

COMBAT ADVANTAGE

Now that this idea is done and finished, it's not exactly turning out as planned. The original concept was to make a "gag role" for 4e that was a neat concept but presented as more of a joke but when I actually started putting the pieces together, it actually works. So what was intended to be nothing more than a moment's snicker has now become an interesting prospect that could add a little bit of flavor to your campaign.

Sidekicks are for any GMs and players who enjoyed characters like gully dwarves, hobbits, and any traditional view of a stereotypical gnome or halfling; or the addition of a humanizing element to the campaign by taking on the vengeful villager seeking revenge for his family; or the young apprentice without the proper tutelage. These are special NPC members of the party who hold a personal place in the players' hearts for their charm and personality – they never hold a strategic importance to the battle, yet they make our favourite games richer for their presence.

Todd Crapper

Sidekicks

They are the loyal followers of mighty heroes, firm believers in the cause, sworn to repay a PC for his deeds with his life while offering no incredible skills. In time, they become an equal force within the party and contribute that unique element to the campaign to make it one of your most memorable ventures.

Sidekicks are a special role in that they are minions designed to aid the PCs. Typically beginning as NPC guides, packmules, and sources of comedy relief, a sidekick can become a precious member of the party over time and can learn to take on the rigors of a class to fight side-by-side with the rest of the party... possibly even becoming a player character themselves.

This special edition of Combat Advantage provides complete rules for creating sidekicks in your campaign, along with three examples and rules for expanding sidekicks into class-based NPCs.

The Sidekick Role

"Sidekick" is a special role assigned to an NPC allied with the heroes. They are treated as minions initially and expand into more competent members of the party over time. Any existing minion can be easily converted to a sidekick with very little effort should you choose to incorporate one into your campaign. They are considered allies and gain the benefits of any powers and rituals invoked on the party (unless a player chooses not to allow the sidekick).

Sidekicks each have a special ability involving hit points. Rather than gain experience in the traditional sense as the PCs, sidekicks gain additional hit points as they assist the party in quests through combat and non-combat encounters. For more details on this ability, see the Expanding Sidekicks section.

Creating a Sidekick

Use the following guidelines for creating your own sidekick. Choose an appropriate level for the sidekick based on the average level of the party (typically half of the party's level), but it is rare to find a sidekick higher than the heroic tier.

Initiative (1/2 level)

Hit Points 1; a missed attack never damages a sidekick

AC 12 + (4/5 level; round up)

Other Defenses 10 + (4/5 level; round up)

Attack vs AC 3 + (level)

Attack vs Other Defenses 2 + (4/5 level; round up)

All sidekicks have the Lucky Break power, as detailed below.

Lucky Break Sidekick Power

That last one should have killed you...

Daily

Immediate Reaction **Personal**

Trigger: The sidekick is reduced to 0 hit points or less by a single attack.

Effect: Make a save throw. If you succeed, you are instead unconscious and helpless until attended to by an ally (as a minor action by the ally).

Sidekick Examples

Helpful Guide

Small/medium natural humanoid

Level 5 Sidekick

XP -

Leaning heavily on his walking stick, this stout figure wears a wide smile on his face. He'll know the way.

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +8

HP 1; a missed attack never damage a sidekick

AC 16, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 14

Speed 6

⊕ **Walking Stick** (standard; at-will) • **Martial, Weapon**

+8 vs AC; 1d6+2 damage

[R] **Sling** (standard; at-will) • **Martial, Weapon**

Range 2/5; +9 vs AC; 1d4+2 damage

Lucky Break (immediate reaction, when the sidekick is reduced to 0 hit points or less; daily)

The helpful guide makes a save throw and remains at 0 hit points if successful. He is considered unconscious and helpless until attended to by an ally (minor action from the ally).

Neutral

Languages Common

Skills History +7, Nature +10

Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+4)

Con 10 (+2) **Int** 14 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+3)

Equipment walking stick, sling, backpack

Helpful guides are commonly found in major communities and remote villages. Their knowledge of the surrounding terrain is impressive and they know secret routes and whispered rumours regarding some of the nasty elements of their region. They rarely accept payment and enjoy the pleasure of company or are swayed to the heroes' cause and will back them up in any way they can.

Combat

While untrained in combat, helpful guides can swing a wicked walking stick over the heads of many monsters. They are never helpless and carry a sling with them to hunt game or fend off orc attacks.

Young Follower **Level 3 Sidekick**
Medium natural humanoid **XP -**
His face is soiled, his back is sore, and his fingertips are bloody but he carries the widest grin of anyone in the party.

Initiative +1 **Senses** Perception +4

HP 1; a missed attack never damage a sidekick

AC 15, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13

Speed 6

⊕ **Frying Pan** (standard; at-will) • **Martial, Weapon**

+6 vs AC; 1d4+1 damage

Determination

A young follower gains a +2 bonus to his Strength score for encumbrance when carrying supplies within 5 squares of his allies.

Lucky Break (immediate reaction, when the sidekick is reduced to 0 hit points or less; daily)

The young follower makes a save throw and remains at 0 hit points if successful. He is considered unconscious and helpless until attended to by an ally (minor action from the ally).

Neutral

Languages Common

Skills Nature +5, Streetwise +5

Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 11 (+1) **Wis** 12 (+2)

Con 12 (+2) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)

Equipment pot and pans, backpack, tattered blanket

Naïve and possibly misguided fans, young followers want to become adventures just like the heroes they tag along with. Eager to carry their backpacks, cook their meals, and forage for herbs needed in rituals, they are beyond willing to prove their worth to the heroes under any circumstances.

Combat

Without any proper weapons training, they swing whatever they can get their hands on and hope it either kills the target or gives them a chance to run away before the target turns around and stabs them to death.

Lone Survivor**Level 8 Sidekick****Medium natural humanoid****XP -***There is a rage in his eyes that will never be quenched until his family has been avenged...***Initiative** +4 **Senses** Perception +7**HP** 1; a missed attack never damage a sidekick**AC** 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16**Speed** 6⊕ **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) • **Martial, Weapon**

+11 vs AC; 1d6+2 damage

↩ **Hateful Strike** (standard; encounter; the targets must be the lone survivor's mortal enemy)

Close burst 1; +10 vs Fortitude; 1d6+5 damage

Lucky Break (immediate reaction, when the sidekick is reduced to 0 hit points or less; daily)

The lone survivor makes a save throw and remains at 0 hit points if successful. He is considered unconscious and helpless until attended to by an ally (minor action from the ally).

Neutral**Languages** Common**Skills** History +7, Nature +8**Str** 12 (+5) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+5)**Con** 13 (+5) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 12 (+5)**Equipment** short sword, daughter's burned teddy bear

As the only villagers remaining from a vicious attack, the lone survivor was discovered by the heroes and travels with them. He is eager to learn the ways of the sword, master the arcane energies of a spell, or perfect his skill in the shadows to one day avenge his loved ones.

Combat

Lone survivors have a propensity for excessive and thoughtless violence. They dive into combat without strategy or consideration for their own safety and unleash untapped rage on their mortal enemies. Given time and patience, they can become a formidable member of the party... if they can stay alive that long.

Apprentice**Level 6 Sidekick****Medium natural humanoid****XP -***That youthful gaze betrays a raw power just out of his control.***Initiative** +3 **Senses** Perception +6**HP** 1; a missed attack never damage a sidekick**AC** 17, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16**Speed** 6☹ **Force Blast** (standard; at-will) • **Force**

Range 5; +9 vs AC; 1d8+2 damage

↩ **Disruption** (standard; at-will) • **Thunder**

Close burst 2; +8 vs Fortitude; 1d4+2 damage thunder and target is stunned (save ends)

Lucky Break (immediate reaction, when the sidekick is reduced to 0 hit points of less; daily)

The apprentice makes a save throw and remains at 0 hit points if successful. He is considered unconscious and helpless until attended to by an ally (minor action from the ally).

Neutral**Languages** Common**Skills** Arcana +10, History +7**Str** 8 (+2) **Dex** 11 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+4)**Con** 10 (+3) **Int** 15 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+3)**Equipment** homemade spellbook, torn robe

Many cultures rich in magic will only endow their lessons to the wealthy and fortunate, forsaking genuine talent due to lineage. Apprentices seek out the knowledge of magic but lack the means to gain a formal education and so they travels the wilds in the hopes of joining forces with an adventuring party.

Combat

With only small range spells at his disposal, the apprentice can make do by pushing around opponents with a few Force Blasts and breaking up crowds with his Disruption spell.

Expanding Sidekicks

When run properly, sidekicks can become an integral part of the adventuring team. They develop quirks, habits, and personality to endear themselves to the players and heroes will throw themselves in front of imminent danger to save them. Without their sidekick, the party is no longer complete. When that day comes, it is time to make them more than just a sidekick.

These rules provide guidelines for adapting sidekicks into complete NPCs or even player characters.

Skills: Sidekicks are treated as supporting characters and, as such, are not as detailed as PCs. As time progresses, they will be called upon

to perform any number of skills not listed in their initial design. Treat all skills provided in the initial sidekick design as trained skills; all other skills are considered untrained.

Accomplishments: Sidekick earn accomplishments as they grow and develop into more than just sidekicks. Every time a sidekick performs an action that would provide a PC with experience points, they gain an accomplishment. Once the sidekick has earned a number of accomplishments equal to their level, they gain one permanent hit point. The sidekick increases any modifiers to his attack rolls, ability scores, and so on as per the standard rules for level adjustment and the sidekick creation guidelines given above.

The sidekick gains one aspect from a template he should choose to train in for every increase to his hit point total. For example, if the sidekick is training to become a cleric, he can choose the XXXX prayer to add to his repertoire. When the sidekick has gained three such powers from the appropriate NPC template, he becomes a full-fledged character from that template at his current level.

Converting Roles: Converting the sidekick to a NPC template removes the sidekick role and any corresponding powers, such as Lucky Break, from the character's power list.

Experience Points: Once the sidekick gains a full NPC template, he earns XP as every other member of the party, but the former sidekick does not count as a party member when dividing XP. For example, if there are five PCs and one NPC in the party, the XP award for an encounter is only divided by five and the NPC receives equal share.

Becoming a Player Character: Instead of rising from sidekick to NPC, any willing player can take the character on as a PC. Simply create a fully detailed player character at the former's sidekick's level or at a level chosen by the DM (particularly in the case of a former sidekick in the heroic tier while the other PCs are in the paragon tier). Such choices can be tricky and are difficult to cover under this article – be sure to involve all players in a discussion as to allow a co-operative introduction of a new PC to the group.

Coming Soon...



*Combat Advantage is a series of free supplemental material for the
Dungeon & Dragons 4E Roleplaying Game™ courtesy of*



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For use with the 4th Edition



Requires the use of the D&D Player's Handbook,® Monster Manual,® and
Dungeon Master's Guide® Player's Handbook® 2, Monster Manual® 2, Adventurer's Vault™
core rulebooks, available from Wizards of the Coast, LLC.

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 4th Edition PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, written by Rob Heinsoo, Andy Collins, and James Wyatt; DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE, written by James Wyatt; and MONSTER MANUAL, written by Mike Mearls, Stephen Schubert and James Wyatt; PLAYER'S HANDBOOK 2, written by Jeremy Crawford, Mike Mearls, and James Wyatt; MONSTER MANUAL 2, written by Rob Heinsoo, and Chris Sims; Adventurer's Vault, written by Logan Bonner, Eytan Bernstein, and Chris Sims. © 2008, 2009 Wizards of the Coast. All rights reserved.