CARCASS CRAWLER

The official Old-School Essentials zine   Issue #2

Phase elves and wood elves

Town services, hiring retainers, quick equipment

Snake cult dungeon & bestiary

Energy weapons

OLD-SCHOOL
ESSENTIALS
RETRO ADVENTURE GAME

CARCASS CRAWLER

The official Old-School Essentials zine — Issue #2

NECROTIC GNOME

EXALTED FUNERAL

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

Welcome to issue 2 of *Carcass Crawler*—the official *Old-School Essentials* zine. Each issue of *Carcass Crawler* is packed with new material for your games, including new character classes and races, new spells and magic items, new monsters, optional and expanded rules, referee advice, previews of in-development products, short adventures, and more.

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► **Snake cult monsters:** 8 brand new monsters: creepy undead, guardian constructs, and devious serpents.

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COMPATIBILITY

Content in *Carcass Crawler* is compatible with all flavours of *Old-School Essentials* (e.g. Classic Fantasy, Advanced Fantasy). By extension, this means that the content is also compatible with the classic Basic/Expert game and with other games that are based on the Basic/Expert rules.

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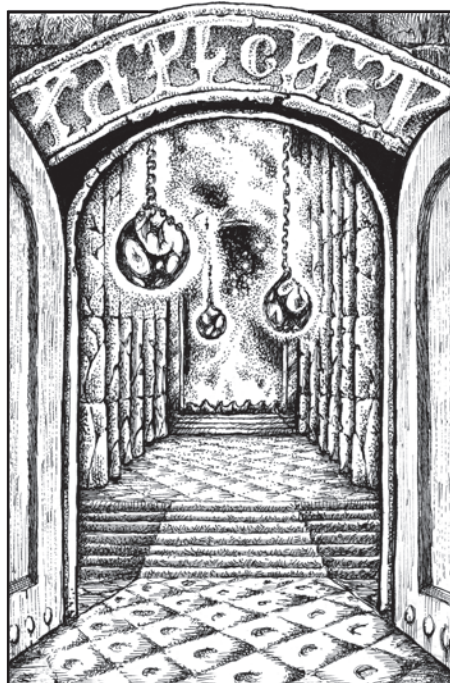
Phase Elf & Wood Elf

By Gavin Norman

Introduction

This article presents two new, optional types of elves for your *Old-School Essentials* games, presented as both classes and separate races (for those using the optional rules for choosing race and class separately).

Introduce these new types of elves as NPCs for player characters to encounter or add them to the roster of character types players may choose from when creating a character.

The Many Kindreds of Elves

Following the tradition laid down by J.R.R. Tolkien, fantasy gaming has always featured many kindreds or sub-species of elves. For campaign worlds that feature multiple elven kindreds, the basic elf class presented in *Old-School Essentials* may be viewed as representing *high elves*. *Old-School Essentials Advanced Fantasy* adds the drow (or *dark elves*) as a playable option. This article now adds two more kindreds: the otherworldly *phase elves* and the secretive *wood elves*.

The relationship between the various kindreds, the details of their shared origins, and the reasons for their sundering should be detailed by the referee, as befits the individual campaign setting.

Too Many Options?

The new classes and races in this article are entirely optional. Some groups love a wide selection of character types, relishing the variety that offers. Other groups prefer a more limited number of options. As always: do what makes your games most enjoyable for your group.

One approach that works well is for the referee to select a limited set of around 7–10 classes / races that suit the flavour of the campaign. For example, in one campaign, wood elves may replace standard elves.

In this way, the number of options available to players when creating characters is kept within reasonable bounds, while the hand-picked set of allowed classes and races can heavily reinforce the flavour of the specific campaign.

Phase Elves

Old-School Essentials is principally inspired by the 1980s Basic/Expert game and the 1970s Advanced 1st Edition game. The phase elf class, however, is inspired by the 1974 Original Edition game, with its idiosyncratic rules whereby a Player Character elf is able to switch between the fighter and magic-user classes in between adventures.

Wood Elves

Secretive elves dwelling in wild, Sylvan forests are undoubtedly one of the most commonly encountered tropes in fantasy fiction. While it is possible to use the standard *Old-School Essentials* elf class to represent such woodland denizens, that class (a heavily armoured wielder of powerful arcane magic) is not an especially good match for the trope. The wood elf class presented here is a better fit, with druidic magic and a range of abilities suited to life in the deep forest.

Separate Race and Class (Optional)

The two new types of elves are also presented here as separate races, for groups who prefer to select character race and class separately.

If using this rule, each player may decide individually whether to create their character by selecting a class alone or by selecting race and class separately.

Character Creation Procedure

If selecting character race and class separately, the following procedure should be used, after rolling ability scores:

1. **Choose a race:** Choose a race from those available, bearing in mind their ability score requirements.

2. **Apply ability score modifiers:** Some races list ability score modifiers. Once you have chosen a race, adjust your character's ability scores as indicated. These modifiers cannot raise an ability score above 18 or lower it below 3.

3. **Choose a class:** The selected character race determines the classes that are available to choose from. Also bear in mind the ability score requirements of some classes. (Note that only core *Old-School Essentials* classes are listed. The referee must decide which races are able to use classes from other sources, e.g. issues of *Carcass Crawler*, if allowed.)

Native Languages

When choosing race and class separately, the character's native languages are determined by the race. The languages listed in the class should be ignored.

Phase Elf

Demihuman Class

Requirements: Minimum INT 9
Prime requisite: INT and STR
Hit Dice: 1d6
Maximum level: 10
Armour: Any, including shields / none
Weapons: Any / dagger
Languages: Alignment, Common, Elvish, Doppelgänger, Dragon, Pixie

Phase elves are slender, fey demihumans with pointed ears. They typically weigh about 120 pounds and are between 5½ and 6 feet tall. Their hair tends to be violet or silver and their eyes are either pure black or pure white—without an iris or pupil (see *Dual Persona*). Phase elves originate from an alternate dimension which is inaccessible to other races, and about which they never speak.

Prime requisites: A phase elf with at least 13 INT and STR gains a 5% bonus to experience. A phase elf with an INT of at least 16 and a STR of at least 13 receives a +10% XP bonus.

Arcane Magic

In their magic-user phase (see *Dual Persona*), a phase elf can make use of the following arcane abilities. See *Magic* in *Old-School Essentials* for full details on arcane magic.

Magical research: A phase elf of any level may spend time and money on magical research. This allows them to add new spells to their spell book and to research other magical effects. When a phase elf reaches 9th level, they are also able to create magic items.

Spell casting: Phase elves carry spell books containing the formulae for arcane spells. The level progression table (opposite) shows both the number of spells in the phase elf's spell book and the number they may memorize, determined by the character's experience level. Thus, a 1st level phase elf has one spell in their spell book, selected by the referee (who may allow the player to choose). The list of spells available to phase elves is found in *Old-School Essentials* (phase elves have the same spell selection as magic-users).

Using magic items: As spell casters, phase elves are able to use magic scrolls of spells on their spell list. They can also use items that may only be used by arcane spell casters (e.g. magic wands).

Combat

A phase elf's combat ability depends on which phase they are in (see *Dual Persona*).

Fighter phase: The phase elf can use all types of weapons and armour.

Magic-user phase: The phase elf can only use daggers and is unable to use shields or wear any kind of armour.

Detect Secret Doors

Phase elves have keen eyes that allow them, when actively searching, to detect hidden and secret doors with a 2-in-6 chance (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Phase Elf Level Progression

Level	XP	HD	THAC0	Saving Throws					Spells (MU Phase)				
				D	W	P	B	S	1	2	3	4	5
1	0	1d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	1	–	–	–	–
2	2,500	2d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	2	–	–	–	–
3	5,000	3d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	2	1	–	–	–
4	10,000	4d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	2	2	–	–	–
5	20,000	5d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	2	2	1	–	–
6	40,000	6d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	2	2	2	–	–
7	80,000	7d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	3	2	2	1	–
8	150,000	8d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	3	3	2	2	–
9	300,000	9d6	14 [+5]	8	9	9	10	10	3	3	3	2	1
10	450,000	9d6+2*	14 [+5]	8	9	9	10	10	3	3	3	3	2

THAC0: Attack matrix row to use. (Ascending AC attack bonus in [].)
*: Modifiers from CON no longer apply.

D: Death / poison; **W:** Wands;
P: Paralysis / petrify; **B:** Breath attacks;
S: Spells / rods / staves.

Dual Persona

A phase elf has two independent but interconnected personae or *phases*—their *fighter phase* and their *magic-user phase*.

Phasing: Each morning, upon awakening, the character may choose to switch to their other phase. This is called *phasing*. Phasing is possible at most once per day.

Class abilities: Certain class abilities (see *Arcane Magic* and *Combat*) are dependent on the active phase.

Eye colour: When in the fighter phase, the character's eyes are pure white; when in the magic-user phase their eyes are pure black.

Personalities: The two phases have complete knowledge of the other's actions. They usually share the same name, but their personalities and goals may differ.

Alignment: The two phases may be of different alignment.

Immunity to Ghoul Paralysis

Phase elves are completely unaffected by the paralysis that ghouls can inflict.

Infravision

Phase elves have infravision to 60' (see *Darkness* under *Hazards and Challenges* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Listening at Doors

Phase elves have a 2-in-6 chance of hearing noises (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

After Reaching 9th Level

A phase elf may bring an extra-dimensional space into being, accessible via a magical doorway in a location of the character's choosing. The extra-dimensional space contains a 10 mile diameter area, consisting of (possibly otherworldly) terrain and wildlife agreed with the referee. No buildings or sentient creatures are present, but the phase elf may construct a stronghold inside their extra-dimensional domain.

Wood Elf

Demihuman Class

Requirements: Minimum DEX 9, minimum INT 9
Prime requisite: DEX and WIS
Hit Dice: 1d6
Maximum level: 10
Armour: Leather, shields
Weapons: Any
Languages: Alignment, Common, Elvish, Bugbear, Dryad, Gnoll

Wood elves are slender, fey demihumans with pointed ears. They typically weigh about 110 pounds and are between 5 and 5½ feet tall. Wood elves dwell in hidden, treetop settlements in deep forests, and are seldom seen by humans. They are reclusive and defend their homelands against trespassers. Like druids, wood elves worship the force of nature and the myriad deities that personify it.

Prime requisites: A wood elf with at least 13 DEX and WIS gains a 5% bonus to experience. A wood elf with a DEX of at least 16 and a WIS of at least 13 receives a +10% XP bonus.

Awareness

Wood elves are only surprised on a roll of 1. This may mean that a wood elf is able to act in the surprise round while their companions are surprised.

Combat

Because of their need for stealth and free movement, wood elves cannot wear armour heavier than leather. They can use shields and any weapon.

Detect Secret Doors

Wood elves have keen eyes that allow them, when actively searching, to detect hidden and secret doors with a 2-in-6 chance (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Divine Magic

See *Magic* in *Old-School Essentials* for full details on divine magic.

Deity disfavour: Wood elves must be faithful to the tenets of their alignment and religion. Wood elves who fall from favour with their deity may incur penalties.

Magical research: A wood elf of any level may spend time and money on magical research. This allows them to create new spells or other magical effects associated with their deity. When a wood elf reaches 9th level, they are also able to create magic items.

Spell casting: A wood elf may pray to receive spells from nature. The power and number of spells available to a wood elf are determined by the character's experience level. The list of spells available to wood elves is found in *Old-School Essentials Advanced Fantasy* (wood elves have the same spell selection as druids). If not using *Old-School Essentials Advanced Fantasy*, wood elves have the same spell selection as clerics (but cannot memorize *cure light wounds* until reaching 2nd level).

Using magic items: As spell casters, wood elves can use magic scrolls of spells on their spell list. They can also use items that may only be used by divine spell casters (e.g. some staves).

Foraging and Hunting

A party with a wood elf succeeds at foraging with a 2-in-6 chance and finds prey when hunting with a 5-in-6 chance (see *Wilderness Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Wood Elf Level Progression

Level	XP	HD	THAC0	D	W	P	B	S	1	2	3	4	5
				Saving Throws					**Spells**				
1	0	1d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	1	–	–	–	–
2	3,000	2d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	2	–	–	–	–
3	6,000	3d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	2	1	–	–	–
4	12,000	4d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	2	2	–	–	–
5	24,000	5d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	2	2	1	–	–
6	48,000	6d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	2	2	2	–	–
7	100,000	7d6	14 [+5]	8	9	9	10	10	3	2	2	1	–
8	200,000	8d6	14 [+5]	8	9	9	10	10	3	3	2	2	–
9	350,000	9d6	14 [+5]	8	9	9	10	10	3	3	3	2	1
10	500,000	9d6+2*	12 [+7]	6	7	8	8	8	3	3	3	3	2

THAC0: Attack matrix row to use. (Ascending AC attack bonus in [].)
*: Modifiers from CON no longer apply.

D: Death / poison; **W:** Wands;
P: Paralysis / petrify; **B:** Breath attacks;
S: Spells / rods / staves.

Hiding

Wood elves have an uncanny ability to disappear from sight. In woods or undergrowth, a wood elf can hide with a 90% chance of success.

Immunity to Ghoul Paralysis

Wood elves are completely unaffected by the paralysis that ghouls can inflict.

Infravision

Wood elves have infravision to 60' (see *Darkness* under *Hazards and Challenges* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Listening at Doors

Wood elves have a 2-in-6 chance of hearing noises (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Missile Attack Bonus

Wood elves' keen coordination grants them a +1 bonus to attack rolls with all missile weapons.

After Reaching 9th Level

A wood elf may construct a treetop stronghold in the depths of the forest, blending in with the natural environment of a site of great beauty. The stronghold must be made of wood, but construction costs as much as similar work in stone, due to the exquisite quality of craftsmanship involved.

Forest animals within a 5 mile radius of the completed stronghold will become friends with the wood elves. They may warn of intruders, carry messages and news, and so on. In exchange for this friendship, the wood elf ruler must protect the animals from harm.

A wood elf ruler may only hire elven mercenaries. Specialists and retainers of any race may be hired.

Phase Elf (Race)

Requirements: Minimum INT 9
Ability modifiers: –1 CON, +1 DEX
Languages: Alignment, Common, Elvish, Doppelgänger, Dragon, Pixie

Phase elves are slender, fey demihumans with pointed ears. They typically weigh about 120 pounds and are between 5½ and 6 feet tall. Their hair tends to be violet or silver and their eyes are either pure black or pure white—without an iris or pupil (see *Dual Persona*). Phase elves originate from an alternate dimension which is inaccessible to other races, and about which they never speak.

Available Classes and Max Level

► **Acrobat:** 10th   ► **Knight:** 10th
► **Assassin:** 10th   ► **Magic-user:** 11th
► **Fighter:** 7th   ► **Ranger:** 10th
► **Illusionist:** 11th ► **Thief:** 10th

Detect Secret Doors

Phase elves have keen eyes that allow them, when actively searching, to detect hidden and secret doors with a 2-in-6 chance (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Dual Persona

A phase elf has two independent but interconnected personae or *phases*, each with a different character class. When creating a phase elf character, the player must select *two classes*, one per phase (e.g. a fighter phase and a thief phase).

Phasing: Each morning, upon awakening, the character may choose to switch to their other phase. This is called *phasing*. Phasing is possible at most once per day.

THAC0 and saves: The character uses the values for their current phase's class.

Class abilities: The character can only use abilities of their current phase's class. This includes spell-casting and allowed weapons and armour.

Hit points: The character has a single pool of hit points, shared by both phases. When rolling for hit points at character creation, roll the HD of both classes and divide the total by two. Upon gaining a level, any hit points gained are also divided by two. Fractions are tracked and may add up to a whole number later on.

Experience points: The character has a separately tracked experience level and XP count for each of their two classes. XP earned is divided between the two classes as the referee sees fit, based on which phase (or phases) the character was in while adventuring. When the character has gained enough XP in one of their classes, that class increases in level.

Eye colour: When in the one phase, the character's eyes are pure white; when in the other phase their eyes are pure black.

Personalities: The two phases have complete knowledge of the other's actions. They usually share the same name, but their personalities and goals may differ.

Alignment: The two phases may be of different alignment.

Immunity to Ghoul Paralysis

Phase elves are completely unaffected by the paralysis that ghouls can inflict.

Infravision

Phase elves have infravision to 60' (see *Darkness* under *Hazards and Challenges* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Listening at Doors

Phase elves have a 2-in-6 chance of hearing noises (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Wood Elf (Race)

Requirements: Minimum DEX 9, minimum INT 9
Ability modifiers: –1 CHA, +1 WIS
Languages: Alignment, Common, Elvish, Bugbear, Dryad, Gnoll

Wood elves are slender, fey demihumans with pointed ears. They typically weigh about 110 pounds and are between 5 and 5½ feet tall. Wood elves dwell in hidden, treetop settlements in deep forests, and are seldom seen by humans. They are reclusive and defend their homelands against trespassers. Like druids, wood elves worship the force of nature and the myriad deities that personify it.

Available Classes and Max Level

► **Acrobat:** 10th
► **Assassin:** 8th
► **Druid*:** 10th
► **Fighter:** 7th
► **Magic-user:** 7th
► **Ranger:** 11th
► **Thief:** 10th

* At the referee's option, wood elf druids may only exist as NPCs.

Detect Secret Doors

Wood elves have keen eyes that allow them, when actively searching, to detect hidden and secret doors with a 2-in-6 chance (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Immunity to Ghoul Paralysis

Wood elves are completely unaffected by the paralysis that ghouls can inflict.

Infravision

Wood elves have infravision to 60' (see *Darkness* under *Hazards and Challenges* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Listening at Doors

Wood elves have a 2-in-6 chance of hearing noises (see *Dungeon Adventuring* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Missile Attack Bonus

Wood elves' keen coordination grants them a +1 bonus to attack rolls with all missile weapons.

Town Services

By Gavin Norman

This article discusses some services commonly used by adventurers when in town, including price guidelines.

Inns and Taverns

Establishments where travellers can get a hearty meal and a bed for the night.

Frequency: Almost all settlements have at least one tavern or inn. Large towns and cities usually have multiple establishments catering to different clientele.

Services

Inn/Tavern Drink	
Type	**Cost**
Ale (pint)	5sp
Mead (pint)	1gp
Wine (pint)	1gp

Inn/Tavern Food	
Type	**Cost**
Cheese	1sp
Fruit	1sp
Porridge or gruel	1sp
Roast fowl	1gp
Roast joint	25sp
Soup	1sp
Stew	5sp

Inn Lodgings	
Type	**Cost/Night**
Common room floor	1sp
Shared room (2–4 beds)	5sp
Private room	1gp
Private suite	5gp

Inn Services	
Type	**Cost**
Bath in private room	5sp
Personal services (barber, laundry, etc.)	1gp
Private dining room	1gp/person
Stabling and fodder	4sp/night
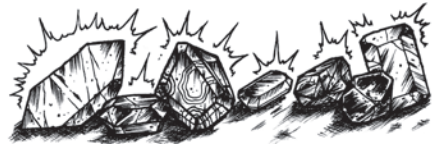
Jewellers

Specialists in buying, selling, and appraising gems and jewellery.

Frequency: Large towns and cities often support multiple jewellers. Small towns close to a trade route or in a mining region may (50% chance) have a jeweller. It is very rare to find a jeweller in a village.

Services

Buying gems/jewellery: Jewellers will purchase items from PCs at 80% of their full value.

Selling gems/jewellers: Jewellers will sell items to PCs at their full value.

Valuation (optional rule): It is generally assumed that adventurers are competent enough to appraise the value of treasures themselves. If the referee wishes to keep the value of gems and jewellery secret, PCs may ask a jeweller to appraise them. The fee for this service is typically 3% of the item's value.

Money Changers

Money changers also offer some banking services.

Frequency: Large towns and cities often support multiple money changers. Small towns close to a major trade route may (50% chance) have a money changer. It is rare to find a money changer in a village.

Services

Money changing: Coins of one kind can be exchanged for coins of another kind of equivalent value (e.g. 1,000cp exchanged for 10gp). The fee is 3% of the value of the coins changed. (e.g. a 3sp fee for exchanging 1,000cp to 10gp.)

Safe storage: Funds can be left in a money changer's safe, with a token given to vouch for the money stored. This service is free of charge if money is left for at least one month. There is a 10% fee otherwise.

Loans: Unknown (low level) characters can get a loan of up to 5gp if an item of equivalent value is left as a deposit. For larger loans, an item of double the value of the loan must be left as a deposit. The fee is 10% of the value of the loan per month. Well-known and respected characters (e.g. high level characters with land) may be able to get loans at a lower interest rate.

Guards and Wards

Jewellers and money changers typically protect their wealth as follows, with larger establishments having more extensive protection.

Guards: 1–4 veterans with 2 HD, armed with crossbows and swords.

Locks: Valuables kept in locked chests / safes behind locked/reinforced doors.

Traps: Locks with poison needle or gas traps—**save versus poison** or die.

Traders and Provisioners

Trade in common tools and trade goods (e.g. fur, salt, spices, cloth).

Frequency: Almost all settlements have at least one trader or provisioner. Large towns and cities usually have multiple establishments, some specialising in specific types of goods.

Services

Selling new equipment: Traders and provisioners will sell common adventuring gear to PCs at standard prices. In isolated regions, they may charge up to double the normal price. In wartime or in borderland regions, they may also stock weapons and armour.

Buying used equipment: Traders and provisioners are often willing to purchase used equipment from PCs, as long as it is in good condition. PCs will receive 50% of the normal value.
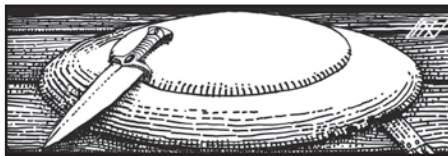
Haggling (Optional Rule)

When PCs are selling items to a jeweller or trader/provisioner, the referee may optionally roll to determine what price is offered. Roll 2d6 on the table below, modified by the PC's reaction modifier due to CHA (see *Ability Scores* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Haggling Results—% of Item's Full Value		
2d6	Jeweller	Trader
2 or less	50%	25%
3–5	65%	35%
6–8	80%	50%
9–11	85%	60%
12 or more	90%	75%

Hiring Retainers

By Gavin Norman

Old-School Essentials presents basic procedures for locating and hiring retainers, but much detail (e.g. pay rates) is left to the referee's judgement. This article provides some additional detail, for groups that prefer more concrete guidelines.

Locating Potential Retainers

Frequenting drinking establishments: Spending a night buying rounds and greasing palms in taverns costs 50gp. Per night, there is a 3-in-6 chance of successfully locating applicants (see *Applicants*).

Posting notices of help wanted: Spending a day posting notices in public places costs 25gp. Per day, there is a 2-in-6 chance of successfully locating applicants (see *Applicants*), who will apply at the specified location 1d4 days later.

Repeated searches: Each method of locating applicants may only be used with a certain maximum frequency, depending on the size of settlement: in villages, each method may be used once a month; in small towns, once a week; in large towns, twice a week; in cities, once a day.

Applicants

Roll on the table below each time a search for potential retainers succeeds.

Number of Applicants by Settlement Size

Settlement	Townsfolk	Adventurers
Village	1d4	1
Small Town	1d6	1d3
Large Town	2d4	1d4
City	2d6	1d6

Townsfolk

Normal humans without a character class (effectively level 0) willing to join an adventuring party. See the Normal Human monster listing in *Old-School Essentials*. Often used as torch-bearers or porters.

Starting equipment: None.

Adventurers

Independent adventurers of a specific character class (roll on the *Retainers' Character Class* table).

Level: Most applicants are 1st level, but 1-in-6 may be of level 1d3+1.

Starting equipment: Basic adventuring gear, weapons, and armour (e.g. using the tables under *Quick Equipment, p16*).

Retainers' Character Class

d12	Class	Alternatives
1	Cleric	Bard, druid
2–4	Fighter	Barbarian, knight, paladin, ranger
5	Magic-user	Illusionist
6–8	Thief	Acrobat, assassin
9–10	Halfling *	Gnome, svirfneblin
11	Dwarf *	Duergar, half-orc
12	Elf *	Drow, half-elf

Alternatives: If using *Old-School Essentials Advanced Fantasy*, 2-in-6 applicants may be of one of these alternative classes. ***:** If using the optional rule for separate race and class (see *Old-School Essentials Advanced Fantasy*), roll 1d8 for class. Reroll if an unsuitable class results.

Offering Wages

Once an applicant has been located, the hiring PC must offer them a certain wage.

Townsfolk: Will want a daily rate of pay.

Adventurers: Will want a daily rate of pay *plus* a share of any treasure recovered.

Poor, Standard, and Generous Wages

Generosity	Daily Rate	Loot Share
Mean (−2)	2sp	¼ share
Poor (−1)	5sp	⅓ share
Standard	1gp	½ share
Decent (+1)	5gp	⅔ share
Lavish (+2)	10gp	Full share

Applicant Reaction

The applicant's reaction to the offer is determined by a 2d6 reaction roll, modified by the hiring PC's CHA and reputation, as well as the generosity of the offer. See *Retainers* in *Old-School Essentials*.

Generosity modifiers: The modifier listed in the table above is applied to the 2d6 reaction roll to determine whether the applicant accepts the offer.

Bonus payments: Offering to buy equipment for the applicant or give them a sum of money up front may improve the offer generosity by one step in the table above, to a maximum of a +2 generosity bonus.

Refused offers: A reaction roll of 3–5 indicates that the applicant refuses. The referee may allow player to try again with an improved offer.

Treasure-Share XP (Optional Rule)

The standard rules for awarding XP state that XP earned in an adventure is divided evenly between all surviving characters, including retainers (who suffer a –50% penalty to XP earned, as they are only following instructions). The division of *treasure* is agreed by the party and does not influence the amount of XP each character gains.

Some groups prefer the division of XP to directly match the division of treasure, as follows.

Division of treasure: The manner in which treasure is divided is the party's decision (usually agreed before the adventure). Retainers are typically awarded a flat fee per day of work and possibly a fractional share of treasure.

Division of XP: Each character earns XP equal to the gp value of the treasure they were awarded by the party. XP not earned due to treasure (e.g. XP from monsters defeated) is divided evenly between all members of the party.

Retainers' XP penalty: If using this optional rule, retainers do not suffer any penalty to XP earned. (But typically earn less XP than PCs as they are awarded a smaller share of treasure.)

Example: A party recovers 1,400gp worth of treasure and is awarded 400 XP for defeating monsters. The surviving members—3 PCs and 1 retainer—agreed to divide treasure as follows: each PC gains a full share (400gp) and the retainer gains a half share (200gp). Each PC thus gains 400 XP and the retainer gains 200 XP. The XP from defeating monsters is divided evenly—the PCs and the retainer each gain 100 XP.

Quick Equipment

By Gavin Norman

Equipping a newly created character is typically the most time-consuming part of the character creation process. This article presents an alternative system for groups who wish to speed things up.

Random Starting Equipment

Instead of rolling 3d6 × 10 for gold and purchasing items, follow these steps:

1. **Basic equipment:** All characters have: a backpack, a tinder box, 1d6 torches, a waterskin, 1d6 iron rations, 3d6 gp.
2. **Class-specific equipment:** The *Equipment by Class* table shows the armour (usually a roll on the *Armour* table), weapons (usually two rolls on the *Weapons* table), and any extra items that characters of each class have.
3. **Adventuring gear:** Roll 1d12 twice on the *Adventuring Gear* table.

Equipment by Class			
Class	**Armour**	**Weapons**	**Extra Items**
Acrobat	Leather	1d4 twice (acrobat table)	—
Assassin	Leather	1d12 twice	—
Barbarian	1d4	1d12 twice	—
Bard	1d4, ignore shields	1d4 twice (bard table)	—
Cleric	1d6	1d4 twice (cleric table)	Holy symbol
Drow	1d6	1d12 twice	Holy symbol
Druid	Leather	1d4 twice (druid table)	Sprig of mistletoe
Duergar	1d6	1d12 twice	—
Dwarf	1d6	1d12 twice	—
Elf	1d6	1d12 twice	—
Fighter	1d6	1d12 twice	—
Gnome	Leather	1d12 twice	—
Halfling	1d6	1d12 twice	—
Half-elf	1d6	1d12 twice	—
Half-orc	1d4	1d12 twice	—
Illusionist	None	Dagger	—
Knight	1d4+2	1d4 twice (knight table)	—
Magic-user	None	Dagger	—
Paladin	1d6	1d12 twice	Holy symbol
Ranger	1d4	1d12 twice	—
Svirfneblin	1d6	1d12 twice	—
Thief	Leather	1d12 twice	Thieves' tools

Armour

d6	Armour
1	Leather
2	Leather + shield
3	Chainmail
4	Chainmail + shield
5	Plate mail
6	Plate mail + shield

Adventuring Gear

d12	Item
1	Crowbar
2	Hammer (small) + 12 iron spikes
3	Holy water
4	Lantern + 3 flasks of oil
5	Mirror (hand-sized, steel)
6	Pole (10' long, wooden)
7	Rope (50')
8	Rope (50') + grappling hook
9	Sack (large)
10	Sack (small)
11	Stakes (3) + mallet
12	Wolfsbane (1 bunch)

Weapons

d12	Weapon
1	Battle axe
2	Crossbow + 20 bolts
3	Hand axe
4	Mace
5	Pole arm
6	Short bow + 20 arrows
7	Short sword
8	Silver dagger
9	Sling + 20 stones
10	Spear
11	Sword
12	War hammer

Acrobat Weapons

d4	Weapon
1	Pole arm
2	Short bow + 20 arrows
3	Spear
4	Staff

Bard Weapons

d4	Weapon
1	Crossbow + 20 bolts
2	Short sword
3	Sling + 20 stones
4	Sword

Cleric Weapons

d4	Weapon
1	Mace
2	Sling + 20 stones
3	Staff
4	War hammer

Druid Weapons

d4	Weapon
1	Club
2	Dagger
3	Sling + 20 stones
4	Staff

Knight Weapons

d4	Weapon
1	Lance
2	Short sword
3	Sword
4	War hammer
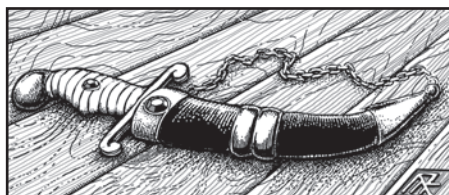
Snake Cult Monsters

By Gavin Norman

This article presents 8 sinister new monsters that may be encountered in the ruined temple complexes of a cult—especially those worshipping snakes. Among their number are specially bred serpents, guardian constructs, fungus-infested mummies, and cultist zombies.

Alabaster Serpent

Slender, 5' long serpents of pure white, with eyes of violet, bred by snake cultists as dangerous guardians. Placed inside treasure chests / urns in suspended animation, as a deterrent against thieves.

AC 5 [14], **HD** 2* (9hp), **Att** 1 × bite (1d4 + poison), **THAC0** 18 [+1], **MV** 120' (40') / 120' (40') climbing , **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 25, **NA** 1d4 (1d4), **TT** None

▶ **Awaken:** If the vessel in which a serpent lies is opened or shaken, the snake wakes from its suspended animation to attack.

▶ **Poison:** A victim must **save versus poison** or enter a state of violent spasms, losing one point of DEX per round until death (when DEX reaches 0). If the poison is cured, lost points of DEX recover at a rate of one per turn.

Hydral

12' long, rainbow-banded, multi-headed snakes bred by snake cultists as companions and guardians.

AC body 6 [13], heads 3 [16], **HD** 5* (22hp) + 10hp per head, **Att** 3–5 × bite (1d6 + constriction), **THAC0** 15 [+4], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3), **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 300, **NA** 1d3 (1d6), **TT** None

▶ **Multiple heads:** An individual hydral has between three and five heads which attack in unison each round, targeting one or more opponents within 5'.

▶ **Severing:** Each head has 10hp, separate to the main hit point total. Attackers may choose to target a head specifically, in which case damage is subtracted from that head's hit point total.

▶ **Killing:** A hydral dies if the body or all heads are killed.

▶ **Constriction:** If two bite attacks hit a single opponent in a round, the hydral's body and tail wrap around and constrict the victim. The victim suffers 1d8 damage per round and a −2 penalty to attack rolls and AC. Only one target can be constricted at a time.
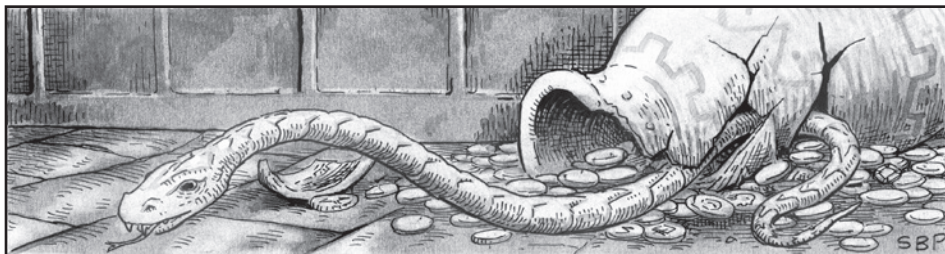
Hydral Statue

Giant (15' tall), five-headed serpent statues of stone or bronze, with eyes of smoky quartz. These enchanted constructs loom beside gates to important shrines and tombs in ancient temple complexes.

AC body 2 [17], heads –1 [20], **HD** 10** (45hp) + 15hp per head, **Att** 5 × bite (1d8+2), **THAC0** 11 [+8], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10 (10), **ML** 12, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 2,300, **NA** 1d2 (1d2), **TT** Gem eyes × 10

▶ **Guardian:** A trigger condition causes it to animate and attack trespassers.

▶ **Deactivating:** When inert, may be deactivated by prying out the gems from all of its eyes. Thieves' tools and a successful pick pockets roll are required per head. (Failure awakens the statue.)

▶ **Multiple heads:** Attack in unison each round, targeting one or more opponents within 10'.

▶ **Severing:** Each head has 15hp, separate to the main hit point total. Attackers may choose to target a head specifically, in which case damage is subtracted from that head's hit point total.

▶ **Killing:** A hydral statue dies if the body or all heads are killed.

▶ **Damage resistance:** Non-magical piercing or slashing attacks only inflict a single point of damage (plus STR bonus, if applicable). Non-magical bludgeoning attacks inflict normal damage.

▶ **Fire resistance:** Unharmed by mundane fire, half damage from magical fire.

▶ **Gem eyes:** Fist-sized smoky quartz, worth 500gp each if undamaged.
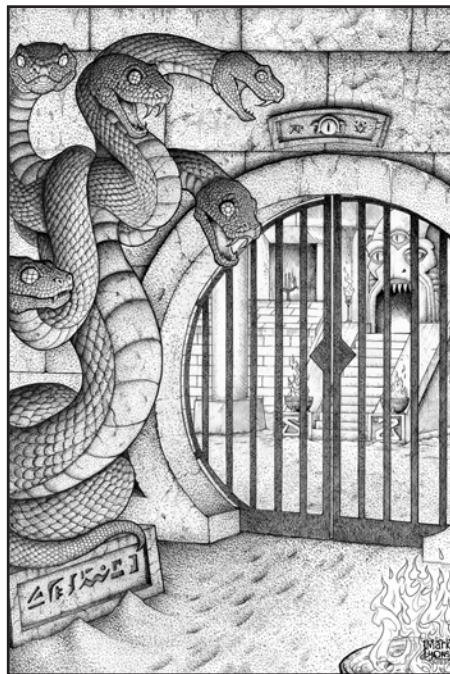
Mushroom-Head Mummy

Mummified corpses riddled with fungus, a great, garish fungal bloom sprouting from the top of the head. The fungus' weird sentience now controls the mummy (these mummies are not undead).

AC 8 [11], **HD** 3 (13hp), **Att** 1 × throttling (1d6), **THAC0** 17 [+2], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 11, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 35, **NA** 1d4 (1d4), **TT** None

▶ **Awaken:** Animate if disturbed by light or sound.

▶ **Hateful:** Seek to attack and kill any living creatures they come across, providing more fodder for the mushroom's mycelia.

▶ **Flammable:** Suffer double damage from fire, but let out a screech.

▶ **Screech:** If damaged with fire, the mushrooms inside the mummy let out an ear-splitting screech: 1d3 damage to all within 30'; triggers a check for wandering monsters.

Puffball Mummy

Grossly swollen, mummified corpses, filled with fungal spores. A dust of spores drifts from the crown of the head. The fungus' weird sentience now controls the mummy (these mummies are not undead).

AC 8 [11], **HD** 5+2* (24hp), **Att** 1 × throttling (1d6), **THAC0** 14 [+5], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 11, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 400, **NA** 1d4 (1d4), **TT** None

▶ **Awaken:** Animate if disturbed by light or sound.

▶ **Hateful:** Seek to attack and kill any living creatures they come across, providing more fodder for the mushroom's mycelia.

▶ **Flammable:** Suffer double damage from fire.

▶ **Spore cloud:** When damaged, releases a cloud of fungal spores: all within 10' must **save vs poison** or breathe in a lungful of spores, with the following effects:

    a. 1d3 choking damage for 3 rounds.

    b. The spores take root and grow inside the victim. Unless cured by magic (e.g. *cure disease*), the victim swells up over the course of a month, and then dies, being entirely taken over by the fungus (becoming a puffball mummy).

Path Guardian

Guardian zombies created from the decapitated corpses of people who trespassed on lands claimed by an evil cult. Long, bronze barbs inserted into the hands act as wicked claws. Bound to the stake at which they were sacrificed.

AC 9 [10], **HD** 2+2 (11hp), **Att** 2 × claw (1d6), **THAC0** 17 [+2], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), **ML** 12, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 25, **NA** 1d6 (1d6), **TT** None

▶ **Undead:** Make no noise, until they attack. Immune to effects that affect living creatures (e.g. poison). Immune to mind-affecting or mind-reading spells (e.g. *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*).
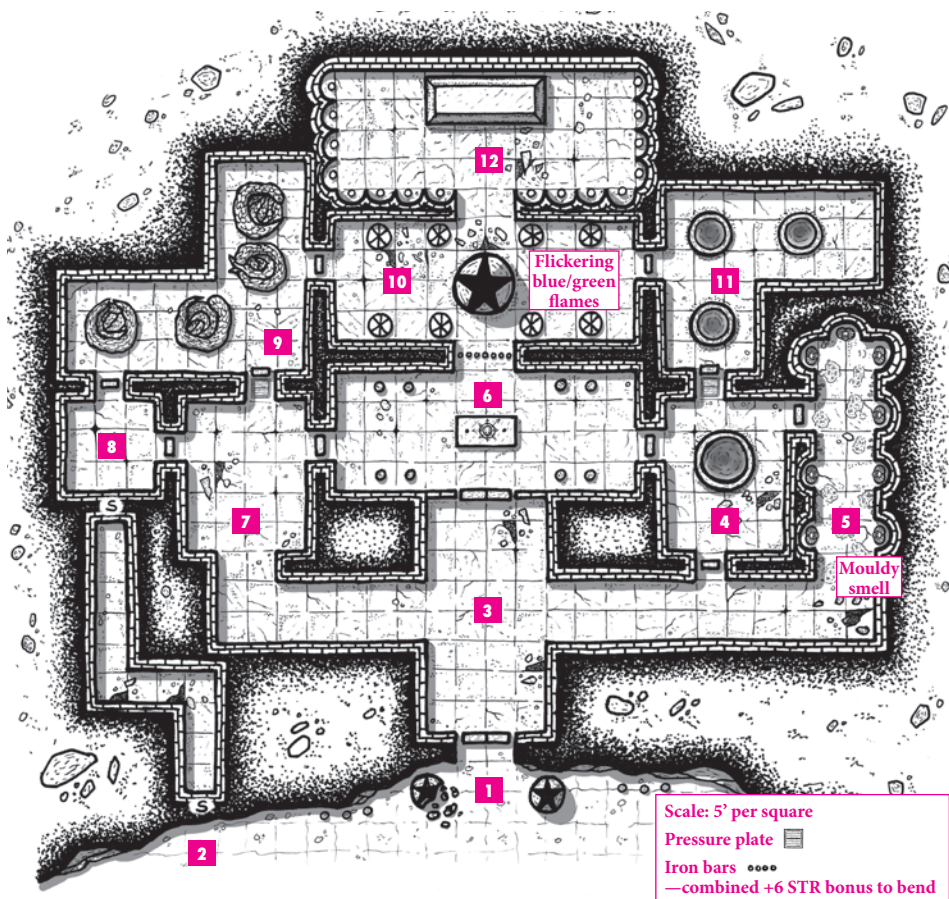
▶ **Approaching within 30':** Break bonds and attack any who come within 30' of the sacrificial totem stake which the guardian is tied to.

▶ **If killed:** Chest splits open upon death, emitting a piercing wail. This triggers a wandering monster check.

Zombie Snake-Guard

Undead warriors with pupilless, yellow eyes and snake-like fangs. Their muscular flesh is covered in serpent tattoos. Were originally human snake cultists who were ritually sacrificed to serve as undying guardians of tombs and shrines.

AC 5 [14], **HD** 4+3* (21hp), **Att** 1 × bronze sword (1d8), 1 × bite (1d4 + poison), **THAC0** 15 [+4], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 12, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 200, **NA** 1d4 (2d4), **TT** None

▶ **Undead:** Make no noise, until they attack. Immune to effects that affect living creatures (e.g. poison). Immune to mind-affecting or mind-reading spells (e.g. *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*).

▶ **Poison:** The victim must **save versus poison** or suffer wracking pain causing 1 damage per turn for 12 turns. Poison from multiple bites is not cumulative.

Zombie Snake-Priestess

Undead priestesses with a human head and torso atop a great serpentine tail (10' long). Snake-like eyes and forked tongues. They were originally humans whose ruthless devotion to a snake cult brought about their transformation and eventual ritual sacrifice. They now serve as eternal guardians of precious treasures.

AC 8 [11], **HD** 4** (18hp), **Att** [1 × bronze scimitar (1d6), 1 × tail (constriction)] or 1 × gaze (mental slavery), **THAC0** 16 [+3], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (4), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 175, **NA** 1d3 (2d4), **TT** D

▶ **Undead:** Make no noise, until they attack. Immune to effects that affect living creatures (e.g. poison). Immune to mind-affecting or mind-reading spells (e.g. *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*).

▶ **Gaze:** Targets one individual, who must **save versus death**. If the save fails, the victim's mind is filled with feverish visions of writhing snakes—they come under the command of the priestess, following her mental commands for 1d4 rounds. Another saving throw is allowed each time the victim suffers damage. If the snake-priestess dies, any under her command fall unconscious for 1d6 turns.

▶ **Constriction:** The victim suffers 2d4 damage each round and a –2 penalty to attack rolls.

The Tomb of Aum-Pharath

By Gavin Norman

Flickering blue/green flames

Mouldy smell

Scale: 5' per square
Pressure plate
Iron bars
—combined +6 STR bonus to bend

Level 3–5 Dungeon Adventure

Treasures lie in the long-forgotten tomb of a snake cult, deep in the rainforest.

General construction: Sandstone block, 10' high ceilings, black wood doors with bronze serpent handles.

Monsters: Names **underlined**. See *Snake Cult Monsters, p18* for descriptions.

Random Happenings: 1-in-6 per Turn

1. **1d3 Zombie Snake-Guards** patrol.
2. **Alabaster Serpent** slithers from hole.
3. **1d6 Path Guardians** burst from wall.
4. Sinister hissing sound.
5. Walls flicker with blue/green flame.
6. Grinding stone, ceiling drops 1'.

1. Gates: Sandstone gates: slightly ajar, decorated with intricate carvings of humans cavorting with giant snakes. Flanked by **2 snake-man statues**: forbidding warriors bearing barbed spears. **Blackened skeletons** hang from stakes.

2. Secret Way In: Cliffs with **bloody hand prints**. A character who slices their palms (–1 to attack rolls this day) has a 4-in-6 chance of finding the secret door.

3. Entrance Hall: Piles of **forest debris** blown inside (searching: bright lizards hiss and scatter). **Sandstone gates (to 6)**: stuck, carvings of cultists drinking snake blood. **Faded murals** depict a giant mummified serpent interred by cultists in a tomb of gold and jewels, plus **gold-leaf script**: "Here rests Aum-Pharath, exalted avatar of the almighty Kahash".

4. Acid Trap: Steaming basin of mild acid bordered by black stone serpent. **Bronze-clad door (to 11)**: engraved with writhing serpents and "Path of venom". **Stone cobra heads** on walls of passage to 11. **Pressure plate** triggers (3-in-6 chance per character) acid spray from snakes' mouths: 2d6 damage.

5. Fungal Tombs: Slimy black/purple fungus covers all surfaces. **Clearing walls** reveals faded murals of lizard-people lighting fires in copper bowls. **Cracked ceiling**: pale webs of mycelia creeping in from the forest above. **Fungus-encrusted sarcophagi**: upright, one in each niche. **Inside sarcophagi** are mummified cultists (4 inert, **2 Mushroom-Head Mummies**, **2 Puffball Mummies**) each with 2 gold and ruby serpent armlets (500gp).

6. Sacrificial Altar: Black marble altar inlaid with malachite runes (lizard man tongue: "Glory to Kahash, Dark Queen of Snakes"). **8 Path Guardians** bound to stakes: break bonds and attack intruders. **Faded murals** depict cultists slashing their forearms, spraying blood into copper bowls.

7. Crushing Trap: Faded murals of snake-women placing gold coins in copper bowls. **Crushed skeleton** plus adventuring gear by door to 9. **Bronze-clad door (to 9)**: engraved with writhing serpents and "Path of constriction". **Pressure plate** triggers (3-in-6 chance per character) falling ceiling block: 3d6 damage, block raises again after 1 turn.

8. Mirrored Snakes: Walls lined with **mirror-scaled serpents**, dazzling reflections of light. **Entering**: non-chaotic characters are affected by *confusion* (12 rounds, roll of 2–5 indicates fleeing). **Secret door** opened by a hidden button in a serpent's eye.

9. Sleeping Guardians: 4 Zombie Snake-Priestesses with amethyst headbands (1,000gp) sprawled on heaps of moulted giant snake skins. **Awoken by noise**: moving silently required.

10. Inner Sanctum: 8 fire pits (2' deep) with magical flames, flickering blue and green. **Bronze reliefs** on walls depict great serpents consuming screaming cultists. **Hydral Statue** in centre, inert, facing 12, **3 copper bowls** at its base. **Entering 12** triggers the statue unless flame, gold (50gp+), and fresh blood are placed in the bowls.

11. Snake Pools: Shimmering pools with (illusory) silvery snakes swimming 4' down. **Drinking water**: cures 1d6+1hp (once/day) but drinker becomes chaotic.

12. Tomb: Smoky glass coffer: giant, coiled mummified snake visible inside. **Touching the coffer:** the dungeon begins to collapse, ceilings in all rooms drop 1d4' per turn. **Green soapstone urns** (200gp) in niches: roll 1d4 for contents of each: 1. onyx shards (2,000gp), 2. cleric scroll (level 1d3), 3. amber snake statuette (800gp), 4. **Alabaster Serpent**.

Energy Weapons

By Gavin Norman

Introduction

This article presents rules for introducing futuristic energy weapons such as those featured in popular science fiction into your *Old-School Essentials* games.

The Basics

Energy weapons shape potent, destructive energy of various kinds into blades or projectiles for use in combat.

Equivalent to magic weapons: Energy weapons are the high-tech equivalent of magic weapons. They have a bonus which is applied to attack and damage rolls. (The bonus depends on the type of energy—see *Energy Types, p26*.)

Invulnerable monsters: Energy weapons are effective against creatures that can only be harmed by magical attacks.

Power cells: Energy weapons are fuelled by *power cells* (see *p26*). Without a power cell, they are inert and useless.

Energy Blades (Melee)

Energy weapons designed for use in melee typically consist of a short (1' or less), metallic handle with a switch. Three types of energy blades (daggers, staves, and swords) are described overleaf.

Activating: Pressing the switch causes a blade of energy to manifest. Pressing the switch again causes the blade to recede.

Carrying: When the weapon is switched off, it can be safely carried in a belt or backpack.

Usage of Energy Blades

Energy blades follow the standard class weapon restrictions—i.e. any character that can use a dagger may use an energy dagger, any character that may use a staff may use an energy staff, and so on.

Energy Guns (Missile)

Hand-held guns that fire projectiles of energy. Also known as blasters or phasers. Three types of energy guns (carbines, pistols, and rifles) are described overleaf.

Usage of Energy Guns

Unlike less technologically advanced missile weapons such as bows, energy guns can be used effectively with very little training.

Non-martial classes: May use an energy pistol but no other types of energy guns.

Semi-martial classes: May use an energy pistol or carbine, but not an energy rifle.

Martial classes: May use all types of energy guns.

Clerics: The referee should decide whether or not energy guns are prohibited by the religious doctrine of clerics.

Behavioural restrictions: Other classes may have special restrictions that limit their use of energy guns, despite having sufficient martial skill to use them. For example, the knight class in *Old-School Essentials Advanced Fantasy* is prohibited from using missile weapons—also precluding energy guns. The referee should rule on such cases arising with other classes.

Martial, Semi-Martial, Non-Martial

Character classes are classified as martial, semi-martial, or non-martial, determined by the rate at which their THAC0 and saving throw values improve, as follows:

▶ **Martial:** THAC0 and saves improve every 3 levels (e.g. fighter).

▶ **Semi-martial:** THAC0 and saves improve every 4 levels (e.g. thief).

▶ **Non-martial:** THAC0 and saves improve every 5 levels (e.g. magic-user).

Availability

When introducing energy weapons into a campaign, the referee must decide how commonly available they are.

Commonplace: Energy weapons are the norm among adventurers, militias, and armies. They can be purchased from stores or technicians in any larger settlement. See the equipment lists on *p26*.

Exceptional: Energy weapons are the province of the rich. They can be purchased from highly specialised and exclusive stores or technicians, which can only be found in large settlements. The equipment lists on *p26* are used, but all prices are multiplied by 10 (or another factor as the referee wishes).

Artefacts: Current technology cannot manufacture energy weapons. They are only found in the treasure hoards of alien beings or ancient civilisations.

Energy Weapons in Treasure Hoards

When a magic sword or weapon is rolled in a treasure hoard, an energy weapon may be placed instead, at the referee's discretion. The following tables may be used to randomly roll an energy weapon.

Energy Weapons Treasure Table

d%	Item
01–12	Ion dagger
13–22	Ion staff
23–29	Ion sword
30–36	Ion pistol
37–41	Ion carbine
42–43	Ion rifle
44–50	Plasma dagger
51–56	Plasma staff
57–60	Plasma sword
61–64	Plasma pistol
65–67	Plasma carbine
68	Plasma rifle
69–73	Laser dagger
74–77	Laser staff
78–80	Laser sword
81–83	Laser pistol
84–85	Laser carbine
86	Laser rifle
87–96	Electric cell (full: 15 charges)
97–99	Fusion cell (full: 30 charges)
00	Void cell

Power Cell Type Found in Energy Weapon

d8	Power Cell Type
1–3	Electric cell (2d6 charges)
4–6	Fusion cell (3d10 charges)
7	Void cell
8	None

Using Unknown Technology

Characters from low-tech cultures may need to make an INT check to figure out how to use a discovered energy weapon.

Success: The character works out how to activate and use the weapon, and can teach others. On a natural 1, the weapon is activated and damages the character.

Failure: The character cannot work out how to use the weapon.

Equipment

Ion Weapons (+1 to Attack/Damage)

Weapon	Cost (gp)	Weight (Coins)
Carbine	40	50
Dagger	15	10
Pistol	25	20
Rifle	60	120
Staff	25	20
Sword	35	15

Plasma Weapons (+2 to Attack/Damage)

Weapon	Cost (gp)	Weight (Coins)
Carbine	120	50
Dagger	45	10
Pistol	75	20
Rifle	180	120
Staff	75	20
Sword	105	15

Laser Weapons (+3 to Attack/Damage)

Weapon	Cost (gp)	Weight (Coins)
Carbine	400	50
Dagger	150	10
Pistol	250	20
Rifle	600	120
Staff	250	20
Sword	350	15

Power Cells

Type	Charges	Cost (gp)
Electric	15	10
Fusion	30	15
Void	Unlimited	250

Charges: Each energy gun shot uses 1 charge. Each melee combat encounter with an energy blade uses 3 charges.

Encumbrance (Optional Rule)

If the optional rule for *detailed encumbrance* is used (see *Old-School Essentials*), the listed weight of weapons is tracked. The listed weight already includes the weight of the power cell.

Weapon Types

Carbine: A two-handed gun with a barrel length of 15–25".

Dagger: A short, thin blade of energy, designed for stabbing.

Pistol: A single-handed gun with a barrel length of around 10".

Rifle: A two-handed gun with a barrel length of 30–50".

Staff: A double-ended blade of energy which emerges from each side of the handle when activated, forming a long staff which is gripped in the middle.

Sword: A long blade of energy, designed for slicing.

Energy Types

Ion: Streams of particles charged with electrical energy. +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Plasma: Streams of particles heated to extreme temperatures. +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Laser: Beams of focused, high intensity light energy. +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Power Cells

Electric cell: A high-capacity battery of electrical energy. Can be recharged for 5gp (requires 1 day).

Fusion cell: A miniaturised fusion reactor fuelled by liquid hydrogen. Can be recharged for 10gp (requires 1 day).

Void cell: Taps into the infinite potential energy of the void.

Energy Weapon Combat Stats

Weapon	Damage	Qualities
Carbine	1d8	Club (1d4), Missile (5'–70' / 71'–140' / 141'–210'), Two-handed
Dagger	1d4	Melee
Pistol	1d6	Club (1d4), Missile (5'–50' / 51'–100' / 101'–150'), Point blank
Rifle	1d10	Club (1d6), Missile (5'–80' / 81'–160' / 161'–240'), Two-handed
Staff	1d6	Melee, Slow, Two-handed
Sword	1d8	Melee

Damage: Die rolled when using the optional rule for variable weapon damage (see *Combat* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Weapon Qualities

Club: May be used as a club in melee (5' or less), for the damage listed. On an unmodified attack roll of 1, the weapon is damaged and cannot be fired until repaired by a technician (costing 20gp).

Melee: Close quarters weapon (5' or less).

Missile: Fired weapon (greater than 5' distance). The distances for short (+1 to the attack roll), medium, and long (–1 to the attack roll) range are shown in parentheses.

Point blank: May be fired at an opponent in melee range (5' or less). +1 to the attack roll.

Slow: The character acts last in each combat round (see *Combat* in *Old-School Essentials*).

Two-handed: Requires both hands; the character cannot use a shield.

Set to Stun (Optional Rule)

In some campaign settings, energy guns may also be set to a non-lethal "stun" mode. When set to stun mode, an energy gun inflicts no damage on a successful hit, but the target must **save versus paralysis** or be knocked unconscious for 3d4 rounds. Non-living creatures are unaffected by stun.

Specialists

In societies where energy weapons can be manufactured, the following new types of specialists may be hired by characters.

Energy Weapon Technician

Craftspeople specialising in the manufacture and maintenance of energy weapons.

Wage per month: 150gp.

Producing energy weapons: A technician can make the following weapons per month: 4 ion blades, 2 plasma blades, 1 laser blade, 2 ion guns, 1 plasma gun, ½ a laser gun (requires 2 months total).

Maintaining mercenaries' energy weapons: A dedicated technician is required per 50 troops.

Assistants: A technician's output (either in terms of weapons produced or troops maintained) may be doubled by hiring two *assistant technicians*. If four assistants are hired, the output may be quadrupled. A technician cannot coordinate more assistants than this.

Energy Weapon Assistant Technician

Apprentices who may work under a technician to increase the rate of production. See *Energy Weapon Technician*.

Wage per month: 35gp.

Item-Based Encumbrance

By Gavin Norman

Old-School Essentials presents two options for determining characters' movement rates based on the amount of gear and treasure carried. This article presents a third option for groups wishing to use a more abstract approach based on tracking the number of items carried.

Tracking Significant Items Carried

Instead of tracking the *weight (in coins)* of items carried, players using this alternative encumbrance system track the number of *significant items* carried.

General guideline: An object that can be carried in one hand counts as 1 item and an object that requires two hands to carry counts as 2 items. Very heavy or bulky objects may count as 3 or more items, per referee judgement.

Equipped and Packed Items

Each item carried is classified as *equipped* or *packed*.

Equipped items: Anything the character is holding, actively using, or has ready to use at short notice: armour worn, shields or weapons held, sheathed weapons, items worn on the belt.

Packed items: All other equipment, packed into pockets, sacks, backpacks, etc. In combat, retrieving a packed item optionally takes one round.

Character Sheet

The *Purist Character Sheet*, available at **necroticgnome.com**, includes a version supporting item-based encumbrance.

Weapons and Armour

Weapons: One-handed weapons count as 1 item; two-handed weapons count as 2 items.

Ammunition: The encumbrance of missile weapons already includes the ammunition and its container.

Armour: Shields count as 1 item; light armour (e.g. leather) counts as 1 item; heavy armour (e.g. chainmail) counts as 2 items. Clothing (i.e. unarmoured) does not count as encumbering.

Adventuring Gear

The item weights of standard adventuring gear are listed in the *Adventuring Gear Item-Based Encumbrance* table, opposite.

Bundled items: Some items (e.g. torches, rations) are usually purchased and carried in bundles. Up to 3 such items (e.g. individual torches or days' rations) bundled together count as 1 item.

Tiny items: Some very small items (e.g. necklaces, rings) are not treated as encumbering unless carried in large numbers (referee's judgement).

Storage: Containers (e.g. backpacks, sacks) only count as an item when not in use. The referee must judge how much can be stored in a container.

Treasure

Coins and gems: Up to 100 coins or gems count as 1 item.

Jewellery: Tiny pieces (e.g. necklaces, rings) do not count as encumbering; larger pieces count as 1 item.

Magic items: Staves count as 2 items; others count as 1 item.

Movement Rate

Movement rate is determined by the number of items carried, shown in the *Item-Based Encumbrance* table. A character's equipped and packed items should both be looked up in the table and the slower movement rate used.

Item-Based Encumbrance		
Equip. Items	Packed Items	Move. Rate
0–3	0–10	120' (40')
4–5	11–12	90' (30')
6–7	13–14	60' (20')
8–9	15–16	30' (10')

Maximum load: A character carrying more than 9 equipped items or more than 16 packed items cannot move.

Mounts and Vehicles

The number of items that mounts or vehicles can carry is calculated by dividing their coin capacity (defined in *Old-School Essentials*) by 100. The distinction between packed and equipped items does not apply to mounts and vehicles.

Example: A riding horse can to carry up to 30 items (3,000 coins) unencumbered and a maximum of 60 items (6,000 coins).

Item-Based Encumbrance Example

Morgan, a fighter, has the following gear:

6 equipped items: Chainmail (2 items), shield (1 item), sword (1 item), shortbow (2 items, including quiver + arrows).

4 packed items: Rope (1 item), tinder box (1 item), 3 iron rations (bundle, 1 item), waterskin (1 item).

Movement rate: Looking at the encumbrance table, Morgan's 6 equipped items put her at movement rate 60' (20') and her 4 packed items at 120' (40'). She thus has a movement rate of 60' (20')—the slower of the two.

STR Modifier (Optional Rule)

A character's melee STR modifier (see *Ability Scores* in *Old-School Essentials*) may be applied to the number of packed items at each movement rate band. e.g. a character with STR 16 (+2 modifier) can carry up to 12 packed items at 120' (40').

Adventuring Gear Item-Based Encumbrance	
Item	Encumbrance
Backpack	1 (storage)
Crowbar	1
Garlic	0 (tiny)
Grappling hook	1
Hammer (small)	1
Holy symbol	0 (tiny)
Holy water (vial)	1
Iron spikes (12)	1
Lantern	1
Mirror (hand-sized, steel)	1
Oil (1 flask)	1
Pole (10' long, wooden)	2
Rations (iron, 7 days)	3 (bundle)
Rations (standard, 7 days)	3 (bundle)
Rope (50')	1
Sack (large)	1 (storage)
Sack (small)	1 (storage)
Stakes (3) and mallet	2 (bundle)
Thieves' tools	1
Tinder box (flint & steel)	1
Torches (6)	2 (bundle)
Waterskin	1
Wine (2 pints)	1
Wolfsbane (1 bunch)	1

Bundle: Lists the item weight of the number of individual items in the bundle when bought (e.g. 7 rations = 3 items). **Storage:** Only counts as an item when not in use. The referee must judge how much can be stored in a container. **Tiny:** Not encumbering unless carried in large numbers.

Adjudicating Traps

By Gavin Norman

"We move along the corridor, one 10' square at a time, with the dwarf and the thief checking every square as we advance."

Many a referee has heard such phrases and shuddered. While some groups enjoy this meticulous, "search every inch" approach to dungeon exploration, for others it quickly becomes a tedious crawl.

This article delves into the role of traps in the game, with advice for the referee on how to keep them engaging and fun.

The Role of Traps in the Game

Along with treasure, monsters, and puzzles, traps are one of the core elements of old-school dungeons, so it's useful to look at the role they play in the game.

Risk / resource trade-off: Searching an area or object for traps takes 1 turn. Searching for a turn has two side-effects: firstly, the party's resources (e.g. light, spell durations) diminish; secondly, a wandering monster check may result in a potentially dangerous encounter. Players must therefore balance the potential benefits of searching against these downsides. This trade-off is one reason why resource tracking and wandering monsters are essential elements of old-school play.

Exploration challenges: Once a trap has been located (either by searching or by characters falling foul of it), it presents an interesting exploration challenge to the party: how do we disable or bypass this trap? For players who enjoy puzzles and exploration, figuring out how to bypass or disable traps can be one of the most fun aspects of the game.

Rolling Dice

Old-School Essentials provides rules for rolling dice to find or remove traps: all characters can search for room traps and thieves have a special class ability allowing them to find or remove treasure traps.

Pros: Rolling dice to search for traps can be resolved very quickly. The players simply inform the referee that they're going to spend a turn searching one or more specific areas, the referee marks the advancement of time, rolls dice for each character searching, rolls a wandering monster check (if applicable), and informs the players of the results.

Cons: The chance of finding traps by rolling dice tends to be low. Most characters have a mere 1-in-6 chance of finding a room trap; low-level thieves likewise have a very low chance of finding treasure traps. A party who relies on this method of finding traps is likely to fall into many.

Removing room traps: The rules do not provide any roll to remove room traps; these can *only* be bypassed / disabled by *Narrative Interaction*.

Narrative Interaction

Players may try to find, bypass, or disable traps by describing their actions in the imagined world. PCs can thus often deal with traps without rolling dice, relying instead on the referee's adjudication of actions based on knowledge of the workings of any traps present. Some examples:

► Water poured over a floor may trickle down cracks, revealing a pit trap.

► A heavy object thrown onto a section of floor may trigger a pressure plate.

► Smashing the lock of a chest with a war hammer may destroy a delicate poison dart trap without triggering it.

► Tapping ahead with a 10' pole may trigger a tripwire.

Pros: Handling traps via narrative interaction is often very effective, parties being able to detect and avoid traps purely by clever tactics, without risking recourse to random dice rolls. Devising cunning ploys for discovering traps and harebrained schemes for bypassing them is also often a lot of fun.

Cons: Detailed narrative interaction with the dungeon environment can take time (real time, that is, not game time). This is an aspect of the game which many players find very enjoyable, however, so it is not time wasted.

Time: The referee must judge how much time passes while using such methods.

Making Traps Fun

Clues / Telegraphing

A great way to emphasise the role of traps as a fun exploration challenge is to place clues as to their presence. Some examples:

► Characters notice a chemical odour (emanating from a pit filled with acid).

► A bisected skeleton lays on the floor (killed by a nearby scything blade trap).

Traps Failing to Spring

Old-School Essentials notes that every time a character makes an action that could trigger a trap, there is a 2-in-6 chance of the trap being sprung.

Optionally, when a trap fails to spring, the referee may give players a clue as to its presence. For example, they may hear a click or feel the movement of a pressure plate, as the (presumably old / rusty) trap is almost but not quite fully triggered.

Verisimilitude

Another simple way to give players hints as to where to search for traps (thus avoiding the "we search every square" approach) is to place them in locations that make sense, given the layout and inhabitants of a dungeon. Some examples:

► Doors to treasure vaults or important tombs may be guarded with traps.

► Monsters are unlikely to place traps in corridors which they frequently traverse.

If this approach is used consistently (in appropriate dungeons), clever players can gain knowledge of traps in advance by charming monsters, interrogating captured dungeon denizens, and so forth.

Non-Lethal Traps

Not all traps need to kill or inflict damage. Traps which cause interesting problems for the party can be a lot of fun. Some examples:

► Characters are trapped in a net for capture by intelligent monsters.

► A trap transports characters to a hidden or dangerous part of the dungeon.

Savouring Character Death

Finally, it is important to note that character death is an intrinsic part of old-school play, especially at lower experience levels. Players are advised to learn to enjoy the tragic, comedic, or gruesome deaths of their characters.

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