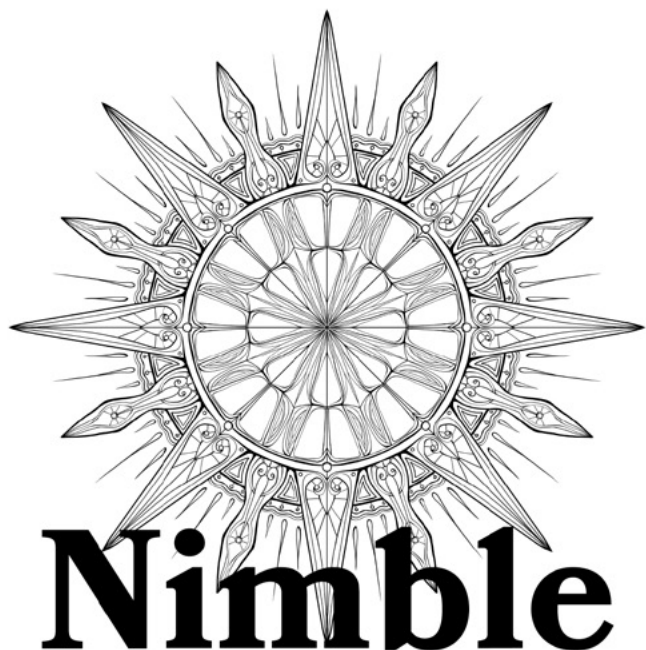




Nimble

STREAMLINING YOUR **5E** GAME



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Nimble: Streamlining Your 5e Game, © 2023 Evan Diaz.

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NimbleRPG.com 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).

Get the full booklet!

The full Nimble 5e booklet also contains modular rules including:

- **BETTER** death & dying mechanics that keep the tension of dying without sacrificing player agency.
- An **overhauled and streamlined** Mana system replacing archaic 5e spell slots.
- **Elegant** Initiative system to get into combat faster and fit the story better.
- Improved skills! A system to grant **more interesting choices and flexibility** with Skills without breaking compatibility with existing 5e adventures.
- 11 additional optional **tactical nuggets** to add more flavor to your game without slowing things down.
- Rules to **easily & quickly** convert 5e Feats & Abilities.
- **Streamlined** and more interesting character creation and leveling up rules that increase the feel of player progression and growth.
- **Practical** guidelines for money, magical items, and prices—fixes the, “I don’t have anything to spend all my useless gold on!” problem.
- An overhaul and streamlining of the character sheet to make what you need to find **quicker and much easier**.
- Tweaks to the 6 main ability scores to make each of them **more useful** and reduce “dump stats”
- **Streamlined** saving throw rules.
- Two different, modular **fast combat systems** to suit your play group. One that feels more heroic, one that sticks a bit closer to 5e rules as written.
- Numerous **examples of play**, FAQs and **DM advice** for tactics, tweaking monsters and running large groups of enemies.

Don't throw out all your existing 5e content, keep using it and easily turn 5e into the RPG you've always wanted it to be!

[Learn More](#)

30 pages of modular and fast rules to get more out of your 5e games!



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