

# 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. 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, no magic items for sale. Furthermore, elves, dwarves and halflings are simply separate classes. There are no elven thieves or dwarven mages. On the other hand, fewer 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 clerics** in my game and I use **restricted spell acquisition** for magic users: finding scrolls and spellbooks will not allow you to master those spells. You need a teacher until you reach level nine.

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. There is **no planned ending** for the campaign.

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 equipped. 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 their 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. If you want to dig deeper, I recommend [Basic D&D](#) by Moldvay and [Expert D&D](#) by Cook.

My campaigns are usually limited to ten levels which is why the information for higher level player characters is missing. If you need suggestions, I suggest going back to [Labyrinth Lord](#).

That's when you get to [research](#) new spells.

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.

The game will remain dangerous for a long time. At very low levels limited hit points mean you'll die if you get hit. Later, around level five and six, it's still easy to die because of spells like *fireball* or *lightning bolt*, poisonous critters and petrifying gazes, or level drain. At higher level, when the first characters hit level eight and nine, the game will be less dangerous and involve more reaction rolls and larger battles, but then again, the characters will soon retire from adventuring...

Spending gold on public [buildings](#) is one way of spending a lot of money.

## 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

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.

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

## 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

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.

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

*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.

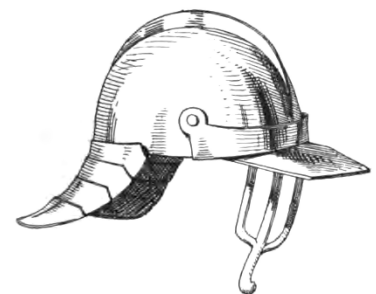
Halflings cannot rise beyond level 8. Since you're so small, you cannot use any large weapons such as battle axes, two handed swords or polearms. You are smaller than men but faster than dwarves.

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



ROLL FOR HIT POINTS and add your constitution bonus. Fighters and dwarves roll 1d8, magic users and thieves roll 1d4, everybody else rolls 1d6.

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

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

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.

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 <a href="#">normal human</a> )	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	Mirror	5	to identify vampires and fight medusas
Silver dagger	30	can be used against lycanthropes in animal form	Rations	15	food for one week; may distract animals
Short sword	7	can be used in dense formations	Rope (50 ft)	1	heavy rope that cannot be thrown very far
Long sword	10	can be used on foot against riders and the other way around, requires space to swing	Spikes (12)	1	keep doors open or closed; need a hammer
Zweihänder	15	two-handed, can be used against multiple opponents at the same time, requires a lot of space	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 <a href="#">death and dismemberment</a>



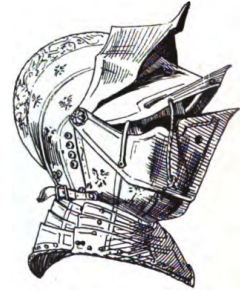
## Buildings

Some prices for buildings:

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

Note that all the larger buildings need gardeners, guards, carpenters and so on for maintenance.

Public buildings are a good way to spend gold and [earn experience points](#).



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

**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; **Frogflings** (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

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 elementalists 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](#).



Discovering and befriending intelligent humanoids will allow you to hire them and eventually to play them. The referee will propose appropriate monster classes when this comes up.

## 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

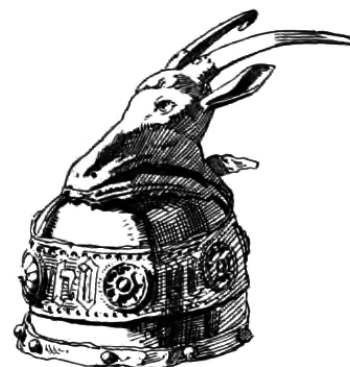
**Freya**: Harvest, Circle of Life, wolves, cats, wilderness, free love

**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 *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 *lose* 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 are sometimes granted a saving throw in order to avoid negative effects or to reduce damage taken by half. The spell descriptions will explicitly 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:

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 loses 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 characters 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 are 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 amongst 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.

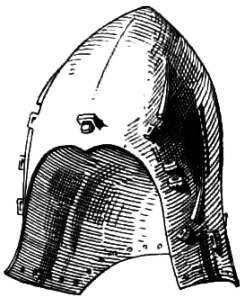
Retainers gain experience points like a player character. Money from wages and treasure shares can be turned into experience points. Gold (and thus xp) can be passed to other characters as long as the recipient’s level is lower. Retainers will spend their money as quickly as possible.

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 3 <sup>rd</sup> level onwards	1–3
Thieves from 6 <sup>th</sup> level onwards	1–4
Thieves from 9 <sup>th</sup> 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 kick in doors, disarm traps, listen for noise, looking for secret doors, this will take some time and 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.

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

**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, 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.

**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!

**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.

**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.

**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

**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.

**Targets:** When attacking, you can't pick individual targets. It's carnage all around you! You can pick the *kind* of enemy: target an orc and not an ogre, for example.

**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.

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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.

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

The referee will distribute hits amongst all the possible targets, but start every round with the same target. If your side lands two hits on three orcs this round, the first two orcs get hit. If you round another two hits next round, the same two orcs get hit.

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. On 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 or sneak 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.

Optional modifiers: +1 for each of the following: if there are twice as many chasing you, if you have a faster [movement rate](#), if there's a thief in your party, if it rains, if it's dark. -1 for each of the following: if there's an elf or a ranger tracking you, if there are wounded party members with you, if there's snow on the ground.

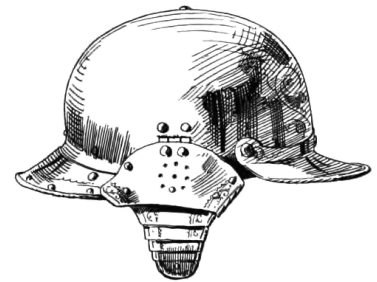
Only use the modifiers if you remember.

**Resurrection** is a spell of the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 spell of the 7<sup>th</sup> circle and requires a level 13 magic-user. It will regrow missing limbs and mend broken bones.

**Raise Dead** is a spell of the 5<sup>th</sup> circle and requires a level 9 magic-user or elf. It 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 lose 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 lose 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  $\pm 1$  per session.

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.

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.



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. It's size is determined by your level. The table below shows the maximum number of spells in your repertoire and the number of spells you can cast per day. You regain your spell casting powers after a good night's sleep at the dawn of day.

Level	1 <sup>st</sup> circle	2 <sup>nd</sup> circle	3 <sup>rd</sup> circle	4 <sup>th</sup> circle	5 <sup>th</sup> 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

ON 1<sup>ST</sup> 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

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

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

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

**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 *240ft* 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.

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.

As you befriend new magic users, they can teach you new spells, too

**Research:** Once you have attained level 9, researching spells is an alternative. This requires a starting point such as an existing 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. Research costs *1,000 gold* and takes two weeks per spell level (no adventuring).

If you're looking for spells to use, the description of all the classic spells can be found in *Labyrinth Lord* and its companion, the *Advanced Edition Companion*. Gavin Norman's *Theorems & Thaumaturgy* and Nathan E. Irving's *The Basic Illusionist* are also good sources.

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

The pale blue light is visible to all.

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.

There is no saving throw!

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

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

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	<i>remove fear</i> , reversed
1	Mace of Stunning	new spell
1	Darkness	<i>light</i> , reversed
2	Goatman	new spell
2	Affinity to Hell	<i>resist fire</i>
2	Mace of Smashing	<i>knock</i>
3	Hellfire	<i>fireball</i>
3	Danse Macabre	<i>animate dead</i>
3	Cancellation	<i>dispell magic</i>
4	Walls of Hell	<i>wall of fire</i>
4	Lies	<i>detect lie</i> , reversed
4	Beastmastery	<i>charm monster</i>
5	Cheating Death	<i>raise dead</i>
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	<i>charm person</i>
1	Rune Magic of Our Elders	<i>read magic</i>
1	Drowzy Lull of Waves	<i>sleep</i>
2	Searching My Feelings	<i>ESP</i>
2	Eternal Starlight	<i>continual light</i>
2	The Language of Fish	<i>speak with animals</i>
3	Lightning Storm	<i>lightning bolt</i>
3	Secrets of Whales	<i>water breathing</i>
3	Eye of the Storm	<i>protection from normal missiles</i>
4	Shape Changing	<i>polymorph</i>
4	Banes and Boons	<i>remove curse</i>
4	Flash Flood	new spell
5	Supremacy of the Will	<i>telekinesis</i>
5	Summon Living Storm	<i>conjure elemental</i>

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.



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