

# THE RED HACK

## FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAME

*A version of D&D based on The Black Hack & the 1980 B/X edition.*



## 2: DUNGEONS & COMBAT

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# THE RULES

## TESTS & MODIFIERS

The *test* is the most common roll in *the Red Hack*. A test is made using a particular attribute, or your Armour Class.

To succeed at a simple test you need to roll equal to or under your attribute on a twenty-sided die.

If you roll a 20, you succeed regardless of your attribute. Similarly, if you roll a 1, you fail regardless. Sometimes these results are particularly good or bad – a 20 on an attack roll indicates a critical hit for extra damage!

Many tests have a *difficulty*. To succeed at a difficult test you still have to roll *within* your attribute, but you also have to roll *over* the difficulty.

For example, you're trying to climb the sheer wall of a tower, which is difficulty 7. If your DEX is 12, you have to roll 8-12 to succeed – a 25% chance. Climbing a sheer wall isn't easy!

If you swing a sword at a monster, your attack roll to hit is a STR test against the monster's AC. If you have a STR of 16 and the monster has an AC of 3, you have to roll 4-16 on the d20 – much better odds!

Monsters don't roll to attack, so when a monster attacks you, you roll your AC vs their HD to avoid the blow.

So most tests consist of the DM giving you an attribute and a difficulty; "roll CON, difficulty 4"; you just have to roll the die, then compare it to the CON written on your sheet and the number 4.

It takes some getting used to because you're aiming for the middle, not just hoping to roll high or low, but it's quick because you don't have to do any adding up – just compare one number to two others.

## COMMON TESTS

Type	Rolled With	Difficulty	Effect
Attack Roll	STR (melee) or DEX (ranged)	Monster's AC	Deal your damage on a success, crit damage on a 20.
Defense Roll	Player AC	Monster's HD	Take damage on a failure, crit damage on a 1.
Saving Throw	Attribute *	Base 4**	Suffer effects, or more severe effects, on failure.
Effect Roll	INT or WIS***	Monster's HD	Monster suffers effects (or more severe effects) on success.

\* Saving throws are made against an attribute depending on the type of threat:

- **STR:** Saves vs unavoidable physical harm.
- **DEX:** Saves to dodge physical harm.
- **CON:** Saves against poison, disease or death.
- **INT:** Saves vs spells, psionics & miscellaneous magic.
- **WIS:** Saves against deception & illusion.
- **CHA:** Saves against emotion and fear effects.

\*\* 2 for Death or Poison effects, 6 for Spells, and 4 for everything else.

\*\*\* INT for arcane magic, WIS for divine magic.

### Optional Rule: Saving Throw Types for Monsters

Subtract 2 from the monster's HD for saves vs Spells, add 2 for saves vs Death or poison.

## ADVANTAGE, DISADVANTAGE & CHASER DICE

If you are asked to make a test or any other roll with Advantage, roll twice and pick the best result. If you are asked to roll with Disadvantage, roll twice and take the worst.

Chaser dice are a special type of advantage, mostly used for magical weapons. If you have a magical weapon you roll an additional die every time you attack with it. If you roll either the highest or lowest result on this die, you hit automatically, regardless of your opponent's AC!

Similarly a magic shield or magic armour would roll a chaser when blocking or defending, and automatically succeed if it came up a 1 or its maximum result.

The type of die depends on the bonus of the weapon:

Bonus	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
Chaser Die	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4

## USAGE DICE

Usage dice are used to track resources. Instead of counting down individual arrows, you might have 'ud8' arrows in your quiver. When you fire one, you roll a d8. On a 1-2, you reduce the die down to d6. If you roll 1-2 on a ud4, the last one is used and the resource is exhausted.

This table shows the average number of remaining uses each die represents:

ud4	ud6	ud8	ud10	ud12	ud20
2	5	9	14	20	30

# LIGHT & DARKNESS

Different creatures can see in different light levels. For example, humans see comfortably in in Bright & Normal light. Wolves and other crepuscular/nocturnal hunters see comfortably in Normal & Dim light. Goblins and most other cave-dwellers are comfortable in all but Bright light.

- **Dazzling:** The plane of radiance.
- **Bright:** A sunny day.
- **Normal:** An overcast day, indoors with windows.
- **Dim:** Underground with light sources within sight.
- **Dark:** Underground, or a moonless, cloudy night.

## COMBAT IN THE DARK

Every creature attacks, defends, and performs other tasks requiring sight at a 2pt penalty for each step outside of their comfort zone. So a human in pitch darkness suffers a 4 point penalty; where a wolf would only suffer 2 points. A goblin in darkness would suffer no penalty, but if forced to fight in bright sunlight would suffer a 2pt penalty.

Penalties cancel out; if both sides are blind the fight proceeds without penalties (though there may be other complications, such as if they're fighting near a precipice.)

Penalties are assessed by modifying the HD and AC of monsters in any engagement appropriately. So a goblin trying to stab and adventurer in the dark would do so at 5HD, instead of his usual 1HD.

Monsters & Retainers will usually have to make a morale test if suffering light penalties in combat.

## TORCHES & LANTERNS

In otherwise **Dark** conditions, everything **Near** to a light source (torch, lantern, magical light) is lit up with **Dim** light; if the light source is carried, or otherwise elevated (for example, a torch in a sconce) everything **Close** to it is illuminated with **Normal** light.

If the prevailing conditions in a dungeon are already **Dim** (due to windows and other natural light sources), everything **Near** to a source is lit up with **Normal** light.

A *Bullseye* Lantern can project light to illuminate a target point and everything Close to it – **Bright** at **Near**, **Dim** at **Far**. The user can change the target at the start of their action for free, or at any time as a reaction.

A *hooded* lantern can be shuttered or unshuttered the same way.

## TRAPS & STEALTH IN DARKNESS

In **Dim** light, deduct 1 from rolls to trigger traps, in a **Dark** conditions, deduct 2.

Stealth rolls have advantage if the foes you're hiding from would have a penalty from light levels.

# TIME & DISTANCE

The game uses the following measurements of time, for combat, travel and interludes between adventures, respectively:

- **Rounds:** 30 seconds, time for every character to move and act in combat.
- **Turns:** Five minutes, time to search a room, finish a short battle, take a breather, or carefully walk down a hallway.
- **Watches:** 4 hours, time to rest or travel a few miles cross-country.
- **Downtimes:** A week or so, time to take care of some business in town between adventures.

Distances are similarly divided into categories, used for movement, light and determining the range of spells and arrows.

Distance	Feet	5' Sqr	Notes
Close	0'-15'	3	Engaged in melee.
Near	16'-60'	12	Standard move distance.
Far	61'-120'	24	In the immediate area.
Distant	121'-180'	36	Present but some distance away.
Extreme	181'-240'	48	Down the road.
Remote(x')	60' incr.	49+	In the distance.

# HEIGHT & FALLING

Climbing vertically requires a DEX test, see Climbing Walls, p33, a failure rolling under the difficulty results in the character falling at a random point during the climb.

Characters may also fall as a result of triggering pit traps, being pushed off precipices in combat, and so on.

A falling character suffers 1d6 damage per 10' of the drop, with a DEX save for half. Based on the damage, the DM may rule that something arrested their fall.

**Example:** A character falls off a 50' cliff, which would do an average of 17.5hp, but only takes 6 damage. The DM rules that the character grabbed a protruding tree and is hanging from the cliff 20ft down.

Damage can be mitigated further if a character at *Close* range or tied to the falling character chooses to catch them. No test is required for this, but the damage from the fall is divided between the PCs. Catching characters save with STR for half damage instead of DEX.

If the resulting damage is reasonably low, it might be the case that nobody falls; the damage is the result of the sudden strain on shoulders and limbs from having to hold up one or more fellow adventurers and all their equipment.

# DUNGEON EXPLORATION

One of the basic activities of the game involves the party of PCs exploring an indoor space, whether a dungeon, a castle, a ruin or a cave system.

Time while exploring is divided into 5-minute turns. On each turn the party can move to a new room, search their current room, or move up to 120' along a hallway. Combat usually takes a turn, while a short rest takes two turns.

If the players are moving through an area for which they have a map, they can move six rooms in one turn.

Every two rounds the DM will check to see if an event occurs. Events include spells or torches expiring, encounters with monsters, or the party becoming tired.

Players can declare if they are at the front or back of the group; anyone who doesn't specify will be somewhere in the middle. Those at the front will face traps and the attentions of monsters first in the event of an encounter.

When exploring you should be clear about which items are in your hands. Are you carrying a torch to see by? Do you have your weapon out and ready?

## MAPPING A DUNGEON

Mapping a dungeon greatly increases your speed moving through it. A map may simply consist of drawing a series of boxes connected with lines. Mapping takes time in-game – one character must have parchment and a writing implement, and spend one turn for each room – corridors can be mapped while traversing them with no additional time spent. When you return to town, you can trade in your map for a more detailed one from the DM, covering the areas you have recorded.

# HOW TO RUN A DUNGEON

Each turn the PCs can move through a hallway, enter a new room, search a room, pick a lock, or take some other significant action to interact with their environment. When a PC takes such an action advance the timer – a clicker can be a good way to track this, and allows the players to hear when time is advancing.

If one player is searching or messing with a lock, you should ask the other players if they want to do something at the same time.

Ask and note who is carrying light, and who is in the front and rear.

Every two turns, check for an event. These will tell you when an encounter occurs, when to exhaust spells and torches, and when to add levels of exhaustion. As a rule, PCs move at half speed if any of them have more than two bags and/or levels of exhaustion.

When an encounter occurs, check for the distance it occurs at, and the reaction of the monsters. The players' actions can modify both of these – friendly overtures or careful scouting, for instance. Be responsive to what your players are trying to do.

If a combat goes badly and PCs have to flee, move them without advancing the timer. Every two moves running they must make an event roll. Unless they are slowed or their foe is fast they will keep ahead automatically, and may drop things to slow their foe's pursuit. Events may cause them to trip and lose ground, become exhausted and slow down, become lost and run into a dead end, run into a new encounter, or drop their torch and stumble blindly.

If a PC on 0hp fails their CON test, they can be helped along by another PC but count as a burden and can't carry burdens of their own without both becoming encumbered; make sure PCs know they are slowed and need to drop weight if this happens.

# THE EVENT DIE

The DM rolls every 2 turns of exploration:

Roll	Result	Event	Running
1	Encounter	Roll on an encounter table and make an encounter roll.	Encounter!
2	Spoor	Roll on the encounter table. A sign of this creature is found.	Lost!
3	Light	Roll usage on nonmagical light sources.	Dropped torch!
4	Exhaustion	Susceptible PCs gain a level of exhaustion.	Exhausted!
5	Event or Timer	Nothing happens unless the dungeon calls for it.	Alert!
6	Magic Expires	Normal duration spells expire.	Trip!

## OPTION: THE EVENT DECK

Use a regular deck of cards:

Card	Result	Event	Running
1-8 ♥	Exhaustion	Susceptible PCs gain a level of exhaustion.	Exhausted!
1-8 ♦	Timer/Event	Nothing, or the timer ticks down, or use the number/roll on an event table.	Alert!
1-8 ♣	Spoor	Use the number or roll on the random encounter table. Next black 1-8 is that result.	Lost!
1-8 ♠	Encounter	Use the number or roll on the random encounter table.	Encounter!
9-10	Light	Roll usage on nonmagical light sources.	Dropped Torch!
J-Q	Magic Expires	Normal duration spells expire.	Trip!
K	Reshuffle	Reshuffle the deck.	Reshuffle!

Characters are susceptible to exhaustion if they are Bloodied, have low CON, are wearing Medium or Heavy armour, are Encumbered, or subject to any other circumstance that would tend to make them tire.

If you are running through the dungeon heedless of the dangers, make a roll for every 2 rooms. All trap and encounter rolls are at -3, so you are more likely to be surprised or set off traps, and the following results replace the normal results on the table:

**Dropped Torch:** One party member drops a torch, lantern or other light source.

**Exhausted:** Every party member takes exhaustion.

**Alert:** If there are intelligent monsters in the dungeon, doors ahead of the PCs will be closed and stuck.

**Trip:** Roll d20. The party member with the DEX score lower than the roll but closest to it goes sprawling.

**Lost:** You take an unintended turn, if this seems possible.

## **PURSUIT**

If the party is running because someone is chasing them, the following rules apply.

- If the fleeing side is faster they escape automatically after 1 full turn of flight.
- If not they will keep running until exhaustion leaves them encumbered or they trip and are caught.
- The pursuing side has a cumulative 1 in 6 chance of giving up or losing the trail each time the fleeing side leave their line of sight.
- They also have a 3 in 6 chance of stopping to collect food or treasure if they are interested in such things, and may also be deterred by obstacles such as burning oil.

## EXPLORATION ACTIONS

**Move:** Move 120' down a hallway or into a new room. If moving through familiar areas, move twice each turn.

**Search or Map a room:** Look for treasure, secret doors, clues. Or, record the room on your map – declare you are doing this, and the DM must give you a complete list of visible exits from the room.

**Take a Short Rest:** Take two turns to remove a level of exhaustion. Heal 1 HD worth of HP if you either remove a level of exhaustion or eat your rations for the day.

**Move Cautiously:** Take two turns for every move, but add +1 to Trap & Encounter rolls – traps will not be triggered as easily, and monsters are more likely to be taken by surprise.

**Run:** Running in the unexplored dark is very dangerous. You make three moves per turn, at -3 to trap and encounter rolls. Every result on the exploration table is worse.

## TRAPS

When a PC might trigger a trap, the DM will roll a d6. On a 1-2 the trap goes off! This means several PCs might walk over a trap before one triggers it. The roll is modified by the light level, see p7.

If the PC crossing the trigger is a Thief, they detect the trap on a 5-6.

Prodding the area with a pole gives an additional chance to trigger the trap while not standing on it.

Room traps should be treated as puzzles; clues in the environment should warn the players of their presence, and avoiding or disarming them is a matter of engaging with that environment – arrowholes can be blocked up, trapdoors spiked shut, swinging blades propped up etc.

Intricate traps on locks and mechanisms can be disarmed by thieves using their tools and special skills.

## DOORS & SECRET DOORS

PCs often wish to listen at doors. Roll a d6 for this; on a 6 they hear whatever is going on in the room beyond.

Add one to the roll for each of the following:

- Listener is a thief.
- Listener has an appropriate background.
- Listener is a being known for good hearing, such as an elf.

On a 1, if the character did not roll to *Move Silently* (see Skills), something on the other side hears the PC.

Sometimes doors are stuck. To force a stuck door take a turn and roll 1d6.

Two characters may attempt together using their highest chance +1.

- Low STR: 1 in 6
- Average STR: 2 in 6
- High STR: 4 in 6

A locked door can be opened via lockpicking (see Skills) or battering it down. The difficulty of this depends on the door, but it is always time-consuming and makes a lot of noise.

Doors can be spiked and held either open or closed using iron spikes and a hammer.

Secret doors are hidden from sight, though there may be signs of their presence – footprints at a dead end hallway, an ornate mirror and so on. They can normally only be found by spending a turn searching for them.

# ENCUMBRANCE & BURDENS

## ITEMS

Weight and bulk of items is measured in 'items', corresponding to about 2lbs in weight. This determines how many items you can fit in your pack, a sack, or on a mule.

Coins and other tiny items don't weigh anything until you have 100 of the same type! Every 100 is one item.

Items are usually printed on A8 cards for reference when playing in person, online they can be written up on a line or two and copy/pasted between character sheets.

## BURDENS

Rather than track the weight of every individual item carried, we measure how many items you can carry by grouping them into burdens.

Burdens are things that weigh your PC down on their adventure. If you have too many burdens, you will move more slowly and be less effective in combat.

A burden is:

- A sack with up to 10 items, or worn backpack with up to 20.
- An unusual and excessive number of worn items, e.g. 6 swords in scabbards.
- A particularly large or unwieldy item, like a chair.
- A physical status like *Tired*, *Weary*, *Sleep-Deprived*, *Hungry*, *Thirsty*, *Injured* or *Wounded*.
- A spiritual, mental or magical status such as 'despair' or 'the weight of your sins.'

A burden is not:

- A sword in a scabbard.
- A 10' pole held in a hand.
- A pouch of marbles or spell components on your belt.
- Your armour.

A character who is fully dressed or armoured, wearing jewelry, with a reasonable number of weapons and an item in each hand is considered unburdened. Obviously if you pile up comical amounts of weapons, necklaces, and armour the DM may rule it a burden, but normally you just don't have to think about what you're wearing and holding for purposes of encumbrance.

## **ENCUMBERED PCS**

The average PC may carry up to 2 burdens at normal speed; more and they become encumbered.

An *encumbered* PC moves at half speed while travelling and cannot use *Reactions* in combat. Dropping some of your loot before fighting is advisable!

Above 6 burdens, a character can no longer attack or cast spells, and can only move at a slow crawl.

A PC with high CON can carry one more burden without becoming encumbered. A character with high STR can carry two more burdens without becoming immobile. Conversely, characters with low CON & STR can carry one and two fewer, respectively.

# PRIVATIONS

Privations are burdens gained through physical exhaustion, want or harm. Poisons and Illness can also inflict their own specific privations.

## EXHAUSTION

**Tired** – Gained as you move through the dungeon. Stacks, with each stack being an additional burden. A short rest will remove a single Tired burden and allow you to heal one roll of your hit die in HP.

**Weary** – Gained by wilderness travel or lack of sleep. Removed on a long rest. No CON loss and doesn't stack, but the DM may ask *weary* characters for CON saves to stay awake in some circumstances.

## WANT

**Hungry** – Gained by not eating for a day, removed by eating a meal. Lose 1 CON when you gain each stack. Counts as one burden, however many stacks there are.

**Thirsty** – Gained by not drinking for a day, removed by drinking water. When you gain a stack, lose 1d6 CON.

Hunger & thirst count as one burden each, however many stacks there are.

# ENCOUNTERS

When an encounter is rolled, the DM will roll or draw to determine who sees who first:

Card Draw	2d6 Roll	Result
A/Q♠	2	PCs Ambushed, surprised unless they roll 6+ initiative.
♠	3-5	PCs seen first, cannot surprise.
♣♥	6-8	Normal initiative.
♦	9-11	PCs see monsters first, cannot be surprised.
A/Q♦	12	PCs hear the monsters coming, may set ambush.

If one side is very cautious, noisy, numerous or stealthy the DM may apply advantage or disadvantage, or simply declare a result without consulting the table.

Normally encounters will occur at sight distance, based on visibility and terrain or the layout of the dungeon.

## AMBUSHES

In an ambush, the ambushers decide the distance at which combat starts, as long as they have some way to perceive the foe is in position from their hiding place.

In the first round of combat, ambushed PCs have -4 to their initiative rolls, while ambushing PCs roll at +4. This means there's only a one in six chance for an ambushed side to avoid being surprised.

# DISPOSITION & FRIENDLY REACTIONS

The DM will also make another roll or draw to determine the attitude of the creatures encountered.

If a PC makes an overture toward the creatures (hailing in a friendly manner, bribing them with food, announcing that the party have slain their hated foe etc.) roll or draw again.

If the overture is successful (an effective bribe, welcome news, or in the absence of anything more concrete to offer, a successful CHA test) use the better result. If it should fail, use the worse result.

If the DM wants to make the result dependent on CHA or another attribute, she can compare the card value to their attribute. Count the face cards in increments of 2: J=12, Q=14, K=16, and A=18.

Card Draw	Roll	Attitude
A/Q♣	2	Hostile
♣	3-5	Unfriendly
♠♦	6-8	Wary
♥	9-11	Reasonable
A/Q♥	12	Friendly

What the results mean is up to the DM. A ‘Friendly’ tiger may be well-fed and lazy. ‘Reasonable’ guards may make demands of the PCs but let them leave without a fight. ‘Hostile’ allies might have mistaken the PCs for someone else. ‘Unfriendly’ foes may still attack on sight, as they are already disposed to be hostile to the PCs.

**King:** Reshuffle the deck after the encounter.

**Optional:** Only count Queens if both cards are red or both are black. (This makes the probabilities match up more closely to the 2d6 roll, if you want to be finicky about it.)

# COMBAT

If combat ensues, the game moves to measuring time in 30-second combat rounds. Each round is resolved as follows:

1. Roll Initiative
2. PCs with Surprise take action and reroll.
3. PCs with rolls of 4-8 act, in descending order.
4. Monsters act.
5. Unsurprised PCs with rolls of 1-3 act, in descending order.

## INITIATIVE

When a round of combat begins, each PC rolls their initiative die. This die is determined by their class but may be reduced if they wear heavy or medium armour, or cast an arcane spell.

On the first round, any result of 6+ means the PC has Surprised their foes; they can take their actions immediately and then reroll their die, acting twice in the round. Similarly, any result of 1 means the PC is Surprised and misses their first round of action.

This is assuming surprise is possible; if one side is already aware of the other and the possibility of an attack, it cannot be surprised.

Once surprise has been resolved, the DM counts down from 8 to 1. PCs may take their actions when their number is called. If they want to delay and act later in the round, they can reduce the number on their die to whatever they want. If two PCs have the same number, they can decide between themselves who goes first.

After the 4s have gone, the monsters have their turn. The DM will declare their actions, and then resume calling out for the PCs from 3-1.

# MOVEMENT

When your number is called you may move once, and take another action such as making an attack or casting a spell.

Movement in Red Hack is ‘theatre of the mind’; there is no board or battlemat, though a simple sketched diagram may be helpful in remembering where everyone is in relation to one another.

When you take a move you can reduce or increase your distance to another character or location by 1 step – for example from *Near* to *Close*, or *Far* to *Near*.

As well as taking your one move per round, you can take additional moves up to your Max move either by spending reactions as a countermove (see *Reactions*, p27) or by spending your action.

Different creatures have different movement rates:

Base/Max	Examples	D&D
0/1	Dragon turtle, ochre jelly	30'
1/1	Dwarf, mummy, skeleton	60'
1/2	Crocodile, cyclops, dragons	90'
1/3	Human, bear, war horse	120'
1/4	Boar, camel, lion, storm giant	150'
2/4	Centaur, sea dragon, pixie	180'
2/5	Aurochs, panther, sea horse	210'
3/5	Riding horse, unicorn, wraith	240'
4/8	Air elemental, griffon	360'

Very slow creatures, like the Ochre Jelly, don't get a move every round – they have to move as a *Reaction*, or spend their action to move at all!

Most PCs move at 1/3, meaning they can always make 1 move per round unless immobilised, and a maximum of 3 moves in a single round.

You can take the extra two moves either by using *Reactions* to move out of your turn, or spending your main action to take all your remaining moves for the round immediately.

For example, if you simply want to move as fast as possible, you spend your move to move once and your action to move twice more. If earlier in the round you had taken a move as a *Reaction*, spending your action would only get you one more move on your turn.

Riding a horse or other animal lets you use its movement rate.

## **STANDING YOUR GROUND & TAKING COVER**

Usually combat is a big whirling melee where anyone within *Close* range can attack anyone else, but if you're outnumbered you might want to stand still so that only a few of the enemy can attack you at once.

- If you stand your ground *in the open*, up to 6 foes can attack you.
- If you stand your ground *with your back to a wall*, only 3 can attack you.
- If you stand your ground *blocking a doorway*, only one can attack you.
- If you find some cover, you can use it as armour against ranged attacks. You can use the rating of your cover instead of your AC.
  - *Shrubs or a bush*: AC12, same as leather armour.
  - *A rock or low wall*: AC14, same as chainmail.
  - *A window or crenellations*: AC16, same as platemail.

This assumes you still have line of sight to your target – you are firing at them or looking out at them. If you conceal yourself completely from their sight they cannot attack you at all!

# ATTACKING & DEFENDING

To attack a foe, roll 1d20 against your STR (if you're fighting close up, with a sword or spear) or DEX (if you're attacking from a distance, with a bow or sling). The difficulty is the monster's AC, which the DM will tell you.

If you hit, you roll your damage to find out how badly you hurt the monster. If you roll a 20, it's a critical hit, and you roll your damage twice.

When the monsters have their turn, they may attack you. If a monster attacks you, and you have any *Close* allies, you can invite them to defend you. If one of them has a *Reaction* to spend she can attack the monster before it gets to attack! See *Reactions*, below.

If the monster is still alive, the attack occurs - roll to see if you defend. You roll your AC. The difficulty is the monster's HD, which serves as a guide to how strong it is.

If you fail to defend, you take damage from the monster. If you roll a 1, you take a critical hit, and the monster does its damage twice.

## RANGED ATTACKS

Ranged attacks beyond your weapon's listed range are made with Disadvantage.

Firing into melee carries a risk of hitting your allies. If you miss with an attack into melee, the DM picks an ally or bystander; if the roll exceeds their AC (or their AC+10 if an NPC) then they are hit instead.

Every time you roll a ranged attack, also roll your ammunition usage die. It'll save time if you get used to rolling your attack, usage dice, and any chaser dice all at the same time!

## FALLING PRONE

A humanoid character may fall prone as a move or reaction, or as part of another action (such as jumping). A prone character has cover against missile attacks, is unable to use reactions, and has disadvantage to attack and defend in melee. Standing up requires a move.

## SHIELDS & DUAL WIELDING

Your main hand may be wielding a weapon, but what do you do with your other hand?

- *Wield a weapon two handed?* You'll do a little more damage.
- *Carry a torch or lantern?* You can provide light for the party.
- *Keep a free hand to cast spells?* Wizards and clerics need a free hand to cast. Clerics can use a hand with a shield or light in it.
- *Carry a second weapon?* If you're dual wielding, and you miss with a standard attack, you can roll the attack again with your second weapon!
- *Carry a shield?* If you or a Close ally gets hit by a melee or ranged attack, you can spend a *Reaction* to roll to defend against the attack again using your STR (or HD for a monster) instead of AC. Blocking with a shield doesn't technically count as a Reaction, so you can even block Reaction attacks!

A shield used to block a critical breaks, unless magical - in which case it breaks the weapon! If both are magical, the stronger item survives.

## READYING ITEMS

Drawing a 'worn' item from a belt, scabbard, or quiver doesn't take an action, but does provide an opportunity for foes to react. Taking a stowed item from your backpack or a sack takes your action for the round, as well as provoking reaction attacks.

## SPELLCASTING

Casting a spell (including most cantrips) takes your main action for the round, prompts reaction attacks from monsters able to hit you, and reduces your initiative roll by 2 – the spell goes off 2 initiative steps after you declare it. If you take damage or are incapacitated during these two steps, the spell fails and the slot is wasted.

## AREA ATTACKS

Some attacks, such as certain spells, affect an area. In theatre of the mind:

- **Blast:** Affects the target and everyone within a certain range (*Close*, *Near* etc.) of them.
- **Cone:** Affects up to two targets within the cone's length of one another, and everyone *Close* to the second target.
- **Line:** Affects one target and anyone *Close* to them. If you move to line it up immediately before casting, affects two targets within the line's length of each other and anyone *Close* to them.

## PLAYER VS PLAYER, MONSTER VS MONSTER

Because players roll their attacks *and* their defense, monsters and players have different stats! Monster stats are mostly difficulty ratings, while player stats are attributes to be rolled against.

So what happens when two monsters fight? Have the monsters make defense rolls, and add 10 to their AC for those rolls.

If a monster has to make a saving throw against something other than a spell cast by a PC, make it on 10+HD.

And when PCs fight? Both PCs roll, and the *highest successful result* wins. So if a STR 14 fighter attacks an AC 12 thief, he misses if he rolls 15 or more; but if he rolls 7 and the thief rolls 9, he still misses.

# REACTIONS

Reactions allow you to interrupt another character's turn and make a move or attack. As a PC you have a certain number of them you can use each round, based on your class and level.

You can only react to moves and actions; you cannot react to a reaction, nor can you ready items as part of a reaction – there just isn't time.

What you can do as a reaction includes:

- **Countermove** – *Maintain distance* between you and an opponent trying to approach or get away from you by reacting to their move and moving with them. *Intercept* a *Near* opponent mid-move, keeping them from reaching a weaker ally or coveted item and making them end their move *Close* to you instead. You may countermove as long as you haven't reached your maximum number of moves per round – usually 3.
  - *Any number of characters may countermove in response to a move.*
  - *Every monster with moves remaining for the round may roll to react.*
  - *PCs with moves and reactions remaining may always react.*
- **Counterattack** – Attack a foe about to attack one of your allies in melee range.
  - *Only one ally can counterattack for each attacking enemy.*
  - *The character being attacked nominates an ally to use this opening.*
  - *Monsters roll to react (see below.)*

- **Overwatch** – Fire a ranged attack on a foe approaching you or moving out of cover or melee.
  - *Any number of characters may fire overwatch against a single target.*
  - *Any PC with reactions remaining and a ranged weapon ready may fire overwatch.*
  - *Roll for every eligible monster.*
- **Opportunity** – Attack a foe while they are changing weapons, drinking a potion, casting a spell, firing a bow in melee, or taking some other non-attack action when they should have their eyes on you.
  - *Only one melee attack can be made in response to each opportunity.*
  - *If a monster triggered the opportunity, the DM must offer it to a PC, who can then pass it to another eligible PC if they wish.*
  - *If a PC triggered the opportunity, roll for monsters to react as normal.*

Some weapons provide additional openings for reaction attacks. A spear gives you a chance to hit anyone moving *Close* to you. A dagger allows you to make a reaction attack against anyone attacking you, instead of inviting another player to defend you. Conversely, if you attack an armed foe with your bare hands, they can make a reaction attack on you instead of calling on an ally.

Fighter Techniques also provide ways to spend reactions.

# MONSTER REACTIONS

Monsters can do all this too, but they do not have a supply of *Reactions* each round. Instead they roll every time an opening arises to see if they are able to react to it. Their chance to react is based on their HD.

If there are multiple monsters and only one can react, roll twice and take the best result. The one to react will be the slowest monster who could react on a given roll – so if you face a dragon and three goblins, and roll 1 on the reaction roll, one of the goblins will react and not the dragon.

Hit Dice	0-1	2-3	4-6	7-9	10-13	14+
React On	1/6	2/6	3/6	4/6	5/6	6/6

Monsters of 4HD or more may have Fighter Techniques, allowing them to react in more situations than the four listed above.

# DAMAGE

Possible damage dice include:

1d2	1d3	1d4	1d6	1d8	1d10	1d12	+1 per step
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Each weapon has a base damage die, which is increased by High STR, being a fighter, or wielding a weapon in two hands. The base die is reduced by Low STR. When a die is increased or reduced, step it up or down to the next die in the list.

When you hit a foe you roll your damage die and subtract the result from their HP.

## MORALE & 'BLOODIED'

PCs never have to check morale; it's up to the player to decide and play out how scared their character is!

Monsters & NPCs have a morale rating from 2-12, usually around 7. 6 represents green or unsteady troops, 8 veterans, 9 elites.

Prey Animal	2	Veteran	8
Cowardly	5	Elite	9
Unsteady	6	Fanatical	10
Average	7	Mindless	12

Monsters have to test morale up to twice per combat. When this happens is up to the DM and depends on things like the temperament of the monsters and how many are present – a single monster is likely to run when reduced to half health, while many smaller monsters might be more alarmed by deaths on their side. Some possible triggers are:

- First blood.
- First death on their side.
- First character bloodied (reduced to half HP) on their side.
- Half of their force defeated.
- Witnessing an ally die by critical hit or grisly magic.
- An effective attempt at intimidation by the PCs.

The DM rolls 2d6; if the result is equal to or under the monster's morale they continue fighting. The second test is at a penalty of -1.

If the result exceeds their morale they are broken. Broken enemies will flee or attempt to surrender on their turn, and will immediately show signs of not wanting to fight – cowering, dropping weapons etc.

# INJURY & DYING

Monsters go down when they reach 0 HP. PCs take any excess damage from their CON, and must make a CON test every time they lose CON while at 0 hp. If they fail they are incapacitated. Another PC can carry them, but the casualty is a Burden (several, if their gear is carried too.)

When a 0-hp NPC is bandaged, healed, or left for dead for an hour, roll a d6 on the following table. Subtract one from the roll if they were magically healed, add one if they were abandoned.

For PCs, compare the amount of CON lost to the following table. If they were healed, apply the healing to their CON first. (This is the only time Cure spells can heal CON!) If left for dead, deduct 2 CON before consulting the table.

A downed character can be killed easily outside of combat, and there's no need to roll for the survival of every encounter. If the PCs defeat a pair of Carrion Crawlers we can assume the beasts are dead; if they defeat a group of enemy soldiers they may wish to take prisoners.

## DOWNED CHARACTER TABLE

Roll	CON Lost	Result	Effect
1	1-3	Winded	You take a level of Exhaustion...
2	4-5	Wounded	You take a Wound, until the damage is healed...
3	6-7	Injured	You take an Injury, requiring 4d8 extra CON to heal...
4	8-9	Festering	...and you must save vs death or suffer an infection...
5	10+	Maimed	...and you suffer a life-changing injury such as loss of a limb...
6	All	Doomed	...and you are dead or dying.

A character who suffers a wound, injury or infection gains a Burden to represent it.

## **FIGHTING THROUGH**

An incapacitated character can continue through a supreme effort of will. They must have a hand free to bandage or cover or clutch at their injury, and will be visibly struggling to carry on. They must spend an action to drag themselves upright, but they may still use their move that round.

They lose a further 1 CON, and another for every full dungeon turn (if exploring) or combat round (if fighting) that they maintain the effort.

## **BURDENS FROM HARM**

**Wound** – A minor hurt gained as a result of losing CON. Removed once your CON is fully restored.

**Injury** – A serious, lingering wound, you must spend a further 4d8 points of CON to remove it. This can come either from your current CON or from rolls to recover CON during downtime.

**Infection** – The character experiences fever and chills, and loses a point of CON every day until their CON is restored to full or they receive a spell to *Cure Disease*.

## **RESTORING CON WITH MAGICAL HEALING**

- Healing items restore 1 CON per die of healing while at full HP.
- Care from a Cleric heals 1 CON per cleric level per downtime.

# SKILLS

## JUMPING GAPS

- A simple STR test lets you jump a 10ft gap from a standing start, or 20ft with a run-up.
- If you fail, you fall into the gap. If the gap is deep you may be able to catch something on the way down.
- Falling damage is 1d6/10ft, DEX save vs Death for half. See *Height & Falling*, p9.

## CLIMBING WALLS

- Difficulty varies, but Thief discount applies:

Situation	Difficulty
With secured rope	Automatic success if unencumbered.
Slope or wall with handholds	1
Overhang or sheer wall	7
Cavern roof	13
Per 50' climbed after the first	+1

- Failure (over DEX): You cannot make progress.
- Failure (under difficulty): You fall at a random point in the climb.
- If an ally falls while *Close* or tied together, you may catch them and share the 1d6 damage per 10' you would have fallen, STR save vs Death for ½.

# THIEF SKILLS

Certain tasks, such as lifting a guard's keys without him noticing, or moving in complete silence, require training and finesse.

The following tests have a base difficulty of 7. Thieves can deduct their level from the difficulty!

## PICKING POCKETS

- +1 difficulty for every level of the target over 5.
- If you fail on an even number you get caught.

## PICKING LOCKS

- If you fail you may give up or push to retry.
- If you push there is a consequence - monsters beyond the door are alerted, a tool breaks, you trigger a trap or leave evidence behind. If the result is odd, the consequence may be dangerous (monsters or traps); if even, merely frustrating (evidence, broken tools.)

## HIDING IN SHADOWS & MOVING SILENTLY

- Simply announce that you're doing it.
- When someone would attack or otherwise respond to your presence, make the test.
  - Test no more than once per round.
  - If you fail you grant the detecting character an opening for a reaction attack if within range.
    - If you pass you can make a Reaction Attack on them.
    - If you incapacitate an opponent in a single round before they can counter attack, you will not necessarily be noticed by other opponents.

## DETECTING & DISARMING TRAPPED CHESTS

- Roll WIS secretly to determine if a chest is trapped.
- Disarm treasure traps by the same process as lockpicking.
- Room traps must be solved like puzzles, though this skill can help in disarming or identifying delicate elements of a trap.

## IDENTIFYING TREASURES & MAGICAL ITEMS

Spend a turn examining the item (one PC at a time) and make an INT test, difficulty 7.

**1:** *You think you know what it is, but you are alarmingly mistaken.*

**2-10:** *You know what it's worth and who might buy it.*

**11-19:** *You know what it does.*

**20:** *You happen to know exactly what it does, what it's worth, and perhaps even additional details such as its history, ingredients and so on.*

**Failure (under difficulty):** *You have a vague idea what it does.*

**Failure (over ability):** *You have a vague idea who might want it/be able to identify it.*

On a 20 you can take an Experience explaining your past with the item.

*Example: Identifying a Healing Potion*

**1:** *This is definitely poison.*

**2-10:** *It's some kind of potion, you could sell it for 50gp to a wizard.*

**11-19:** *This a potion of healing, it restores 1d6+1 HP.*

**20:** *Oh, this smells just like a healing potion made with stirge blood! It's worth 50gp and heals 1d6+1 HP. I used to work for an alchemist who used this recipe!*

**Failure (under difficulty):** *This is some kind of curative potion.*

**Failure (over ability):** *A wizard might buy this.*

# LANGUAGES

Make an INT test against the following difficulty:

- 1 - Second language commonly spoken in PC's homeland.
- 4 - Language of neighbouring lands or cultures.
- 7 - Language of a foreign land or subterranean culture.
- 10 - Dead, alien or obscure language.

Thieves & Wizards get a difficulty discount, but if they succeed while rolling under the base difficulty, they only know the written form.

For example, a level 4 Thief with INT 12 tries to read some ancient hieroglyphs. They deduct their level from the difficulty, taking it from 10 to 6, and roll an 8. They know the meaning of the hieroglyphs but because their roll was under the unmodified difficulty, they don't know what the words sound like.

**1: Miscommunication.** The PC believes they speak the language better than they do, and are likely to give offence or obtain mistaken information.

**2-7: Rudimentary.** The PC can communicate and understand basic concepts and get the gist of what's being said. "You think they want you to follow them"; "he wants you to give him a gift."

**8-13: Crude.** The PC can communicate using simple language.

**14-19: Fluent.** The PC can communicate normally using the language.

**20: Like a native.** The PC could write poetry in the language.

**Failure (difficulty or ability):** You don't know the language.

When the result indicates you know a language you can write it on your sheet as a new Background, mentioning your level of fluency – which you can increase through study, see the booklet on *Downtimes*.

# MONSTER LORE

Monsters are ranked by obscurity:

**Mundane:** Animals (wolf, bear), common humanoids (goblin, elf.)  
*Increase your knowledge rolled by one step.*

**Fantastical:** Giant creatures (hill giant, giant octopus), undead (skeleton, wight), mythical beast (troll, dragon), weird humanoid (sahuagin, lizardman), dungeon fauna (rust monster, gelatinous cube).

**Fabulous:** Extradimensional being (elemental, faerie, devil), being from another time (dinosaur, robot), eldritch abomination (mind flayer, aboleth). *Decrease your knowledge rolled by one step.*

And degrees of monster lore by familiarity:

**Ignorant:** You've never heard of the monster or have no useful insight.

**Folklore:** You've heard rumours and tales of the creature.

**Familiar:** You know its HD and one or two important details.

**Studied:** You have detailed knowledge of the creature, including strengths and weaknesses.

**Expert:** You have studied the creature closely and know all there is to know about it.

Wizards step up their knowledge of every creature by one step, unless the roll indicates clueless/ignorant.

Make an INT test to determine what you know of a monster:

**1: Clueless:** *You are dangerously wrong about the creature's habits, temperament or abilities.*

**2-7: Folklore:** *You've heard rumours and tales of the creature.*

**8-13: Familiar:** *You know its HD and one or two important details.*

**14-19: Studied:** *You have detailed knowledge of strengths and weaknesses.*

**20: Expert:** *Gain an Experience explaining how you know so much of this creature! You still gain the experience even if this result is reduced to **Studied**.*

**Failure: Ignorant:** *You've never heard of the monster or have no useful insight.*

*Example: Studying an Osquip [Fantastical]*

**1: Dangerously mistaken:** *This is an osquip, they're good-natured herbivores.*

**2-7: Folklore:** *I knew a guy who said one took off his leg in one bite.*

**8-13: Familiar:** *A dangerous form of tunneling vermin with a powerful bite. 3HD.*

**14-19: Studied:** *Their bite does 2d6 damage. They show up in packs of 5 or so, and are sometimes used as guard dogs and steeds by small subterranean humanoids but also sometimes prey upon them. Their number of legs can vary. They can burrow through stone and their tunnels are well-hidden.*

**20: Expert:** *I did my thesis on Osquips. (Read the whole MM entry.)*

**Failure: Ignorant:** *What's an Osquip?*

# NPCS

## RELATIONSHIPS

Each relationship has a level associated with it which determines what the NPC or group is willing to do for the PC:

1. **Strangers:** Wouldn't know the PC from Adam.
2. **Acquainted:** The NPC knows the PC's name and has seen them around. They'll extend common courtesy - give directions, light a pipe, or introduce a friend.
3. **Associates:** There's a little friendship, gratitude or shared experience. The NPC will do small favours - lend a few coins, run an errand that doesn't take them out of their way, give reasonable advice.
4. **Friends:** A serious connection; the pair have a common cause, owe each other a lot, have shared a significant experience, and are likely to genuinely enjoy one another's company. The NPC will go out of their way to help the PC - give them coin when they're hard up, take moderate risks to protect or aid them, or spend hours helping to solve their problems.
5. **Close:** True and old friends, lovers, comrades in arms, a beloved mentor and their student. The NPC will be generous with the PC, will risk their life if they have to. At this level the NPC will only ask for something in return if they're being asked to make a significant sacrifice or take a terrible risk.

It's important to remember that all of these bonds cut both ways, and the NPC will expect the same behaviour of the PC; if an NPC is in trouble they will call on their PC friends for help. A refusal is likely reduce the level of the relationship as they realise "maybe we aren't friends after all."

An NPC may do favours above their relationship level, but will want something in return. If the request is more than one level above the level of the relationship, it may be off the table entirely.

Some NPCs – and, in particular, organisations – may have specific relationship trackers with more or fewer levels, and specific rewards and requirements for each level.

## **HIRELINGS & RETAINERS**

There are two kinds of followers available to PCs:

**Hirelings** are NPCs paid to serve the PC. They may be soldiers, sages, labourers and so on. They will not enter dungeons or embark upon adventures. Soldiers will escort a caravan through the wilderness and fight monsters who attack it, but they will not enter a dragon's lair willingly. A PC may have as many hirelings as she can afford to hire, and the only limit is the number available in the local community.

**Retainers** are NPCs who consider themselves to some degree a part of the PC's party. They may require pay, and often expect a share of the treasure. The total number of Retainers is limited by the PC's CHA. They will go on adventures, enter dungeons, and join in the risky activities of the party, though may balk if they feel they are being treated poorly or the situation is too dangerous.

A PC has a total number of Retainer slots equal to their CHA. A retainer with a **close** relationship with the PC uses one slot; a **friend** uses 2, an **associate** 3, an **acquaintance** 4, and a **stranger** 5. So a PC with a CHA of 11 could recruit three associates and one friend to adventure with them.

These numbers assume a type of game where it's reasonable for a PC to have an entourage; DMs who don't want to deal with too many NPCs in the party may wish to increase the costs.

In combat, Retainers are controlled by and act on their leader's initiative. The leader's initiative die is reduced to the lowest of the followers, unless the leader is a fighter.

## **RETAINER MORALE CHECKS**

When adventuring in any situation in which a Retainer has to make a morale check, either in combat or as a result of frightening events or orders, make a test on their PC's CHA, with advantage or disadvantage based on particularly good/bad pay or treatment. The difficulty of the test is the number of slots the retainer is taking up.

On a failure, the Retainer balks. In combat they may retreat to a safe distance or fight more defensively; when being given dangerous-sounding orders they may refuse; and they will usually make some kind of demand, usually either for greater rewards or less danger.

If their demand isn't met and the PC fails another roll, they may consider abandoning or betraying the party instead of making another demand.

## CREATING RETAINERS & OTHER LEVELLED NPCS

Roll 3d6 in order for attributes, or assign 14, 12, 11, 10, 9, 7.

If you want them to start above level 1, decide how many levels you want to add. Spend points on the following table equal to twice that number to improve the character's primary and secondary requisites.

Then, spend four times the number of levels added on any attribute. No attribute may be raised more than the total number of levels being added.

Otherwise, follow the procedure for creating PCs in the *Making a Character* booklet.

Current Attribute	Cost to Raise
3-4	2
5-8	3
9-11	4
12	5
13	6
14	7
15	8
16	10
17	13

# MAGICAL ITEMS

Minor, single-use magical items, such as potions and scrolls, can be created by their corresponding downtime actions or through Spiritual Journeys.

More significant items begin life as Splendid Items, created from fabulous materials by master craftsmen, and become magical by featuring in epic events worthy of story and song. These events awaken the magic latent within all such items.

Splendid items come with a small bonus indicating their great potential and craftsmanship.

An item used in an act of hideous perfidy or tragic failure may become cursed.

In game terms, the DM will determine if an act is terrible enough to produce a cursed item, while players (with the DM's approval) can choose to invest an Experience into an item to awaken it. The Experience must be suitably impressive and have been earned while carrying the item. The Experience is checked off as though used for levelling. This can be done in the moment, if the DM agrees the event counts as an Experience, or after the adventure.

# WEAPONS

Weapons have a bonus from +1 to +5, which adds to their damage and determines the kind of *chaser die* rolled along with their attacks.

Weapons will usually awaken to +1, though particularly powerful experiences may start the item at a higher bonus.

To advance to further bonuses after awakening, more Experiences must be added, and they must be in some way compatible with – and perhaps greater than – the first. *Research* or *Spiritual Journeys* may be used to reveal potential experiences to seek out in order to advance an item.

### **Optional Rule: Alternate Weapon & Armour Bonus**

In other systems the modifier is added to the hit roll as well as the damage roll. This doesn't work in *the Red Hack* because higher rolls are not always better, and the system seeks to keep modifiers to a minimum.

Chaser dice make magic weapons more effective the less likely the roll is to succeed. If your miss chance is around 50% they are about as effective as adding to the roll in another system would be. You may find this narratively satisfying – magic weapons only deign to help in situations of real danger, not when casually dispatching unworthy foes.

If not, another approach is to simply say that magic weapons hit if you roll equal to or under their bonus. This has a couple of effects:

- Magical weapons no longer guide your arm – the fighter's skill is the only thing that determines whether the attack connects.
- They cleave through hide and steel, reducing the benefits of armour.
- They eliminate the automatic miss on a 1! So while your attack isn't supernaturally guided, with a magic weapon you'll never blunder.

For armour, you can add the bonus to the total AC of the armour. If this brings the total to 20 or higher, (as in the case of +5 plate) the armour will allow the wearer to reroll the first 1 rolled on a defence roll, dramatically increasing their resistance to critical hits.

It's up to you whether you want to roll an extra die, and whether you want magic weapons that weave fate and favour the underdog, or ones that are simply supernaturally sharp and won't slip in your hand.

## **AMMUNITION**

Cost 100, 300 and 450 for ud8 arrows/bolts of +1, +2 and +3 respectively. They require the services of a master fletcher, and rare materials. At the DM's discretion certain materials may provide additional benefits.

## **ARMOUR**

An armour piece that awakens gains a magical +1 with a chaser die instead of its splendid bonus; these pluses can combine to provide a magical bonus of up to +5 and a corresponding d4 chaser die.

Under this system only heavy armour can exceed +4, and light armour is capped at +2, due to the differing number of pieces between types.

### **Optional Rule: One Magical Piece per Set**

Alternatively, the DM may simply rule that armour pieces become magical in the same way weapons do, and through the investment of further experiences can reach +5, and only the die from the highest plus in the suit applies – though other magical armour pieces can contribute other effects.

## **MAGIC WEAPONS & ARMOUR IN PLAYER VS PLAYER**

In player vs player combat, if one side rolls a success due to magic armour or weapons they succeed regardless of the number rolled. If both players do so, go back to comparing their d20 rolls.

## WANDS & RODS

- Awaken in the normal way, by the player investing an Experience.
- Receive a usage die of charges, see table below.
- May be recharged with a ritual usually involving risk, inconvenience or privation, e.g.
  - Submerging a Wand of Fireballs in lava and retrieving it.
  - Leaving a Rod of Cancellation at least one mile away from any magic item, creature, or wizard for a week.
  - Feeding a Staff of Healing with your own CON.

Item	Charges
Rod	ud8
Wand	ud10
Staff	ud12