

Nimble

STREAMLINING YOUR **5E** GAME



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[NimbleRPG.com](https://NimbleRPG.com/discord) or you can join the Nimble Discord server at NimbleRPG.com/discord

Inspired by:

Paizo's Pathfinder 2e, The Dungeon Coach's DC20 RPG, Ben Milton's Knave, Yochai Gal's Cairn, Chris McDowall's *Into the Odd*, House DM, and many other long forgotten sources (sorry).

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What makes a 5e game FUN?

"It's the free snacks."

Drama & Tension. But not that alone! We can watch movies or read books to scratch that itch. What makes TTRPGs so special is being able to *engage* with the drama and *change* the story by making *meaningful choices*. Cool choices make RPGs fun!

This is why "railroading" is so loathed among DMs. The "choices" that players make are stripped of any consequence. What happens in a railroaded campaign happens regardless of the choices players make. If the number (and quality) of choices is what makes RPGs fun then being able to make *more* of those choices each time you and your friends get together should make it *more fun*.

The rules can make combat a slog. Quite often, players only get to do *1* thing each round and they miss half the time, wasting their turn (and it takes half an hour for their turn to come around again!). When this happens, chances are they're not having much fun. Or if there is always one clear *best* thing to do in every situation, it's not *really* a choice.

Neither is it fun to need half a dozen or more steps to find out how much damage a single attack does. It's tedious. Looking up things on an overcrowded character sheet (or across *multiple* sheets for spellcasters), needing to confer back & forth between players and DMs to resolve every choice, players losing agency of their character—all of this can put a damper on an otherwise fun game night.

Rules should get out of the way and enable players to do cool things more often.

That is the goal of Nimble: To give the DM and players modular tools to streamline their 5e game and pack *more fun* into each session. These rules truly shape 5e into a faster, more tactical, and less fiddly RPG, where *choices matter* and are made more often.

If you want the full Nimble experience, read on! If you'd rather dip your toes in first, start with page 27. There, you'll find alternate rules that change 5e very minimally to speed up play. Test them out and see how your group likes it. No need to change too much all at once if you don't want to.

Feel free to take what you like and throw out what you don't.
It's your game, play it how you like.

– Evan @ Nimble Co.

Nimble Core Rules

These rules make combat faster, more tactical, and more... DRAMATIC!

Nimble Attacks

"I got 15... what do I add to that?" "Is that 15 to hit or 15 for damage..."

No More Rolling to Hit. To attack, PCs and Monsters just roll the damage die! A 1 misses and deals no damage (*what about my armor?* see pg. 7).

For spells & weapons with multiple dice, 1 die is chosen ahead of time as the *Primary Die* (e.g., one of a different color, or the one that lands furthest to the left) for determining a hit or miss. If the Primary Die lands on a 1, the attack misses and deals no damage regardless of what the other dice roll (see pg. 29 for more examples).

Exploding Critical Hits. Any time the *highest* number on a Primary Die is rolled, the Primary Die is rolled *again* and added to the total. There is no limit to how many times this damage can stack, except your luck!

PC critical hits also ignore monster armor (see pg. 15).

Examples. Grudge, the Fighter, wields a battleaxe and rolls 1d8. He rolls an 8, a critical hit! Grudge rolls again, and gets... ANOTHER 8! Rolling a 3rd time he gets a 1. $8+8+1$ damage, with his STR modifier of +3 brings it to a total of 20 damage for that attack. Well done, Grudge!

Glow, the Cleric, casts guiding bolt and rolls 4d6, deciding beforehand to treat the leftmost die as the Primary Die. She rolls: 6, 5, 3, and 1. A critical hit! She will roll only the Primary Die again for the critical hit damage. Getting a 4 on it, she deals 19 damage altogether. On her next turn, Glow casts guiding bolt again. This time, she gets a 1 on the Primary Die and the attack misses entirely. Sorry, Glow!

Stabs, the Rogue, attacks an enemy while his buddy, Grudge, is nearby, triggering his Sneak Attack. Rolling 1d4 for his dagger, he gets a 4! He gets to roll his Sneak Attack dice, but only the dagger's Primary Die (d4) is rolled again (and possibly again!) for the critical hit damage.

Saving Throw Spells. Ignore monster armor (see pg. 15), do not miss on a 1, and cannot crit.

Example. Glow, the Cleric, casts sacred flame and her goblin target fails its DEX save. Glow rolls 1d8 for the damage and she gets an 8! Saving throw spells do not crit (but neither do they miss on a 1) so the goblin takes 8 damage.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. This GREATLY speeds up combat while maintaining the expected difficulty and game balance (the math has been fanatically calculated). The gameplay loop of missing roughly 50% of the time is trimmed down substantially. There is still enough of a chance to miss that combat remains unpredictable but not so much that it becomes slow or unfun.

Damage works out better between different weapons now, as well, since the "best" weapon isn't automatically whichever one has the bigger die. Small weapons crit more often, large weapons hit more consistently.

With the tweaks to monster AC (see pg. 15), each weapon type is much more competitive and interesting in different situations.

Action Points

"Can I have his bonus action? He didn't use it."

Action Points (AP). Instead of a move, action, bonus action, & reaction in combat, PCs get **3 Action Points!** A player's AP recharge at the END of each of their turns.

1 AP can be spent to: attack, move, use a bonus action or reaction, drink a potion, cast a cantrip/bonus action/reaction spell, or use any of the other more obscure actions (e.g., hide). **Leveled spells** with casting time of 1 action are the only exception, they cost **2 AP**.

More Attacks? Making more than your *normally allowed* attacks each turn is allowed (provided you have enough AP to spend), but these attacks trigger *stacking disadvantage*: you'll roll an additional die and remove the highest result for each stack.

Examples. Stabs, the Rogue, spends all 3 AP to attack three times with his dagger. For the first attack, he'll roll 1d4. Since he couldn't normally make any more attacks this turn, the 2nd and 3rd attacks would impose stacks of disadvantage. For the 2nd attack, he'll roll 2d4 and take the lowest. For the 3rd attack, he'll take the lowest of 3d4. He ends his turn and all 3 AP recharge.

Book, the wizard, spends 2 AP to cast burning hands, rolling normally. With his final AP he'll cast the cantrip fire bolt. Since he couldn't normally cast another spell on his turn, this attack is rushed — he'll roll with disadvantage (rolling 2 dice and taking the lowest). At the end of his turn his 3 AP recharge.

Grudge, the level 5 Fighter, uses 1 AP to move 30 ft. and 1 AP to attack twice (with his Extra Attack ability), since he could normally make those attacks on his turn both are made without additional disadvantage. He uses his final AP to move another 30 ft.

Special Abilities. Any feature or ability that allow *actions* to be made as a *bonus action* (e.g., *Step of the Wind*, *Cunning Action*, *Flurry of Blows*, *Two-Weapon Fighting*) instead can be done for 0 AP once/round each (i.e., a monk could use both *Step of the Wind* and *Flurry of Blows* for 0 AP, but not use *Flurry of Blows* twice in a round).

Example. Swift, the Monk, spends 1 AP to attack. Then he can use his Martial Arts ability to make an unarmed strike for 0 AP. He'll also move with Step of the Wind for 0 AP. He'll use his 2nd AP to attack again with disadvantage, and his 3rd AP to attack with two stacks of disadvantage (rolling three dice and taking the lowest).

Saving Throw Spells. Spells that trigger saving throws are also considered attacks. However, instead of stacking *disadvantage* for extra saving throw spells, the saving throw is rolled with stacking *advantage* by the target. Damage from these attacks is unaffected by disadvantage and ignores monster armor (see pg. 15).

Example. Glow, the Cleric, takes out a goblin with her sacred flame cantrip (1 AP). She then casts sacred flame again (1 more AP, her 2nd attack), her new target rolls 2d20 for its DEX save. Glow casts it a 3rd time this turn (3rd AP), her target gets to roll its DEX save taking the highest of 3d20.

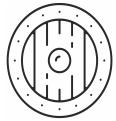
DESIGNER'S NOTE. This greatly improves tactical decisions. Grappling, shoving, moving, and reactions all are far more interesting choices now. You could attack 3 times at level 1, but there are diminishing returns and only if you forego reactions and movement. Multiple attacks are rushed making it easier for the enemy to dodge or resist.

Note: PCs still get one free action/round (e.g., drop an item, open an unlocked door).

Heroic Reactions

"Of course I'm not MOVING, I'll get hit!"

You can perform each reaction up to 1/round (provided you have enough AP) and you will start your turn with that many fewer AP. Here are some new and updated reactions:



Block/Dodge. (Replaces the Dodge action) This is where AC comes in. Reduce damage from any single attack by your AC modifier (AC-8). At the DM's discretion, some damage may not be avoidable (i.e., psychic damage, or some areas of effect).



Opportunity Attack. A melee attack *made with disadvantage* when an adjacent enemy moves away. Common monsters do *not* make opportunity attacks. Only PCs, legendary monsters, bosses, or other leaders (as determined by the DM) that are "a cut above the rest" can use them.



Interpose. If an ally within 10 ft. would be struck with an attack, you can push them out of the way and become the new target of the attack. You enter their square and move them to an adjacent square of your choice.



Help. Grant an ally advantage on an attack, skill check, or saving throw *if* you can reasonably explain to the DM how you could help in a given situation. The DM may call for a skill check or grant advantage automatically, depending on how good the idea is. Limit of *one* help reaction for each roll.



Assess. In combat, a PC can spend 1 AP to make a skill check to uncover information, spot a weakness, intuit enemy tactics/plans, etc.

Example: A DC 8 Insight check could reveal the enemy is going to attack the Cleric next turn; a DC 14 Perception check could reveal where a *group* of enemies are going to go or who they are going to attack; a DC 18 Arcana check could reveal the weaknesses/mechanics of a relevant magical creature; a DC 22 Examination check might reveal an enemy's soft underbelly, thereby lowering their AC by one step or granting advantage on all attacks for 1 round).

DESIGNER'S NOTE. *Help* as a reaction really encourages creative thinking and teamwork, especially in dire situations. *Interpose* likewise encourages tactical movement and enables players to heroically take a mortal wound to save a friend. *Being protected* really allows a PC to lay on heavy damage since their AP isn't needed to move or block/dodge; on the other hand, failing to think tactically and getting yourself surrounded can become deadly very quickly (as it should be)! You may need allies to interpose if you're low on HP and already used your *Block/Dodge* reaction for the round!

With the *Block/Dodge* reaction, you can now have a say over when you take damage or not, at a cost. AC bonuses still matter a lot, but getting a +3 shield isn't absolutely gamebreaking. You could block some incoming damage, but then you'd have fewer AP to use on your next turn. Your AP recharges at the end of your turn, so if you use too many reactions you'll end up with 0 AP and skipping your turn!

Opportunity attacks being made with disadvantage make them an interesting choice. Unless an enemy is very low on HP, it may be worth it for a Wizard to save their AP and not waste time on a low-damage opportunity attack. Common monsters not making opportunity attacks make the battlefield more dynamic; PCs no longer need to waste an entire turn disengaging. Since movement already comes at a cost, as it spends AP, there is no need to penalize players further. If a monster is considered legendary or a boss and can make opportunity attacks, it should be made very clear to the players (e.g., THE HUGE DRAGON, the minotaur boss at the end of a big dungeon, or the leader of an entire goblin clan).

Dying

"Heroes do not go gently into that good night."

Dropping to 0 HP does not cause unconsciousness or death saves. Instead, you gain 1 level of exhaustion and the *Dying* condition:



Limited Actions. Your AP is limited to 1 per round. Concentration is broken and cannot be maintained.



Risk of Further Injury. Continuing to fight may further harm you.

- Attacking or casting spells require a DC 12 STR save, gaining 1 level of exhaustion on a failure.
- Taking damage while Dying causes **2** levels of exhaustion.
- Taking a critical hit while Dying causes **3** levels of exhaustion.

Example. Glow, the Cleric, takes damage and drops to 0 HP. She's now Dying! She gains 1 level of exhaustion and drops to 1 AP. When her turn begins, she can't cast cure wounds since that would cost 2 AP, but a bonus action spell like healing word only costs 1 AP. Casting it, she heals 5 HP. Since she cast a spell, she rolls a STR save, failing it with an 11, she gains a second level of exhaustion. No longer at 0 HP, the Dying condition ends. When she ends her turn, she gets all 3 AP back.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. Going unconscious and being in "time out" is not fun. Instead, now, you can still play your turn and have choices to make. Do you block, run away, drink the last potion, or attack and risk injuring yourself further? There is still a real risk of permanent death, but PCs can see it coming sooner and actually do something about it. They have a chance to contribute, or if all truly is hopeless, they can at least role-play their dying words!

Also, DMs no longer have to feel bad if a monster continues to attack a PC that is at 0 HP. As far as the monster is concerned, they're still standing and still a threat. Attack away!

Exhaustion

"I'm so tired. And the Ring is so heavy, Sam." – Frodo

Exhaustion. Replacing the archaic exhaustion rules in 5e, each level now only causes a cumulative -1 to all d20 rolls *when outside of combat*. A PC dies when they receive their 6th level of exhaustion. 1 level of exhaustion is recovered per long rest.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. The tension of dying is a big part of what makes 5e so exciting, but the tension comes from the risk of permanently losing a character—NOT from losing your turn. People come to play, not to watch their friends play. It just isn't fun to do nothing on your turn for multiple rounds, nor is it fun for players to game the mechanics and "yo-yo" up and down because that's an optimal play pattern. This fixes that aspect of dying as well.

SEEING death coming is what makes for exciting tension; being unable to do anything about it is NOT. Players are not helpless spectators any longer. However, at the same time, a character that has started to rack up a few levels of exhaustion will be played in a noticeably different way, and even their party members will start instinctively protecting them.

We've moved away from the convoluted exhaustion mechanics of 5e, making it easier to track and understand. Exhaustion should serve as a long-term measure of how close someone is to death. Removing the additional negative effects of exhaustion is needed to avoid the "death spiral" of the more you fail, THE MORE YOU FAIL. Exhaustion should not impact the combat ability of the PCs; the adrenaline of being in combat allows them to shrug off its effects... temporarily!

Think of HP as a quickly diminishing and quickly recharging shield, and exhaustion as a long-term gauge of how close a PC truly is to death.

Resting

"My arm fell off. Let's take a nap in this spooky dungeon!"

Long Rest. Long rests require at least 6 hours of sleep in a *safe* place designated by your DM, typically lodging at an inn. Camping in the wilderness or in a dungeon is *not* sufficient for gaining the benefits of a long rest.

The cheapest rooms save you money but may lead to complications. To determine if there is a Complication, roll 1d4 for poor lodgings or 1d8 for modest lodgings—on a roll of 1, you get a Complication (pg. 12).

On the other hand, some inns may allow you to pay a premium for a nicer room, giving you a Temporary Boon.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. Resting in the wilderness or in a dungeon after every battle is the bane of DMs everywhere. It breaks encounter balance and strips the game of the interesting choices that resource management brings. Additionally, it forces the DM to use random encounters as a cudgel to keep the party from resting, slowing down the game needlessly (and possibly making the DM an adversary).

If combined with the new Exhaustion/Dying mechanics (see pgs. 9–10), after the PCs return from an adventure they may need to rest up for a week or so to fully heal (recovering 1 level of exhaustion/long rest). This helps mitigate the common feeling of leveling up too quickly in some campaigns as well.

Typical Lodging Prices (per person)

- **Poor (5 cp/day)** Roll 1d4 for the party each night, getting a Complication on a 1.
- **Modest (5 sp/day)** Roll 1d8 for the party each night, getting a Complication on a 1.
- **Comfortable (1 gp/day)**
- **Lavish (5 gp/day)** Gain one Temporary Boon the following day.

Short Rest. Short rests require at least 1 hour to catch your breath and tend to your wounds, but could also be a full night spent camping under the stars.

Upon completing a short rest, you may spend any number of Hit Dice to regain HP. If a fire was made and you slept for at least 6 hours, roll Hit Dice with advantage.

Lodging Boons & Complications

"OH, THAAAAT'S WHY THIS PLACE IS SO AFFORDABLE!"

1d6 Temporary Boon (Roll or pick one)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Recover ALL your Hit Dice | 4 10ft. extra movement speed today |
| 2 Gain temp HP equal to your level | 5 Gain inspiration |
| 3 Gain 2 temp HD (lasts until next long rest) | 6 Heal 2 levels of exhaustion |

2d6 Complications

- | |
|--|
| 2 Robbed blind. You lose all your coin. |
| 3 Your coin purse feels lighter than it should. You lose half your total coin. |
| 4 Contract a disease, must find out how to cure it. Gain 1 level of exhaustion. |
| 5 Pests got into your supplies, will cost 1d20 gp to replace. Sabotage? |
| 6–8 You... got a good night's rest? No complication! |
| 9 Restless sleep. You recover no Hit Dice. |
| 10 You make a contact that could prove very useful in the future. |
| 11 You overhear a valuable clue about something you really wanted to know. |
| 12 Choose any Temporary Boon or Complication on this page. |

DESIGNER'S NOTE. Resting provides a great opportunity for downtime activities. PCs can develop stronger connections with the local village or city and its people, allowing them and the DM to advance the plot and care more about the stakes. However, if your group wants to fast forward past resting, it can be narratively skipped once the lodging money is spent!

Mana

"Use my only 5th level spell slot...are you crazy? I MIGHT NEED IT LATER!"

To ease the bookkeeping of tracking spell slots and increase spellcasting flexibility, Mana now fuels spellcasting instead. Casting a spell costs Mana equal to its level (e.g., a level 4 spell, or upcasting a level 1 spell at 4th level, costs 4 Mana). Mana recovers on a long rest.

- The maximum Mana pool for a full spellcaster (Bard, Cleric, Druid, Sorcerer, and Wizard) = number of spell slots + spellcaster level. *Arcane Recovery* regains Mana equal to 1/2 wizard level (rounded up). *Sorcery Points* can be converted into Mana and vice versa, 1 to 1.
- The maximum Mana pool for half-casters: (Paladin & Ranger) = spellcaster level + Proficiency Bonus (PB).
- The maximum Mana pool for quarter-casters (e.g., certain Fighter and Rogue subclasses) = number of spell slots + PB.

Examples. A level 7 Wizard has 18 Mana (11 spell slots + 7 from level) and could cast 18 level 1 spells or four level 4 and 2 level 1 spells. They couldn't cast any 5th level spells; however, since wizards don't get access to those until level 9. A level 7 Ranger has 10 Mana (level 7 + PB of 3 = 10). A level 20 1/4 caster Fighter or Rogue would have 17 Mana (11 spell slots + PB of 6).

Leveling Up. When a full spellcaster levels up, increase their maximum Mana pool by 1 for their level, and 1 for each new spell slot (ignoring the *level* of the slot, each slot = 1 Mana, regardless of its level).

When a half-caster levels up, they increase their maximum mana pool by 1 for their level, and 1 more if their PB increased.

When a quarter-caster levels up, they will increase their maximum Mana pool by 1 for each new spell slot, and 1 if their PB increased.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: 5e spellcasting has 2 competing problems:

Too often does a spellcaster have a single high-level spell slot and will hoard it preciously—"there might be a BIG encounter right around the corner, I can't spend it!"—so the players rarely get to see them use their coolest spells. Or they will "waste" it on a throw away encounter and the Big Boss Fight will be far harder than it needs to be.

Players, so far, have REALLY liked the increased flexibility. During our last long-term campaign, one spellcaster used his highest level spell slot... once, I think? It was awesome, but he more often than not went to sleep with an unused spell slot. The Mana system makes sense, is numerically balanced, and has been well received so far. It's much easier to say that a level 2 spell uses 2 Mana than to try and explain the rules for 5e, as written.

The bookkeeping is minimized, as is the confusion for new players.

Monsters

"... the foul creature opens wide its *toothy maw*..."

Monsters Take Turns as Normal. Monsters use the standard move, action, bonus action, and reaction, as in 5e. They do NOT use Action Points or Heroic Reactions. A DM can use any 5e compatible monster book or stat block, as written. Only two small tweaks are made and can be done easily, on the fly:



Monster Attacks. Like PCs, monsters simply roll their damage dice + stat modifier, as usual. They miss on an attack by rolling a 1 on their Primary Die, and crit by rolling the maximum.



Monster AC. Unlike PCs, monster armor is simplified into three groups:

(0-13 AC) **Light armor** takes damage as usual: damage dice + ability modifier.

(14-17 AC) **Medium armor** takes damage ONLY from the dice, ignoring ALL damage modifiers (e.g., STR/DEX bonuses, *agonizing blast*, etc.) unless they are negative.

(18+ AC) **Heavy armor** takes half damage from all sources (rounded up).

PC critical hits, saving throw spells, and damage type vulnerabilities ignore monster armor altogether.

Monster Difficulty. For an easier game, limit exploding critical hits for monsters to 1/attack. For HARD MODE, add the monster's "to hit" bonus instead of its attribute modifier.

Minions. Tons of minions are *super* fun to chop down as a player, and best of all, with these rules, they're *easy* for the DM to run. Use a single damage die for each minion and roll them all at the same time: 1d4 for weak minions, up to 1d12 for a stronger minion. Minions do not use modifiers, they miss on a 1 and do not crit. PCs can block/dodge minion attacks as if they were a single attack. ANY damage kills minions, no need to track HP individually, and a crit can kill more than one if it makes sense.

Examples. Stabs, the Rogue, attacks a goblin (AC 15; medium armor) with his +1 magical dagger, Pepper, rolling 1d4. On a 1 he would miss. On a 2 or 3, he would deal that much damage and not add his DEX or Pepper's +1 damage. On a 4, Stabs crits! His blade slips past the goblin's armor altogether, he'll add his damage dice and modifiers up as normal, and roll again for the crit.

Grudge, the Fighter, attacks an iron golem (AC 20; heavy armor) with his battleaxe. Rolling 1d8, he gets a 7, plus his STR of 4. The iron golem shrugs off half of the damage, taking only 6!

DESIGNER'S NOTE. We can keep the feeling of a tough, high AC monster without the frustration of constantly missing attacks, or ballooning HP. This also speeds up play. By no longer needing to add modifiers to every attack, we lower the mathematical overhead while maintaining game balance.

This also creates a subtly tactical "Rock, Paper, Scissors" situation where different weapons or attack types are better suited for different foes. Not so much that it warps the game but just enough for tactically-minded players to notice and take advantage of.

- Large d10 or d12 weapons are best against light armor since they rarely miss and can add their powerful damage modifiers.
- Small d4 & d6 weapons, with their more frequent critical hits, are best against heavy armor since they more frequently ignore the steep damage reduction.
- Medium d8 weapons are more versatile against various kinds of armor.
- Spell attacks are best against medium armor since they don't rely on additional modifiers.
- Saving throw spells are best against heavy armor since they ignore armor altogether.

Distinct kinds of monster armor also makes each weapon type FEEL very different while not warping the damage curve and breaking the math of the game. Daggers deal very "spiky" damage, frequently failing to connect but other times dealing a devastating blow, slipping between the plates of heavy armor. On the other hand, a greataxe will deal more consistent damage, rarely critting but also rarely missing. Now, +3 weapons and elemental weapons like flame tongue, feel more distinct too!

Feats & Abilities

"No, its FEAT, not FEET!" *Disappointed* "oh..."

While the vast majority of feats & abilities work without change in Nimble, some tweaks and rules of thumb are listed below. Use them as a guideline to make tweaks of your own.



Abilities that allow *actions* to be made as a *bonus action* (e.g., *Cunning Action*) can be done for 0 AP once/round EACH.



Racial proficiencies or abilities that grant extra skill bonuses give +1 Skill Point instead.



If an ability seems overpowered, limit it to 1/round. If an ability seems underpowered, let your players do the cool thing and look it up later.



A bonus/penalty to *hit* can be a bonus/penalty to *damage* instead (e.g., *bane* or *bless*).

Action Surge. Gain 1 AP, can attack with it as if it was your first attack in the turn (i.e., no disadvantage, and it triggers the Fighter's *Extra Attack* ability).

Assassinate. If you roll 20+ on initiative, your first attack with a finesse or ranged weapon triggers Sneak Attack and is an automatic critical hit (the Primary Die deals the max amount and is rolled again).

Archery Fighting Style/Bless/Bane. Add or subtract 1d4 damage instead of affecting chance to hit, 1/turn.

Bardic Inspiration. Reaction, 0 AP. Can add the Bardic Inspiration die to an ally's d20 roll or reroll 1 damage die of an ally.

Called Shot (new feat). Ranged weapon attacks you make ignore cover and the normal range is doubled. You may replace a ranged attack with a *Called Shot*. It misses on a 3 or less; if you hit, roll an additional weapon die that can explode.

Dazed (New Status). -1 AP for 1 round (see pg. 30).

Empowered Spell. Cannot change a miss into a hit.

Expertise. +1 Skill Point/level in that class.

Patient Defense. Spend 1 ki point when you block/dodge to add your monk level to your AC for 1 attack.

Quickened Spell. Reduces the AP cost of a spell by 1, 1/round.

Shield (Spell). +5 AC for 1 attack and grants a free Block/Dodge reaction.

Shield Adept (new feat). You can use the Block/Dodge reaction 2/round while wearing a shield. If you attack on your turn, you can use the Shove action for 0 AP 1/round.

Skillful (new feat). Grants 4 Skill Points.

Spare the Dying. Give a Dying creature 1 HP.

Unarmed Strike/Flurry of Blows. Costs 0 AP. Spend 1 ki point also to make 2 unarmed attacks instead, 1/round.

Unarmored Defense (Barbarian). Uses PB instead of CON.

Uncanny Dodge. Add your PB to your AC. When using the Block/Dodge reaction you may use your AC modifier or halve the damage instead.

Wild Shape. Costs 1 AP to Multiattack 1/round. For additional Rushed Attacks, pick one of the creatures attacks to perform. You use your own HP while Wild Shaped, but gain Temp HP equal to your Druid level + your spellcasting modifier.



What About...? Many 5e feats and abilities are not available in the SRD unfortunately (legal restrictions).

If you have a question about other particular interactions, see the Nimble website at NimbleRPG.com or you can join the Nimble Discord server at NimbleRPG.com/discord

Optional Tactical Nuggets

If your play group likes extra little tactical nuggets, you can try out these additional variants to add some more spice to your game.

Late Advantage. Allow PCs to spend inspiration or, otherwise, grant advantage AFTER they roll rather than before.

Critical Healing. Treat healing just like an attack roll. Rolling the maximum is a critical heal (rolling again just like a critical hit), rolling 1 is a failure to heal (note: this variant is FUN for the right group that enjoys big, dramatic, swingy moments). Consider incrementing the die by one if you use this variant (e.g., *healing word* would use a d6).

Extra Movement. Taking the Disengage action, standing from prone, or escaping a grapple also gives 1/2 movement for free, making those actions less punishing.

I Have the High Ground! A character that is on *moderately* higher ground than their target gains +1 damage on attacks (e.g., standing on the higher slope of a hill or on a desk). If a character is *much* higher than their target (e.g., in a tree or flying and shooting to the ground) they gain a +2 to their damage.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: +1 or +2 damage isn't enough damage to make battle lopsided and warp combat around this one goal, but just enough to get PCs thinking strategically about where they are standing relative to their enemies and add more movement to the game. Crits knocking a target down (see below) makes low damage weapons like slings, darts, & daggers much more useful as well.

I HAD the High Ground. Taking a critical hit while at a height may cause a character to fall down (PCs and monsters alike). A reasonable STR save for a strong character may be called for, but a weak kobold may just fall automatically. Very dramatic!

Thrown Potions. Treat potions like ranged attacks (30/60 range). Roll the d4 potion dice as normal, choosing one ahead of time as the Primary Die. The potion misses on a 1, otherwise it heals for half as much since some splashes away and is wasted.

Weapon Proficiency. Weapons used without proficiency cannot crit and roll with disadvantage.

Grapple & Shove. Instead of using the Attack action (and triggering stacking disadvantage), these are now separate actions of their own, not subject to the stacking disadvantage rules (you will still need to succeed on the STR check though!).

DESIGNER'S NOTE: This again makes STR less of a dump stat and encourages more thoughtful play rather than "Attack, Attack, Attack."

Sucker Punch. A character standing up from prone gives enemies the chance to take opportunity attacks. This makes sense story-wise and adds tactical depth.

Ready. You can ready actions just like in 5e rules, as written, consuming an action and a reaction: 1 AP (or more, in the case of spells—spending the Mana also) to ready an action and 1 more AP to trigger it. A word of caution: the more opportunities players have to interrupt the flow of another person's turn, the less smooth gameplay will become.

Inventory Slots. You have inventory slots equal to 10 + STR to carry equipment and loot. 1 inventory slot can hold: a shield, a one-handed weapon, armor, a quiver of 20 arrows, 6 javelins or darts, 500gp, or 3 potions. A two-handed weapon takes 2 slots.

Example: The Fighter, Grudge, with a Strength score of 16, has 13 inventory slots. He can carry a greataxe (2), his chain mail armor (1), a stack of 6 javelins (1), 400gp (1), a couple of potions (1), a bed roll for resting in the wilderness (1), rope (1), rations (1), and have 4 slots left over for loot he might find while out adventuring.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: If you've tried encumbrance rules in the past and disliked them, try it this way! It is much lighter with minimal bookkeeping. It is interesting to see how players will swap equipment and make fantastic (or terrible) choices once they realize how much they can take with them on an adventure actually matters. Having a safe haven to store valuables while adventuring is important as well. This also gives more utility to STR as an attribute.

Character Creation & Leveling Up

Racial stat bonuses, class starting equipment, and background languages are exchanged in favor of the rules here.

Class & Race. Choose character class & race appropriate to the setting as well as height and weight.

Ability Scores. Choose a stat array for your main ability scores, then allocate **3** additional points (in at least **2** different abilities) reflecting your background:

- Balanced: 14, 13, 12, 11, 11 (**61 points**)
- Standard: 15, 14, 12, 10, 8 (**59 points**)
- Min-Max: 15, 15, 10, 9, 8 (**57 points**)

Saves. Choose **1** saving throw proficiency that fits with your class or background. A character can only have proficiency with 1 kind of save.

Skills. Proficiency bonus is no longer added to skills. Instead you can allocate **6** points (in addition to the bonuses granted by your ability score modifiers) into at least **3** different skills.

Hit Points. To get your HP at level one, roll your Hit Die with advantage, add that to the maximum die result.

Example: Grudge, the Fighter, rolls 2d10 and gets 2 & 7. He adds 10+7 and starts level 1 with 17 HP.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. Changes to HP increase survivability at levels 1 and 2 without bloating HP at higher levels. Changes to the AC stat make magical armor and AC related feats still very useful but not gamebreakingly so. Changes to starting gear and money give low-level characters a better sense of reward and progression—rather than starting with relatively good gear already. Now, they may have to choose between upgraded armor or a nicer weapon, etc.

At very low levels, PCs are roughly as strong offensively and defensively as if they were 1 level higher. Keep this in mind for combat balance. A formerly deadly encounter may only be hard, and an easy encounter may be trivial.

Money

The real world value of copper, silver, and gold can be difficult for players to grasp. These guidelines can help clarify value:

- 1 copper is roughly equivalent to \$1
- 1 silver is roughly equivalent to \$10
- 1 gold is roughly equivalent to \$100

A village laborer could earn 1 cp/day, or 3–4 gp/year. A moderately skilled worker could earn 1 sp/day, or 30–40 gp/year. A well-to-do merchant could earn 1 gp per day, or 300–400 gp/year.

- A small introductory village quest could be worth 1–50 gp per character.
- A mid-sized town quest could be worth 50–500 gp per character.
- A large city quest could be worth 500–5,000 gp per character.
- A REALM-sized quest could be worth 5,000–50,000+ gp per character.



DESIGNER'S NOTE. Magical weapons and armor are great and no longer mathematically gamebreaking. Feel free to make them more available to your players to purchase, craft, upgrade, or receive as quest rewards!.

Now players can think twice before chugging 3 healing potions. At 50 gold a pop, that's like drinking \$15,000! Tipping a poor villager 1 gold piece is equal to 3 months wages!

Magical Item Prices

Potions	Price
Potion of Healing	50 gp
Potion of Greater Healing	150 gp
Potion of Superior Healing	450 gp
Potion of Supreme Healing	1,350 gp

Weapons & Armor	Price
+1 Weapon/Armor*	500 gp
+2 Weapon/Armor*	1,500 gp
+3 Weapon/Armor*	4,500 gp

*In addition to the base cost of the item

Spell Scrolls	Price
Level 1	25 gp
Level 2	50 gp
Level 3	150 gp
Level 4	450 gp
Level 5	1,250 gp
Level 6	3,500 gp
Level 7	12,000 gp

Misc Magical Items	Price
Common Item	150 gp
Uncommon Item	500 gp
Rare Item	1,500 gp
Very Rare Item	4,500 gp
Legendary Item	35,000 gp
Artifact Item	100,000+ gp

Main Ability Scores

"Do I use the big number or the little number?"

STRENGTH: Affects STR saves, *Intimidation*, resistance to exhaustion, and carrying capacity.

DEXTERITY: Affects DEX saves, *Stealth*, *Sleight of Hand*, and ranged weapon attacks.

INTELLIGENCE: Affects Arcana, *Examination*, *Lore*, and WILL saves (see below).

WISDOM: Affects Initiative, *Naturecraft*, *Perception*, and WILL saves.

CHARISMA: Affects, *Insight*, *Influence*, and WILL saves.

CONSTITUTION. Removed.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. Constitution is not used to derive any skills and overlaps so much with Strength that it has been removed to reduce needless complexity on the character sheet. HP is now strictly a function of class. Other options are given later to improve survivability (see Hit Points on pg. 21).

Dexterity is a notoriously overvalued ability score in 5e (AC, finesse attacks, ranged attacks, initiative, stealth, and the most common saving throw). By separating out some of its benefits across other abilities, there are more interesting choices that can be made and fewer "dump stats".

Wisdom aiding in initiative makes sense because a perceptive character can sense a situation turning hostile. A WIS-based Cleric might sense danger because their deity forewarned them! If you spot the danger first, you have more time to act.

Saving Throws

Replacing the separate INT, WIS, & CHA saves is the combined **WILL** save. This is your ability to resist mind altering effects, see through illusions, or retain your composure. A player uses the sum of the highest and lowest of those 3 abilities as their WILL save modifier.

Example. A character with +5 INT, -1 WIS, & +3 CHA would have a +4 WILL save (5-1). A character with +4 INT, +2 WIS, and +2 CHA would have a +6 WILL save (4+2).

Whenever a DM would normally call for a CON save or check, a STR save or check is used instead (e.g., a Wizard making a concentration check).

DESIGNER'S NOTE. It is exceedingly rare for a CHA or INT save, but they can be debilitating when they do happen. Bards can now resist mind control through sheer force of their charismatic personality, and wizards because of their intellect! Now, STR is less of a dump stat, even for spellcasters; they can still ignore it, but they will be more frail in combat.

Secondary Stats

"...almost done, I promise... who got 5 to 10?"

Armor Class (AC). Reflects your ability to resist, absorb, or dodge incoming damage. You can use a reaction to block or dodge, negating damage equal to your AC modifier (AC-8).

Example. Grudge, with an AC of 15, has an AC modifier of **7** (15-8=7). So he can deflect 7 damage from a single attack whenever he uses the Block/Dodge reaction.

Hit Points (HP). Reflects your fortitude and ability to take damage and stay on your feet. At level 1, roll your Hit Die (HD) with advantage and add it to the maximum HD number. Each time you level up, roll your Hit Die with *advantage* and add that to your maximum HP.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. Rolling your Hit Dice with advantage compensates for the removal of CON. It also helps at the very fragile lower levels without bloating HP at higher levels.

Initiative. Your ability to sense danger coming. Roll 1d20 and add your WIS modifier to any initiative rolls. Rather than affecting how soon in the round you act, initiative affects *how many AP* you have on the first round of combat:

Roll	AP
0-9	1 AP
10-19	2 AP
20+	3 AP

Surprise. Roll w/ advantage! Or disadvantage if YOU are surprised.

Easy to Remember. To help remember, single digit initiative = single AP on your first turn. Double digit initiative = 2 AP. 20+ initiative roll? Wow, you get all 3 AP!

The order in which PCs act matters less this way. Default to *whichever player is ready first goes first*, with play proceeding around the table clockwise. Alternatively, the DM can choose the player that makes the most narrative sense to go first. Since initiative determines how much a PC can do on round 1, a high initiative roll is still rewarded even if they go last.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: DMs not having to poll the entire party for initiative, write down all the names in order, and track everyone's turn (reminding players their turn is coming up next), is a **HUGE** time saver. If the player next to you is going, YOU'RE going next. Easy. The DM can still roll for or decide when monsters act (e.g., 1 monster after each PC), or simply let all the bad guys act after all of the PCs. This won't (usually) result in a lopsided encounter since actions are somewhat limited during the 1st round; it's mostly about tactical positioning and getting in a small hit or two.

Spellcasters may need help from allies to set up a big fireball first, since they won't be able to cast it on their first turn if they rolled low initiative or spent their AP dodging incoming damage!

Skills

"Can I roll perception to SEE if he's lying to me?"

Many skills rarely come up throughout an entire campaign. So, less-frequently used skills have been merged to make each one more useful (*Animal Handling*, *Nature*, and *Survival* are now *Naturecraft*; *Medicine* and *Investigation* are now *Examination*; *History* and *Religion* are now *Lore*). Redundant skills were removed (*Athletics* and *Acrobatics* are now simply STR or DEX checks). Other skills now use stats that make more sense (*Intimidation* uses STR instead of CHA, *Insight* using CHA instead of WIS). The remaining choices are more meaningful and more frequently useful.

Skills are no longer tied to a PC's proficiency bonus. Instead, at level 1 you mark the bonuses granted by your main ability score modifiers and then can allocate **6** extra points into at least **3** different skills. Each time you level up, you gain **1** Skill Point to add to any skill, and you may move 1 Skill Point to another skill. This better represents new skills your character develops interest in over the course of a campaign.

DESIGNER'S NOTE. Skill Points allow characters more flexibility to choose what skills they want to become good at during a campaign rather than being stuck with what they chose at level 1.

Arcana (INT). Your ability to understand magical spells & objects. Knowledge of Aberrations, Elementals, and Oozes.

Examination (INT). From doctors to detectives, this is your ability to diagnose and treat injuries, uncover causes of death, understand clues, or figure out how a device or trap works. Knowledge of Constructs. (Replaces *Medicine* and *Investigation*)

Influence (CHA). Your ability to convince and deceive people, get them to like you, haggle, gain trust, make deals, win allies, or put on an entertaining show. (Replaces *Persuasion*, *Deception*, and *Performance*)

Insight (CHA). Your ability to sense motives and hidden emotions, detect deception, or just "get" what is happening at any given time.

Intimidation (STR). Your ability to convince or sway someone, or cause non-compliant characters to give up information through threats of physical harm. Other kinds of threats may use different skills.

Lore (INT). Your knowledge of the history of civilization, kingdoms, and religions. Knowledge of Celestials, Dragons, Fey, Fiends, Giants, Humanoids, and Undead. (Replaces *History* and *Religion*)

Naturecraft (WIS). Your knowledge of the wilderness: ability to survive, navigate, track, and handle animals. Knowledge of Beasts, Monstrosities, and Plants. (Replaces *Animal Handling*, *Nature*, and *Survival*)

Perception (WIS). Your overall awareness of what is going on around you: notice non-obvious things, secret passages, sense you are being followed, etc.

Sleight of Hand (DEX). Your deftness of hand, ability to pick locks, pilot vehicles, steal or plant items, and overall use of your hands in clever or sneaky ways.

Stealth (DEX). Your ability to move silently and stay hidden.

Nimble Lite: Alternate Fast Combat Rules

"Wake me up when it's my turn."

If you'd like to stick closer to the 5e rules, here are a couple different options for faster combat. You can use just the **Monster Balance** rules to speed things up a bit or the additional rules further down the page to make things even faster. These can be used with or without the Nimble rules for AP, Reactions, Dying, Mana, Resting, etc. It's modular!

Monster Balance. Missing an attack and "wasting" your turn is not fun for PCs or DMs. It should still be a *possibility* but not the norm. To alleviate this, DMs can reduce monster AC by 3-5 across the board, and increase monster HP by 30-50% respectively. To keep combat moving along, increase a monster's chance to hit by 1-3 as well and use the monster's average damage. These are easy tweaks that can be done on the fly.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: This keeps monster survivability roughly the same but cuts down on the frequency of attack-miss-attack-miss gameplay loops where nothing happens. DMs regularly use average monster HP to speed up play rather than rolling and adding their Hit Dice; using their average DAMAGE also greatly speeds up the DM's turn and keeps players in the game. There's no shame in it! Optionally, for a bit of variability, the DM can reduce a monster's average damage by 3 and add 1d6 to it; this does the same amount of damage on average.

Fast Attacks. Using the average damage greatly speeds up a DM's turn; we can also greatly speed up PC turns by doing something similar. Whether or not a PC hits *and* the damage dealt can both be determined by a single d20 roll; there is no need to roll and calculate damage separately; the higher your d20 roll, the more damage you do. Attacks and their damage are averaged and laid out on the character sheet with one addition: Heavy Strikes.

Heavy Strikes: If a PC's attack roll exceeds the monster's AC by 10 or more, they deal extra damage equal to 2x their Proficiency Bonus (PB). IMPORTANTLY, this is calculated ahead of time and listed on the character sheet for speed of play.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: A PC may only need to roll a 4 or more on the d20 to hit a very poorly armored foe, and a roll of 14 or more would be a heavy strike and deal extra damage. While more heavily armored foes may only be hit on a roll of 8+ and receive a heavy strike with an 18 or 19 on the die.

PCs & DMs can still roll damage occasionally if they wanted to (e.g., for a possible boss finishing blow, or one big spell), but that should be the exception rather than the rule. Rolling lots of dice is fun! SOMETIMES. Making everyone else wait is less fun. This makes things go MUCH more quickly and everyone can stay in the moment and not pause for finding all the dice... adding them up, searching for modifiers on the character sheet... No. Just 1d20. Done.

With the addition of Heavy Strikes and minor tweaks to monsters stats, combat can retain its unpredictable excitement without slowing down to a crawl. As an incentive to use average damage, round up any decimals instead of rounding down.

ROLL	WEAPON/ABILITY	HIT	HEAVY	CRIT
1d20+7	+1 Longbow w/ Hunter's Mark (1d8+1d6+5)	13	19	26
1d20+7	+1 Longbow (1d8+5)	10	16	20
DC13 DEX	Conjure Barrage (60ft. cone) 3d8, half on save.	13	—	—

Example. Elfie, the level 5 Ranger, attacks an ooze (8 AC) with her longbow and gets an 18 to hit. The DM lets Elfie know that's a Heavy Strike! Normally she would deal **10** damage, but now she deals an additional 6 damage (PB of 3 x2), making it **16**! Since it's already written on her character sheet, her turn takes a mere handful of seconds. Wow!

Additional Examples of Play & FAQ

How do I roll an attack that has multiple dice with advantage or disadvantage?

- If you have *advantage*, roll 1 additional die per stack. Remove the lowest die for each stack (if the Primary Die is removed, the next leftmost die is now the Primary Die).
- If you have *disadvantage*, roll 1 additional die per stack. Remove the highest die for each stack (if the Primary Die is removed, the next leftmost die is now the Primary Die).
- If there is a tie, remove the leftmost die (this always results in the preferred outcome).

Example: A level 17 Wizard, casts fire bolt for the 3rd time this turn (2 stacks of disadvantage). He'll roll 6d10 and remove the 2 highest dice. If the leftmost die is a 1 or 10, it is a miss/crit as normal.

How does eldritch blast work? Eldritch blast is worded such that each damage die hits, misses, or crits separately, so each is treated as a separate Primary Damage Die. A level 11 Warlock casting *eldritch blast* would roll 3d10: a 1, 4, and 6 would deal 10 damage.

What about effects that grant advantage on all attacks (e.g., restrained, prone, Reckless Attack)? The first AP you spend to attack that target on your turn is made with *advantage*, the 2nd AP is made as a normal roll (instead of *disadvantage*), 3rd AP attack is made with 1 stack of *disadvantage* (instead of 2).

Can I cast the shield spell multiple times in a round? No. It triggers the Block/Dodge reaction and you are only allowed 1 of each reaction/round.

How does cover work? 1/2 cover imposes 1 stack of disadvantage, 3/4 cover imposes 2.

If a monster applies an effect on hit, and all the damage is blocked/dodged, what happens? At the DM's discretion the additional effect may not apply.

Example: A poisonous snake attacks a slow, heavily-armored dwarf and he blocks all the piercing damage. Since none of the fangs pierced the skin, it makes sense that no additional poison roll is needed. But, if that same dwarf blocks damage from a grappling bite attack, if the attack hits (but deals no damage) his shield is grappled! On the other hand, a fast monk using the Block/Dodge reaction to avoid the grappling bite damage might not be grappled at all.

How would familiars work? They start combat with 1 AP, have a maximum of 2AP, and always act immediately after their owner. They can use any of the actions and reactions that PCs can use (i.e., move, help, interpose, assess) though familiars *cannot* attack. Attacks against familiars are made with disadvantage, but *any* damage will destroy them.

How does a monster with heavy armor and damage resistance work? Any time damage would be halved twice, no damage is taken instead.

How would the blowgun work (or unarmed strikes)? Roll 1d4 to see if you miss, if not, deal 1 damage (+STR for unarmed strikes).

Vulnerability, does it ignore armor AND cause double damage? Either/or.

More questions? NimbleRPG.com or on Discord: NimbleRPG.com/Discord

DM Advice

Player Agency. When a monster would take away agency in some way from PCs — incapacitate, slow, paralyze, petrify, or stun — consider replacing that ability with the new Dazed status (-1 AP for 1 round). People come to a TTRPG session to play, let them play.

If a medusa or cockatrice attempts to petrify a PC, on the first failed save, they might gain 1 stack of Daze and have a maximum of 2 AP as their body begins to slowly turn to stone. On a 2nd failure, they could gain a 2nd stack of Daze (a maximum of 1 AP) this adds tension without removing agency. Then finally, on the 3rd failure, 0 AP; they are completely petrified!

If a monster's attack confused a PC, you could make the target spend 1-2 AP in a way you choose; leaving some AP left over for them to work with still.

Tactics. Move monsters every turn! This makes martial characters use their AP on movement rather than burning it all attacking. It also lets players use opportunity attacks. Go for squishy characters that deal a lot of damage. Make them use their AP to avoid damage. Make them run away and hide behind their stronger friends! Let the tanks feel good about blocking and interposing. **The fun part for DMs** is you can be far more aggressive now. Players have plenty of options to get themselves out of sticky situations—go get em! Don't be afraid to keep attacking a PC at 0 HP. They're still standing; it's what a monster would do. Leave it to the players to figure out how to save themselves. Interpose, run away, or something else...

Monster Survivability. If you find monsters dying too soon or lasting too long, consider using the upper or lower ends of the HP range in their stat blocks rather than the average (increase or decrease HP by up to 25%).

Large Groups of Enemies. Letting players fulfill a specific character fantasy is the heart of what makes RPGs so much fun. In 5e, a heavily-armored PC can basically take a nap inside swarm of weaker enemies and wake up unharmed and refreshed. In Nimble, being surrounded by a group of even relatively-weak enemies can become deadly very quick. Using the minion rules (see pg. 15), you can still present a substantive threat while really making players still feel heroic. Tanks can block attacks from six different monsters at once. Damage dealers can clear a huge swath of bad guys with a single spell — it's great fun!