Halberds & Helmets
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THIS IS THE PLAYER HANDBOOK for my campaigns. It is based on Labyrinth Lord and various house rules. – Alex Schroeder

Old School

WE PLAY CLASSIC D&D using rules from the early eighties. This is not a Monty Haul campaign and not a stupid dungeon crawl. If at all, we explore a nightmarish mythical underworld.

The rules offer **very little mechanics**: there aren't many classes to choose from, no feats, no skills, no prestige classes and hardly any special abilities. Furthermore, elves, dwarves and other demi-humans are simply separate classes. There are no elven thieves of dwarven mages. On the other hand, missing rules also leave **a lot of freedom** for players. The characters are as diplomatic, friendly or intimidating as the players want them to be. There are no rules governing it.

We're playing in a sandbox. There is **no planned ending** for the campaign. The actions of player characters determines the directions the campaign grows in.

Dangers are not adapted to the strength of the party. Generally speaking it's safer near civilized settlements. The further you move into the wilderness, the more dangerous it is. That's how **players control the risks they want to take**.

Preparation and experience should help you avoid situations, where your character's survival depends on a single die roll. If you're rolling dice, it's already too late. **A saving throw is your last chance** to survive due to luck and experience. Ideally you would never have to roll dice because you're well informed and equipment. Perseus didn't have to save against the medusa's petrifying gaze because *he was well prepared*.

Retainers are another safeguard against character death: torch bearers, porters, men-at-arms and mercenaries all cost money, but they will also keep your character alive. Should player characters die, the next character is most probably going to be one of the retainers.

Experience points are gained by **spending gold** you gained on adventures. If you manage to obtain the gold without combat, good for you. The best strategy is to pick your battles and stake the odds in your favor as far as possible. Remember, if you're rolling dice, it's already too late.

Ownership of the rules is optional. We'll add more rules as time passes. Discovering and befriending intelligent humanoids, for example, will allow you hire them and eventually to play them. Certain magic users can teach player characters new spells, too.

Players determine where the campaign will head. If player characters investigate rumors and locations, I will develop the game world in that direction. The harder you look, the more there is to see.

Character Creation

Every player needs at least one character. You can skip character creation by using the online character generator. If you want to invest the time necessary, start with an empty sheet of paper or print a charactersheet in portrait or landscape orientation.

ROLL 3D6 IN ORDER for your attributes.

Strength allows you to carry more and to hit harder. Add the bonus to your to-hit rolls and to your damage rolls when using *melee weapons*.

Dexterity allows you to aim better and to better avoid attacks. Add the bonus to your to-hit roll when using *ranged weapons* (but not to your damage rolls) and subtract the bonus from your *armor class* (lower is better).

Constitution determines your health. Add the bonus to every *hit die* (but never reduce a hit die below 1).

Intelligence determines your education. If you have a positive bonus, it indicates how many *extra languages* you speak.

Wisdom determines how much in tune with the world you are. Add the bonus to your *saving throws against magic* (spells, wands and the like).

Charisma determines how well others react to you, how many retainers and pets will follow you (4 + your bonus) and what their morale will be (7 + your bonus).

CHOOSE YOUR CLASS.

Fighter: you can fight well; you will be able to use magic swords; this is the simplest character to play

Magic User: you can memorize the spells in your spell book but you cannot fight very well; you may be weak at first but if you survive, you will be very powerful

Thief: your skills will improve with time; surprise your enemies and deal double damage

Elf: you can memorize the spells in your spell book and you can fight well but you will advance very slowly; you can see in the dark; elves can live forever; you need a minimum intelligence of 9

Dwarf: you are small but hardy and you can fight well; you sometimes know things about underground constructions; you can see in the dark; you need a minimum constitution of 9

Halfling: you are even smaller than dwarves and you are always barefoot; you can hide well and you are good at throwing and shooting things; you are harder to hit by giants; halflings are nimble; you need a minimum dexterity of 9

A short summary for players:

1. roll for your six attributes
2. choose your class
3. choose first spell, if any
4. copy your attack values for level 1
5. copy your saving throws for level 1
6. roll for hit points
7. choose alignment
8. roll for money
9. buy equipment

When using *ranged weapons*, the damage you roll remains unchanged. This is good for weak characters and bad for strong characters.

Each score comes with a bonus:

Score	Bonus
3	-3
4–5	-2
6–8	-1
9–12	
13–15	+1
16–17	+2
18	+3

What slaughter haunts your dreams? Whom do you hope to meet again in hell?

Who or what taught you sorcery? Why does it damn you?

What do you love about adventure? Who taught you your tricks?

What do you love and hate about humans? What inhuman thing will you do or refrain from doing, again and again?

What feud curses your family? How come your parents wanted a child?

Why did your parents let you go? How do you get over the lack of home and family?

Questions adapted from a Google+ post by Judd Karlman.

Fighter

You can fight well. You can use magic swords.

Armor Class	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Level 1–2	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
Level 3	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
Level 4	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
Level 5	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7
Level 6	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
Level 7–8	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
Level 9	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
Level 10	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3

This is the simplest class to play.

Saving Throws	Dragon Breath Explosions	Paralysis Petrification	Death Poison	Rays Wands	Spells Miracles
Level 1–3	15	14	12	13	16
Level 4–6	13	12	10	11	14
Level 7–9	9	10	8	9	12
Level 10	7	8	6	7	10

Level	Experience Points
1	0
2	2'035
3	4'065
4	8'125
5	16'250
6	32'500
7	65'000
8	120'000
9	240'000
10	360'000

The to-hit table shows what you need to roll on a d20 to hit a particular armor class. In melee, add your *strength* bonus; when using ranged weapons, add your *dexterity* bonus.

Magic User

You can cast spells from your spell book. Fighting isn't quite your thing. You can use but small knives and clubs. At first you will be weak, but if you survive, you will be very powerful. You may wear no armor nor carry a shield. If you do, you'll fight and save as a normal human and you cannot cast spells.

Armor Class	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Level 1–3	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
Level 4–7	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
Level 8–10	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8

Choose a spell of the first circle from your master's spell book for your own spell book. The referee will have prepared a list for you.

Saving Throws	Dragon Breath Explosions	Paralysis Petrification	Death Poison	Rays Wands	Spells Miracles
Level 1–5	16	13	13	13	14
Level 6–10	14	11	11	11	12

Level	Experience Points
1	0
2	2'501
3	5'001
4	10'001
5	20'001
6	40'001
7	80'001
8	160'001
9	310'001
10	460'001

If you write your spells on to your character sheet, you won't have to search your notes during the game.

Thief

You are a Jack of all trades. Your skills will improve over time. You may no armor other than leather and you may carry neither shield nor wear a helmet. If you do, you'll fight and save as a normal human and you cannot use your superior skills.

Armor Class	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Level 1–3	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
Level 4–5	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
Level 6–8	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
Level 9–10	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7

Level	Experience Points
1	0
2	1'251
3	2'501
4	5'001
5	10'001
6	20'001
7	40'001
8	80'001
9	160'001
10	280'001

In the surprise round, you'll deal **double damage** (roll twice).

Only if you surprise your foes!

Since thieves don't cast spells and don't wear a lot of armor, playing a thief is a bit like playing on skill level HURT ME PLENTY. You have been warned.

Saving Throws	Dragon Breath Explosions	Paralysis Petrification	Death Poison	Rays Wands	Spells Miracles
Level 1–4	16	13	14	15	14
Level 5–8	14	11	12	13	12
Level 9–10	12	9	10	11	10

Normal Human

You are a farmer, a shepherd, a workman, a soldier, a bandit, but not an adventurer. You won't gain any levels unless you pick a class after a big battle or a similar experience.

Normal humans retire after a traumatic experience, but some decide to become fighters, magic-users or thieves.

Armor Class	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Level 0	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11

This "class" is only used for humans with no levels such as **Torch Bearers** and **Porters**. The tables also apply for magic users wearing armor or thieves wearing metal armor.

Saving Throws	Dragon Breath Explosions	Paralysis Petrification	Death Poison	Rays Wands	Spells Miracles
Level 0	17	16	14	15	18

Elf

You can both cast spells from your spell book and fight. You will advance more slowly than your peers. You can see in the dark and you will live forever. You need a minimum intelligence of 9.

Elves cannot rise beyond level 10.

Armor Class	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Level 1–2	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
Level 3	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
Level 4	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
Level 5	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7
Level 6	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
Level 7–8	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
Level 9	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
Level 10	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3

Elves speak the common tongue and elvish; they are also somewhat familiar with the languages of gnolls (hyena men), hobgoblins and orcs (pig men).

Saving Throws	Dragon Breath Explosions	Paralysis Petrification	Death Poison	Rays Wands	Spells Miracles
Level 1–3	15	13	12	13	15
Level 4–6	13	11	10	11	13
Level 7–9	9	9	8	9	11
Level 10	7	7	6	7	9

Level	Experience Points
1	0
2	4'065
3	8'125
4	16'251
5	32'501
6	65'001
7	130'001
8	200'001
9	400'001
10	600'001

Elves can wear all armor, wield all weapons, *and* cast spells. That makes them very popular. They need much more experience points to gain a level, however. They also have fewer hit points than fighters.

Choose a spell of the first circle from your master's spell book for your own spell book. The referee will have prepared a list for you.

Halflings

You are very small and walk around barefoot. You can hide well and you're good with ranged weapons. Giants have a hard time hitting you. You need a minimum dexterity of 9.

Halflings cannot rise beyond level 8. Since you're so small, you cannot use any large weapons such as battle axes, two handed swords or polearms. You are smaller than men but faster than dwarves.

Armor Class	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Level 1–2	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
Level 3	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
Level 4	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
Level 5	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7
Level 6	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
Level 7–8	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5

You get an additional +1 bonus for ranged weapons. Your own armor class improves by -2 when fighting opponents larger than humans.

Saving Throws	Dragon Breath Explosions	Paralysis Petrification	Death Poison	Rays Wands	Spells Miracles
Level 1–3	13	10	8	9	12
Level 4–6	10	8	6	7	10
Level 7–8	7	6	4	5	8

Level	Experience Points
1	0
2	2'035
3	4'065
4	8'125
5	16'251
6	32'501
7	65'001
8	130'001
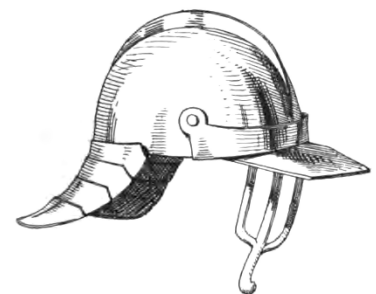
Dwarves

You are small, tough, and you know how to fight. You know a lot about constructions underground. You can see in the dark. You need a minimum constitution of 9.

Dwarves cannot rise beyond level 12. Since you're relatively small, you cannot use two handed swords. You are slow.

Armor Class	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Level 1–2	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
Level 3	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9
Level 4	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8
Level 5	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7
Level 6	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
Level 7–8	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
Level 9	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
Level 10	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3

Dwarves are somewhat familiar with the languages of goblins, gnomes and kobolds.

Saving Throws	Dragon Breath Explosions	Paralysis Petrification	Death Poison	Rays Wands	Spells Miracles
Level 1–3	13	10	8	9	12
Level 4–6	10	8	6	7	10
Level 7–9	7	6	4	5	8
Level 10–12	4	4	2	3	6

Level	Experience Points
1	0
2	2'187
3	4'375
4	8'751
5	17'501
6	35'001
7	70'001
8	140'001
9	280'001
10	400'001

Roll for hit points and add your constitution bonus. Fighters and dwarves roll 1d8, magic users and thieves roll 1d4, everybody else rolls 1d6.

When gaining a level, reroll one die per level. Add your constitution bonus to every level. A die can not be reduced below 1. Keep your old hit points if the new result is lower.

Roll 3W6 ×10 gold. Buy some equipment using this gold .

Gold	Your parent's background
30	rag pickers, beggars, slaves, refugees
40–50	outcasts, single parents, artists
60–80	thieves, robbers, scammers
90–120	artisans, craftsmen, peasants
130–150	merchants, priests
160–170	landowners
180	nobles

A good rule of thumb when shopping: a backpack and rations for a week. Half of your remaining gold for armor, shield, and helmet, if possible. Then buy a melee weapon, a ranged weapon and a light source. Thieves need thieves' tools. Buy rope or iron spikes and a hammer for exploration. Some monsters require wooden poles mirrors, holy water or wolfsbane to defeat. Use the remaining money to hire retainers and equip them.

Equipment

Weapon	Gold	Notes	Item	Gold	Notes
Battle axe	7	two handed, smash doors, requires space to swing	Backpack	5	to carry more items
Hand axe	4	can be thrown	Bag (large)	2	to carry more treasure
Crossbow	30	can be used while lying on the ground and without training (a normal human)	Flask of oil	2	burns for two rounds doing 1d8 damage when lit using a torch; may scare animals
30 Quarrels	10		Garlic	1	a string of garlic to keep vampires away
Long bow	40	long range, can be used in dense formations	Hammer (small)	2	for spikes and stakes
Short bow	25	can be used while riding	Holy water	25	burns undead like burning oil; no torch required
20 Arrows	5		Lantern	10	requires a flask of oil to burn for 4 h
Dagger	3	can be thrown, can be hidden			
Silver dagger	30	can be used against lycanthropes in animal form	Mirror	5	to identify vampires and fight medusas
Short sword	7	can be used in dense formations	Rations	15	food for one week; may distract animals
Long sword	10	can be used on foot against riders and the other way around, requires space to swing	Rope (50 ft)	1	heavy rope that cannot be thrown very far
Zweihänder	15	two-handed, can be used against multiple opponents at the same time, requires a lot of space	Spikes (12)	1	keep doors open or closed; need a hammer
			Thieves' tools	25	required by thieves to open locks
Club	3	bludgeoning	Torches (6)	1	burn for 1 h; may scare animals
War hammer	5	bludgeoning	Wolfsbane	10	keeps werewolves away
Mace	5	bludgeoning	Wooden pole (10 ft)	1	cheaper than a weapon and useful for poking things
Pole arm	7	two-handed, can be used from the second rank and in dense formations	Wooden stakes (3)	1	to kill vampires; needs a hammer
Sling	2	requires a lot of space			
30 sling stones	–	bludgeoning			
Spear	3	can be thrown			

Armor	Class	Gold	Notes
Leather	7	20	sneaking and swimming are no problem
Chain	5	40	no sneaking and no swimming
Plate	3	60	no sneaking and no swimming
Shield	-1	10	can be sacrificed in order to evade an attack
Helmet	–	10	helps against death and dismemberment

Buildings

Some prices for buildings:

small statue for a well	50 gold
normal statue for a garden	100 gold
small stone altar with a spirit gate and a small pond (2 m×2 m)	250 gold
small wooden shop with a place to sleep in the back (5 m×5 m)	300 gold
single story wooden business such as a tavern, a gallery, a gambling den (15 m×15 m)	700 gold
large bronze statue for a square	1,000 gold
two story wooden house in a village (15 m×15 m)	1,500 gold
two story stone house in a village (15 m×15 m)	3,000 gold
two story villa with marbel columns and statues in a large town (15 m×15 m)	10,000 gold
keep out in the wilderness, six stories (20 m×20 m) and a walled courtyard (10 m×20 m)	75,000 gold

Public buildings are a good way to spend gold and earn experience points.

Note that all the larger buildings need gardeners, guards, carpenters and so on for maintenance.
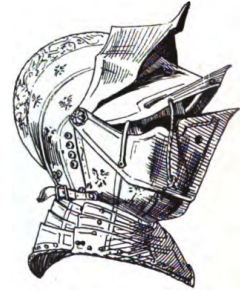
The wages paid for these servants also turn gold into experience points.

Wages

Mercenaries and servants live in the houses, caves, towers and keeps assigned to them. They don't go on adventures.

Category	Wage	Morale
servants, cooks	1 gold/month	6
light infantry	3 gold/month	8
heavy infantry	4 gold/month	8

Light infantry could be robbers with sword, shield and leather armor; heavy infantry could be city guards with sword, shield and chain mail. All off them might have to make morale checks in combat.

Important people earn far more than that. Spies earn 500gp/month. Sages earn 2000gp/month.

Retainers accompany their employers on adventure. Your charisma limits the number of retainers (and pets) you may have!

Category	Wages
porters, torchbearers and other unarmed people	5 silver/day
mercenaries, soldiers and other armed people	1 gold/day
all retainers with a level	½ treasure share

You'll have to decide at the table whether players get to bring all their retainers to an adventure. If there are too many characters to run, fights will take longer and treasure shares will be smaller.

Hiring: Before going on an adventure, one of the player characters can spend 10 gold for town criers and beer in order to attract 1d6 candidates.

Candidates

1. a lazy bum
2. a water carrier
3. a dreamer and a fool
4. a poor shepherd
5. an apprentice to the kennel master
6. a deserter, a former city guard (fighter)
7. a former river pirate (fighter)
8. a cheating charlatan (magic-user)
9. a pilgrim looking for lost shrines (magic-user)
10. a hungry thief trying to support a family
11. a tough dwarf, disciplined and taciturn
12. a halfling running away from debt
13. an elf looking for the meaning of life
14. an elementalist unable to pay for tuition
15. a goblin faking to be a halfling (same stats)
16. a torch bearer
17. a porter
18. a runaway slave
19. a hateful hunter
20. an apprentice to the stable master
21. a grim, one-eyed body guard (fighter)
22. a former mercenary (fighter)
23. a wandering scholar (magic-user)
24. a wandering miracle healer (thief)
25. a thief at odds with the local guild
26. a crazy tattooed dwarven rune warrior
27. a foolish halfling trying to imitate their uncle
28. an elf unfit for elven society (why?)
29. a lotus monk on a journey to their inner self
30. a monster from the surrounding wilderness (lizard, troll, or frogling)

Porters and similar servants cannot and will not fight. In a pinch, they'll surrender immediately.

Use the following table to determine gender and age:

1	boy
2	girl
3	man
4	woman
5	elderly man
6	elderly woman

Magic users and elves will have a spell book with a random spell:

1	read magic
2	detect magic
3	light
4	charm person
5	magic missile
6	sleep

Elementalists are magic users preferring spells using the four classic elements. You could use Gavin Norman's spell list. Alternatively, you could use the elementalist class described in Gavin's Theorems & Thaumaturgy. If you don't like elementalists, the same book also has spells for **vivimancers**, **necromancers**, and **illusionists**. I also recommend Nathan E. Irving's The Basic Illusionist.

Monsters from the surrounding wilderness could be **Goblins** (like halflings); **Lizard People** (HD 2), leather, zweihänder, can swim; **Satyrs** (HD 2), leather, short bow and short sword; **Tengus** (HD 2, AC 9, 1W6), can fly, cannot wear armor; **Froglings** (HD 1), spear, cannot wear armor, can swim, double damage when jumping; **Minotaurs** (HD 2, AC 6, 1W6), double damage when charging; **Giant Apes** (HD 3, AC 8, 1W6/1W6), cannot wear armor; **Centaurs** (HD 3, AC 8, 1W6/1W6), cannot wear armor, double damage when charging, gallop at double speed; **Trolls** (HD 6+3, AC 4, 1W6/1W6/1W10), regenerates 3/round after 3 rounds.

HD: hit dice (1d8 hit points each)
AC: armor class

Alignment

Choose an alignment: Law, Chaos or Neutrality.

The **Priests of Law** say: "Alone we are weak and life is a valley of tears. Together we are strong. Together we build our homes. Together we till our fields. Together we defend our towns and villages. Together are we strong.

We build dams against the flood. We build aqueducts against the drought. We build canals against the plague. We drain the swamps and push back the fever. We fill our granaries and defeat famine.

We punish treachery and reward loyalty. We ensure law and justice. Even if the corruption of chaos and anarchy are on the rise, we have our heavenly order from the highest gods in heaven down to the lowest devils in hell. They make sure that punishment and rewards are not forgotten—not now and not for all eternity.

In our world, everybody has a place and there is a place for everybody—including you. See these books: the knowledge of the elders, the scriptures and tablets of our ancestors. This is our inheritance. Learn as much as you can, work as hard you can. Lift your head, rise! Be a true member of our proud community."

The **Priests of Chaos** say: "Life is Chaos: the weeds in the plowed fields, the orchards gone to woods, the shore worn away by the sea. Chaos is long patterns: the rivers unfurl, the clouds move as they will but each with their own way.

The Elves make homes in the trees, but not by killing them and cutting them into sharp-edged planks then watching those rot and weather. No, they watch for the trees' patterns and shape them slowly and live among them; the tree living, the Elf living.

Order is the hubris that mans' whims can be imposed on the world, and dooms them—man, woman, and child—to a lifetime of wearying burden. Chaos is not the burning of cities, but realizing the foolishness of building such at all. Chaos is not lawlessness, but realizing that men, like trees, have their ways, and to lay laws upon them without acknowledging this, is to cut them down and bury them in plank-sided boxes. Come with me. I know not where I'm going, but we will learn along the way. "

Trying to keep out of this cosmic battle? Choose **Neutrality**. There are no priests of neutrality.

Religious characters can pick a **Patron Deity**.
   Orcus: Lord of the Undead, raises the dead
   Ishtar: Ency and *amour fou*, war, descent into the Underworld, looking for true love
   Nergal: Revenge, vermin, rats, pestilence, lord of the Underworld
   Freya: Harvest, Circle of Life, wolves, cats, wilderness, free love
   Marduk: Fighting monsters, war lord, ruler
   Mitra: Fire, honesty, contracts, oaths
   Set: Cleverness, subterfuge and murder
   Hecate: magic, witches, crossroads

The Chaos Priest's statement was taken from a blog post by Telecanter.

Basic Rules

Some key terms, first.

Player: The people sitting at the table, you, me, our friends.

Player Character: The people we're playing. My name is Alex and I live in Zürich. My character is called Edrig and hails from Einaheim.

Experience Points (**xp**): Tricking and defeating oponents grants experience points. Spending money nets you *one experience point per gold piece spent*. Examples: donations to a temple, erecting a statue, organizing a party, building a manor house, hiring servants, and so on. With enough experience points characters gain new levels.

Level: As time passes, characters hit better, get better saving throws and gain hit points. They *gain a level*.

Hit Points: Hit points indicate your endurance, luck and will to live. As you *gain* a level, roll as many dice as you have levels and keep the result if it is is *higher* than your current hit point total. Fighters and dwarves use a d8, magic-users and thieves use a d4, everybody else uses a d6. Do not forget to add your constitution bonus to every die rolled. If your constitution bonus is negative, you'll still get at least 1 hit point for every die. If you *loose* a level, roll as many dice as you have levels and keep the result if it is *lower* than your current hit point total.

Saving Throw: Targets of spells and miracles are sometimes granted a saving throw in order to avoid negative effects or to re-duce damage taken by half. The spell descriptions will explicity mention any saving throws granted. Saving throws depend on your level. To make it, roll a d20 and add your wisdom bonus. You must get number indicated or higher.

Circle: As magic-users and elves gain levels, they get access to higher spell circles—more powerful spells and miracles:

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Circle	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5

Reaction Roll: The referee will make a reaction roll for almost all creatures characters talk to. Roll 2d6 and add the *reaction bonus* of the person doing the talking. The result varies from immediate attack (2) to very helpful (12).

Morale: When the opposing side looses a member and when it has lost half of its members, the referee should make a morale check. If 2d6 *exceed* the morale score, morale breaks and opponents flee. Opponents must make at most two morale checks. Player char-acters must never check morale. Mercenaries hired by characters must make morale checks when suffering losses. Retainers need not check morale when suffering losses.

As gold turns into experience, the pursuit of treasure is a central element of adventures. Sometimes the simple act of bringing the loot back to safety can be a problem if you weakened and heavily loaded on your way back to town.

Hit points are a measure of much of a beating a character can take.

Reaction Bonus: This bonus is a bit smaller than the charisma bonus because the *reaction roll* uses 2d6 instead of a d20:

Charisma	Bonus
3	-2
4–8	-1
9–12	
13–17	+1
18	+2

2d6	Reaction
2–5	negative
6–8	neutral
9–12	positive

Retainers: Unlike mercenaries, retainers are loyal. Their number is limited, however: 4 + charisma bonus (1–7). After disastrous adventures, they'll need to make a Their morale is determined by the player character: 7 + charisma bonus (4–10). If they roll higher than their morale, these retainers will retire.

Experience Points for Opponents Defeated: These will be distributed amonst all the player characters and their retainers. Retainers with no levels reaching 100 experience points will gain their first level and from now on they will demand *half a share* of all treasures gained. Don't forget to determine their attributes and hit points. Their hit points may not fall below their current value. Humans may pick a class.

Retainers gain experience points like a player character. Money from wages and treasure shares can be turned into experience points. Gold (and thus xp) can be passed to other characters as long as the recipient's level is *lower*. Retainers will spend their money as quickly as possible.

Skills

The big table of d6:

Skill	1d6
Default	1
Kick in doors, add your strength bonus	1–2
Trigger, evade or disarm traps	1–2
Dwarfs are better at finding secret constructions	1–2
Dwarves are better at finding traps	1–2
Elves can hear better	1–2
Elves are better at finding secret and concealed doors	1–2
Halflings are better at hiding and sneaking	1–2
Halflings are even better at hiding and sneaking outdoors	1–5
Thieves are better at everything	1–2
Thieves from 3rd level onwards	1–3
Thieves from 6th level onwards	1–4
Thieves from 9th level onwards	1–5

Wages must be paid at the end of the session.
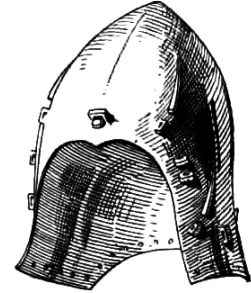
In most cases, no dice need to be rolled. If there is a secret lever behind the statue and the player said their character was looking behind the statue, then said lever will be found. We usuall roll dice when there's some risk involved. When rolling to force doors, the referee will usually roll for a random encounter at the same time.

Thieves improve over time. They'll be faster at opening locks, disarming traps, finding secret doors, moving silently, hiding, hearing, and so on.

Combat

Surprise: Both sides roll a d6. Your side is surprised if you roll a 1 or a 2. If you're surprised, you'll have to skip the first round. If the distance between the two sides isn't obvious, add the two dice and multiply the sum with 10 ft. The result is a distance of 20–120 ft.

Your movement rate determines whether surprised opponents can be attacked in the first round.

Initiative: At the beginning of every round, both sides roll a d6. The higer number begins. On a tie, players begin.

The worst that can happen is that opponents go twice in a row.

Round: Every round, you can move your movement rate and still do something before or after your move. Typical actions: melee or ranged attack, casting a spell or a miracle, read a scroll, quaff a potion. Getting up also counts as a move. Dropping items you're holding, drawing a weapon or saying things are free.

Anything may be *attempted*, but chances of success and the time it takes will be determined at the table based on circumstances.

To-Hit: Roll a twenty-sided die (d20) and see if you hit. Add your strength bonus when making a melee attack. Add your dexterity bonus when making a ranged attack. Don't forget to add any magic bonuses, if you have a magic weapon!

The description of your class comes with a table where you'll see what you need to roll, depending on your level and the opponent's armor class. Roll that number or higher.

20: If you roll a 20, you score a critical hit which always hits and does max damage.

30: Every player may use the thirty-sided die (d30) in place of a d20 once per session. When rolling to hit, every roll of twenty and above is a critical hit.

Damage: If you hit, roll damage using a d6. Add your strength bonus when making a melee attack. There is no bonus for ranged attacks.

We don't use variable weapon damage. All weapons do 1d6 damage.

Shield: When carrying a shield and hit by a melee weapon or a magical force such as a lightning bolt or a fire ball, you may sacrifice the shield such that it absorbs all damage and is destroyed.

At low levels, shields are crucial! Unfortunately, thieves and magic users may not carry shields.

Space: In a wide corridor (10 ft) three people can fight side by side. The space required depends on the weapons used, however:

Weapon Characteristic	Space Required	For 10 ft
can be used in dense formations	2½ ft	4 people
normal weapons	3 ft	3 people
requires space to swing	5 ft	2 people
requires a lot of space	10 ft	1 person

A typical setup would be four fighters in the front row with short swords or hand axes, four fighters in the second row with polearms, and the rest in the back, shooting arrows and slinging stones.

Protection: When you are attacked, nearby friends can protect you by placing themselves in the line of attack. The attacker will roll to hit your friend instead of you. You can place yourself in the line of at most *one* extra attack per round.

Intelligent monsters can do the same thing and protect each other. Pets cannot place themselves in the line of an attack.

Retreat: When retreating using your movement rate, your opponents can follow you and continue to attack unless somebody is covering your retreat. If you need to move faster, you'll have to flee.

Flee: When running away, you'll have to survive one last round of attacks. All your opponents in melee get one free attack with a +2 bonus.

Everybody in melee gets exactly *one* extra attack against fleeing opponents. If you didn't use a melee weapon, you're not in melee and don't get to make an extra attack.

Chase: If you're being chased, roll 2d6. On a 2, you're surprised. On a 3–6, it's a fight. On a 7–9, choose two points from the list. On a 10–11 choose one point. One a 12, you made it, no problem.

— you were separated

— it takes a long time

— you got lost

— you had to drop shields and backpacks

Injury and Death: Hit points are a measure of much of a beating a character can take. Once it falls to zero, and whenever you're hit thereafter, you'll have to roll on the table of *Death & Dismemberment*.

2W6	Result
2	**Instant Death**: Decapitated or other grievous wound
3	**Fatal Wound**: gutted, stabbed through lung, broken back; you'll die in 1d6 rounds
4	**Severed Limb**: roll a d4: 1 – sword arm, 2 – shield arm, 3, 4 – leg; you'll die in 3d6 rounds unless you cauterize the wound using fire or stop the bleeding using a tourniquet
5	**Broken Bones**: roll a d4: 1 – sword arm, 2 – shield arm, 3 – leg, 4 – rib; healing takes 2d4+9 weeks
6	**Painful Loss**: roll a d6: 1 – nose, 2 – eye, 3 – ear, 4 – finger, 5 – d6 teeth, 6 – mean cut and ugly scar
7, 8	**Unconscious**: knocked out and helpless for 2d6 rounds unless wearing a helmet; with a helmet, stunned for a round
9	**Stunned**: unable to act for a round; with a helmet, only knocked down
10	**Knocked Down**: knocked down
11	no effect: you suffer no additional harm
12	**Adrenalin Surge**: you get 1d4 hit points for every two levels you have (round up); after the fight you'll collapse with zero hit points and faint for 2d6 rounds

Conditions: The *Death & Dismemberment* table imposes various conditions:

Arm Lost or Broken: You can retrain your sword hand, no problem. You'll need a hand to cast spells.

Leg Lost or Broken: You can't walk. A lost leg can be replaced with a wooden leg. You cannot run using a wooden leg.

Rib Broken: No sudden moves with a broken rib or you'll pierce your lung! No fighting. No running.

Helpless: you can be killed without requiring a roll to hit.

Stunned: you cannot move and you cannot attack, but opponents must still roll to hit.

Knocked Down: opponents get +4 to hit you until you get up; getting up prevents you from moving in the same round.

Resurrection is a miracle of the 7th circle and requires a level 13 magic-user. So long as some small portion of the body still exists and you haven't been dead for more more than a hundred years, you can be raised from the dead, fully healed.

Regeneration is also a miracle of the 7th circle and requires a level 13 magic-user. This miracle will regrow missing limbs and mend broken bones. It's less taxing on the magic-user than *Resurrection*.

Raise Dead is a miracle of the 5th circle and requires a level 9 magic-user or elf. This miracle will not regrow missing limbs or broken bones. It simply restores you to life if you died due to hit point loss.

The Death & Dismemberment table was adapted from a blog post by Brian Murphy.
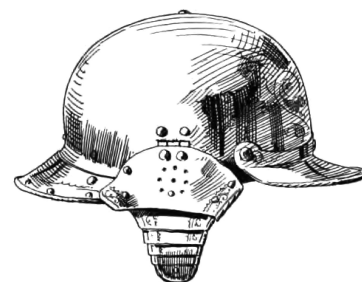
If you loose both arms, you'll need to get yourself a new arm. A mechanical arm made by gnomes will do, if you'll trust them not to pull a prank on you.

If you loose both legs, you'll need to find somebody to carry you or magical means of movement.

Movement

Movement Rate: Humans have a movement rate (**MV**) of 12—that's 120 ft per round (10 s) when *running* or *fighting*.

Proceeding slowly and methodically in the underworld slows you down dramatically. MV 12 is only 120 ft per turn (10 min). That's the only way to have a fair chance of drawing maps and avoiding traps.

Carrying Capacity: You can carry as many significant items as your *strength*. If you carry more, each extra item adds -1 to hit and to saving throws.

Stuff: It takes a lot of small things to count as an item: a hundred gold coins, gems, rings, amulets and the like count as a single item.

Typical movement rates of other creatures: dwarf 6, halfling 9, elf 12, giant weasel 15, dog or wolf 18, panther 21, galloping horse 24, flying hippogryph 36, flying pegasus 48.

Typical items: armor, a weapon, a book, a potion, a torch, a quiver, a scroll. There's no difference between light and heavy items. Clothing, bags or backpacks don't count.

Reputation

Reputation: Fame and honor can be earned everywhere. Even the gods are interested in the deeds of mortals. Reputation is tracked separately for all the gods, towns and factions. The higher your reputation, the harder it is to increase it. In order to gain reputation, roll higher than your current reputation. The starting reputation is 0. Thus, the first time reputation increases, no roll is required. Reputation can be good or bad. The gods take an interest in blasphemers, too! Usually, reputation will not change for more than ±1 per session.

The referee maintains a list of gods, towns and factions and the respective reputation for each character.

The higher your reputation, the harder it will be to increase.

Roll an appropriate die depending on the deeds you have done:

Roll	Deeds
d4	Finding and returning or stealing and destroying items of religious significance; saving or sacrificing animals; dedicating or desecrating altars and shrines
d6	Saving or sacrificing humans, dedicating or desecrating temples
d8	rescuing or sacrifice villages and whole communities, found cults or eradicate heresies
d10	convert, save or sacrifice nations and entire tribes
d12	render a service to the gods

Help: The help of towns and factions may depend on your reputation. Roll 2d6 and compare it to your reputation. If you rolled *higher*, help is not forthcoming.

Intervention: In an emergency, reputation also acts as the percentage chance for divine intervention.

A divine intervention could mean the appearance of an angel, a devil, demon, a naga, or the like.

Spells

Magic users and elves begin their career with exactly *one* spell in their spell book. When you gain a level, you can learn one or more new spells from your peers. The referee will have at least one source of new spells prepared. You'll find some ideas on the following pages.

Repertoire: The list of spells in your spell book make up your repertoire. When casting a spell, choose a spell from your repertoire. The size of your repertoire is determined by your level:

Level	1st circle	2nd circle	3rd circle	4th circle	5th circle
1	1	-	-	-	-
2	2	-	-	-	-
3	2	1	-	-	-
4	2	2	-	-	-
5	2	2	1	-	-
6	2	2	2	-	-
7	3	2	2	1	-
8	3	3	2	2	-
9	3	3	3	2	1
10	3	3	3	3	2

Magic users and elves will often stay close to their former master and keep learning new spells from them, often in exchange for services rendered. This is why most of them will simply have a subset of their master's spell book.

An alternative to that is **Research**. This requires a starting point such as an existing a scroll, spell book or magic item, and a library of further books about the origins of magic, related spells, history and lore, and so on. The magic user or elf must have attained level 9 and spend 1,000 gold and two weeks per spell level researching (no adventuring).

The table determines both the number of spells you can cast *per day* and the number of spells *in your repertoire*.

On 1st level you start with a single spell from your master's spell book. Typically, retainers would have one of the following:

Charm Person turns *one* humanoid creature into a loyal friend. The target is granted a saving throw vs. spells. As time passes, more saving throws are granted to the target:

Intelligence	Timeframe
3–8	monthly
9–12	weekly
13–18	daily

Undead and giants may be humanoid but they're still immune to this charm.

Detect Magic makes all enchanted items, creatures and locations within *60 ft* shine with a pale blue light for *20 min*.

The pale blue light is visible to all.

Light enchants one object within *120 ft* for *1 h + 10 min/level* so that it shines faint light with a *15 ft* radius.

If you target the eyes of a creature, it will go blind for as long as the spell lasts. Blind creatures are at -4 to hit. Targets are granted a saving throw vs. spells.

Magic Missile hits any visible target within *150 ft* and causes 1W6+1 damage. At 5th level, *three* missiles can be shot at the same time and they hit different targets. At 10th level, *five* missiles can be shot.

There is no saving throw!

Read Magic allows you to decipher magical runes for *10 min*. This is how to read spell books, scrolls and magical inscriptions.

Sleep puts *2W8 hit dice* of creatures within *240 ft* to sleep for *4W4 × 10 min*. This is a magical slumber. They need to be slapped in order to wake them before the spell ends. No creature may have more than 4+1 hit dice. Creatures with less hit dice are affected first.

There is no saving throw!

Priests of Freya

Freya is the goddess of winter, of spring, of fertility, of grain, of war, of cats, of magic. She leads the valkyries and collects half the slain in battle. They dine with her in Sessrúmnir.

Circle	Spell Name	Traditional Name
1	Watchful Eye of the Keeper	*detect evil*
1	Scent of Sorcery	*detect magic*
1	Weather the Storm	*resist cold*
2	Language of Animals	*speak with animal*
2	Sound of Silence	*silence 15' radius*
2	Paralysis of Men	*hold person*
3	Light of the Moon	*continual light*
3	Weapon of the Gods	*striking*
3	Wolf Shape	limited *polymorph self*
4	Honey of the Valkyries	*neutralize poison*
4	Wall of Ice	*wall of ice*
4	Curse of the Völva	*curse* and *remove curse*
5	The Path to Sessrúmnir	*raise dead* and *ray of death*
5	Freya's Quest	*quest*

Limited *polymorph self* means: You can only turn into a white wolf: AC 6 2d4 MV 15

Priests of Marduk

Marduk is the patron of war chariots, of war lords, of might, of lightning, of punitive justice, of commandments and stone tablets. Marduk is popular in big cities and the dwarves love him as well.

Circle	Spell Name	Traditional Name
1	Bolt of Power	*magic missile*
1	Protection from Harm	*shield*
1	Voice of the Ruler	*charm person*
2	Club of Law	limited *striking*
2	Courage of Marduk	*bless*
2	Eyes of the Overlord	*detect invisible*
3	Bolt of Lightning	*lightning bolt*
3	Protection from Hail	*protection from normal missiles*
3	Wings of God	*fly*
4	Chariot of Fire	new spell
4	Voice of the Master	*charm monster*
4	Wall of Fire	*wall of fire*
5	Eyes of Truth	*true seeing*
5	Melting Walls	*transmute rock to mud*

Limited *striking* means: You can only enchant a club that you're wielding yourself for an extra 1d6.

Chariot of Fire summons a flying, flaming scythed chariot dealing 2d6 each to anybody you ride past, save vs. wands for half damage. It holds three people. The chariot is yours to command for 8 h. MV 18.

Priests of Orcus

Orcus is the pot-bellied goat-headed bat-winged hairy demon prince of the undead and one of the Gods. He promises eternal life. He raises the dead. He likes cruel deeds, necromancy and the walking dead, the slaying of innocents, caves and hellfire.

Circle	Spell Name	Traditional Name
1	Fear of Death	*remove fear*, reversed
1	Mace of Stunning	new spell
1	Darkness	*light*, reversed
2	Goatman	new spell
2	Affinity to Hell	*resist fire*
2	Mace of Smashing	*knock*
3	Hellfire	*fireball*
3	Danse Macabre	*animate dead*
3	Cancellation	*dispell magic*
4	Walls of Hell	*wall of fire*
4	Lies	*detect lie*, reversed
4	Beastmastery	*charm monster*
5	Cheating Death	*raise dead*
5	Lord of Darkness	new spell

Mace of Stunning means: You can only enchant a mace that you're wielding yourself. For ten minutes, anybody you hit with your mace must *save vs. paralysis* or be stunned for a round.

Goatman turns up to four people into goatmen for the night. This is how they conceal their identities in cities.

Lord of Darkness summons a shadow knight for every level of yours (minimum 9). They cannot be dismissed and they are immune to non-magical weapons. Their touch drains a level. To simplify things at the table, their attacks deal damage as indicated, steal the victim's best spell and reduce saving throws as appropriate. HD 4 AC 3 2d8 F4 ML 12 MV 12

Book of the Sea

Lady Geradana has ruled the coastal elves of Lagnabadalë for over 250 years. This is her spell book. These are very traditional spells.

Circle	Spell Name	Traditional Name
1	Secrets of the Elven Voice	*charm person*
1	Rune Magic of Our Elders	*read magic*
1	Drowzy Lull of Waves	*sleep*
2	Searching My Feelings	*ESP*
2	Eternal Starlight	*continual light*
2	The Language of Fish	*speak with animals*
3	Lightning Storm	*lightning bolt*
3	Secrets of Whales	*water breathing*
3	Eye of the Storm	*protection from normal missiles*
4	Shape Changing	*polymorph*
4	Banes and Boons	*remove curse*
4	Flash Flood	new spell
5	Supremacy of the Will	*telekinesis*
5	Summon Living Storm	*conjure elemental*

When *water breathing*, you can speak the language of whales.

As is typical for elves, her favorite shape to *polymorph* into is a blue dragon. At level 9, its stats are AC 0 1d6+1/1d6+1/3d10 MV 24; at level 10 its stats are AC -1 1d8/1d8/4d8 MV 24.

A *flash flood* will create a sudden flood from a body of water within 30 ft. Anybody caught by it must save vs. death or be swept away. If wearing metal armor, save vs. death again or drown within a minute or two.

When *conjuring an elemental*, she prefers to summon an air elemental called *Flying Debris*, HD 16 AC -2 3d8 F16 MV 36; plus 1d8 vs. flying creatures; requires a save vs. death to approach; immune to non-magical weapons; will attack summoner and remain on this plane if the conjurer's concentration fails.

Running the Game

This section is for the **referee** of the game, the person that runs everything that is not a player character. It is an instruction manual on how to to run the games the way I do. My advice is obviously **colored by my preferences**:

1. **No Skills**: This challenges players. They need to roleplay to be diplomatic, intimidating, bluffing, and the referee needs to roleplay the non-player characters accordingly. Players need to guess where hidden treasure and secret doors are and the referee has to provide the right amount of clues.

2. **Fewer Classes**: This provides less mechanical differentiation between characters. Players need to roleplay in order to differentiate characters.

3. **Quick Character Generation**: Easy character generation with few actual choices speeds things up. A high attrition rate is more acceptable as you can bring multiple characters to the table and make extras in a minute or two.

4. **Random Character Generation**: Random character generation may surprise players and provide interesting party dynamics.

5. **Rare Healing**: Players need to avoid wandering monsters and avoid unnecessary fighting. This makes strategic decisions (when to fight) more important than tactical decisions (how to fight).

6. **Simple Combat**: No explicit rules for combat maneuvers and battle grids result in quicker combat rounds, less waiting for your turn, and more time to do other stuff—or more fights per session, if desired.

7. **Little Damage, Few Hit-Points**: Fewer attacks and smaller damage bonuses simplify the math and speed things up.

8. **Smaller Bonuses**: The smaller bonuses due to abilities reduce the math and produce far less trickle down effects. This also makes the initial ability rolls less important (without actually resorting to point-buy).

9. **Treasure is Experience**: This encourages players to research their goals, picking their fights carefully. It also provides for an easy and quick reason for the party to form and go adventuring.

10. **No Buying or Selling of Magic Item** : Getting them should always involve adventuring.

11. **Random Encounters, Random Monsters**: This forces the referee to improvise and adapt the story on the fly.

Keep it short: My main problem is that I don't want to spend a lot of time in preparation for a session. Half an hour for a three hour slot is all I'm prepared to invest.

Campaign Map: When I start a new campaign, I create a small hex map. You could use my random hexmap generator, for example. I only start worrying about the ruins and lairs in the various hexes once players actually explore the region. This is going to be an organic campaign. I like to start with a wilderness surrounding a small village. In the wilderness, travelling a hex takes a day. That keeps things simple. See below for more on traveling. I work on the map, adding more locations as players push forward.

Use every idea as soon as possible. Do not save good ideas for later! Use them now. You will have more good ideas in the future.

Settlements: Every settlement has two or three interesting, named people. These are the people of authority the characters are likely to talk to. Every settlement should have a building or two where you can find said named people, and an inn, or an exaplanation for the missing inn. Don't bother with a map for the settlement.

People: Most of civilization consists of neutral, egoistical, normal humans and appropriate demihumans from the monster manual. Don't bother assigning levels unless these people are important.

Level	Role
0	ordinary people
1	veterans, trained guards
3	a boss of one or two dozen people, captain of the watch, bandit boss
5	lord over a small settlement, a contested five mile hex, a tower, a small fortress, a sheriff, two of these might be the assistants of a level 9 lord
7	a captain of a small army, the most powerful chieftain of a tribe, a second in command to a level 9 lord
9	lord over a town, a castle plus a town or two, multiple villages, a region up to thirty miles in diameter, known up to a hundred miles away
11	great heroes, the favorites of the gods
13	prophets, avatars and holy men
15	demigods and immortals
17	god-like, granting wishes!

Names: Keep lists of names to assign to non-player characters. I like names to depend on gender and culture, so I usually have multiple lists.

News: Spies and Sages allow you to feed setting information to your players. Get into the habit of preparing a little something to report for spies and sages in the employ of player characters. Actionable information is preferred. Activities of rivals that can be stopped. Rumors of treasures that can be sought. Let players know where to go next if they want to pursue a certain goal.

Dungeons: I like to prepare a number of small dungeons and place them on the campaign map. I make note of a few rumors that would lead the party to the various dungeons and warnings they might hear in order to prepare them for it. This is a sandbox campaign and the encounters do not depend on the power level of the party. Instead, the party gets to choose the risk they are willing to face by choosing areas that are more or less dangerous based on the rumors they hear.

Treasure: I just roll for random treasure. Treasure spent earns experience: 1 gp is worth 1 XP.

Magic Items: I like magic weapons. If I roll up a simple +1 weapon I often pimp it with some extra gimmick. Magic items are not for sale. Potions can be bought from alchemists. Every alchemist has a handful of potions they know how to make. They cost around 500 gold.

Stocking the dungeon: Use a d20.

d20	Contents and Treasure
1–5	Empty
6	Unguarded treasure
7	Trap and unguarded treasure
8–9	Trap
10–12	Monster
13–15	Monster and treasure
16–20	Special

Random Wilderness Encounters: Based on the current area the party is in, jot down a little random encounter table. Consider the critters in the surrounding dungeons, think of a theme, browse the monster manuals and look at the pictures. If you like beholders, maybe add a dwarf merchant with an extra eye stalk or two to the encounter table. He's a spy for the beholder! If you like frogs, go for an amphibian theme and pick psionic frog men, giant frogs, toads, froglings, and so on. If you have a theme, consider antagonists. Is the frog faction competing with the gnomes? Add a gnome entry!

d6	Encounter
☼ 1	merchants (1d6)
☼ 2	soldiers (1d6+3)
3	gnomes (1d6+2)
4	giant frogs (1d4)
5	froglings (2d6)
6	giant dragonfly
☾ 7	psionic frog men (2d6)
☾ 8	frog demons (1d4)

If you need some inspiration, check out the One Page Dungeon Contest submissions. When the party explores one dungeon, use the time to make up some events surrounding the other dungeons. Giant frog plague? Cultists spreading? Rival party found some treasure?

Expand on the list of buildings and add cathedrals, tempels, hippodromes and the like as your players will need things to spend their gold on.

Talking, gnawing, cursing, trailing smoke, oozing strange liquids, . . .

This is easier than rolling two d6 which is what Moldvay uses.

Keep using the same table while the player characters are in the same region: the same valley, the same forest, the same mountain range— basically a bunch of hexes that seem to belong together.

Add one or more entries for **peaceful folk** from the neighborhood or named people from nearby settlements. Two of these is a good number. Add these at the top of the list. During the night, add this number as you roll. This is how you get slightly different results for day time and night time encounters. In this example, merchants and soldiers are only encountered during the day. At night, add +2 to your roll. Thus, psionic frog men and frog demons are only encountered during the night.

Exploration: Typically travel is initiated by a non-player characters telling the player characters about a location. Usually directions are accurate and the location and any landmarks on the way get placed on the player map. When traveling, player characters cannot get lost. A hex is usually big enough for multiple locations (a hill, a lake, a castle, a village, a dungeon). Unknown locations are not be easy to find. Use the typical *search* abilities: 1/6 per day for humans, 2/6 per day for demi-humans. Known locations can always be found.

Travel: The default is one hex traveled per day unless there are trails or roads (two per day; no bonus for riding or flying) or they are traveling by ship along a coast (in which case it'll be eight hexes per day). As it stands, this ignores movement speeds and hex size. You travel one hex per day, that's it. I usually think that one hex is five miles, but players don't need to know that.

Thus the actual *procedure* at the gaming table is simple:

1. Players tell me where they want to go. There is a 1 in 6 chance for a daylight encounter and a 1 in 6 chance for a nighttime encounter for every hex traveled. Combine encounters if that spices things up.

That's it.

Lairs: Many hexes have a building of some sort. I place stuff I got from the net or from books I bought. I add lairs for all the intelligent monsters on my encounter tables. As time passes, I might add more locations and lairs to known hexes. It's simply not possible to *completely* map a hex. There's always more stuff to discover. Don't be afraid to add new stuff to existing hexes.

If you use five mile hexes, that's an area of about $22\,\text{mi}^2$.

If you have some monsters on your random encounter table and haven't decided where the lairs of these creatures are, there's a 1 in 6 chance when encountering them that you have found their lair. Let players find the secret gnome village, the slaad temple, the frogling pond. These improvised lairs will necessarily be simple one, two or three room affairs. No problem.

Monsters: It's easier if monsters announce themselves: let players find, smell or hear something. This allows them to choose their approach. Determine encounters before the game starts or have a procedure to determine the number of monsters encountered ready. Use 1d8 if you're at a loss. This makes sure that you're not scaling the encounter to the players. Let the *players decide* whether to engage or not.

Adapt the encounter as it happens. If your players are bored, let the monsters fight. If your players need guidance, have the monsters talk. If your players are afraid, make it easy to avoid the encounter. The entertainment of your friends at the table takes priority. A *total party kill* can be part of it. Know your players.

Use the reaction roll. Not all encounters need to end in a fight. Use morale checks ins combat. Not all fights are to the death. Here are some typical morale scores:

2	animals that will always run
3	animals when cornered
4	herbivores
5	carnivores and cowards
6	cautious people
7	normal men
8	well led humanoids
9	disciplined troops
10	fanatics
11	lunatics
12	unnatural creatures

Keep Adding: In order add life to the world, you need to have two or three events or changes happen between sessions if time passes in-game. A lot of it should relate to what the party did. If their dog was killed by a giant crab and they didn't rescue it, then there will be a rumor of a ghost dog haunting the beaches. If they discovered skeletons in a crypt and fled, they have released undead that will be roaming the neighborhood. If they had hirelings with them, those will be spreading rumors of a necromancer. Use these rumors to add big and small adventure options for the players to focus on.

Focus Follows Players: As time passes, you should see a constant trickle of little ideas to add to your campaign. Prepare for 3-7 of these potential adventures and keep a list of open plots to remind players of ongoing issues. More adventures develop wherever the party shows up. If the party fights a mammoth and decides to track it back to the forest, then maybe there will be neanderthals living there. If the players try to contact them, maybe there will be a sabre-toothed cat and a velociraptor in the area. If they investigate the velociraptor, they might find a valley full of dinosaurs.

Essentially players express their interest in the campaign by spending time. If players never leave town, then they want urban adventures. If they keep returning to your megadungeon, then that's what they want. Giving players real options will make sure the game adapts to their preferences (and yours, given that you are providing the options).

Contacts: Keep a list of contacts. These provide easy plot hooks. Magic-users provide new spells in exchange for quests. Sages provide information about items found in exchange for quests. Rulers provide men-at-arms in exchange for quests. They can provide rumors and gossip that hint at things to get involved in. Provide enough to allow choice but not too much in order to save preparation time and avoid decision paralysis. Keep it somewhere between three and seven. I also like to play up alignment. A drug abusing alchemist hands out chaotic quests, a curious insect trainer hands out lawful quests.

Living World: Keep a list of a handful in addition to your list of contacts. Between sessions, check whether any of the entries need to be removed or changed. Consider adding new entries. It's best to do this soon after the session when recent events are still fresh. Let your players know about these changes during the next session. "You notice a new bard in the Yellow Straightjacket. She is called Miela, newly arrived from Halgorn. Ilaria appears to have left for Tlan."

Maps: Maps are inspiring. They provide a sense of place, every landmark they contain is a potential exploration goal, yet another option for players to pursue. Keep a campaign map, hand out treasure maps, let other characters draw maps for the party.

Players need options, and maps are like option tokens. Maps are also props that are very easy to make.

Goals: Talk to your players about their character goals every now and then. Identify the players that have interesting goals you'd like to pursue, and start providing rumors that lead to adventures on the way to achieving those goals.

Two or three players pushing their own agendas can be a lot of fun. There will be a little rivalry because each character needs to pursue their own quests. There will be some cooperation: "I'll help you retrieve ice from that glacier for your frost rapier if you will help me find Xu-Li the fire sage."

Not everybody needs to have goals! You just need enough player goals to add adventure seeds to your campaign. If all the players have divergent goals, they end up not having a reason to adventure together. In that case you might be better off adding a traditional villain to the mix: A powerful nemesis that sends minions after the characters, builds an army to attack their home base, coordinates the bad guys in the region such that the party absolutely needs to fight. Just increase the pressure whenever the players are starting to squabble again.

Spotlight: I like to give enemies the opportunity to shine every now and then. Don't overdo it. I find that providing a single non-player character the opportunity to shine in a session is about right.

The same is true for player characters. I'll try to emphasize situations where a player character specifically did something awesome. It lets players know that I appreciated their character being there and the things they did. Everybody likes this.

If a player is very entertaining in the game, I like to encourage them. Non-player characters will go along with a lot of silliness as long as it doesn't strain my credulity.

Even quiet players like to shine. Sometimes you just have to guess what makes them tick. Perhaps they'd like romantic success? As the extroverts grab the spotlight, make sure to interrupt the action once or twice per session and offer a scene to an introverted player. The leader is charmed by their presence, the enemy wants to talk to nobody else but them, the farmers ask them for advice. Don't overdo it. Sometimes shy players don't want to make big decisions. A public display of respect or admiration might be enough.

Planning: If players invest a lot of time into a particular plan, I like to join in and provide advice—my commentary stands in for their character's knowledge of the world. I also like to reward players for the effort by having their plans succeed. Be sure to recapitulate the successful execution of the plan, coloring it appropriately. Avoid the evil feedback loop of foiling their plans. They'll counter it by spending even more time planning or by trying to keep you out of the planning phase. This makes the session boring.

If players don't want to plan a lot, then that's even more awesome, because it gives you the opportunity to improvise some action scene. Roll for wandering monsters or the like and go for it.

If you feel that they over-planned it, make sure you use words like "boring wait" and "endless hours pouring over your preparations" as you remind them of the time wasted in-game.

Avoid boring "it doesn't work" results. Succeed or fail spectacularly.

Background: I tend to prefer character accomplishments to character abilities. Thus, player characters in my games are mechanically simple. If a player wants to do something that I think is out of the ordinary, I ask for an explanation: "Do you think your character can do this?" If the player says yes, then we think of an explanation and have the player write it down on the character sheet. That's how we learn that the dwarf has in fact served as a scout and an ensign in the dwarven army.

Development: Hopefully the events at the table shape the characters. Was the character generous or avaricious? Was the character diplomatic or rude? Was the character honest or deceitful? That's what we need all the social encounters for. By interacting with other characters, players can develop their own character. Therefore, they need to meet people that can be cheated or dealt with honestly. They need to meet people that can be robbed and people that beg. It forces players to make choices regarding their characters. It's how they grow to be more real.

Avoid situations where there is only one course of action. If you can only rescue the baron's child, then there's no choice involved. You should add temptation at every single step. Slavers will be interested in the child. Enemies of the baron will be interested.

Sometimes there are no obvious choices, and none of the choices will help define the character. The baron's child might not want to return back home, preferring to go on adventure instead. The character's choice will define what they see as filial duty and family integrity. Hardly heroic decisions to be made! Use these situations rarely.

Influence and Reputation: Find a way to let characters gain influence and a reputation through adventuring. This anchors them in the campaign world and encourages character development instead of character ability gain. It's a different sort of reward.

Announce consequences before players commit to actions. There can only be meaningful choice if players know what to expect. ("If you fail the roll, you'll [. . .]. Do you want to risk it?")

The following list is from the Hack & Slash blog.

Provide information if players are unsure. You can wrap it in vague language, but be sure to provide the necessary information. ("It's hard to say, but you feel a nagging suspicion that he's probably hiding something.")

In the same vein, **provide warnings** if players are putting themselves in danger. You're aiming for "I knew it!" when something bad befalls player characters. ("You notice that the hanging bridge above the tar pits seems frail. Just make sure nobody cuts those ropes!")

Provide alternatives if you think that what players want should be impossible. ("You can't just buy a magic weapon but they say there's a hidden entrance to a goblin market in the Smoke Forest.")

Add obstacles whenever players are getting what they want. ("The insect trainer will teach your lizard how to spy ahead if you provide her with a living giant wasp.")

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