* spells heal an additional +1 hit point per die, and all saves against poison and disease gain a +2 circumstance bonus.

Major: All *inflict* spells deal −2 points of damage per die (minimum 1 point of damage per die).

Knowledge

Minor: All divination school spells are cast at +2 caster level.

Moderate: All Knowledge skill checks and bardic knowledge checks gain a +2 bonus.

Major: All research done on this day (including researching and learning spells) counts as 2 days worth of work.

Law

Minor: All skill checks made in furtherance of a crime (potentially including Hide, Move Silently, and Sleight of Hand for instance) take a −1 penalty.

Moderate: All chaotic-aligned creatures take a −1 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Major: All mind-affecting spells are cast at −2 caster level, and all saving throws against them gain a +2 bonus.

LUCK

Minor: All creatures may add a +1 luck bonus to one roll made that day.

Moderate: All luck bonuses are increased by +1.

Major: All creatures may reroll a single d20 roll made on this day, taking the better of the two rolls.

MAGIC

Minor: All castings of *detect magic* have double normal range and duration.

Moderate: All caster level checks made to bypass spell resistance gain a +2 bonus.

Major: All spells are cast at +1 caster level.

PLANT

Minor: All plant-related skill checks (including Profession [herbalist] and Survival) gain a +1 bonus.

Moderate: All creatures of the plant type increase their natural armor bonus by +1.

Major: All creatures of the plant type gain a +2 bonus to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

PROTECTION

Minor: All objects have their hardness increased by +2.

Moderate: All saving throws gain a +1 morale bonus.

Major: All forms of energy resistance, DR, and SR, are increased by +2.

STRENGTH

Minor: All Strength ability checks (but not skill checks) gain a +4 bonus.

Moderate: All Strength-based skill checks gain a +2 bonus.

Major: All creatures with a 16 or greater Strength gain a +2 enhancement bonus to Strength.

SUN

Minor: All light sources shed light in a +25% larger area.

Moderate: All saves against spells with the Fire descriptor take a −1 penalty.

Major: All spells with sun, light, fire, or flame in the name, that produce fire or light, are cast a +3 caster level.

TRAVEL

Minor: All Constitution checks made for a forced march gain a +2 bonus.

Moderate: All overland movement is increased by +25%.

Major: All terrain penalties to overland travel are reduced by one step (from trackless to road or trail, and from road or trail to highway).

TRICKERY

Minor: All illusion school spells are cast at +2 caster level.

Moderate: All Charisma-based skill checks gain a +2 morale bonus.

Major: All Wisdom-based skill checks take a −2 morale penalty.

WAR

Minor: All weapon damage rolls gain a +1 bonus.

Moderate: All creatures fighting with an ally adjacent to them gain a +1 dodge bonus to AC.

Major: All morale bonuses are increased by +1.

WATER

Minor: Creatures with the water descriptor and worshipers of a water god gain a +2 bonus to all Reflex saves.

Moderate: All creatures' swim movement rate is increased by +20 feet.

Major: All creatures with the Fire descriptor take a −2 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls, skill and ability checks, and saving throws.

Appendix One: Compiled Feats

Numerous options presented throughout the *Advanced Gamemaster's Guide* suggest adding feats to allow characters to access new abilities. Rather than having you search through the entire book for each feat reference, all the proposed feats are collected here. Each feat also references the chapter and section regarding it, so the full text of new rules need not be duplicated.

The following feats should be added to the bonus list of any class that gains bonus item creation feats: Attune Spell Lens, Scavenge Charged Items, Scavenge One-Shot Items, Scavenge Permanent Items.

Classes that gain bonus combat feats (such as the fighter) should have the Weapon Kata feat added to their bonus feat list.

Additional Chakra (General)

You have more mystic power points than normal.

Prerequisite: Cha 13.

Benefit: Choose one chakra location. You have an additional chakra at this location, allowing you to use another magic item linked to the location.

Special: This feat may be taken more than once. However, the prerequisite for each additional chakra is 2 Cha higher.

Reference: See **Changing Chakras** on page 131.

Attune Spell Lens (Item Creation)

You have learned the art of creating spell lenses.

Prerequisites: Caster level 10th.

Benefit: You can create spell lenses of all types. You must pay half the market value of the spell lens and expend a number of experience points equal to its market price divided by 25. Attuning a spell lens takes one day per 1,000 gp of its market price, and each spell to be stored within the lens must be cast once during this time.

Reference: See **Spell Lenses** on page 162.

Change Chakra (General)

Your mystic power points are arranged differently than those of others.

Benefit: You may assign your chakras to any chakra locations. You may have no more than four chakras of the same type. Once you have rearranged your chakras, the change is permanent.

Special: This feat may be taken more than once. Each time it allows the character to rearrange his chakras. It never grants additional chakras.

Reference: See **Changing Chakras** on page 131.

Table A-1: Advanced Gamemaster's Guide Feats

Feat	Chapter	Prerequisites
Additional Chakra	7	Cha 13
Attune Spell Lens	7	Caster level 10th
Change Chakra[2]	7	—
Create Major Artifact[2]	7	Int, Wis, or Cha of 27, dragon, fey, elemental, outsider, or undead type, Craft 21 ranks, any 5 item creation feats, character level 31st
Create Minor Artifact[2]	7	Int, Wis, or Cha 25, dragon, fey, elemental, outsider, or undead type, Craft 21 ranks, any 5 item creation feats, character level 21st
Distinctive	6	—
Drawbacks of Fortune	2	—
Expanded Spell Choice[2]	5	Ability to cast 1st-level spells
Mentor	4	—
Metamage[1]	2	One or more metamagic feats
Peer	5	Cha 15, must have a community that considers you a native
Scavenge Charged Items	7	Any item creation feat, Scavenge One-Shot Items
Scavenge One-Shot Items	7	Any item creation feat
Scavenge Permanent Items	7	Any item creation feat, Scavenge One-Shot Items
Single Target Spell	2	—
Spell Power[2]	5	Key ability 15
Weapon Kata[3]	5	Int 15, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus, base attack bonus +1

1 A fighter may select this feat as one of his fighter bonus feats.
2 You may select this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you select this feat, it applies to a new weapon, skill, school of magic, or selection of spells.
3 You may select this feat multiple times. Its effects stack.

Create Major Artifact (Epic)

You have the power and ability to forge one major artifact.

Prerequisites: Int, Wis, or Cha of 27, dragon, fey, elemental, outsider, or undead type, Craft 21 ranks, any 5 item creation feats, character level 31st.

Benefit: You can create one major artifact, using the rules described in **Chapter Seven**.

Special: Once you have created the major artifact, you must take this feat again to make a second one.

Reference: See **Making Artifacts** on page 164.

Create Minor Artifact (Epic)

You have the power and ability to forge a specific kind of minor artifact.

Prerequisites: Int, Wis, or Cha 25, dragon, fey, elemental, outsider, or undead type, Craft 21 ranks, any 5 item creation feats, character level 21st.

Benefit: You can create one type of minor artifact, using the rules described in **Chapter Seven**.

Special: This feat can be taken multiple times. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a different type of minor artifact.

Reference: See **Making Artifacts** on page 164.

Drawbacks of Fortune (General)

You have a drawback that leads to fortune smiling on you occasionally.

Benefit: Select one or more drawbacks with your GM's approval. If one of those drawbacks has a negative effect on you during a game session, you gain 1 additional fortune point at the end of that session. You never gain more than 1 extra fortune point for a single session, no matter how many times each drawback comes up.

Reference: See **Fortune Points and Drawbacks** on page 37.

Distinctive (General)

You are unusual in some minor way.

Benefit: Select something unusual to be part of your character's description. You may have silver eyes, been

raised by ghosts, or be the last member of the royal bloodline of a lost empire. Your distinctive feature gains you no game mechanical benefits, but the feat allows you to break from the norm in a way your GM wouldn't normally allow.

Reference: See **Character Backgrounds** on page 116.

Expanded Spell Choice (General)

You have mastered spells normally beyond the reach of those who practice your kind of magic.

Prerequisite: Ability to cast 1st-level spells.

Benefit: You gain access to a spell not normally on your class spell list. This access has no affect on your spells per day or how you prepare spells. The new spell is simply treated as if it was on your spell list. If you must learn spells (such as a wizard), you must still scribe the spell into your spellbook before use. If you gain access to all spells on your list (such as a cleric), you automatically gain access to the new spell. If you have a limited number of spells known (such as a bard), you must select the new spell as one of your spells known before you can cast it.

The maximum level the new spell may be is based on the similarity of the spellcasting class it's taken from, as defined below. Type refers to arcane, divine, or psionic. Thus, a sorcerer selecting a bard spell is choosing one of the same type (arcane), while a sorcerer selecting a druid spell is selecting one of a different type (divine). Ability refers to the key ability used to determine the spell DC of the class. A sorcerer (a Charisma-based caster) selecting a bard spell is selecting one of the same ability, while a sorcerer selecting a druid spell (a Wisdom-based caster) is selecting one of a different ability. Thus, an 8th-level sorcerer could choose a 4th-level bard spell to add to his list, but only a 2nd-level druid spell.

Expanded Spell Choice

Spell's Class is…	Maximum Level of Spell Choice
Same type, same ability	Half caster level
Same type, different ability	One-third caster level
Different type, same ability	One-third caster level
Different type, different ability	One-quarter caster level

Special: This feat may be selected more than once; each time, it adds a new spell to the character's spell list.

Reference: See **Spells as Feats and Skills** on page 99.

Mentor (General)

You have attracted a loyal mentor to train and guide you.

Benefit: You have a mentor who is appropriate to your chosen path and who gives you training and advice. The mentor's level is determined by your student rating (see **Mentors** in **Chapter Four** for more information).

Reference: See **Allies** on page 64.

Metamage (Metamagic)

You are an expert in the use of metamagic feats.

Prerequisites: One or more metamagic feats

Benefit: You gain +2 metamagic points.

Special: This feat may be taken more than once, and its benefits stack. However, a character must have one other metamagic feat for each Metamage feat taken.

Reference: See **Metamagic Points** on page 41.

Peer (General)

You are a well-regarded leader in your community.

Prerequisites: Cha 15, must have a community that considers you a native.

Benefit: Your leadership score is increased by +2 (see the Leadership feat in the *DMG*). Additionally, you gain a +2 bonus to all Charisma-based skills and Sense Motive checks made with members of your community.

Normal: A character with this feat can be a minor noble, a junior knight, or even a local celebrity.

Reference: See **Designing Feats** on page 102.

Scavenge Charged Items (General)

You have mastered the art of extracting levin from typical magic items.

Prerequisites: Any item creation feat, Scavenge One-Shot Items.

Benefit: You can scavenge levin from charged items. These are all items that have one or more abilities that can be used a multiple but specific number of times and then cease to be magic (such as staves).

Reference: See **Levin** on page 140.

Scavenge One-Shot Items (General)

You have mastered the art of extracting levin from the simplest of magic items.

Prerequisites: Any item creation feat.

Benefit: You can scavenge levin from one-shot items. These are all items that allow a single use of an ability

(such as potions and scrolls), including items that have one charge of multiple abilities (such as a scroll with three different spells on it).

Reference: See **Levin** on page 140.

Scavenge Permanent Items (General)

You have mastered the art of extracting levin from permanent magic items.

Prerequisites: Any item creation feat, Scavenge One-Shot Items.

Benefit: You can scavenge levin from permanent magic items. These are all items that have one or more abilities that can be used an unlimited number of times without becoming mundane (though they may only be used a certain number of times each day), including most rings, rods, and wondrous items.

Reference: See **Levin** on page 140.

Single Target Spell (Metamagic)

You have learned to cast area spells on a single target

Benefit: Only spells with a listed area may be cast as single-target spells. Such spells affect only a single target, which must be within the spell's normal range. All other aspects of the spell work normally. A single-target spell takes up a spell slot of the same spell level.

Reference: See **Self-Limited Spells** on page 41.

Spell Power (General)

Choose a spellcasting class. You've learned a small amount of spellcasting ability from that class.

Prerequisites: Key ability 15.

Benefit: Select one spell from your chosen spellcasting class. This spell must be no more than 1 level higher than the highest level spell you've gained with this feat, and no higher than half your character level. You may cast this spell once per day as a member of your chosen class. You may never have more spells of a higher level than you do the level below it.

For example, a fighter with a 15 or higher Wisdom could take this feat and choose cleric as his spellcasting class. Since he's never taken this feat before, he can only select a 1st-level spell, which he may cast once per day as a cleric of his level.

If the fighter is at least 2nd-level and takes this feat again, he may select either another 0-level spell or a 1st-level spell. If he takes it a third time, he cannot choose another 1st-level spell as he has only one 0-level spell. He could select another 0-level spell, or if 4th level or higher a 2nd-level spell.

Special: This feat may be taken more than once, as outlined in the benefits section.

Reference: See **Spells as Feats and Skills** on page 99.

Weapon Kata (General)

Select one weapon with which you have Weapon Focus. You have learned to use this weapon as part of your unarmed combat style.

Prerequisites: Int 15, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus, base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: You may deal your unarmed damage with a weapon with which you have taken the Weapon Focus feat, as well as make grapple and trip attacks with it. The type of damage done is based on the weapon used, rather than your unarmed attack.

Normal: Characters normally cannot make grapple and trip attacks with weapons except for a specific few.

Reference: See **Designing Feats** on page 102.

Appendix Two: Initiative Cards

By JD Wiker

Keeping track of initiative in games using the d20 System can get complicated. Every GM has a method that he or she favors, but which sometimes lacks in versatility or utility. These Initiative Cards provide GMs both with an easy way to keep track of initiative, and a handy reference for all the sorts of information a GM sometimes needs during a game session.

There are two types of Initiative Cards:

- **Character cards**—which contain information about the player characters and the occasional non-player character. You can use these cards for familiars as well.

- **Monster cards**—which contain information about monsters (though it's best to use character cards for monsters that have class levels). You can use these cards for most animal companions as well.

Initiative Cards in Play

Before beginning play, fill out one Initiative Card for each opponent the heroes are likely to face during the coming session. If you have a current copy of the heroes' character sheets, fill one out for each hero; if not ask each player to fill one out at the start of the game.

When combat begins, ask the players to roll initiative while you roll initiative for any opponents and non-player characters. Set aside any cards for characters or creatures who are surprised. One by one, go around the table and ask each player for his or her character's initiative result. Write their initiative numbers down in the space marked "INIT" on the cards; do the same for all the initiative rolls you make. Use a pencil; you'll be erasing and rewriting these numbers fairly often. Sort the stack of cards by initiative total with the highest on top.

Then simply begin at the top of the stack, moving each card to the bottom when that character or creature has concluded its turn. If you have characters or creatures joining combat who have not yet rolled initiative, ask them to roll for initiative, jot down their initiative numbers, and place their cards in the proper place in the initiative order.

If a character or creature delays, or readies an action, turn that Initiative Card sideways, with the "Delay/Ready" box showing. If a character or creature falls unconscious, simply turn the card sideways facing the other direction, with the word "Unconscious" visible.

Character Cards

Use character cards for player characters, non-player characters, familiars, and monsters that have classes and levels.

NAME: Record the character's name here.

ALIGN/RACE: Record the character's alignment and race here. The former may be useful for spells that work off of a character's alignment, such as protection from good; the latter is useful for spells, effects, and situations that take the character's race into consideration. If you're using the character card to represent a familiar, record the animal's species (cat, hawk, rat, weasel, etc.) here.

INIT: Leave this space blank at first. When combat begins, use it to record the character's initiative roll.

AC: Record the character's base armor class here, including AC for touch attacks (TCH)—attacks that disregard armor—and for attacks when the character is flatfooted (FLT). There is also a box in which you can mark any temporary changes to the character's AC (TMP) that occur during the course of the game.

CLS/LVL: Record the character's classes and levels here. If the character has several classes, you might want to use abbreviations: Brb for Barbarian, Clr for Cleric, or Wiz for Wizard, for example.

NAME: Brown Bear   ALIGN/RACE: TN   INIT:

DELAY or READY / UNCONSCIOUS

| | BASE | TCH | FLT | TMP | CLASS/LEVEL |
| AC | 15 | 10 | 14 | | |

STR 27   INT 2   FORT +9   SPD 40
DEX 13   WIS 12   REF +6   GRAP +16   VIS
CON 19   CHA 6   WILL +3   The GameMechanics

Skills: Listen +4   Spot +7   Swim +14

Attack (#)	Bonus	Type	Damage
Claw (2)	+11	M	1d8+8
Bite	+6	M	2d8+4

HP: 51

Special/Notes: Improved Grab, Scent

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Delay or Ready: Turning the card so this space is showing indicates the character is delaying or has readied an action.

STR, DEX, CON, INT, WIS, and CHA: Record the character's ability scores and ability modifiers here.

FORT, REF, and WILL: Record the character's Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saving throws here.

SPD: Record the character's base movement here.

VIS: Record any special vision modes the character might have, such as low-light vision, darkvision, or blindsight. If the vision mode has a range, make sure you note that, such as "Dark 60."

Skills: Record the total skill modifiers (skill rank + ability modifier + miscellaneous modifiers) here. This area lists only those skills for which the GM should regularly make skill checks on the player's behalf. (See the *DMG*, **Chapter 1**, **Determining Outcomes**.) In addition to their use for recording skills that are not already included, the blank skill spaces can be used to record other score-based information, such as Spell Resistance.

Languages: Record the languages the character knows here. This could come in handy when the characters encounter speech or writing in a language other than Common. (You can check which of the characters might understand without having to ask the players which languages each character knows.)

Special/Notes: Use this space to record any temporary effects on the character, such as spells or the special attacks of monsters, and to keep track of the duration of such effects.

Unconscious: Turning the card so this space is showing indicates that the character is unconscious.

Monster Cards

Use monster cards for monsters that don't have classes and levels. You can use one card to represent multiple monsters of the same type (one card to stand for three ogres, for example), or you can use individual cards for individual monsters.

NAME: Record the monster's name here. You can use one card to represent a number of identical monsters, or use separate cards for each according to your own preferences.

ALIGN: Record the monster's alignment here. Knowing the monster's alignment could be important for spells that key off of a character's alignment, such as protection from evil.

INIT: Leave this space blank at first. When combat begins, use it to record the character's initiative roll.

Delay or Ready: Turning the card so this space is showing indicates the character is delaying or has readied an action.

AC: Record the monster's base armor class here, including AC for touch attacks (TCH)—attacks that disregard armor—and for attacks when the character is flatfooted (FLT). There is also a box in which you can mark any temporary changes to the monster's AC (TMP) that occur during the course of the game.

INIT: Record the monster's initiative modifier here.

FORT, REF, and WILL: Record the monster's Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saving throws here.

SPD: Record the monster's base movement here. If the monster has other movement modes, record those as well, with a brief notation such as "Fly 50/Swim 40."

VIS: Record any special vision modes the character might have, such as low-light vision, darkvision, or blindsight. If the vision mode has a range, make sure you note that, such as "Dark 60."

GRAP: Record the monster's grapple bonus here.

Skills: Record skills and total skill modifiers (skill rank + ability modifier + miscellaneous modifiers) here. Unlike Character Cards, no specific skills are listed in this area. In addition to their use for recording skills, these spaces can be used to record other score-based information, such as Spell Resistance.

Attacks: Record the monster's attacks here. Spaces are included for Attack (#) (the method of attack, such as "Bite," "2 Claws," or "Sword"); Bonus (the attack modifier); Type (the type of damage: "P" for piercing, "B" for bludgeoning, and "S" for slashing); and Damage (the damage caused by the attack).

HP: Use this space to keep track of the monster's hit points.

Special/Notes: Use this space to record any temporary effects on the monster, such as spells or the special attacks of other monsters, and to keep track of the duration of such effects.

Unconscious: Turning the card so this space is showing indicates the character is unconscious.

Getting the Cards

The following pages contain a set of blank Initiative Cards with permission to photocopy for personal use. Blank Initiative Cards are also available at The Game Mechanics website (http://www.thegamemechanics.com) in .pdf format.

The Game Mechanics also offer a free version of blank Initiative Cards for modern d20 System games and sets of pre-completed cards for fantasy campaigns.

Card 1

DELAY or READY

| NAME | | ALIGN/RACE | INIT |

AC | BASE | TCH | FLT | TMP | CLASS/LEVEL

STR | INT | FORT | SPD

DEX | WIS | REF | VIS

CON | CHA | WILL

THE GAMEMECHANICS — WWW.THEGAMEMECHANICS.COM

Skills

Bluff .... Move Silently.. ....

Diplomacy.. Search............... ....

Hide .... Sense Motive... ....

Listen .... Spot.................. ....

Languages

Special/Notes

UNCONSCIOUS

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Card 2

Card 3

Card 4

MONSTER CARDS

DELAY or READY

NAME — ALIGN/RACE — INIT

AC — BASE TCH FLT TMP — CLASS/LEVEL

STR — INT — FORT — SPD

DEX — WIS — REF — GRAP — VIS

CON — CHA — WILL

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Skills

....

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Attack (#) — Bonus — Type — Damage

HP

Special/Notes

UNCONSCIOUS

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DELAY or READY

NAME — ALIGN/RACE — INIT

AC — BASE TCH FLT TMP — CLASS/LEVEL

STR — INT — FORT — SPD

DEX — WIS — REF — GRAP — VIS

CON — CHA — WILL

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Skills

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Attack (#) — Bonus — Type — Damage

HP

Special/Notes

UNCONSCIOUS

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DELAY or READY

NAME — ALIGN/RACE — INIT

AC — BASE TCH FLT TMP — CLASS/LEVEL

STR — INT — FORT — SPD

DEX — WIS — REF — GRAP — VIS

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THE GAMEMECHANICS — WWW.THEGAMEMECHANICS.COM

Skills

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Attack (#) — Bonus — Type — Damage

HP

Special/Notes

UNCONSCIOUS

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DELAY or READY

NAME — ALIGN/RACE — INIT

AC — BASE TCH FLT TMP — CLASS/LEVEL

STR — INT — FORT — SPD

DEX — WIS — REF — GRAP — VIS

CON — CHA — WILL

THE GAMEMECHANICS — WWW.THEGAMEMECHANICS.COM

Skills

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Attack (#) — Bonus — Type — Damage

HP

Special/Notes

UNCONSCIOUS

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CAMPAIGN WORKSHEET

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CAMPAIGN SETTING: _____

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IMPORTANT NONPLAYER CHARACTERS

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TABLE RULES
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HOUSE RULES

RACES	Y	SOURCE	NOTES
HUMAN	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
DWARF	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
ELF	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
GNOME	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
HALF-ELF	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
HALF-ORC	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
HALFLING	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
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PERMITTED SOURCEBOOKS

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CLASSES/PRESTIGE	Y	SOURCE	NOTES
BARBARIAN	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
BARD	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
CLERIC	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
DRUID	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
FIGHTER	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
MONK	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
PALADIN	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
RANGER	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
ROGUE	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
SORCERER	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
WIZARD	☐	*Player's Handbook*	_____
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HOUSE RULES

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SPELLS

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EQUIPMENT & MAGIC ITEMS

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FEATS		SOURCE	NOTES
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