Rath RPG

GM Handbook

For player rules: See the **Players Handbook For advanced aptitudes:** See **Advanced Aptitudes For magic system:** See **Advanced Magic**

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1. Running Your Game

Make It Your Own

Rath was built on player-GM negotiation. The aptitudes and rules in this book are a starting point, not a limit.

Do what feels right for your game: - If a player wants something unusual and it fits your world, figure out how to let them have it - Don't be afraid to modify rules that don't work for your table - The rules exist to support your game, not constrain it

When players ask for something unusual: 1. Say "yes, and let's figure out how" instead of "no" 2. Work together to find the right mechanical fit 3. Adjust after play if it doesn't work— that's expected, not failure

The best campaigns emerge from this collaboration.

NPC Reactions

When NPC reaction isn't obvious, roll **2d6**:

Roll	Reaction
2	Hostile — Attack or threaten
3-5	Unfriendly — Suspicious, unhelpful
6-8	Unsure — Waiting to see what PCs do
9-11	Talkative — Willing to help (for a price)
12	Helpful — Genuinely friendly

Modifiers: +1 polite approach, -1 rude approach, +2 gift/favor offered, -2 bad reputation precedes them

Morale

NPCs have a **morale rating** (typically 5-9). When facing danger, roll **2d6**. If result > morale rating, the NPC flees or surrenders.

Check Morale When: - Half the group is defeated - Leader is killed - Lone enemy reaches half HP - Facing overwhelming odds

Typical Ratings:

Rating	Type	Examples
5	Cowardly	Goblins, bandits

Rating	Type	Examples
6-7	Average	Hired guards, humanoids
8	Brave	Soldiers, loyal guards
9	Fearless	Elite warriors, fanatics
10+	Never flees	Undead, constructs

Henchmen: Check morale when employer dies, they go unpaid, they face traumatic danger, or someone offers a better deal.

Test Difficulty

DC	Difficulty	When to Use
10	Easy	Trained person, good conditions
12	Standard	Default for most tests
15	Challenging	Difficult task, poor conditions
18	Hard	Expert-level difficulty
20	Very Hard	Near-impossible for most

Remember: DC 12 is the default. Only change it when the situation clearly warrants easier or harder.

Note: Players must meet or beat the DC to succeed (d20 + stat ≥ DC).

2. Dice Pools

Rath uses dice pools for two purposes: **timers** (something is coming) and **conditions** (something is happening). Both work the same way but serve different narrative functions.

How Dice Pools Work

1. Create a pool of d6s (size depends on severity)
2. Each interval, roll all dice in the pool
3. Check results and remove dice as specified
4. When the pool is empty, the effect ends (or the event triggers)

Tracking Tip: Write down the pool size (e.g., "6d6 poison"). Roll, apply effects, remove dice, write new total.

Doom Dice (Timers)

Use doom dice for impending events—something bad is coming and players can see the clock ticking.

Setup: Create a pool of **6-10 d6s** based on how much time you want.

damage max (6+6)

When to Use: If characters are being one-shot frequently, or your group prefers tactical play over high-variance chaos.

Gritty Fortune

For deadlier campaigns, limit Fortune Points.

Limited Fortune: Max 1 Fortune instead of 3. Start sessions with 0, earn through natural 20s only.

No Fortune: Remove Fortune entirely. Every roll stands.

Shared Fortune: Party shares a single pool (3-5 points). Any player can spend, but replenishment is slower.

Warning: These significantly increase lethality.

Quick Reference

NPC Reaction (2d6)

2 Hostile | 3-5 Unfriendly | 6-8 Unsure | 9-11 Talkative | 12 Helpful

Morale Check

Roll 2d6 > morale rating = flee/surrender

Condition Dice

Roll pool each interval. 1-2 = effect triggers. 5-6 = remove die.

Doom Dice

Roll pool each interval. Remove up to 2 dice on 5-6. Last die removed = event triggers.

Trap/Lock Scale

Impossible → Disadvantage → Straight → Advantage

Test DC

10 Easy | 12 Standard | 15 Challenging | 18 Hard | 20 Very Hard

After the Funnel: - Each player picks **one survivor** to promote to level 1 - Apply rolled stats - Choose **2 aptitudes** that fit actions during the funnel - Finalize keywords - Calculate proper HP (10 + CON), AC, inventory

Gaining Inherent Aptitudes

Skill Aptitudes can always be learned at level-up.

Inherent Aptitudes represent fundamental nature changes. After character creation, they require: - GM approval - Strong narrative justification - Often significant story events

With Existing Demihuman Keyword: A Dwarf (Darkvision) could gain Treasure Sense through: - Quest to awaken draconic heritage - Blessing from earth spirits - Training with master delver

Through Transformation: Characters can gain new keywords that justify inherent aptitudes: - Werewolf bite → "Lycanthrope" keyword → Natural Weapons, Feral Attack - Magical ritual → "Gargoyle" keyword → Armor Skin, Wings - Infernal pact → "Infernal" keyword → Sense Infernal

Transformations should be: - Significant story events (not off-screen) - Fundamentally change who the character is - Have narrative costs (social consequences, quests, etc.)

Overloaded Inventory

Characters have inventory slots equal to 10 + CON. When carrying more than their limit:

Slots Over	Penalty
1-3 over	Half movement speed
4-6 over	Quarter movement, disadvantage on physical tests
7+ over	Can barely shuffle, no combat actions

Dropping items is a free action. Encourage players to drop packs before combat if overloaded.

6. Optional Rules

Capped Explosions

By default, exploding damage chains infinitely. This creates exciting moments but can result in extreme spikes.

The Rule: When you roll max damage, roll again and add. **If this second roll is also max, stop.** The explosion caps at one additional die.

Maximum With Cap: - d10: 20 damage max (10+10) - d8: 16 damage max (8+8) - d6: 12

Each turn or interval: 1. Roll all remaining dice 2. Remove up to 2 dice showing **5-6** 3. When the **last die is removed**, the event happens

Examples: - Flooding dungeon (8d6) — water rises each round - Pursuing enemies (6d6) — they're getting closer - Ritual completing (10d6) — cultists are almost done - Reinforcements arriving (7d6) — guards heard the fight

Pacing: Larger pools = more time. Removing only on 5-6 (not 4-6) makes it slower. Adjust to fit your desired tension.

Condition Dice (Ongoing Effects)

Use condition dice for ongoing harm—poison coursing through veins, flames burning, wounds bleeding.

How Conditions Work:

1. When affected, create a condition dice pool based on severity

2. Each turn (combat) or interval (exploration), roll all dice

3. **If any dice show 1-2:** The condition's effect triggers

4. **Remove all dice showing 5-6:** The condition is fading

5. When the pool is empty, the condition ends

Key Insight: As dice disappear, the condition becomes less likely to trigger. A character with 2d6 poison left is fighting it off.

Multiple Sources: If hit by the same condition again, add new dice to existing pool.

Poison

When a creature is poisoned, they suffer ongoing effects until their body fights it off.

Initial Save: When first poisoned, CON test DC 12: - **Success:** Start with half dice (round down, minimum 2d6) - **Failure:** Start with full dice pool

Severity: | Type | Dice Pool | |——|————| | Weak poison | 4d6 | | Moderate poison | 6d6 | | Strong poison | 8d6 | | Lethal poison | 10d6+ |

Each turn (combat) or 10 minutes (exploration): 1. Roll all poison dice 2. **On 1-2:** Effect triggers (see below) 3. **On 5-6:** Remove that die

Poison Effects (choose when designing poison): - **Damage:** Take 1 damage per die showing 1-2 - **Paralysis:** Can't act this turn - **Sleep:** Fall unconscious (wake if shaken/damaged) - **Weakness:** Disadvantage on physical tests this turn

Curing Poison: - Basic antitoxin (5 gp): Remove 2d6 from pool - Superior antitoxin (20 gp): Remove 4d6 from pool - Temple/healer (1 gp): Remove all poison dice - Short rest + CON test: Remove additional 1d6 - Long rest + CON test: Remove additional 2d6

Fire

When ignited, a creature suffers ongoing fire damage.

Severity: 4-6d6 depending on source (torch splash vs oil immersion)

Each turn: 1. Roll fire dice 2. **On 1-2:** Take 1 damage per die showing 1-2 3. **On 5-6:** Remove that die (flames dying down)

Extinguishing: - Action to drop and roll (DEX test DC 12): Remove 2d6 - Doused with water: Remove 2d6 immediately

Bleeding

Major wounds cause ongoing blood loss.

Severity: Typically 4d6 for serious wounds

Each turn: 1. Roll bleeding dice 2. **On 1-2:** Take 1 damage per die showing 1-2 3. **On 5-6:** Remove that die (blood clotting)

Stopping the Bleeding: - Action to apply pressure/bandage (no test): Remove 2d6 - Field Medicine aptitude removes all bleeding dice

Disease

Infections cause ongoing harm over longer intervals.

Initial Save: When first infected, CON test DC 12: - **Success:** Start with half dice (round down, minimum 2d6) - **Failure:** Start with full dice pool

Severity: 6-8d6 depending on disease

Each hour (or day for slow diseases): 1. Roll disease dice 2. **On 1-2:** Take 1 damage per die and feel weakened 3. **On 5-6:** Remove that die (immune system fighting)

Curing Disease: - Temple cure (1 gp): Remove all disease dice - Healing magic: As specified by spell - Let it run its course: Eventually the pool empties

Drowning

When out of air underwater, a creature begins drowning.

Setup: 6d6 drowning condition

Each round underwater: 1. Roll drowning dice 2. **On 1-2:** Take 1 damage per die showing 1-2 3. **On 5-6:** Remove that die

Reaching Air: Condition ends immediately when the creature can breathe (surfacing, spell, etc.)

5. Special Situations

Scrolls

Scrolls are single-use magical items containing one spell at a specific level. Each scroll takes 1 inventory slot. When running OSR modules, scroll levels translate directly (a "3rd level scroll" is a level 3 scroll).

Scroll Level: A scroll's level equals its casting DC minus 11. Base spells are level 1; each enhancement adds +1 level.

DC	Scroll Level	Example
12	1	Flame Jet (1d6, 10 ft line)
13	2	Flame Jet +1 step (2d6)
14	3	Flame Jet +2 steps (3d6)
15	4	Flame Jet +3 steps, +1 target
16+	5+	Heavily enhanced spells

Scroll level determines advantage/disadvantage for both using scrolls (any character) and preserving them (Chartomancer). A character with INT 3 has advantage on level 1-2 scrolls, rolls normally on level 3, and has disadvantage on level 4+.

Using Scrolls (Any Character): - Any character can attempt to use a scroll - INT test DC 12 to activate the spell - Success: Effect activates, scroll destroyed - Failure: Nothing happens, scroll destroyed - Advantage if INT > scroll level, disadvantage if INT < scroll level

Chartomancer Aptitude: Characters with the Chartomancer aptitude can preserve scrolls after casting. See Players Handbook.

Scribe Aptitude: Characters with the Scribe aptitude can create scrolls. See Advanced Aptitudes.

Creating Scroll Effects: When creating scrolls as treasure, use the spell lists and scaling rules in Advanced Magic. Start with a base spell (DC 12) and add enhancements to increase power and level.

Spellbooks: - Trade goods worth 50-200 gp depending on contents - Or: Narrative justification for taking Circle of Magic at next level-up - Or: Source material for Scribes to copy spells from

Funnels and Level 0 Characters

A funnel is a deadly adventure where each player controls multiple fragile characters. Survivors become level 1 PCs.

Level 0 Creation: - Each player makes **5 characters** - **Must** roll stats (no array) - No aptitudes, no weapons, no armor - Still roll on gear tables - 10 HP, stats don't apply yet

During the Funnel: - Characters can gain **keywords** through play - "My character has fighter training" → if GM agrees, gain "Fighter" keyword - Keywords grant advantage when relevant - No aptitudes yet—save that for after survival

Average (Level 2-3)

Orc Warrior AC 13, LVL2(2d8), #at 1, dam 1d8, mv 20, ml 7, Person Leather armor, crude weapons.

Wolf AC 12, LVL2(2d8), #at 1, dam 1d6, mv 40, ml 7, Object Pack Tactics. Keen smell.

Zombie AC 10, LVL2(2d8), #at 1, dam 1d8, mv 10, ml 12, Person Never flees. Vulnerable to fire (double damage).

Dangerous (Level 4-5)

Ogre AC 13, LVL4(4d8), #at 1, dam 1d10, mv 20, ml 7, Warhorse Can throw rocks (near range, 1d8).

Troll AC 14, LVL5(5d8), #at 3, dam 1d6/1d6/1d8, mv 30, ml 9, Warhorse Regeneration 5 HP/round. Fire or acid stops regeneration for 1 round.

Wyvern AC 13, LVL5(5d8), #at 2, dam 1d8/1d6, mv 20 (fly 60), ml 8, Warhorse Stinger: Target makes CON test DC 12 with disadvantage or gains 6d6 damage poison condition.

Major Threats (Level 6-8)

Hill Giant AC 13, LVL6(6d8), #at 1, dam 2d8, mv 40, ml 8, Elephant Throw boulders (far range, 2d6). Knocks prone on crit.

Young Dragon AC 16, LVL7(7d8), #at 3, dam 1d8/1d8/1d10, mv 30 (fly 60), ml 10, Warhorse Breath weapon (4d6, near cone, recharge 5-6 on d6). Resistant to breath type.

Vampire AC 15, LVL8(8d8), #at 2, dam 1d8+drain, mv 20, ml 10, Person Regeneration 10 HP/round (stopped by radiant/sunlight). Bite drains 1d4 CON. Charm (WIS DC 15). Shapeshift.

Encounter Balance

- **Equal level monster** = moderate challenge for 1 PC
- **2-3 equal level** = tough fight for party
- **Higher level** = threatens entire party

Use morale. Not every fight goes to the death. Smart enemies flee or surrender.

Unbalanced encounters are fine. Some things should be avoided or outsmarted, not fought.

3. Traps and Locks

The Advantage Scale

Traps and locks exist on an advantage scale:

Impossible → Disadvantage → Straight Roll → Advantage

Characters move up or down this scale based on tools, aptitudes, and trap complexity.

Detecting Traps

Any character can actively search for traps: - Spend your turn examining a 10 ft area - Make a **WIS test DC 12** - Success reveals the trap's location and general mechanism

Dungeon Sense aptitude: Advantage on detection + learn detailed mechanics (trigger, effect, bypass methods, complexity)

Disabling Traps and Picking Locks

Once a trap is detected (or a lock is encountered):

Base: DEX test DC 12 with **disadvantage** (requires thieves' tools)

Without Tools: Impossible (though you can try triggering traps from a distance)

Failing by 5+: Trap triggers OR tools break (1 gp to replace)

Complex Traps and Locks

Some traps and locks are particularly sophisticated. Complex mechanisms shift you **down one step** on the advantage scale:

- Advantage → Straight roll
- Straight roll → Disadvantage
- Disadvantage → Impossible

Simple: Tripwire, basic lock, pit trap **Complex:** Multi-stage mechanisms, master locks, magical wards

Aptitudes That Help

- **Break and Enter** - Advantage with tools (straight roll on complex). Can work without tools at disadvantage

- **Dungeon Sense** - Advantage on detection. Learn complexity and details. No help with disabling

- **Trapsmith** - Advantage with tools (straight roll on complex). Can work without tools (disadvantage on complex). Identify complexity at a glance

Stacking: A character with both Break and Enter and Trapsmith has significant capability, but aptitudes don't stack—use the better one.

Example Situations

Aptitude	tools	lock dificulty	Result
No aptitude	Yes	Simple	Disadvantage
Break and Enter	Yes	Simple	Advantage
Break and Enter	Yes	Complex	Straight roll
Break and Enter	No	Simple	Disadvantage
Break and Enter	No	Complex	Impossible
Trapsmith	No	Complex trap	Disadvantage

4. Monsters

Stat Block Format

Format: AC, LVL(HD), #at, dam, mv, ml, size

- **AC:** Armor Class
- **LVL(HD):** Level/Hit Dice (roll d8s for HP)
- **#at:** Attacks per round
- **dam:** Damage per attack
- **mv:** Movement (feet)
- **ml:** Morale rating
- **size:** Size category

Example: `AC 13, LVL2(2d8), #at 1, dam 1d8, mv 20, ml 7, Person`

Size Categories

Size	Description	Examples
Item	Carryable	Cat, rat, dagger, imp
Object	Bigger than carryable	Barrel, door, wolf
Person	Human-sized	Human, orc, skeleton
Warhorse	Horse-sized	Ogre, troll, wyvern
Elephant	Massive	Giant, dragon

Creating Monsters

Level/Hit Dice:

Level	Threat	Examples
0-1	Weak	Goblins, rats, kobolds
2-3	Average	Orcs, wolves, zombies
4-5	Dangerous	Ogres, wyverns, trolls
6-8	Major	Giants, young dragons
9+	Legendary	Demon lords, ancient dragons

Armor Class:

AC	Type
10-11	Unarmored
12-13	Light armor, hide
14-15	Medium armor, scale
16-17	Heavy armor, plates
18+	Magical, dragon scales

Damage:

Die	Power	Examples
d4	Weak	Rat bite, peasant
d6	Standard	Sword, goblin
d8	Strong	Greataxe, wolf
d10+	Powerful	Ogre club, dragon

Special Abilities: - **Darkvision** — See in darkness - **Pack Tactics** — Advantage if ally nearby - **Regeneration** — Heal X HP/round - **Resistance** — Half damage from type - **Immunity** — No damage from type - **Poison** — Specify dice and effect

Example Monsters

Weak (Level 0-1)

Goblin AC 12, LVL1(1d8), #at 1, dam 1d6, mv 20, ml 6, Person Darkvision. Cowardly when outnumbered.

Skeleton AC 11, LVL1(1d8), #at 1, dam 1d6, mv 20, ml 12, Person Never flees. Blunt weapons deal double, piercing deals half. Immune to poison and fear.

Giant Rat AC 10, LVL0(1d4), #at 1, dam 1d4, mv 30, ml 5, Item Disease: CON DC 12 or 4d6 disease condition.