

# Nimble 5e

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A SUPER FAST **5E** RULES HACK



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If you love playing 5e and love tinkering with the rules to make the game play faster and more fun. This is for YOU. Nimble 5e is a *modular* ruleset, you can use all of it or take only what you like. Make it your own and have fun!

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.

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Questions or feedback? I'd love to hear from you, [evan@nimbleRPG.com](mailto:evan@nimbleRPG.com)

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

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# Nimble Attacks

*"I got 15... what do I add to that?"*

**No More Rolling to Hit.** To attack, Heroes and Monsters simply roll the damage die! A 1 misses and deals no damage. For attacks with multiple dice, the die that lands the leftmost is called the Primary Die, it determines whether the attack is a hit, miss, or crit.

**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! hero critical hits also ignore monster armor.

**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: 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, Sneak Attacks an enemy. 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.

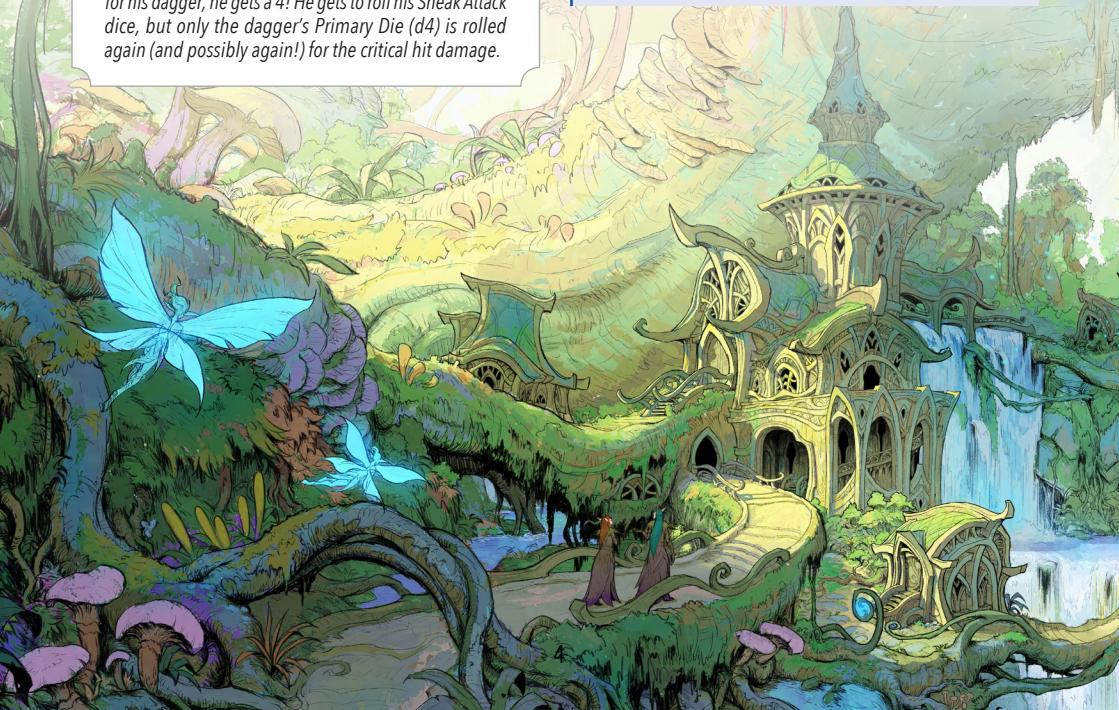
**Saving Throw Spells.** Ignore monster armor (see pg. 10), do not miss on a 1, and cannot crit.

**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 across the level curve. 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. 10), each weapon type is much more competitive and interesting in different situations.



# Actions

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

**Actions.** Instead of a move, action, bonus action, & reaction in combat, heroes get **3 Actions!** Heroes' Actions recharge at the END of each of their turns.

**1 Action** can be spent to: attack, move, use a bonus action or reaction, drink a potion, cast a cantrip, or use any of the other actions (e.g., hide). **Leveled spells** cost **2 Actions** (unless they are bonus action or reaction spells, those cost only 1).

**More Attacks?** Making more than your *normally allowed* attacks each turn is allowed (provided you have enough Actions to spend), but these attacks are rushed—imposing 1 instance of disadvantage for each additional attack after the first. Any actions that can harm an enemy counts toward Rushed Attacks (e.g., save spells, Grappling, etc.).

**Examples.** Stabs, the Rogue, spends all 3 Actions 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 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 Actions recharge.

Grudge, a level 5 Fighter, uses 1 Action to move 30 ft. and 1 Action to attack twice (with his Extra Attack ability), since he CAN normally make both attacks on his turn, they are made without additional disadvantage. He uses his final Action 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 without spending an Action (for free) once per round *each* (i.e., a monk could use both Step of the Wind and Flurry of Blows for free, but not use Flurry of Blows twice in a round).

**Saving Throw Spells.** Instead of stacking disadvantage for rushed saving throw spells, the saving throw is rolled with advantage by the target. Damage from these attacks is unaffected by disadvantage and ignores monster armor (see pg. 10).

**Example.** Glow, the Cleric, takes out a goblin with her sacred flame cantrip (1 Action). She then casts sacred flame again (1 more Action) since this is her 2nd attack, her new target rolls 2d20 for its DEX save. Glow casts it a 3rd time this turn (3rd Action), 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: Heroes 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 Actions) and you will start your turn with that many fewer Actions. Here are some new and updated reactions:



## Defend

(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 willingly moves away. Monsters do *not* make opportunity attacks, only heroes can.



## Interpose

If a creature 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 space and move them to an adjacent space of your choice.

**Can I Interpose and Defend at the same time? Yes!**  
As long as you have enough Actions to spend. You won't, however, be able to do either reaction again until your next turn is over since each of those is limited to 1/round.



## Help

Grant an ally advantage on a roll if you can reasonably explain to the GM how you could help in a given situation (limit of one help reaction for each roll). The GM may call for a skill check or grant advantage automatically, depending on how good the idea is.

**Teamwork!** Help as a Heroic Reaction is a fantastic way to bring teamwork, role-playing, and creativity into a combat encounter. Did your buddy fail? Maybe not, think quickly and see if you can help them succeed!



## Assess

In combat, a hero can spend 1 Action 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 Armor by one step or grant advantage on attacks for 1 round).

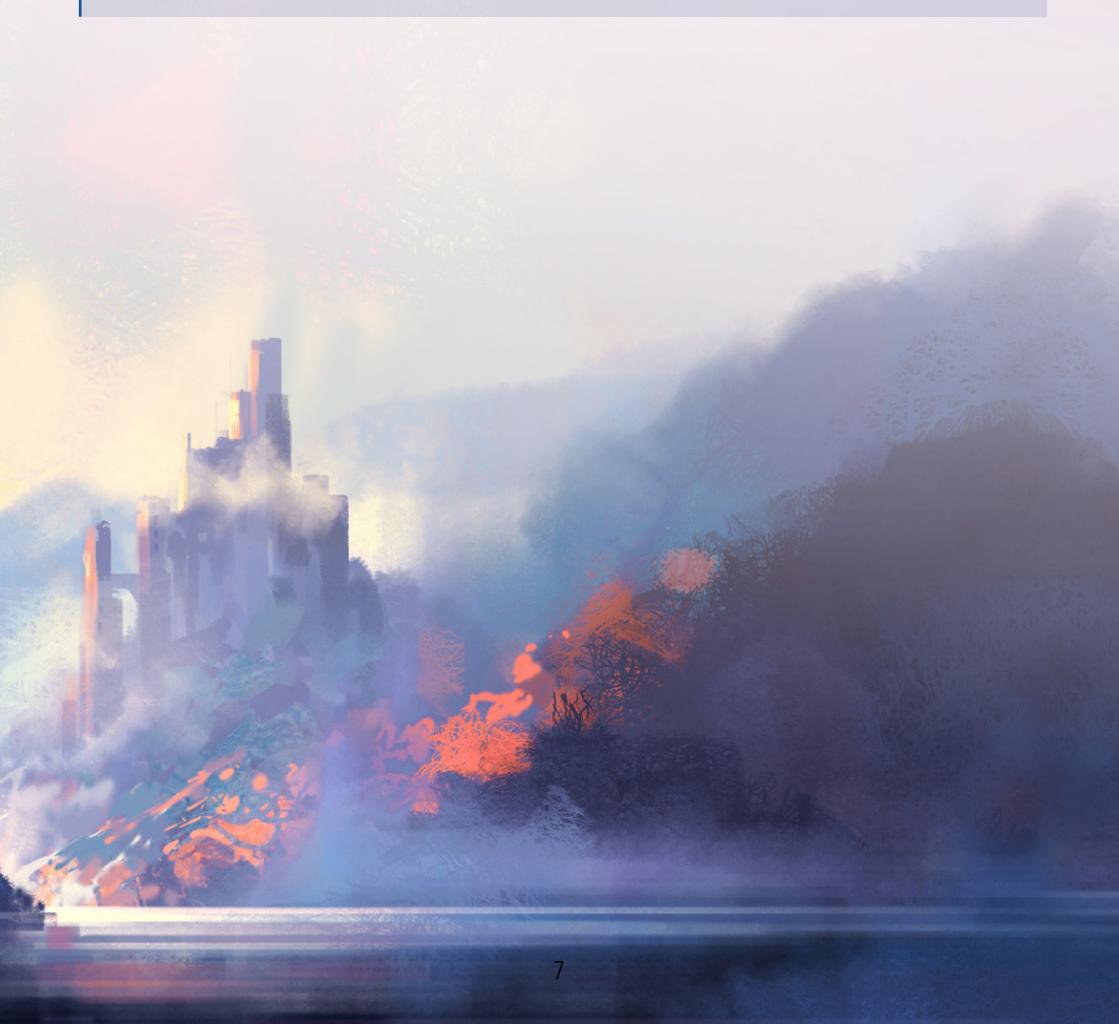


**DESIGNER'S NOTE.** *Help as a reaction encourages creative thinking and teamwork, especially in dire situations.*

*Interpose likewise encourages tactical movement and enables players to heroically take a mortal wound to save a friend. Being protected allows a hero to lay on heavy damage since their Actions aren't needed to move or defend; 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 Defend reaction for the round!*

*With the Defend 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 Actions to use on your next turn. Your Actions recharges at the end of your turn, so if you use too many reactions you'll end up with 0 Actions 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 Actions and not waste time on a low-damage opportunity attack. Monsters not making opportunity attacks make the battlefield more dynamic; heroes no longer need to waste an entire turn disengaging. Since movement already comes at a cost, as it spends Actions, there is no need to penalize players further.*



# Dying & Exhaustion

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

## Dying

Dropping to 0 HP does not cause unconsciousness or death saves. Instead, you gain 1 level of Exhaustion. You also gain the Dying condition until you regain HP. While Dying, actions are limited to 1, Concentration is broken, and you are at risk of further serious harm:

- Attacking/casting spells causes 1 level of Exhaustion unless you make a DC 10 STR save.
- Taking damage while Dying causes 2 levels of Exhaustion, a crit causes 3 instead.

**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 Action. When her turn begins, she can't cast cure wounds since that would cost 2 Actions, but a bonus action spell like healing word only costs 1 Action. 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 Actions 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 defend, run away, drink the last potion, or attack and risk injuring yourself further? There is still a real risk of permanent death, but heroes 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 hero that is at 0 HP. As far as the monster is concerned, they're still standing. Attack away!

## Exhaustion

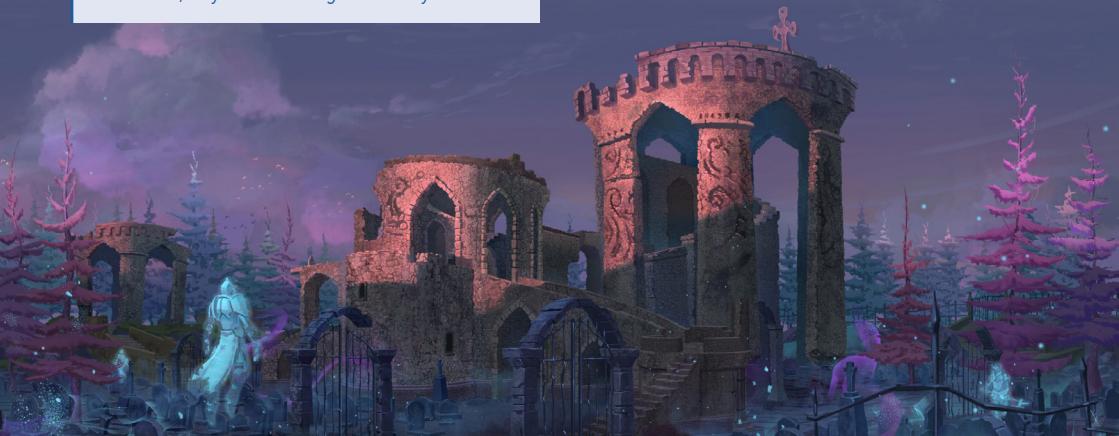
Replacing the archaic exhaustion rules in 5e, each level now only causes a cumulative -1 to all d20 rolls *when outside of combat*. A hero dies when they receive their 6th level of exhaustion. 1 level of exhaustion is recovered per Long Rest.

**DESIGNER'S NOTE.** *The tension of dying is a big part of what makes ttrpgs 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.*

*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 heroes; 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 hero truly is to death.*



# Resting

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

## Long Rests

Long Rests require at least 8 hours of sleep in a safe place designated by your DM, typically lodging at an inn; but could also be at a secret oasis, a well-stocked cabin in the woods, near a sacred shrine, or the like. Camping in the open wilderness or in a dungeon is **not** sufficient for gaining the benefits of a Long Rest.

After a Long Rest, heroes recover all of their HP, Hit Dice, mana (and other class specific resources), and heal 1 level of Exhaustion.

## Short Rests

Short Rests require at least 15 minutes 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 expend any number of Hit Dice (rolling them and adding your STR modifier to each), and regain that many HP. If you rest at least 8 hours with food and sleep, take the maximum instead of rolling.

**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 turning the DM into an adversary, rather than a facilitator of fun).

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.

Resting provides a great opportunity for downtime activities. Heroes 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!



# 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. 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 heroes, 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.** For ease of play, monster armor is simplified into 3 groups: 14-17 AC is Medium Armor and ignores all damage modifiers from stats and other effects, taking damage from the sum of the dice only. Monsters with higher AC than that have Heavy Armor and take half as much damage as Medium. Monsters with less are unarmored and take damage as normal.

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

**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, the iron golem shrugs off half of the damage, taking only 4!

**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. heroes can Defend against 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.

**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. 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!

**DM Advice:** Be flexible with Armor, encounter balance is much more forgiving with Nimble. Feel free to give a good mix of different monster armor types. If an encounter calls for only Medium Armored foes, it won't break the encounter balance to make a few of them unarmored and one or two heavily armored. It'll let different classes shine more and keep things interesting.



# 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. Spells 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, Wizard, etc.) = 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.*

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 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.*

*The Mana system makes sense, is numerically balanced, and gives more flexibility to players. 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.*

# Main Abilities

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

Having 6 abilities but only caring about 2 or 3 of them is the illusion of choice and needlessly complex. By combining some of the abilities with less utility we can create room for more interesting choices and fewer "dump stats". This also has the side effect of streamlining the character sheet and lowering the barrier of entry for new players.

Constitution has been combined with Strength, likewise Charisma and Wisdom have been combined to Will.

**Strength (STR).** Affects STR weapon damage, resistance to Exhaustion, HP, the Might skill, Concentration, Grappling, and STR saves.

**Dexterity (DEX).** Affects DEX weapon damage, Initiative, contributes to Armor, as well as the Stealth and Finesse skills, Grappling, and DEX saves.

**Intelligence (INT).** Affects languages, spellcasting, Arcana, Examination, Lore skills, and INT saves.

**Will (WIL).** Your force of personality, courage, and wisdom, shapes your interactions with both nature and society. Affects, spellcasting as well as the Insight, Influence, Naturecraft, and Perception skills, and WIL saves.

**DESIGNER'S NOTE.** Constitution is not used to derive any skills and overlaps so much with Strength that they have been combined to reduce needless complexity on the character sheet. Similarly with WIS and CHA, they have been combined into a new Will ability.

Now, STR is less of a dump stat, even for spellcasters; they can still ignore it, but they will be more frail in combat. And WIL is useful to more than just Bards and Clerics!

## Saving Throws

Whenever a DM would normally call for a CON save or check, use STR instead (e.g., a Wizard making a concentration check), likewise for WIS or CHA, use WIL instead.

# Secondary Stats

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

**Armor Class (AC).** If you're standing right next to a baddie with an axe and you're not doing anything to defend yourself, chances are, you're going to get axed! You can use a reaction to Defend, 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 Defend reaction. If he doesn't Defend, however, he'll be hit!

**Hit Points (HP).** Reflects your fortitude and ability to take damage and stay on your feet. At level 1, roll your Hit Die (HD)+STR and add that to the max HD number.

**Initiative.** Rather than affecting how soon in the round you act, initiative affects how many Actions you have on the first round of combat. A single digit initiative roll means you start combat with 1 Action. 2 digits, 2 Actions. A result of 20+ (or a natural 20) you get all 3 Actions! Regardless of what you roll on Initiative, at the end of your turn you gain all 3 Actions back.

**Surprise?** Roll w/ advantage/disadvantage.

Since initiative determines how much a hero can do on round 1, a high initiative roll is still rewarded even if they go last. Whichever player is ready first can go first, with play proceeding around the table clockwise. Alternatively, the DM can choose the player that makes the most narrative sense.

**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.

**Monsters.** The DM can safely default to monsters going last. This won't (usually) result in a lopsided encounter since actions are limited during the 1st round; it's mostly about tactical positioning and getting in a small hit or two.

# Skills

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

Some skills rarely come up in a campaign, so infrequent ones were combined making choices more meaningful and useful (e.g., Animal Handling, Nature, and Survival are now Naturecraft; Medicine and Investigation are Examination; History and Religion are Lore; Sleight of Hand and Acrobatics are Finesse). Skills are no longer tied to proficiency. At level 1, apply bonuses from your main ability modifiers, then allocate 4 additional points. Each level, you gain 1 skill point to add and can move 1 point (as long as the skill does not become negative), reflecting new interests developed over time.

**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).** Knowledge of magical phenomena, spells, and enchantments, plus insight into magical creatures like Aberrations and Elementals.
- **Examination (INT).** Skill in analysis and deduction for diagnosing injuries, finding clues, and understanding mechanical devices. Offers insight into Constructs.
- **Finesse (DEX).** Skill in careful tasks like lockpicking, disarming traps, piloting, climbing, or stealing.
- **Influence (WIL).** Persuasiveness and charm to convince, deceive, negotiate, or perform.
- **Insight (WIL).** Understanding motives, detecting lies, and making sense of situations. Can retroactively help anticipate needs.
- **Might (STR).** Physical power for lifting, breaking, climbing, and other feats of strength.
- **Lore (INT).** Knowledge of history, kingdoms, and religions, with insights into Celestials, Dragons, Fey, Fiends, Giants, Humanoids, and Undead.
- **Naturecraft (WIL).** Expertise in wilderness survival, tracking, and animal handling, with knowledge of Beasts, Monstrosities, and Plants.
- **Perception (WIL).** Keen awareness for spotting hidden objects, detecting environmental changes, and sensing threats.
- **Stealth (DEX).** Skill in staying unseen and moving quietly to evade detection and hide.



# 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 Actions once/round EACH.



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.



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



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

- **Action Surge.** Gain 1 Action, 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.
- **Archery Fighting Style/Bless/Bane.** Add or subtract 1d4 damage instead of chance to hit, 1/turn.
- **Bardic Inspiration.** Reaction, 0 Actions. 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.
- **Empowered Spell.** Cannot change a miss into a hit.
- **Expertise.** +1 Skill Point/level in that class.
- **Extra Attack.** Can be made for free after your first attack during your turn.
- **Fireball.** Costs 3 Actions.
- **Great Weapon Fighting.** 1/round.
- **Great Strike (new feat).** The first time you reduce a creature to 0 HP on your turn, you may make an additional attack for free. You may replace any two-handed melee weapon attack with a Great Strike. It misses on a 4 or less (2 or less for 2d6 weapons); if you hit, roll an additional weapon die that can explode.
- **Improved Critical.** Roll crit dice with advantage.
- **Jack of All Trades.** Any skill modifier that is 0 or less is treated as +1 instead.
- **Light (Weapon Property).** The first time you attack on your turn while wielding 2 light weapons, you may also make an offhand attack (with no stat modifier).
- **Patient Defense.** Spend 1 ki point when you block/dodge to add your monk level to your AC for 1 attack.
- **Quickened Spell.** A spell costs 1 fewer Actions.
- **Shield (Spell).** +5 AC for 1 attack, Defend for free.
- **Shield Adept (new feat).** You can use the Defend reaction 2/round while wearing a shield. If you attack on your turn, you can Shove for free 1/round.
- **Skillful (new feat).** Grants 4 Skill Points.
- **Spare the Dying.** Give a Dying creature 1 HP.
- **Unarmed Strike/Flurry of Blows.** Free Action. Spend 1 ki point also to make 2 unarmed attacks instead, 1/round.
- **Unarmored Defense.** (Barb.) PB instead of CON.
- **Uncanny Dodge.** Add your PB to your AC. When using the Defend reaction you may use your AC modifier or halve the damage instead.
- **Wild Shape.** Costs 1 Action 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](https://NimbleRPG.com) or you can join the Nimble Discord server at [NimbleRPG.com/discord](https://NimbleRPG.com/discord)

# Optional Tactical Nuggets

*"The 2nd best kind of 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).
- **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.
- **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.

• **Acting Over Multiple Turns.** Replacing the Ready action, for abilities that cost more than 1 Action, your Actions can be spent over multiple turns in combat as long as Concentration is maintained and you cannot spend Actions (unless they are free).

• **Dazed (New Status).** -1 Action for 1 round.

**DM Advice.** When a monster would take away agency in some way from heroes—incapacitate, slow, paralyze, petrify, or stun—consider replacing that ability with this new Dazed status. 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 Actions 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 Action) this adds tension without removing agency. Then finally, on the 3rd failure they are completely petrified!

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

• **High Level Spells (Optional).** All spells of level 6 or higher cost 3 Actions to better maintain game balance at very high levels.

• **Inventory Slots.** You have inventory slots equal to  $10 + \text{STR}$  to carry equipment and loot. 1 inventory slot can hold: a shield, a one-handed weapon, armor, or 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.

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

**Class & Race/Species.** 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, 11, 11 (49 points)
- **Standard:** 15, 14, 10, 8 (47 points)
- **Min-Max:** 15, 15, 8, 8 (46 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 4 points (in addition to the bonuses granted by your ability score modifiers).

**Hit Points.** At level 1, roll your Hit Die (HD)+STR and add that to the max HD number.

**Example:** Grudge, the Fighter, rolls 1d10 and gets a 5. Plus his STR of 2, he adds 10+7 and starts level 1 with 17 HP.

**AC.** Just like your ability scores, only your AC modifier is commonly used. This is how much damage you mitigate when you take the Defend reaction. Your AC modifier is AC-8.

**Languages & Tool Proficiency.** You know Common and any racial/species languages. Choose 1 additional language that fits with your background (unless your INT is negative). Choose 2 tool or vehicle proficiencies.

**Equipment.** Start with 2d4x10 GP to buy starting equipment. (Wizards can start with a novice's spellbook for their level 1 spells, but will need to upgrade it for higher-level spells).

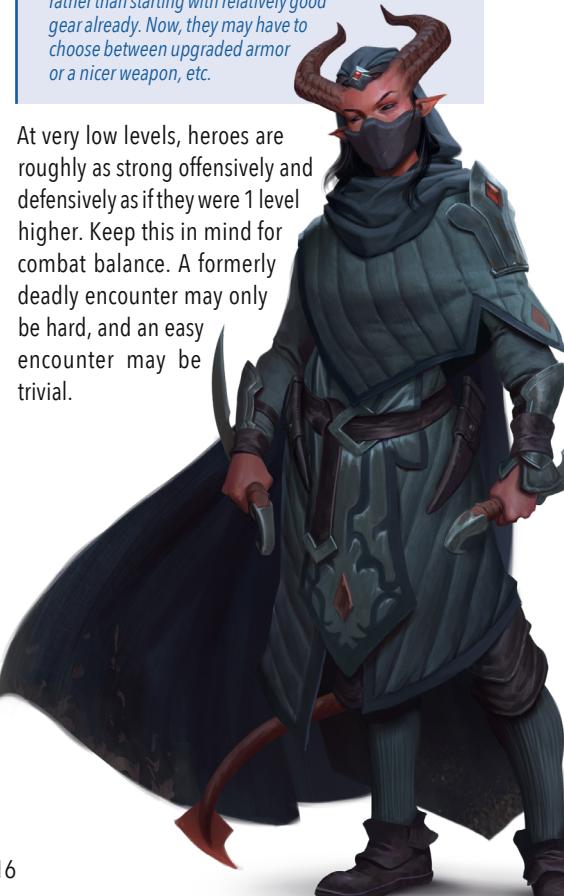
**Background & Adventuring Motivation.** What your character did before going adventuring.

**Personality.** Choose your adventuring motivation (what caused you to abandon your previous life?). Choose 1 bond (who, or what would you die for?). Choose 1 flaw (your one weakness).

**Leveling Up.** Roll your Hit Die, add your STR and increase your Max HP by that amount. Gain 1 point to allocate to any skill and you may move 1 Skill Point from a positive skill to another one. Classes with Expertise gain 1 additional Skill Point each level. Increase your Mana by an appropriate amount.

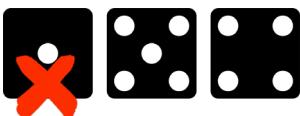
**DESIGNER'S NOTE.** Changes to HP increase survivability at levels 1 and 2 without bloating HP at higher levels. Changes to the AC stat make magical armor and AC related feats still very useful but not gamebreakingly so. Changes to starting gear and money give low-level characters a better sense of 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, heroes 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.

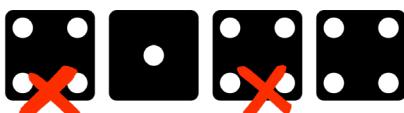


# DM Advice & FAQ

- **How do I roll an attack that has multiple dice with advantage or disadvantage?** If you have multiple instances of advantage or disadvantage, for each one, roll an extra die and remove the lowest (for advantage) or the highest (for disadvantage). Each instance of advantage cancels out one instance of disadvantage before you roll.



**Example 1.** Greataxe ( $2d6$ ) with advantage. Roll 1 additional die and remove the lowest. You hit!



**Example 2.** Greataxe ( $2d6$ ) with disadvantage. Roll 2 additional dice, remove the 2 highest. In there is a tie, always remove dice from left to right. You miss!

- **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 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 Action you spend to attack that target on your turn is made with advantage, the 2nd attack is made as a normal roll (instead of disadvantage), the 3rd is with disadvantage 1 (instead of 2).
- **Can I cast shield multiple times in a round?** No. It triggers the Defend reaction and you are only allowed 1 of each reaction/round.
- **How does cover work?** Imposes disadvantage.

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

- **How would familiars work?** They start combat with 1 Action, have a maximum of 2 Actions, and always act immediately after their owner. They can use any of the actions and reactions that Heroes 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.

## Tactics

- **Move monsters every turn!** This forces martial characters to use Actions for movement, not just attacks, and gives players chances for opportunity attacks. Target high-damage, "squishy" characters to make them Defend or hide behind allies, letting tanks shine. DMs, be aggressive—players have ways to get out of trouble. Don't hesitate to keep attacking a hero at 0 HP; let the players figure out how to save each other.

- **Large Groups of Enemies:** RPGs are most fun when players get to fulfill their character fantasies. In Nimble, even weak enemies in large numbers can become deadly, unlike 5e, where armored PCs shrug off swarms. Using minion rules (pg. 10), you can keep the threat real while letting heroes shine—tanks can block attacks from multiple foes, and damage dealers can wipe out hordes with a single spell—it's great fun!

More questions? [NimbleRPG.com](http://NimbleRPG.com) or on Discord: [NimbleRPG.com/Discord](https://NimbleRPG.com/Discord)