

ZERO LEVEL RULEBOOK



Complete Rules for Adventuring
as Commoners in 5th Edition
Dungeons & Dragons

ZERO-LEVEL ADVENTURERS

A 5TH EDITION SUPPLEMENT

RULES: THOM DENICK

RULES EDITOR: BENSON CONDIE

LAYOUT & DESIGN: BRENDA HO

COMMONER ARTWORK: KURT KOMODA

WHAT IS ZERO-LEVEL?

Zero-Level “adventurers” are commoners. This is your character before they mastered the fighting arts, studied to learn how to wield arcane spells, or made pacts with otherworldly creatures for amazing powers.

As a Zero-Level, you know you are destined for greater things, and while you toil away at the occupation society has tossed you into, you know that someday, you will get a chance to prove yourself and rise above the rabble.

WHY PLAY ZERO-LEVEL?

Playing a Zero-Level adventurer is an exciting experience. Any wrong move could result in a permanent (and messy death.) Taking risks means something entirely new when the risk could mean the a character’s story. Zero-Level campaigns are no less epic than a standard 5E campaign; you’ll uncover ancient artifacts, battle vicious abominations, explore unlit depths, and solve mind-bending puzzles. Our aim with this supplement is to open up this fun, alternative avenue of play to 5E players.

THE FUNNEL

In standard 5E gameplay, the emphasis on character creation is putting a lot of thought and effort into creating your character’s background from scratch. You can use the Backgrounds systems to create a backstory and history for your character. With Zero-Level characters, you actually create your character’s history through rolling dice and gameplay.

But be warned! Adventuring as a Zero-Level is deadly work, so you will generally be playing 2-4 characters in a Zero-Level adventure hoping that at least one survives.

At the conclusion of the adventure, you hopefully will have at least a couple of adventurers with a story of how they became what they are; ready for their level one adventures.

CHARACTER CREATION

Since you need to have more than one character to play a Zero-Level campaign, we have a series of random tables that you will roll on to generate your character. In our default rules, you won’t be able to pick whether you are a Halfling, Dwarf, Elf, or Human; it will be determined by dice roll. Additionally, your Ability Scores will be determined by straight dice roll.

STEP ONE: ROLL YOUR RACE

Based on the type of fantasy world your campaign is set, your DM will pick a table for you to roll your character’s race on below. Some worlds have an even mix of demi-human races, and some are heavily dominated by humans. If you’re not sure which table to roll on, the Default table is a great pick as it should conform to standard 5E settings like Forgotten Realms and Greyhawk.

Your subrace does not affect the racial abilities you get at level Zero, so choosing it is optional.

Note: This supplement only utilizes materials available in the SRD (Systems Reference Document), this means some of your favorite races may be missing. We’ve provided the basics here, and it should be very easy to add any races you’d like to play to the tables if your DM allows it.



RACIAL TRAITS

Your Race gives you several important base character details that you want to fill in on your character sheet.

SIZE: Size has many affects in 5E including affecting how much you can carry, what weapons you can use, and how much space you take up.

SPEED: Your speed is given in feet, and represents how far you can move during a standard Move action in one round.

LANGUAGE: As a Zero-Level, you speak Common and the language of your race.

ABILITY BONUSES: After rolling your Ability Scores, add these bonuses.

RACIAL ABILITIES: Almost all races have special abilities. We have written in the abilities you get at Zero-Level. For full rules on these abilities, please refer to the Player's Handbook.

RACE TABLE

DEFAULT	HIGH FANTASY	HUMAN DOMINATED	RACE
01-40	01-20	01-64	Human
41-50	21-30	65-69	Halfling
51-60	31-40	70-74	Dwarf
61-65	41-50	75-80	Gnome
66-70	51-60	80-89	Tiefling
71-80	61-70	90-95	Half-Elf
81-90	71-80	96-97	Elf
91-97	81-90	98-99	Half-Orc
98-00	91-00	00	Dragonborn

ZERO LEVEL RACIAL TRAITS

RACE	SIZE	SPEED	EXTRA LANGUAGES	ABILITY BONUS	RACIAL ABILITIES
Human	Medium	30 ft	None	+1 to All	None
Halfling	Small	25 ft	Halfling	+2 Dex	Brave, Halfling Nimbleness
Dwarf	Medium	25 ft	Dwarvish	+2 Con	Darkvision 60', Dwarven Toughness
Gnome	Small	25 ft	Gnomish	+2 Int	Darkvision 60', Gnome Cunning
Half-Elf	Medium	30 ft	Elvish	+2 Cha, +1 Any, +1 Any	Darkvision 60', Fey Ancestry
Elf	Medium	30 ft	Elvish	+2 Dex	Darkvision 60', Fey Ancestry, Trance
Tiefling	Medium	30 ft	Infernal	+2 Cha, +1 Int	Darkvision 60', Hellish Resistance
Half-Orc	Medium	30 ft	Orcish	+2 Str, +1 Con	Darkvision 60', Menacing
Dragonborn	Medium	30 ft	Draconic	+2 Str, +1 Cha	Draconic Ancestry, Damage Resistance

Note: If you'd like to determine a random age for your character, see Appendix A!

DRAGONBORN ANCESTRY TABLE

Because it's a lot more fun to roll your ancestry than pick it, here's a table to help you! Rarity is based on the 1977 Monster Manual.

d100 ROLL	COLOR	DAMAGE RESISTANCE
01-20	Black	Acid
21-40	White	Cold
41-60	Brass	Fire
61-70	Copper	Acid
71-76	Blue	Lightning
77-82	Bronze	Lightning
83-89	Green	Poison
90-96	Red	Fire
97-98	Silver	Cold
99-00	Gold	Cold

STEP TWO: DETERMINE CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES

With Zero-Level characters, there's no point buys, mulligans, or do-overs. We value weird, unusual characters (That incredibly ugly and uncharismatic Tiefling has a place in the world just as much as the min-maxed Half-Orc brawler.) True balance has no place in a Zero-Level game! We want randomness, and we adapt our characters and stories to the dice as they lay.

ROLL ABILITY SCORES

Roll 3d6 for each Ability in order: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, add any racial modifiers you have, and fill in the stat on your character sheet. You may not switch Ability scores around, you must play the rolls as they lay.

After determining your base Ability Scores, be sure to note the modifier on the stat based on standard 5E rules:

ABILITY MODIFIERS CHART

ABILITY SCORE	MODIFIER
3	-4
4-5	-3
6-7	-2
8-9	-1
10-11	+0
12-13	+1
14-15	+2
16-17	+3
17-18	+4
19-20	+5

ROLL HIT POINTS

To determine hit points, roll 1d4 and add your Constitution Modifier. If the result is less than one, your character has one hit point.

FILL SECONDARY STATS

Now that you have determined your primary Ability Scores, you can fill in all of your "secondary" stats including:

PROFICIENCY: Your character has a +2 Proficiency.

INITIATIVE: this is simply your Dexterity modifier.

BASE ARMOR CLASS: assuming you don't have any armor, this is 10 + your Dexterity modifier.

SAVING THROWS: by default you get no proficiency on saving throws. Some occupations may confer a saving throw proficiency.

SKILLS: There is a good chance your character will not survive very long, so no need to fill in all of your character's skill modifiers.

STEP THREE: DETERMINE OCCUPATION

The first step towards determining your occupation is to determine your character's highest Ability Score. In the case of a tie between two Ability Scores, you may choose the table to roll on.

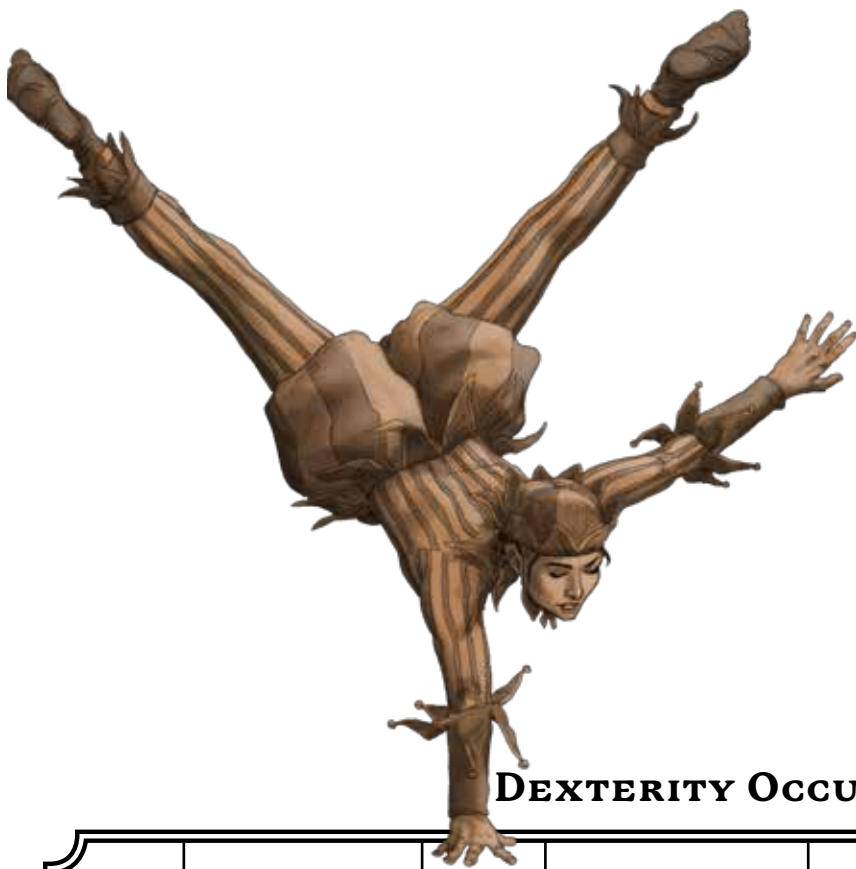
Your Occupation gives your character one proficiency, a starting weapon (which you are also proficient with), some coin, clothes, and a bonus item.

Your Occupation should fill your Background slot on your character sheet.



STRENGTH OCCUPATIONS

1d20	OCCUPATION	COIN	PROFICIENCY	WEAPON	ITEM	CLOTHES
1	Blacksmith	d12 sp	Smith's Tools	Light Hammer	Smith's tools	Common
2	Miner	d20 cp	Investigation	Handaxe	Pick, Miner's	Common
3	Teamster	d8 sp	Strength Saving Throws	Whip	Block and tackle	Common
4	Bodyguard	d10 gp	Heavy Armor	Maul	Ringmail	Traveler's
5	Plowman/woman	d10 cp	Nature	Quarterstaff	A bag of good soil	Common
6	Rough	d6 sp	Intimidation	Club	Leather armor	Common
7	Butcher	d10 sp	Handaxes	Butcher Knife (Handaxe)	5 pounds of jerky	Common
8	Gladiator	d12 gp	Simple Weapons	Net	Chain shirt	Traveler's
9	Woodcutter	d6 sp	Nature	Handaxe	A tie of cut wood	Common
10	Carpenter	d6 gp	Carpenter's Tools	Light Hammer	Carpenter's Tools	Common
11	Milkman/Milkmaid	d8 sp	Animal Handling	Club	Metal bucket	Common
12	Executioner	d12 sp	Intimidation	Greataxe	Basket	Common
13	Mercenary	d12 sp	Simple Weapons	Short Sword	Leather armor	Traveler's
14	Bone Carver	d6 sp	Woodcarver's Tools	Bone Knife (Dagger)	3 large animal bones	Common
15	Mason	d10 cp	Mason's Tools	Light Hammer	Mason's Tools	Common
16	Grinder	d8 sp	Daggers	Dagger	Grinding stone	Common
17	Plattner	d8 sp	Mauls	Maul	Sheet of metal	Common
18	Porter	d8 cp	Perception	Broom (Quarterstaff)	Lye soap	Common
19	Jailer	d4 sp	Investigation	Club	A set of keys	Common
20	Wagoner	d12 cp	Land Vehicles (Wagon)	Whip	Wagon bolts	Common



DEXTERITY OCCUPATIONS

1d20	OCCUPATION	COIN	PROFICIENCY	WEAPON	ITEM	CLOTHES
1	Pickpocket	d12 sp	Sleight of Hand	Shortsword	Thieves' tools	Common
2	Haberdasher	d12 gp	Persuasion	Dagger	3 yards fine cloth	Fine
3	Orphan	d4Be cp	Stealth	Club	A beggar's cup	Common
4	Circus Acrobat	d8 sp	Acrobatics	Scimitar	Portable trampoline	Costume
5	Glassblower	d10 sp	Glassblower's Tools	Blowgun (10 needles)	Glassblower's tools	Common
6	Messenger	d6 sp	Persuasion	Quarterstaff	Bell	Traveler's
7	Locksmith	d4 gp	Thieves' Tools	Dagger	Lock	Common
8	Weaver	d12 sp	Weaver's Tools	Dagger	Weaver's tools	Common
9	Hunter	d10 sp	Nature	Shortbow (20 arrows)	Deer skin	Common
10	Contortionist	d6 gp	Performance	Flail	Circus flier	Costume
11	Potter	d12 sp	Potter's Tools	Quarterstaff	Potter's tools	Common
12	Bandit	d6 gp	Stealth	Shortsword	Caltrops (10)	Traveler's
13	Basketweaver	d4 cp	Weaver's Tools	Dagger	Weaver's tools	Common
14	Bookbinder	d6 sp	Calligrapher's Supplies	Knife (Dagger)	Spool of thread	Common
15	Fletcher	d8 sp	Bows	Short bow	A quiver of arrows (30)	Common
16	Gilder	d4 gp	Jeweler's tools	Knife (Dagger)	Smelting pot	Fine
17	Miniaturist	d6 cp	Painter's supplies	Brush (Club)	Painter's supplies	Common
18	Chicken Butcher	d6 cp	Handaxes	Butcher Knife (Handaxe)	A chicken carcass	Common
19	Glovemaker	d8 sp	Leatherworker's Tools	Knife (Dagger)	A pair of fine leather gloves	Common
20	Jeweler	d4 gp	Jeweler's Tools	Dagger	Jeweler's Tools	Fine



CONSTITUTION OCCUPATIONS

1d20	OCCUPATION	COIN	PROFICIENCY	WEAPON	ITEM	CLOTHES
1	Gong Farmer	d12 cp	Con. Saving Throws	Club	Sack of manure	Common
2	Pig Farmer	d10 sp	Animal Handling	Pitchfork (Spear)	5 lb cured ham	Common
3	Leatherworker	d6 gp	Leatherworker's Tools	Dagger	Leatherworker's tools	Common
4	Rat Catcher	d12 cp	Animal Handling	Net	Bag (with dead rats)	Common
5	Seaman	d8 sp	Sailing Ship	Shortsword	50' Rope	Traveler's
6	Tavern Cook	d6 sp	Cook's Utensils	Cast Iron Pan (Club)	Cook's utensils	Common
7	Brewer	d6 gp	Brewer's Supplies	Steel Beer Stein (Club)	Brewer's Supplies	Common
8	Chandler	d10 sp	Investigation	Scissors (Dagger)	Fine candles (50)	Common
9	Apiarist	d6 gp	Animal Handling	Quarterstaff	Padded armor	Common
10	Stone Carver	d6 sp	Performance	Chisel (Dagger)	3 uncarved bust-sized stone blocks	Common
11	Undertaker	d8 sp	Insight	Light hammer	Bouquet of dried flowers	Fine
12	Grave Digger	d12 cp	Athletics	Greatclub	Shovel	Common
13	Chestmaker	d12 cp	Woodcarver's tools	Club	Chest	Common
14	Broom maker	d6 cp	Woodcarver's tools	Broom (Quarterstaff)	4 heads of broomcorn	Common
15	Sheep Shearer	d4 sp	Short sword	Shears (Shortsword)	Sheepskin	Common
16	Parchmenter	d6 sp	Investigation	Dagger	Parchment (3 sheets)	Common
17	Smelter	d8 sp	Tinkerer's tools	Light hammer	Iron ingot	Common
18	Cooper	d8 cp	Carpenter's tools	Light hammer	Wooden plank	Common
19	Haenyeo (Diver)	d6 sp	Athletics	Dagger	A bushel of oysters	Common
20	Roofer	d12 cp	Carpenter's tools	Light hammer	Carpenter's tools	Common



INTELLIGENCE OCCUPATIONS

1d20	OCCUPATION	COIN	PROFICIENCY	WEAPON	ITEM	CLOTHES
1	Bookkeeper	d8 sp	Investigation	Dagger	Abacus	Common
2	Tax Collector	d12 pp	Intimidation	Longsword	Money sack	Fine
3	Wizard's Apprentice	d10 sp	Arcana	Quarterstaff	Book on arcane subject	Fine
4	Apothecary	d8 sp	Medicine	Sickle	Healer's kit	Common
5	Tinker	d6 sp	Tinker's Tools	Hand Crossbow	Tinker's tools	Common
6	Tutor	d8 sp	History	Quarterstaff	School book	Common
7	Navigator	d6 gp	Navigator's Tools	Shortsword	Navigator's tools	Common
8	Pastry Cook	d8 sp	Cook's utensils	Rolling Pin (club)	Cook's utensils	Common
9	Cartographer	d10 sp	Cartographer's Tools	Compass (dagger)	Cartographer's tools	Traveler's
10	Interpreter	d8 gp	Bonus 2 Languages	Quarterstaff	Book	Traveler's
11	Scrivener	d8 sp	Calligrapher's Supplies	Dagger	Calligrapher's supplies	Common
12	Banker	d10 pp	Insight	Quarterstaff	Abacus	Fine
13	Barrister	d4 gp	Persuasion	Club	Law decree	Fine
14	Clockmaker	d6 gp	Tinker's tools	Dagger	A small clock	Common
15	Lampwright	d10 sp	Glassblower's tools	Quarterstaff	Lantern	Common
16	Lensgrinder	d6 sp	Tinker's tools	Sickle	Magnifying glass	Common
17	Portraitist	d12 sp	Painter's supplies	Dagger	Painter's supplies	Common
18	Herald	d4 sp	Performance	Quarterstaff	Speaking trumpet	Fine
19	Astronomer	d8 cp	History	Quarterstaff	Wheel Chart	Common
20	Knifeman	d12 gp	Medicine	Dagger	Jar of leeches	Fine



WISDOM OCCUPATIONS

1d20	OCCUPATION	COIN	PROFICIENCY	WEAPON	ITEM	CLOTHES
1	Herbalist	d12 sp	Medicine	Club	Healer's kit	Common
2	Sexton	d12 gp	Religion	Mace	Holy symbol (emblem)	Vestments
3	Squire	d6 sp	History	Longsword	Shield	Fine
4	Friar	d8 sp	Religion	Quarterstaff	Holy Symbol (reliquary)	Traveler's
5	Woodward	d8 sp	Nature	Quarterstaff	Druidic focus (totem)	Common
6	Tracker	d8 sp	Survival	Shortsword	Hide armor	Common
7	Painter	d8 cp	Painter's supplies	Dagger	Painter's supplies	Common
8	Ostler	d8 sp	Animal Handling	Whip	Saddlebags	Common
9	Baker	d6 sp	Cook's Utensils	Rolling Pin (club)	Cook's utensils	Common
10	Servant	d12 cp	Perception	Club	Towel	Common
11	Trapper	d12 sp	Survival	Light Crossbow (20 Bolts)	Hunting trap	Common
12	Beadle	d12 cp	Religion	Quarterstaff (with religious ornament)	Holy Symbol	Vestments
13	Cheesemaker	d12 cp	Cook's utensils	Quarterstaff	10lb cheese wheel	Common
14	Bowyer	d4 sp	Bows and Crossbows	Longbow (10 arrows)	A bundle of 5 bow staves	Common
15	Cobbler	d12 cp	Cobbler's Tools	Dagger	Cobbler's tools	Common
16	Furrier	d4 sp	Survival	Longbow (10 arrows)	A badger fur	Common
17	Watchman	d6 sp	Perception	Spear	Leather Armor	Common
18	Midwife	d8 cp	Medicine	Club	Bucket	Common
19	Falconer	d12 cp	Animal Handling	Shortbow (10 arrows)	Bird bait	Common
20	Shaman	d8 cp	Nature	Spear	Druidic Focus (Totem)	Common



CHARISMA OCCUPATIONS

1d20	OCCUPATION	COIN	PROFICIENCY	WEAPON	ITEM	CLOTHES
1	Barker	d8 gp	Perception	Club	Speaking trumpet	Costume
2	Minstrel	d10 gp	Lute	Dagger	A lute	Costume
3	Alewife / Innkeeper	d6 gp	Charisma saving throws	Club	A grocery list	Common
4	Low Noble	d12 pp	Deception	Rapier	Papers declaring nobility	Fine
5	Costermonger	d6 sp	Persuasion	Quarterstaff	A dozen perfect apples	Common
6	Fishmonger	d6 sp	Perception	Dagger	Fishing tackle	Common
7	Mime	d10 gp	Performance	Club	Disguise kit	Costume
8	Storyteller	d12 sp	Performance	Dagger	Journal & pen	Costume
9	Diplomat	d12 gp	Insight	Longsword	Official papers	Fine
10	Peddler	d10 sp	Persuasion	Club	Bag of trinkets	Traveler's
11	Fortune-Teller	d6 sp	Performance	Ornate Dagger	Crystal ball	Costume
12	Drummer	d8 sp	Drum	Short Sword	Drum	Traveler's
13	Confectioner	d8 cp	Cook's utensils	Wooden Spoon (club)	Cook's utensils	Common
14	Milliner	d8 sp	Weaver's tools	Dagger	Weaver's tools	Fine
15	Barber	d6 sp	Medicine	Scissors (dagger)	Jaw pliers	Fine
16	Card Player	d6 cp	Playing card set	Hand Crossbow	Playing card set	Traveler's
17	Poet	d6 cp	Insight	Quill (dagger)	1 Parchment	Common
18	Singer	d6 cp	Performance	Quarterstaff	Song Booklet	Costume
19	Forger	d10 sp	Forgery Kit	Dagger	Forgery kit	Common
20	Conman	d6 gp	Disguise Kit	Shortsword	Disguise Kit	Fine

STEP FOUR (OPTIONAL): ROLL RANDOM STARTING ITEM

If the adventure you are about to embark on doesn't allow you to acquire basic adventuring gear at the start, your DM may allow each of your characters to roll on the tables below to bestow some random starting gear that will make adventuring a bit easier. If you are looking for detailed descriptions, all of these items can be found in the Player's Handbook.

ADVENTURING GEAR

ROLL 1d100			
01-02	Acid Vial	46-55	Torches (4)
03-05	Tent, two-person	56-60	Lamp
05-07	Ball Bearings	61-63	Manacles
08-10	Backpack	64-66	Steel Mirror
11-15	Chain (10 feet)	67-70	Pick, miner's
16-20	Chalk (4 pieces)	70-75	Pitons (10)
21-25	Candles (8)	76-80	Pole (10-foot)
26-30	Empty flasks (3)	81-83	Tinderbox
31-33	Grappling hook	84-85	Ram, portable
34-36	Hammer, sledge	85-90	Rope, Hempen (50-ft)
37-39	Crowbar	90-95	Shovel
40-42	Healer's kit	96-98	Spikes, iron (10)
43-45	Ladder (10-foot)	99-00	Holy Water

ADVENTURING AS A ZERO-LEVEL PC

There are some special rules that apply when playing your less-than-heroic characters as an adventurer.

PROFICIENCIES

As a Zero-Level PC you have a proficiency of +2. However, you are not proficient in anything except for your profession's special proficiency (see charts above) and your starting weapon. This represents many weeks or possibly years of work at your profession.

ARMOR PROFICIENCY

Normally in D&D, If you are not proficient with armor or shields you are wearing, you have disadvantage on any ability check, saving throw, or attack roll that involves Strength or Dexterity. However, this effectively makes it so no Zero-Level would ever wear armor. This didn't seem fun, so for the purposes of a Zero-Level campaign, we recommend ignoring this rule.

WEAPON PROFICIENCY

You can attack with proficiency with your starting weapon, but attacking with other weapons means you don't get the bonus. However, several occupations confer proficiency to a type of weapon. In this case, your character is proficient in all weapons of that type (not just your starting weapon.)

DAMAGE

With poor stats, it's quite possible that you could do less than one damage after making a successful attack. In the case you would do less than one damage as a Zero-Level, you do one damage instead.

NON-MAGICAL HEALING

As a level 0 you have one hit die (a d4), but you may not use it during short rests. You heal as per normal rules: you regain 1 hit point every 1d4 hours. Resting can still occur to regain some hit points, but healing naturally will happen much more slowly than it does in a regular 5E game. For instance, if your group decides to rest for an hour or more, your DM will roll a d4 to determine how many hours it will take to heal one hit point.

DEATH SAVES

Once a Zero-Level reaches zero hit points, they die. They do not make death saves.

LEVELING UP TO ONE

Upon completion of your first adventure, you should level up to one in the class of your choice. In-game this could come as a reward of training from a nearby King, a powerful artifact that bestows its power on your adventurer, or a purse that allows you to finally quit your job and head off to a nearby wizard tower to begin years of study.

Transition your Zero-Level into your new class following these guidelines:

STEP ONE: FINALIZE RACE

If your race has subraces, and you haven't already picked a subrace, you do so at level one. Some subraces confer a bonus to abilities, so be sure to add those. Add all racial features from your base race that you didn't add at Zero-Level, as well as any features you may receive from a subrace.

STEP TWO: CHOOSE A CLASS

You may pick any class when leveling up to one. As a bonus for completing a Zero-Level adventure, you will also get to keep your hit points and hit dice. Add your Zero-Level maximum hit points to the number listed under "Hit Points at 1st Level" number found in the Class Features description.

Example: if you had 4 maximum hit points with a +0 Constitution modifier, and then chose to play a Bard, your level one hit points will be 12.

STEP THREE: FINALIZE ABILITY SCORES

Since you rolled straight 3d6 instead of 4d6 drop lowest die to determine your stats, you gain 5 ability points to distribute as you level up. Since you get to pick which Ability you get to apply these points to, in testing we found 5 points to be about right.

As with normal Ability Score increases, you may not increase a score beyond 20.

The average die roll for a 3d6 roll is 10.50.

The average die roll for a 4d6 drop the lowest die roll is 12.24.

The average stat for the Standard Array is 12.

STEP FOUR: CONVERT BACKGROUND

After picking your class and ability scores, pick a Background. You gain the proficiencies, languages, and feature listed. You do not earn gain the starting coin or items.

We have also included a new background exclusively available to Zero-Level adventurers:



COMMONER

You were never meant to be one of the common folk, toiling away at a day-to-day occupation. You knew in your heart that one day you would find the means to become a true adventurer. Spell battles and clashing steel is where your mind drifted whenever you got lost in your daily duties.

Now, you've done your time, and your experiences will make you stand out from your fellows who had blessed backgrounds being born into high nobility, being recruited and hardened in an army, or kidnapped by a wise witch and taught the ways of the arcane.

You never expected your first adventure to arrive when it did, and somehow, after seeing your friends and companions cut down one after the other, you stand tall, a survivor - ready to face the world.

SKILL PROFICIENCIES:

Pick two new skill proficiencies.

TOOL PROFICIENCIES:

Pick one new tool proficiency.

EQUIPMENT:

Everything you have was earned in your Zero-Level adventure. This likely includes more riches than you ever dreamed of possessing, and perhaps even an artifact or two.

FEATURE: COMMONER'S BOND

You are one with the people, and other commoners who hear of your origins and where you come from will bestow their trust and respect in you. You might gain advantage when negotiating with an innkeeper for a discount on a stay, or have good insight into where an ostler might hide a secret document in his stable. In addition, you are a master of your former occupation, and your knowledge related to that occupation is superior—how useful that will be in future adventures remains to be seen.





RUNNING A ZERO-LEVEL ADVENTURE

This section contains some general guidelines for Dungeon Masters. There's nothing secret in here, but if you are just planning on playing as a Zero-Level, you can stop reading here.

INITIATIVE

Initiative with 16-24 characters can be quite tedious, so we recommend using an alternative initiative system to speed up combat.

Have all players (and the DM) roll 1d20 and add their highest initiative modifier among their characters. Play proceeds in that initiative order, with each player activating all of their characters on their turn.

Or, have all players (and the DM) roll 1d20 and add their highest initiative modifier among their characters. Whoever rolls highest goes first; and

then play continues clockwise around the table, with each player activating all of their characters and the DM's spot representing all of the monsters' actions. This system is so simple, it's quite easy to re-roll at the beginning of each round of combat to make it a bit more exciting for players.

Use cards (available at <http://weird.works!>) to represent each player. Shuffle the cards into a deck and draw cards to determine who will go next in combat order.

CHARACTER LIFE EXPECTANCY & CAMPAIGN BALANCE GUIDELINES

Unlike in standard adventures, players shouldn't have the expectation that any of their Zero-Level characters will make it to the end of the adventure. For this reason, you don't generally

need to pull any punches on unlucky characters who fall into traps or fall victim to a vicious attack. Generally, players can take only one or two hits before they die. To compensate for this, players should have access to 3-4 characters in the adventure. Here are some additional tips to make sure everyone has fun in a Zero-Level session:

SPREADING ATTACKS AROUND

Because of the nature of the gameplay, it can be quite easy for a player to feel picked on if several of their characters die due to bad luck while the rest of the players have their starting characters still alive. To prevent this, it's a good idea to distribute attacks around to different players' characters rather than truly picking random targets.

FEARSOME OPPONENTS

When a character has one hit point, it doesn't matter if they take 1d4 damage or 1d6 damage from an attack. This means you can throw some big, very scary monsters at the level zeros, and as long as the creature doesn't have an extremely high armor class (14 armor class or under) or hit point pool, the Level-Zeros should be able to overcome the challenge. However, this generally will thin the ranks significantly, so be sure to limit extremely deadly monsters to boss fights and key points in the adventure.

One thing to be extra cautious of utilizing in a game are area effect attacks. If you do use an area effect attack, make sure to give players a chance to reduce the damage to zero by succeeding on a saving throw. Avoid spells like fireball which could easily wipe out an entire party of Zero-Level adventurers.

REINFORCEMENTS

If a player finds themselves out of characters, or if there is a total party wipe, it's quite easy to add in commoner reinforcements to practically any adventure. Players may find townsfolk bound by the last group of enemies, or players could assume the roles of their previous characters' relatives seeking their missing brethren.

ADDING ADDITIONAL RACES

If you want to add races not included within these rules, follow these guidelines:

Keep the race's Ability Score modifications the same.

Keep the Size, Speed, and Vision the same.

Most races have multiple additional traits. If they do, pick the one that is simplest and give that to your Zero-levels. For instance, simply gaining a proficiency is a perfect base trait to give. A trait like the Dragonborn's breath weapon is way too powerful for a Zero-Level to have access to, so we give them just the resistance part of their Draconic Ancestry trait.

USING LEVEL ONE ADVENTURES

Any level one adventure that is designed for 4-6 level one adventurers can be used as a Zero-Level adventure for 16-24 commoners. However, be aware, that it's extremely unlikely that anyone in the party will be able to pick locks (unless they are lucky with an occupation roll), and there is no access to spells. So, you may need to slightly modify some of the traps, secrets, and other challenges set in the adventure.

Combat encounters should be about the same, but be wary of area effect attacks and some monsters (like Swarms) may be much more effective against commoners than level one adventurers.

“TOURNAMENT” STYLE VS. STANDARD ADVENTURE

Depending on the type of adventure you are running, you may want to run the adventure “Tournament” style. In the Tournament style, each player runs one character, but the character is quickly replaced via an event in the adventure. For instance, if the players are moving through a village destroyed by giant-sized goblins, after three characters are lost fighting “Ogold the Elephantine,” the party could find three replacement characters hiding in the burning tavern at the end of the street.

Tournament style allows you to play with a lot of players, with some players sitting out waiting for the next death. Additionally, managing one character is much easier for beginning players, and depending on the group, may be the way to go.

CONVERTING A ZERO-LEVEL DCC ADVENTURE TO ZERO-LEVEL 5E

In Appendix N, we make some recommendations for Dungeon Crawl Classics Zero-Level adventures that would work well with this system. If you do use one of these adventures, you have to make some slight adjustments to align the two systems:

Luck is probably the biggest consideration. Since Luck isn't represented in the same way in 5E, you should convert Luck checks to an appropriate Ability check. For instance, if a player failing a Luck check would be blown off a bridge, convert that to a Strength check with a DC 10. If the module instructs you to determine the player with the lowest luck, you can do this manually by having all players roll a d20, and whoever rolls lowest is the least lucky.

Saving Throws and Abilities are roughly analogous with Reflex = Dexterity, Personality = Wisdom. Will = Wisdom saving throw, Fortitude = Constitution saving throw, Reflex = Dexterity saving throw.

When a special effect calls for corruption or some other DCC-centric mechanic, it's generally very easy to look up the effect on a DCC table and convert that to an affect in 5E. A lot of the really crazy stuff doesn't necessarily have rules applied to it.

When asked to subtract 1d from a roll, instead impose disadvantage on that roll.

When making a "crazy dice" roll (for instance a d7 or d24), it's easiest to just pick a die closes to that number and have them roll that die instead.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We owe so much of this work to the innovation of Joseph Goodman; creator of Dungeon Crawl Classics. DCC is a fantastic system, and when I'm not playing D&D, I'm usually running a DCC Tournament or game. They also make a great series of D&D adventurers including the official Original Adventures Reincarnated series and adventure shorts in Fifth Edition Fantasy.

We also are indebted to Shawn Vincent for providing us with a ton of research on medieval occupations on his webpage dedicated to them.

<http://www.svincent.com/MagicJar/Economics/MedievalOccupations.html>

—Thom Denick

Culver City, Oct. 2020

APPENDIX A: DISTRIBUTED RACIAL AGE CHARTS

This weighted table provides a random age within a range that a particular race would most likely begin adventuring. However, it doesn't completely exclude the adventurer who begins adventuring in old age or as a child.

Roll a d100 to determine the age group, and a second roll as indicated in the formula in the grid.

ROLL 1d100					
RACE	01-05 (CHILD)	06-20 (ADOLESCENT)	21-70 (YOUNG ADULT)	71-90 (MIDDLE AGE)	91-100 (OLD AGE)
<i>Human</i>	$1d4 + 8$	$1d6 + 12$	$1d20 + 18$	$1d20 + 38$	$1d20 + 58$
<i>Halfling</i>	$1d10 + 9$	$1d20 + 20$	$1d20 + 40$	$2d20 + 80$	$3d20 + 160$
<i>Dwarf</i>	$1d10 + 11$	$1d10 + 1d20 + 20$	$1d100 + 50$	$1d100 + 150$	$1d100 + 250$
<i>Gnome</i>	$1d10 + 10$	$1d20 + 20$	$1d100 + 40$	$1d100 + 140$	$1d100 + 240$
<i>Tiefling</i>	$1d4 + 8$	$1d6 + 12$	$1d20 + 18$	$1d20 + 38$	$2d20 + 58$
<i>Half-Elf</i>	$1d4 + 8$	$1d6 + 12$	$1d20 + 18$	$1d100 + 38$	$1d20 + 138$
<i>Elf</i>	$1d4 + 10$	$4d20 + 14$	$1d6 + 3d100 + 94$	$2d100 + 400$	$1d100 + 600$
<i>Half-Orc</i>	$1d4 + 4$	$1d6 + 8$	$1d20 + 14$	$1d10 + 34$	$1d20 + 44$
<i>Dragonborn</i>	$1d6 + 3$	$1d6 + 9$	$1d20 + 15$	$1d20 + 35$	$1d20 + 55$

APPENDIX B: CHARACTER CREATION EXAMPLE

In this appendix, we show an example of how to create a character from start-to-finish.

STEP ONE: DETERMINE RACE

I roll a 35 on a d100, which means my character is Human.

STEP TWO: ROLL YOUR STATS

I roll 3d6 six times, and get: 13, 10, 11, 8, 8, 10. Since I'm Human, I get to add +1 to all of my Abilities. This results in the following Ability Scores:

Strength: 14 (+2), Dexterity: 11 (+0),
Constitution: 12 (+1), Intelligence: 9 (-1),
Wisdom: 9 (-1), Charisma: 11(+0)

Next, I roll hit points and add my Constitution modifier. I roll a 1 on a 1d4, and have a +1 Constitution modifier, so I have 2 maximum hit points.

Now I know my Initiative (+0), Armor Class (10), and saving throw modifiers. Additionally, I get the Common language for being Human.

STEP THREE: DETERMINE OCCUPATION

Since my highest ability score is Strength, I roll on the Strength occupation table. This means

1d20	OCCUPATION	COIN	PROFICIENCY	WEAPON	ITEM	CLOTHES
15	Mason	dro cp	Mason's Tools	Light Hammer	Mason's Tools	Common

my occupation is a Mason. I fill that in the “Background” spot on my Character Sheet.

Next, I roll 1d6 to determine the amount of Silver Pieces I have.

I add Mason's Tools to my inventory, along with common clothes, and a Light Hammer which serves as my starting weapon. I get to add +2 to my Light Hammer attacks as my proficiency. This means, I will roll 1d20 + 2 (Str) + 2 (Proficiency) on my attack rolls.

Finally I mark down Mason's Tools in my skill proficiencies.

STEP FOUR: (OPTIONAL) RANDOM STARTING ITEM

My DM says we need adventuring gear for the campaign, so I get to roll a d100 and compare it on the Adventuring Gear table. I roll a 09, so I get a backpack.

I'm all done with character generation, so I name him Hamilton Brickyard, and he's ready to play!



APPENDIX N: RECOMMENDED ZERO LEVEL ADVENTURES

Goodman Games' Dungeon Crawl Classics (DCC) is the primary place to get access to an extended Zero-Level adventure library. DCC is based on 3rd edition and is in-turn very easy to convert to 5E on the fly.

We recommend the following official Level Zero Dungeon Crawl Classic adventures:

Hole in the Sky

Sailors of the Starless Sea

They Served Brandolyn Red

The Portal Under the Stars

(In core DCC Rules book.)

SOME EXCELLENT THIRD PARTY ADVENTURES:

Sanctum of the Snail

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/240336/>

Sky ov Crimson Flame

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/208425/>

Greenwood of the Fey Sovereign

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/242362/>

Carnival of the Damned

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/168167/>

APPENDIX O: OPEN GAMING LICENSE

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ZERO LEVEL CHARACTER

Player Name

Character Name

Inspiration



STATS

Race

Size

Occupation

	Score	Modifier	Saving Throw Proficiency
STR			☆
DEX			☆
CON			☆
INT			☆
WIS			☆
CHA			☆

Racial Traits		Inventory	
Proficiency (+2)		Weapons	
Weapon Proficiency		To Hit	Damage
Skill Proficiency		To Hit	Damage
Coins & Treasure	PP	GP	SP
	EP	CP	

Initiative

Speed

HP

MAX HP



AC

Hit Dice



ZERO LEVEL CHARACTER

Player Name

Character Name

Inspiration



STATS

Race

Size

Occupation

	Score	Modifier	Saving Throw Proficiency
STR			☆
DEX			☆
CON			☆
INT			☆
WIS			☆
CHA			☆

Racial Traits		Inventory	
Proficiency (+2)		Weapons	
Weapon Proficiency		To Hit	Damage
Skill Proficiency		To Hit	Damage
Coins & Treasure	PP	GP	SP
	EP	CP	

Initiative

Speed

HP

MAX HP



AC

Hit Dice



QUICK CHARACTER CREATION RULES

ROLL YOUR RACE

You can find the race tables on Page 3. Pick a table appropriate to the fantasy world you are adventuring in.

Note you do not get all standard Racial Abilities. Consult the table on Page 3 to determine which Racial Abilities you gain.

If you roll a Dragonborn, use the table on Page 4 to determine your draconic heritage.

ROLL YOUR ABILITY SCORES

Roll 3d6 six times.

Fill your Abilities in the order rolled (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma.)

Add your racial stat bonuses.

Determine your Ability modifiers (see chart on Page 4.)

Roll hit points ($1d4 + \text{Constitution modifier}$).

Fill in your Initiative (Dexterity modifier), Armor Class ($10 + \text{Dexterity modifier}$), Saving Throws, Skills and Languages.

DETERMINE OCCUPATION

Determine your highest ability. If you have two equal highest abilities, you can pick which one to use for your occupation.

Roll 1d20 on the occupation table that matches your highest ability. (Pages 5-10.)

Note your Occupation in your Background.

Roll the coin die to determine your starting money.

Add the proficiency to your character sheet.

Add your weapon, starting item, and clothes to your inventory.

ROLL RANDOM STARTING ITEM

If your DM allows it, roll for an additional adventuring starting item. (Page 11.)

LEVELING UP TO ONE QUICK RULES

FINALIZE RACE

Pick a subrace (if applicable.)

If the subrace gives you an Ability Score bonus, add that as well.

Add all racial features from your race that you didn't add at Zero-Level.

CHOOSE A CLASS

You may pick any class when leveling up to one.

Add your Zero-Level maximum hit points to your class's "Hit Points at 1st Level" number.

Add your Zero-Level hit die ($1d4$) to your total hit dice.

FINALIZE ABILITY SCORES

Increase your Ability scores 5 times.

You may apply this increase to one score multiple times.

You may not exceed 20 in any of your Ability scores.

CONVERT BACKGROUND

Pick a background and gain the proficiencies, languages, and feature listed.

Alternatively, you can pick the Commoner background on Page 13.