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Combat is an important feature of MYTHRAS. Violent confrontation has ever been a way of settling problems, from vengeance driven fights between nemeses, to the clash of armies in times of war. Combat need not be a savage battle to the death. Some combat encounters can be swashbuckling duels which end without injury, or perhaps light-hearted bar room brawls.

There are a number of central concepts which are an inherent part of MYTHRAS combat:

- ❖ Combat can be a very deadly business: Even the greatest hero can be hacked down if seriously outnumbered, receive grievous wounds if abjuring armour, or suffer ‘the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’ if luck turns her back.
- ❖ Combat need not end in death: Although commonplace in some genres, battles do not have to conclude with the demise of opponents. It is as easy to end a fight with the submission or capture of a foe without necessarily killing them.
- ❖ Combat is both abstract and tactical: Whilst the rules are not specifically designed for tabletop miniatures, tactical manoeuvres and techniques are a vital part of how combat plays. A comprehensive range of options exist to take advantage of the situation if one participant gains the upper hand over another.
- ❖ Combat is exciting: Since combat is inherently dangerous, a well orchestrated duel or melee will exhilarate players; the advantage swinging to and fro with innovative use of tactical choices and techniques.

MYTHRAS combat can be either gritty or cinematic: The rules allow for the emulation of any genre, from the grim realism as recounted from Viking Sagas to the highly visceral encounters in works of fantasy – such as written by Howard, Leiber or Gemmell – and mythological epics like the Iliad or Mahabharata. Whatever the setting, MYTHRAS is designed to handle all such confrontations.

Whatever the intent of participants, their armaments or the situation they find themselves in, all forms of physical combat are handled using these rules in this chapter.

COMPONENTS OF COMBAT

MYTHRAS uses a number of terms and concepts to explain the core elements of Combat. These are explained in the following sections, but in overview, these are:

COMBAT STYLES

The skill of wielding a group of weapons learned as part of a culture or profession.

COMBAT ROUNDS

Book keeping time segments of five seconds each.

COMBAT ACTIONS

Possible acts a character can perform during a round by the expenditure of an Action Point.

WEAPON SIZE AND REACH

How difficult it is to parry a particular weapon, and the distance it can engage at.

ENGAGEMENT

Combatants can hit or be hit by a direct opponent, depending on circumstances.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Special combat manoeuvres which can be performed if one combatant gains the upper hand.

COMBAT STYLES

Fighting skills are purchased as styles. Each style is a ‘package’ of multiple weapons, related by culture, career or even schools of combat, which avoids the necessity of learning each individual weapon separately. Deciding how many weapons should be included into a single style is ultimately a choice determined by the Games Master.

SAMPLE COMBAT STYLES

The following are Combat Styles taken from elsewhere in the MYTHRAS rules to help act as inspiration for developing your own Combat Styles.

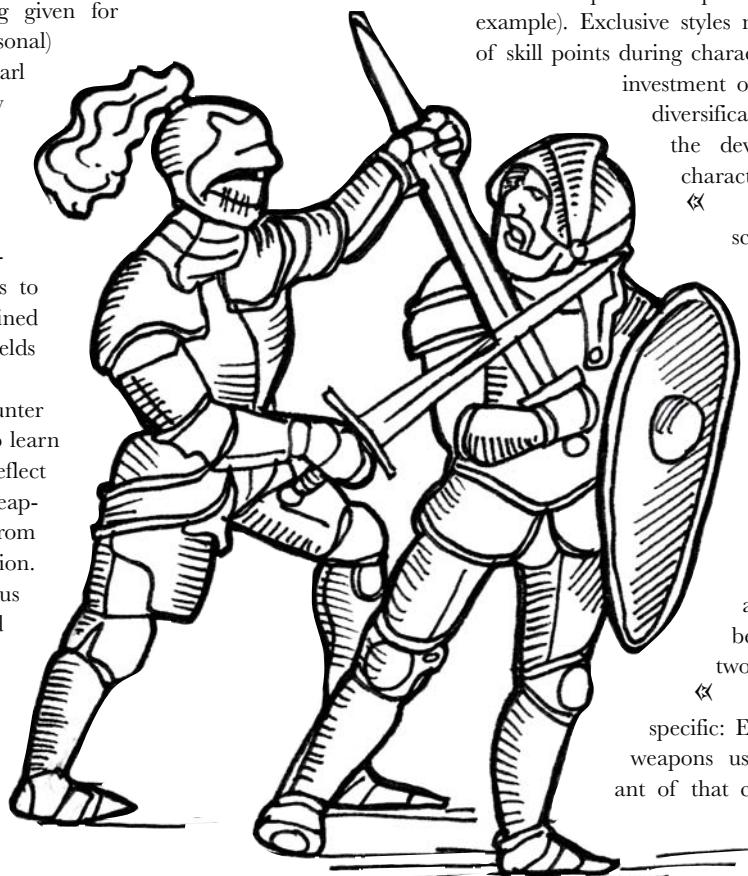
- Meerish Infantry (Spear, Hoplite Shield, Javelin)
- Meerish Slinger (Sling, Shortsword, Peltast Shield)
- Centaur Warrior (Spear, Shield, Short Bow)
- Dwarven Legionary (Axe, Hammer, Shield, Crossbow)
- Elven Ranger (Sword, Spear, Shield, Bow)
- Lizardman Savage (Axe, Shortspear, Target Shield)
- Big Hitty Things - Ogres (Club, Hammer, Thrown Rock)
- Striped Death - Tiger (Teeth, and Claws)
- Crushing Doom - Giant Snake (Constrict, Bite, and Writhe)

However, some guidance is provided here to help tailor Combat Styles to match a particular campaign theme.

The most important aspect of Combat Styles is that the character learns how to use each weapon in the style, both singly and in combination so that they might be interchanged as necessary. Combat training does not focus merely on using a specific weapon or weapons under best conditions, but also covers what to do when placed at a severe disadvantage. Such cross-training is a primary part of preparing a combatant for the unpredictable events of the battlefield, where weapon breakage or becoming disarmed is always a potential possibility.

Almost all characters begin with the chance to learn a cultural combat style. This is supposed to reflect a basic education in those weapons available for a member of that society and social rank, reflecting the training given for community (or perhaps personal) defence. Thus a barbarian karl may be expected to know how to use a spear, hand axe, and bow – the fundamental weapons and tools of a commoner; whereas a thane from the same community, growing up with access to better weapons, may be trained in swords, spears, and shields instead.

Some careers such as hunter or warrior offer the option to learn further styles. These should reflect more unusual weapons, or weapons normally restricted from someone not of their profession. So continuing the previous example, if the karl decided to become a mercenary he might learn a new style, diversifying his competence to include glaives, great axes, and thrown axes.



ANATHAYM'S SAGA

As part of her cultural background, and civic duties, Anathaym learned the Meerish Slinger style, combining the art of slinging with the close combat skill in shortsword, and peltast shield. During the hot summers of her adolescence she trained as part of a skirmishing unit learning how to sling stones at targets, whilst sometimes wielding a shield in her off-hand.

At the same time she was also taught how to use a shortsword, again both with, and without a shield, to prepare her for close combat if ever her unit was ever engaged in melee during a battle. She even knows how to fight with just a shield if she ever loses her shortsword in a fight. This adaptability holds her in good stead, since provided she is using at least one of her cultural weapons, she'll never suffer a situational penalty due to her comprehensive preparation.

Games Masters should avoid, if possible, replicating the same weapon within additional Combat Styles. If unavoidable, common sense should be applied, such as limiting the character to use the relevant Combat Style skill if the weapon is used in combination with a second weapon available only to that specific style, or permitting them to use the style with the highest value when wielding that particular weapon singly. Duplication of weapons simply reflects superfluous, repetitive training.

Choosing how many weapons should be part of a Combat Style depends ultimately on how important combat will be within a campaign. Some suggestions are:

❖ Combat Styles are very exclusive: Each style pertains to one particular two-handed weapon or a specific paired weapon combination. Best used for combat heavy campaigns such as a game focused on gladiators, where each gladiatorial type has its own precise weapon combination (net and trident for example). Exclusive styles necessitate a greater investment of skill points during character generation, and subsequent investment of Experience Rolls to achieve diversification, which may slow down the development rate of combative characters.

❖ Combat Styles are cult or school specific: Each style specialises in a few weapons of noted significance to a particular cult or school of combat. An evil brotherhood of assassins may, for example, train in unusual signature weapons like blowpipes and garrotes. Schools of combat might reflect the battlefield armaments of a mercenary company, or an ascetic martial arts school. The suggested number of weapons should range from two to three per style.

❖ Combat Styles are career specific: Each style is limited to the core weapons used by a professional combatant of that career, for example a legionary soldier should demonstrate competence in

shortsword, dagger, scutum, and javelin. The number and type of weapons should roughly match those of a similar historical context, between three or four per style.

- ❖ Combat Styles are weapon class based: Each style incorporates every weapon of a particular design or damage type. An example may be 'All Swords', incorporating everything from shortswords to greatswords; or 'Bludgeoning Weapons' covering clubs, hammers, maces, and anything else which relies on bashing to inflict damage. As can be surmised, these categories can potentially include dozens of weapons.
- ❖ Combat Styles are all-encompassing: These styles are inclusive of any, and all melee weapons, ranged weapons or both. This option is only recommended for campaigns where combat is infrequent, secondary to other forms of interaction.

It should be obvious that not all Combat Styles will be equal, or necessarily need to balance with one another. Such considerations are intended to be based on culture, social class and career – not be limited by game mechanics.

WEAPON CHOICES

When deciding on which particular weapons are included within a Combat Style the following should be considered:

- ❖ Two handed weapons generally have an advantage in both terms of weapon reach (see page 61), and how much damage they inflict, but leave the wielder vulnerable if the weapon is lost.
- ❖ Shields are the best defensive weapons, able to block fairly large weapons in addition to protecting against ranged attacks – which other weapons cannot normally parry.
- ❖ Using two offensive weapons simultaneously offers the wielder a greater range of engagement distances and grants some security if one weapon is broken, dropped or disarmed during combat. Secondary off-hand weapons must be at least one size category smaller than the main weapon, unless both are small.
- ❖ Ranged weapons grant the ability to strike from beyond the immediate reach of an enemy, typically at the cost of a lower rate of attack unless using anachronistic firearms or sorcerous devices. A Combat Style could potentially include unusual weapons such as siege engines.
- ❖ Unarmed combat styles allow the user the opportunity to fight and defend themselves without the need of weapons. They are also useful in situations where an opponent has closed inside the reach of a wielded weapon. An unarmed attack can be made with any part of the body, except for the torso. Thus limbs, wings, tails and even the head can be used.

COMBAT STYLE BENEFITS

Combat styles possess another function beyond simply learning a group of weapon skills. Since each style is taught by a particular culture or career, they are inherently optimised for the environment or military tactics that group normally fights with; for instance a horse nomad learns to fight from the saddle, or an infantryman trains to fight in close order formation. Therefore, as an additional bonus, every Combat Style *may* gain one or more traits which grant it an advantage under certain circumstances. This can be thought of as

an inbuilt technical advantage the style offers for those particular situations. However, a trait is only intended to be used with the weapons and situations of that particular style.

There are limitless diverse and potential benefits a Combat Style can enjoy. The adjacent table merely suggests a few possibilities, and is intended to offer flavour rather than overwhelming tactical advantage. Games Masters are encouraged to create further ones to match their campaign setting.

Note that some of these benefits can potentially be applied, by extension, to the Unarmed skill – either learned via culture or added later as part of a profession.

USE OF WEAPONS NOT COVERED BY A COMBAT STYLE

Occasionally characters may be forced to pick up an unfamiliar weapon, using it either independently or in conjunction with a trained weapon. A character with a Sword and Shield style might, for example, be forced to use a mace, or mace and shield together.

By rights, using an untrained weapon forces the user to fight at his base Combat Style percentage. However, much depends on the weapon and how similar it is to something the user is experienced with. Some guidelines on using unfamiliar weapons are as follows:

- ❖ If a weapon is *substantially* different from a trained weapon – in weight, size, length and method of use – then offensive and defensive actions are made at the base Combat Style skill (ie, STR+DEX).
- ❖ If a weapon is *reasonably* different from a trained weapon – say a greatsword when the combatant is trained with a broadsword – then offensive and defensive actions are based on the existing Combat Style but are two grades more difficult.
- ❖ If a weapon is *broadly similar* to a trained weapon – say a shortsword when the combatant is trained with a broadsword – then offensive and defensive actions are one grade more difficult.
- ❖ If a weapon is *similar* to a trained weapon – a scimitar say, as opposed to a broadsword – then the character uses his existing Combat Style with no penalty.
- ❖ If a combatant is using an *unfamiliar* weapon in conjunction with a trained weapon, such as a shield, then the trained Combat Style is used, but is one grade harder. This simulates the compensation in the overall style the combatant must make (adjusting balance, accounting for heft, and so on) necessary to use a combination of trained and untrained weapons.
- ❖ The penalty imposed by use of an unfamiliar weapon cannot reduce the user's skill below the default level of STR+DEX.

COMBAT ROUNDS

To emphasise its visceral nature, MYTHRAS combat is tracked on a blow by blow basis. In order to ease bookkeeping but still reflect the differences in speed or numbers of attacks, fights are broken down into Combat Rounds of five seconds each. During this period combatants may make hand-to-hand attacks or defend against them, manoeuvre into and out of combat, fire or throw a ranged weapon, and so on.

COMBAT STYLE TRAITS

Trait	Description
Assassination	Allows the user access to the normally restricted 'Kill Silently' special effect.
Batter Aside	If the fighter's Damage Modifier is two or more steps greater than his opponent's, his weapon is considered one size larger for the purposes of bypassing parries.
Beast-back Lancer	Performing a mounted charge with this combat style does not incur the one step difficulty penalty to hit.
Blind Fighting	Allows user to ignore any penalties imposed due to poor lighting or temporary blinding.
Cautious Fighter	Can use the Change Range action to automatically withdraw from engagement with no need to roll
Chariot Fighting	Style allows those riding in a chariot to ignore the skill cap placed upon their combat rolls by the driver's Drive skill.
Daredevil	May use Evade to dodge blows in hand to hand combat without ending up prone.
Defensive Minded	Increases the Size of your weapon when parrying by one step, provided no offensive action is taken that round.
Do or Die	Allows dual weapon combinations to use the Flurry special effect, provided that each subsequent attack utilises the alternating weapon.
Excellent Footwork	When fighting on slippery, wobbling surfaces the user can ignore the skill cap placed on combat rolls by the Acrobatics skill.
Formation Fighting*	Permits a group of three or more warriors to draw into close formation, placing more open or disordered opponents at a disadvantage (provided the 'unit' cannot be outflanked), and thus reducing each foe's Action Points by one if they engage.
Hidden Weapons	Allows the user to utilise seemingly innocuous objects noted as part of the style as deadly weapons, with no chance of accidental breakage despite apparent delicacy (fans or musical instruments for example).
Intimidating Scream	Style encourages frequent yells and bellows in combat to intimidate foes, making any psychological resistance rolls inflicted on an opponent one grade harder.
Knockout Blow	When attacking with surprise treat any Stun Location as lasting minutes instead of turns.
Mancatcher	The style grants its user an advantage when entangling or immobilising opponents, making a foe's opposed rolls to evade or break free one difficulty grade harder.
Mounted Combat	Style allows rider to ignore the skill cap placed upon combat rolls by the Ride skill.
Ranged Marksman	When using a ranged weapon, shift a random Hit Location roll to an adjoining body location.
Shield Splitter	Permits clubs and axes to roll the weapon's damage twice and pick the best result, but only when using the Damage Weapon special effect against shields.
Shield Wall*	Allows a group of three or more shield users to overlap their protection, adding one to the number of locations which can be protected with passive blocking and resisting Knockback, Leaping attacks, and Bash as if using the Brace action.
Siege Warfare	The style permits its user to ignore the skill cap placed upon combat rolls by the Athletics skill when making assaults whilst scaling walls or crawling through tunnels.
Skirmishing	The style permits launching ranged attacks whilst at a run (but not whilst sprinting).
Swashbuckling	Style allows the user to engage in attacks and evades made whilst jumping or swinging into (or disengaging from) combat, ignoring any skill cap placed on it by the Athletics skill.
Throw Weapons	Any nominal melee weapon in the style can also be thrown at no penalty to skill, but when used in this way a weapon's damage roll is halved.
Trained Beast	Intended for styles which emphasise fighting in close coordination with an animal companion (such as trained birds of prey, pet wolves, and so on), the user may utilise any of his Action Points to defend against attacks launched at his beast.
Unarmed Prowess	Permits the user to treat his Unarmed blocks and parries as 'Medium' sized, enabling him to better defend himself from armed opponents.
Water Combat	The style allows its user to ignore the skill cap placed on combat rolls by the Swim skill.

* Requires everyone else in the group to also have this benefit, otherwise the coordinated effort fails to lack of one or more participants being trained in the correct technique.

ANATHAYM'S SAGA

Anathaym is trained in two separate Combat Styles, Meerish Slinger, and Meerish Infantry. After considering the options available, the Games Master decides to grant the Meerish Slinger style the Skirmishing trait, and the Meerish Infantry style the Formation Fighting trait. Thus her cultural and career styles now look like this:

Meerish Slinger: (Skirmishing) sling, shortsword and peltast shield

Meerish Infantry: (Formation Fighting) spear, hoplite shield and javelin

Note that Anathaym is limited to ranged weapon skirmishing with her sling, and formation fighting with spear and large shield. During the hundreds of hours she trained in combat, she only ever practiced slinging at a running gait, since javelin throwing was learned as part of being a close ordered unit. Similarly she learned the tactics of fighting shoulder to shoulder only whilst using a spear and large hoplite shield, and wouldn't feel comfortable trying to fight as a formation with a shorter weapon and smaller shield.



Similarly to real life, most combat engagements – once joined – are concluded in a matter of seconds rather than minutes. In game terms this means several Combat Rounds (usually three or less) unless participants withdraw to perhaps reset initiative, reassess their tactical situation or simply to grab a momentary rest before re-engaging. Only fights between well matched foes or sequences of opponents tend to last longer.

Combat Rounds use several important terms:

- ❖ Initiative: The order of who acts when during a Cycle of a Combat Round.
- ❖ Cycle: The countdown through initiative values from the highest to the lowest, so that each participant has a chance to take their Turn when their number is reached. There can be several cycles per Combat Round.
- ❖ Turn: Upon each turn, participants perform a Combat Action, which comprises of a declaration, any necessary dice rolls (including reactions), and the resolution of the action.

Each term is described in more detail, below.

INITIATIVE

Initiative determines participants' order of actions during the cycles of a Combat Round. It is rolled at the start of a fight. Unless something occurs to change the situation, such as certain Combat Actions or Special Effects, initiative remains in play until it is forced to be re-rolled.

ANATHAYM'S SAGA

On the plains outside the city Anathaym is practicing with shortsword and shield against her weapons tutor, Master Zamothis. Both she and her mentor have 3 Action Points each, but Anathaym rolls a better initiative. Going first she decides to attack (Proactive, 1 Action Point) which Zamothis effortlessly deflects (Reactive, 1 Action Point). Thus far they have each used one Action Point – Anathaym to attack and Zamothis to parry. Then it is her mentor's turn, and he returns with an attack (Proactive, 1 Action Point), forcing her to block (Reactive, 1 Action Point). Now they have used two Action Points each.

Both have now taken their respective turns, but each still has a Combat Action remaining; so the Games Master cycles back to the highest initiative again; allowing Anathaym to attack a second time that round. Zamothis again parries the blow and the round ends, since neither has any Action Points remaining. Thus going first allowed Anathaym to use her actions to attack twice and parry once.

CALCULATING INITIATIVE

Initiative is calculated by each participant rolling 1d10 and adding their Initiative Bonus. Whoever gained the highest result acts first, followed by the second highest, and so on. When two or more participants tie scores they act concurrently.

INITIATIVE PENALTY

Characters who wear armour are hindered by the encumbrance of their protection, slowed by its inherent mass and bulk. As described on page 58, a penalty is applied to Initiative equal to the total ENC for all the armour worn, divided by 5, and rounded up. For example, a full suit of Hoplite Plate armour, covering all seven hit locations, with an ENC value of 4 per location, imposes an Initiative penalty of $(7 \times 4)/5 = 6$.

CYCLES AND TURNS

Once initiative has been determined, the participants have the potential to perform several Combat Actions during each Combat Round. The number of times they can act is equal to their Action Points, but when they can act is limited to whether the action is proactive or reactive.

Proactive actions can only be attempted on the character's own Turn; that is to say, when it is his initiative. Proactive actions are those in which the character is the instigator, such as making an

ANATHAYM'S SAGA

As Master Zamothis continues his lesson Anathaym notices three bellicent centaurs, armed with bows, gallop out of a nearby gorge towards them. She cries out a warning and interposes herself between her momentarily surprised mentor and the approaching raiders.

All three centaurs roll higher initiatives than Anathaym. Each one, on its turn, spends an Action Point to fire an arrow at the female warrior. In response Anathaym defends herself against the fusillade with her shield, forcing her to block three times, once per arrow. This costs all three of her Action Points, so when her turn arrives she is unable to do anything and indeed cannot act for the rest of the round.

The Games Master cycles back to the highest initiative, but fortunately for Anathaym the centaurs each spend their second (and last) Action Point nocking new arrows to their bows. Thus the end of the second cycle is reached, and since nobody has any Action Points remaining, a new round is begun.

attack with a weapon. Only one proactive action may be attempted per cycle. If no proactive action is selected, the character is assumed to have used Dither by default.

Reactive actions are those taken by a character to counter or resist an act made against them. Only one reaction attempt is permitted for each threat, an example would be trying to parry an attack. However, any number of reactions may be made per cycle, provided that the character has Action Points to spend.

The end of the cycle is reached once every participant has taken their turn. If anyone still has Action Points remaining then a new cycle is begun for those characters with Action Points available. This continues until all available Action Points have been expended, at which point the round is over, and a new one begins.

COMBAT ACTIONS

Combat Actions are those acts which can be performed during battle. Drawing a weapon, casting a spell, or diving clear from an attack are all examples of Combat Actions. Most are concerned with elements of combat itself, but some relate to activities outside the to and fro of spells and weapons.

As previously mentioned, how often a character can act per round is limited by their available Action Points. These are spent over the course of each Combat Round to perform various Combat Actions. Once a combatant's Action Points are expended, they may no longer act for the remainder of that round, and must wait until their points reset at the beginning of the next.

Unless otherwise specified any Combat Action (save for 'free' actions) costs one Action Point. Thus combatants need to carefully consider how and when they use their points. They may act as aggressively or defensively as they wish, dynamically reacting to the evolving circumstance of the combat.

PROACTIVE ACTIONS

The following are activities a character can attempt on his Turn by spending an Action Point. Note that some actions such as spell casting or reloading may take several turns to complete; each turn costing its own Action Point.

ATTACK

The character can attempt to strike with a hand-to-hand weapon or use a ranged weapon.

BRACE

The character braces himself by taking a firm stance, and leaning into the direction of a forthcoming attack. For the purposes of resisting Knockback or Leaping Attacks the character's SIZ is treated as 50% bigger. Against the Bash special effect SIZ is doubled. The benefits of bracing are lost once the character moves away from the place they planted themselves.

CAST MAGIC

The character can attempt to cast a spell, call for a miracle, invoke a talent or summon a spirit. Complex magics may require several turns in order to complete the casting. Once concluded, the magic can be released at any moment up until the caster's next turn; at which point it can be held for later effect; but this requires the Hold Magic action (see below) to maintain it in preparation for later release.

KEEPING TRACK OF ACTION POINTS

It can be tricky to keep track of Action Points during a round, especially if characters make a habit of using Combat Actions such as Delay or casting spells which require more than one turn to complete. As an aide to simplify book keeping, the use of tokens (coins or poker chips are ideal) is recommended.

Give each player a number of tokens equal to their Action Points, then each time they act or react, remove one of the tokens – tossing them into a used pile in the centre of the table. In the case of the Delay action, the token can be moved half way, indicating a held action which can be triggered at a later point. For spell casting a separate pile could be formed which keeps track of how many turns have been invested thus far.

When each round concludes the players can reclaim a requisite number of tokens from the discard pile. Of course other methods can be used, such as using dice as trackers or even tallying Action Points on scrap paper.

CHANGE RANGE

The character can attempt to close on, or retreat from, an opponent; changing the range at which he is fighting to take best advantage of his weapon's reach or disengage from engagement entirely. See Weapon Reach - Closing and Opening Range on page [106](#).

DELAY

The character conserves his action so that he can instead perform a Reactive Action at a later time, such as an Interrupt or Parry. The Action Point cost of delaying is covered by whatever act is finally performed. If the delayed action is not taken before the character's next turn (on the following cycle), then the character is considered to have Dithered, and the Action Point is lost.

DITHER

A character can decide to simply waste his turn doing nothing useful.

HOLD MAGIC

Once casting is complete, the character may hold a spell, miracle or spirit in temporary check, awaiting the best moment to release it. The magic may be held back for as long as the character continues to take this action on his subsequent turns, but allows free use of the Counter Spell reaction if pertinent to his spell.

MOUNT

The character can mount or dismount a riding beast. Particularly large mounts may require several turns to complete.

MOVE

Provided he is not engaged with an opponent, the character can move any distance the Games Master deems suitable for the situation. The Move Combat action is not required for every instance of movement during combat.

One does not need to spend an Action Point on Move to engage an opponent. For instance, a character crossing an open field to engage a group of archers would spend 1 Action Point to cover the distance. He would not, though, need to spend a further Action Point to initiate combat with one of the archers when he reaches their vantage point. He may use his next turn solely for his attack roll.

ANATHAYM'S SAGA

Backtracking the centaurs' trail, Anathaym and Zamothis discover the raider's encampment in a small cave-filled canyon far to the west of Meeros. Using the cover of darkness they creep close enough to see a sorcerer by the name of Kratos, whom the herd is serving, about to perform a human sacrifice of a youth tied spread-eagled between frighteningly carved totem poles. Zamothis orders Anathaym to deal with the black wizard, then yells loudly and, bedecked in his bronze hoplite armour, heroically leaps down into the midst of the centaur warriors to cause a distraction.

Anathaym runs to engage the sorcerer and Initiative is rolled, resulting in Kratos gaining the higher Initiative. Spotting her approach the sorcerer immediately begins invoking a diabolical spell, one which the Games Master determines will take two turns to cast. He marks off the first of Kratos' Action Points for the round. Guessing at her imminent doom, Anathaym on her turn tries to stab the sorcerer, forcing Kratos (who has no weapons) to Evade in a desperate attempt to avoid the blow. Rolls are made, and the sorcerer successfully throws himself backwards into the shadows, but is now prone upon the rocky ground. This concludes the cycle, with Anathaym having used one Action Point, and Kratos two.

The next cycle begins with the sorcerer in apparent difficulty. He has one Action Point remaining, and has the choice of either kicking at the warrior in the hope of perhaps tripping her (leaving him at the mercy of Anathaym's sword for the rest of the round) or continuing his half cast spell. Facing little chance of mercy Kratos uses his turn to complete his spell and rolls against his Invocation skill. Despite an imposed difficulty grade of Formidable for lying on his back, he succeeds, and disappears in a puff of greasy, black smoke. Anathaym is left on her turn with nobody to attack, so revises her intentions and starts cutting the youth's bonds...

To summarise, use the Move Combat Action for:

- ❖ Moving up towards a combat
- ❖ Perform a dramatic action within combat (swing from a handy chandelier, for example)

Move is not necessary to engage an opponent.

OUTMANOEUVRE

The character can engage multiple opponents in a group opposed roll of Evade skills. Those who fail to beat his roll cannot attack him that Combat Round. See the section on Outmanoeuvring on page [104](#).

READY WEAPON

The character may draw, sheath, withdraw or reload a weapon. Retrieving a nearby dropped weapon requires two turns: one to move and reach down for the weapon, and a second to return to a readied stance. Some missile weapons require several turns to reload.

REGAIN FOOTING

If unengaged with an opponent, the character can regain his footing from being tripped or knocked down. If engaged, the character must win an opposed test of Brawn or Athletics with the opponent before standing.

STRUGGLE

If the character is the victim of a certain types of attack or Special Effect, he may attempt to extract himself from the situation. For example breaking free from a Grapple or Pin Weapon.

REACTIVE ACTIONS

This list specifies reactions which can be used at any time during the Combat Round as a response to an imminent threat. As in the previous list, a reaction costs an Action Point to perform.

COUNTER SPELL

The character can attempt to dismiss or counter an incoming spell, miracle or spirit. This assumes the countering magic has a casting time of one Turn, otherwise it must be prepared in advance, and temporarily withheld using the Hold Magic action. Successfully intercepting magic in this manner is assumed to negate the entire spell or miracle, even those with multiple targets or areas of effect.

EVADE

The character can attempt to dive or roll clear of threats such as incoming missiles or a charging attack. Using Evade leaves the character prone, unless mitigated by some special consequence. Thus the character's next turn is usually spent taking the Regain Footing action to stand again. See Evading on page [103](#).

INTERRUPT

(Delaying characters only) Halts an opponent's turn after his declaration in order to take your own delayed turn. Assuming no change in the tactical situation, the opponent continues his turn after yours is completed. If unable to still achieve his original declaration, the opponent's Action Point is wasted. An interrupt can also be used against anyone passing close by the delaying character, within weapon reach.

DELAY AND INTERRUPT

Delay is intended to be a way of allowing a character to conserve all of their Action Points in a Round for reactive actions; for example parrying.

Interrupt, on the other hand, is intended to permit pre-emptive actions which could, but do not necessarily, involve combat, such as slamming a door shut, knocking a siege engine off target, waiting for the clear shot, and so on. It is also worded to allow characters to intercept those that try to dodge or pass close by them.

Neither Delay nor Interrupt are intended to be used as a way of gaining an Action Point advantage over a closing opponent: it is not in the spirit of the rules to permit the withholding of actions until engagement has been initiated.

PARRY

The character can attempt to defend against an incoming attack using a combination of parrying, blocking, leaning, ducking or side-stepping footwork to minimise the blow.

FREE ACTIONS

Free actions can be performed at any time during the Combat Round, and cost no Action Points to perform.



ASSESS SITUATION

If unengaged, a character can make a Perception roll at no Action Point cost. Success in the roll alerts them to any relevant changes in the tactical situation (such as spotting a foe beginning a charge).

DROP WEAPON

Dropping a weapon is a Free Action.

SIGNAL

If unengaged, gesturing or signalling to one or more participants (as long as they can perceive the sign) is a Free Action.

SPEAK

A character can speak at any time during combat, but what is said should be limited to short phrases which can be uttered in five seconds or less; for example ‘Time to die!’, ‘Look out behind you!’ or ‘Damn you to hell!’

USE LUCK POINT

Using a Luck Point – to re-roll a particular result for example – is a Free Action.

WARD LOCATION

The character guards a particular Hit Location from being hit by dedicating one of his weapons to statically cover the area. Any blow which lands on that location has its damage automatically downgraded as per normal for a parrying weapon of its Size. The ward continues until the dedicated weapon is used to attack or actively parry. Establishing a ward or changing the Hit Location covered must be performed prior to an opponent rolling to attack the character. Due to their design, shields can cover multiple areas. For further explanation see Passive Blocking, page [105](#).

WEAPON SIZE AND REACH

Every weapon in MYTHRAS possesses a number of different attributes from the damage it deals to how many hands are required to wield it. Two of these ratings, Size and Reach are important due to their mechanical effect. Size is used to determine the weapon’s ability to impose and parry damage (see [Damage Reduction](#) in this

chapter), whilst Reach can affect whether an opponent lies within range of being struck (see Weapon Reach - Closing and Opening Range on page [106](#)).

Size categories are *Small*, *Medium*, *Large*, *Huge*, and *Enormous*. Reach categories are *Touch*, *Short*, *Medium*, *Long*, and *Very Long*. Some monsters and weapons further extend these categories beyond the scope of human characters, as illustrated in the Creatures chapter.

Both of these ratings are largely abstract in nature, simplified to help speed play. Size is a combination of a weapon's mass, leverage and stability. Reach is more a measure of its length and ability to hold a foe at bay due to how far it extends beyond the hilt or grip.

The Equipment chapter provides default Size and Reach values for common weapons, but the following guidelines are provided for those Games Masters wishing to design their own armaments.

The unarmed attacks of creatures are assigned similar categories according to their physical characteristics. See page [222](#).

WEAPON SIZE CATEGORIES

Size	Description
Small	Human unarmed combat, and light single handed weapons less than a kilo in weight, such as a dagger
Medium	Single handed weapons over a kilo in weight, a mace for instance
Large	Long hafted thrusting weapons, two handed spears being a case in point
Huge	Two handed slashing, chopping or bashing weapons, like greatswords
Enormous	Weapons used by very large creatures, for example a tree trunk used by a giant

WEAPON REACH CATEGORIES

Reach	Description
Touch	Human reach in unarmed combat, knuckledusters, spiked kneepads, and so on
Short	Weapons less than half a metre long; such as a dagger or short sword
Medium	Single handed swung weapons longer than half a metre, like a ball and chain
Long	Single handed thrusting weapons, or two handed swung weapons, a great axe for instance
Very Long	Two handed or mounted thrusting weapons, polearms or lances for example

KEEPING TRACK OF ATTACK ROLLS

As will be further explained in the rules, some Special Effects and certain types of injury require an opposed roll of some sort against the attacker's original attack roll. The same thing applies to offensive magic. For this reason it is a useful habit for players to leave the percentage dice lying untouched on the table until the attack and consequences have been fully resolved. In this way the dice provide a record of what number was actually rolled, thus helping to avoid lapses of memory or unnecessary dispute.

HOW COMBAT WORKS

Fighting in MYTHRAS is resolved in a blow by blow progression, each attack or parry representing a single swing, cast or shot of a weapon. Any offensive action is permitted the chance to be resisted by a reaction. Thus even if a character manages to strike an opponent, the foe is permitted its own roll to see if it can parry the blow before it lands. The same philosophy is used whether the attacks are missile weapons against targets diving for cover, or trying to break free from the iron grasp of a giant octopus.

ATTACKS AND PARRIES

Close combat is handled in the following step by step manner:

1. On his turn the attacker spends an Action Point, rolls against his Combat Style and notes the result.
2. If desired, the defender spends an Action Point, rolls against his Combat Style and notes the result.
3. The success level of the results are compared as per a Differential Roll.
4. Any difference grants the combatant with the superior roll one or more Special Effects (see below).
5. If the attacker achieved a success or critical, he may roll weapon damage and apply their Damage Modifier (if any). If applicable, a Hit Location is determined for the blow.
6. If the defender achieved a success or critical, reduce any damage inflicted according to the comparative sizes of the weapons involved.

It should be noted that any Special Effects generated by the exchange are independent of whether or not damage is inflicted. It is quite possible for a defender to gain the higher success level, yet still suffer injury.

DAMAGE REDUCTION

If a defender succeeds in parrying, then he can reduce an attacker's damage, if any, according to the comparative Size of the weapons used.

- ❖ Parrying an attack with a weapon or shield of *equal or greater* Size deflects *all* damage
- ❖ Parrying with a weapon or shield of *one Size less* only deflects *half* damage
- ❖ Parrying with a weapon or shield *two or more Sizes less* fails to deflect *any* damage

For example, parrying a great axe (*Huge*) with a hoplite shield (*also Huge*) would block *all* damage; parrying it with a pike (*Large*) would halve the damage, and parrying it with a shortsword (*Medium*) would stop no damage at all.

PARRYING A MISSED ATTACK

If the attacker misses his initial attack roll, the defender has the option of whether or not to spend an Action Point to parry. Although it may seem disingenuous to parry an attack which will miss anyway, a skilled defender can use this to his advantage to gain one or more Special Effects, potentially weakening or incapacitating a foe, and preserving their next turn for some other action.

DAMAGE REDUCTION TABLE

		<i>Attacking Weapon</i>				
		<i>Small</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Large</i>	<i>Huge</i>	<i>Enormous</i>
Defending Weapon	Small	All	Half	None	None	None
	Medium	All	All	Half	None	None
	Large	All	All	All	Half	None
	Huge	All	All	All	All	Half
	Enormous	All	All	All	All	All

UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO PARRY

In a situation where a defender is unable to parry due to having no Action Points remaining, or, confident in his ability to weather the blow, elects not to parry, he is treated as having automatically rolled a failure. This has the consequence of granting a successful attacker one or more Special Effects.

FAILED ROLLS AND FUMBLES

If both combatants fail their rolls, or the defender decides not to take advantage of a missed attack, then the attack-parry sequence ends, and combat continues on to the participant with the next highest Initiative.

Fumbling a Combat Style roll has no additional effect other than the chance it provides his opponent to inflict multiple (and more dire) Special Effects against him. If a combatant fails when his

**RETROACTIVE PARrying WITH
A SKILL OVER 100%**

Allowing a character to parry only those attacks which will hit is an essential part of maintaining the unpredictable flow of combat. However it does start to cause problems when the defender has a combat skill exceeding 100%, since what was originally a successful roll by the attacker may become downgraded to a miss if the penalty provided by the defender's superior skill is retroactively applied.

To avoid messy calculations or causality issues, the best way to handle this situation is to only permit the defender to impose his over 100% skill penalty if he pro-actively defends, declaring his parry before the attacker rolls. This has the added benefit of preventing superhumanly skilled opponents from being near-immune to attacks without the need to expend Action Points to defend themselves.

For example; despite his best efforts to outmanoeuvre them, Master Zamothis is surrounded by centaur opponents. The grizzled warrior is worthy of his title, possessing (amongst others) a Combat Style (Meerish Infantry) skill of 120%. However he is surrounded and faces the tough choice of whether or not to use his remaining two Action Points to defend himself. Since his skill is so high that it would provide a penalty to his attackers, the Games Master asks his player if he wishes to declare his parry in advance (thus reducing the centaurs impending attack skill by 20%) or withhold parrying until it is seen whether the centaurs hit or miss at their normal skill.

opponent fumbles, then he misses the opportunity to take advantage of his foe's clumsiness.

In the rare circumstance that both opponents fumble, Games Masters are encouraged to describe some hilarious or amazingly improbable event occurring which temporarily takes both out of the fight.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Fighting is far more than simply injuring or killing an opponent. Combative arts teach many methods of defeating a foe, perhaps rendering them helpless or forcing them into situations where they must capitulate, without necessarily needing to actually cause them harm. Special Effects represent these techniques, and control how they occur in play.

Whenever opponents engage in a Differential Roll of their respective fighting skills (Combat Styles or Evade for example), any resulting difference in success levels indicates an opportunity for Special Effects to occur. This reflects one combatant manoeuvring his opponent into a disadvantageous situation which can be exploited using a cunning trick or tactic.

The number of Special Effects received depends on the difference between the levels of success, as illustrated on the Differential Roll Results Table (see page 51).

If any Special Effects are won during an exchange, they must be selected before Damage and Hit Location, if any, are rolled. In cases where the recipient is badly wounded in addition to receiving a Special Effect, Endurance rolls are resolved after the application of the effect.

Special Effects cover a diverse range of situations and techniques. Some are designed specifically for attacks, whilst others are intended for defence, and a few are adaptable for either circumstance. Certain Special Effects can also be limited to particular weapon types or specific dice rolls, requiring a Critical or Fumble result on their skill check for instance.

When two or more Special Effects are gained, the combatant may freely mix and match which ones are selected, providing he meets the prerequisite conditions for each one. Some effects can be stacked. For example, an attacker who rolls a critical success and wins two Special Effects could choose Maximise Damage twice, rather than choosing two separate offensive manoeuvres.



SPECIAL EFFECT DESCRIPTIONS

ACCIDENTAL INJURY

The defender deflects or twists an opponent's attack in such a way that he fumbles, injuring himself. The attacker must roll damage against himself in a random hit location using the weapon used to strike. If unarmed he tears or breaks something internal, the damage roll ignoring any armour.

ARISE

Allows the defender to use a momentary opening to roll back up to their feet.

BASH

The attacker deliberately bashes the opponent off balance. How far the defender totters back or sideward depends on the weapon being used. Shields knock an opponent back one metre per for every two points of damage rolled (prior to any subtractions due to armour, parries, and so forth), whereas bludgeoning weapons knock back one metre per for every three points. Bashing works only on creatures up to twice the attacker's SIZ. If the recipient is forced backwards into an obstacle, then they must make a Hard Athletics or Acrobatics skill roll to avoid falling or tripping over.

BLEED

The attacker can attempt to cut open a major blood vessel. If the blow overcomes Armour Points and injures the target, the defender must make an opposed roll of Endurance against the original attack roll. If the defender fails, then they begin to bleed profusely. At the start of each Combat Round the recipient loses one level of

Fatigue, until they collapse and possibly die. Bleeding wounds can be staunched by passing a First Aid skill roll, but the recipient can no longer perform any strenuous or violent action without re-opening the wound. See Blood Loss page 71.

BLIND OPPONENT

On a critical the defender briefly blinds his opponent by throwing sand, reflecting sunlight off his shield, or some other tactic which briefly interferes with the attacker's vision. The attacker must make an opposed roll of his Evade skill (or Weapon style if using a shield) against the defender's original parry roll. If the attacker fails he suffers the Blindness situational modifier for the next 1d3 turns.

BYPASS ARMOUR

On a critical the attacker finds a gap in the defender's natural or worn armour. If the defender is wearing armour above natural protection, then the attacker must decide which of the two is bypassed. This effect can be stacked to bypass both. For the purposes of this effect, physical protection gained from magic is considered as being worn armour.

CHOOSE LOCATION

When using hand-to-hand melee weapons the attacker may freely select the location where the blow lands, as long as that location is normally within reach. If using ranged weapons Choose Location is a Critical Success only, unless the target is within close range, and is either stationary or unaware of the attacker.

THE HEAD? AGAIN?

Some Games Masters may find the Choose Location special effect a rather sour annoyance, especially if their players continue to take down foe after foe with exactly the same blow. What might surprise many people to know is that this behaviour is exactly matched by real life combat. Not only is the head the closest part of the body to strike, but shields tend to be held beneath the level of the eyes, exposing the head and part of the face so that you can see your opponent.

There are several techniques which can help prevent foes being chopped down with the same blow. First, and most obvious, is to wear a helmet, which after shields was the most prevalent type of protection used throughout history. Secondly is to use the Ward Location action. This is a perfectly natural thing to do, since once an opponent has suffered a wound he will tend to try to keep that weakened area covered so that it cannot be struck again.

Last but by no means least the Games Master should himself use a range of diverse and interesting Special Effects, showing that Choose Location can be eclipsed by manoeuvres such as Bleed, Stun Location or even Bash in the right circumstances!

CIRCUMVENT COVER

Assuming that the shooter is using some high-tech weaponry, they can fire around the target's cover. In most cases this will require something along the lines of self guided ammunition. If used as a trick shot, for example bouncing a laser blast off a mirror or ricocheting a bullet off a wall, then the special effect should be treated as a Critical Success only with a commensurate reduction in damage.

CIRCUMVENT PARRY

On a critical the attacker may completely bypass an otherwise successful parry.

CLOSE RANGE

Permits the character to automatically change the engagement range between himself and his opponent, so that they end up at the Range favoured by the shorter weapon (see Weapon Reach - Closing and Opening Range page [106](#)).

COMPEL SURRENDER

Allows the character a chance to force the surrender of a helpless or disadvantaged opponent; for example someone who has been disarmed, is lying prone unable to regain his footing, has suffered a serious (or worse) wound, and so on. Damage is not inflicted on the target, they are only threatened. Assuming the target is sapient and able to understand the demand, the target must make an opposed roll of Willpower against the original attack or parry roll. If the target fails, they capitulate. Games Masters may wish to reserve Compel Surrender for use against non-player characters only.

DAMAGE WEAPON

Permits the character to damage his opponent's weapon as part of an attack or parry. If attacking, the character aims specifically at the defender's parrying weapon and applies his damage roll to it, rather than the wielder. The targeted weapon uses its own Armour Points for resisting the damage. If reduced to zero Hit Points the weapon breaks.

DISARM OPPONENT

The character knocks, yanks or twists the opponent's weapon out of his hand. The opponent must make an opposed roll of his Combat Style against the character's original roll. If the recipient of the disarm loses, his weapon is flung a distance equal to the roll of the disarmer's Damage Modifier in metres. If there is no Damage Modifier then the weapon drops at the disarmed person's feet. The comparative size of the weapons affects the roll. Each step that the disarming character's weapon is larger increases the difficulty of the opponent's roll by one grade. Conversely each step the disarming character's weapon is smaller, makes the difficulty one grade easier. Disarming works only on creatures of up to twice the attacker's STR.

DROP FOE

Assuming the target suffers at least a minor wound from the shot, they are forced to make an Opposed Test of their Endurance against the attacker's hit roll. Failure indicates that the target succumbs to shock and pain, becoming incapacitated and unable to continue fighting. Recovery from incapacitation can be performed with a successful First Aid check or using some form of technological or narcotic booster if such exists in the campaign. Otherwise the temporary incapacitation lasts for a period equal to one hour divided by the Healing Rate of the target.

DUCK BACK

This special effect allows the shooter to immediately duck back into cover, without needing to wait for their next Turn to use the Take Cover action. The character must be already standing or crouching adjacent to some form of cover to use Duck Back.

ENHANCE PARRY

On a critical the defender manages to deflect the entire force of an attack, no matter the Size of his weapon.

ENTANGLE

Allows a character wielding an entangling weapon, such as a whip or net, to immobilise the location struck. An entangled arm cannot use whatever it is holding; a snared leg prevents the target from moving; whilst an enmeshed head, chest or abdomen makes all skill rolls one grade harder. On his following turn the wielder may spend an Action Point to make an automatic Trip Opponent attempt. An entangled victim can attempt to free himself on his turn by either attempting an opposed roll using Brawn to yank free, or win a Special Effect and select Damage Weapon, Disarm Opponent or Slip Free.

FLURRY

An unarmed creature or attacker can make an immediate follow-up attack using a different limb or body part, without needing to wait for its next turn. A human attacker might follow up a punch to the abdomen with a knee to the face for example. The additional attack still costs an Action Point, but potentially allows several attacks in sequence before the defender can respond offensively.

FORCE FAILURE

Used when an opponent fumbles, the character can combine Force Failure with any other Special Effect which requires an opposed roll to work. Force Failure causes the opponent to fail his resistance roll by default – thereby automatically be disarmed, tripped, etc.

GRIP

Provided the opponent is within the attacker's Unarmed Combat reach, he may use an empty hand (or similar limb capable of gripping such as claws, tails or tentacles) to hold onto the opponent, preventing them from being able to change weapon range or disengage from combat. The opponent may attempt to break free on his turn, requiring an opposed roll of either Brawn or Unarmed against whichever of the two skills the gripper prefers. If the gripped victim wins, they manage to break free. Note that some attackers using Brawn may be so strong that no amount of brute force or cunning technique can overcome their grip (see Brawn page [39](#)).

IMPALE

The attacker can attempt to drive an impaling weapon deep into the defender. Roll weapon damage twice, with the attacker choosing which of the two results to use for the attack. If armour is penetrated and causes a wound, then the attacker has the option of leaving the weapon in the wound, or yanking it free on their next turn. Leaving the weapon in the wound inflicts a difficulty grade on the victim's future skill attempts. The severity of the penalty depends on the size of both the creature and the weapon impaling it, as listed on the Impale Effects Table above. For simplicity's sake, further impalements with the same sized weapon inflict no additional penalties. To withdraw an impaled weapon during melee requires use of the Ready Weapon combat action. The wielder must pass an unopposed Brawn roll (or win an opposed Brawn roll if the opponent resists). Success pulls the weapon free, causing further injury to the same location equal to half the normal damage roll for that weapon,

IMPALE EFFECTS TABLE

Creature SIZ	<i>Small Weapons</i>	<i>Medium Weapons</i>	<i>Large Weapons</i>	<i>Huge Weapons</i>	<i>Enormous Weapons</i>
1-10	Formidable	Herculean	Incapacitated	Incapacitated	Incapacitated
11-20	Hard	Formidable	Herculean	Incapacitated	Incapacitated
21-30	No Effect	Hard	Formidable	Herculean	Incapacitated
31-40	No Effect	No Effect	Hard	Formidable	Herculean
41-50	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	Hard	Formidable
Each +10			Follow table progression		

but without any damage modifier. Failure implies that the weapon remained stuck in the wound with no further effect, although the wielder may try again on their next turn. Specifically barbed weapons (such as harpoons) inflict normal damage. Armour does not reduce withdrawal damage. Whilst it remains impaled, the attacker cannot use his impaling weapon for parrying.

KILL SILENTLY

Restricted to those trained in a Combat Style with the Assassination benefit. It allows the attacker to neutralise a victim in complete silence, covering their mouth or grasping them about the neck whilst simultaneously stabbing, cutting or garrotting them. This prevents the victim from crying out or otherwise raising an alarm for the entire round. In addition, if during this time the attacks inflict a Serious or Major Wound, the victim will automatically fail its Endurance roll. Kill Silently can only be used on a surprised opponent, and only on the first attack against them.

MARKSMAN

Permits the shooter to move the Hit Location struck by his shot by one step, to an immediately adjoining body area. Physiology has an effect on what can be re-targeted, and common sense should be applied. Thus using this special effect on a humanoid would permit an attacker who rolled a leg shot, to move it up to the abdomen instead. Conversely shooting a griffin in the chest would permit selection of the forelegs, wings or head.

MAXIMISE DAMAGE

On a critical the character may substitute one of his weapon's damage dice for its full value. For example a Hatchet which normally does 1d6 damage would instead be treated as a 6, whereas a great club with 2d6 damage would instead inflict 1d6+6 damage. This special effect may be stacked. Although it can also be used for natural weapons, Maximise Damage does not affect the Damage Modifier of the attacker, which must be rolled normally.

OPEN RANGE

Permits the character to automatically change the engagement range between himself and his opponent, so that they end up at the Range favoured by the longer weapon (see [Weapon Reach - Closing and Opening Range page 106](#)).

OVEREXTEND OPPONENT

The defender sidesteps or retreats at an inconvenient moment, causing the attacker to overreach himself. Opponent cannot attack on his next turn. This special effect can be stacked.

OVERPENETRATION

If shooting at lineally positioned opponents or into a densely packed group, this special effect allows the shot to travel completely

through the first victim to strike a second behind them, assuming that it overcomes the first target's body armour. The second victim however, only suffers half damage due to attenuation or slowing down of the shot. Overpenetration is generally of more use with high powered weapons that inflict large amounts of damage or those which have some sort of armour piercing ability. Any special effects inflicted on the first target are not applied to the second.

PIN DOWN

Similar to Press Advantage, this special effect forces the target to make an Opposed Test of their Willpower against the attacker's hit roll. Failure means that the target hunkers down behind whatever cover is available, and cannot return fire on their next Turn. Note that Pin Down works even if no actual damage is inflicted on the target (perhaps due to a successful evasion or shots striking their cover instead), as it relies on the intimidation effect of projectiles passing very close by.

Although a pinned victim is unable to fire back for the requisite time, they can perform other actions provided they don't expose themselves to fire in the process, such as crawling away to new cover, communicating with others, reloading a weapon, and so on.

PIN WEAPON

On a critical the character can pin one of his opponent's weapons or shield, using his body or positioning to hold it in place. On his turn the opponent may attempt to wrestle or manoeuvre the pinned item free. This costs an Action Point and works as per the Grip special effect. Failure means that the pinned item remains unusable. In the meantime, an opponent lacking a weapon or shield in the other hand may only avoid an attack by evading, using his Unarmed skill or disengaging completely.

PREPARE COUNTER

The defender reads the patterns of his foe and pre-plans a counter against a specific Special Effect (which should be noted down in secret). If his opponent attempts to inflict the chosen Special Effect upon him during the fight, the defender instantly substitutes the attackers effect with an offensive or defensive one of his own, which succeeds automatically.

PRESS ADVANTAGE

The attacker pressures his opponent, so that his foe is forced to remain on the defensive, and cannot attack on their next turn. This allows the attacker to potentially establish an unbroken sequence of attacks whilst the defender desperately blocks. It is only effective against foes concerned with defending themselves.

RAPID RELOAD

When using a ranged weapon, the attacker reduces the reload time for the next shot by one. This effect can be stacked.

REMISE

The attacker performs a sequential follow-up attack with a weapon of size Small on his opponent's next turn, which forces the foe to change their proactive action into a reactive one.

SCAR FOE

The opponent is given a scar that will disfigure them for the rest of their life, for example a slice across the face, or an artfully inscribed letter across the chest.

SELECT TARGET

When an attacker fumbles, the defender may manoeuvre or deflect the blow in such a way that it hits an adjacent bystander instead. This requires that the new target is within reach of the attacker's close combat weapon, or in the case of a ranged attack, is standing along the line of fire. The new victim is taken completely by surprise by the unexpected accident, and has no chance to avoid the attack which automatically hits. In compensation however, they suffer no special effect.

SLIP FREE

On a critical the defender can automatically escape being Entangled, Gripped, or Pinned.

STAND FAST

The defender braces himself against the force of an attack, allowing them to avoid the Knockback effects of any damage received.

STUN LOCATION

The attacker can use a bludgeoning weapon to temporarily stun the body part struck. If the blow overcomes Armour Points and injures the target, the defender must make an opposed roll of Endurance vs. the original attack roll. If the defender fails, then the Hit Location is incapacitated for a number of turns equal to the damage inflicted. A blow to the torso causes the defender to stagger winded, only able to defend. A head shot renders the foe briefly insensible.

SUNDER

The attacker may use a suitable weapon to damage the armour or natural protection of an opponent. Any weapon damage, after reductions for parrying or magic, is applied against the Armour Point value of the protection. Surplus damage in excess of its Armour Points is then used to reduce the AP value of that armour(ed) location – ripping straps, bursting rings, creasing plates or tearing away



SPECIAL EFFECTS SUMMARY

<i>Special Effect</i>	<i>Offensive</i>	<i>Defensive</i>	<i>Specific Weapon Type</i>	<i>Specific Roll</i>	<i>Stackable</i>
Accidental Injury		X		Attacker Fumbles	
Arise		X			
Bash	X		Shields or Bludgeoning		
Bleed	X		Cutting Weapons		
Blind Opponent		X		Defender Criticals	
Bypass Armour	X			Attacker Criticals	X
Choose Location	X			See Description	
Circumvent Cover	X		Ranged Weapons		
Circumvent Parry	X			Attacker Criticals	
Close Range	X	X			
Compel Surrender	X	X			
Damage Weapon	X	X			
Disarm Opponent	X	X			
Drop Foe	X		Ranged Weapons		
Duck Back	X		Ranged Weapons		
Enhance Parry		X		Defender Criticals	
Entangle	X	X	Entangling Weapons		
Flurry	X		Unarmed		X
Force Failure	X	X		Opponent Fumbles	
Grip	X		Unarmed		
Impale	X		Impaling Weapons		
Kill Silently	X		Small Weapons	See Description	
Marksman	X		Ranged Weapons		
Maximise Damage	X			Attacker Criticals	X
Open Range		X			
Overextend Opponent		X			X
Overpenetration	X		Ranged Weapons	Critical Only	
Pin Down	X		Ranged Weapons		X
Pin Weapon	X	X		Critical Only	
Prepare Counter		X			X
Press Advantage	X				
Rapid Reload	X				X
Remise	X		Small Weapon Only		
Scar Foe	X	X			
Select Target		X		Attacker Fumbles	
Slip Free		X		Defender Criticals	
Stand Fast		X			
Stun Location	X		Bludgeoning Weapons		
Sunder	X		Axes, Two Handed Weapons		
Take Weapon	X	X	Unarmed		
Trip Opponent	X	X			
Weapon Malfunction	X		Ranged Weapons	Attacker Fumbles	
Withdraw		X			

ANATHAYM'S SAGA

One of the centaurs battling Master Zamothis becomes infuriated at the grizzled warrior's near impenetrable defence. When it finally rolls a critical attack, Zamothis once again parries with his Hoplite shield which would normally be enough to block any damage from the centaur's great club. So rather than attacking the warrior, the enraged beast aims for the shield instead, and selects Damage Weapon as its effect. The blow from the club inflicts 11 points of damage which when applied to the shield, overcomes its 6 Armour Points and reduces it to 10 Hit Points. The resulting cracking noise alerts Master Zamothis, who realises he will soon be in serious trouble.

Meanwhile, Anathaym cuts the youth free, but as he flees to the entrance of the canyon, one of the centaurs spots the escape and closes in for an attack, waving a dangerous looking halberd in wide circles above its head. Anathaym interposes herself, and engages the savage warrior in combat. Rolls are made resulting in Anathaym gaining a normal success, and the centaur fumbling!

With two special effects to select, Anathaym decides she doesn't want to be hit by the halberd so chooses Disarm Opponent and Force Failure. Normally this would prove troublesome for the heroine, her shortsword suffering significant penalties to knock the larger weapon out of the centaur's hands. However, because she has also taken Force Failure, the centaur automatically fails the opposed roll and his weapon clatters to the ground, leaving him unarmed.

the hide, scales or chitin of monsters. If any damage remains after the protection has been reduced to zero AP, it carries over onto the Hit Points of the location struck.

TAKE WEAPON

Allows an unarmed character to yank or twist an opponent's weapon out of his hand. The opponent must make an opposed roll of his Combat Style against the character's original Unarmed roll. If the target loses, his weapon is taken and from that moment on, may be used by the character instead. Take Weapon differs from Disarm Opponent in that the size of the weapon is largely irrelevant. However, the technique only works on creatures of up to twice the attacker's STR.

TRIP OPPONENT

The character attempts to overbalance or throw his opponent to the ground. The opponent must make an opposed roll of his Brawn, Evade or Acrobatics against the character's original roll. If the target fails, he falls prone. Quadruped opponents (or creatures with even more legs) may substitute their Athletics skill for Evade, and treat the roll as one difficulty grade easier.

WEAPON MALFUNCTION (FIREARMS)

The attacker's weapon malfunctions in such a way that it is rendered useless until time can be spent repairing it.

WITHDRAW

The defender may automatically withdraw out of reach, breaking off engagement with that particular opponent.

CLOSE COMBAT

Close combat is hand to hand fighting in its classic sense, when combatants strike each other with wielded or natural weapons. Although the basic combat rules have been described previously, this section further details a number of tactical and environmental situations which may affect those in close combat.

The following guidelines offer ways to make close combat more interesting and help to further explain some concepts hinted at earlier in this chapter.

SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS

The Situational Modifiers table (see overleaf) provides some common situational modifiers that may be applied when fighting in particular situations, or as the result of a Special Effect.

Unless stated otherwise, these modifiers are applied to attacking, parrying, and evading equally. The difficulty grade column suggests a suitable skill penalty for that situation. Where two or more situations are pertinent to the character, use the most severe. See Modifying Skills page 38.

CLOSE COMBAT SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS

Situation	Difficulty Grade
Attacking a helpless target	Automatic
Attacking in a confined situation	Hard
Defending while on lower ground or against mounted foe	Hard
Fighting while on unstable ground	Hard
Fighting whilst crouching or from one knee	Hard
Fighting in poor visibility (thick fog, snowstorm)	Hard
Defending against an attack from behind	Formidable
Fighting while prone	Formidable
Fighting in partial darkness (dim illumination)	Formidable
Fighting in pitch black conditions (no illumination at all)	Herculean
Blinded or loss of primary perceptive sense	Herculean

ENGAGEMENT

An important concept of close combat is that of Engagement. A character is considered Engaged if he is within melee weapon range of his opponent. This does not necessarily require that both combatants can reach each other; only that one of them can be potentially struck by the other.

Once a character has engaged with an opponent he can no longer freely depart that fight (Charging is a special exception). It requires some form of deliberate act to break contact with the foe, who might not wish to allow him to depart. This is normally performed via a combat action such as Change Range or Outmanoeuvre, but sometimes an unexpected chance to disengage occurs by use of a Special Effect. Fleeing from a battle requires that engagement is broken first.

Certain circumstances will allow a character to engage with multiple foes simultaneously, provided the enemy are in close proximity with each other. This can occur in many ways, for instance closing with a line of soldiers blocking a bridge, or jumping down into the

middle of a tight packed rabble. In such situations not only does the character have the option of which foe he strikes, but the reverse is also true.

Withdrawing from Engagement in this circumstance depends on the distribution of foes. Obviously retreating from the middle of a pack will be near impossible, whilst withdrawing from an organised formation might be automatic, providing the enemy doesn't wish to break ranks.

CLOSE COMBAT MECHANICS

The remainder of this section provides further guidelines concerning combat under different tactical circumstances.

CHARGING

Charging is the act of moving quickly to increase the force and impact of an attack. There are two main types of charging, depending on whether the attacker wishes to stop in engagement range with the target or continue sweeping past, through or over the target.

The common principles of a charge are as follows:

- ❖ A charge requires at least one full Combat Round of movement at running or sprinting speed prior to contact
- ❖ A charge imposes a penalty to the attack roll, increasing it by one difficulty grade
- ❖ A charge increases a bipedal attacker's Damage Modifier by one step; or the Damage Modifier of four (or more) legged creatures by two steps. In addition, the Size of the attacking weapon is improved by one step

The recipient of a charge has three options; attempt to parry, evade or simultaneously counterattack the charging attacker.

Parrying a charge attack holds some significant risks, depending on the size and strength of the attacker. The primary danger is suffering knockback, which may leave a victim prone even if they suffer no other damage from the impact. Use of the Brace combat action in advance of the charge attack can help mitigate the effects of knockback. The secondary threat comes from the bonus to the charger's weapon size, which may permit a blow to penetrate or overcome the defender's parrying weapon.

Evading a charge attack is more of a gamble, but in some circumstances may be the only option. The defender must make an opposed roll of his Evade skill versus the charging opponent's combat skill. If the defender wins he throws himself completely clear of the charge, otherwise he is hit. Any difference in Level of Success results in Special Effects as normal.

Counterattacking sacrifices the defender's opportunity to actively defend against the charge in exchange for a chance to injure the attacker. In such cases both sides are treated as having failed to parry, although they can still benefit from Passive Blocking. The wielder of the weapon with the longest Reach strikes first, potentially hindering his opponent from launching the subsequent blow. If using long-shafted impaling weapons which can be 'set' against a charge, the defender may substitute his own Damage Modifier for that of the charging opponent (or its mount if the attacker is riding).

CHARGING INTO CONTACT

Some charges are intended as a method to crash into an opponent, then remain in place to take advantage of any chaos caused. An example of this would be a barbarian warrior, armed with a

ANATHAYM'S SAGA

Although disarmed the centaur is still dangerous. On its next turn it clips Anathaym with a hoof sending her reeling backwards, momentarily stunned. When she gathers her senses she sees that her foe has galloped off to pluck up a lance, and is now galloping back towards her, weapon levelled for a charge!

Cursing that she only brought her peltast shield, Anathaym realises that attempting to parry the lance would result in the weapon passing right through the shield (shield size Large versus a lance size Huge, but boosted to size Enormous during a charge). Not wishing to be impaled she decides to try and dive clear. The centaur makes an opposed roll of his weapon skill against Anathaym's Evade. Both achieve normal successes but Anathaym gets the higher roll and leaps clear, ending up prone. On her next turn she regains her feet, but by this time the centaur has been carried clear by the speed of his attack, and is now slowing in preparation for another charge...

Fearing that she will eventually fail if forced to keep on evading, Anathaym looks around frantically for some other option, and spots the halberd she earlier knocked from the centaur's grasp. She quickly grabs the weapon and, using it like a spear, sets it to receive charge then braces herself; completing her arrangements just before the centaur contacts her again.

Since both weapons are of equal reach, the Games Master declares that the attacks are simultaneous. The centaur's attack is rolled first, and to Anathaym's great relief the mighty beast just misses her with its lance, thanks to the attack difficulty being raised to Hard. Her own attack is a hit however, and since the halberd is set she uses the centaur's own Damage Modifier against itself in this case 1d8 (1d4 increased by two steps for the charge). This added to the 1d8+2 for the halberd, and the special effect for not defending, Anathaym impales the weapon through the centaur's chest for 14 points of damage, giving it a Major Wound. The centaur collapses in gouts of blood, unable to continue the fight.

great-axe, throwing himself at a shield wall, hoping that the impetus of his charge will help him smash through the defender's shield or knock him over.

Once the charge strikes home, the attacker is considered engaged with his opponent. From that moment on combat proceeds normally. All benefits gained from the charge are lost after the first attack.

CHARGING THROUGH CONTACT

The second type of charge is one which uses the momentum to carry the attacker through, and clear of an engagement. It is normally limited to mounted combatants or creatures of significant size unlikely to be hindered by an impact with smaller foes. For instance an enraged aurochs could quite easily charge through a group of warriors, tossing or trampling over a victim as it passes, before continuing on out of close combat range.

The speed of such charges prevents the attacker and defender from exchanging more than a single action with each other, namely the charge attack, and the defender's reaction to it (Parry, Evade or Counterattack). Since the charge attack occurs on the attacker's turn, they will have already been carried clear by the time the defender's turn arrives.

Note that charges are not limited to just running, but can be performed by flying or swimming creatures in the relevant environment.

COVER

Cover is used by opponents to obstruct attacks against them, whether from ranged or close combat. This occurs by either physically blocking a blow due to the toughness of the interposing

material, or by obscuring where precisely the foe is. For example a guard standing behind a crenellated wall may have his lower body shielded, whereas a thief hiding somewhere behind a curtain may be hidden from direct attack. The precise value of cover depends on the thickness of its protection and the extent of its coverage.

In the case of partial cover, any attack against a target which lands on an obscured Hit Location will be blocked to the extent of the cover's inherent protection. Thus in the case of the guard covered by the crenellated wall, any attack which would normally hit his abdomen or legs would be stopped by the stone fortification.

The effects of cover can be partially negated either by use of the Choose Location special effect to aim at visible parts of the target; or striking through the cover if the weapon is capable of penetrating it. When using ranged weapons however, Choose Location normally requires a critical success, which makes taking cover against missiles extremely worthwhile.

In situations where cover is total but the attacker knows his attack will penetrate, he may strike blindly at the hidden target. In such cases the attack roll is one grade harder, and Choose Location may not be taken if a special effect is won. This assumes the cover is not so extensive as to permit the target to move freely behind it. Thus, someone lurking behind a small bush could still be attacked, even though the attacker might not be able to see his quarry, but if he was behind a lengthy hedge his position could not be accurately predicted.

EVADING

Protecting oneself from attacks such as volleys of ranged weapons, headlong charging beasts, and even destructive magical spells can be exceptionally difficult, especially if the consequences will overwhelm or ignore a shield. In these situations often the best thing for a character to do is fling themselves to the side or dive behind cover to escape. This is known as evading.

Evasion attempts require an opposed roll of the attacker's pertinent skill versus the Evade skill of the defender. This could be anything from the Drive roll of a charioteer to the spell casting roll of a magician. If the attacker wins then they inflict damage as per normal. If the defender wins damage is completely avoided. Whatever the result, the evasive gambit leaves the defender prone, usually requiring him to regain his footing on his following turn.

If the winner of the opposed roll achieves one or more levels of success over his opponent, they may select suitable Special Effects as per normal combat.

Evading may be made more difficult or rendered impossible depending on the circumstances:

- « The character is helpless or entangled
- « There is nowhere to evade to (balancing on a ledge whilst scaling a cliff, for example)
- « A mounted character may only evade by flinging themselves clear of the saddle

Evading is not normally performed in close combat due to its inherent disadvantages. However, a character facing a hand-to-hand attack against which he has no applicable defence due to the lack of a weapon (or an inferior sized one which won't block the damage) may have no other choice.

In such cases evading provides only a temporary respite from a determined opponent who decides to follow up, preventing the

EVADING CREATURES

Creatures that lack thick natural armour to bull through attacks, or the intellect or skill to actively parry them, are often forced to evade in close combat in order to defend themselves.

In these circumstances, most creatures lacking humanoid form, quadrupeds or serpents for example, have an inherent advantage over bipedal characters; in that they rarely go prone when evading, due to their shape or multiple limbs.

As a rule of thumb, whenever such a creature attempts to evade an attack, they only end up prone if they fail their Evade roll (the skill check, not the opposed test).

prone character from regaining their feet. Nothing prevents a prone character from attempting to evade subsequent attacks, with the proviso that they suffer a 'Fighting while prone' situational penalty as they continue to roll aside or scrabble backwards away from their attacker.

FLYING COMBAT

Fighting against flying creatures, and full scale aerial battles provide a rather interesting dynamic to close combat, since most airborne creatures require constant movement to remain aloft.

ATTACKING GROUND-BASED TARGETS

It can be difficult for ground-based characters to defeat airborne foes. Of course in some encounters the flying creature will hover or land on the combatant, allowing combat to proceed normally. In others the flying creature may fly back and forth, sweeping down to make attacks before continuing back out of range. In the latter situation it is recommended that each 'strafing' run is treated as Charging through Contact, see Charging page [102](#). This can make airborne creatures deadly opponents unless ground based defenders have some sort of ranged weaponry or cover.

AERIAL COMBAT ALOFT

Combat between aerial creatures or characters mounted on flying beasts should be handled slightly differently. Unlike ground based fighting it often takes a significant period of time to jockey into a position where one airborne opponent can assault the other. Each brief engagement only allows one of them to attack before the flying creatures travel apart, requiring them to manoeuvre again to see which gets the upper hand in the next pass.

Thus at the start of each round combatants must make an opposed roll of their Fly skills (or Ride if a mount). The winner is the one who can attack that round. If facing multiple opponents use a group opposed roll, and all those who beat the lone participant

AERIAL TACTICS

Airborne combat can be spiced up by introducing terrain and environmental factors. Clouds can be used for ambushes or places to escape battle. Tall buildings and narrow canyons can offer a dramatic setting in which to set chases, with the participants playing a deadly game of chicken if they fail their flying or riding rolls. An aerial battle could even involve support fire from the ground, forcing combatants to hoard their Action Points to evade deadly ballista bolts whilst trying to beat their flying opponents.

may attack it that round. Attacks are resolved in a similar manner to charges, the recipient allowed to parry, evade or counterattack.

In the case of particularly large creatures or those travelling at high speed, the Games Master may wish to increase the manoeuvring time between passes, for example perhaps 1d3 rounds for a griffon or 1d6 rounds for a dragon. In these cases it is wise to limit mounted archers or spell casters to acting on each pass, since most of the intervening time the rider will be thrown about in aerial acrobatics or the enemy target will be out of range.

KNOCKBACK

An attack which imparts more damage than the SIZ of the recipient will, by default, result in him being knocked back. The damage in this circumstance is before any reduction due to parrying or armour. On receiving such a blow, the recipient must pass an easy Acrobatics or standard Athletics roll to avoid falling prone. They are also thrust backwards one metre for each five points of damage (or fraction thereof) in excess of their SIZ. Proactively using the Brace combat action can reduce or even negate the effects of knockback.

Knockback differs from the Bash special effect in that Knockback is the automatic and accidental side effect of tremendously powerful blows, whilst a Bash is a deliberate technique which relies on timing and leverage.

LEAPING ATTACKS

There are some animals, monsters, and even people who leap upon their victims in order to knock them prone. Leaping attacks can be launched from a variety of situations, but most are triggered as part of an ambush or at the conclusion of a charge. A few creatures have the ability to leap atop an opponent without the need for a run-up or superior height.

A leaping attack is resolved with an opposed roll of the leaper's Athletics skill versus the defender's Brawn or Evade skill. If the leaper wins then the defender is automatically knocked prone, with the attacker astride them. If the attack fails, the defender has weathered or sidestepped the impact. If the winner of the opposed roll achieves one or more levels of success over his opponent, they may select suitable Special Effects as per normal combat.

No damage is inflicted as part of the leap; however a subsequently prone victim cannot recover his footing until either his attacker leaves him, or he eventually wins a Special Effect permitting him to Arise.

If the target is a quadruped, then it may substitute Athletics for Evade, and makes the attacker's initial Athletics roll one difficulty grade harder. In addition, leaping attacks only work against opponents of up to twice the attacker's SIZ. A target can make themselves more difficult to knock down by proactive use of the Brace combat action, provided they are aware of the impending leap attack.

MOUNTED COMBAT

Unless learned as part of specifically mounted combat styles (see Combat Style Benefits page 88), the combat skills of a rider may not exceed their Ride skill. The advantages of being mounted are considerable however:

- « A mounted warrior rolls a 1D10+10 for the Hit Location of bipedal creatures, provided the target is lower than the rider.
- « A mounted warrior can withdraw freely from engagement on his turn provided his mount moves faster (i.e. has a higher

Movement value) than the opponent, and the mount itself is not engaged in attacking.

- « A mounted warrior may, at the cost of an Action Point, substitute either his own Combat Style or Ride skill instead of his mount's, to defend it against attacks.
- « A mounted warrior may combine his SIZ with his mount's for the purposes of avoiding Knockback, provided he passes an unopposed Ride roll.
- « A mounted warrior may, when charging with a braced weapon, substitute his own Damage Modifier for that of his mount. A weapon braced for a charging attack cannot be used to parry. If the weapon impales it must be left in the body of the target, or else break or dismount the rider as the mount continues past.

MULTIPLE OPPONENTS

Facing multiple opponents in MYTHRAS is often exceptionally dangerous. Whilst a character suffers no specific penalties to his combat skills, he can soon become swamped by his opponents and rapidly run out of Action Points with which to defend himself. Once all his actions have been expended the character is treated as having failed his parry roll against any subsequent attacks, which in addition to any damage inflicted also leaves him vulnerable to Special Effects.

The best tactics to use against being outnumbered are:

- « Constrain the avenue of attack so that fewer opponents can engage simultaneously
- « Fight as a formation to place disordered opponents at a disadvantage
- « Outmanoeuvre around multiple opponents so that they interfere with one another
- « Withdraw then flee the combat as quickly as possible

OUTMANOEUVRING

A character facing multiple opponents can use movement to limit the number which can attack him at any one moment in time. This works by constantly shifting position, forcing some foes to start running around the flanks of their companions to re-establish reach or lines of attack, generally causing them to interfere with one another. Outmanoeuvring requires that the character has room to move about, and is not pinned in a confining area. It also assumes that the character is engaged with the entire group of foes, rather than a specific individual.

An example of outmanoeuvring in action would be a group of guards trying to arrest a drunken barbarian in a tavern. The warrior could manoeuvre around the tables, chairs, and roof supports to block the majority of his foes whilst he whittles them down one by one.

Outmanoeuvring requires that the character engages his opponents in a group opposed roll of Evade skills. Every participant, both the manoeuvring character and those foes who wish to corner him, must spend an Action Point. Then they each roll once, and those who fail to beat the manoeuvring character's roll cannot attack him for the remainder of that Combat Round, being blocked by their allies or terrain features.

If the manoeuvring character beats all of his opponents he has the choice of safely engaging a single foe for the rest of the round or withdrawing from the fight completely.

PASSIVE BLOCKING

Passive Blocking is the placement of weapons and shields in such a manner so that they effectively act as cover. Characters armed with a weapon may hold it in such a way that it covers a chosen location (or locations when using a shield), but at the cost of being unable to actively parry with it (see Ward Location page 93). Any attack which hits those locations automatically receives the benefit of the weapon or shield, reducing damage as normal. The technique is commonly used when a warrior wishes to guard a weak spot or wounded location.

It may seem paradoxical to sacrifice the ability to parry, potentially opening up a passively blocking character to an unopposed attack. However there are many situations it is a valid tactic: for example when used by inexperienced troops or those lacking full sets of armour. In addition there is nothing which prevents a two weapons or weapon and shield combatant from using his other weapon to actively parry.

Since passive blocking works in the same way as cover, the Choose Location special effect cannot be used to bypass the block in close combat, though opponents can still use the effect to strike other unblocked areas. Assuming a shield, passive blocking against missiles becomes even better, since for ranged weapons Choose Location is a critical only.

Crouching down behind a shield allows a character to double the number of locations covered whilst passive blocking.

PULLED BLOWS

Occasionally a character may wish to avoid maiming or killing an opponent. This is achieved by ‘pulling’ a blow, limiting the force placed behind it or striking with a less lethal part of the weapon. A pulled blow halves the damage inflicted on a successful hit. However, the intent to pull a blow must be stated before the attack is made, since it is near impossible to withhold a fully committed strike once it has been launched.

SURPRISE

Surprise occurs when an unexpected attack is launched against opponents unaware of the attacker’s presence or intention. An ambush would be an example of the former, whilst treacherously turning on an unsuspecting ally during amiable conversation illustrates the latter.

The effects of surprise on a target are potent:

- ❖ The target suffers a -10 penalty to initiative
- ❖ Until their Initiative arrives they are considered flat footed and cannot defend themselves
- ❖ The first attack on the target, if successful, gains a bonus Special Effect
- ❖ For the remainder of the round they may not perform any offensive action

For example, an assassin who sneaks up on an oblivious guard, wins the initiative, and successfully strikes from behind would gain two special effects – one for the attack’s success against the guard’s automatic failure; and a bonus one for surprising him. If the assassin were using a dagger he could then choose Select Location: head, and Kill Silently, quietly stabbing the guard in the throat.

As surprise can be so devastating, targets of such an attack should be permitted a chance to detect the impending conflict. For instance, an ambush might allow an opposed roll of Perception versus Stealth;

or Insight versus Deceit for a betrayal. Difficulty modifiers should be applied in situations where the target is hindered, such as being inebriated or dozing lightly. Conversely a bonus should be applied if the target is suspicious or forewarned. If the target wins the opposed roll then the effects of surprise are negated.

SWEET ATTACKS

Sweep attacks occur when weapons or creatures of unusual size attack a closely clumped group of opponents – the scything tail of a huge dragon for example – striking several foes simultaneously. A sweep attack is made by applying a single attack roll of the weapon or creature to all targets in its path. Each defender must resolve the effects of the attack separately, and any special effects imposed on the attacker are treated as having occurred concurrently.

Sweep attacks can also be used for other ‘area affect’ assaults, such as the overhead smash of a giant’s tree trunk club or the unstoppable charge of a giant triceratops. The games master decides how many foes are caught in the attack based upon the length or trajectory of weapon, and his visualisation of the conflict.

UNARMED COMBAT

Unarmed combat is the default Combat Style available to any person or creature, which covers the skill of fighting using only the limbs and natural armaments of their own body. Some beasts have a variety of natural weapons, each with a different reach and size, which can make larger creatures particularly dangerous – able to stand off at longer range, and still launch blows capable of smashing through the stoutest shields. The unarmed combat techniques used by animals and monsters are examined in more detail in the Creatures chapter.

Although unarmed combat seems superfluous for warriors who utilise weapons, it still provides a number of advantages:

- ❖ Unarmed combat can be used interchangeably with any other weapon style, provided the target is within reach of the attacker’s natural weapons.
- ❖ Unarmed combat can be used offensively for either striking or grappling an opponent. It is important for the user to declare which he intends in advance, since the resolution of each is handled slightly differently.
- ❖ Unarmed combat can be used defensively to parry a weapon attack. Damage is reduced as per normal, according to the comparative Sizes of the natural and wielded weapon. Even if no damage was stopped, the parry attempt might still prevent the defender from suffering one or more Special Effects.

Note that if an unarmed combatant can step within the reach of an armed opponent, he will reduce the effective Size of his opponent’s weapon, making it quite possible to parry blows without suffering injury.

PARRYING WEAPONS WHILST UNARMED

As previously described a Parry is actually a combination of parrying, blocking, and footwork to deflect the force of a blow. It is not simply interposing an object into the path of an attack to stop it dead – for example using a forearm to block the sweep of a sword – since such an action would likely result in a mangled arm.

Instead most unarmed and armed combat styles use more subtle techniques to gain maximum deflection for the minimum risk. Examples include, but are not limited to: Pressing against the hand

or hilt of a weapon to change its line of attack, stepping very close to cut down angular momentum of swung weapons, deflecting thrusts by knocking aside the point or haft, or even grabbing a weapon on the haft or blade near its grip.

Such methods rely on several points however; firstly that the parrying creature is intelligent enough to understand and use said techniques, and secondly that they are within unarmed range. The latter point is perhaps the most crucial, and demonstrates the dangers of facing an armed opponent with a longer reach.

STRIKING

Using unarmed combat to throw simple damage-inflicting strikes is resolved in the same way as normal weapon attacks. Some Special Effects are specifically reserved for unarmed combat, namely Flurry, Grip, and Take Weapon.

Calculating the damage, Size and Reach of natural weapons is defined on page [222](#) of the Creatures chapter. Human unarmed attacks, for instance, have a size of Small, reach of Touch, and inflict 1d3 damage.

Some creature's natural weapons and unarmed combat styles may add other effects or impart inherent Special Effects on a successful strike. For example the gripping jaws of a crocodile or the poisoned stinger of a giant scorpion.

GRAPPLING

Grappling attacks are resolved using an opposed roll of the attacker's Unarmed skill versus the combat skill used by the defender. If the attacker wins then they establish the grapple, but if the defender wins the grapple fails. As with Evade, if one of the combatants achieves one or more levels of success over his opponent, they may select an equal number of Special Effects.

The effects of grappling depend on the location struck. A grappled limb is rendered inoperable whilst grappling the head or torso imposes a difficulty penalty of Hard against any skill the opponent attempts. In addition, on his following turns the grappler may make unarmed attacks to inflict damage (equal to his Damage Modifier) on the body part by crushing, twisting or strangulating it. The defender may oppose with his own Unarmed or Brawn skill in order to reduce or block the damage.

A grapple continues until the victim manages to break free. Escape attempts are performed on the victim's turn using the Struggle combat action. This requires an opposed roll of either Brawn or Unarmed against whichever of the two skills the grappler prefers. If the grappled victim wins, they manage to break free. Note that some attackers using Brawn may be so strong that no amount of brute force or cunning technique can overcome their grip.

Grappling requires that the limb or appendage is empty, and is capable of hooking, sticking or gripping.

UNUSUAL COMBAT CONDITIONS

There are certain circumstances and environments which may prevent a character from fighting at his full ability. Several are specifically noted below, but other situations may occur which aren't covered by the rules. In such cases the Games Master should apply similar rules as appropriate to the fight. For example, a battle upon a treacherously slippery ice floe may require that combat skills be capped by Acrobatics.

CLIMBING

A climbing character has all of his combat skills capped by the value of his Athletics skill. Bipedal characters are limited to fighting with a single limb, requiring the other three to remain clinging to the vertiginous surface they are scaling.

SWIMMING

A swimming character has all of his combat skills capped by the value of his Swim skill. Since water (and other fluids) impose significant drag, only thrusting weapons are effective whilst submerged, and even those are reduced to half damage. Other weapons are slowed to the point of impotence. Unarmed combat attacks which involve biting, strangulation or ramming are unaffected.

WEAPON REACH – CLOSING AND OPENING RANGE

Weapon Reach, and its associated mechanics for Closing and Opening Range are optional rules for those desiring more realistic combat.

In general terms when two combatants face one another armed with weapons of greatly disproportionate reach, the wielder of the longer weapon can keep his opponent at bay, preventing him from attacking. If however, the wielder of the shorter weapon can step inside the effective reach of the longer, then the tables turn and the combatant with the longer weapon will find himself unable to parry with that weapon.

The following rules assume a Reach difference of two or more steps between the longer and shorter weapon. Thus a dagger (Short) against a falchion (Medium) would suffer no penalties in combat, whereas the same dagger against a great axe (Long) would.

FIGHTING AT THE LONGER REACH

If fighting at the Reach of the longer weapon, then the user of the shorter weapon cannot directly attack the wielder of the longer. They are still considered to be engaged since the longer weapon can still reach them.

In this situation the user of the shorter weapon can attack the longer weapon of his opponent, try to close the range between them, or hope to win an applicable Special Effect. If the longer weapon is in fact the natural armament of a creature with superior reach, such as the tentacle of a colossal squid, the user of the shorter weapon can directly attack the limb assaulting them.

The intimidating threat of longer reach is an inherent advantage of two handed weapons, which offsets the disadvantage of not using a shield.

FIGHTING AT THE SHORTER REACH

In the converse situation where the fighters are engaged at the Reach of the shorter weapon, the user of the longer weapon will find he cannot parry the attacks of the shorter.

The user of the longer weapon can still attack with the haft or hilt of his now encroached weapon, but its efficacy is significantly reduced. In this circumstance the weapon's Size is reduced as many steps as the difference between the two weapons' Reach, and only inflicts 1d3+1 damage due to the necessity of striking with the haft, pommel, guard from an awkwardly cramped position.

At this point the best option for the user of the longer weapon is to reopen the range between them, draw a shorter backup weapon, defend themselves with their Unarmed skill, or hope to win a useful Special Effect. In a last ditch situation the encroached fighter can attempt to Evade instead.

CLOSING RANGE

A character that is being held at range by a longer weapon must close on his opponent before being able to attack him. Two methods are available to do this.

- ❖ Close Range Special Effect – automatically closes, but cannot be used unless a character has generated an opportunity for a Special Effect.
- ❖ Change Range Combat Action – costs an Action Point, and is used on a character's Turn.

In the latter case of attempting to Change Range, the character's opponent has two options, described below. In both cases if the opponent has no Action Points left – or chooses not to spend an Action Point – then the attempt to close is automatically successful.

- ❖ The combatants match Evade skills in an opposed test. If the character initiating the Change Range action wins then he can close the range to a desired distance. If the opponent wins then the existing range is maintained.
- ❖ However, if the opponent decides to attack the closing character instead, then he must make an opposed roll of his combat skill versus the closing character's Evade skill. If the opponent wins, he strikes the character, and any difference in Level of Success results in Special Effects as per normal combat. Whether or not the blow lands, the closing character bridges the distance, and gains the advantage of having the shorter weapon.

OPENING RANGE

Opening Range works in the same way as Closing Range – but obviously in reverse. The character can use Change Range to completely withdraw from engagement. See Withdrawing below.

WITHDRAWING

Withdrawing from a fight means that the character extricates himself from close combat weapon range. This can be done in a myriad of ways, from physically pushing an opponent away, side-stepping a committed attack or unexpectedly taking several large steps backward. At this point they have not fled the battle entirely, but have briefly opened up enough space to have disengaged that opponent, and consider new tactical options.

Withdrawing is automatic when using the Withdraw special effect. Otherwise a character must attempt to break free by use of the Change Range or Outmanoeuvre combat actions, in which case the opponent(s) may resist.

Once he has disengaged himself, the withdrawing character may on his next turn (for the cost of an Action Point):

- ❖ Reroll initiative
- ❖ Flee the battle entirely
- ❖ Seek out a new opponent to engage
- ❖ Perform some other suitable act not covered here

RANGED COMBAT

Ranged combat incorporates all forms of weaponry which require to be shot, thrown or slung to strike their target. The ranged weapons a character can use are listed as part of their combat styles - anything from throwing stones to firing a huge trebuchet.

Ranged attacks are resolved in an identical way to close combat. However, ranged weapons can normally only be parried with shields; those without must rely on natural cover or use Evade to dive out of the line of fire. Thus against lightly armoured foes, ranged weapons can be formidable deterrents.

Each ranged weapon has a number of specific attributes which determine its effectiveness. The ones which have a key bearing on combat are as follows:

FORCE

The ranged weapon equivalent of Size. It measures the penetrative power of that weapon or its ammunition to determine whether the blow overcomes a (shield) parry.

DAMAGE MODIFIER

This attribute shows whether or not the Damage Modifier of the attacker can be used to boost the ranged weapon's damage roll. In general only bows and thrown weapons allow the user to apply their Damage Bonus.

RANGE

Three numbers separated by slashes, representing the maximum Close, Effective, and Long ranges of the weapon or its ammunition. Close range is the distance over which the Choose Location special effect may be used, provided the target is stationary or unaware of the impending attack. Effective range has no significant modifiers. At long range the weapon can still inflict harm, but the amount of damage is halved and Force is reduced by one step.

RELOAD

The time taken to reload a weapon which fires ammunition.

SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS

The table on page 108 provides some situational modifiers specific to ranged weapons. Where two or more situations are pertinent to the character, use the most severe.

RANGED COMBAT CONSIDERATIONS

Whilst ranged weapons appear to be extraordinarily potent they do suffer a number of restrictions, and have special rules covering their use. Specific notes concerning ranged attacks are as follows:

AIMING

By spending additional time aiming a ranged weapon, a character can potentially increase his chance to hit. Aiming requires an entire Combat Round steadyng the weapon, and waiting for the best opportunity to release, for example withholding a bowshot for a momentary lull in the wind or until a target moves between two obstructions. By aiming, the character may reduce the difficulty of a Situational Modifier by one grade. Additional rounds spent aiming grant no further advantage.

RANGED COMBAT SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS

Situation	Difficulty Grade
Light Wind*	Hard
Moderate Wind*	Formidable
Strong Wind*	Herculean
Gale, Storm or Worse*	Hopeless
Target is Running	Hard
Target is Sprinting	Formidable
Target obscured by mist or is in partial darkness	Hard
Target obscured by thick smoke, fog or is in darkness	Formidable
Target is completely obscured	Herculean
Blinded or loss of primary perceptive sense	Hopeless
Target prone	Formidable
Attacker is prone**	Herculean
Attacker is on unstable ground	Hard

*Assumes the thrown weapon or ammunition is vulnerable to crosswinds; and supersedes the normal penalty imposed by winds on physical skills.

**Penalty can be negated if using a crossbow from a prepared position.

DISTANCE PENALTIES

The difficulty of hitting a target increases rapidly with the distance which separates it from the marksman. Distance is considered independent of a weapon's Range, the latter being the performance characteristics of the weapon over set distances.

Distance penalties can be offset by the size of the target being aimed at. Hitting a mammoth at fifty metres is far easier than hitting a human at the same range. The table overleaf indicates the difficulty grade adjustment of hitting various sized objects over incremental distances. These stack on top of other ranged combat situational modifiers.

These values assume an active target in the open field. If shooting a static object at a known range, for example a straw butt during a competition, the Games Master may reduce the difficulty by a step or two.

Whilst there are few creatures which achieve such gargantuan scales, there are other objects which can reach sizes in the hundreds; such as buildings, fortifications, and troop formations. On the battlefield the near impossibility of striking a single man is replaced by the use of volley fire, saturating an area densely packed with men; in the hope that a small proportion of projectiles will strike home.

DISTANCE PENALTIES

Distance	Target SIZ					
	10 or less	11-20	21-40	41-80	81-150	151-300
1-20m	1 Step Harder	No Effect	1 Step Easier	1 Step Easier	2 Steps Easier	2 Steps Easier
21-40m	1 Step Harder	1 Step Harder	No Effect	1 Step Easier	1 Step Easier	2 Steps Easier
41-60m	2 Steps Harder	1 Step Harder	1 Step Harder	No Effect	1 Step Easier	1 Step Easier
61-80m	2 Steps Harder	2 Steps Harder	1 Step Harder	1 Step Harder	No Effect	1 Step Easier
81-100m	3 Steps Harder	2 Steps Harder	2 Steps Harder	1 Step Harder	1 Step Harder	No Effect
101-120m	3 Steps Harder	3 Steps Harder	2 Steps Harder	2 Steps Harder	1 Step Harder	1 Step Harder
121-140m	4 Steps Harder	3 Steps Harder	3 Steps Harder	2 Steps Harder	2 Steps Harder	1 Step Harder
Each 20m	Follow table progression					

For characters with a more destructive bent, statistics for siege engines are included in the Economics and Equipment chapter.

FIRING INTO A CROWD

Firing into the swirling ebb and flow of a melee can be a risky business, even for the most proficient marksman. The unpredictable movement of crowds and engaged opponents can easily result in an ally straying into the line of fire, during the time it takes for a ranged weapon to travel the intervening distance to its intended target. Thus there is always a risk of accidentally striking someone other than the original target being aimed at.

When firing at a specific target at the edge of a crowd or melee, the attack suffers a difficulty grade of at least Hard. If trying to fire through a group to hit a target in its midst, or on the other side, the penalty should be raised to Formidable.

The result of the dice roll is very important. A marksman who passes his attack roll despite the difficulty penalty has aimed true, and will hit his intended target. If however the marksman fails the roll, but would have succeeded if not for the firing into a crowd penalty, then an adjacent victim is struck instead. If more than one target is in the line of fire, the Games Master should determine the victim randomly.

No matter who eventually becomes the target – intended or not – if they are aware of the impending attack, they are free to Evade or Parry as normal. Any special effects won as part of the attack only apply to the original target, not any accidentally struck bystander.

FIRING ON THE MOVE

A character is still permitted to use ranged weapons even whilst mounted on an animal or vehicle. However in these circumstances their combat skill is capped by the Ride or Drive skill of the person controlling the conveyance, which may or may not be the attacker himself. For example an archer riding in a two man chariot would have his attack skill capped by the Drive skill of his driver.

Ranged attacks cannot usually be performed if the attacker himself is moving at a gait faster than a walk, since their aim is constantly thrown off by the physical movement. One exception to this are warriors trained in a Combat Style specialising in Skirmishing, see page 89. However in this case the attacker's attack percentage cannot exceed his Athletics skill.

IMPALING RANGED ATTACKS

Ranged weapon projectiles which result in an impale, such as an arrow or thrown javelin, clearly cannot be yanked free of the wound on the next turn by the marksman who threw or fired the weapon. However nothing stops a character in close combat with

REALISTIC RANGE PENALTIES

Trying to hit a man-sized target with a human powered missile weapon is actually much harder than most people expect. A shot must take into consideration physical factors such as cross winds, variances between weight, flexibility and air resistance of each piece of (ostensibly identical) ammunition, and the necessity to arch a shot or throw. Even humidity and heat can significantly affect the performance of weapons such as bows.

Further complicating the matter are the difficulty of judging range accurately, and the diminishment in the perceived size of a target as range increases. And this is assuming a stationary object! Complexity is further increased when attacking a moving target, because of the time it takes for the weapon to reach the destination; even more so if that target starts to move erratically.

Taking all these factors into account, it soon becomes evident that there is a huge difference between how ranged weapons are portrayed in fantasy and the realities of the real world. In actual fact most bow and spear hunters rely primarily on stealth to get very close, and are rarely able to hit large prey in the wild at ranges over a few tens of metres. Fortunately MYTHRAS errs on the side of the heroic.

the transfixed victim from subsequently attempting to grab the impaling weapon to tear it free.

Note that the Size of an impaled weapon is different from the Force it struck with. Ranged impaling weapons have a special column denoting their actual size when considering the hindrances caused by the Impale special effect.

LOADING RANGED WEAPONS

Before a ranged weapon can be used it must either be readied or loaded. This can often take significant time, slowing down a ranged combatant's rate of fire.

ANATHAYM'S SAGA

Seeing that Master Zamothis is in trouble, Anathaym abandons the impaled halberd, and unwinds her sling from her forehead. At the start of the next round she casts a lead slingshot into the tight melee surrounding her desperately manoeuvring mentor, aiming at a black coated centaur of prodigious musculature.

Her combat skill (Meerish Slinger style) is normally 67%. Since she does not wish to accidentally strike Zamothis the roll is considered Hard, reducing her skill to 45%.

Anathaym passes the attack roll, and selects the Stun Location special effect against the unsuspecting creature. Unluckily she rolls minimum damage, and her shot glances off its hindquarters with no apparent effect.

Her first attack unnoticed, Anathaym reloads, and at the end of the round casts again. This time she does not do so well, rolling 52. This not only fails to strike the black centaur but since it is less than her normal skill (without the firing into a crowd penalty), it means she has struck a bystander. The Games Master states there are two other possible targets in immediate proximity, a second (chestnut coated) centaur, and Master Zamothis himself. A dice is rolled to see which of the two is struck, and to her horror Anathaym inadvertently hits her oblivious mentor. Fortunately this time the slingshot inflicts no special effect, but still manages to draw a glare from the grizzled warrior when the shot clangs off his crested bronze helmet.

Throwing weapons, for example javelins, necessitate the weapon be drawn or plucked up in preparation. This normally only requires one turn to complete, as per the Ready Weapon action providing it is within reach. If a second throwing weapon is held in preparation in the off-hand, the caster can swap it over to his throwing hand as a Free Action.

Projectile weapons, such as slings or bows must be loaded. The number of turns it takes to load a ranged weapon is listed in its Load column on the Ranged Weapons table, page 65.

A character can reduce the time spent loading or readying by use of the Rapid Reload special effect.

HIT LOCATIONS

Most successful (weapon) attacks land on a specific hit location. This can be determined randomly or in some circumstances be selected by Special Effects such as Choose Location. To randomly calculate which location is been hit, roll 1d20 and compare the number rolled with the relevant humanoid or creature Hit Location table.

Animals and monsters usually have slightly different hit location tables than humanoids to reflect their own unique physiology. These are listed as part of each being's description in the Creature chapter. The humanoid Hit Location table is repeated here for ease of reference.

HUMANOID HIT LOCATIONS

1d20	Hit Location
1–3	Right Leg
4–6	Left Leg
7–9	Abdomen
10–12	Chest
13–15	Right Arm
16–18	Left Arm
19–20	Head

Note than some attacks, especially magical ones or those produced by particular monsters (a dragon's fiery breath for example) may strike several Hit Locations simultaneously. Individual Hit Locations may be armoured, either from worn protection or the natural toughness of the creature's outer surface. This is important when considering Damage and Wound Levels below.

DAMAGE AND WOUND LEVELS

If an attack strikes successfully, it causes damage according to the damage rating for the weapon (see the statistical entries for close combat and ranged weapons in the Economics & Equipment chapter, pages 63 to 65). A shortsword, for instance, inflicts 1d6 damage.

The rolled damage for the weapon or attack is modified by the certain conditions in the specific following order:

- ❖ Apply the Damage Modifier for the character making the attack
- ❖ Modify the damage from any weapon enhancing (or reducing) magic
- ❖ If parried, reduce the damage appropriately as per the comparative weapon sizes
- ❖ If the hit location is armoured, reduce damage by the Armour Points value

If the damage inflicted by the attack is above zero, then the hit location sustains that amount of damage, with the damage total being immediately removed from the location's Hit Points. Note how many Hit Points the location has remaining, and the wound category that results.

- ❖ Minor Wound: Hit Location still has positive Hit Points
- ❖ Serious Wound: Hit Location is reduced to zero Hit Points or below
- ❖ Major Wound: Hit Location is reduced to a negative score equal or greater than its starting Hit Points

Use the following rules if a location receives a Serious or Major wound. Note that wounds requiring Endurance checks test them in an opposed roll against the value of the original attack roll. This reflects the ability of highly skilled warriors to make more deadly strikes. Endurance rolls are not repeated unless the location is wounded again.

MINOR WOUND

Minor wounds are cuts, scratches, bruises and sprains. They hurt, may bleed, but are not significant enough to slow down or hamper the victim.

SERIOUS WOUND

If a location is reduced to zero Hit Points or below, the victim receives a Serious Wound. The location is permanently scarred, and the victim cannot attack or start to cast spells (but can still parry or evade) for the next 1d3 turns due to being stunned or distracted by the pain of the wound.

A character suffering a Serious Wound to a limb must immediately make an opposed test of his Endurance versus the successful attack roll of his enemy. Failure results in the limb being rendered useless, until the location is restored to positive hit points. If a leg, the victim drops prone. If an arm, he drops whatever he is holding unless the object is strapped on (use common sense here).

A character suffering a Serious Wound to the Abdomen, Chest or Head must immediately make an opposed test of his Endurance versus the successful attack roll of his enemy. Failure results in unconsciousness for a number of minutes equal to the amount of damage sustained in the attack causing the Serious Wound. First Aid or Healing skills can be used to help an unconscious victim regain consciousness, but he will not be able to rejoin any combat until he has received further healing to the Seriously Wounded location.

At the Games Master's discretion, even if the character remains functional, all tasks requiring use of that body location will suffer an

WOUNDING OPPONENTS WITH AN ENDURANCE OVER 100%

When a serious or major wound is inflicted against an opponent that possesses an Endurance over 100%, the opposed test should take into account the penalty applied by the higher skill in the contest. In the rare cases where Endurance is the higher skill, it is recommended that the penalty is imposed retroactively to attacker's skill – potentially downgrading the success level of the original attack roll.

This does not mean that the attacker missed his original attack, merely that the deadliness of the wound is reduced and it becomes easier for the victim to win the opposed test.

ongoing penalty of one difficulty grade, until the injury is reduced to a Minor Wound.

MAJOR WOUND

If a location is reduced to a negative score equal or greater than its starting Hit Points, the character receives a Major Wound. The character is immediately incapacitated, unable to continue fighting.

A limb is considered to be severed, transfixated, shattered or ripped off by a Major Wound. The character drops prone, physically incapacitated, and must immediately make an opposed test of Endurance versus the successful attack roll of his enemy. Failure results in unconsciousness from the agony. If a severed, punctured or ripped-off location is not treated within a number of minutes equal to five times his Healing Rate, the character dies from blood loss and shock.

The victim of a Major Wound to the Abdomen, Chest or Head drops unconscious, totally incapacitated and must immediately make an opposed test of Endurance versus the successful attack roll of his enemy. Failure results in an instant and gratuitous death (decapitated, chopped in half, impaled through the heart, torn apart, and so forth). If he survives, and the location is not treated within a number of Combat Rounds equal to twice his Healing Rate, he still dies from blood loss and shock.

Since most Major Wounds require some form of surgery or major magic to heal, the sufferer will be very unlikely to recover from a major wound in time to rejoin combat. Depending on the available treatment the wounded location will be potentially maimed (see Healing from Injury page 80).

HEROIC LAST ACTIONS

In special cases where key characters receive a Major Wound, the Games Master might allow a heroic last action - such as spitting out one last spell, attempting to cut down their slayer, crawling away to hide, or trying to tourniquet their own wound. They must have working limbs applicable to the action, and burn a Luck Point. They get a single opportunity to attempt their action, and then immediately collapse into unconsciousness, and probable death.

ANATHAYM'S SAGA

Giving up on her sling, Anathaym recovers her shortsword and rushes to aid Master Zamothis, who despite cutting down two of the formidable centaurs is becoming rapidly exhausted. Just as she arrives, the big black centaur smashes through the last of her mentor's shield, and with its return blow catches Zamothis full in the head. Despite the protection of his helmet the aging warrior is knocked down, out of the fight with a Major Wound.

Anathaym screams with fury and leaps astride the centaur's back, taking it completely by surprise. On her next turn she stabs with her shortsword. The gods are with her and she rolls a critical success. Since the centaur was unable to defend with its club, she gains two special effects and chooses Maximise Damage and Impale, driving her blade deep into its back. Although this might have finished off a human, the centaur is somewhat tougher. On its own turn it rears, throwing her off. Anathaym fails her Athletics roll and lands prone – unarmed and helpless before the enraged creature.

As it raises its great club to finish her off, the forgotten Master Zamothis spends a Luck Point to perform a Heroic Last Action and rallies long enough to cast his knife at the centaur. It flies true, striking the beast in the chest, near to where the tip of Anathaym's shortsword emerges. This is enough to give the centaur a Serious Wound, forcing it to make an opposed roll of its Endurance against the attack roll of the thrown knife. Zamothis wins with the higher roll, and the centaur chief collapses with a look of surprise.

The remaining centaurs take this as an omen, and lacking the steady presence of their sorcerer, turn tail and flee. Anathaym crawls over to the now unconscious body of her beloved mentor and performs First Aid on his cracked skull, saving his life. Then with the help of the rescued youth, they carry the old man back to Meeros.

OPTIONAL RULES: RABBLE & UNDERLINGS

Only use these optional rules when the characters are facing a ravening horde of inconsequential and expendable adversaries. Competent NPCs and major villains should be treated differently

A mainstay of some fantasy literature is the scene of heroes scything down hordes of faceless opponents, be they enemy soldiers, fanatical cultists or even ravening demi-humans. To portray such battles in MYTHRAS can not only be time consuming enterprises, but are also difficult to pull off satisfactorily considering the ever present risk of becoming outnumbered or rolling a fumble at the wrong time. Luck Points can only help so far.

A better way of modelling these types of encounter is to provide weaker foes or simplify the book keeping required to keep track of injuries. MYTHRAS offers alternate options to dealing with this issue, thus speeding up combat considerably.

RABBLE

Rabble are foes who intimidate by their numbers but in actual fact have little prowess or willingness to remain in combat once blood is shed. They can take many forms from vicious beggars who set upon drunken characters when they stumble home from the tavern along dark alleyways; or the mindless adherents of a dark cult

– eager yet incompetent. In terms of conflict, members of a rabble use the following guidelines:

- ❖ Rabble have little or no armour
- ❖ Rabble are too incompetent to be able to use Special Effects
- ❖ Rabble have Hit Points equal to one fifth (rounded up) of the CON+SIZ of an average member of that race
- ❖ Once they receive any damage, they cease fighting
- ❖ If the damage is less than their Hit Points they flee cursing or yelling in fear
- ❖ If the damage equals or surpasses their Hit Points, they collapse clutching the wounded location, and weeping or screaming in agony
- ❖ If the damage is double their Hit Points, they die in a spectacular and grotesque manner
- ❖ Once one third of their number are dead or wounded, the rest of the rabble break and take flight

UNDERLINGS

Underlings are competent foes usually sent en-masse to harass Adventurers: thuggish bodyguards irregular troops in the opening stages of a battle, for example. Despite not being tracked as full characters, underlings can prove deadly if they catch their targets unprepared. Similar to rabble, Underlings use the following guidelines:

- ❖ Underlings wear moderate amounts of armour
- ❖ Underlings are freely able to use Special Effects
- ❖ Underlings have Hit Points equal to one fifth of the CON+SIZ of an average member of that race
- ❖ Once they receive two injuries, they cease fighting and if possible, withdraw cursing or yelling in fear
- ❖ If the damage equals or surpasses their Hit Points, they automatically fail the Endurance roll, suffering the effects of a Serious Wound in the location struck
- ❖ If the damage is double their Hit Points, they die in a gruesomely violent manner
- ❖ Once half their number are dead or wounded, the rest of the underlings withdraw from the fight