

GOOD HITS & BAD MISSES

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Critical hits and fumbles are probably two of the most controversial subject areas in *D&D*. The most common procedure is for 20 to represent a "perfect hit" and 1 a "perfect miss," or a critical hit and a fumble, respectively. This is an overly simplistic system, and this seems to be the main problem. The problem is less severe with 20's—a character's strength and dexterity bonuses, along with any magical help coming from swords and the like, often combine to modify the die roll to or above the magic score of 20.

Stronger characters have a relatively better chance at reaching this score, so do higher-level characters (but only because higher-level characters will presumably have more powerful magic swords). Unfortunately, the problem is that a character who can only hit his/her opponent on a roll of a 20 will get critical hits as often as one who needs only a 10 or better.

When applied to fumbles, the simple system really falls apart. A roll of 1 is a fumble-period. An 18/00 strength, an 18 dexterity, a +5 sword, none of it will help. Or, if these *will* help, then what's the point of having the rule, since all one needs is a +1 dagger to boost any rolls of 1 up to 2, and your worries are over. And, if a 1 is always a fumble, a character will fumble 5% of the time, whether he or she is 1st, 5th, or 15th level.

The following variant system allows swords and dexterity to increase chances for a critical hit, and reduce chances for a fumble, without eliminating them entirely. Basically, any swing that hits can be a critical hit, and any swing that misses can be a fumble. The higher the die roll, the "better" the swing, and the more likely it will be critical. The system works as follows:

The character rolls the die normally, to determine if he/she has hit. If the roll is a hit, then the minimum score necessary to hit is subtracted from the roll, and the result is the percentage chance of the hit being a critical hit. If the swing is a miss, the result is subtracted from the minimum score needed to hit, and that is the chance of the swing being a fumble.

EXAMPLE: Ferdinand Orc-Punter, +2 hit probability due to strength, +2 sword, needs a 10 or better to hit Sorghum Orc. He swings, rolling a 14, +2 (for strength) +2 (for the sword), with the final result of 18. A hit! The chance of it being critical is 18 (the final result) minus 10 (the minimum score needed), which is 8 (the percentage chance of the hit being critical).

EXAMPLE: Sampson Numbfingers has +1 hit probability and a +1 dagger. He needs an 11 or better to hit a bugbear. He rolls 4+1+1=6. A miss. The chance he will fumble is 11-6, which is 5.

This system is nicely symmetrical, and works well. If the percentages seem too high, they can always be halved.

The tables below are for the various kinds of critical hits. The first table is primarily for swords, but is also used for poleaxes, ox-tongues, and the other large cutting weapons that pop up occasionally. The second table is for maces, with other fun things such as falling rocks being rolled for here, if desired. The table for critical hits against animals is used for all weapons. The missile fire critical hits table is also for thrusting weapons such as spears, and for daggers.

The fumble table is also for all weapons. Most of the results are minor, such as losing one's balance or dropping a weapon, but even

the nastier ones, such as "hit self," aren't unreasonable to allow for. If you've ever seen an SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism) tournament, you can probably understand how it can happen.

In using the charts, some referee input is necessary. When fighting an elephant with a dagger, it's not too likely that one of the elephant's legs will be lopped off by a critical hit.

Also, a character who is missing an arm or two won't be in very good condition, and is likely to bleed to death. Still, there are instances where the character insists on fighting to the end. In these cases, have the character roll a system shock check. If the check is made, then he/she can continue on fighting (provided he/she has the limbs necessary), although 1-3 pts. of damage are taken each round until something is done to bandage up the wound. If the system shock check is failed, the character falls unconscious due to pain for 1-12 rounds.

Critical Hit Effects Table-Edged Weapons

- 01-31 double damage
- 32-62 triple damage
- 63 shield destroyed (no effect if no shield)
- 64 shield destroyed (roll again if no shield)
- 65 helm removed (lose ear, stunned 1-6 rounds if no helm)
- 66 helm removed (lose ear, stunned 1-6 rounds)
- 67 voicebox punctured, no talking (no effect if helmeted)
- 68-69 ear removed (no effect if helmeted)
- 70 ear removed (helm removed if helmeted)
- 71-72 eye removed (no effect if helmeted)
- 73 eye removed
- 74 knee split; movement halved
- 75 knee split; no movement
- 76 fingers removed; dexterity reduced 1-5 pts.
- 77 leg removed at ankle
- 78 leg removed at knee
- 79 leg removed at hip
- 80 shield arm removed at wrist (no effect if shield)
- 81 shield arm removed at elbow (no effect if shield)
- 82 shield arm removed at elbow (no effect if shield)
- 83 shield arm removed at wrist
- 84 shield arm removed at elbow
- 85 shield arm removed at shoulder
- 86 weapon arm removed at wrist
- 87 weapon arm removed at elbow
- 88 weapon arm removed at shoulder
- 89 abdominal injuries; carrying capacity halved
- 90 chest injuries; carrying capacity halved
- 91 abdominal injuries; death in 1-6 days
- 92 chest injuries; death in 1-4 days
- 93 abdominal injuries; death in 2-12 turns
- 94 chest injuries; death in 2-8 turns
- 95 abdominal injuries; immediate death
- 96 chest injuries; immediate death
- 97 throat cut; immediate death (no effect if helmeted)
- 98 throat cut; immediate death
- 99 decapitated; immediate death (no effect if helmeted)
- 00 decapitated; immediate death

Critical Hit Effects Table—Blunt Weapons

01-31 double damage
 32-64 triple damage
 65-66 shield broken (no effect if no shield)
 67-68 shield broken (roll again if no shield)
 69-70 shield arm struck (no shield defense for 1-6 rounds)
 71-72 shield arm broken; lose shield
 73-74 weapon arm struck; hit probability -2
 75-76 weapon arm struck; hit probability -4
 77-78 weapon arm broken; no attacks
 79-80 hand struck; dexterity down 1-5 points until healed
 81-82 hand struck; dexterity down 1-5 points

83-84 chest struck; stunned 1-6 rounds
 85-86 chest struck; ribs broken, lungs punctured; no movement
 87-88 chest struck; ribs broken, heart punctured; death.
 89-90 leg struck; fall to ground
 91-92 leg struck; movement halved
 93-94 leg broken; no movement
 95 head struck; lose 1-6 pts intelligence (no effect if helmed)
 96 head struck; lose 1-6 pts intelligence
 97 head struck; lose 2-12 pts intelligence (no effect if helmed)
 98 head struck; lose 2-12 pts intelligence
 99 skull crushed; dead (no effect if helmed)
 00 skull crushed; dead.

Critical Hit Effects Table—Missile and Thrusting Weapons

01-34 double damage
 35-70 triple damage
 71-72 shield arm struck (no effect if shield)
 73-74 shield arm struck
 75-76 weapon arm struck; hit probability -2
 77-78 weapon arm struck; hit probability -4
 79-80 weapon arm struck; no attacks
 81-82 struck in abdomen; death in 1-6 days
 83-84 struck in chest; death in 1-4 days
 85-86 struck in abdomen; death in 2-12 turns

87-88 struck in chest; death in 2-8 turns
 89-90 struck in abdomen; immediate death
 91-92 struck in chest; immediate death
 93 blinded in eye (no effect if helmed)
 94 blinded in eye
 95 larynx punctured (no effect if helmed)
 96 larynx punctured
 97 struck in head; lose 1-6 pts intelligence (no effect if helmed)
 98 struck in head; lose 1-6 pts intelligence
 99 struck in head; immediate death (no effect if helmed)
 00 struck in head; immediate death

Critical Hit Effects vs. Animals

01-29 double damage
 30-58 triple damage
 59-60 limb removed at body; speed halved
 61-62 limb removed at midpoint; speed halved
 63-64 limb removed at midpoint; hit probability -2
 65-66 limb removed at body; hit probability -4
 67-68 limb removed at midpoint; speed halved, hit prob. -2
 69-70 limb removed at body; speed halved, hit probability -4
 71-72 throat cut; immediate death
 73-74 decapitated

75-76 abdominal injuries; immediate death
 77-78 abdominal injuries; death in 2-12 turns
 79-80 abdominal injuries; death in 1-6 days
 81-82 chest injuries; immediate death
 83-84 chest injuries; death in 2-8 turns
 85-86 chest injuries; death in 1-4 days
 87-90 snout struck; immediate retreat
 91-94 snout struck; hit probability -2 for 1-4 rounds
 95-98 snout struck; hit probability -4 for 1-4 rounds
 99 head struck; stunned for 1-6 rounds
 00 head struck; immediate death

Fumble Effects Chart-All Weapons

01-19 slip; roll dexterity or less on d20 or fall and stunned for 1-4 rounds
 20-33 stumble; roll dexterity or less on d20 or fall and stunned for 1-6 rounds
 34-39 trip and fall; stunned for 1-6 rounds
 40-44 off balance; roll dexterity or less on d20 or no action next round
 45-49 lose grip on weapon; roll dexterity or less on d20 or no attack next round
 50-54 lose grip; roll dexterity or less on d20 or drop weapon
 55-59 lose grip; drop weapon
 60-61 shield tangled with opponent (no effect if no shield)
 62-63 shield tangled with opponent; neither attacks next round
 64-65 weapon tangled with opponent; no attack next round
 66-69 weapon knocked away-roll d8 for direction, d10 for distance in feet
 70-74 weapon breaks (base 100% chance -20% for each "+" or ability of weapon
 75-76 hit self; half damage
 77-78 hit self; normal damage
 79-80 hit self; double damage
 81-82 hit friend; half damage
 83-84 hit friend; normal damage
 85-86 hit friend; double damage
 87-88 critical hit, self
 89-90 critical hit, friend
 91-92 twist ankle; half speed for 1 turn, roll dexterity or less on d20 or fall
 93-95 helm slips; roll dexterity or less to fix, hit probability -6 until fixed
 96-97 helm slips; roll dexterity to fix, no attacks until fixed
 98 distracted; opponent's next attack at +3
 99 roll twice, ignoring rolls of 99 or 00
 00 roll three times, ignoring rolls of 99 or 00

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