



or, “Roman Hands, Thracian Fists, and Dacian Feet”

Misadventuring in the Roman Empire  
with [Risus: The Anything RPG](#) © 1993-2001 by S. John Ross  
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### **Acrobat**

Juggle, walk tightrope, amuse audiences, wear funny clothes, be nimble, be sure-footed

**Variations:** Tumbler, contortionist

### **Advisor**

Advise ruler, cite precedent, talk for hours, speak with authority, debate minutiae, know history and laws

**Variations:** Scheming Kingmaker, Dedicated Public Servant, Self-Serving Bureaucrat

### **Amorous Scoundrel**

Go without sleep, run from enraged spouse, leap out window, caress passionately, endear with a look, virility under duress, be attractive and charming

**Variations:** Seductress, Libertine, Ladies’ Man, Hussy, Philanderer

### **Alchemist (Pharmakon)**

Brew useful but noxious potions, analyze somebody else’s noxious potions, learn about obscure poisons, write recipes in a complex code, blow up lab on a regular basis

### **Arena Hunter**

Hunt exotic game for arena, organize expedition, survive in the wild, tramp stealthily, know nature lore, know territory, palaver with natives

**Variations:** Hard-bitten Trapper, Sadistic Animal Trainer, Greedy Arena Factor

**Artist**

Be sensitive, suck up to potential patrons, defend artistic vision, suffer for your art

**Variations:** Sculptor, Painter, Mosaic Tiler, Playwright, Actor

**Beggar**

Grovel convincingly, show crippling injury, flatter gullible passersby, spin tale of woe, collect juicy gossip, rummage through garbage heaps, eat stuff that would gag an orc, sleep in alleys and on doorsteps

**Variations:** Vagabond, Tramp, Mendicant, Panhandler, Freeloader

**Bounty Hunter**

Hunt outlaws, hunt barbarians, track through the wilderness, stalk through cities

**Backgrounds:** Barbarians looking for rewards; greedy or revenge-seeking Romans

**Variations:** Opportunistic, Vengeful, Greedy, Famous, Infamous, Bloodthirsty

**Boxer**

Fight without weapons or armor, float like butterfly/sting like bee, register fists as deadly weapons

**Background:** Plebeian, ex-slave

**Variations:** Professional, Amateur, Corrupt, Honorable

**Buffoon**

Wear funny clothes, make witty observations about people at the court who hopefully won't get mad and have you killed, embarrass that guy you don't like, make everybody realize just how witty you really are, take a pratfall, juggle as if your life depended on it, caper and prance

**Charioteer**

React quickly, lay on the lash, survive crashes, evaluate horses, maintain chariots, know odds

**Background:** often slaves or freedmen; successful drivers might rise in rank.

**Variations:** Despised, Greedy, Famous, Infamous, Corrupt

**Christian Priest**

Denounce heresy, minister to flock, proselytize, organize secret meetings, teach Scripture, endure persecution, perform marriage, baptize infant, convert unbeliever

**Variations:** Kindly, Arrogant, Condescending, Saintly

**Christian**

Hide beliefs, meet secretly, witness to others, proselytize, hide sacred paraphernalia, endure persecution, render unto Caesar

**Background:** any. Christians are often persecuted and must hide their religion from outsiders.

**Variations:** Rabble-Rousing Missionary, Covert Acolyte, Devout Pilgrim, Future Martyr

**Civil Servant**

Produce red tape, accumulate wealth and power, shuffle papers, produce voluminous reports, create organizational system only you can understand, say things in a way that people will be afraid to admit they don't understand, supervise subordinates, keep your eyes open and your mouth shut

**Backgrounds:** Slaves, Ex-Slaves, Former Roman officers

**Variations:** Capable Functionary, Greedy Procurator, Meddlesome Administrator, Devious Civil Servant, Cowardly Secretary, Honest Magistrate

**Courier (Auriga)**

Carry dispatches, convey orders, deliver reports, be resourceful, complete assignment at all costs

**Variations:** Scupulous, Careless, Traitorous

**Craftsperson**

Craft, make minor Equipment, Find Necessary Supplies, Haggle; Inspired, Patient

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

**Variations:** Silversmith, jeweller, mason, potter, weaver, cook, baker, leatherworker, laundress, woodcrafter, brewer

**Diplomat**

Carry important messages, be an emissary, pal around with foreign courtiers, indulge in intrigue, keep your eyes and ears open, know what to kiss and when, know about what's in vogue

**Background:** Equestrian or patrician class

**Variations:** No-nonsense Envoy, Jaded Ambassador

## Diviner

Cast horoscope, examine livers, read palms, interpret omens, gaze into crystal ball, examine head-bumps, read cards, read tea leaves, dowse for water, use ouija board, look in magic scrying pool, read runes, find prophecies in sacred books, interpret dreams, cast lots, psychometry

**Variations:** Convincing Fraud, Self-Deluded Fortune-Teller, Wealthy Astrologer, Greedy Haruspex, Priestly Augur

## Entertainer

Juggle things, sing funny songs, tell lame jokes, do funny voices, imitate local celebrities

**Variations:** Wacky Juggler, Lame Comedian, Sonorous Soliloquist, Nimble Prestidigitator, Exotic Dancer

## Explorer

Get antsy when you're home too long, go somewhere nobody else has ever heard of, meet people you can't talk to, stumble on lost civilizations, collect exotic memorabilia, tell stories about how you got that scar, learn scandalous phrases in foreign languages

**Background:** often a merchant or sailor, sometimes a wealthy equestrian or patrician

## Fisherman

Fish, build boat, repair nets, make traps, know the local waters, brag about the one that got away

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

## Gang Member

Defend turf or patron, know streets, evade capture, stand up for your gang, persuade violently

**Background:** ex-gladiators, young nobles looking for trouble or serving tough-willed clients, former soldiers, urban poor

**Variations:** Young Noble Bully, Street-Bred Tough, Struggling Ex-Soldier, Swaggering Ex-Gladiator, Ponderous Thug, Belligerent Mook

## Gladiator

Salute the emperor because you're about to die, fight with odd weapons and too little armor, please the crowd, flex muscles impressively, "it's just a scratch", kill opponents entertainingly, learn clever ways to "die" convincingly

**Background:** Barbarian, Slave

**Variations:** Enslaved Pit-Fighter, Famous Professional Gladiator, Crazy Crusher

## Gladiator

Salute the emperor because you're about to die, fight with odd weapons and too little armor, please the crowd, flex muscles impressively, "it's just a scratch", kill opponents entertainingly, learn clever ways to "die" convincingly

**Background:** Slave, often Barbarian

**Variation:** Reluctant, Bloodthirsty, Sadistic, Famous, Infamous, Wealthy, Greedy, Ex-

## Healer

Bind wounds, split broken bones, know herbal lore, treat illness

**Variations:** Discrete Physician, Crusty Old Sawbones, Rustic Herbalist, Embittered Combat Medic, Devout Faith Haler

## Hedge Wizard

Find lost possessions, craft protective amulets, scare away vermin and unwelcome visitors, create sleeping potion, cure minor ills, use natural properties of plants and animals

## Herder

Care for herd, train dog, butcher herd animals, run long distance, listen to endless stream of off-color jokes about herders and their herds

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

## Innkeeper

Keep a tidy inn, throw out ruffians, provide food and drink, keep valuables safe

**Variations:** Nosy Landlord, Generous Taverner, King's Hosteler, Long-Suffering Bartender, Buxom Serving Wench, Burly Barmaid

## Lawyer

Plead case, investigate suspect, make speech, fake evidence, obfuscate, bribe official

**Variations:** Greedy, Corrupt, Crusading, Famous, Infamous, Struggling, Poor, Streetwise, Self-Promoting, Overconfident

**Legionnaire**

Perform duty, esprit de corps, take orders from your superiors, give orders to your subordinates, know the regulations, complain about the food, stand watch, complain about “the brass”, maintain discipline on the battlefield, gamble and drink and wench off duty

**Background:** Cannot be of Equestrian or Senatorial ranks. Must be a free Roman citizen.

**Variations:** Bumbling Veteran, Green Young Recruit, Dashing Young Officer, Grizzled Old Campaigner, Pious Mithraist

**Magician**

Make talismans and amulets, ward off evil eye, bring luck, ward off danger from building or property, defend walls or gates, create guardian statues, make sacred stones, bring luck and prosperity, repulse danger, avert ill-will, reverse sterility, prevent illness, oppose harmful testimony, protect from curses

**Mariner**

Live on a ship, never get seasick, say things like “arr, matey” and “landlubber”, wear little or no armor, batten down the hatches, swab the deck, climb the rigging, man the fo’c’sl, get tattoos, wear a ring in your ear, have a girl in every port, dance a hornpipe

**Medium**

Hold seance, enter trance, contact spirit guide, contact the dead, speak in spooky voices, interpret knocks on the walls by spirits of the dear departed, speak in spooky voices

**Merchant**

Buy cheap and sell dear, haggle haggle haggle!, know what things cost, keep an eye on your stuff, organize caravan, carry heavy stuff, pick up the local gossip

**Midwife**

Know signs of pregnancy, tend mother-to-be, spread old wife's tales, terminate pregnancy

**Military Tribune**

Plan battle, lead troops, lead sortie, spy on enemy, command auxiliaries, carry message

**Background:** Equestrian or Senatorial rank or family, impoverished Patrician

**Mystic**

Seek enlightenment, meditate upon obscure philosophical dilemmas, avoid unnecessary confrontations (but not the necessary ones), use obscure quotations from dead philosophers and strange folk wisdom, feign death, leave body, levitate self, don’t own more than you can carry

**Background:** Foreigner from the east (e.g., Asia, India or China)

**Necromancer**

Summon spirits of the deceased, harrow up the dead, look good in black, be spooky, hang around in graveyards and ancient battlefields, exorcise ghosts

**Outlaw**

Spit in the face of authority, scoff at the law, rob wayfarers and passersby, live in unpleasant places, disguise yourself as harmless local, travel lightly, watch your back, brag about the bounty on your head

**Variations:** Freedom-Loving Rebel, Fugitive from Justice, Reluctant Gangster

**Pacifist**

Resist passively, don’t fight (even to defend yourself or others), tell others not to fight, resolve conflicts peaceably, don’t wear armor, get beaten up a lot, get killed (usually only done once)

**Pagan Priest**

Perform ceremony, supervise charity, perform divination, teach theology, give advice

**Variations:** Patrician, Equestrian, Plebeian, Kind, Generous, Corrupt

**Patrician**

Hold office, debate endlessly, set good example, be educated, live lavishly, behave condescendingly, command respect, have a lot of influence, keep the peasants in their place, demand the best things in life, go hunting and riding, wear fancy clothing

**Variations:** Honest, Strong-Willed, Patriotic, Corrupt, Lecherous, Decadent, Thrill-Seeking, Young, Impoverished, Debauched

**Philosopher**

Indulge curiosity, know lots of obscure facts, carry around bundles of esoteric equipment, collect thousands of specimens, know astrology, take measurements and make calculations, lecture authoritatively, debunk critics, denounce rival, look scruffy

Platonist: Find ways to improve things, concentrate on the mind and soul

Pythagorean: “Number is all”, manipulate through astrology and numerology, attempt to abolish irrational numbers, purify soul through successive lives through intellectual activities

Megaran: Give lectures, debate everything, make people do things they don’t know they want to do

Milesians: Make calculations, draw up complicated plans, observe the heavens

Cynics: Don’t believe what your senses tell you, deliver unpleasant truths without flinching, hopelessly and shamelessly offend

Stoics: Endure hardship, ignore suffering, pay no heed to pleasure

Epicurians: Experience everything, disregard unpleasant experiences, free self and others from fear (not the same as boldness)

## **Pirate**

Sail the seas, attack ships, ransom wealthy prisoners, climb the rigging, say things like “Sink me fer a lubber!” and “Shiver me timbers!”, have an eyepatch or a peg leg or a hook

**Background:** Greek, Phoenician

**Variations:** Dashing Privateer, Grizzled Sea Dog, One-Eyed Buccaneer, Ouzo-Swilling Freebooter

## **Police/Fireman (Vigile)**

Patrol neighborhood, put out fires, spot crimes, enforce law, look for danger, use own judgement

**Background:** freedmen, others

## **Roman Politician**

Speak publicly, know laws, seek office, serve Rome (without pay), know Greek, enhance reputation, maintain wealthy lifestyle, know important people

**Background:** Equestrian or Senatorial rank or family, impoverished Patrician

**Variations:** Corrupt, Virtuous

## **Foreign Ruler**

Look imposing, bluster, debate, compromise, rally followers, keep followers happy, find weakness in argument, negotiate

**Variations:** Foreign Despot, Tribal Chieftain, Barbarian King, Crafty Usurper, Beloved Queen, Despised Tyrant, Reluctant Dictator, Puppet Monarch

## **Scholar**

Know lots of obscure lore, write down everything, be an expert on something, act as if you know something about everything else, criticize rivals, flatter patrons

## **Scout**

Live in the wild, hunt game, trap small animals, know the lay of the land, watch enemy troop movements, size up danger, be self-reliant, be uncomfortable out of your element

Background: barbarian, ex-legionnaire

**Variations:** Pathfinder, Frontiersman

## **Secret Agent**

Sneak around, decode secret messages, eavesdrop, stay out of the way, work undercover, know foreign languages, give report, kill people, wear cheesy disguises, use interesting poisons

Note: may be working for private citizens, political parties, a wealthy patron, or the government (or any combination thereof)

**Variations:** Informer, Spy, Infiltrator, Investigator

## **Sharpshooter**

Hit a fly’s eye at 100 yards, be rock-steady, be extremely protective of your equipment

Background: Barbarian, Legionnaire

**Variations:** Eagle-eyed Archer, Trick Knife Thrower

## **Shipwright**

Build Ship, Patch Leaks, Make Sails, Boil Pitch, Career Ship

## **Slave**

Obey master, endure beatings, swallow pride, seize opportunities, explain self, keep ears open and mouth shut

**Variations:** Ambitious, lazy, rebellious, talented, beautiful, ex-

## **Smith**

Make things out of metal, ignore burns, impressive muscles, evaluate metalwork, snarl at lazy apprentice

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

**Variations:** blacksmith, weaponsmith

## Smuggler

Fence illicit goods, feign innocence, have connections, appraise goods, obtain forged documents, conceal identity, have an escape plan

**Background:** any

## Soldier of Fortune

Getting paid for fighting, getting tricked out of being paid by evil patron who hired you, looking to be hired by a non-evil patron, gambling and drinking and wenching your pay away

**Background:** Usually a Barbarian or a former Legionnaire

**Variations:** Avaricious Mercenary, Idealistic Sellsword, Heartbroken Footslogger

## Sorcerer

Make trouble, afflict with boils, poison wells, afflict cattle, cause plague, pretend not to be a sorcerer

## Tenant Farmer

Grow food, raise livestock, kill varmints, gripe about taxes, talk about weather

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

## Thief

Steal valuables, purloin treasure, filch a fortune, pilfer swag, cut purses, burgle shops, loot coffers, ransack vaults, slink warily, shadow victims, strike from behind, fence booty, bypass booby traps, scale obstacles

**Variations:** Deft Cutpurse, Dashing Highwayman, Gentleman Jewel-Thief

## Village Crone

Cackle menacingly, prepare corpse, tell how much better things used to be, hide valuables away, know secret

**Background:** Any except Equestrian, Senatorial, or Impoverished Patrician

## Village Priest

Bless crops and cattle, perform marriages, bless newborns, perform funerals, perform auguries, serve the gods

**Background:** Any except Equestrian, Senatorial, or Impoverished Patrician

## Weapon Master

Single-minded devotion to mastering one type of weapon, not being able to master other types of weapons, being able to do cool things with the type of weapon that you can maste

**Background:** Most likely barbarian or gladiator.

**Variations:** World-weary Swordslinger, Eager Young Duellist, Lord of the Lash

## BARBARIAN CLICHES

**Romans consider anyone who is not a Roman citizen to be a barbarian. However, in this context, we'll only consider the stereotypical barbarians like the Celts, the Picts, the Scythians, and the Germans, and all those like them; all other non-Romans (such as the Egyptians, the Persians, etc.) are referred to as "Foreigners". Many other clichés above are well-suited to barbarians (e.g., gladiator, soldier of fortune, soldier, gang member, chariot driver, scout, arena hunter, etc.)**

## Amazon

Stand up for yourself to any patronizing male, show women how to fend for themselves, show those bully-boys who's better

**Background:** usually a Barbarian (Scot/Pict, German, Scythian, perhaps a descendant of the legendary Amazons from a lost civilization)

## Barbarian

Growl menacingly at soft city dwellers, complain about the filthy streets, praise the virtues of living in a crude lean-to in your faraway homeland, forget to shower except when it rains, heft a mean battleaxe, perform amazing feats of martial prowess, have a wyrd or geas

**Variations:** Filthy German, Woad-stained Scot/Pict, Scythian Horseman, African Tribesman

## Berserker

Ignore wounds, look really scary, fight to the death, intimidate, ignore fire, drink kegs of ale, punch out rude oxen, leave a trail of destruction at a moment's notice

**Background:** Scot or Pict, German

## Bloodthirsty Crone

Appease the Earth, assure fertility, inflict curse on the wicked, lift curse from community, conduct human sacrifice (only when

necessary), stop plague

### **Druid**

Sacrifice prisoners (only when absolutely necessary), predict weather, answer questions with riddles, invoke the powers of nature, perform bizarre rituals

**Variations:** Rebel Druid, Village Druid, Wandering Druid

### **Savage**

Be primitive, hunt and forage, wear skins and paint, know about animals and plants and spirits, sleep lightly, be perplexed by foreign ways

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Poor Jobs**

Beggar, Client, Dole Recipient, Litter Bearer, Low-Income Teacher, Miner, Street Guide, Street Thief, Street Vendor, Streetwalker, Tenant farmer, Work Gang farmer

### **Struggling Jobs**

Auxiliary Soldier, Barber, cart Driver, Cook, Sign Writer, Slave Cook, Small Store Owner, Street magician, Street Porter

### **Average Jobs**

Astrologer, bath masseur, Bodyguard, Cheap lawyer, Elementary Teacher, Gladiator, Legionary, Minor Civil Servant, Minor Priest, Personal Attendant, Sailor, Scribe, Shop Owner, Skilled Craftsman, Slave Administrator, Slave Entertainer, Small Farm Owner

### **Comfortable Jobs**

Artist, Augur, Bank Secretary, Building Administrator, Charioteer, Civil Servant, Corrupt Civil Servant, Doctor, Gladiator manager (Lanista), Lawyer, Legionary Officer, Merchant, Praetorian Guard, Provincial Tax Collector, Rhetoric Teacher

### **Wealthy Jobs**

Banker, Building Owner, Imperial Favorite, Large Land Owner, Provincial Governor

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