**5th Edition Dungeons and Dragons Magic Item Scale**

**Prefix:**

Generally, in 5th Edition, the Game Master (known as the Dungeon Master) determines loot drops (item drops). By entrusting this mechanic to the Game Master, it can be ensured that Player Power Scaling does not go past what is intended for the current Challenge Rating (CR) while maintaining steady Player Progression. Balancing Player Power Scaling with Player Progression is vital in order to maintain the integrity of any given game. If disturbed, consecutive gameplay sessions may become undesirable for all parties involved. Any system that Automates this process takes that power away from the Game Master, and in doing so, puts at risk this very delicate balance. Therefore, before designing such a system, item scaling must be at the foremost of considerations in order to achieve symbiosis with the game.

**Power Scaling:**

Classically, in Dungeons in Dragons, there are 20 levels of Power Scaling. However, for the intents of designing a tool, 4 level ranges will be identified and described. The purpose of utilizing level ranges instead of levels or CR, is in order to account for Rarity, Balance, and Pace. For instance: A Paladin that receives a sword one day, and then receives a slightly better sword in the very next game session, will feel that his previous sword was useless, but that his new sword isn’t that much of an improvement over the previous one. Meanwhile, while it would vary from Game Master to Game Master, typically, this means that the other party members do not get any notable loot. Instead, each party member should get marginally better loot in small increments that reflect the CR of the campaign. Loot distribution under the range system is as follows:

Levels 1-5 – Common Adventurers

Who doesn’t love a sell-sword or four? These adventurers have dedicated themselves to a life rife with adventure. They maybe be nobodies, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t capable. These types are perfect for clearing out that goblin camp in Smallsville, and they’re willing to do it too!

Typically in low levels, Magic Items aren’t commonplace. Players will be gearing up with Masterwork +1 gear. A lucky player might get a lesser Magic Item on the level of a +1 Ring of Protection, or a Wand of Light, but most of what they find will be mundane.

Levels 6-10 – Proven Heroes

Adventurers who have thwarted the plans of the Kingdoms resident evil Archbishop, they may be inclined to seek out greater trials and tribulations. Perhaps demons have started invading the realm en massse, or that one evil Empire hath decided to resume their evil conquest plans. Whichever the quests problem is, you and yours have decided to put an end to it.

This is where players will start to find their Magic Items. The Paladin will get his first Holy Sword, the fighter will get his awesome Flaming Sword. The wizard will begin her collection of wands and scrolls, and the thief will discover the gift of invisibility. As the players settle more thoroughly into their roles, their items should begin to reflect that. You’ll probably find yourself rewarding minor magic items as uncommon drops, along side the more common +2 Masterwork items, and in rare cases, the players might even find moderate magic items. You might even end up bequeathing an item of great importance to the players, something beyond the scope of normal loot. Should this be the case, consider attunement as a way to limit the use of the item, and of course, *if the players aren’t supposed to have it*, you can always curse it.

Levels 11-15 – The Chosen Ones

After they saved the realm, your players discovered an ancient prophecy that somehow recounted their deeds, and then something really really, really, really, *really* bad happened. It’s now up to them to deliver the world from destruction, corruption, or whatever the day calls for.

Do you smell that? That’s the smell of the burning flesh of a thousand innocents as the wizard summoned a hellstorm of fire to destroy the local Illthid infestation. If you’re reading this, you need items for high level campaigns, however first, you need to understand one simple concept. Linear Fighters, Exponential Wizards. Simply, this is to say, martial class characters (the Fighter) will start as being more powerful than the caster class characters (the Wizard). However the Fighter will only progress linearly, where the Wizard will gain access to spells on a magnitude or order more powerful than his last. At some point, the Wizard is destined for copius amounts of damage. These are the levels where you will begin to see this. Items should not be used to keep martial classes up to parity with a single spell from the wizard. A rough idea of how this should work is that if the Wizards maximum damage is 48 damage for 3 targets in proximity in a turn, then the martial class should being doing about half that to a single target per turn. It may seem unbalanced, but keep in mind that the Wizard likely only has 2 fireballs prepared, depending on the situation of course, so overall, the fighter should sill have a high damage per turn ratio than the wizard. They just wont be as explosive anymore, which is fine.

Items, Items, and Items. By now, your players should have quite the collection, however it won’t be enough. Start introducing Wonderous items into play (wonderous cover all tiers however they are to be used sparingly). These should be super rare, but in the right players hands, they’ll aid the campaign without breaking it, just as you intended. You could introduce an artifact, but you should hold off on it for as long as possible. Throw in major magic Items into play, as uncommon to rare drops and make moderate magic items common chest drops. By now, your party has out scaled mundane items so any of those they get would be junk and sold for scraps. Impede them with the seldom cursed item. Congratulations, your Fighter has a +1 Flaming Great sword of Ghost Touch, and your Paladin has DR magic 2 on his armor.

Levels 16-20 – Forced out of Retirement

The world was saved, your players had retired, and the Fighter used all of their other spoils to finally accomplish their one true desire: Running their own Tavern. It was a fine establishment, and he had no problem of dispatching any issues that arose with the patrons. That is until a Tarrasque destroyed it all. His dreams, his tavern, his life. Unacceptable. Calling upon his former mates, the Fighter swore to put an end to all the nonsense in existence.

At this point, your players are already gods among men. A good party of players will have managed to exhaust your list of encounters, and before that you will have already begun to take extensive liberties in regards to the players equipment. After all, what can you do when the Wizard can *alter the fabric of reality*? Should you do anything? As a DM this is where you should get creative. The closer your players get to Level 20, the more insane things are going to get. Even if you aren’t giving out magic items anymore, you’re still probably giving out tons of gold, and even if that isn’t the case, your players have likely taken magic item creation into their own hands. Whichever the case is, you’ll find that they have what they want. At this point, everything is on the table, so find new ways to incentivize your players with loot.

Levels 20+ – The Epic Levels

If you’ve made it this far, you’re out of the purview of this guide. Epic scaling is in a class of its own and the Dungeon Masters Guide tells it the best. Epic levels are supposed to be crazy, so start there. With crazy. If the Paladins Sword can’t sunder a god out of existence, you’re doing it wrong.. probably.

There are some things to add here that don’t fall under the level ranges, but impact them nonetheless. Wizards of The Coast never states a Hard Item Cap for Dungeons and Dragons, it is up to the Game Masters discretion to determine that, and because of that, it’s not impossible to out scale the CR by just items alone. While ultimately, item slot limitations will be up to the Game Master, a slight consideration should be given to the fact that players might be running around with 20 item slots. 10 for rings, 1 for earrings, 1 for bracelets/bracers, 1 for shoes, 1 for head, 1 for armor, 1 for gloves, 1 for neck, 1 for eyes, 1 for waist, and 1 for cloak.

**Item Properties and Effects:**

You can split item effects and properties into 2 categories: Environmental and Combat. Either of these categories can impact the game in a noticeable way. Boots of Speed are a lower level Environmental Item that doubles the characters movement speed in and out of combat. A +1 Greatsword is a combat item that adds 1 to the Attack Roll making it 5% more likely you will hit the enemy. Both are with in the same level range of drops. Other examples and their impacts on the game are as follows:

* Embered Mace of Ghost Touch
  + Any Item with the Ghost Touch effect may hit an incorporeal creature/item (ghosts for example) without suffering the regular 50% miss penalty associated with such creatures.
  + Any Item with the Minor Fire enhancement adds 1d4 Fire Damage in addition to the Damage Roll.
* Magic Wand
  + Wands contain spells and can be used by classes other than a wizard. Classes other than spellcasters may use a wand. Wands do not consume a spell slot and instead consume a wands charges. Typically, wands are created with 50 charges.
* Adamantine
  + Armor Made out of Adamantine negates the effects of a Critical Hit against the wearer in addition to granting a higher Armor Class bonus. Treat them as a normal attack.
  + Weapons Made out of Adamantine are more effective at breaking things. Treat every roll against an object as if it were a critical hit.
* Cloak of Invisibility
  + User can use the cloak to render themselves invisible as per the spell *Invisibility*.
* Half Plate of Invulnerability
  + Grants the User DR-2 /Magic. DR stands for Damage Resist, where 2 stands for the amount of damage resisted. /Magic stands for the type of damage that is not resisted. So a DR-2 /Magic armor resists everything except Magic Damage.

**Rarity**

Sometimes an item or an effect does doesn’t fit. For instance, the Canteen of Infinite Water (a variation of Pathfinder’s Everfull Mug) does exactly what it say it does, produce infinite water, but it cannot fill other reservoirs. Something like this barely impacts gameplay in most scenarios, and when it does, it does so in an extremely specific scenario. While the item is classified as a Wonderous Item, it doesn’t impact gameplay in much of a meaningful way, yet it still makes for a rewarding loot drop, especially among other mundane items. Rarity was touched upon during description of item level ranges. This section will expand upon that and what it means in more detail.

There are 3 typical styles a game can be run at. Medieval: A setting including little to no magic. Classical: A setting typical of Dungeons and Dragons. Epic Fantasy: A setting heavily based in a magically active world. Using the Canteen example above, we can get an idea of how rarity begins to work. An item such as this would either be nonexistent in the Medieval Setting, or an item of great legend. In the Classical Setting, any character that meets the prerequisites can craft this item, so the players will eventually find one. In the Epic Fantasy Setting, this item would be sold in the common adventuring shop, as it is mass-produced in limited quantity elsewhere. It can be inferred that rarity depends greatly on the Game Masters intentions, however any system cannot infer these intentions as they are the Game Masters alone. Instead, the machine can break down rarity into what a typical Game Master would want in the Classical Setting. Assigning a rarity value to an item and balancing it around the Classical Setting would also enable the Medieval and Epic Fantasy to utilize the system as well by way of allowing them an input into the system – more on that later.

This guide suggest using a rarity scale of 1-11, based largely on a casters Spell Levels, with an additional 2 spots for something that should always drop, and something that should never drop.

**Putting the System Together:**

Using this system, items and effects can be assigned an integer value that tells the System how they should drop. Since the system can not generate it, the programmer will have to assign each individual value, and then balance and refactor based on gameplay. However, there are a few advantages to the system.

1. Manual Balancing – Items can be scaled back and forth if there is a clear imbalance.
2. Tailored for User Experience – A User can Determine his/her experience.
3. Modularity – Using this system, items can actually be randomly generated from a list of predetermined list of effects.

This is more or less how the current numbers would look like (Subject to change).

* **1-3** for each level range increment. This is the given range for representing beginning/middle/end. For Example: **5** represents the middle of level range 2 (levels 6-10).
* **1-7** for rarity. 1 means an item should always drop, where 7 means an item should never drop.

***LevelRange*** + ***ItemRarity*** = ***ItemNumber*** (where ItemNumber is used to determine loot drop)

There should be a system in place used to determine the type of item dropped. Items can be classified as Weapon/Armor/Clothing/Tool. Additionally, Both Weapons and Armor have multiple effects scaling to a wide variety of levels. Using the new system, these effects may be compounded unto each other thus allowing a few minor effects to have the same strength as a single moderate effect, as well as enabling variety without having to manually input 100 additional items.

**Weapon** | ***EffectNo*** + ***EffectNo*** = ***ItemNumber***

***EffectNo*** = ***LevelRange*** + ***EffectRarity***

When predetermining any drop, there should be a margin for fluctuation in order to allow for a greater variety of items to drop. The maximum number on the scale is 19 (20 is used to represent epic).

**Figuring out where an Item Belongs on the Scale:**

Take a given item. Measure it at a level increment using the established rules. Assign it a rarity value, and then repeat the process for each level increment (use 2, 5, 8, 11). Add up each Item Number and then divide by 4 and round to the nearest whole number for true scale placement. For instance, a Flaming great sword scores an 8 first, then 8 again, then a 10, and then an 11. The total of this is 37. 37/4 is 9.25 or rounded is 9. A Flaming Great sword is a 9 on the scale (this is an example and not representative of the final placement of A Flaming Great Sword on the scale).

**Biasing the Loot Generator:**

The Loot Generator can currently pull uncommon tier items in item range 2 as rare items in item range 1. While this is wanted, and expected, behavior, the fact remains that the 1/7 chance is not reflective of rare in this circumstance. Instead, a constrainer should be implemented to guarantee that the wanted level of loot drops within a reasonable range (for +/- 1 within rarity) at least 50% of the time, (for +/- 2 within rarity) if not 50% then 30% of the rest of the time it should be an extended range, and then the full range 20% of the time. This allows for rarer items to appear rarely, constantly. Additionally there should be a “roll for junk” option that only ever rolls within the first 5 increments, thus always guaranteeing a junk item of some sort.

*Epic Fantasy and Medieval Settings should adjust the bias by adding or subtracting an appropriate number respectively.*

**Indexing Loot:**

Now that the basic rules are established, all loot should be contributed to a list of loot. This list should chronologically contain every item and effect by number for use in the loot generator.