

FANTASY HERO



Steven S. Long

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FANTASY HERO

A GENRE BOOK FOR THE HERO SYSTEM



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DEDICATION

To all the gamers with whom I've had such amazing Fantasy adventures and explored so many wondrous Fantasy worlds.

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INTRODUCTION



Fantasy has long been the most popular genre for gaming — in fact, it's the genre that led to the creation of roleplaying games in the first place. The release of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game in the mid-Seventies introduced millions of people to the concept of roleplaying, slaying monsters, and adventuring using only their imaginations, some paper and pencils, and dice. D&D inspired many other games, including *Champions* and the *HERO System* — and thus, eventually, this book (and its predecessors, the first edition released in 1985, the second in 1990, and the third in 2003).

But long before gaming came along, Fantasy was working its magic on the minds of readers. Beginning with the tales and legends of ancient days, and leading up to novels by such modern masters of the genre as Tolkien, Vance, Dunsany, Moorcock, Howard, Leiber, Kurtz, and Kay, stories of wizards, quests, swordplay, dragons, and magic have long enthralled us. In fact, most gamers come to Fantasy gaming through their love of Fantasy literature, rather than the other way around.

Thanks to their interest in Fantasy, gamers have run Fantasy campaigns using the *HERO System* rules for decades — before there ever was an official “Fantasy Hero” book, in fact. No two Fantasy settings are identical, and the unmatched adaptability, flexibility, and customizability of the *HERO System* makes it a natural for Fantasy gaming. Rather than forcing you to use a pre-defined list of spells, monsters, or the like, *Fantasy Hero* lets you decide what magic is like, how characters create and cast spells, what attributes different types of characters have, how strong giants are, and how your Fantasy world functions.

Thus, *Fantasy Hero* is a *genre book*, a sort of “guidebook” to the genre of Fantasy that shows you how to use the *HERO System* rules to create the sort of Fantasy campaigns and characters you want — whether that's in the style of your favorite Fantasy novels, short stories, and movies, or some idea that's entirely original to you.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Fantasy Hero is designed both for players experienced with Fantasy roleplaying and those who are new to this style and genre of play. Nothing in these pages is secret or for the GM's eyes only, so every reader can read it all the way through and then decide which portions he wants to utilize.

Chapter One, *Warriors, Wizards, And Wondrous Worlds: The Fantasy Genre*, delves into the nuts and bolts of Fantasy as a genre. First it discusses what “Fantasy” is, and describes many of the classic Fantasy “bits” and elements — things like dragons, necromancy, prophecies, and swords. Then it explores the major sub-genres of Fantasy, such as High Fantasy, Epic Fantasy, Swords And Sorcery, and Urban Fantasy, as well as the interaction of Fantasy with meta-genres such as Tragedy, Comedy, and Romance.

Chapter Two, *Heroes Of The Realm*, reviews the subject of Fantasy Hero character creation in two sections. The first section contains over five dozen Racial, Environment/Ancestry, Culture, and Professional Templates covering not only the “typical” races and professions found in Fantasy gaming — dwarves, elves, gnomes, warriors, wizard, priests, and so on — but many more unusual ones as well (winged folk, lizard-men, shamans, bounty hunters, and the like). The second section reviews the major elements of the *HERO System*, such as Skills and Powers, and describes how they function in Fantasy games. This section includes several new or expanded Perks and Talents as well.

Chapter Three, *Battles And Blades: Combat And Adventuring*, discusses the subject of Fantasy Hero combat. It includes optional rules for the use of Combat Modifiers and Maneuvers in Fantasy settings, an expanded weapons list and rules for weapons use, and a mass combat system so you can include battles and sieges in your games.

Chapter Four, *Arcane Creations: Magic*, is perhaps the most important one in the book. Magic is a core defining element of most Fantasy settings, and how magic works influences many other aspects of the setting. Thus, it's important for the GM to take the time to define how magic functions in his campaign, and what affect it has on society, history, the economy, and even geography. First the GM has to create a *magic system*, a framework and set of rules explaining how magic

ABBREVIATIONS

Fantasy Hero uses the following abbreviations to refer to other *HERO System* books:

6E1: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume I: Character Creation*

6E2: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume II: Combat And Adventuring*

APG: *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide*

HSB: *The HERO System Bestiary*

HSEG: *The HERO System Equipment Guide*

HSMA: *HERO System Martial Arts*

HSS: *HERO System Skills*

UBA: *The Ultimate Base*

works in the game. After he knows how magic works generally, he has to create *spells* for the characters to buy (or let the players create their characters' spells themselves). This chapter walks you step-by-step through the process, discussing not only basic considerations but social and rules-related issues; it includes over a dozen sample magic systems, each with several spells, to get you started. Lastly, the chapter describes enchanted items — how they function in the campaign, how characters can create them, and so forth — and provides examples.

Chapter Five, *Beyond The Fields We Know: Fantasy Worlds And Races*, describes how to create Fantasy settings and races. For many gamers, creating their own Fantasy world is one of the most enjoyable things about gaming, and this chapter discusses the creation process in detail. It includes sections on government, population, trade, travel, technology, and religion, among other subjects.

Chapter Six, *Wonders Of The Imagination: Gamemastering Fantasy Hero*, provides advice for the GM. It discusses campaign guidelines and standards, themes, and morality, and covers the Fantasy Hero environment (including underground adventuring, traps, and the like). It also describes Fantasy villains and NPCs — how to create memorable ones and use them to best effect in the game.

Chapter Seven, *Drudaryon's Legion*, provides a selection of sample heroes and villains to inspire players and GMs, or even to adopt for their own use. The characters all come from Hero Game's Turakian Age setting, but you can easily adapt them to other Fantasy worlds.

Lastly, the book concludes with a detailed Bibliography of Fantasy literature and movies. It's not complete (no Fantasy bibliography could be!), but it contains a long list of Fantasy works gamers may find inspirational — not to mention just plain fun.

So, draw your sword, prepare your spells, and get ready — realms of wondrous Fantasy await!

HISTORICAL REALISM

Most Fantasy games portray quasi-medieval societies, or other societies based, in whole or in part, on earlier eras of human civilization. This raises the issue of conducting research to make the settings more historically “accurate,” increase the verisimilitude of the world, and even unearth unusual and interesting facts that might add flavor and color to a game.

While there's no question that historical research often proves helpful to a Fantasy game, Fantasy Hero only contains a few historical facts here and there as points of comparison. There are several reasons for this (beside the lack of page space).

First, there's often little consensus on what constitutes “historical fact.” Historians have only limited information about many subjects relevant to gaming, and in other cases their conclusions inspire extensive discussion and debate. What one historian (or gamer) regards as “fact,” another dismisses as speculation or erroneous information — and it's entirely possible both views are justified.

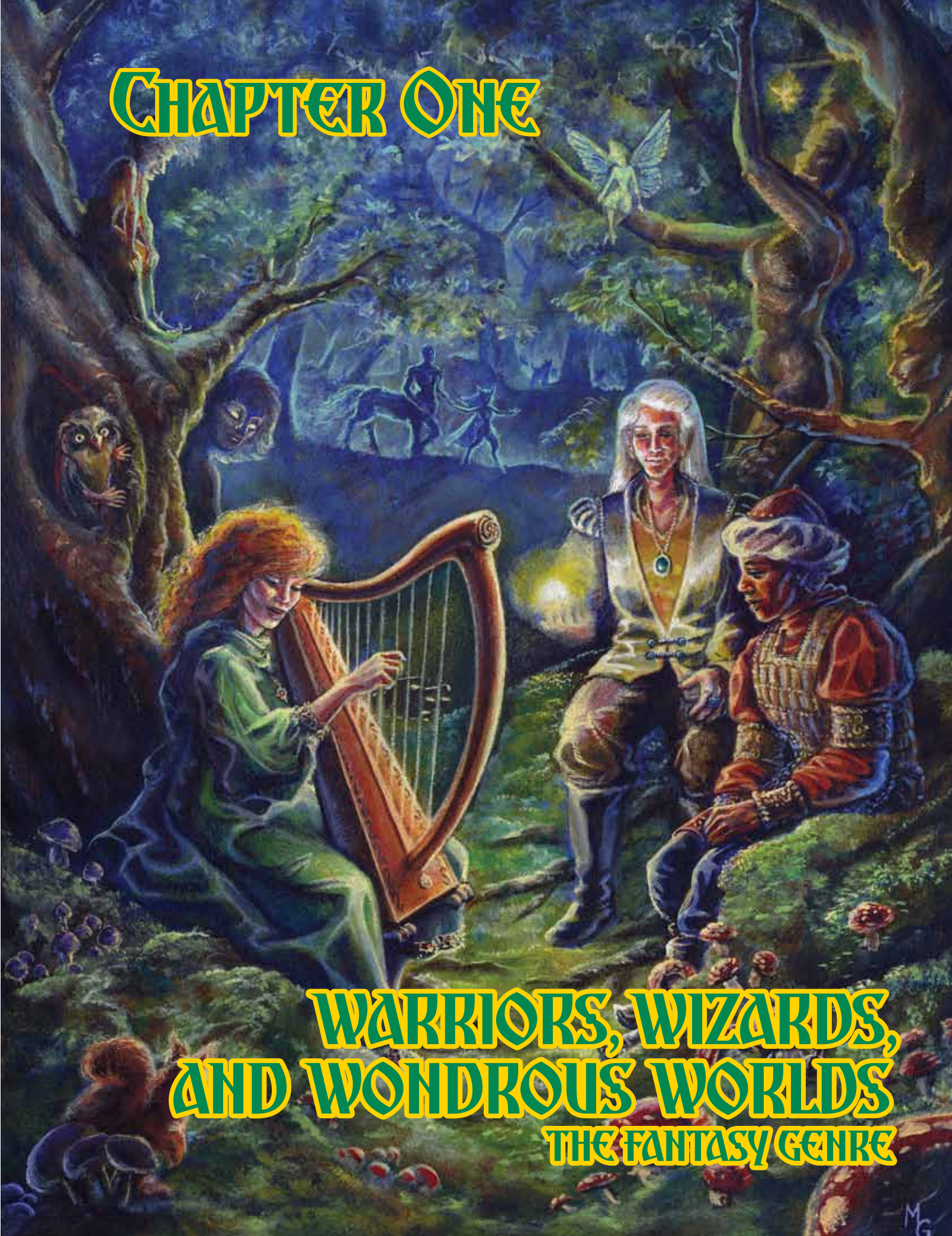
Second, most Fantasy gamers don't want historical realism. They want their games to have a *vener* of historical realism — a political system approximating Western European feudalism, weapons and armor similar to those used in medieval cultures around the world, and so forth. They don't care about the nature and function of incorporeal hereditaments, how medieval economies “really” worked, or the precise relative merits of one type of weapon over another. An approximation, often one made with dramatic rather than “realistic” considerations in mind, suffices. Like most Fantasy novels and movies, they want the flavor and the feel, not the substance... and there's nothing wrong with that at all.

Third and most importantly, in many cases historical data, accurate or not, is totally irrelevant to a Fantasy game. A Fantasy world is not our world, and it's questionable just how analogous real-world data can be to a Fantasy setting. Numerous factors, including geography, natural disasters, influential persons, and native flora and fauna vary so much from the real world to the Fantasy world that it's hard to say that the state of affairs prevailing on Earth (or some part of Earth) at various points in history would duplicate, even to a slight degree, in another world.

In particular, the existence of magic has an enormous effect on Fantasy settings. All but the most mundane of Low Fantasy settings features magic; it suffuses some High Fantasy worlds. Once you bring magic into the picture, analogizing between the real world and your Fantasy world becomes much harder, and perhaps even futile — especially when magic is common and powerful enough to effectively take the place of high technology. What would the Roman Empire have been like with fireballs and sorcery? We don't know, and we never will, and speculation about the subject is largely meaningless...

...but of course, sometimes meaningless subjects are fun to pursue. Even though *Fantasy Hero* doesn't include a lot of historical research, there's no reason you can't do all the research you want, if you're so inclined. The books in the “Nonfiction” section of the Bibliography are a good start. Examine the facts, draw your own conclusions, and plan your game as you see fit. As long as you and your players have fun, you win, whether you're “historically correct” or not.

CHAPTER ONE



**WARRIORS, WIZARDS,
AND WONDROUS WORLDS**
THE FANTASY GENRE



WHAT IS FANTASY?

Before you can think about the different subgenres and elements of Fantasy, you have to define what Fantasy *is*, or else the vastness of the topic makes meaningful discussion (and game creation) impossible. Many books, movies, and television shows contain elements of the *fantastic*, but that doesn't necessarily make them *Fantasy* stories. For the purposes of this book, which covers Fantasy from a gaming perspective rather than a literary or dramatic perspective (to the extent those viewpoints differ), the following definition suffices: *a Fantasy roleplaying game campaign tells a story, or depicts events and adventures, involving magic, alternate worlds, or both, so that the stories could not take place in the "real world."* Fantasy differs from Science Fiction because a Science Fiction story depicts events the reader regards as possible — even if only in a distant future involving much more advanced technology (see *Star Hero* for more on this subject). Fantasy, on the other hand, features *impossible* events: events dependent on something that doesn't exist in the real world (magic), or occurring in a fictitious otherworld. But despite the existence of impossible elements, a good Fantasy story has as much internal consistency and logic as stories set in the "real world."

Three major elements define Fantasy in the minds of most gamers: magic; alternate worlds; and low technology.

The critic Brian Attebery [has said of Fantasy that it] cannot be defined by its boundaries but ... can be understood through significant examples of what best represents it. ... [A] fantasy text is a self-coherent narrative which, when set in our reality, tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it; when set in an otherworld or secondary world, that otherworld will be impossible, but stories set there will be possible in the otherworld's terms.

—John Clute and John Grant describe the Fantasy genre in the introduction to *The Encyclopedia Of Fantasy*

MAGIC

"In ages gone," the Sage had said, his eyes fixed on a low star, "a thousand spells were known to sorcery and the wizards effected their wills. Today, as Earth dies, a hundred spells remain to man's knowledge, and these have come to us through the ancient books...."

—Turjan recalls his master's words in "Turjan Of Miir," by Jack Vance

Magic was subtle, and full of surprises, even to those who appeared to be masters of it. The thought of the magic that had become interwoven with his life made Genlon uneasy.

—Genlon ruminates on the nature of magic in *Grey mantle*, by John Morressy

The first, and most important, feature of fantasy is *magic*. The existence and effects of magic almost define Fantasy by themselves; only the lowest of Low Fantasy (see below) settings completely lack magic. For Fantasy roleplaying games in particular, magic is a crucial element; most players don't consider it a "Fantasy" campaign unless characters can cast spells and magical beings like dragons exist.

Magic in Fantasy ranges from minor and rare to commonplace and powerful, depending on the subgenre (see below). In many cases it consists of cast spells and evoked effects that PCs and other characters can command (or have used against them). However, the fact that magic *exists* doesn't necessarily mean it's something PCs can wield. In some Fantasy worlds the magic is mostly an atmospheric element — a feature that may help or hinder the characters indirectly, but over which they exert little control.

For more about magic in general, particularly the creation of magic systems and spells, see Chapter Four.



ALTERNATE WORLDS

Holger's brain went into a spin. Was he really in the past? No, impossible. And yet Charlemagne was certainly a historical figure.

Ah, he had it. The Carolingian cycle, the Chansons de Geste, the later medieval prose romances and folk ballads. Yes, that fitted. Fairyland and Saracens, swan-mays and unicorns, witchcraft and Elf Hill, Roland and Oliver — Holy jumping Judas! Had he somehow fallen into a... a book?

—Holger Carlsen tries to figure out where he is in *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, by Poul Anderson

The second major defining aspect of Fantasy is *an alternate world*. Most Fantasy stories take place in a world that superficially resembles Earth (it has mountains and seas; there's a moon in the nighttime sky; people build cities, use swords, and ride horses), but also differs from it in important ways. For one thing, magic usually exists, and with it fantastic beasts (like griffins) and races (such as dwarves and elves). For another, the geography is unique, and often flavorfully-named. For many Fantasy gaming campaigns, the better realized the world — the more detailed and flavorful the GM makes it, the more “dramatic verisimilitude” it has — the better the game.

An alternate world doesn't literally have to be *another* world. It could instead be a past, future, secret, or hidden part of the “real” Earth — settings that are in effect “alternate” even though they're not defined as a separate reality. This is a common convention of Urban Fantasy (see page 43), some historical fantasies, and settings like Jack Vance's “Dying Earth” which take place on Earth so many aeons from now that it's not recognizable as the same world.

LOW TECHNOLOGY

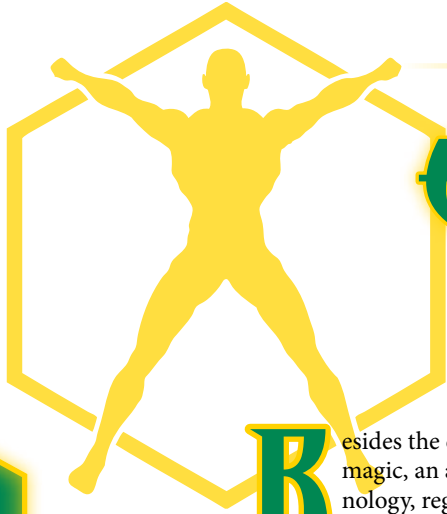
This time their preparations were well thought out. The Mouser carried a mallet and a stout iron pry-bar, in case they had to attack masonry, and made certain that candles, flint, wedges, chisels, and several other small tools were in his pouch. Fafhrd borrowed a pick from the peasant's implements and tucked a coil of thin, strong rope in his belt.

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser prepare to go after a treasure in “The Jewels In The Forest,” by Fritz Leiber

Lastly, and least importantly, most Fantasy stories feature low technology, similar to that possessed by medieval-era civilizations on Earth. Characters in Fantasy games can't call each other on the phone, don't have indoor plumbing, and lack modern medicine. They wield swords, not guns; they ride on horses, not in cars; they have to use muscle power instead of engines and electricity.

Of course, a few Fantasy Hero campaigns diverge from this rule. The most common exception is Urban Fantasy, which by definition takes place in a “modern” world of automobiles and television. Urban Fantasy games that push into the near future may even feature technology that's *more* advanced than what's currently available on Earth. The second is settings where magic has replaced technology. Rather than making guns that work with gunpowder, the inhabitants of these settings have enchanted pistols that fire through pure magic.





ELEMENTS OF FANTASY

Besides the core definitional elements of magic, an alternate world, and low technology, regardless of subgenre certain elements, themes, features, and tropes — or “bits,” in gamer parlance — occur from setting to setting in Fantasy stories. They include:

ALCHEMY AND ALCHEMISTS

Alchemists practice *alchemy*, the mystic pseudo-science that led, in the real world, to the development of chemistry and other physical sciences. While searching for the Philosopher’s Stone, a substance that granted immortality and could transform base metals into gold, alchemists made all sorts of discoveries, including many drugs and chemicals still used today.

In Fantasy settings, alchemists practice a genuinely magical art that revolves not just around the quest for the Philosopher’s Stone, but the creation of enchanted potions, elixirs, cordials, powders, dusts, unguents, salves, and other such substances. In some Fantasy stories, they can also craft magical automata, such as golems or magico-mechanical dragons; in others they may even possess the secret of gunpowder. In either case, they usually serve as a valuable source of supply for Fantasy characters, especially in High Fantasy campaigns. Characters who have enough gold can make a quick trip down to the local alchemist’s shop and stock up on healing potions, sword-polish that gives their blades an extra-sharp edge for a short period, intangibility elixirs, flying dust, and lots of other goodies.

The Fantasy alchemist is typically old, with unruly white hair and beard, and patched clothes displaying numerous stains from laboratory accidents. Thanks to inhaling a few too many potion fumes or having lived through some lab explosions, he may be absent-minded or doddering.

For more on creating potions and the like, see page 322.

The first room they inspected in this manner was a laboratory given over to alchemy. A great stone fireplace covered most of one wall and upon its hearth a magic fire of yellow and purple flames crackled, heating the simmering contents of strange glass spheres. A profusion of chemical equipment cluttered long low tables of porcelain and steel. Glass and ceramic containers of bewildering design bore colored fluids of unguessable nature. And strange instruments of the alchemic science loomed in the wavering, colored light of the mystic fire: crucibles and athanors, curcubits and aludels, and all manner of peculiar devices beyond their knowledge even to name.

—Thongor and Ald Turmis
come upon an alchemist’s lab in
“Thieves Of Zangabal,” by Lin Carter

Alodar followed Basil’s arm to the nearest workbench and saw a figure huddling under a cape studded with the inverted triangle logo of the alchemist. A bony hand reached out from the folds and carefully poured the liquid from a beaker into a funnel filled with what looked like coral-colored flower petals. With a scratchy pen, the alchemist slowly copied strange glyphs from an open grimoire on a clean sheet of paper and then crumpled and cast it into a flame when he was done. For a moment the liquid seemed lost in the crevasses between the petals, then a drop of light pink formed at the bottom of the funnel’s stem and fell into a flask below. Several more drops followed the first, and then a small stream of color trickled free. ... “I am lucky at that[, said Basil]. Out of seventeen, I expect maybe three flasks of honeysuckle oil. Three flasks out of a hundred for spices, perfumes, and as ingredients for a dozen formulas more.”

—Basil the Apothecary shows some of the basics of Alchemy to Alodar in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

ALTARS

*“No more bloody altars of Liart, yeomen.
Blood on our blades now.”*

—Paksenarrion rouses the folk of Darkon Edge to fight the god of torments in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

Altars — or, more broadly, places/objects which serve as the focus for religious ceremonies and rituals — appear frequently in Fantasy stories, often at key points (such as the beginning or the climax). They range from elaborately-carved altars inside Gothic-style cathedrals or Hellenistic temples, to standing stones on Celtic hilltops. Most are made of marble or some other stone, and a few have secret compartments in which sacred relics reside.

Altars represent the power, and often presence, of the divine. If dedicated to a dark or evil god, they're often used for human sacrifice and stained with the dried blood of countless victims. If dedicated to a more benevolent deity, they often include altarpieces (cups, candles, jeweled holy books, and the like), fountains of water, or the like. The chance to desecrate an enemy's altar — to cast holy water upon the worship-stone of the God of Evil, or to befoul the God of Light's pure sanctuary — is a momentous opportunity in any Fantasy struggle, and often indicates a turning of the tables during a prolonged conflict.

In either case, priests often use altars in blessing-ceremonies which grant the followers of a god extra power, or the god's protection, for a coming struggle. In fact, the very presence of an altar may inspire and aid those whom the god favors. In game terms, an altar might grant a small Aid to nearby heroes, though they lose this Aid (and perhaps suffer the effects of a corresponding Drain to boot) if they allow their enemies to defile the altar.

AN ANCIENT WORLD

It was but the ghost of a city on which they looked when they cleared a jutting jungle-clad point and swung in toward the in-curving shore. Weeds and rank river grass grew between the stones of broken piers and shattered paves that had once been streets and spacious plazas and broad courts. From all sides except that toward the river, the jungle crept in, masking fallen columns and crumbling mounds with poisonous green. Here and there buckling towers reeled drunkenly against the morning sky, and broken pillars jutted up among the decaying walls.

—Conan, Bêlit, and her pirates explore strange ruins in “Queen Of The Black Coast,” by Robert E. Howard

In most Fantasy settings, the world is a vast and ancient place. Relics of bygone days litter the landscape: ruined castles built by hands clearly bigger and stronger than man's; gigantic statues untouched by time or weather; the crypts, tombs, and dungeons of kings and wizards of yore; grimoires and scrolls so aged they crumble into dust if not handled carefully. All of these things provide the GM with story seeds and present excellent opportunities for adventure.

Similarly, an ancient world usually assumes the existence of deep, ancient magics. Spells cast long ago may affect the characters in the present day, while summoned demons linger for centuries to work their evil and the ghosts of once-mighty sorcerers refuse the call of the Grey Lands so they may remain in this world and continue their schemes of power. Most importantly, prophecy becomes available as a dramatic tool for the GM to use. Words uttered millennia before the campaign begins can foretell the birth and adventures of the PCs, motivating them (and their enemies!) to take certain actions — and thus drive the story.



BOOKS

Books were piled everywhere: ancient volumes bound in serpent-skin, with verdigris-eaten clasps, that held the frightful lore of Atlantis, the pentacles that have power upon the demons of the earth and the moon, the spells that transmute or disintegrate the elements; and runes from a lost language of Hyperborea, which, when uttered aloud, were more deadly than poison or more potent than any philtre.

—a description of Malygris's library from "The Last Incantation," by Clark Ashton Smith

Unsurprisingly in a genre created by writers, books often play a key role in Fantasy stories. Typically these books are wizards' grimoires and tomes, filled with spells, ancient lore, cryptic prophecies, and much other useful information. Priests' holy books may fill a similar function in a different way. But some are more ordinary, such as the record-books of a Thieves' Guild that could be used to blackmail its members, or a watersoaked captain's log that provides hints and clues as to where to find a long-lost treasure.

CASTLES, KEEPS, AND TOWERS

The castle grew slowly out of the twilight. Its walls rose dizzingly high, the roofs all peaks and angles, overtopped with soaring thin towers: a wild beauty, like ice on a winter forest. The white stone seemed lacy, so fragile that a breath would dissolve it, but as he approached Holger saw how massive the walls were. A moat surrounded the hill on which the castle stood, and though no river emptied therein, the water circled endlessly chiming.

—Holger Carlsen comes to a castle of the faerie-folk in *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, by Poul Anderson

Dotting just about every Fantasy landscape are castles, keeps, towers, and similar structures built by emperors, kings, nobles, knights, wizards, and other powerful people. In the real world, castles and their kin served political-military purposes; they provided a place of defense and displayed the builder's power over an area (and in many cases his wealth) for all the world to see. They have those *raisons d'être* in Fantasy settings as well, but may serve additional purposes. For example, a wizard might build his tower on a site possessing high levels of eldritch energy, the better to tap that energy for his experiments. A king worried about incursions of underground monsters might build a keep over the cave where the monsters dwell to keep them *in*, rather than to keep an invading army *out*.

In most Fantasy games, castles are made out of stone, as they were in the real world, but many other possibilities exist. The real world also featured earthenwork fortresses and wooden palisade castles, for example, and a Fantasy world may likewise. Given magic to work with, designers could also build castles out of metal (steel for protection; gold and silver for ostentation), glass, crystal, bone, solidified clouds, or other fantastic substances.

Naturally, castles provide all sorts of opportunity for adventure. Daily life within a castle, and the internal intrigues of its inhabitants, may lead to tightly focused stories such as the ones told in Stephen Donaldson's *Mordant's Need* duology or Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* novels. Heroes trying to defeat an enemy holed up in a mighty castle have to besiege it or infiltrate it, while heroes trying to defend themselves against the vast armies of the Dark Lord have to break a siege. Sneaking into a wizard's tower to steal a wondrous magical object forms the basis of many Fantasy stories; so does exploring ruined castles where bandits, monsters, and the undead may lair.

For detailed rules on creating castles in the *HERO System*, see *The Ultimate Base*.

CAVERNS AND DUNGEONS

"Beyond this entrance, there are a number of passages and chambers, a maze to one who does not know the way. Some of these are dangerous, some are not. Soon after we enter, we will reach the tunnel of the Sphinxes, giant statues like these sentries, but carved as half man, half beast. If you look into their eyes, you will be turned to stone instantly."

—Allanon warns his friends of the dangers of the Hall of Kings in *The Sword Of Shannara*, by Terry Brooks

Even in Fantasy realms with light spells, darkness inspires a certain primordial terror in character and player alike — and no place is darker than underground. Caves and caverns thus hold a certain fascination for gamers, perhaps one dating back subconsciously to the days when humans lived in them.

In the real world, animals often lair in caves and underground tunnels. A Fantasy world transforms these animals into monsters — dragons, trolls, giant insects, and more. Carrying the concept one step further under the aegis of gaming, the cavern itself sometimes converts to a *dungeon*, a (usually) manufactured underground environment of corridors and chambers. Replete with traps, guardian monsters, puzzles, and other challenges for explorers to overcome, dungeons offer great reward (the monsters' or former inhabitants' treasure), but at great risk.

Caverns and dungeons are tailor-made for Fantasy Hero scenarios. Adventurers look for cave openings or “stairs going down” to hunt monsters, kill them, and take their treasure (or drag the carcass out into the light of day to earn a reward from the local noble). The underground setting offers a controlled environment that lets the GM keep the characters focused on a defined adventure, rather than allowing them to gallivant around the landscape at will. A GM could even run an entire campaign underground, without ever having the characters see the light of the sun.

For more information about underground environments, see page 418.

CITIES

Most Fantasy settings feature one or more cities; some Fantasy campaigns take place solely within a single large city. For example, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser often stayed in the city of Lankhmar, finding adventure aplenty there.

The cities in most Fantasy roleplaying campaigns share certain characteristics. First, they're often walled, for defensive purposes, though more than a few outgrow the boundary of the first wall and have to build a concentric series of walls over time. Second, they're divided into “quarters” or “districts,” usually named after the types of people who live there: Merchant's Quarter; Noble District; Thieves' Quarter; Alchemist's Row; Mages' District. Third, most of them are on large bodies of water (like historical cities), since that makes travel and trade easier.

Cities offer two things for Fantasy campaigns. First, they can provide the services and story opportunities a modern-day city offers, but on a Fantasy scale. Merchants and specialized craftsmen (including, in settings with plentiful magic, wizards-for-hire) cluster there, eager to exchange their goods for the PCs' hard-earned coin; thieves and other ne'er-do-wells abound, ready for the PCs to tangle with; kings, nobles, and rich men live there, engaging in political and social intrigues for the PCs to get swept up in.

Second, they can, in and of themselves, be fantastical locations whose mere presence or structure awes the PCs and signals that adventure is near. Instead of ordinary cities built on the ground, Fantasy metropolises could be floating in the clouds, gigantic labyrinths, underground complexes dozens or hundreds of “levels” deep, cities sunk beneath the waves, vast hive-like structures, carved out of titanic trees, or something even more unusual.

At last he came to the city. It stood out in stark black silhouette, a city of fantastic magnificence, in conception and in execution. It was the oldest city in the world, built by artists and conceived as a work of art rather than a functional dwelling place, but Elric knew that squalor lurked in many narrow streets[.] Built to follow the shape of the ground, the city had an organic appearance, with winding lanes spiralling to the crest of the hill where stood the castle, tall and proud and many-spined, the final crowning masterpiece of the ancient, forgotten artist who had built it.

—Elric comes to Imrryr, capital of the Empire of Melniboné, in *Sailor On The Seas Of Fate*, by Michael Moorcock

Torches flared murkily on the revels in the Maul, where the thieves of the east held carnival by night. In the Maul they could carouse and roar as they liked, for honest people shunned the quarter, and watchmen, well paid with stained coins, did not interfere with their sport. Along the crooked, unpaved streets with their heaps of refuse and sloppy puddles, drunken roisterers staggered, roaring. Steel glinted in the shadows where wolf preyed on wolf, and from the darkness rose the shrill laughter of women, and the sounds of scufflings and strugglings.

—a description of the worst side of town in “The Tower Of The Elephant,” by Robert E. Howard

For the fashion of Minas Tirith was such that it was built on seven levels, each delved into the hill, and about each was set a wall, and in each wall was a gate. [And each time the paved way through the city] passed the line of the Great Gate it went through an arched tunnel, piercing a vast pier of rock whose huge out-thrust bulk divided in two all the circles of the City save the first. For partly in the primeval shaping of the hill, partly by the mighty craft and labour of old, there stood up from the rest of the wide court behind the Gate a towering bastion of stone, its edge sharp as a ship-keel, facing east. Up it rose, even to the level of the topmost circle, and there was crowned by a battlement[.]

—a description of Minas Tirith from *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien



CURSES AND BLACK MAGIC

“Hallard.” She held his eyes. “If you don’t give me that skull now, I will lay a curse on your threshold that no friend will ever cross it, on the high gates and posterns and stable doors that they will never close again, on the torches in your house that they will never burn, on your hearth stones that no one standing under Farr’s hollow eyes will ever feel warm. This I swear by my name.”

—Raederle of An threatens Hallard Blackdown in *Heir Of Sea And Fire*, by Patricia McKillip

“None can use black magic without straining the soul to the uttermost — and staining it into the bargain. None can inflict suffering without enduring the same. ... The forces black magic evokes are like two-edged poisoned swords with grips studded with scorpion stings.”

—Ivrian recalls the words of the magician Glavas Rho in “The Unholy Grail,” by Fritz Leiber

“And if the West prove mightier than thy Black Master, this curse I lay upon thee and thy folk: to rest never until your oath is fulfilled.”

—Aragorn recounts the story of Isildur’s curse on the Men of the Mountains in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Then Morgoth cursed Húrin and Morwen and their offspring, and set a doom upon them of darkness and sorrow[.]

—Morgoth curses his enemy Húrin in *The Silmarillion*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Curses and evil magic — usually called “black magic,” or in some settings “sorcery” — are commonplace in Fantasy because they’re a superb way to drive stories. A character placed under a curse may suffer misfortune that leads to adventure, or may have to go on a quest to rid himself of the malediction. And black magic is the perfect weapon for many a villain to use against the PCs!

See page 280 for more on curses in the *HERO System*.

DEMONS

The black demon heeded not at all. There was a second great sound, and a second demon appeared. ... Vanille was low and broad, and of a swimming green color, with eyes like scarlet lights. It flung itself upon the first demon, and the terrible bellow of the encounter stunned the ears, and eyes could not follow the frenzy of the fight.

—Vanille and another demon are summoned to battle in *The Eyes Of The Overworld*, by Jack Vance

Her limbs blurred, then grew transparent as smoke, then remolded themselves. A ghastly parrot beak thrust from the warm oval of her girl’s face. Blazing orbs of yellow fire seethed with hellish mockery beneath her arched brows. Her hands became scaly bird claws, armed with ferocious talons.

“Fool of a mortal,” the bird-demon croaked in a clashing iron voice, “I knew of your presence within the house of my master from the first moment you set foot herein... and I chose a form that would lull your suspicions[!]”

—Thongor the barbarian encounters a bird-demon in “Thieves Of Zangabal,” by Lin Carter

As Alodar returned to silence, he saw the beginnings of an outline in the center of the blaze. An orange head, eyes and ears blended with the flames, rose above a massive trunk of huge scales and thighs the girth of barrels. Up into the room it towered, cloven hooves and tail dancing in the small fire from which it sprang.

—Handar summons a powerful demon in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Denizens of the infernal realms such as demons, devils, imps, and their kin appear frequently in Fantasy literature and game campaigns. Usually some evil wizard or dark priest summons a demon or demons to do his bidding, but sometimes they find their own way into the material world. In either case, they pose a danger to even the hardest of adventurers.

In a literal sense, demons are the ultimate threat a hero, or even a group of heroes, can face. The greatest of them not only possess extreme physical prowess but vast magical powers as well. They can blast their enemies with hellfire, summon others of their kind to aid them, kidnap people to Hell, travel great distances in the blink of

an eye, deceive people with ease, and possess the minds of innocent mortals. If all that weren't bad enough, they're difficult to harm, and killing them may just send them back to Hell temporarily....

Figuratively, demons can represent problems characters face, or may face — *personal* demons, if you will. For example, a character known for his greed might find himself confronted by a demon embodying that trait, who can use his weakness against him. A cowardly character might encounter a demon of fear.

For character sheets for demons, see HSB 71-97.

DENIAL OF POWER

In the Giant's cavernous eyes and buttressed forehead, he saw the import of the comment. As clearly as if he were pleading outright, Foamfollower said, Acknowledge the white gold and use it to aid the Land. Impossible, Covenant replied.

—Thomas Covenant once again denies the power he could wield in *Lord Foul's Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

It's not uncommon in some types of Fantasy stories, particularly Crossworlds Fantasy and sagas in which the main character is a reluctant subject of prophecy, for heroes to deny the power they possess. They may refuse to believe in the power, decline to use it when they should, or refrain from getting the learning and training they need to understand and utilize it properly. In any event, denying one's power almost always has disastrous consequences: either the character eventually finds himself forced to use it despite his intentions, which makes him miserable; or something tragic happens that he could have prevented had he accepted his power and done what he was supposed to.

Denial of power doesn't suit many Fantasy Hero games well. If a Player Character has power, the player wants to use it, often as much as possible. Incorporating a denial of power element into the game requires the willing participation of a player responsible enough to roleplay the situation properly.

DESTINY

"I am no seer, but I see before you, not rooms and books, but far seas, and the fire of dragons, and the towers of cities, and all such things a hawk sees when he flies far and high."

—Vetch contemplates Ged's destiny in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

"Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, and not by its maker. In which case you also were meant to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought."

—Gandalf explains Frodo's destiny to him in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Related to the element of prophecy, foretelling, and omens (see below), the element of destiny signifies that a character is going to experience and do great things. Not all destinies are welcome, and even the best of them require a hero to go through all sorts of trials and tribulations — but having one is a great background element for a character and may account for his goals and aspirations.



DRAGONS

The dragon is one of the most ubiquitous features of Fantasy. Ranging from the realistic wyrms and wyverns of medieval legend, to the gigantic, powerful, fire-breathing dragons of modern Fantasy artwork, they fit into all but the lowest of Low Fantasy settings.

No creature moved nor voice spoke for a long while on the island, but only the waves beat loudly on the shore. Then Ged was aware that the highest tower slowly changed its shape, bulging out on one side as if it grew an arm. He feared dragon-magic, for old dragons are very powerful and guileful in sorcery like and unlike the sorcery of men: but a moment more and he saw this was no trick of the dragon, but of his own eyes. What he had taken for a part of the tower was the shoulder of the Dragon of Pendor as he uncurled his bulk and lifted himself slowly up.

When he was all afoot his scaled head, spike-crowned and triple-tongued, rose higher than the broken tower's height, and his taloned forefeet rested on the rubble of the town below. His scales were grey-black, catching the daylight like broken stone. Lean as a hound he was and huge as a hill. Ged stared in awe. There was no song or tale could prepare the mind for this sight. Almost he stared into the dragon's eyes and was caught, for one cannot look into a dragon's eyes.

—Ged confronts the Dragon of Pendor in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

It came from the south, still half a mile away, but already the thunderclap wingbeats hit his ears. Fifty feet long, he thought in a vortex of panic. Fifty feet of scale-armored muscle, a snake head which could swallow him in two bites, bat wings and iron talons.

—Holger Carlsen encounters a dragon in *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, by Poul Anderson

The dragon was crossing the valley, moving as quickly and gracefully as a serpent. With astonishing speed he ascended the steep slope of the valley and launched himself over the precipice beyond its green bounds. [T]he huge beast plunged through the wispy clouds, spreading his golden wings in the sun's ruddy light[.]

—Asgara first sees the dragon in "Dragon's Fosterling," by Ruby S. W. Jung



The typical Fantasy dragon is an enormous reptilian creature with scaly skin (often red, black, or green), a long neck, a wedge-shaped head, gigantic bat-like wings that allow it to fly, and a long tail. Its fangs and talons can pierce the heaviest armor, and it can breathe fire and smoke.

Typicalities aside, the variety of dragons seen in Fantasy campaigns borders on the infinite. They come in all sizes, colors, and dispositions. Most are nasty, evil, greedy, and gluttonous, viewing adventurers as threats to exterminate and food to eat. But a few possess great wisdom and beneficence, and may use their powers to walk among men in human guise, or to aid worthy heroes. Some are little more than animals; others learned and wise beyond the best of mortals. Some have great magical powers; others rely solely on fang, claw, and fiery breath. Some can fly, others must crawl along the ground.

Legends about dragons and their supposed powers and properties abound. Some say eating a dragon's heart confers the ability to understand the speech of birds or animals, while others claim bathing in dragon's blood renders a character immune to injury. The truth of such tales, and the effects in game terms (if any), are left to the GM.

In most Fantasy campaigns dragons simply represent a powerful foe to stalk and overcome. But in deeper stories, symbolically they're often a metaphor for something: an unreasoning force of nature; the power and impersonal nature of government; a powerful political or military foe; greed; the dangers of magic left unchecked.

For more on dragons, including several character sheets, see pages 103-126 of *The HERO System Bestiary*.

THE VULNERABLE SPOT

Since a gigantic, powerful, magical monster isn't much fun if it's totally undefeatable, tellers of tales have traditionally given dragons a vulnerable spot or Achilles's heel of some sort. The most common is a patch of skin on the dragon's belly, often where a front leg joins the body, that lacks any armor, but GMs could come up with many other sorts of weaknesses. For example, in Lord Dunsany's story "The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save For Sacnoth," the dragon-crocodile Tharagavverug feels great pain when struck on his leaden nose.

If you use the Draconic Hit Location table on HSB 44, a dragon's Vulnerable Spot is location 18.

DRAGON-RIDING

Another common trope surrounding dragons is that of using them as mounts. A horse may be noble and true, a griffin or hippogriff might be spectacular, but a dragon is the most wondrous mount of all! Depending on how common they are, dragons may be used for all sorts of routine commerce and transportation... but more commonly only one group or kingdom has them, giving that group or kingdom great power.

[W]hat [Bilbo] thought inside was: "Old fool! Why there is a large patch in the hollow of his left breast as bare as a snail out of its shell!"

—Smaug unwittingly reveals his vulnerable spot to Bilbo in *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

"[O]f course he had a chance." He rolled on his side, lifting his left front leg. "There, touch that pale patch." Asgara complied, and the dragon giggled. It was tender and smooth as a child's skin. "You won't be able to reveal this while I live, of course, but that's my one vulnerable spot, my dear. Did I try to hide it from him? It was his own limited vision that made him hack at my neck."

—The dragon confidently reveals his vulnerable spot to Asgara in "Dragon's Fosterling," by Ruby S. W. Jung

Dyvim Slorm nodded and swung off his mount. The beast stirred restlessly and drew back the lips of its tapering snout to reveal teeth as thick as a man's arm, as long as a sword. Its forked tongue flickered and it turned its huge, cold eyes to regard Elric.

Elric sang to it in the old Melnibonéan speech, took the goad and the Dragon Horn from Dyvim Slorm and carefully climbed into the high saddle at the base of the dragon's neck. He placed his booted feet into the great silver stirrups.

"Now, fly, dragon brother," he sang, "up, up and have your venom ready."

—Elric rides a dragon in *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, by Michael Moorcock

When Menolly, daughter of Yanus Sea Holder, arrived at the Harper Craft Hall, she came in style, aboard a bronze dragon.

—Menolly gets to ride one of the famed dragons of Pern in *Dragonsinger*, by Anne McCaffrey



“Other evils there are that may come; for Sauron is himself but a servant or emissary.”

—Gandalf counsels the lords of Men in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

“Evil is stirring in the north. It’s something vague and inchoate, a dark magic from the far past. I can sense it even within the High City, but I don’t dare reveal my own presence as yet. The end is unclear. But I know that you, or your descendants, or their descendants, will one day be called upon to confront it.”

—Cathwar the wizard warns King Ambescand of evil awakening in *Grey mantle*, by John Morressy

*Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand
For the world’s more full of weeping than you
can understand.*

—“The Stolen Child,”
William Butler Yeats

The fairy of the shee often seems childlike by reason of intemperate acts. His character varies of course from individual to individual, but is always capricious and often cruel. Similarly, the fairy’s sympathies are quickly aroused, whereupon he becomes extravagantly generous. The fairy is inclined to be boastful; he is given to dramatic postures and quick sulks. He is sensitive with regard to his self-image and cannot tolerate ridicule, which prompts him to a prancing demonstrative fury. He admires beauty and also grotesque oddity in the same degree; to the fairy these are equivalent attributes. ...

Fairies love tricks. Woe to the giant or ogre the fairies decide to molest! They give him no peace; his own magic is of a gross sort, easily evaded. The fairies torment him with cruel glee until he hides in his den, or castle.

—Jack Vance explains the nature of the faery-folk in *Lyonesse*

EVIL

In Fantasy, Evil exists as a palpable, almost tangible, force with which the characters must reckon. In a world where magic exists, Evil transcends the base desires of the human heart to embody itself as demons and worse things, including “Dark Lords” such as Sauron (see page 424). Spells and priestly powers often exist to detect Evil or ward characters against it, as if it were fire or sound.

Most texts offering advice to authors and GMs point out that no one thinks of himself as Evil, or does Evil for Evil’s sake. This doesn’t always hold true in Fantasy. In Fantasy, some gods, wizards, and the like *do* serve Evil or perform Evil acts solely for the joy of “being Evil.” While it’s usually best to give an enemy some understandable motivation (such as revenge, or a hunger for power), in some Fantasy situations it’s enough to say “he’s Evil” and turn the heroes loose.

FAERIES

Derived largely from the folklore and legendry of the British Isles, the faeries are a feature of many Fantasy worlds. Known for their capricious natures, odd quirks, and vast magical powers, they’re virtually walking (or flying) plot devices for the GM to exploit to create adventures and strange situations. A player could decide that his character has some faerie blood, or has been gifted or cursed by the faeries, to explain many special abilities or Complications.

THE FOUR ELEMENTS

“What was that — that thing?” Carthalla asked with a little grimace of revulsion.

“A shioggua — a Guardian Demon, summoned from the Water Element[,” Kellory replied. But] they met with no more supernatural encounters on their path. Kellory found this diquieting in the extreme. Surely, an Air Elemental should have been set to watch over the treasures of Yaohim. Or, most terrible of all, a Demon of the Earth, with the iron mineral strength of the earth itself slumbering in its vast, misshapen limbs.

—Kellory considers the threat posed by elementals in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

The Four Elements of classic thought — Air, Earth, Fire, and Water — crop up frequently in Fantasy stories and games. They form the basis of many magic systems (see Chapter Four), inspire GMs to create elementals and similar monsters (see HSB 128-38 for some example character sheets), and can affect how characters view their world. But don’t feel like you have to limit yourself to the classic Four Elements if you’d rather not! Asian thought claims there are five (Earth, Fire, Metal, Water, Wood), and in a Fantasy setting a GM could come up with all sorts of “Element systems” incorporating things like Shadow, Frost, Arcane, Chaos, and the like.

GODS

Then the gods turned to do the work of the gods, answering the prayers of men or smiting them[.]

—from *Time And The Gods*, by Lord Dunsany

In the waning days of the Empire Christian dignitaries landed at Avallon amid vast pomp and panoply. They established bisophrics, appointed appropriate officials and spent good Roman gold to build their basilicas, none of which prospered. The bishops strove mightily against the olden gods, halflings and magicians alike, but few dared enter the Forest of Tantrevalles. Aspergillums, thuribles and curses proved futile against such as Dankvin the giant, Taudry the Weasoning, the fairies of Pithpenny Shee. ... In Godelia Druids never paused in the worship of Lug the Sun, Matriona the Moon, Adonis the Beautiful, Kernuun the Stag, Mokous the Boar, Kai the Dark, Sheah the Graceful, and innumerable local half-gods.

—the unfortunate history of early Christianity in *Lyonesse*, by Jack Vance

While it's possible to create and tell stories in a Fantasy setting with little or no reference to religion (Middle-earth, for example), few fantasists do so. Most Fantasy realms have a plethora of gods, ranging from minor spirits to vast entities with the power to crush worlds. In High Fantasy settings, the gods grant priests spells and powers, and may even manifest bodily in the world when called (or just because they want to). In less fantastic settings, they simply add to the color, feel, and verisimilitude.

HEROIC SACRIFICE

"I thought you were going to enjoy the Shire, too, for years and years, after all you have done."

"So I thought too, once. But I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them."

—Frodo explains what it sometimes means to be a hero to Samwise at the end of *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Most commonly seen in Epic Fantasy, but present to some extent in most Fantasy subgenres, Heroic Sacrifice indicates that no true, lasting good is achieved without giving something up. One of the things that makes a hero a hero is that

he's willing to step forward and pay the price... even if that means he won't get to enjoy the better world his deeds lead to.

LYCANTHROPES

"Could it not be a natural wolf that raided your folds?" Alianora asked. ...

"That might have been," said Raoul dourly, "though 'twas hard to see how a natural animal could have broken so many gates or lifted so many latches. Nor do true wolves slay a dozen sheep at a time for mere sport."

—a werewolf besets the village of Lourville in *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, by Poul Anderson

Werewolves and other lycanthropes appear in many types of Fantasy, ranging from traditional fare to Urban Fantasy tales that have them inhabiting the shadows of big, modern cities. Unlike vampires (with whom they're often compared, or in Urban Fantasy settings whom they're often at war with), they tend to be somewhat predictable. Their animal form dictates, to a greater or lesser extent, their personalities and abilities: werewolves are powerful, proud, and run in packs; wererats are sneaky, tricky, and vicious; werefoxes are clever; and so on. Just pick whatever type of animal fills the role you have in mind for the character, give it a human form, and you're ready to go.

See HSB 173-80 for character sheets for several types of lycanthropes and rules for contracting lycanthropy.

MAPS

[A]fter dinner the Magician did a very useful and beautiful piece of magic. He laid two blank sheets of parchment on the table and asked Drinian to give him an exact account of their voyage up to date: and as Drinian spoke, everything he described came out on the parchment in fine clear lines till at last each sheet was a splendid map of the Eastern Ocean, showing Galma, Terebinthia, the Seven Isles, the Lone Islands, Dragon Island, Burnt Island, and the land of the Duffers itself, all exactly the right sizes and in the right positions.

—the crew gets a superb map in *The Voyage Of The Dawn Treader*, by C.S. Lewis

Nothing gets a Fantasy story (or game campaign) off to a start like a map. Whether it's a perfectly-drawn map from the King's Cartographer, or a wormy, half-burned thing found in a tomb or dug out of an ancient archive, a map fires the imagination like almost nothing else. It's a partial key to the unknown and an invitation to explore... and should the map indicate the presence of treasure, so much the better!





MONSTERS

It was not remotely human in form. It was three or four times the size of the largest sea-beast she had ever seen, crouching huge and greenish, the color of seaweed and sea wrack. All she could see of the head was rows and rows of teeth, huge teeth gaping before her.

—Lythande of the Blue Star encounters a “mermaid” in “Sea Wrack,” by Marion Zimmer Bradley

Springing back, sword high, he saw the horror strike the floor, wheel and scuttle toward him with appalling speed — a gigantic black spider, such as men see only in nightmare dreams. It was as large as a pig, and its eight thick hairy legs drove its ogreish body over the floor at a headlong pace; its four evilly gleaming eyes shone with a horrible intelligence, and its fangs dripped venom that Conan knew, from the burning of his shoulder where only a few drops had splashed as the thing struck and missed, was laden with swift death.

—Conan fights a monstrous spider in “The Tower Of The Elephant,” by Robert E. Howard

Besides demons, dragons, the faerie-folk, lycanthropes, orcs, and vampires (which are all discussed elsewhere in this section), many other types of fantastic beasts and creatures populate the wondrous worlds of Fantasy — the *monster*, in general, is an important element of the genre.

Slaying a monster, or at least warding off the threat it presents in some way, is the main focus of many a Fantasy tale.

Depending on the nature of the campaign and the type of story the GM wants to tell, a monster can be exactly what it seems — a threat, whether obvious and crude or subtle and sophisticated — that the PCs have to overcome... or it can be something more. In fiction and legend, a monster often represents less overt things: for example, a subconscious universal concern, such as fear of the dark, or the potential dangers posed by outsiders. In fairy tales, monsters are often used to scare children away from perilous places (like forests); the GM could expand/alter this concept in ways that are meaningful to PC adventurers.

On a more figurative level, monsters often serve as a metaphor in the overall context of the campaign. For example, orcs, goblins, and other minor monsters who work in groups often represent mob rule, unreasoning adherence to authority, or the dangers of conformity. Larger, more fearsome monsters that act on their own or in pairs may stand for a hero’s subconscious fears and desires.

FANTASTIC BEASTS

One of the most common type of monster is the *fantastic beast*, a creature that’s a monstrous version of some existing animal, an amalgam of several animals, or something similar. Dragons (see above) are by far the best known fantastic beast in Fantasy, but they’re far from the only type. Other common ones include: the unicorn (symbolizing, in many cases, purity); the manticores; the griffin; the hippogriff; and the chimera. You can find more information about hundreds of them (including character sheets) in *The HERO System Bestiary*.

MUSIC

“I remember thinking there’s a magic about her, too, but now I know it’s in the music she calls up from that blue fiddle of hers, the same kind of magic any good musician can wake from an instrument. It takes you away.”

—Charles de Lint, “Seven For A Secret”

“If I could make that sound come out of that harp, I would sell my name for it and go nameless.”

Deth smiled. “That’s too high a price to pay even for one of Uon’s harps.”

—Morgon of Hed and Deth discuss harping in *The Riddlemaster Of Hed*, by Patricia McKillip

Music is an element in many Fantasy stories (particularly in Urban Fantasy, where authors and GMs can blend rock ‘n’ roll, jazz, or other favorite musical forms into the mix). Harking back to the ancient rhythms of Pan’s pipes, the shaman’s drum, and the bard’s harping, it evokes the magic nearly everyone has felt a time or two when listening to or playing music. As a result, many Fantasy characters are musicians, harpists, singers, or at least musically talented in some way. Some cast their spells through music, either consciously or subconsciously — sometimes going to a concert in a Fantasy world can be a dangerous thing to do!

NECROMANCY AND THE UNDEAD

Magic comes in many types and flavors in most Fantasy settings, but one of the most common types is Necromancy — magic that deals with life force, death and undeath, and related phenomena. Necromancers can raise the spirits of the dead to foresee the future (the literal meaning of “necromancy”), instill fear in others, and even kill with a touch.

Necromancers can also create *undead* servants. “The undead” is a broad term for a class of monsters who are people and animals brought back to life (at least partially) by magic. Examples include skeletons, zombies, wraiths, mummies, and specters. Undead creatures typically hate the living, and yearn to kill them or drain away their life-force or blood; they’re some of the deadliest and most terrifying foes a Fantasy hero can face, in part because they never tire. (See HSB 31-32 and 281-300 for character sheets and other information about undead creatures.)

THE LICH

Combining the force of Necromancy and the powers of the undead is the *lich*, a sorcerer who maintains himself in a state of undeath by means of potent magics. The most fearsome and powerful of all undead, liches often serve as the “master villain” for a Fantasy campaign or story arc. See HSB 284 for a character sheet for a typical lich.

[S]oon they came to the skeletons of a horse and its rider, lying full in the road, and wearing still the sumptuous harness and raiment which they had worn in the flesh. And Mmatmuor and Sodosma paused before the piteous bones, on which no shred of corruption remained; and they smiled evilly at each other. ... Then, in the ashy sand by the wayside, they drew a threefold circle; and standing together at its center, they performed the abominable rites that compel the dead to arise from tranquil nothingness and obey henceforward, in all things, the dark will of the necromancer. Afterwards, they sprinkled a pinch of magic powder on the nostril-holes of the man and the horse; and the white bones, creaking mournfully, rose up from where they had lain and stood in readiness to serve their masters. ... Along the way, as they neared Yethlyreom ... they found numerous tombs and necropoli, involate still after many ages, and containing swathed mummies that had scarcely withered in death. All these they raised up and called from sepulchral night to do their bidding.

—Mmatmuor and Sodosma create “The Empire Of The Necromancers,” by Clark Ashton Smith

For the first few decades after his discovery, the Black Hand remained secluded in the Shards of Lor. The sight of his undead servants shuffling stiffly over the frosted rocks taught the races of Minaria to shun the necromancer’s baleful domain.

—a description of the most infamous and feared necromancer of Minaria from “The Black Hand,” by Glenn Rahman

With the casual ease born of long practice, gaunt Themnon animated a favorite decomposing lich and queried it as to the current affairs of Sarthath Oob. Chan listened intently but could make nothing from the slurred, liquescent syllables of the animated corpse’s mumbled reply. Themnon was accustomed to a certain lack of articulation on the part of his decaying corpses, and easily interpreted the slobbering speech[.]

—Chan seeks to learn about a coven rival in “The Twelve Wizards Of Ong,” by Lin Carter

For, after some years of repose within the sepulchre, vigor seeped back again into the brittle limbs of the mummified enchanter [Avalzaunt] and sentience gleamed anew in his jellied and sunken eyes. At first the partially revived lich lay in a numb and mindless stupor, with no conception of its present charnel abode. ... [I]t was the necromantic powers of Avalzaunt himself which were the sole cause of his return to life.

—Avalzaunt arises as a lich in “The Stairs In The Crypt,” by Lin Carter and Clark Ashton Smith



ORCS

“If there are Orcs there, it may prove ill for us, that is true. But most of the Orcs of the Misty Mountains were scattered or destroyed at the Battle of Five Armies.”

—Gandalf’s optimism leads him to Moria in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Orcs and their kin — goblins, hobgoblins, ogres, and more — have been a staple of Fantasy gaming practically since the first dungeon was drawn. Available to the GM in limitless amounts, and usually depicted as irredeemably evil and dangerous so they can be slaughtered without moral quandry, they’re the perfect foe for many groups of PCs. In other settings they may be smart and organized enough to learn how to cast spells, use heavy armor and weapons, and develop technology, making them even more dangerous but raising the possibility of freedom of thought and some orcs choosing “good” instead of “evil.”

THE POWER OF WORDS

The change in the wizard’s voice was astounding. Suddenly it became menacing, powerful, harsh as stone. A shadow seemed to pass over the high sun, and the porch for a moment grew dark. All trembled, and the Elves stopped their ears.

“Never before has any voice dared to utter words of [the Black Speech] in Imladris, Gandalf the Grey,” said Elrond, as the shadow passed and the company breathed once more.

“And let us hope that none will ever speak it here again,” answered Gandalf. “Nevertheless I do not ask your pardon, Master Elrond. For if that tongue is not soon to be heard in every corner of the West, then let all put doubt aside that [the Ring] is indeed what the Wise have declared: the treasure of the Enemy, fraught with his malice[.]”

—Gandalf’s words give the Council of Elrond pause in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Words and language factor prominently into many Fantasy settings. In a world where magic exists, words and songs have power in and of themselves. Besides spoken incantations for spells, some words — curses, the names of gods and demons, and the like — may be so powerful that any character can invoke that power if he’s not careful. The abilities of many loremaster, namer, and bard characters depend on this phenomenon.

But Sauron caused to be built upon the hill in the midst of the city of the Númenóreans, Armenelos the Golden, a mighty temple, ... and in that temple, with spilling of blood and torment and great wickedness, men made sacrifice to Melkor that he should release them from Death.

—Sauron manipulates the Númenóreans through their fear of dying in *The Silmarillion*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

NAMES AND TRUE NAMES

“You offer me safety! You threaten me! With what?”

“With your name, Yevaud.”

Ged’s voice shook as he spoke the name, yet he spoke it clear and loud. At the sound of it, the old dragon held still, utterly still. ... When he spoke the dragon’s name, it was as if he held the huge being on a fine, thin leash, tightening it on his throat.

He spoke again. “Yevaud! Swear by your name that you and your sons will never come to the Archipelago.”

Flames broke suddenly bright and loud from the dragon’s jaws, and he said, “I swear it by my name!”

—Ged defeats the Dragon of Pendor in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

Perhaps the most striking example of the power of words in Fantasy is the use of names as tools for spellcasting. In some settings, most notably Ursula LeGuin’s Earthsea, knowing the “True Name” of a thing or person gives one the ability to affect it with magic, even to the extent of holding absolute power over another being. In such settings, people guard their True Names carefully, and learning the True Name of an enemy may be the object of a quest, the reason for summoning a demon, or the like.

PRIESTS AND TEMPLES

A different sort of visitor arrived at Lyonesse Town: Brother Umphred, a portly round-faced evangelist, originally from Aquitania, who had arrived at Lyonesse by way of Whanish Isle and the Diocese of Skro. With an instinct as certain and sure as that which takes a ferret to the rabbit’s throat, Brother Umphred found the ear of Queen Sollace. Brother Umphred used an insistent mellifluous voice and Queen Sollace became a convert to Christianity.

—Brother Umphred becomes a part of the events chronicled in the *Lyonesse Trilogy*, by Jack Vance

Altars (see above) often imply two things: a priesthood; and temples.

Priests occur in any Fantasy setting that features gods. In most cases the gods cannot directly take part in events in the material world; they must instead act through their most faithful and trusted servants, priests, to take a hand in mortal affairs. To assist their servants in the tasks assigned them, and to win converts, the gods grant priests miraculous and magical powers. In most Fantasy roleplaying games, priests’ powers work similarly to wizards’ spells, though they usually emphasize healing, protection, succor, and

practical forms of assistance rather than combat. But priests' holy powers make them fierce and deadly foes of the undead, demons, and similar monsters... not to mention rival priests.

Some types of priests include: the fanatic; the righteous crusader (a warrior-priest who slays the heathen and the unholy and wins converts by the sword); the monk (a cloistered priest who engages in study and meditation); the village priest; and the evil high priest (a classic foe of noble-minded heroes). Closely related to priests are druids (nature priests, often with a touch of modern environmentalism added), shamans, witchdoctors, and the like.

Temples are holy buildings (or other sacred sites, such as stone circles) where the priesthood and believers congregate to engage in worship ceremonies. Priests may also cast ritual spells there, and temples themselves often have powerful protective magics to aid the faithful and hinder (or harm) unbelievers. For example, the undead usually cannot enter holy ground without suffering burning pain (and even destruction), while priests, paladins, and other "good" characters may suffer mental or physical agony in the temples of evil gods.

For more information about religion and priesthoods in Fantasy worlds, see page 374.

PROPHECIES, FORESIGHT, AND OMENS

Particularly common in Epic and High Fantasy, but prevalent in other subgenres as well, prophecies, mysterious dire warnings, and pronouncements of doom factor into many Fantasy stories. In many cases the prophecy prompts the Dark Lord (or other enemy) into rash action, causing the heroes to take countermeasures that lead to the fulfillment of the prophecy anyway.

Prophecies work well in Fantasy Hero games because they give the GM a way to foreshadow future events and motivate the heroes without providing direct, unambiguous information. Even in High Fantasy settings with lots of magic, prophecies tend to be vague and open to multiple interpretations, so the PCs may trip themselves up no matter how hard they try to figure things out and take pre-emptive action. (Conversely, they may stumble onto the solution regardless of how mistakenly they read the prophecy at first — not a bad thing for many gaming groups!)

Prophecies have the additional benefit of setting the PCs apart from everyone else. If one or more PCs are the subject of a prophecy that's central to the campaign, they *have* to be involved, regardless of how illogical that may seem. The King can't just send his army to deal with whatever the problem is, because the prophecy says a red-headed girl not born of woman will be the kingdom's salvation... so he has to turn to the only red-headed girl around (a PC) to get the job done.

For more about prophecy and how to handle it during the game, see page 408.

"Say to the Council of Lords, and to the High Lord Prothall son of Dwillian, that the uttermost limit of their span of days upon the Land is seven times seven years from this present time. Before the end of those days are numbered, I will have the command of life and death in my hand. And as a token that what I say is the one word of truth, tell them this: Drool Rockworm, Cavewight of Mount Thunder, has found the Staff of Law, which was lost ten times a hundred years ago by Kevin at the Ritual of Desecration. Say to them that the task appointed to their generation is to regain the staff. Without it, they will not be able to resist me for seven years, and my complete victory will be achieved six times seven years earlier than it would be else.

"As for you, groveler: do not fail with this message. If you do not bring it before the Council, then every human in the Land will be dead before ten seasons have passed. You do not understand — but I tell you Drool Rockworm has the Staff, and that it is a cause for terror. He will be enthroned at Lord's Keep in two years if the message fails."

—Lord Foul prophesies to Thomas Covenant in *Lord Foul's Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

And yet another concern, even more poignant, gnawed at Casmir's mind: the prediction uttered long years before by Persilian the Magic Mirror. The words had never stopped ringing in Casmir's mind:

*Suldrun's son shall undertake
Before his life is gone
To sit his right and proper place
At Cairbra an Meadhan
If so he sits and so he thrives
Then he shall make his own
The Table Round, to Casmir's woe,
And Evandig his Throne.*

—Casmir ponders a mysterious prophecy in *Madouc*, by Jack Vance

"Only two pazoors, O generous one, and I will prophesy." ...

"I do not require your prophecies."

"One pazoor, then."

"No." ...

"Then, O Avoosl Wuthoqqan," he hissed, "I will prophesy gratis. Harken to your weird: the godless and exceeding love which you bear to all material things, and your lust therefor, shall lead you on a strange quest and bring you to a doom whereof the stars and sun will alike be ignorant. The hidden opulence of earth shall allure you and ensnare you; and earth itself shall devour you at the last."

—a greedy merchant learns of his final fate in "The Weird Of Avoosl Wuthoqqan," by Clark Ashton Smith

Do you know more now, or not?

—a translation of the phrase with which the Volva ends many of her prophetic predictions in the *Voluspa* of the *Elder Edda*



“We quest, do we not?”

—Alodar reminds Saxton of the need to diligently and tenaciously pursue their goal in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Vafthrudnir was indeed the wisest of the Giants, and many went to strive to gain wisdom from him. But those who went to him had to answer the riddles Vafthrudnir asked, and if they failed to answer the Giant took their heads off.

—Odin contemplates seeking wisdom from Vafthrudnir in *The Children Of Odin*, by Padraic Colum

QUESTS

She and her fellow sorcerers labored in utter darkness. They knew only that the object of their search was hidden somewhere north of the River Issalt. ... To learn even that much had cost their fellowship lives and lifetimes.

—villains can go on quests too, as demonstrated in *Grey mantle*, by John Morressy

“The Ring-bearer is setting out on the Quest of Mount Doom. On him alone is any charge laid: neither to cast away the Ring, nor to deliver it to any servant of the Enemy nor indeed to let any handle it, save members of the Company and the Council, and only then in gravest need. The others go with him as free companions, to help him on his way.”

—Elrond describes the Quest in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

A central element of most Epic Fantasy stories (see page 32), but present in other subgenres as well, quests represent the driving goal of the story: to get to a particular place; to accomplish a particular deed; or both. And they work just as well for Fantasy gaming campaigns as they do for novels. A campaign focused in whole or in part on a quest provides all the PCs with a goal right off the bat, one that the GM can use to keep the events of the campaign on track.

RIDDLES

He knew, of course, that the riddle-game was sacred and of immense antiquity, and even wicked creatures were afraid to cheat when they played at it.

—Bilbo plays a dangerous game of riddery with Gollum in *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Rood stirred. “And this from the man who put his life in the balance with his knowledge. Beware the unanswered riddle.”

“It is that: unanswered, and for all I know it may not need an answer.”

Rood’s hand cut the air, his sleeve fluttering. “Every riddle has an answer.”

—Morgon and Rood discuss the riddle of Morgon’s three stars in *The Riddle-master Of Hed*, by Patricia McKillip

Riddles play a part in many Fantasy stories. It’s rarely a central part (though finding the answer to a riddle may enmesh the characters in the grand adventure), but still a part, and often an enjoyable one. Riddle-games can become a fun part of a Fantasy gaming campaign by having the GM and players directly ask riddles of one another... though the GM will need rules to handle the situation if a player’s playing a character who’s much smarter or better at riddling than the player himself!



RINGS

*Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*

—the lore of the Rings of Power in *The Lord Of The Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Ever since Bilbo stumbled down the wrong tunnel under the Misty Mountains and chanced to put his hand upon the One Ring, enchanted rings have been a mainstay of Fantasy fiction in general, and Fantasy roleplaying games in particular. Traditionally they bestow powers such as invisibility, animal speech, language comprehension, or conjuration (as in Phyllis Eisenstein's *Sorcerer's Son*). However, in most game campaigns a wizard can imbue a ring with just about any sort of magical power, even the ability to fire deadly magical missiles or let the wearer walk through walls. (For more about magic rings, see page 324.)

SHAPE-CHANGING AND TRANSFORMATION

As a boy, Ogion like all boys had thought it would be a very pleasant game to take by art-magic whatever shape one liked, man or beast, tree or cloud, and so to play at a thousand beings. But as a wizard he had learned the price of the game, which is the peril of losing one's self, playing away the truth. The longer a man stays in a form not his own, the greater this peril. Every prentice-sorcerer learns the tale of the wizard Borger of Way, who delighted in taking bear's shape, and did so more often until the bear grew in him and the man died away, and he became a bear, and killed his own little son in the forests, and was hunted down and slain.

—Ogion considers the dangers of shape-changing in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

Changing of shape, form, and function, whether voluntary or involuntary, is an element found in many Fantasy sagas. Characters change shape to gain greater abilities, or inflict shape-changes on their enemies to weaken and hinder them. On a more symbolic level, a character can transform slowly over the course of a story from a naive nobody into a bold, wise hero.

SIDES

If Ilmiora represented Law, then the Sighing Desert certainly mirrored something of the barrenness of Ultimate Chaos. Those who dwelled in [Tanelorn] had loyalty neither to Law nor to Chaos and they had chosen to have no part in the Cosmic Struggle which was waged continuously by the Lords of the Higher Worlds.

—Michael Moorcock describes the inhabitants of the city of Tanelorn in *The Vanishing Tower*

Holger got the idea that a perpetual struggle went on between the primeval forces of Law and Chaos. No, not forces exactly. Modes of Existence? A terrestrial reflection of the spiritual conflict between heaven and hell? In any case, humans were the chief agents on earth of Law, though most of them were so only unconsciously and some, witches and warlocks and evildoers, had sold out to Chaos.

—Holger Carlsen contemplates the nature of the world in *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, by Poul Anderson

"All the world knows that Lythande is a servant of Law and not of Chaos, and no magician bound to the Law would demean himself to cheat an honest man."

—Rastafyre tells what he knows of Lythande's loyalties in "The Incompetent Magician," by Marion Zimmer Bradley

In many Fantasy settings, particularly Epic Fantasy stories, every important person (including all the PCs, prominent NPCs, and the like) belongs to one "side" or the other. This may be cast outright as Good versus Evil, but some authors prefer different terms, such as Light versus Dark. One of the most common expressions of this is Law versus Chaos, a dichotomy most starkly expressed by Michael Moorcock in his "Eternal Champion" stories (which use this trope extensively), and later picked up by other authors (and by the *Dungeons & Dragons* roleplaying game, which transformed it into the "alignment" system and rules).

Regardless of the terms used, the conflict between the two fundamental opposing forces drives the action of the story, in whole or in part. The heroes' quest may involve defeating a member of the opposing side or destroying the opposing side's talisman, for example.

The dualistic conflicts found in most Fantasy literature may not appeal to GMs and players, who prefer more variety and factional fighting. For these gamers, three, four, nine, or a dozen different sides, each espousing some belief wholly or partially at odds with the other sides, struggle for supremacy (or at least the most influence).

"To change this rock into a jewel, you must change its true name. And to do that, my son, even to so small a scrap of the world, is to change the world. It can be done. Indeed it can be done. It is the art of the Master Changer, and you will learn it, when you are ready to learn it. But you must not change one thing, one pebble, one grain of sand, until you know what good and evil will follow on that act. ... Enjoy illusions, lad, and let the rocks be rocks."

—the Master Hand explains the nature of transformation-spells to Ged in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

And beside the sleeping men he saw wolfskins, left there as though they had been cast off. Then Sigmund knew that these men were shape-changers — that they were ones who changed their shapes and ranged through the forests as wolves.

—Sigmund encounters some shape-changers in "The Sword of the Volsungs," as recounted in *The Children Of Odin*, by Padraic Colum



The Silver Eel bustled with pleasantly raucous excitement. Fighting men predominated and the clank of swordsmen's harness mingled with the thump of tankards, providing a deep obbligato to the shrill laughter of the women. Swaggering guardsmen elbowed the insolent bravos of the young lords. Grinning slaves bearing

1 open wine jars dodged nimbly between. In one corner a slave girl was dancing, the jingle of her silver anklet bells inaudible in the din.

—a description of one of the taverns of Lankmar in “The Bleak Shore,” by Fritz Leiber

Player 1: “Please, please don't say we met in a tavern.”

DM (narrating): “... in a tavern called The Prancing Pony, an age-old meeting place.”

Player 1: “Arg!”

Player 2: “Total cliché.”

Player 1: “Lame. And the innkeeper. I'll bet he's some burly sod with a funny moustache and an apron.”

DM: “Maybe...”

Player 3: “I say we kill the fat geezer and sack the town.”

—the conventions of Fantasy fiction and gaming are mocked in “DM Of The Rings,” a webcomic by Shamus Young

SWORDS

“For the Sword that was Broken is the Sword of Elendil that broke beneath him when he fell. It has been treasured by his heirs when all other heirlooms were lost[.]” said Aragorn.] ...

The Sword of Elendil was forged anew by Elvish smiths, and on its blade was traced a device of seven stars set between the crescent Moon and the rayed Sun, and about them was written many runes[.] ... And Aragorn gave it a new name and called it *Andúril, Flame of the West*.

—Aragorn has his sword re-forged in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

He took from the box a small sword in an old shabby leathern scabbard. Then he drew it, and its polished and well-tended blade glittered suddenly, cold and bright. “This is *Sting*,” he said, and thrust it with little effort deep into a wooden beam.

—Bilbo gives Frodo the enchanted sword *Sting* in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

He heard a soft moaning from the great black battle blade as he reached out a slim-fingered white hand to take it. It was heavy, yet perfectly balanced, a two-handed broadsword of prodigious size, with its wide crosspiece and its blade smooth and broad, stretching for over five feet from the hilt. Hear the hilt, mystic runes were engraved and even Elric did not know what they fully signified.

—Elric once again takes up the sentient demonic sword *Stormbringer*, and prepares for battle in *Stormbringer*, by Michael Moorcock

By far the most popular Fantasy weapon, the sword often has connotations beyond its use as a deadly weapon of war. For one, it represents power. Symbolically, the man who holds the sword is the man who rules, the man who exercises authority. In some cases the sword even represents magical power; wizards use swords and knives in ceremonies which banish hostile forces or sever the ties between two people or things.

Second, swords often bear enchantments. The most common in gaming are ones that increase the sword's offensive power, and which usually also make the weapon emit light (like *Sting* and *Glamdring* in *The Lord Of The Rings*). However, many other magical effects could also apply to swords. For example, in some Irish legends, every sword has the ability to speak, so that it can recount the great deeds performed with it.

TAVERNS AND INNS

They found a small tavern and secured a room, then sprawled in comfort in the low-ceilinged drinking room to sip ale before the morning fire and see if they could overhear any of the news they sought. Kull had been in civilization long enough to learn that more information can be found in a wineshop than in the chamber of a king's chief spy.

—King Kull seeks information the old-fashioned way in “Riders Beyond The Sunrise,” by Lin Carter and Robert E. Howard

Even from the outside the inn looked a pleasant house to familiar eyes. ... The door was open and light streamed out of it. Above the arch there was a lamp, and beneath it swung a large signboard: a fat white pony reared up on its hind legs. Over the door was painted in white letters: THE PRANCING PONY by BARLIMAN BUTTERBUR. Many of the lower windows showed lights behind thick curtains. ...

They led their ponies under the arch[.] Frodo went forward and nearly bumped into a short fat man with a bald head and a red face. He had a white apron on, and was bustling out of one door and in through another, carrying a tray laden with full mugs.

—Frodo and his friends come to the Prancing Pony and meet innkeeper Barliman Butterbur, setting the stage for countless gaming inns and innkeepers to come, in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Taverns crop up in many Fantasy stories as a place for the heroes to meet, and where they seek information (and a bite to eat, and perhaps a place to stay) in a strange town. (There's even a whole “tavern tales” subgenre of speculative fiction involving stories told by characters in, or which occur in, bars and taverns.) In fact, they serve as the starting point for adventures so much that it's become a little clichéd. Many a Fantasy Hero campaign or adventure has begun, “You're all sitting around in a tavern when something happens...”

Taverns, and their slightly more sophisticated cousins inns, usually feature a few stock characters: a plump and friendly innkeeper, easily bullied if he becomes stubborn or truculent; his either pleasant or shrewish, but equally plump, wife; a beautiful serving wench or two; the innkeeper's mischievous son; the big (and sometimes drunk) bruiser who picks a fight with one of the PCs, and who sometimes becomes a friend and staunch ally after getting soundly thrashed; and the down-on-his-luck troubadour who plays for food, drink, and whatever coins the audience throws at him. As GM, you can't go wrong with this sort of cast.



VAMPIRES

“I don’t like vampires. I’m going to take a stand and say they’re not good.”

—Xander displays wisdom on *Buffy, The Vampire Slayer*

And immediately [Sauron] took the form of a vampire, great as a dark cloud across the moon, and he fled, dripping blood from his throat upon the trees, and came to Taur-nu-Fuin, and dwelt there, filling it with horror.

—Sauron flees after being defeated by Huan the hound and Lúthien the Elf-woman in *The Silmarillion*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Vampires, with their sophisticated danger and smoldering sexuality, crop up frequently in Fantasy, particularly in Urban Fantasy (which has evolved an entire subgenre, “vampire romance,” devoted to interaction between male vampires and living women). They range from the traditional blood-sucker who can’t abide the sunlight, sleeps in a coffin, and can change into mist or bat form, to “realistic” depictions that explain vampirism as a separate species, the result of a virus that infects humans, or the like. Sometimes they’re totally evil (or at least a dangerous threat to humanity), sometimes bestial, sometimes they run the same range of emotions and personality types as ordinary humans. Whatever type of vampire you want, you can find it somewhere in Fantasy.

WIZARDS

“Do not meddle in the affairs of Wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger.”

—Gildor advises Frodo in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

“No matter how subtle the wizard, a knife between the shoulder blades will seriously cramp his style.”

—assassin Vlad Taltos offers his own opinion in *Jherog*, by Steven Brust

Except for Low and Urban Fantasy, most Fantasy stories feature at least one prominent wizard. Often aged, usually wise, and quite powerful, the wizard serves as an ally and helper to a naive hero, a patron for groups of adventurers, an advisor to kings and nobles, or an evil nemesis. Common fashion accessories for mages include pointed hats, hooded cloaks (usually grey, black, or blue), long beards, and a wizard’s staff (perhaps imbued with magical power of its own, or used as a focus for spellcasting).

In most Fantasy stories, wizards have more power than other characters, but they refrain from using it. Usually they cite “the need to preserve the Equilibrium,” not wanting to tire themselves out, or an effort not to attract unwanted attention as the reason. But the true reason is that the frugal use of power prevents the wizard from overshadowing the other characters and short-circuiting the plot. In most Fantasy roleplaying campaigns,

where characters need to be relatively equal in power, the wizard is significantly weaker than in literature, so he need not worry as much about over-using whatever power he does possess.

Similar to wizards are *witches*, female spell-casters with a particular arsenal of magics and abilities: potion-brewing; curse- and hex-casting; candle magic; lesser healing; some minor nature magics; and hedge-wizardry. In some settings they have much greater power, making them little different from wizards.

LEARNING TO BE A WIZARD

“If you wish, I will send you to Roke Island, where all high arts are taught. Any craft you undertake to learn you will learn, for your power is great. Greater even than your pride, I hope. I would keep you here with me, for what I have is what you lack, but I will not keep you against your will. Now choose between Re Albi and Roke.” ...

“Master,” he said, “I will go to Roke.” ... So bolstering up his pride, he set all his strong will on the work they gave him, the lessons and crafts and histories and skills taught by the grey-cloaked Masters of Roke, who were called the Nine. ... Thenceforth he studied the high arts and enchantments, passing beyond arts of illusion to the works of real magery, learning what he must know to earn his wizard’s staff.

—Ogion the Silent offers Ged a choice, and Ged takes it, in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

A common story told in Fantasy fiction is that of the wizard *learning* to be a wizard. Perhaps the best example of this is Ursula K. LeGuin’s magnificent *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, but it’s a central element in such diverse novels as Patrick Rothfuss’s *The Name Of The Wind*, Trudi Canavan’s *Black Magician* trilogy, and of course the “Harry Potter” books.

Unless the GM wants the entire campaign to focus on a group of young wizardlings learning to cast spells, this trope doesn’t work so well in a gaming context. However, a wizard player and the GM could game out some of the key events in the wizard’s apprenticeship, or the player could create such details as part of crafting his character’s background.

THE WIZARD’S WORKROOM

The walls were of smooth stone faced with gray plaster and lined with shelves of dark wood. Along these were stacked and piled a jumble of curious things. Bottles and jars and flasks filled with colored liquids and nameless powders, bundles of dry, withered leaves and grotesquely shaped roots, little cloth bags tied with drawstrings and filled, perhaps, with strange drugs and deadly powders.

And books — more of these than Thongor had ever seen before. Huge, ponderous tomes made of crinkly sheets of rough parchment crudely bound in heavy leather or carven wood or painted ivory panels.

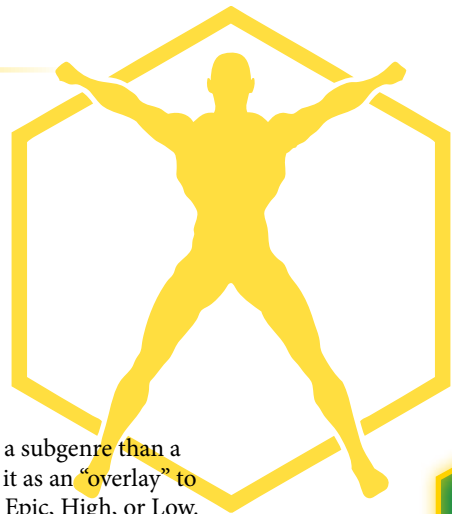
This, he knew, must be the magical workshop of Athmar Phong. A massive desk of oily black wood, carved all over with grinning devil masks, stood to one end of the room, its top littered with hieroglyphic charts and curious instruments of brass and crystal. A man’s skull of browned bone stood as a paperweight on one corner of the desk, and rubies were set in the sockets of the skull for eyes.

—Thongor enters a wizard’s workroom in “Thieves Of Zangabal,” by Lin Carter

Many a Fantasy story features a scene set in a wizard’s workroom. The bizarre objects, glass containers filled with bubbling chemicals, and ancient tomes found in such places draw authors like honey draws flies. They’re somewhat less common in Fantasy gaming, since PCs are far more inclined to loot them than characters in fiction, but they can still make for a great scene when the GM works them in properly.



FANTASY SUBGENRES



Like Science Fiction, Superheroes, Martial Arts, or any other major genre, Fantasy has several major “subgenres,” each with its own distinct themes, features, conventions, and elements. Although all Fantasy subgenres tend to share the three factors described above, and sometimes two or more subgenres mix together, for gaming purposes it helps to analyze them individually.

CROSSWORLDS FANTASY

“May I ask, O Lucy Daughter of Eve,” said Mr. Tumnus, “how you have come into Narnia?”

“Narnia? What’s that?” said Lucy.

“This is the land of Narnia,” said the Faun, “where we are now; all that lies between the lamp-post and the great castle of Cair Paravel on the eastern sea. And you — you have come from the Wild Woods of the West?”

“I — I got in through the wardrobe in the spare room,” said Lucy.

“[I]f only I had worked hader at geography when I was a little Faun, I should no doubt know all about those strange countries. It is too late now. ... Daughter of Eve from the far land of Spare Oom where eternal summer reigns around the bright city of War Drobe, how would it be if you came and had tea with me?”

—Lucy enters Narnia and meets the faun Tumnus in *The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis

Crossworlds Fantasy involves stories in which the protagonists (the PCs, in a Fantasy Hero campaign) are people from the real world who somehow cross over into a Fantasy world and become involved in adventures there. Because they’re different — they come from another world — it’s possible for them to become heroes. Often the heroes are the subjects of prophecy, or possess some power, ability, or insight that inhabitants of the Fantasy setting lack.

Crossworlds Fantasy is less a subgenre than a *meta*-subgenre. You can apply it as an “overlay” to other types of Fantasy, such as Epic, High, or Low. Most *Crossworlds* stories involve High or Epic Fantasy.

In many *Crossworlds Fantasy* stories, such as *The Chronicles Of Narnia* or *The Weirdstone Of Brisingamen*, the protagonists are children — perhaps precociously intelligent and insightful, but still children. However, this doesn’t hinder them in the Fantasy world. Because of their “special” nature in the Fantasy realm, adults treat them as equals, and they may in fact possess awesome magical powers (though they may not have much skill at using them in the early part of the story). But since most gamers have little interest in playing child characters, a typical *Crossworlds Fantasy Hero* campaign would more likely involve adult heroes, as in the Fantasy novels of Stephen Donaldson.

Since crossing worlds means spending some time in the “real world,” *Crossworlds Fantasy* sometimes seems similar to Urban Fantasy (especially when the crossing of realities only means going to secret or hidden places on Earth that ordinary mortals lack access to). The main difference between the two lies in the fact that in an Urban Fantasy, the events of the story still take place in “the real world” (even if a secret or hidden part of it), while in a *Crossworlds* tale, the action only really begins when the characters cross the borders of reality into another realm. Furthermore, the trappings of modern-day life tend to play into Urban Fantasy, whereas they have little (if any) effect on *Crossworlds Fantasy*.

Examples of *Crossworlds Fantasy* include *The Chronicles Of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles Of Thomas Covenant* trilogy and *Mordant’s Need* duology by Stephen Donaldson, J.K. Rowling’s “Harry Potter” novels, Poul Anderson’s *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, deCamp and Pratt’s “Compleat Enchanter” stories, Guy Gavriel Kay’s *Fionavar Tapestry* trilogy, Mark Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur’s Court*, Alan Garner’s *The Weirdstone Of Brisingamen*, and Roger Zelazny’s *Changeling* and *Madwand*.



CROSSWORLDS FANTASY ELEMENTS

In addition to the central element of “the protagonists come from another world,” the following conventions tend to define much of Crossworlds Fantasy:

ALLEGORY, ANALOGY, AND METAPHOR

Moreso than other types of Fantasy stories, Crossworlds Fantasy has a predilection for allegory, analogy, and metaphor. Sometimes it seems as if every person, event, creature, and place “stands for” something. Perhaps the best-known example are the *Narnia* stories, which are generally considered to have elements of Christian allegory (such as the lion Aslan representing Jesus Christ), but many others exist.

A PAUCITY OF HUMANITY

While humans are commonplace in most Fantasy stories (and sometimes the only race around), in some Crossworlds Fantasy stories they exist barely, if at all. In this case the crossover heroes are noteworthy for their unusual race as much as their abilities or powers, though some of the “natives” may be *almost* Human. The lack of humans tends to occur more frequently in Fantasy movies, such as *Labyrinth*, but does occur in some written stories.

TALK, TALK, TALK

Something very curious indeed had come out of the cabin in the poop and was slowly approaching them. You might call it — and indeed it was — a Mouse. But then it was a Mouse on its hind legs and stood about two feet high. ... “My humble duty to your Majesty. And to King Edmund, too.”

—Lucy, Edmund, and Eustace meet Reepicheep the Mouse in *The Voyage Of The Dawn Treader*, by C.S. Lewis.

In many Crossworlds Fantasy lands, animals can talk! In some cases, inanimate objects can talk, too. And anything that can talk, can converse intelligently (though sometimes obsessively about a favorite topic). A talking horse can carry on a perfectly ordinary discussion with his rider, for example, but a talking tree may constantly steer the conversation back toward its complaints about the weather.

SOCIAL COMMENTARY

In much the same way that some Crossworlds Fantasy stories are written as allegory, some contain aspects of social commentary. The events of the story mirror events in the characters’ own world, or the adventures they experience have some bearing on the current state of affairs in their normal lives. This is difficult to pull off in a gaming context unless the GM first runs some games in the characters’ home world to set the stage for what’s going on there, but it is possible.

THE PERSPECTIVE IS...

Variable. In Crossworlds Fantasy written for children, or featuring children as protagonists, the perspective tends to be beneficent. While Evil exists, and bad things may happen, the heroes have the means to oppose and overcome such things — a good heart and true, coupled with courageous determination, can see them through to victory (a fitting moral perspective for a children's tale). In Crossworlds Fantasy with adult heroes, the perspective may be only subtly beneficent (as in High Fantasy), ranging to downright neutral or hostile.

CROSSWORLDS FANTASY HERO CAMPAIGNS

A Crossworlds Fantasy Hero campaign featuring child protagonists usually has PCs who aren't even Heroic — they're Normals, usually Competent or Skilled Normals, each with a mandatory Social Complication: Child (for which the GM may or may not allow them to receive points). A campaign involving adult PCs usually has Standard Heroic characters built on 175 Total Points (including 50 points' worth of Matching Complications). Both types of characters are automatically subject to Characteristic Maxima, and may obtain ordinary equipment by spending money in-game.

In either case, the GM may let players build characters on more points if he wants the PCs to be the powerful subjects of prophecy, or gifted with special magical abilities that only work in the Fantasy realm. In such campaigns, Crossworlds characters, whether adults or children, could be Powerful or Very Powerful Heroic characters.

EPIC FANTASY

"This is the One Ring that he lost many ages ago, to the great weakening of his power. He greatly desires it — but he must not get it."

—Gandalf reveals to Frodo the central, epic, fact of *The Lord Of The Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Epic Fantasy stories and game campaigns feature grand, romantic, monumental stories of the heroes' struggle against a vast, and often overwhelmingly powerful, enemy. Like Crossworlds Fantasy, Epic Fantasy is in many ways a meta-subgenre; your Fantasy Hero campaign could tell an Epic Low Fantasy story, Epic High Fantasy story, or the like.

"I have come to Chaya on quest, with a call from the gods I serve."

—Paksenarrion searches for the lost king of Lyonya in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

Central to all Epic Fantasy stories is the concept of the *quest*: a striving toward a desired, and distant, end goal. In most cases the heroes' quest literally involves a journey, as they travel over the map of the world toward a location of special significance (such as a mystic site where they can destroy an evil talisman, or the long-lost abbey to which they must return a sacred relic). Along the way, the heroes meet new friends, encounter and overcome obstacles, and confront their enemy(ies) in numerous guises. Some of them may not even make it the entire way, but new heroes may join the quest in midstream.

In the best Epic Fantasy, the quest transcends the literal journey or striving toward a goal to reach the level of the spiritual and personal as well. Epic heroes change, becoming better people as a result of their experiences. A hard-bitten or embittered character may learn sympathy and compassion, an immature one responsibility and duty, a selfish one the joys of serving others. A character with a destiny (such as a throne to win, or a powerful spell to obtain) may achieve it; one who's the object of prophecy may fulfill it. Sometimes the characters reach the end of their quest with different goals and desires than when they started out.

Epic Fantasy is ideally suited for many Fantasy Hero campaigns. The quest construct shapes a game nicely, giving everyone an objective to strive for and a clear vision of what the story involves. The characters' travels allow the GM to pit them against a variety of foes, and the fact that heroes can leave or join the quest at various points makes it easy to add new players or let a player change characters. The epic scale of the conflict puts the PCs at the center of the action, with the fate of the world resting on their shoulders.

The quintessential Epic Fantasy saga is, of course, J.R.R. Tolkien's magnificent *Lord Of The Rings*, which influences just about every other work in this subgenre (not to mention the entire Fantasy genre, and countless Fantasy roleplaying campaigns). Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* can also be regarded as Epic Fantasy in many respects. The many imitators of Tolkien's work, such as Terry Brooks in *The Sword Of Shannara*, sometimes introduce variations on the standard Epic Fantasy themes, but the core of the subgenre always remains intact. Other examples include Patricia McKillip's "Riddle-Master" trilogy, *The Belgariad* series by David Eddings, Stephen Donaldson's *Chronicles Of Thomas Covenant The Unbeliever*, Guy Gavriel Kay's *Fionavar Tapestry* trilogy, and some bodies of myth and legend (such as the Arthurian tales or parts of Norse mythology).



EPIC FANTASY ELEMENTS

In addition to the central element of the quest, the following conventions tend to define much of Epic Fantasy:

FREE WILL AND FATE

“You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so.”

—Elrond points out the hand of fate at work in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

“[F]or were you ten times as wise you would have no right to rule me and mine for your own profit as you desired[.]”

—King Théoden upbraids Saruman in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Despite the occasional use of prophecies, foretelling, and the like, Epic Fantasy characters and peoples are not slaves to fate. They have free will, and thus make their own destinies as much as they simply “achieve” them. Those who are Evil choose to be Evil, but even at the end of the story the chance to reform and repent often remains available — it is as much by his own rejection of the Good, as by the heroes’ actions, that the enemy suffers defeat.

The theme of free will intertwines with the concept of fate and prophecy running through Epic Fantasy, but in a way that enhances free will. A character may be *fated* to do something, receive some gift, or manifest some power, but *how* he does that thing, and *what* he does with his gift or power, remains up to him. He can exercise his free will, choosing Good or Evil... for if no hard choices exist, heroism loses its meaning.

HEROIC QUALITIES AND PRESERVING THE GOOD

“I believe that hitherto ... [Sauron] has entirely overlooked the existence of hobbits. You should be thankful. But your safety has passed. He does not need you — he has many more useful servants — but he won’t forget you again. And hobbits as miserable slaves would please him far more than hobbits happy and free.”

—Gandalf explains that the Shire is now in great peril in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Epic Fantasy characters recognize that they are *heroes*, first and foremost, and that it’s up to them to preserve the good, even if it means making great sacrifices. Frodo sacrifices his idyllic life

and health to save Middle-earth from Sauron; Morgon of Hed gives up the land and principedom he loves to assume a role of power and leadership he doesn’t want, because it’s necessary for the preservation of the realm.

Epic Fantasy heroes tend to embody all the best qualities associated with the term “hero.” They’re noble, honorable, compassionate, self-sacrificing, valorous, honest, fair, wise, brave, and able to exercise restraint. This often presents a roleplaying challenge, since it’s difficult for gamers to spare defeated enemies, pass up opportunities for unfair advantage, and otherwise be “heroic” instead of just “powerful.”

The desire to preserve the good introduces an inherent, albeit sometimes subconscious, element of conservatism into Epic Fantasy stories (and, for that matter, many other types of Fantasy). The implicit assumption is that “things should stay the way they are — there’s no need for change, what we have is worth protecting.” Of course, the story usually involves one major change (the elimination or diminishment of Evil), but that change itself serves the goal of maintaining the desired status quo.

HIGH STAKES AND POWERFUL ENEMIES

“Sauron can torture and destroy the very hills.”

—Galdor succinctly sums up the Dark Lord’s enormous power in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

In Epic Fantasy, characters aren’t trying to achieve short-term objectives or cope with minor problems. Their goals are epic in scope, and so are the obstacles they must overcome — trivial considerations like how much money the characters have rarely factor into the story. In most cases, the fate of the world lies in their hands: if they succeed, a new era of peace, truth, justice, and wisdom will prevail; if they fail, the world plunges into darkness, despair, and evil.

Naturally, an epic story requires powerful, epic enemies. The most common type is the “Dark Lord,” usually modeled after Tolkien’s Sauron: a wizard, fallen god, or other incredibly powerful foe who’s utterly devoted to Evil (see page 424). In most cases, the characters lack the power to confront Evil directly; if they do, the Dark Lord can easily destroy them. The only way to defeat this enemy, whose power and armies can easily overwhelm the forces of Good, is to act indirectly. They may slay his minions and cripple him, or exploit his Achilles’s heel — destroy the object containing his life-force or power; trick him by taking advantage of his fears and paranoias; or find a way to attract the attention and aid of his equally-powerful, but remote, peers (such as other, Good-aligned, gods who’ve removed themselves from the world).

THE NAIVE HERO

“I will take the Ring,” he said, “though I do not know the way.”

—Frodo accepts the burden of the quest without fully understanding what he’s getting into in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

“It’s only a story,” Garion insisted.

“Many good and solid men would say so,” the old man told him, looking up at the stars, “— good men who will live out their lives believing only in what they can see and touch. But there’s a world beyond what we can see and touch, and that world lives by its own laws.”

—Belgarath begins to peel back a bit of the veil of Garion’s ignorance in *Pawn Of Prophecy*, by David Eddings

The central protagonist in many Epic Fantasy stories is an ordinary person — one who, though good-hearted, knows little of the world or what’s really going on in it. In other words, he’s a *naive hero*. Thrust into a situation he doesn’t understand and isn’t powerful enough to confront directly, with the help of strong allies he gradually learns and grows until he’s wise enough to win through to victory. In some cases, as with Garion in *The Belgariad*, he also has to grow into a legacy of power that helps him defeat Evil.

In a literary sense, the naive hero exists for two reasons. The first, and most practical, is that he gives the author a way to dispense information to the reader. The wise wizard or other helpers who accompany the naive hero on his quest answer his questions and tell him about what he may encounter, thus informing the reader about the Fantasy world. For example, Gandalf, by explaining things to Frodo, allows Tolkien to explain his world to people reading *The Lord Of The Rings*. Second, the weak, unknowing hero allows the author to layer a spiritual journey onto the physical journey of the quest. If the main character starts out powerful and wise, he rarely needs to grow very much, but a young and inexperienced hero has a long way to go “personally” as well as “professionally.”

Simulating the naive hero in Fantasy Hero games is difficult; it requires a desire for an intriguing roleplaying experience on the part of at least one player. Most gamers don’t want to play a character who’s weaker and less informed than the other PCs, even when that character is the central protagonist. In a gaming context, it often works better to have a hero who’s skilled and powerful in his own right, but naive about the rest of the world or the overall scope of the conflict.

THE NATURAL WORLD

[T]ogether they gazed through the branches northward. In the far distance, they saw a river running almost directly east, and beyond it the hills spread on to the horizon. But something more than the river separated these northern hills from those beside which the travelers had been walking since they had left Mithil Stonedown. The land beyond the river seemed to ripple in the morning sunshine, as if the quiet earth were flowing over shoals — as if there the secret rock of the Land ruffled the surface, revealing itself to those who could read it. From his high Woodhelves vantage, Covenant felt he was seeing something that surpassed even his new perceptions.

—Thomas Covenant drinks in the majesty of the Land in *Lord Foul’s Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

The illustrations on the covers and interiors of Epic Fantasy stories often don’t depict characters — they depict sweeping natural vistas with stark mountains, broad forests, winding rivers, and sometimes glittering castles (or dark, brooding towers). The natural world, the landscape through which the characters move, plays a role in most Epic Fantasies. In some cases it even comes alive, with tree-men, river-gods, and mountain-spirits helping or hindering the PCs. By emphasizing descriptions of the natural world in his narration, or even showing pictures taken from books and magazines to illustrate the majestic panoramas he’s describing, the GM can easily work this convention into his games.

A RICHLY-DEVELOPED, WELL-ORDERED WORLD

The legends, histories, and lore to be found in the sources are very extensive. Only selections from them, in most places much abridged, are here presented.

—from the introduction to the appendices of *The Lord Of The Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Just like an Epic Fantasy requires epic heroes and epic enemies, it requires an epic scope — a vast canvas on which to paint the story of the fate of the world. Thus, Epic Fantasy worlds are usually highly detailed and richly developed. The GM not only needs to have a map of the world and game information about prominent NPCs, he should create an extensive history for his setting, and perhaps develop its languages, cultures, and other elements to a greater degree than normal.

Epic Fantasy worlds usually aren’t just detailed, they’re *ordered*. There’s a place for everything, and everything has its place... and more importantly, everyone in the setting recognizes that this is The



When maybe a thousand years had passed, and the first shadow had fallen on Greenwood the Great, the Istari, or Wizards first appeared in Middle-earth. It was afterwards said that they came out of the Far West and were messengers sent to contest the power of Sauron, and to unite all those who had the will to resist him; but they were forbidden to match his power with power, or to seek to dominate Elves or Men by force and fear.

—the coming of the Five Wizards, as chronicled in the appendices of *The Lord Of The Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Way Things Should Be. Followers, servants, and subjects obey their masters and kings because that's how things should be in an ordered world. People respect wizards and men of learning because they should, even if those scholars possess little power. While the GM can turn this convention on its head — for example, by using hordes of orcs to symbolize unreasoning submission to power-hungry leaders, or having a servant's unquestioning obedience of the king creates problems for the PCs — in most cases the orderliness of the world should remain a beneficial thing.

STARKLY-DRAWN CHARACTERS

"I will have the future of this life, to waste or hold as I desire."

—Lord Foul explains the extent of his evil ambition in *Lord Foul's Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

Epic Fantasy stories depict worlds of black and white, where Good is Good and Evil is Evil, and never the twain shall meet. While some Good characters become traitors, and the possibility of reform and redemption remains open to at least some Evil enemies, it's easy to see where the average character stands thanks to the bright, primary colors in which the author (or GM) draws the story — no shades of grey here! Furthermore, usually death and/or disgrace is the ultimate fate reserved for those who betray their allies, though sometimes a former Evil enemy converts into a helpful Good companion.

A TRAGIC NOTE

[F]or the Third Age was over, and the Days of the Rings were passed, and an end was come of the story and song of those times. With them went many Elves of the High Kindred who would no longer stay in Middle-earth[.] "I will not say: do not weep; for not all tears are an evil."

—from the ending of *The Lord Of The Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Lurking within many Epic Fantasy stories is a note of tragedy. Not only do the heroes have to commit acts of Heroic Sacrifice (see page 19), but often in ending the threat of Evil they must set in motion events that have a tragic effect. For example, in *The Lord Of The Rings*, the destruction of the Ring and the downfall of Sauron leads in turn to the passing of the Elves and their great works of beauty and wonder. While no Elf would argue that the end should be otherwise, the loss is definitely tragic.

WISE AND POWERFUL WIZARDS

While Epic Low Fantasy is possible, most Epic Fantasy worlds and stories feature a heavy dose of magic — though not necessarily powerful magic in the throw-fireballs-and-summon-demons sense. Wise and powerful wizards exist, often in the role of chief aide and ally to the naive hero, and all but the most foolish and ignorant respect their learning and power. They don't even necessarily have to use their power often, because the reputation for power makes it unnecessary to exercise that power. Gandalf uses very little magic compared to the average Fantasy Hero wizard, for example, but nevertheless has a profound impact on the events of *The Lord Of The Rings*.

THE PERSPECTIVE IS...

Subtly beneficent. In most Epic Fantasies, the odds are heavily stacked against the heroes; the Evil enemy has much more personal power, larger armies, and greater strength than they do. But through nobility, valor, heroic determination, and heroic sacrifice, they can triumph — the "rules" of the world set things up so that, if sufficiently motivated, they *can* win despite the odds against them.

EPIC FANTASY HERO CAMPAIGNS

Most Epic Fantasy Hero campaigns have PCs built as Standard Heroic characters with 175 Total Points (including 50 points' worth of Matching Complications). The characters are automatically subject to Characteristic Maxima, and may obtain ordinary equipment by spending money in-game. In campaigns where the GM wants to "even the odds" against the forces of Evil just a bit, he may start the PCs as Powerful or Very Powerful heroes instead.

If appropriate to his gaming group, the GM may also wish to consider varying the starting points for different types of characters. The "naive hero" may only start the game as a Skilled Normal, whereas the "wise wizard" and another character or two are Very Powerful Heroes, and the bulk of the PCs remain Standard Heroic characters. The fewer Total Points a character has, the more Experience Points he earns, so that by the end of the campaign the characters are much more equal in power. (Alternately, the lower-powered PCs may have significantly more Heroic Action Points than the other PCs, though the GM may restrict what they can spend them on.) This simulates the sort of Epic Fantasy stories found in many novels.

HIGH FANTASY

The subgenre of *High Fantasy* has as its primary defining characteristic the presence of extensive, common, and/or powerful magic and magical beings. While spells and spellcasters are rare in Low Fantasy, and often uncommon (at best) in Epic Fantasy, in some High Fantasy games you can't take ten steps without tripping over someone who can cast spells. Wizards tend to be (or can become) immensely powerful, able to dictate the fate of kingdoms (or worlds), bargain with dragons and gods on equal terms, and devastate entire regions with a single spell. Some High Fantasy setting creators take the magic one step further, making it so common and easy to use that it replaces technology. Almost everyone can cast a minor spell or two, merchants use magic to create their goods and stock their shelves, cities have mystical lighting at night, everyone has running water because of aquamancy spells, and people drive self-propelling enchanted wagons.

Furthermore, and equally as important, magic in High Fantasy is often completely reliable. Wizards know exactly what they can do, and how well they can do it. Anyone who can cast a spell can do so without difficulty or chance of failure. A spell, once cast, has a defined, specific (often absolute) effect, and may remain in effect for a long time (days, centuries, even forever).

The prevalence and power of magic in High Fantasy lets you introduce elements and objects loosely known as “wonders” into the game. Examples include knights using dragons, griffins, or unicorns as steeds, cities and castles built among the clouds, and thrones carved from single, enormous gemstones. After all, where powerful magic exists, anything is possible!

In the minds of gamers, the conventions of High Fantasy are shaped less by literature than by the aesthetic and nature of the *Dungeons & Dragons* roleplaying game. This means most High Fantasy campaigns, no matter what rules system one uses, tend to take on aspects of D&D. Thus, at its best, High Fantasy gaming allows for the creation of grand and wondrous stories of adventure and enchantment, often verging toward Epic Fantasy. At its worst, the subgenre often degenerates into nigh-mindless hack-and-slash campaigns devoted solely to killing monsters, getting treasure, and acquiring magical items.

Besides the typical *Dungeons & Dragons* gaming campaign, examples of High Fantasy include *Master Of The Five Magics* by Lyndon Hardy, the *Earthsea Trilogy* of Ursula LeGuin, some of Jack Vance's “Dying Earth” stories, some bodies of myth and legend (such as certain fairy tales and Greek myths), Steven Erikson's “Malazan Book of the Fallen” series, the *Deed Of Paksenarian* trilogy by Elizabeth Moon (a somewhat muted High Fantasy), Stephen Donaldson's *Chronicles Of Thomas Covenant The Unbeliever*, many of Steven Brust's novels, Roger Zelazny's *Jack Of Shadows*, and some of the tales written by Lord Dunsany and James Branch Cabell.



“Do you remember dungeons, Joe? Party order? Remember the simple joys we took in Armor Class and random encounters? Whatever happened to moving silently down the corridor and checking for traps? YOU ENTER A 10’ X 10’ ROOM — AN ORC IS GUARDING A CHEST —”

—Blag the dwarf laments the passing of the old ways in the *Yamara* comic strip, by Barbara Manui and Chris Adams

Elric shook his head. “I am confused. There has been too much of the supernatural about this affair. I suspect the gods of manipulating us...”

“The gods serve only those who are willing to serve them. And the gods serve destiny, also.”

—Elric discusses his current adventure with his patron god, Arioch the Duke of Hell, in Michael Moorcock’s *Elric Of Melniboné*

A terrible figure was coming towards them. It was far smaller than the shape they had seen from the Tower, though still much bigger than a man[.] ... It had a vulture’s head and four arms. Its beak was open and its eyes blazed. A croaking voice came from its beak. “Thou hast called me into Narnia, Rishda Tarkaan. Here I am. What hast thou to say?”

—Rishda Tarkaan learns the price for unbelief and blasphemy when the god Tash manifests before him in *The Last Battle*, by C.S. Lewis

HIGH FANTASY ELEMENTS

In addition to the central element of powerful magic, the following conventions tend to define most High Fantasy worlds:

DUNGEONS

The stairs were irregular, worn blocks of stone. The eternal damp of the well kept them wet and slippery. The halfling took each step slowly, with great care. Under his bare toes he could feel the squishiness of some kind of darkness-growing lichens. He wished he dared put his boots... back on his feet, but he needed every advantage he could get on the slimy descent — burdened as he was with chainmail coat, helmet, short sword, and buckler, in addition to the bandolier of daggers he habitually wore across his chest, ... and holding a sputtering, smoking torch in his left hand.

—Zereth and Boinger begin a dungeoneering expedition in “The Sorcerer’s Jewel,” by J. Eric Holmes

Thanks to the influence of *Dungeons & Dragons*, many High Fantasy campaigns feature adventures that take place in “dungeons” — underground cavern complexes and carved residences, or similar contained environments such as ruined castles. Filled with traps, eerie corridors, secret doors, sloping passages, and monsters (lots of monsters), dungeons present a significant, but easily defined, challenge for the PCs to overcome. In most cases, the goal of exploring a dungeon is to kill the monsters and take their treasure (including magical items). A properly constructed and executed dungeon adventure is enormous fun, combining roleplaying, tactics, danger, and the thrill of discovery; a poorly-run one is a slaughterfest devoted to nothing but killing and looting.

GODS WALK THE EARTH

Just as there are no atheists in foxholes, there are precious few in High Fantasy worlds, since the gods exist and make their presence known every day. In most cases, they do so through organized, regimented priesthoods, whose members the gods grant the power to perform miracles such as healing injuries, curing disease, and creating food and water out of thin air. Sometimes the gods themselves manifest physically, either in person or through an “avatar.” But in many High Fantasy worlds a compact among the gods prevents this, forcing them to play out their divine struggles through worshippers and other mortal pawns. In High Fantasy, taking a god’s name in vain can be *really* dangerous, since he just might regard it as an invitation to show up and teach the character a little respect... though some High Fantasy characters are powerful enough to look on gods more as equals, or prey, than beings to fear.

MONSTERS AND FANTASTIC CREATURES

“Go quickly. Summon all our people to meet me here as speedily as they can. Call out the giants and the werewolves and the spirits of those tree who are on our side. Call the Ghouls, and the Boggles, the Ogres and the Minotaurs. Call the Cruels, the Hags, the Spectres, and the people of the Toadstools. We will fight.”

—the White Witch calls up her armies in *The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis

Dragons, manticores, unicorns, griffins, hydrae, basilisks, and countless other monstrous and/or fantastic creatures exist in High Fantasy settings — often as obstacles for the heroes to defeat, or enemies to overcome. Dragons, in particular, tend to be immensely powerful, possessing not only great physical prowess (and fiery breath!) but potent magical abilities as well.

Of course, High Fantasy GMs don’t have to limit themselves to “traditional” monsters like chimerae and hippogriffs. In a world with common, powerful magic, insane or evil wizards often create their own custom-made monsters in the laboratory. The body of a lion, a dash of demon, and an infusion of dragon, and *voila!* — you’ve got yourself a brand-new monster with which to bedevil the heroes.

See *The HERO System Bestiary* for *HERO System* rules about, and an extensive selection of character sheets for, monsters and fantastic beasts.

PLANAR TRAVEL

A cruciform shape stood in the middle of the temple. They moved around it in wonder, but from whatever angle they regarded it, it retained the same perspective. It was a shimmering silver in the cool darkness of the temple and through it, as through a window, they could see a part of a landscape.

Arkyn’s voice came from behind them. “There is the entrance to Xiombarg’s plane.”

—Corum, Jhary, and Rhalina prepare to journey to the dimension of Xiombarg of Chaos in *The Queen Of The Swords*, by Michael Moorcock

Characters possessing vast magical power often don’t need to limit themselves to a single reality. Like the protagonists of Roger Zelazny’s *Amber* novels, they can journey from one plane to another as easily as a peasant takes a cartload of vegetables to market. While on quests, or simply for fun, they might visit the Hells, the Elemental Planes, the Astral Plane, or any one of countless other dimensions. Some, like a few of the wizards in Jack Vance’s *Rhialto The Marvellous*, may even rule over their own private dimensions.

A PLETHORA OF RACES

“The Company of the Ring shall be Nine; and the Nine Walkers shall be set against the Nine Riders that are evil. With [the hobbits Frodo and Samwise] Gandalf will go[.] ... For the rest, they shall represent the other Free Peoples of the World: Elves, Dwarves, and Men.”

—Elrond ensures that all the peoples of Middle-earth are represented in the Company in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

In contrast to Low Fantasy and Swords And Sorcery, which usually just have humans, most High Fantasy settings feature a wide variety of intelligent races. Some of the most common include dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, orcs, ogres, and trolls, though the nature of these beings can vary so much from world to world that all they really have in common is the name. Other, less common races include various anthropomorphic species (cat-people, lizard-people, wolf-people...), centaurs, and satyrs.

For more information on races, see Chapter Two.

THE PERSPECTIVE IS...

Neutral, though often tilted at least a little in the heroes' favor. The characters survive and thrive because they're powerful, and use their power to acquire more power, obtain riches, and/or make themselves secure.

HIGH FANTASY HERO CAMPAIGNS

Most High Fantasy Hero campaigns have PCs built as Standard Heroic characters with 175 Total Points (including 50 points' worth of Matching Complications). However, given the vast amount of power available to heroes in some High Fantasy settings, GMs may prefer to start with Powerful or Very Powerful Heroic characters, and a few even verge into the lower ranks of Superheroic characters. Regardless of the amount of starting Character Points available, the characters are automatically subject to Characteristic Maxima, and may obtain ordinary equipment by spending money in-game.

LOW FANTASY

Low Fantasy is the opposite of High Fantasy. Unlike most Fantasy, which has magic as a strong element, Low Fantasy stories and settings feature very little magic — sometimes none at all. If magic does exist, it's usually difficult to cast (it's hard to learn, or tires the user out), relatively low-powered, and quite rare. In some worlds, such as Middle-earth, magic may suffuse the setting, but in such subtle or indirect ways that characters have little (if any) control over it. The “Deryni” novels of Katherine Kurtz depict a world with just about as much magic as a setting can have and still remain “Low Fantasy.”

Low Fantasy is a relatively unpopular subgenre for Fantasy Hero; gamers tend to like flashy magic in their games. The character choices tend to be limited — while PC spellcasters occur in every gaming group in a High Fantasy world, most characters in Low Fantasy games are warriors, rogues, or the like. Furthermore, the nature of the opposition also changes. The characters usually face mundane opponents — city guards, the king's soldiers, political rivals, or the like — instead of hordes of orcs, an evil wizard, or a rampaging dragon.

In addition to Kurtz's Deryni stories, examples of Low Fantasy include most of the novels of Guy Gavriel Kay, the tales of the Three Musketeers and other “swashbuckling” heroes, *The Deepest Sea* by Charles Barnitz, Keith Taylor's “Bard” series, George R. R. Martin's *Song Of Ice And Fire* series, Gene Wolfe's *Book Of The New Sun*, John Morressy's *Iron Angel* trilogy, and the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*.

LOW FANTASY ELEMENTS

In addition to the absence or relative lack of magic, the following conventions tend to define most Low Fantasy worlds:

GRIM AND GRITTY

“No! I won't be bled.” Rhys Michael whispered, sitting up in alarm. “And I don't want cauterization. I'm making good progress. Just give me time.”

—the king, desperately hoping to save his badly-injured hand, tries to stave off dangerous medical procedures in *The Bastard Prince*, by Katherine Kurtz

Many Low Fantasy campaigns and stories have a grim, gritty feel compared to the wonders and unfettered imagination of Epic and High Fantasy. Characters have to cope with such mundane details as where to sleep at night, how to deal with severe injuries (especially since the cure may be no better, or even worse!), surviving in the wilderness, lack of food and funds, assassins, and even disease.



It is A.D. 792, a time of violent uncertainty. In Ireland, the Cross of Jesus vies with Thor's Hammer, the new ways of the Church clash with ancient beliefs. Bran Snorrison, carver of runes and composer of verse in the Viking town of Clontarf, has fallen in love with the village beauty and sets off on a journey to prove his worth in gold. But the fates have much more in store for him[....]

—from the back cover text of *The Deepest Sea*, by Charles Barnitz

HISTORICAL ADVENTURE

Since there's no magic to speak of in the real world (unfortunately), some Low Fantasy stories are also historical sagas as well. They usually take place in medieval or Renaissance Europe, though adventures set in other places (China, Japan, Africa, India...) at comparative periods of cultural development are just as exciting (and more exotic). A gaming group willing to do the necessary research could create an amazing historical Low Fantasy Hero campaign.

PATRIOTISM

"I'll organize a revolt, exact a death for a death, and I'll never rest until every Saxon in this shire can stand up free men, and strike a blow for Richard and England."

—Sir Robin of Locksley declares his intentions to the wicked Prince John in the movie *The Adventures Of Robin Hood*

Lacking the power to stand on their own against any threat, or to treat kings as equals, characters in Low Fantasy often serve some cause. Typically they're devoted to a country or its ruler (or perhaps the *true* ruler who's trying to overthrow the current usurper), but they could also serve a temple/priesthood or just about any other large institution capable of inspiring loyalty.

POLITICS AND WARFARE

To no one's surprise, insurrection flared again in Meara in that spring of 1089, obliging Donal to mount the threatened personal expedition into that rebellious land.

—the province of Meara revolts against the rule of Gwynedd in Katherine Kurtz's *In The King's Service*

"I've hired you to help me start a war. It's a prestigious line of work, with a long and glorious tradition."

—Vizzini once again explains things to Fezzik and Inigo in the movie *The Princess Bride*

Many Low Fantasy stories, including the Deryni novels and the *Song Of Ice And Fire* series, focus to great effect on politics and war. In this sort of story, the characters tend to be high-ranking nobles, even royals, whose adventures revolve not around personal quests or treasure-gathering but on maintaining the security and power of their realm in the face of an aggressive, even ruthless enemy. Elements of religious conflict, economic warfare, espionage, and forced marriage may also factor in.

ROMANCE

"Death cannot stop true love. All it can do is delay it for awhile."

—Westley explains things to Buttercup in the movie *The Princess Bride*

Low Fantasy stories often concentrate on the heroes' feelings and beliefs to a greater extent than Epic or High Fantasy. This includes an emphasis on romantic entanglements both potential and existing. The pursuit of love, or the efforts to rescue one's true love, drive many tales.

SWASHBUCKLING

Inigo Montoya: *You are using Bonetti's Defense against me, eh?*

The Man in Black: *I thought it fitting considering the rocky terrain.*

Inigo: *Naturally, you must expect me to attack with Capa Ferro?*

MiB: *Naturally... but I find that Thibault cancels out Capa Ferro. Don't you?*

Inigo: *Unless the enemy has studied his Agrippa... which I have.*

—Inigo Montoya and the Man in Black (Westley) banter during a skillful duel with rapiers in the movie *The Princess Bride*

Some types of Low Fantasy campaigns and stories feature the swashbuckling action associated with the Three Musketeers and Errol Flynn. Rapier duels between fierce rivals occur frequently, chandeliers are used for swinging across rooms as well as lighting them, and a derring-do attitude, quick wit, and courtly manners are almost as important as a sharp blade. This may be at odds with the "realistic" feel of some Low Fantasy settings, but it suits others marvelously.

THE PERSPECTIVE IS...

Neutral, even dangerous, in most cases, though verging into the "subtly beneficent" of Epic Fantasy in the case of swashbuckling stories. In most settings, the characters survive because they're tough, clever, and skilled, though the world isn't necessarily as hostile to them as in Swords And Sorcery.

LOW FANTASY HERO CAMPAIGNS

Most Low Fantasy Hero campaigns have PCs built as Standard Heroic characters with 175 Total Points (including 50 points' worth of Matching Complications). A few verge even lower, into the Skilled-Competent Normal range. Characters are automatically subject to Characteristic Maxima, and may obtain ordinary equipment by spending money in-game.

SWORDS AND SORCERY

Also known as “heroic fantasy” in the parlance of many publishers, *Swords And Sorcery* is an action-adventure-oriented sort of Fantasy that focuses primarily on warriors (and to a lesser extent on roguish characters). The sword-wielding hero fights terrible monsters, rescues helpless maidens, and thwarts evil plots. In the best Swords And Sorcery tales, such as Howard’s Conan stories, the hero relies on speed, stamina, wits, and skill as much as on muscles; poorer works emphasize brawn and brute force over everything else. Coupled with his warrior’s skills the hero often has his refusal to become corrupted by the “softness” of more civilized life, which gives him an edge over more effete city folk and soldiers.

The Swords And Sorcery emphasis on action, combat, treasure, and danger suits many Fantasy Hero campaigns well (not surprising, given the strong influence of the likes of Howard and Leiber on Fantasy roleplaying generally). While the character types available for play sometimes seem a little restrictive compared to High or Epic Fantasy, most GMs bend the rules of the subgenre slightly to allow for more gaming-friendly spellcasting.

Examples of Swords And Sorcery Fantasy include Robert E. Howard’s Conan stories, Michael Moorcock’s stories about Elric of Melniboné and Corum, Clark Ashton Smith’s pulp Fantasy fiction, C.L. Moore’s “Jirel of Joiry” tales, Fritz Leiber’s stories of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, Gardner F. Fox’s stories about swordsmen like Kothar, Kyrik, and Niall of the Far Travels, Karl Edward Wagner’s fiction featuring the enigmatic swordsman Kane, and many others.

SWORDS AND SORCERY ELEMENTS

In addition to the emphasis on swordplay and action-adventure, the following conventions tend to define Swords And Sorcery worlds:

BARBARISM

“Barbarism is the natural state of mankind,” the borderer said, still staring somberly at the Cimmerian. “Civilization is unnatural. It is a whim of circumstance. And barbarism must always ultimately triumph.”

—a forester philosophizes to Conan in “Beyond The Black River,” by Robert E. Howard

Explicitly stated in the quote above, and implied by many other stories, this theme underlies much of Swords And Sorcery fiction (and thus gaming). The premise is that civilization tends to weaken men, making them soft, and thus easy prey for the next barbarian invasion. Of course,

“barbarian” doesn’t mean “stupid.” While Fantasy barbarians are often depicted as violent, loincloth-wearing louts, the best of the breed (such as Conan and Kull) are clever, even crafty, and over time often become a little more sophisticated than the term “barbarian” implies. Kull, after all, was King of Valusia, and Conan the ruler of Aquilonia — and few kings rule by strength of arm alone.

MAGIC, SLOW AND DIFFICULT

“Again we meet, wizard!” he grinned savagely.

“Keep off!” screamed Tsotha like a blood-mad jackal. “I’ll blast the flesh from your bones! ... I am Tsotha, son of —”

Conan rushed, sword gleaming, eyes slits of wariness. Tsotha’s right hand came back and forward and the king ducked quickly. Something passed by his helmeted head and exploded behind him, searing the very sands with a flash of hellish fire. ... Conan’s sword sheared through [Tsotha’s] lean neck. The wizard’s head shot from his shoulders on an arching fount of blood, and the robed figure staggered and crumpled drunkenly.

—Conan slays the sorcerer Tsotha before Tsotha can bring all of his magic to bear in “The Scarlet Citadel,” by Robert E. Howard

Swords And Sorcery occupies something of a middle ground between Low and High Fantasy. Magic exists (hence the “And Sorcery” part), but in most cases it’s difficult to use, slow, or otherwise “restricted” compared to the spells and powers of High Fantasy. A guy with a sword usually beats a guy with a spell, cutting him down before he has a chance to complete his incantations. What magic does exist often involves a curse, or the conjuration of some demonic servant the hero has to fight.

The main exception to this rule are stories, such as Moorcock’s tales of Elric, Marion Zimmer Bradley’s Lythande stories, or Lin Carter’s *Kellory The Warlock*, where the protagonist himself wields magic. In that case, magical forces and foes become more potent. However, magic still usually remains slow and difficult — it’s not often the “combat spellcasting” common to many Fantasy roleplaying game settings. Elric, for example, usually has to spend a long time invoking the aid of some patron deity, demon, or being; he can’t just blast his enemies with a bolt of lightning from his fingertips. Kellory *can* blast his foes with lightning, but using that much power can debilitate him.

Another exception is major villains, who can have magic far in excess of what the protagonist possesses. Swords And Sorcery characters often confront powerful Evil spellcasters who have attained vast arcane powers through various unsavory means — worshipping dark gods, performing human sacrifice, selling their souls, and the like.

In game terms, Swords And Sorcery spells usually have Limitations such as *Requires A Roll*, *Concentration*, *Extra Time*, *Increased Endurance Cost*, *Gestures*, *Incantations*, and *Side Effects*. See Chapter Four for more details on creating magic systems.





LACK OF HEROISM

In a place like the Thieves' Quarter of Old Gandrin, there is no survival skill more important than the ability to mind your own business. Come robbery, rape, arson, blood feud, or the strange doings of wizards, a carefully cultivated deaf fear for other people's problems — not to mention a blind eye, or better, two, for anything that is not your affair — is the best way, maybe the only way, to keep out of trouble. ...

Lythande, the mercenary-magician, knew this perfectly well. When the first scream rang down the quarter, despite an involuntary shoulder twitch, Lythande knew that the proper thing was to look straight ahead and keep right on walking in the same direction.

—Lythande will soon have cause to regret not following her usual instinct not to get involved in “Somebody Else’s Magic,” by Marion Zimmer Bradley

In *Swords And Sorcery*, it’s a character’s ability to survive in a hostile world that makes him a hero, not his attitude or his conduct. Indeed, many *Swords And Sorcery* characters are outright mercenary or decidedly amoral — they care about money, personal comfort, power, and other such things, casting nobility, honesty, and morality by the wayside as necessary.

Or at least that’s *outwardly* the case. When push comes to shove, the truth is that most of the time, they’ll “do the right thing.” Many’s the time a hero like Conan chooses to give up a fortune in gold and gems just to rescue a maiden in distress, for example. But to whatever extent the “non-heroic” outlook accurately applies, it suits some Fantasy Hero campaigns perfectly, leading to a sort of synthesis between dungeon-delving High Fantasy and *Swords And Sorcery* action-adventure.

ONLY THE TOUGH SURVIVE

“Let him wait until we get to camp. It’s only ten miles. If he’s fit to live in the desert he’ll live that long without a drink.”

—Olgerd Vladislav wants to test Conan’s toughness even further after rescuing him from several days of being crucified in the desert in “A Witch Shall Be Born,” by Robert E. Howard

If you’re not tough, you’re dead. If you can’t fight, you’re dead. This ties in with the “Barbarism” theme above; the two conventions complement each other nicely. In a gaming context, “toughness” and “fighting” don’t necessarily have to mean physical prowess; a wily thief who’s good at throwing daggers and backstabbing is as skilled a fighter, in his own way, as the sword-swinging warrior.

PERSONAL DANGERS AND SHORT-TERM THINKING

In Epic and High Fantasy, the fate of the world is often at stake. Not so in Swords And Sorcery. Characters in Swords And Sorcery stories generally don't go on lengthy quests or have long-term goals. They live in the here and now. They want treasure, good food, beautiful women, and to revel in battle — and if the chance to obtain them doesn't arise on its own, they'll find a way to make their own opportunities. Similarly, the dangers they face are immediate ones of threat to life and limb, or the conquest of the city or castle they're occupying, not long-range perils like the Dark Lord taking over the world.

SHOW ME THE MONEY... BUT DON'T LET ME KEEP IT

Unfathomable wealth lay before the eyes of the gaping pirates; diamonds, rubies, bloodstones, sapphires, turquoises, moonstones, opals, emeralds, amethysts, unknown gems that shone like the eyes of evil women. The crypt was filled to the brim with bright stones that the morning sun struck into lambent flame.

—Conan, Bêlit, and her pirates find wealth undreamed of in “The Queen Of The Black Coast,” by Robert E. Howard.

In many, if not most, Swords And Sorcery tales, acquiring treasure or loot is one of the hero's most prominent motivating factors. It's hard to imagine Conan or Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser without some sack of gems or bejewelled bauble to try for. Descriptions of staggering amounts of wealth occur in many Swords And Sorcery stories...

...though inevitably, something prevents the hero from obtaining more than a fraction of the treasure. Maybe a monster or curse drives him away from it, or he doesn't have the means or time to cart it all away, or he abandons it in favor of something else he prefers (like rescuing a hapless maiden), or it's soon stolen from him. In dramatic (and gaming) terms, letting a hero have huge amounts of money removes his incentive to go adventuring; Swords And Sorcery authors, realizing this, don't let their characters get rich.

THE PERSPECTIVE IS...

Neutral. Heroes survive through toughness, skill, and wits, not because the world tilts in their favor.

SWORDS AND SORCERY FANTASY HERO CAMPAIGNS

Most Swords And Sorcery Fantasy Hero campaigns have PCs built as Standard Heroic characters with 175 Total Points (including 50 points' worth of Matching Complications). Characters are automatically subject to Characteristic Maxima, and may obtain ordinary equipment by spending money in-game.

URBAN FANTASY

Most people in the gambling business thought Siegel was a megalomaniac to build a grossly expensive luxury hotel and casino in the desert seven miles south of Las Vegas — but Leon, to his alarm, saw the purpose behind the castle.

Gambling had been legalized in Nevada in 1931, the same year that work was begun on Hoover Dam, and by 1935 the dam was completed, and Lake Mead, the largest man-made body of water in the world, had filled the deep valleys behind it. ... The Flamingo, as Siegel named his hotel, was a castle in the wasteland with a lot of tamed water nearby.

And the Flamingo was almost insanely grand, with transplanted palms and thick marble walls and expensive paneling and a gigantic pool and an individual sewer line for each of its ninety-two rooms — but Leon understood that it was a totem of its founder, and therefore had to be as physically perfect as the founder.

Leon now knew why Siegel had stolen the Tower card: based on the Tower of Babel, it symbolized foolishly prideful ambition, but it was not only a warning against such a potentially bankrupt course but also a means to it. And if it were reversed, displayed upside-down, it was somewhat qualified; the doomful aspects of it were a little more remote.

Reversed, it could permit a King to build an intimidating castle, and keep it.

—Georges Leon contemplates the secret history of Las Vegas in *Last Call*, by Tim Powers

Sometimes known as “modern Fantasy,” *Urban Fantasy* mixes modern-day, real world settings with magic and other Fantasy tropes. It does this to varying degrees. In some settings, magic is in the open and well-known, making it a force to be reckoned with in society — and perhaps even a force that changes society irrevocably.

More commonly, *Urban Fantasy* features a “hidden history” — a secret, underground, and/or behind-the-scenes community of spellcasters and fantastic creatures most people remain completely oblivious to. In many cases they have influenced or altered history in ways the common man remains unaware of. The magic is usually relatively low-powered, and often flavorful; it may not even be overt. The hero often gets involved in some conflict between the forces of good and evil, or has to find a way to use magic to correct some societal problem. In more espionage-oriented stories verging toward the Dark Champions genre, the government may know about mystic powers, and even have a secret agency devoted to countering arcane threats.





Part of the difficulty for an Urban Fantasy GM is explaining the nature of magic in the modern-day, technological world. Has magic always existed, or did it go away and return (and if the latter, how recently and with what effects)? Can magic and technology work together, or are they anathema to each other? Does everyone know about magic, or only some people (and what about the government)? Does magic “protect” itself, making it hard for ordinary people to perceive or remember? Can fantastic creatures interact with normal society?

Examples of Urban Fantasy include many of the novels and short stories of Charles deLint, Tim Powers, and Simon Hawke, as well as some of Lord Dunsany’s short stories and Aaron Allston’s “Doc Sidhe” pulp-Crossworlds/Urban Fantasy novels. In other media, the *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer* television show and “World of Darkness” series of games from White Wolf Game Studios represent interesting perspectives on the subgenre.

For a much more extensive look at Urban Fantasy and its elements, please see *Urban Fantasy Hero*.

URBAN FANTASY ELEMENTS

In addition to the modern-day setting, the following conventions tend to define Urban Fantasy worlds:

FAIRY FOLK

“You have seen one of them, one of their forms. That is what seeks dominion over every natural thing in this place. We of the Seelie Court are capricious, and not always well-disposed toward humankind. But would you hand this city over to the likes of what you saw tonight? That is the Unseelie Court. If we fall, every park, every boulevard tree, every grassy lawn would be their dwelling place.”

—Phouka explains the facts of Urban Fantasy life to Eddi McCandry in *Emma Bull’s War For The Oaks*

Regardless of where the author (or GM) sets them, Urban Fantasy stories often include Celtic/Northern European-style fairy folk — everything from small winged Victorian fairies, to proud elfish lords, to trolls and goblins. Depending on their predilections, these creatures may be helpful, malicious, or mischievous, but one thing’s for sure: they always bring adventure and excitement with them.

MAGICOTECHNOLOGY

The sky was full of broomsticks and the police were going nuts trying to handle the traffic. ... I edged my battered pre-war Chevy past a huge 200-dragonpower Lincoln with sky-blue handle, polyethylene straw, and blatting radio. It sneered at me, but I got to the vacant rack first. Dismounting, I pocketed the runekey[.]

—werewolf Steve Matuchek attends the homecoming game between Trismegistus University and Albertus Magnus University in Poul Anderson's "Operation Salamander"

In some Urban Fantasy settings, magic and technology mix together into one seamless whole. The army has rifles that re-supply themselves with ammunition using teleportation spells, people don't plan their schedules until they consult an oracle, cybermancers surf the Internet via magic rather than computers, and wizards keep their grimoires on laptops. While decidedly different from the "hidden history" sort of Urban Fantasy, this type of setting often makes for very interesting games.

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS MAGIC!

"An actual wizard?" he asked, grinning, as though I should let him in on the joke. "Spells and potions? Demons and incantations? Subtle and quick to anger?"

"Not so subtle." I jerked the mail out of his hand and looked pointedly at his clipboard.

"Can I sign for my mail please?"

The new mailman's grin vanished, replaced with a scowl. ... "You're a nut. That's what you are."

—Harry Dresden deals with a skeptical mailman in *Storm Front*, by Jim Butcher

In most types of Urban Fantasy, the average person doesn't know about or believe in magic. This has two important effects. First, it keeps the world relatively "normal" and "recognizable" for the reader/gamer — unlike a world with magicotechnology, cars, trains, and society in general remain the same as what one can see out one's window. Second, and more importantly, it isolates the heroes. If only they (and the hidden "Mystic Community") can see the ghosts, talk to the fairies, and work magic, they can't simply turn to the cops when they need help.

WONDERS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

"It's funny how your whole life can change because of the smallest thing. Like someone walking in through the door of your office. ... Everything still looks the same, but now I feel like the most common object has a secret history that most people can't see. The difference between them and me is, they don't even think about it."

—Charles de Lint, "If I Close My Eyes Forever"

Secret world-style Urban Fantasies sometimes focus not on "magic" as it's usually meant in the Fantasy sense — spells, evocations, and the like — but on what one might call the magic of daily existence. Love, a smile at the right time, or the simple joy of contemplating a flower may transform a person's life or work some other minor miracle.

THE PERSPECTIVE IS...

Usually beneficent. While things may not always work out for every character, and there's a good bit of tragedy and angst in many Urban Fantasy stories, in most cases characters emerge through trial and tribulation happier and more content than they were before. Their good hearts and sympathetic attitudes take them far in a world that often seems ignorant or uncaring. In many cases, Urban Fantasy takes a progressive/left-wing sort of perspective, depicting members of the underclass showing how truly "noble" and charitable they are in a world that shuns them.

URBAN FANTASY HERO CAMPAIGNS

Most Urban Sorcery Fantasy Hero campaigns have PCs built as Competent-Skilled Normals (50-100 Total Points, including 25-30 points' worth of Matching Complications). Some, particularly those involving magicotechnology, feature Standard Heroic characters with 175 Total Points (including 50 points' worth of Matching Complications). Characters are automatically subject to Characteristic Maxima, and may obtain ordinary equipment by spending money in-game.





FANTASY, METAGENRES, AND OTHER GENRES

Fantasy comes in many flavors, as described above. But beyond “pure” expressions of Fantasy there are many types of stories (and game campaigns) involving the use of meta-genres with Fantasy, or which combine Fantasy and some other genre.

FANTASY AND META-GENRES

A *meta-genre* is a style or theme of storytelling/game play/campaign conception that could apply to any genre. Comedy, Horror, Romance, and Tragedy are all meta-genres, whereas Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Westerns are genres. Thus, you could have a Horror Western, or Horror Science Fiction, or Horror Fantasy — Horror isn’t a genre, it’s a *meta-genre*. A meta-genre can apply to an entire campaign, or just to specific adventures or story arcs within an otherwise normal Fantasy game.

In most cases, a campaign’s or scenario’s meta-genre evokes (or is intended to evoke) a particular mood in the characters: dread, compassion, suspense, or what have you. The GM should do his best to enhance the mood by encouraging players to have their characters engage in *dramatically appropriate actions* — such as deliberately putting them in situations where they’ll look ridiculous in a Comedic Fantasy campaign. In some cases, this may involve granting Skill Roll bonuses or the like for actions which fit or improve the mood; in others it may mean giving the players advance warning about what’s expected and letting them concoct a proper response on their own.

“Listen, strange women lyin’ in ponds distributin’ swords is no basis for a system of government. Supreme executive power derives from a mandate from the masses, not from some farcical aquatic ceremony. ... Oh, but you can’t expect to wield supreme executive power just because some watery tart threw a sword at you.”

—Dennis objects to how King Arthur became king in the movie *Monty Python And The Holy Grail*

COMEDY

Comedy and whimsy definitely have their place in the realm of Fantasy, particularly in Fantasy movies and television shows. At its most base level, Comedic Fantasy spoofs or parodies the serious elements of Fantasy, such as the wise, ancient wizard, the Dark Lord and the threat he poses to the world, and brawny sword-swingers. In a genre given to ominous pronouncements of Doom, majestic oratory, and lush descriptive text, parody becomes a relatively easy thing to pull off, but it also gets old fast. This sort of Comedic Fantasy works best as a one-shot game or a brief interlude in an otherwise serious campaign.

More sophisticated forms of Comedic Fantasy use the elements and tropes of the Fantasy genre to create and exploit unique comedic situations. Usually this involves one of two things: a spell that goes awry, and the frantic efforts to fix things (*a la* Disney’s “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice”); or being sent on quests that feature humorous encounters with funny monsters and the like. This form of Comedic Fantasy has more “legs” for gaming, but still usually works better for short-term games rather than as a full-fledged campaign.

In a gaming context, the GM can often rely on the help of the players to establish a comedic (or at least whimsical) mood. Players rarely do quite what the GM expects them to, and if placed in a ridiculous or absurd situation, frequently just dig themselves in deeper, with hilarious results. The trick to this is not to always use the PCs as fall guys, patsies, or the butt of jokes; no one likes to be made fun of all the time. Instead, put them in the driver’s seat sometimes, letting them take advantage of the other guy’s pratfalls.

Just about any type of character works for Comedic Fantasy, though such characters should rarely, if ever, be powerful or competent. In addition to the dumb warriors and incompetent wizards described below, a Comedic Fantasy adventuring party might feature fumble-fingered thieves, bards who can’t sing well, boozy priests, druids with pollen allergies, vampires who are scared of the dark, and the like.

Examples of Comedic Fantasy include the works of Craig Shaw Gardner (*A Malady Of Magicks*); Terry Pratchett (the Discworld stories); John Morressy’s stories of the wizards Kedrigern

and Conhoon; Robert Asprin (the “Myth” series, such as *Myth Adventures*); Piers Anthony’s pun-filled Xanth novels; and National Lampoon’s *Bored Of The Rings*.

COMEDIC FANTASY ELEMENTS

Some of the conventions that define Comedic Fantasy include:

Anthropomorphic Monsters: In Comedic Fantasy, monsters tend to look a little less like monsters and a little more like people. A dragon, for example, might have a less reptilian, slightly more human head, and his “claws” might be a lot more like hands than deadly weapons. More importantly, monsters are also *anthropopathic* — they think like humans, and have human feelings. That same dragon might express his greed by asking for a bribe not to roast the heroes, or a troll living under a bridge might want the heroes to help him “move up to a nice condo next to the Enchanted Forest.”

Dumb-As-A-Brick Warriors: The average sword-swinger in a Comedic Fantasy is as dumb as a bag of hammers — all brawn, no brains. His constant pursuit of gold, wenches, and booze causes all sorts of humorous havoc, and his inability to think his way out of even the simplest difficulties means he has to rely on his friends for help when he’s in trouble.

Magicians — Loony, Absent-minded, Or Just Plain Incompetent?: In Comedic Fantasy, mages may be powerful, but you couldn’t describe even the best of them as level-headed. Some are so old they’re approaching total senility, others can’t find anything without a scrying-spell (and sometimes not even then), and some got their job as Court Wizard more through family connections than ability. In most cases, a comedic wizard has an apprentice or two to help him out, but the apprentice’s relative lack of power means he can’t do everything.

Spells — A Recipe For Disaster: If a spell is cast, it’s as likely to go wrong as go right — sometimes even *more* likely. A mis-casting may drive an entire plot, or it may simply complicate matters when the characters need the right incantation to get them out of trouble. However, magic does tend to have a lot of power, since it can achieve just about any result that would be funny.

In game terms, most Comedic Fantasy spells should come loaded with Limitations like low Activation Rolls, Required Skill Rolls with -1 per 5 Active Points penalties, and of course Side Effects (the more bizarre, the better). Regardless of the spell’s power, getting it to work is difficult... unless the GM decides success would be funnier than failure.

The Perspective Is: Strongly beneficent. After all, it’s not very funny for the heroes to lose, Evil to triumph, or serious disasters to occur. At worst, a Comedic Fantasy settings tend toward capriciousness, but even then, everyone knows things will work out in the end and no one will suffer permanent injury.

HORROR

Horror and Fantasy relate closely to one another; in fact, many people use the term “dark fantasy” to refer to at least some types of Horror stories. The element of fear factors into both genres, though it’s less prominent in Fantasy; many Horror stories, such as *Dracula*, take creatures associated with Fantasy and re-cast them for pure Horror use (and vice-versa).

Horror stories rarely take place in alternate realities; instead, like Urban Fantasy, they occur in the “real world,” but often involve dark secrets, hidden terrors, and lurking evils the average person knows nothing of. In most of them, ordinary, and usually sympathetic, protagonists begin investigating some strange situation, only to discover the true horror behind it. One by one, the main characters die, go insane, become corrupt, lose loved ones and possessions, and suffer other disasters and terrors as the story wends its way to a conclusion (usually, but not always, a happy or hopeful ending, as the heroes end the threat and restore normalcy).

Most Horror/dark Fantasy stories use one or more of several mechanisms to create suspense, fear, and dread in the characters (and thus, in the readers/players as well). The first is *isolation*. If characters can summon help, or escape, that lessens their feelings of terror. A proper Horror story traps them somewhere — a deserted island, an isolated mansion during a driving thunderstorm, a dungeon underground — and keeps them there until they resolve the situation. The second is *ignorance*. People tend to fear the unknown, so Horror stories often place characters in situations where they’re unaware of the true facts. As the story unfolds, the characters slowly learn what’s going on... often to their own detriment. The third is *powerlessness*. Characters who have the ability to cope with adversity often also have the confidence to confront that which scares them. It creates a better Horror effect if they have to struggle against the lurking terrors instead of just attacking them as if they were any other monster.

It’s difficult to achieve Horror effects in a gaming context, with the lights on and plenty of snacks at hand, but it is possible. Even the toughest of Fantasy characters becomes less cocksure when stripped of his weapons and spells and put in a deadly situation he cannot control. Just about any type of character is appropriate, though the characters should never have the power to confront the lurking horrors effectively (at least, not at first).

Examples of Horror that dovetail most closely with Fantasy include the works of H.P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Edgar Allen Poe, Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen, Bram Stoker, Robert Chambers, Robert Bloch, Stephen King, Brian Lumley, and Ramsay Campbell. Many “mainstream” Fantasy stories have a heavy element of fear in them, such as the terror inspired by the Nazgûl in *The Lord Of The Rings*.





HORROR FANTASY ELEMENTS

Some of the conventions that define Horror Fantasy include:

Anybody Can Die At Any Time: In a Horror Fantasy story, no one is safe. Since the author (or GM) usually doesn't want to kill off lots of protagonists, he needs a steady supply of beloved NPCs and DNPCs to take the axe-blows of cruel fate. The characters should never assume they (or their friends) are safe; just when they least expect it, a random death occurs to jolt them out of their complacency and emphasize the "powerlessness" aspect of Horror.

Lurking Horrors: The terrors of the night are never out-in-the-open things. They hide in the nooks and crannies of reality, in much the same way a character's personal demons (which the lurking horrors may play upon) hide in the back of his mind.

Understanding Brings Insanity: The illusion of "normal reality" covers up the lurking horrors and protects the characters and other people from their full effects. As the characters learn more and more, gradually lifting the veil of ignorance from their eyes, they may become increasingly unhinged by what they uncover.

Despite these dangers, most Horror Fantasy characters prefer awareness to ignorance. Ignorance exacerbates powerlessness; it's better, in the minds of most Fantasy characters, to take the risks posed by learning about the lurking horrors than to remain "in the dark" literally as well as figuratively.

Wizardry's Dangers: Magic in Horror Fantasy holds as much peril as understanding. Knowledge of the "secret sciences" implies a greater understanding of What's Really Out There, which means wizards and sorcerers are as prone to insanity, if not more prone, than other characters. Casting even the merest spell may finally cause the character's mind to snap... or attract the unpleasant attention of the lurking horrors.

Horror Fantasy usually features magic that's low-powered compared to High or Epic Fantasy spells. Characters may have to perform human sacrifices or obtain disgusting material components before they can cast certain spells, and other Limitations (particularly a Side Effect of cumulative, long-lasting Drains of INT, EGO, and/or PRE) usually also apply.

The other danger magic poses in Horror Fantasy is more practical: it often doesn't work. Creatures and spirits a character can defeat with a simple incantation aren't very frightening, after all, so more often than not resolving a Horror scenario requires more than potent spells. And of course, just because a character possesses the power to summon a lurking horror doesn't mean he has the ability to banish it....

The Perspective Is: Hostile. The heroes cannot count on anything, even survival, and the horrors pitted against them are both powerful and thoroughly evil/cruel. The failure of the characters' plans and stratagems only augments the horror of the situation, so in the GM's plans they're often doomed to fail despite their best efforts.

MYSTERY

Master Sean came in with a rolling walk. He was holding an oddly shaped bronze thing in his hand that Sir Pierre didn't quite recognize. The sorcerer was muttering. "Evil, there it is! Faith, and the vibrations are all over the place. Yes, me lord?"

"Check this dress and the button when you get round to it. I want to know when the two parted company."

—Lord Darcy and Master Sean begin using their magic and deductive skills to investigate a murder in “The Eyes Have It,” by Randall Garrett

Mystery and Fantasy generally don't work too well as a straight mix, because it's difficult to make a story work both as good Fantasy and as an enjoyable mystery. Furthermore, many of the tropes of Fantasy literature make it difficult to create mysteries in the first place. When characters have access to magic spells that let them peer backward in time, scry into the future, or compel someone to tell the truth, it's difficult to hide the killer's identity from them.

However, the enterprising GM can find several ways around this dilemma. The first is to fight fire with fire. If spells exist to detect crimes, spells could exist to conceal them as well. An assassin could cast a concealing-spell to hide his identity and location from divinatory spells, and a cleansing-spell to remove any trace of his presence from the crime scene. He might even use spells to help him kill the victim — such as a spell that lets him walk through walls into the King's bedchamber to create a “locked room” murder mystery, or a spell that removes the air from the victim's lungs.

Second, remove the magic. If the campaign takes place in a Low Fantasy setting, or perhaps some Swords And Sorcery settings, the characters won't have access to magic that helps them solve the mystery. This creates an adventure sort of like historical murder mysteries, such as *The Name Of The Rose* by Umberto Eco or the Brother Cadfael books by Ellis Peters.

You can sometimes achieve the same effect by denying the characters their normal magic powers — perhaps as a result of an accident that leaves them temporarily “drained” of magic, maybe because they don't yet understand how their magic works. For example, Stephen Donaldson's *Mordant's Need* duology revolves largely around two characters trying to untangle a complex conspiracy/mystery. Both possess enormous, unusual powers... that they don't understand and can't control. Part of solving the mystery is figuring out *why* they have the powers they do and *how* they work.

Third, make Mystery as much the focus of the campaign as Fantasy, and arrange the game (and the magic) to suit. This usually works best with some form of Urban Fantasy, where the character uses his spells and knowledge to solve crime, much like a detective on a police drama (just with different “tools”). For example, Randall Garrett's “Lord Darcy” stories have as their main character the Chief Investigator for His Royal Highness, who uses magic to analyze crime scenes, study trace evidence, and otherwise gather the knowledge he needs to solve murders.

ROMANCE

“...and I think,” he added, with a glance at Araxie, “that you have a very important announcement concerning this young woman, whose true mettle only now begins to emerge. You would be well advised to marry her as soon as you may, and crown her your queen.”

Kelson took Azim's wise counsel and did exactly that. He and Araxie were wed a week later, to the joy of all Gwynedd.

—from *King Kelson's Bride*,
by Katherine Kurtz

“This is true love — you think this happens every day?”

—Westley explains things to Buttercup
in the movie *The Princess Bride*

Romance as a meta-genre refers to campaigns or storylines involving, or focusing on, the romantic attachments, entanglements, and relationships of the main characters. Most Fantasy Hero campaigns are “romantic” in the broad, dramatic sense of that term — they're filled with adventure, excitement, and appropriate but unlikely actions (such as swinging from chandeliers) — but that's not quite the same thing.

Romantic Fantasy campaigns generally require two things. First, the characters have to stay put in one location. Many Fantasy Hero games feature a lot of traveling as the PCs progress from one adventure or dungeon to the next. Heroes who stay “on the road” all the time don't have the time or opportunity to form the sort of lasting attachments a Romance game requires (except, perhaps, with their comrades, which could create a very interesting campaign indeed). If you want to emphasize Romance, base the campaign in a single city, castle, or other static location.

Second, and more importantly, the characters must have potential romantic partners to choose from (and perhaps fight over). A Romance Fantasy campaign won't go far without enough “fish in the sea” for the characters to take an interest in.





The GM has to design intriguing NPCs who attract one or more PCs through some qualities, and yet have other qualities the PC(s) find troublesome or off-putting. For example, perhaps Taldarien the archer takes an interest in the Lady Zara because she's a skilled equestrian, like himself, but has difficulty because she's above him in social station or belongs to a different faction at court. After all, what fun is a Romance story if the romances are smooth sailing all the way?

Romance works well in conjunction with Comedy. What makes people look more foolish, or causes them to do things they ordinarily wouldn't, than love? In Fantasy, the possibilities are practically endless: mis-applications of love potions and the havoc that results; characters who fall in love with dragons, ghosts, or other non-human creatures; couples kept apart by bizarre curses ("The Sorcerer of the Black Tower made me *allergic* to her?!?!?")

Of course, the GM can always introduce a minor romantic sub-plot or two without making the whole campaign revolve around Romance. For example, one of the background elements in *The Lord Of The Rings* is the love between Aragorn and Arwen, but that rarely comes to the forefront of the story — it simply provides motivation for Aragorn.

TRAGEDY

"The marchpane! It must be —!" Brigetta managed to gasp out, between gagging fits. "Lord Ahern sent it. S-some of the boys ate it, too — and Marie. Dear God, I can't breathe!"

...
"She's poisoned! Alyce blurted. "They're all poisoned! But Ahern can't have sent poisoned marchpane!"

—a romantic rival of Marie de Corwyn's murders her, and unwittingly several children and other people, in Katherine Kurtz's *In The King's Service*

Traditionally, a Tragedy tells the story of a hero or heroes, doomed by some personal flaw or circumstance to loss, diminishment, or death. Although, as noted above, a subtle tragic note pervades many Epic Fantasy stories, Fantasy usually features an ending that's happy to some degree, and thus doesn't mesh well with Tragedy.

In a gaming context, Tragedy works even less well as a campaign theme, since most people want to have fun when playing a game. However, a GM can easily introduce a few tragic elements

or subplots by using a character's Complications against him. Choose a Complication — Psychological Complications such as *Proud*, *Greedy*, or *Overconfidence*; an undeserved Negative Reputation the character cannot overcome — and bring about the character's downfall by exploiting it. For example, perhaps a character who's Proud comes to a tragic end because he can't walk away from a situation where his enemies bait him into a trap by insulting him. In short, have the character's flaws lead to the tragic ending.

For a true Tragedy Fantasy story, you should incorporate some unique Fantasy elements into the mix. For example, magic can have all sorts of unintended tragic consequences that you could exploit. Imagine a mage whose arrogance and pride cause his true love to fall under a curse he cannot lift, and which eventually results in both their deaths. Enormous power (of just about any sort) can cause enormous problems the GM can use to tragic effect.

FANTASY AND OTHER GENRES

Of all the major genres portrayed in role-playing games, Fantasy is the one most amenable to mixing with other genres. Gamers have long found it easy to take some of the elements of Fantasy — magic, dragons, trolls, and the like — and import them into other genres and settings, or to bring other genres' elements into Fantasy games.

CHAMPIONS

Since magic already exists in most superhero settings — courtesy of supermages, dimensional conquerors, embodied deities, and the like — bringing some Fantasy tropes into the mix poses little problem for most GMs. The only problems that might arise result less from conflicting abilities or conceptions than clashing “flavor.” In Champions, “magic” is just another special effect justifying superpowers. Spells have flashy, often alliterative, names, and though supermages appear to gesture and incant, in most cases they can work magic without any such restrictions. Fantasy magic, on the other hand, usually follows “laws” specific to the setting it comes from, and requires chanting, hand gestures, material components like bats' wings, and the like. In comparison to super-magery, Fantasy Hero magic usually seems limited and low-powered. Therefore, the GM needs to decide whether Fantasy magic brought into a Champions campaign works more like super-magic (giving Fantasy characters a lot more freedom and power), or if the restrictions remain in effect.

Instead of bringing Fantasy elements into superheroing (Champions Fantasy), you can instead run a Fantasy game with superhero elements (Fantasy Champions). Fantasy Champions campaigns are High Fantasy campaigns

— *really* high. The PCs are immensely powerful wizards and heroes whose powers derive from magic in some way. They may be demigods who gain numerous powers from divine ancestry or patronage *a lá* Heracles or Gilgamesh, sorcerers whose spellcraft makes them like unto gods, mighty dragons who choose to mingle with and help humans, powerful giants, or the like. However, they tend to participate in more traditional Fantasy adventures and battles rather than fight crime, much in the way Heracles had his labors or Gilgamesh searched for the secret of immortality.

But you could create a more Champions-like campaign structure if you wanted. For a true Fantasy Champions campaign, set the game in a large Fantasy city, give the characters vast magical powers like unto superpowers, and then create enemies for them with similar abilities. Instead of combating VIPER or the Ultimates, the superheroes have to take on the Black Claw (a group of superpowered assassins), the Thieves' Guild's magically-augmented fighters, demons summoned by evil wizards, and perhaps even fallen gods.

DARK CHAMPIONS

Dark Champions — modern-day action-adventure — mixes well with Urban Fantasy. For example, a group of vigilante PCs might use their mystic powers (be they spellcasting, vampiric or lycanthropic abilities, or enchanted talismans) to fight traditional crime. If you make the PCs a group of government agents investigating weird events, you've got a game something like the television show *The X-Files*. If they're espionage agents or military personnel using mystic powers and recruiting Fantasy-type beings for use in covert operations, your game becomes something like Brian Lumley's book *Necroscope* or the Tim Powers novel *Declare*.

For a slightly different spin on the two genres, create a vigilante crimefighting campaign set in a Fantasy world. The characters, armed with the best weapons and magic they can obtain, take on the Thieves' Guild, assassins, renegade wizards, and corrupt government officials in a Fantasy city like Lankhmar or Minas Tirith. If you make the setting a Low Fantasy “swashbuckling” sort of place, you can use *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Zorro* as inspiration for your game.

Another possibility is to focus on the espionage subgenre as it would exist in Fantasy settings. Spies, codes, and assassination were a fact of political and military life for millennia before James Bond, and an espionage-oriented Fantasy Hero campaign has a lot of potential. When you add magic into the mix to take the place of Bondian gadgets like laser watches and sportscar-mounted concealed rockets, the heroes' adventures can become *really* wild!

PULP FANTASY

Fantasy stories have always been a part of Pulp fiction. Some of the best-known Fantasy authors, such as Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, and H.P. Lovecraft, became famous for their Pulp fiction work.

There isn't a specific “Pulp Fantasy” style of play. Most Pulp Fantasy tales were Swords And Sorcery or High Fantasy stories, so if you want to run a game in the “Pulp style” you should pick one of those subgenres. Other than that, be lush in your descriptions, and try to add a little bit of eeriness to the mood you evoke, and you should simulate Pulp Fantasy just fine.



FANTASY SATIRE

Satire and social commentary have a long and honored place in the Fantasy genre. Several early Fantasy-like stories, such as Rabelais's *Gargantua And Pantagruel* or Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, satirized contemporary nations and events. In more modern times, James Branch Cabell's "Poictesme" novels satirized religion, society, and the events in early twentieth century America, including the famed obscenity trial over the Poictesme novel *Jurgen*.

However, satire and social commentary do not carry over well into Fantasy roleplaying, for several reasons. First, satire often works best when it's subtle and clever, and the nature and content of gaming stories often overwhelms or ignores such subtlety. Second, the players and the GM may not share the same social views, making the interactive telling of a satirical story awkward and uncomfortable. Third, it's far too easy to descend into moral preaching, or to create "satirical" characters who are caricatured or bland. Thus, a GM who wants to introduce social commentary or satire into his Fantasy Hero campaign should proceed deftly, choosing his subjects with care and portraying them in acceptable ways.

MARTIAL ARTS

The Martial Arts genre is a natural for mixing with Fantasy. Fighting and weapons are central elements of both, and the amazing powers of the more fantastic Martial Arts subgenres are largely indistinguishable from magic (and vice-versa). Players and GMs looking to develop Oriental-style cultures for Fantasy Hero campaigns, or races of warrior-wizards with strange powers, can find plenty of ideas in *HERO System Martial Arts*.

STAR HERO

Vermoulian consulted his Celestial Almanac and made note of certain symbols; these he inscribed upon the carnelian mandate-wheel, which he set into rotation; the signs were spun off into the interflux, to elucidate a route across the universe. Vermoulian fired a taper and held it to the speed-incense; the palace departed; ancient Earth and the waning sun were left behind.

—a group of magicians travel in a flying palace across space in search of a lost colleague in *Rhialto The Marvellous*, by Jack Vance

The idea of mixing Science Fiction and Fantasy — of mingling ultra-advanced technology with swords and magic — has a strong allure for writers and gamers alike. In almost all cases, this means introducing Fantasy elements into a Science Fiction setting; the opposite occurs much less frequently.

The first thing for the Star Fantasy Hero GM to decide is which type of Science Fiction he wants to use Fantasy elements in. Magic in a Post-Apocalyptic campaign (as in Fred Saberhagen's *Empire Of The East* or the "Thundarr the Barbarian" cartoon) may have much less spectacular effects and "feel" than the magic in a Space Opera game or Military SF milieu. Similarly, in a Post-Apocalyptic or Planetary Romance-style campaign, the idea of characters running around with both swords and high technology may not seem out of place, whereas it's difficult for many gamers to justify having their characters tote bladed weapons around when they can go down to the corner store and buy a blaster pistol for fifty credits.

Second, the GM has to decide how magic functions in the Science Fiction setting. For example, does it only work on some planets? Does the power of magic wax and wane over time, or from place to place? If the Science Fiction setting features psionics, how do they work in conjunction with, or when opposing, sorcerous abilities?

Similarly, the GM has to decide how magic and technology work together. Is each as good as the other, or does one have the upper hand in an encounter? Can wizards manipulate technology with magic, or scientists build devices that draw on magical energy — or do the two realms remain distinct? One can easily envision a setting where Fantasy spells and Science Fiction starships merge into an intriguing blend; the only question is how much the GM wants of each.

Perhaps the most fun comes from just pouring everything into the blender at once. Characters can use magic spells, psionic powers, mutant abilities, and technological tools all at once. Distinctions among them are, for the most part, nothing more than vocabulary. The Galactic Emperor's starships carry scrying-mages and have powerful defensive enchantments, cyber-wizards jack into the Hypernet to cast spells in virtual reality, dragons carry blaster-armed riders into battle against psionic demon-cyborgs, and stealthy thieves use gravitic lockpicks and a Potion of Insubstantiality to try to steal the Soulgem from a wizard's orbital fortress.

WESTERN HERO

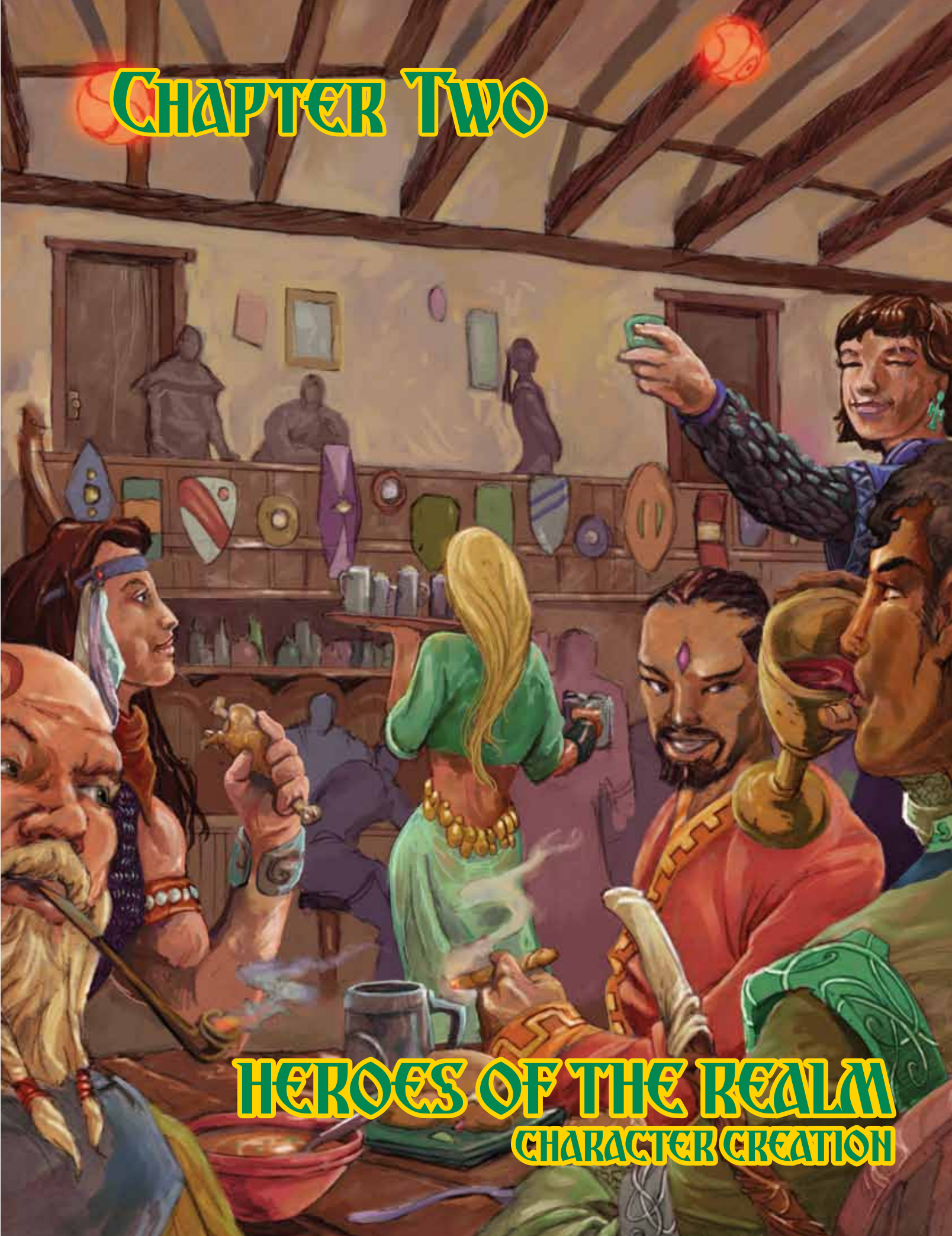
Towns out west were dying faster than mayflies in June. To survive the perils of the frontier — bandits, hexes, marauders, and conjurations — folks needed a strong sheriff. And any lawman who expected to survive had better have a fast gun and a talent for magic.

—from the back cover text of *Devil's Tower*, by Mark Sumner

In recent years a number of creators have introduced Fantasy elements (mainly magic) into traditional Western stories. For example, Mark Sumner's *Devil's Tower* presents a Wild West where some people have magical powers, and the *Deadlands* roleplaying game has flavorful "hex" magic, zombies, and various lurking horrors. You could easily create a Western Hero campaign that includes Fantasy Hero magic.

On the other hand, you could import some of the motifs and themes of Westerns into a Fantasy setting. Imagine a Fantasy game set on a dusty frontier that has only infrequent contact (at best) with king and country back east. In the place of hostile Indians, you have tribes of evil hobgoblins. Instead of renegade wolves and bears, you have vicious Fantasy monsters threatening the livestock. For outlaws and bandits, you substitute... well, outlaws and bandits, but armed with swords and crossbows instead of shootin' irons. Change the saloon to a Fantasy tavern, and the town marshal to a shire reeve, and you're just about set. Now watch a few Western movies and you'll have all the story ideas you need for a long-running campaign.

CHAPTER TWO



HEROES OF THE REALM
CHARACTER CREATION



FANTASY CHARACTER BASICS

Fantasy adventures feature a wide variety of characters — from humans of every type and culture imaginable, to dwarves and elves, to serpent-men, to free-willed sentient golems, to down-on-their-luck dragons, to just about anything else you can think of. This chapter discusses the elements you should consider when creating a Fantasy Hero character — race, profession, Skills, powers, and more — and describes how to simulate them in *HERO System* terms.

But before you jump right in to the nuts-and-bolts rules for character creation, you should consider a few basic issues.

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

As they wandered the grove's quiet trails, he led her to talk about her life, bit by bit. She found herself remembering little things from her childhood: watching her father help a lamb at birth, ... carrying her younger brother on her shoulders from the fields to the house[.] ... Day by day the talk covered more and more of the years [... h]er first days in the Duke's Company, her friends there[.] ... And as she talked, her life seemed to gain solidity — to become real again. She felt connected once more to the eager, adventurous girl tagging after older brothers and cousins, to the determined young woman running away from home, to the young soldier fighting beside trusted companions in the Duke's Company.

—Paksennarion thinks about her life in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

A well-designed Fantasy character is a lot more than some numbers on a piece of paper. Before you begin thinking about those numbers, give some thought to who the character is — where he comes from, what he's like, the sorts of things he's done in his life. In short, spend some time developing his *background* before you design him using the rules.

By considering a character's background, you can make him a better, more well-rounded character to play. Suppose, for example, that you want to play a warrior who comes from a mountain village. That's a good nugget to start with. Now ask yourself questions. Is his village a cluster of houses and shops, or does he perhaps belong to a tribe of mountain nomads who live in fur tents? What was his family's social class or status? What did his

father (and perhaps mother) do for a living? What did he do as a child growing up — did he support the family in some way, or was he apprenticed to a craftsman? When did he first develop an interest in fighting and learn about weapons and war? Who taught him?

Answering these (and other) questions gives you ideas for ways to build and design your character to make him more than a cardboard cut-out. A character who comes from a prosperous family in an established mining village doesn't learn the same things growing up as one who comes from an extended tribe of mountain nomads. Both of them may be warriors with the same STR, DEX, WFs, and Combat Skill Levels, but the former may have Persuasion and Trading while the other has Survival and Tracking.

Proper background planning has benefits during play: a well-developed character can cope with more situations in the game. A PC who's spent all of his points on combat abilities is great to have around when the swordplay starts, but he's not likely to contribute much to a diplomatic mission, a scene at court, or an adventure that calls for subtlety and sneakiness. On the other hand, a character with a detailed background tends to have a broader set of Skills and abilities. For example, imagine a situation where the heroes have to negotiate safe passage. A well-developed character may not be as trained in diplomacy as a courtier, but he's more likely to have some applicable ability (Conversation, Persuasion, an appropriate KS, a high INT or PRE) than a "combat monster."

When developing your character's background, don't forget what it says on 6E1 31 — typically there's no need to spend Character Points on abilities that are flavorful, fun, and help develop a character, but that have no impact on game play. This could cover things like AKs of the character's home region, KSs of the local flora and fauna, PSs related to the sorts of work he had to do growing up, and the like. Alternately, the GM might give all PCs a few extra Character Points — say, 10 or 20 — to spend solely on Background Skills and related abilities that aren't likely to have any major impact on combat or game play.

CHARACTER THEME

You may also want to consider whether your character has a *theme*. In many types of Fantasy literature (particularly Epic Fantasy), often the best, most interesting characters embody some sort of virtue, motif, or quality. In other words, in a literary sense they stand for or represent some theme or concept. A character's theme is distinct from his goals and motivations (see below), but often relates to them in some way, and usually dictates at least some of his actions (perhaps because of associated Psychological Complications).

For example, look at the characters in *The Lord Of The Rings*. Gandalf represents Wisdom and Devotion To Good; Aragorn is The Once And Future King; Boromir is the Man Blinded By Ignorance And Desire; Merry and Pippin are Boys Who Become Men; Sam stands for Loyalty; and Frodo represents Sacrifice. They have the same goal — the defeat and destruction of Sauron — and in some cases their literary motif relates closely to it. Frodo, for instance, must sacrifice his health and peace of mind to complete the quest. Boromir, on the other hand, who has Psychological Complications reflecting his love of Minas Tirith and his desire to command, nearly derails the quest because his theme makes him try to take the Ring from Frodo.

Suppose, for instance, that you want to play a character who's a troubadour — a wandering minstrel, ever eager for news and stories, and always willing to show off his talents and knowledge. In the early stages of the campaign, he might represent the Hubris of Knowledge: he knows a lot, but he hasn't *done* a lot of things during his life to date, so he's likely to get into trouble in situations where he incorrectly thinks his book learning tells him what he should do. As the campaign progresses and he gains more hands-on learning, his theme could alter to that of Wisdom Through Experience. He gradually transforms from the brash young know-it-all to a man who's been to the School of Hard Knocks and now has some genuinely valuable insights to impart to other people.

GOALS AND MOTIVATIONS

Lastly, you should ask yourself what your character's *goals* are. All well-developed characters in literature have a goal of some sort, even if it's not immediately apparent to the reader (or the character!) at the beginning of the story. The best Fantasy roleplaying characters have goals, too.

Another way to approach this issue is to ask: what *motivates* a character? Why does he do what he do? What does he hope to gain from adventuring? The answers to those questions usually tell you what his overall end goal is.

“Bring to me in your hand a Silmaril from Morgoth's crown; and then, if she will, Lúthien may set her hand in yours. Then you shall have my jewel; and though the fate of Arda lie within the Silmarils, yet you shall hold me generous.”

—King Thingol of Doriath tells Beren what he must do to win Lúthien in *The Silmarillion*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

A character's goal should, in most cases, be a large, impressive thing that can affect and influence the entire course of the campaign. If a character can achieve his goal quickly and easily, he has no reason to keep adventuring — proper goals for Fantasy characters require great effort and personal sacrifice to attain.

To put it another way, a character's goal should be something that, if he achieves it, the campaign ends (or, at the very least, the character has to seriously ask himself, “Why should I continue adventuring?”). It may help if all characters share at least one goal (such as defeating the evil high priest whose sect threatens their homeland) in addition to other, more personal, goals.

From the GM's perspective, the trick is to juggle the characters' various goals and keep them progressing toward them without (a) slowing the pace of the campaign too much, (b) allowing one or two goals to dominate the campaign, and (c) splintering the gaming group by having some characters meet their goals and drop out of the campaign. The best way to handle this is to work with the players in advance to ensure that they choose reasonable goals the GM can dovetail together in an enjoyable fashion.

When choosing a character's goal and/or planning a campaign, you should distinguish between a *goal* and an *objective*. As mentioned above, a goal is a large-scale thing not easily achieved. An objective is a lesser goal, perhaps one step on the journey toward achieving the goal. An objective may serve as the goal for a story arc that's part of the overall campaign, but that's the most it can do. For example, imagine a campaign world where a Dark Lord menaces the land. Far to the north, an evil dragon holds sway over a large, desolate area. The dragon could easily ally with the Dark Lord, augmenting his armies of orcs to the point where the Forces of Good cannot hope to defeat him. Therefore, it's important to slay the dragon before it can join forces with the Dark Lord. The early stages of the campaign may all focus on the dragon, and his destruction may mark the end of a major story arc — but killing him isn't the campaign goal. The goal is “defeat the Dark Lord,” and slaying the dragon is just one objective to achieve along the way.

For more on character motivations and goals, see *Psychological Complication* on page 171.

CHARACTER GOALS

Here are some examples:

- overthrow the Dark Lord and preserve the world from his evil
- win the heart of one's true love, who's betrothed to a powerful enemy
- become king
- find the long-lost Book Of Ancient Magic and become the wisest wizard in the world
- regain the throne taken from one's family years ago by an usurper
- solve some Deep Mystery about the world and the way it works



Four things support the world: the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the good, and the valor of the brave.

—Mohammed



FANTASY RACES

In a Fantasy campaign, players may want to create characters from a variety of non-human species (referred to as *races* in Fantasy roleplaying parlance). Even if the PCs are all human, the GM may still wish to create non-human enemies for them.

Individual GMs must decide for themselves whether to allow players to create their own races. In a setting with only a few races, it's probably best for the GM to define all the races and let players choose from that menu of possibilities. If the campaign world features dozens or hundreds of thinking races, GMs may wish to allow players to do some of the work by creating races for their characters. (Of course, the GM should always review player-created Templates, and can veto abusive races, or ones that simply don't fit in with the campaign setting.)

Although each Fantasy realm is unique, with its races and locales, certain archetypical races tend to occur throughout Fantasy, and particularly in Fantasy roleplaying games. This section includes Templates not only for various races, but which reflect the culture or unusual environment the character grew up in (such as high in the mountains, deep underground, or underwater).

Typically a character should only have one Racial Template, plus one Cultural Template, and perhaps one Environment/Ancestry Template, if those are appropriate and/or desired. However, a GM might let a character take more than one in some cases (see also *Halfbreeds*, page 66).

See Chapter Five for more information on creating Fantasy races.

RACES AND KNOCKBACK

Several large or heavy races have Knockback Resistance in their Templates, even though Fantasy Hero doesn't normally use the Knockback rules. This is because some campaigns *do* use Knockback, and in other campaigns spells could still do Knockback if they take the *Does Knockback* Advantage. If the GM doesn't think this will occur frequently enough to justify making characters pay for it, he should remove the Knockback Resistance from the Templates and simply give it to those races for free.

RACIAL TEMPLATES

These Templates represent common races found in many Fantasy stories. They're all presented "generically," without reference to any particular setting or location (since *Fantasy Hero* isn't a setting book), though they often follow the stereotypes common to Fantasy roleplaying games. You should consider making slight changes to them to adapt them to your specific campaign, or to create alternate forms of the same race. And of course, the GM may not want to use *any* of them; many Fantasy settings have no alternate races, just Humans.

This section doesn't include a Human Template, because humans serve as the "baseline" from which to derive other Racial Templates — each Template indicates how the species in question is "better" or "worse" than humanity in some respects. Human characters can, of course, take Cultural or Environment/Ancestry Templates (see below).

If the campaign uses the Characteristic Maxima rules, those rules apply to Characteristics gained from Templates. This may in some instances require a character to spend additional points to buy a Characteristic affected by the Template up to a proper level. For example, imagine a Template that provides +15 CON, for 15 points. The first 10 points of effect increase the character's CON to 20. After that the Characteristic Maxima doubling applies, so the next 5 points only add 2.5 points' worth of CON. Since a character can't have a 22.5 CON, the character has to spend another Character Point to increase his CON to 23. Alternately, with the GM's permission a character can reduce the points a Template adds to a Characteristic to avoid this problem.

None of these Templates has the *Distinctive Features* Complication, though you can easily add it if appropriate; see page 169.

CAT-FOLK

The Cat-Folk are a race mixing the features of humans and cats. Soft fur covers their bodies. They may all have the same general body type, or they may vary among themselves much as great cats do, leading to tall, lean, fast cheetah-folk, broad-shouldered, strong lion-folk, and leopard-folk and panther-folk in between those two extremes. Cat-Folk can live just about anywhere in a Fantasy world, though they tend to prefer either plains or forests.

Cat-Folk often have Complications reflecting their feline nature. They may hate the water, or have reduced meters of Swimming. They may be very fussy about their food and their environment, insisting that things be “just right.” Some of them display a streak of independence, even stubbornness.

Their speed, agility, and senses make Cat-Folk excellent warriors, hunters, and scouts. Those who live in cities sometimes take to roguish pursuits instead. Few become merchants or craftsmen; it’s not in the typical Cat-Folk nature to pursue such trades.

CENTAUR

Here Trufflehunter called again, “Glenstorm! Glenstorm!” and after a pause Caspian heard the sound of hoofs. It grew louder till the valley trembled and at last, breaking and trampling the thickets, there came in sight the noblest creatures that Caspian had yet seen, the great Centaur Glenstorm and his three sons. His flanks were glossy chestnut and the beard that covered his broad chest was golden-red.

—Glenstorm the centaur comes to join the rebellion in *Prince Caspian*, by C.S. Lewis

Centaurs are half-man, half-horse creatures; they have the upper torso, arms, and head of a man projecting from the front of a horse’s body where the horse’s neck and head would normally be. They’re large, heavy, strong, and can run with great speed, but their form makes some tasks difficult. For example, they have trouble climbing narrow or winding staircases, and cannot sit in chairs or climb trees.

Centaurs almost always live in temperate wilderness areas: plains, meadows, fields. They tend to dislike cities, forests, and closed-in areas, though some of them do enjoy mingling with other folk. They often have a reputation for rowdy, raucous behavior — particularly when drunk, and they become drunk easily. Many of them have harsh tempers and anger quickly; they often regard requests for a ride or to pull a cart as mortal insults.

CAT-FOLK TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

6	+3 DEX
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
4	Cat-Folk Legs: Running +4m
2	Cat-Folk Legs: Leaping +4m
5	Cat-Folk Eyes: Nightvision
2	Cat-Folk Nose: +1 to Smell/Taste Group PER Rolls
8	Claws: HKA ½d6; Reduced Penetration (-¼)
5	Tail: Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)
-1	-1 CON
-1	-1 BODY

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 40

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+3	Lion-Folk: reduce DEX to +2, add +2 STR, +2 CON, +1 BODY
+4	Cheetah-Folk: Increase to Running +8m
+10	Feline Bond: Animal Handler (Felines) (PRE +4)



CENTAUR TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

10	+10 STR
4	+2 DEX
4	+4 CON
5	+1 OCV
4	+4 BODY
8	Kick/Rear: HA +2d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)
10	Centaur Legs: Running +10m
6	Heavy: Knockback Resistance -6m

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 51

Value Complications

10	Physical Complication: Large (4m; +2 OCV for others to hit, +2 to PER Rolls for others to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
10	Physical Complication: Prone To Intoxication (-3 on CON Rolls to resist drunkenness) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
10	Physical Complication: Unusual Form (makes some tasks difficult or impossible) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 30

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+2	Survival (Temperate) (INT Roll)
+3	Centaur Senses: +1 with all PER Rolls
+4	Centaur Warrior Skills: WF: Common Melee Weapons, Bows, Lances
(10)	Psychological Complication: Temperamental (Common, Moderate)

DRAGON-FOLK TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

5	+5 STR
3	+3 CON
1	+1 PD
1	+1 ED
8	Talons: HKA ½d6; Reduced Penetration (-¼)
2	Scaly Skin: Resistant (+½) for 2 PD/2 ED
8	Wings: Flight 12m; Restrained (-½)
5	Dragon-Folk Eyes: Nightvision
5	Tail: Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 38

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+22	Fire Breath: RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (16m Cone; +½); No Range (-½), 8 Charges (-½)
+5	Stronger Wings: Increase to Flight 20m
+6	No Fear Of Fire: +6 ED; Only Versus Fire (-½) and Resistant (+½) for +6 ED; Only Versus Fire (-½)
+10	Tough Skin: Change Resistant (+½) to Resistant Protection (4 PD/4 ED)

Centaur make excellent warriors and scouts; each centaur is like a cavalryman who cannot be unhorsed! They tend to survive by hunting, foraging, and gathering; they rarely craft items (other than some weapons and gear) or engage in trade.

DRAGON-FOLK

Dragon-Folk look like a mingling of Man and Dragon. They have the form of a man, but with a dragon-like head (and perhaps neck), dragon wings sprouting from their shoulderblades, tough, scaly skin, tails, and small but sharp claws. Rumors say some even have the fiery breath of their draconic ancestors!

Possibly related to Lizard-Folk, Dragon-Folk can live in just about any environment, though they prefer temperate or tropical climes. Clever and nimble-fingered, they can succeed at just about any trade, but most favor aggressive pursuits such as warfare, raiding, banditry, exploration, or adventuring. Many of them dislike mingling with other folk, preferring the company of their own kind or a small band of friends.

DWARF

Dwarves are short, stocky folk standing about four to five feet tall, but with disproportionately broad shoulders and barrel chests; they have the same average weight as humans. Tough and sturdy, they're much stronger than their size suggests, and can withstand much more pain, toil, and exhaustion than a human — dwarven endurance and hardiness are legendary. They also enjoy greater lifespans than Men; some live as long as four centuries.

Male dwarves have long, distinctive beards. Sometimes they specially braid or dye them, or tie small decorative objects or trophies to strands of them. They tend to wear their hair long, sometimes with small war-braids down the sides of the head. Dwarven females do not have beards, and tend to venture away from dwarven realms and settlements far less frequently than male dwarves.

Dwarves prefer to live in the mountains and hills, often in enormous underground halls carved and decorated as only dwarven skill allows. They frequently fight with goblins and orcs, and many dwarves hunt those ancient enemies of their folk at every opportunity. In some settings, dwarves of one type (often dark-haired) live underground and work stone, while dwarves of another type (often red-haired) live above-ground in cunningly-concealed, well-defended fortresses and work wood. Of course, it's entirely possible that dwarves in some realms defy these stereotypes and live on plains, by the sea, or in forests.

Dwarves' skill with smithing, mining, masonry, and similar crafts is as renowned as their vigor. They make some of the finest weapons, armor, jewelry, and other goods known, often trading these things with other races for the food and other supplies they cannot obtain underground or in mountainous regions.

Dwarves are widely known for certain personality traits. They tend to be stern, dour,

close-mouthed, and quick to anger. If offended or harmed, they can hold grudges for a long time, even generations or centuries. Many dwarves are greedy, with an inordinate love of gold, silver, gems, and fine craftworks. On the other hand, dwarven honor and loyalty are bywords among most folk; a dwarf often takes as much offense at an insult to one of his friends as the friend takes himself. Dwarves also love good times, good song, and good food and drink.

Dwarves' toughness makes them excellent warriors. Size and cultural predilections lead them to favor axes, hammers, picks, and maces as weapons, though short swords and daggers are by no means unknown. Since their strength and endurance let them bear the weight of armor easily, they favor heavier armors and shields. But not all dwarves are warriors. Many remain craftsmen all their lives, taking great pride in producing ever-finer works. Some become so possessed by greed that they turn to thievery or raiding; less wicked-minded dwarves may become merchants instead, earning the gold they so love honestly. While dwarven wizards are usually rare, they're not unheard of; dwarves seem to have a particular affinity for magics involving earth, stone, and runes.



Like most Dwarfs he was very stocky and deep-chested. He would have been about three feet high if he had been standing up, and an immense beard and whiskers of coarse red hair left little of his face to be seen except a beak-like nose and twinkling black eyes.

—the Pevensie children meet the dwarf Trumpkin in *Prince Caspian*, by C.S. Lewis

Dain had come. He had hurried on through the night, and so had come upon them sooner than they had expected. Each one of his folk was clad in a hauberk of steel mail that hung to his knees, and his legs were covered with hose of a fine and flexible metal mesh, the secret of whose making was possessed by Dain's people. The dwarves are exceedingly strong for their height, but most of these were strong even for dwarves. In battle they wielded heavy two-handed mattocks; but each of them had also a short broad sword at his side and a roundshield slung at his back. Their beards were forked and plaited and thrust into their belts. Their caps were of iron and they were shod with iron, and their faces were grim. ... [D]warves can carry very heavy burdens, and nearly all of Dain's folk, in spite of their rapid march, bore huge packs on their backs in addition to weapons.

—Dain comes to the aid of Thorin Oakenshield in Erebor in *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

DWARF TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

7 +2 STR, +3 CON, +2 BODY

5 +2 PD, +2 ED, +5 END

5 **Dwarven Eyes:** Nightvision

2 **Dwarven Longevity:** Life Support (Longevity: lifespan of up to 400 years)

3 **Dwarven Toughness:** Resistance

-2 **Short Legs:** Running -2m (10m total)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 20

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+6 **Typical Dwarven Cultural Skills Package:** Add any two dwarven PSs at 11- (such as Blacksmith, Engraving, Gemcutter, Jewellerymaking, Masonry, Mining, or Woodcarving), Trading 8-, and WF: Axes/Maces/Hammers/Picks

+4 **An Underground Folk:** Bump Of Direction; Only Underground (-1) and Detect Depth And Passage Slope While Underground (INT Roll)

+5 **Knowledge Of Stone:** KS: Stonework 11- and +3 to Concealment; Only To Detect Hidden/Concealed/Cunning Stonework (-1)

(10) **Psychological Complication:** Stern, Dour, And Temperamental (Common, Moderate)

(10) **Psychological Complication:** Greedy (Common, Moderate)

(15) **Psychological Complication:** Hatred Of Orcs And Goblins (Common, Strong)

ELF

As depicted in most Fantasy settings, elves are tall, often willowy, fair-skinned and fair-haired folk. Swift and quick-witted, they often have a gift for song and other creative pursuits, and a deep appreciation for beauty in its many forms. They have extremely long lifespans (and in some settings, are true immortals), and often an innate talent for magic as well.

Elves typically live in forests and woodland areas and enjoy a strong relationship with nature. Animals often treat them with deference, respect, and love, making it easy for elves to train them or ride them. They fight fiercely against goblins and orcs, who raid elven homes and try to capture elven forests for their own use. However, elves can live in many other places, if desired; for example, a Fantasy realm could feature sea elves or mountain elves.

ELF TEMPLATE**Cost Ability**

4	+2 DEX
2	+2 INT
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
4	Elven Swiftness: Running +4m
2	Elven Eyes: +1 Sight Group PER
5	Elven Eyes: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)
3	Elven Sleep: Lightsleep
4	Elven Longevity: Life Support (Longevity: lifespan of up to 1,600 years)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 34

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS**Cost Option**

+1	Woodland Dweller: Survival (Temperate/Subtropical Forests) (INT Roll)
+4	Elven Archery: +2 OCV with Bows
+6	Elven War-Skills: +2 with Swords, Spears, and Lances
+11	Elven Animal Empathy: Animal Handler (Canines, Equines, Felines, Raptors) (PRE Roll +3)
+20	Elven Magic: Magic Skill (INT Roll) and 17 points' worth of spells and/or magical powers
+0	Elven Wakefulness: Replace Lightsleep with Life Support (Diminished Sleep: no need to sleep)
+6	Elven Artistry: 6 points' worth of PSs related to art (Singing, Storytelling, Play Harp, and the like)
+61	High Elf Package: Increase to +3 DEX and +5 INT and add +2 STR, +5 EGO, +5 PRE, +2 PD, +2 ED, +1 SPD, and 30 points' worth of spells and/or magical powers
+18	Wood Elf Package: Add Climbing (DEX Roll), +5 to Stealth; Only In Forests (-1), Survival (Temperate/Subtropical Forests) (INT Roll +3), Tracking (INT Roll)
(15)	Psychological Complication: Hatred Of Orcs And Goblins (Common, Strong)

Elves are often renowned for their skill at archery; in melee combat they tend to favor swords (particularly longswords and rapiers) and spears. Though they're not thought of as a warrior race, their speed and skill make them more than a match for strong, brutish races such as orcs. Elves who prefer other paths in life often become wizards — because they have innately magical natures, wizardry comes easily to them.

In many worlds, elves have several sub-races. The most common are High Elves, Wood Elves, and Grey Elves. High Elves are the noblest, fairest, strongest, and most magically powerful elves. Wood Elves, the shortest and least powerful elves, dwell deep in forests and are the most skilled at woodcraft. Grey Elves occupy a sort of "middle ground" between the other two and most often mingle with Men and other races.

Many other races seem to regard elves as "flighty," since they often care little for current events or "emergencies." This shows the perspective of a race whose members live for a thousand years or more; to elves, even the longest-lived of other races are young, and what seem like tremendous difficulties to others pass away after a few short decades.

"And Elves, sir! Elves here, and Elves there! Some like kings, terrible and splendid; and some as merry as children."

—Samwise gets to spend some time around Elves in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

All at once the piercing sweet call of an elvenhorn lifted her heart, the sound she had heard in Kolobia, and never forgotten. She looked east. A wave of silver light rolled down the forested slope, as if the starlight had taken form. Out of the trees rode what none there had ever seen. Tall, fair, mounted on horses as pale as starlit foam, they cried aloud in ringing voices that made music of battle. Rank after rank they came, bringing with them the scent of spring, and the light of elvenhome kingdoms that is neither sun nor star.

—Paksenarrion witnesses elven warriors coming to the aid of Kieri Phelan in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

GARGOYLE

Gargoyles are stony-skinned, vaguely reptilian-looking winged humanoids with clawed hands, taloned feet, and sharp fangs. Most prefer the company of their own kind, but they sometimes serve in the armies of wizards or powerful warlords, and a few are gregarious enough to mingle with other races freely. Most people consider gargoyles vicious, spiteful, and cruel, and those words describe many gargoyles well, but some have kind and noble hearts despite their somewhat grotesque appearance.

GIANT

Even for a being twelve feet tall, he appeared gnarled with muscles, like an oak come to life. He was dressed in a heavy leather jerkin and leggings, and carried no weapons. A short beard, as stiff as iron, jutted from his face. And his eyes were small, deep-set, and enthusiastic. From under his brows, massed over his sockets like the wall of a fortress, his glances flashed piercingly, like gleams from his cavernous thoughts. Yet, in spite of his imposing appearance, he gave an impression of incongruous geniality, of immense good humor.

—Thomas Covenant meets the giant Salthart Foamfollower in *Lord Foul's Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

Giants are enormous humanoids possessing great strength and fortitude. Most have foul tempers and cruel dispositions, so people fear them. However, some are wise and kind, willing to help those in need. In either case, giants' size, strength, and proportionately large weapons make them deadly warriors; few "short folk" fighters (as giants call smaller races) can battle a giant one-on-one and hope to win.

Giants typically live in hilly or mountainous regions, either in caves or in steadings and castles they build themselves. A few prefer the depths of the forest (or the sea), and those with magical power favor even more exotic locales. They often accumulate vast wealth.

In some settings, giants' magical nature makes them skilled at the arcane arts. They can forge the best magic swords, build castles among the clouds, and cast potent runes. Legends say some can even command the weather.

This Template represents a giant who's roughly 15-25 feet tall. You can easily adjust it up or down to simulate other types of giants by changing it to conform to the Size/Weight guidelines on 6E1 442-45.

GARGOYLE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

33	+10 STR, +4 DEX, +10 CON, +5 PRE
20	+2 OCV, +2 DCV
6	+4 PD, +2 ED
5	Gargoyle Eyes: Nightvision
15	Talons: HKA 1d6
10	Fangs: HKA ½d6
5	Stony Skin: Resistant (+½) for 6 PD/4 ED
13	Wings: Flight 20m; Restrainable (-½)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 107

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+3	Simulate Death
+5	Tail: Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)

GIANT TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

30	+30 STR
14	+14 CON
10	+10 PRE
6	+6 PD
6	+6 ED
10	+10 BODY
12	Heavy: Knockback Resistance -12m
24	Giant's Legs: Running +24m
3	Reach: Reach +3m

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 115

Value Complications

15	Physical Complication: Enormous (+4 OCV for others to hit, +4 to PER Rolls for others to perceive) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 15

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+30	Magical Nature: Add 30 points' worth of spells and/or magical powers
+12	Fire Giant: Add Resistant Protection (0 PD/10 ED); Only Works Against Fire/Heat (-½) and Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Heat)
+12	Frost Giant: Add Resistant Protection (0 PD/10 ED); Only Works Against Ice/Cold (-½) and Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold)
+90	Storm Giant: Add 30 points' worth of spells and/or magical powers and 60 points' worth of weather control and manipulation powers
(10)	Psychological Complication: Foul-Tempered (Common, Moderate)
(10)	Psychological Complication: Greedy (Common, Moderate)



GNOME

Gnomes are a short folk, about three to four feet tall with a slimmer build than dwarves. They have some traits in common with both dwarves and halflings; some sages believe gnomes may have arisen from a mating or crossing between those two races.

GNOME TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

-3	-3 STR
1	+1 CON
-2	-2 PRE
10	+2 DCV
1	Gnomish Longevity: Life Support (Longevity: lifespan of up to 200 years)

5	Gnome's Eyes: Nightvision
-4	Short Legs: Running -4m (8m total)
4	Hard To Perceive: +2 to Stealth

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 12

Value Complications

10	Physical Complication: Small (around 1-1.5m; +6m KB) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 10

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+4	Typical Gnomish Cultural Skills Package: Add any two gnomish PSs at 11- (such as Brewing/Distilling, Engraving, Gemcutter, Jewelmaking, Mining, or Woodcarving)
+3	Gnomish Engineering: Add PS: Gnomish Engineering (INT Roll)
+1	An Underground Folk: Bump Of Direction; Only Underground (-1)
(10)	Psychological Complication: Greedy (Common, Moderate)
(15)	Psychological Complication: Hatred Of Orcs And Goblins (Common, Strong)

GOBLIN TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

-2	-2 STR
-2	-2 INT
-2	-2 EGO
-2	-2 PRE
5	Goblin Fangs: HKA 1 point
-2	Short Legs: Running -2m (10m total)
5	Goblin Eyes: Nightvision
5	Goblin Senses: +1 PER with all Sense Groups

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 5

Value Complications

10	Physical Complication: Small (around 1-1.5m; +6m KB) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 10

Like dwarves, gnomes tend to have craggy faces (especially as they age) and beards, and they often live underground. They prefer hilly or forested regions (or, better still, hilly forests), where they expand natural cave formations or dig their own halls and chambers. They also share dwarves' love for the crafts of the hand, and sometimes their greed as well.

Like halflings, gnomes usually have pleasant dispositions; they appreciate the value of a good jest, a clever turn of phrase, or the comradeship of a friend. They enjoy food and drink, and have a reputation as skilled brewers and distillers.

Gnomes can enter just about any profession, and mingle freely with other races. Gnomish warriors favor short swords, daggers, and similar weapons appropriate to their size; they lack the strength to make good use of the weapons dwarves favor. Gnomes' dexterity and size allows many of them to become skilled, stealthy rogues. Compared to dwarves or halflings, gnomes have a talent for magic; spellcasters occur much more commonly among gnomes than among the other "small folk." In many settings, gnomes seem to have a particular predilection for the arts of alchemy, illusion-weaving, and sometimes earth or fire magic.

In some worlds, gnomes are renowned for their skill as engineers. They may have more advanced technology than other races, including such oddities as clockwork golems, hang-gliders made from the wings of giant bats, alchemically-manufactured explosive grenades, and steam-powered digging machines.

GOBLIN

Goblins are small humanoids, usually about four to five feet tall at most (and potentially as short as three to four feet). Their dark or green skin gives them a vaguely reptilian appearance. Their long noses, wide eyes, large, pointed ears, and sharp teeth only enhance this impression.

In most settings and regions, goblins are a cruel and evil folk who raid settlements, commit acts of banditry and rapaciousness, and even eat the flesh of Men. Other races, particularly dwarves, elves, and gnomes, hate them bitterly and fight them at every opportunity. However, some goblins learn to live peacefully with other races, often becoming mercenaries, traders, rogues, scouts, or adventurers.

Goblins prefer to live in caves, hills, or forests, often competing with dwarves and gnomes for living space. They often take poor care of their dwellings, moving on every few years when the debris becomes too plentiful to cope with.

Most goblin adventurers are warriors, favoring short swords, short spears, and short bows as weapons. Sneakier goblins may become rogues, and those with enough wit and talent sometimes become wizards or shamans.

HALFLING

[Halflings] are an unobtrusive but very ancient people[.] They love peace and quiet and good tilled earth[.] Even in ancient days they were, as a rule, shy of “the Big Folk,” as they call [Men.] They are quick of hearing and sharp-eyed, and ... nimble and deft in their movements. They possessed from the first the art of disappearing swiftly and silently, when large folk whom they do not wish to meet come blundering by[.] ... [T]hey are a little people, smaller than Dwarves: less stout and stocky, that is, even when they are not actually much shorter. Their height [ranges] between two and four feet[.]

—an introductory description of Hobbits (Halflings) from *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Halflings are the shortest of the humanoid races, standing an average of three feet tall. Their short size makes it hard for enemies to strike them, and easy for them to hide, but also means they're comparatively weak. In some settings, they have an innate skill with thrown or shot weapons that lets them strike back at those who would kill or oppress them.

Most halflings are quiet, peaceful folk; they prefer to live in idyllic pastoral areas where they can farm and raise animals. They get along well with most other races, particularly humans and gnomes. More than a few halflings leave their homelands to move to human cities, where they often become innkeepers, brewers, or bakers.

Halflings are well-known for their prodigious appetites. Despite being only half as tall as an adult human, a halfling can eat twice as much as a human can! As a result, halflings may become superb cooks, but most tend to be portly, if not extremely fat.

Halflings rarely become adventurers, preferring more sedate, safer occupations. Those with a desire for more excitement often become rogues (a profession for which their size and agility suit them), archers, or bards.

LIZARD-FOLK

The door opened to the little man's signal. The tall lizard man on the other side stared at them with slit-like pupils for a long moment and then stepped aside to let them in. As Boinger entered, he saw that the saurianoid held a halberd in one scaly hand. He began to wish he had not come[.]

—Boinger fears he's gotten in over his head in “In The Bag,” by J. Eric Holmes

Reptile-men who live mostly in temperate/tropical swamps and marshes (and occasionally coastal areas), Lizard-Folk tend to keep to themselves. They often favor weapons of wood or bone,

HALFLING TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

-4	-4 STR
4	+2 DEX
-2	-2 PRE
5	+1 OCV
10	+2 DCV
-4	Short Legs: Running -4m (8m total)
4	Hard To Perceive: +2 to Stealth
Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 13	

Value Complications

10	Physical Complication: Small (around 1-1.5m; +6m KB) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
Total Value Of Template Complications: 10	

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+4	Typical Halfling Cultural Skills Package: Add any two halfling PSs at 11- (such as Brewing/Distilling, Cook, Farmer, Gardener, Innkeeper, or Woodcarving)
+24	Halfling Missileer: Add +3 with Ranged Combat



LIZARD-FOLK TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 7 +2 STR, +3 PRE, +2 BODY
- 10 **Fangs:** HKA ½d6
- 1 **Lizard-Folk Skin:** Resistant (+½) for 1 PD/1 ED
- 2 **Strong Swimmer:** Swimming +4m
- 5 **Tail:** Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 25

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +8 **Claws:** HKA ½d6; Reduced Penetration (-¼)

OGRE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 43 +20 STR, +13 CON, +10 BODY
- 4 -2 INT, -2 EGO
- 5 +5 PRE
- 3 +3 PD
- 2 **Ogre's Hide:** Resistant (+½) for 2 PD/2 ED
- 4 **Ogre's Legs:** Running +4m (16m total)
- 5 **Ogre's Eyes:** Nightvision
- 3 **Ogre's Senses:** +1 PER with all Sense Groups

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 61

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +10 **Fangs/Tusks:** HKA ½d6
- +19 **Magical Nature:** Remove -2 INT and -2 EGO and add 15 points' worth of spells and/or magical powers

ORC TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 8 +2 STR, +3 CON, +3 BODY
- 4 -2 INT, -2 EGO

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 4

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +10 **Fangs:** HKA ½d6
- +8 **Claws:** HKA ½d6; Reduced Penetration (-¼)

and leather armor, since they live in regions where keeping metal gear free of rust requires too much effort. If necessary, they can use their fangs (and among some types of Lizard-Folk, their claws) to defend themselves and their homes. Lizard-Folk who leave the swamps often become traveling merchants (if their people produce goods worth trading) or warriors.

OGRE

Ogres are large (up to about eight feet tall) humanoids with ochreish or dark skins. By human standards, they're usually quite crude-looking and ugly, and often have fangs large and sharp enough to use as natural weapons.

Immensely strong and tough, ogres usually earn their pay as soldiers and warriors, though a few of the more intelligent and independent-minded ones become adventurers instead. Most folk consider them evil and cruel, and with good reason, for ogre tribes often raid settlements, both for treasure and to kidnap people for food. But a few ogres are kind enough, and learn enough manners, to live peacefully with others.

In some settings, ogres (or some types of ogres) have magical powers and abilities. These ogres often become wizards or shamans instead of warriors, and may lead tribes or clans of their kind.

ORC

[A] huge orc-chieftain, almost man-high, clad in black mail from head to foot, leaped into the chamber; behind him his followers clustered in the doorway. His broad flat face was swart, his eyes were like coals, and his tongue was red; he wielded a great spear.

—the Fellowship encounters a mighty orc in the Mines of Moria in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Orcs are dark- or green-skinned humanoids about the same average height as Men (or a little shorter, in some types). They have the same general facial features as goblins, though sometimes with flat or pig-like noses. Some scholars believe they come from an ancient cross-breeding of Man and Goblin performed by an evil sorcerer.

In most settings, orcs are evil, brutal, and ruthless. They live in tribes or clans that inhabit wilderness areas, often surviving by raiding other races (and even other orc tribes). They're easily swayed and bullied by stronger members of their own race, ogres, giants, and evil humans. But he who would lead them must have an iron grip, or else they're as likely to start fighting among themselves as fight the foe.

Orcs' natural strength and hardiness make them ideal soldiers. A few, more intelligent, specimens become assassins, bounty hunters, rangers, rogues, or the like; some even show a gift for shamanism or crude wizardry. They rarely mingle with other races, who find them, at best, repugnant.

SERPENT-FOLK

The guidance of Raptontis never failed him; and he came anon to the spacious caverns in which the serpent-men were busying themselves with a multitude of tasks. They walked lithely and sinuously erect on pre-mammalian members, their pied and hairless bodies bending with great suppleness.

—Ralibar Vooz visits the domain of the serpent-folk in “The Seven Geases,” by Clark Ashton Smith

Similar to Lizard-Folk in many ways, Serpent-Folk resemble a cross between a man and a snake. Some have thin, snake-like bodies with arms and legs; others have human-like torsos and arms coupled with serpentine heads and a snake’s body/tail in place of legs. Fangs fill their mouths, and sometimes those fangs can inject deadly venom into a foe’s body; some types of Serpent-Folk have claws on their fingers as well. Some Serpent-Folk have more than two arms.

Most other races consider Serpent-Folk wicked and cruel, and in many cases this is true. However, some Serpent-Folk get along well with others. Evil or good, they often possess wisdom and learning, and sometimes magical powers to boot. Serpent-Folk wizards and priests may have strange spells and magics long-forgotten by other races.

Serpent-Folk typically live in tropical or sub-tropical regions; though not cold-blooded like their ophidian kin, they dislike cold weather intensely. Some prefer jungle homes, others live underground or in swamps. Sometimes they build eerie Serpent-Folk cities, where other races are rarely welcome.

SPRITE

Sprites are tiny (about four to five inches tall) winged beings, a type of faerie-folk — perhaps the most mundane of the faeries. They are fast and agile, hard to hit in combat and difficult to perceive when they hide. On the other hand, they’re weak and fragile, and the weapons they can wield inflict almost no damage on normal-size beings. As a result, they favor roguish and wizardly professions.

Sprites typically live in idyllic forest glades with their kind and other faerie-folk. Some, seeking adventure or excitement, leave these places to visit the cities of men or join groups of adventurers. They usually dislike cold weather, underground environments, and loud noises.

SERPENT-FOLK TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

2	+2 INT
2	+2 EGO
3	+3 PRE
2	+2 BODY
10	Fangs: HKA ½d6
2	Serpent-Folk Skin: Resistant (+½) for 2 PD/2 ED
2	Strong Swimmer: Swimming +4m
5	Tail: Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 28

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

7	Venomous Bite: RKA 1d6, NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (45 Active Points); Damage Over Time (2 increments, one every 5 Minutes for ten minutes, defense only applies once, cannot be used again on same victim until all increments accrue; -½), Extra Time (onset time begins 5 Minutes after victim is bitten; -2), No Range (-½), HKA Must Do BODY (-½), Linked (-½), 4 Charges (-1)
+8	Claws: HKA ½d6; Reduced Penetration (-¼)
+20	Magical Nature: Add 20 points’ worth of spells and/or magical powers
+1	Many Arms: Change Extra Limbs to “as many as desired” and remove Limited Manipulation (-¼)

SPRITE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

-9	-9 STR
8	+4 DEX
-5	-5 CON
-8	-8 PRE
10	+2 OCV
40	+8 DCV
10	+1 SPD
11	Sprite’s Wings: Flight 16m; Restrainable (-½)
-10	Short Legs: Running -10m (2m total)
19	Stealth (DEX Roll +8)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 66

Value Complications

20	Physical Complication: Minuscule (.125m; +24m KB) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 20

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+30	Magical Nature: Add 30 points’ worth of spells and/or magical powers
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TROLL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

25	+25 STR
6	+3 DEX
15	+15 CON
15	+15 PRE
8	+5 PD, +3 ED
12	+12 BODY
6	Troll's Hide: Resistant Protection (2 PD/2 ED)
6	Heavy: Knockback Resistance -6m
6	Long Legs: Running +6m
5	Troll's Eyes: Nightvision
6	Troll's Senses: +2 PER with all Sense Groups
2	Reach: Reach +2m

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 112

Value Complications

10	Physical Complication: Large (4m; +2 OCV for others to hit, +2 to PER Rolls for others to perceive) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 10

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+10	Fangs: HKA ½d6
+12	Claws: HKA 1d6; Reduced Penetration (-¼)
+14	Trollish Healing: Regeneration (1 BODY per Turn), Can Heal Limbs; Does Not Work On Fire Or Acid Damage (-½)
+12	Stony Skin: Increase Resistant Protection to (6 PD/6 ED)
var	Multiple Heads: see HSB 29-30 for abilities for multi-headed beings
+25	Magical Nature: Add 25 points' worth of spells and/or magical powers
(40)	Susceptibility: to direct sunlight, takes Severe Transform 3d6 per Segment of exposure (Very Common)

WOLF-FOLK TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

9	+2 STR, +1 DEX, +1 OCV
10	Fangs: HKA ½d6
2	Wolf-Folk Legs: Running +2m
1	Wolf-Folk Legs: Leaping +2m
5	Wolf-Folk Eyes: Nightvision
2	Wolf-Folk Nose: +1 PER with Smell/Taste Group

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 29

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+8	Claws: HKA ½d6; Reduced Penetration (-¼)
+5	Tail: Extra Limb, Inherent (+¼); Limited Manipulation (-¼)
+10	Canine Bond: Animal Handler (Canines) (PRE Roll +4)

TROLL

There were many kinds of trolls: mountain trolls, forest trolls, water trolls, trolls with one head, trolls with three heads, trolls with twelve heads. ... Biggest and strongest of all the trolls where those who lived inside the mountains. They had the strength of fifty men and they also had great magic powers and could throw spells over people.

—from the introduction to *D'Aulaires' Trolls*, by Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire

Trolls are large humanoids, smaller than giants but larger than ogres, often with stony or scaly skin. They may have fangs or claws large enough to use as weapons, but the more intelligent among them favor swords, hammers, and other weapons scaled to their size.

In most settings, trolls are evil, cruel, and bloodthirsty. They serve wicked wizards, Dark Lords, and other major villains as powerful troops, or sometimes establish their own kingdoms and war on their neighbors. However, some trolls have greater wisdom, and can live and work with members of other races peacefully.

The typical troll is a warrior, using his strength to slay any who dare to stand against him. He also has the advantage of skin so tough that it offers him extra protection. Additionally, some trolls regenerate, healing from wounds with great speed. Only fire and acid inflict wounds they cannot heal. But some suffer from a significant weakness: the touch of sunlight turns them to stone!

In some settings, trolls tend to be more solitary, and to have magical powers. They often become powerful wizards, using their abilities to prey on the weak and helpless as well as to extend the sway of their authority.

WINGED FOLK TEMPLATE

Winged Folk are humans, or human-like beings, with wings growing from their shoulder-blades. The wings may be leathery like a bat's, or feathered like a bird's. You can buy this as Flight 20m, Restrained (-½) (total cost: 13 points). Otherwise, they're just like normal Men.

WOLF-FOLK

As Cat-Folk are to great cats, Wolf-Folk are to wolves, hunting dogs, and other large canines. Shaggy fur covers their bodies, and fangs fill their mouths; sometimes they have claws on their fingers as well.

Wolf-Folk tend to live in small tribes in wilderness areas, with the largest, strongest, or most clever member of the tribe acting as its chieftain. But they're often gregarious, even friendly, and mingle easily with other races at cities, trading posts, and meeting-places.

OTHER RACE CONSIDERATIONS

Players and GMs may wish to consider several other things when choosing a race for a character.

RACE WITHIN A RACE

They were men of many races and many crimes. There were tall Hyperboreans, gaunt, big-boned, of slow speech and violent natures; tawny-haired Gundermen from the hills of the northwest; swaggering Corinthian renegades; swarthy Zingarians, with bristling black mustaches and fiery tempers; Aquilonians from the distant west. But all, except the Zingarians, were Hyborians.

—a description of some of the races of Conan's world from "Black Colossus," by Robert E. Howard

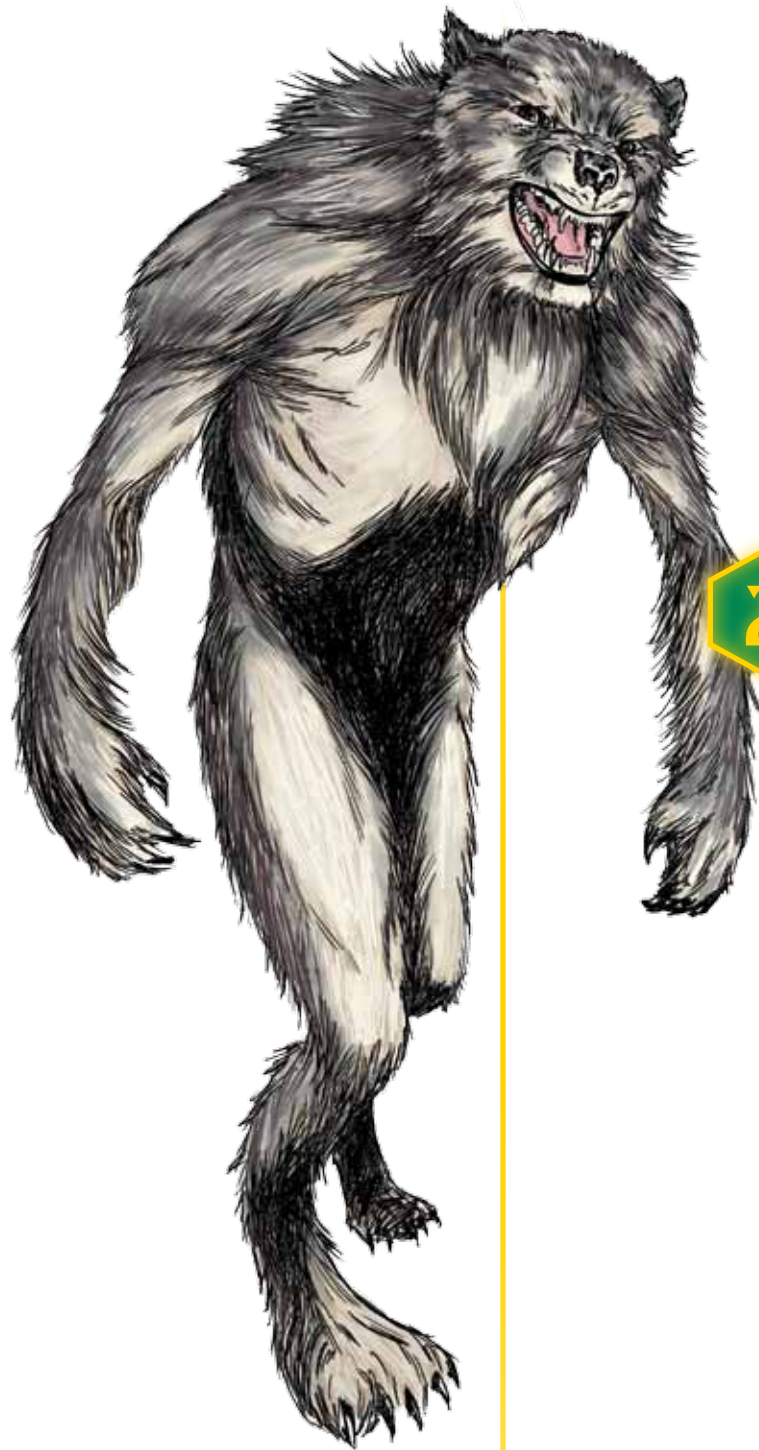
[T]hough the length of the lives of the Dúnedain grew ever less in Middle-earth, after the ending of their kings the waning was swifter in Gondor, and many of the Chieftains of the North still lived to twice the age of [other] Men[.]

—the superiority of the Dúnedain to other Men of Middle-earth is discussed in the appendices to *The Lord Of The Rings*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

In some Fantasy settings, Fantasy races have actual races in the scientific sense of the term (sub-types of the species). For example, as mentioned above, many campaigns have High, Grey, and Wood Elves, and both Tolkien and Eddings created different races of Men in their novels.

Developing "sub-races" for the races in your game can add flavor and variety to your world. It offers the players a lot more options when creating characters. For example, instead of every halfling being exactly the same in terms of his racial abilities, a player could create a halfling PC using any one of three sub-races: Thewborn (taller and stronger than average); Featherfoot (quicker than average); and Starbel (the "average" halfling from which the other sub-races diverge). That gives your campaign a lot more flavor as well; you might, for example, develop friendly (or not-so-friendly) rivalries between the different types of halflings.

Sub-races are particularly important for campaigns featuring only one race — such as a Swords And Sorcery game with no dwarves, elves, or orcs, only Men. By creating sub-races, or even distinct cultural groupings, you keep every character from seeming like a two-dimensional cut-out at the start of character creation. For example, in Robert E. Howard's Conan stories, people from Kush, Shem, Turan, Stygia, Aquilonia, Zingara,



and Cimmeria are each distinct physically, culturally, and psychologically. You could easily establish a similar situation in your world, indicating the respective differences through small Templates.

In game terms, you can create sub-races in several ways. First, you can alter the Racial Template slightly for each race, creating minor variations within the overall race. Second, you can apply an Environmental/Ancestry Template to the basic Racial Template; that's a good way to create, for example, such extreme sub-races as Deep Dwarves, Forest Goblins, Infernal Elves, or Sea Gnomes. Third, if appropriate, you can create an entirely new Template for the sub-race.

DEMIGOD TEMPLATE

ABILITIES

Cost Ability

General Demigod Abilities

- 1 **Semi-Divine Lifespan:** Longevity (200-year lifespan)
- 3 **Divine Resistance:** Power Defense (3 points)
- 1 +1 STR
- 2 +1 DEX
- 1 +1 CON
- 1 +1 INT
- 1 +1 EGO
- 3 +3 PRE
- 20 One group of god-specific abilities (see below)

God-Specific Abilities

- 20 **Child of the Earth-Goddess:** +5 STR, +10 CON, +5 EGO
- 20 **Child of the Fire-God:** +5 STR, +5 CON, +10 ED
- 20 **Child of the Magic- or Wisdom-God:** Power Defense (5 points), +1 with all Magic Spells, +4 INT, +3 EGO
- 20 **Child of the Love-Goddess:** +10 PRE, +1 ED, Charm, Striking Appearance +2/+2d6
- 20 **Child of the Moon-Goddess:** Nightvision, Moon-Magic (see below), +4 PRE
- 20 **Child of the Ruler-God:** +5 STR, +5 INT, +10 PRE
- 20 **Child of the Sea-God:** Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater), Swimming +10m, +5 STR, +5 CON
- 20 **Child of the Sky- or Storm-God:** Lightning Aegis (see below), +3 STR, +3 DEX, +3 CON, +1 INT
- 20 **Child of the Sun-God:** Aura Of Helios (see below), Sight Group Flash Defense (6 points), +3 PRE, +2 ED
- 20 **Child of the War-God:** +10 STR, +10 CON

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 33

Powers for God-Specific Abilities

- 7 **Lightning Aegis:** Resistant Protection (10 ED) (15 Active Points); Only Works Against Lightning/Electricity (-1).
- 9 **Aura Of Helios:** Sight Group Images, +4 to PER Rolls (22 Active Points); No Range (-½), Only To Create Light (-1).
- 11 **Moon-Magic:** Aid Magic 2d6, Expanded Effect + Variable Effect (all Magic spells/powers simultaneously; +4), Delayed Return Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Minute; +1) (72 Active Points); Only At Night (-½), Only During The Full Moon (-2), Only Aid Self (-1), 1 Charge (-2).

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 20 **Divine Accuracy:** +2 with All Combat
- var **Divine Beauty:** Striking Appearance
- 10 **Divine Strength:** +10 STR
- 16 **Divine Swiftiness:** +3 DEX, +1 SPD

HALFBREEDS

“You may need a light of some kind,” said Llyn[.] Rolan shook his head. “I can see well enough; my mother passed her eyes on to me at birth. I’m half-elven.”

—Rolan and Llyn prepare to invade a lair of hobgoblins in “Honor Among Thieves,” by Roger Moore

In one of the windows he caught a glimpse of a sallow face with sly, slanting eyes; but it vanished at once.

“So that’s where that southerner is hiding!” he thought. “He looks more than half like a goblin.”

—Frodo sees a half-orc in Bree in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

In Fantasy settings with lots of races, such as most High Fantasy campaigns, it’s not uncommon for some races to breed with each other (voluntarily or involuntarily), creating “half” races: half-elves; half-orcs; half-ogres, and so on. This most often occurs between Men and similar races (elves, orcs, and the like), but other halfbreeds are certainly possible. It’s not difficult to imagine a character with a dwarven father and gnomish mother, or one whose ancestry includes both Lizard-Folk and Serpent-Folk.

Halfbreed characters usually have some features of both races, often somewhat muted or altered to reflect their “diluted” heritage. For example, a male half-elf may have pointed ears, but not so strong or distinct a point as a full-blooded elf, and unlike most elves he can probably grow a respectable beard. The character’s Everyman Skills, attitudes, and the like usually depend on which race raised him, or which parent he most favors. He may suffer from prejudice or discrimination (possibly simulated with a Social Complication) if the society he lives in scorns halfbreeds.

Since each halfbreed is different, there’s no Template for them. Instead, the player and the GM should work together to come up with an appropriate Template that combines attributes from the Templates for his parent species. (If one of the parents is human, this means reducing or diluting the relevant features of the other parent’s Template.) In most cases the attributes shouldn’t be as strong as in either parent species’s Template.

DEMIGODS

Many characters from mythology, and more than a few from Fantasy literature, have the blood of the gods flowing in their veins. For example, Heracles (Hercules) was the son of the sky-god Zeus and the human woman Alcmene; and the Norse hero Sigurd was the great-great-grandson of the All-Father, Odin. Assuming the GM has no objection, a player in a Fantasy Hero campaign could also have a character who’s a demi-god.

This Template (or, more accurately, ten Templates in one easily-referenced format) represents characters with divine ancestry (typically this means having a god as one's parent, but it could represent divine grandparents, great-great-grandparents, or the like). For types of gods not listed, the GM can create additional Templates if desired. As an optional Complication, the child of a particular god may be Hunted by that god's divine enemies or rivals, who will try to make his life difficult or even kill him.

MONSTERS AS CHARACTERS

Even Jewel said, "Shall I run after those Dwarfs, Sire, and spit ten of them on my horn at each plunge?"

—Jewel the unicorn offers to deal with some treacherous Dwarves in *The Last Battle*, by C.S. Lewis

Several of the Templates above are for races often regarded as "monsters" — gargoyles, giants, goblins, ogres, orcs, trolls, and so on. They're presented here not only because of the possibility of halfbreed characters, but because in some Fantasy settings, these races may interact with "regular" PC races as other than adversaries. A High Fantasy setting could easily feature a cooperative working relationship between Men and Giants, for example (as in Stephen Donaldson's "Thomas Covenant" books), or a city so cosmopolitan that orcs and goblins can show up and trade just like everyone else.

Humanoid "monsters" work well as PC races because they have the same general body structure, and thus use the same sorts of tools and develop the same sorts of cultures as Men, dwarves, elves, or the like. However, they're not the only possibility. In truly fantastic campaigns — the highest of High Fantasy — GMs might let players choose any type of monster as a character, provided they can justify it within the context of the campaign. Imagine how much fun it might be to try playing a minotaur mercenary, a demon who got kicked out of Hell for being too nice, a puckish dragon who wants to increase the size of his hoard and have some adventures in the process, or a unicorn on a quest to destroy evil.

The main difficulty with playing a monster in *HERO System* terms is lack of game balance. Most monsters, even relatively weak ones, are built on more points than the starting points GMs allow in most campaigns. You may need to work with the GM, reduce the monster's abilities some, and/or forego most of the Experience Points you would otherwise earn to make the character fit into the game.

CULTURAL TEMPLATES

In Fantasy literature, certain broadly-defined cultures or cultural stereotypes tend to recur repeatedly, crossing both setting and subgenre lines. In some cases, it may be appropriate to represent this with Cultural Templates, such as the ones described below. However, Cultural Templates are *optional*; the GM should approve their use, and may prefer to adjust them slightly to better portray the cultures specific to his world. And of course, even where well-defined cultures exist, many Fantasy heroes flout the sort of traditions they represent, making a Cultural Template inappropriate for them.

CITYFOLK CULTURE

Hakiem the Storyteller licked the dust from his lips as he squinted at the morning sun. It was going to be hot again today — a wine day, if he could afford wine. The little luxuries, like wine, that he allowed himself were harder to come by as the caravans became fewer and more infrequent.

—life on the street becomes harder for Hakiem in *Thieves' World*, edited by Robert Asprin

Many Fantasy settings feature large cities with entrenched populations. Surviving and thriving in a Fantasy city is often an art in itself, since the cities lack modern amenities. This Template contains some of the skills and resources city-bound characters often draw upon during their daily lives.

CITYFOLK CULTURAL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 2 CK: character's home city 11-
- 2 AK: district/quarter/neighborhood of city with which character is most familiar 11-
- 2 Survival (Urban)
- 6 Contacts (6 points' worth among people in the city; player's choice)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 12

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0



CRIMINAL CULTURAL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 1 +1 INT
- 1 +1 PRE
- 6 6 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
Bribery, Conversation, Forgery, Gambling, Lock-picking, Persuasion, Security Systems, Charm, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, Streetwise, Trading, any Background Skill
- 2 WFs (2 points' worth)
- 4 Contacts (4 points' worth; player's choice)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 14

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

NOMAD CULTURAL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 2 +1 DEX
- 3 Riding (DEX Roll)
- 2 WFs (2 points' worth)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 7

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +2 **Wandering Traders/Entertainers:** Replace Riding with TF: Equines, Carts & Carriages and Trading

SEAFARING CULTURAL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 2 Navigation (Marine)
- 2 TF (2 points' worth of Water Vehicles appropriate to the setting)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 4

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +2 **Sailing Culture:** Add PS: Sailing 11-
- +3 **Sailing Trader Culture:** Add Trading (PRE Roll)
- +3 **Sailing Warrior Culture:** Add Combat Sailing (DEX Roll)
- +2 **Weather Eye:** Add PS: Predict Weather 11-

CRIMINAL CULTURE

Many Fantasy societies have rampant levels of crime, and some Fantasy peoples have a well-deserved reputation as a race of pickpockets, thieves, and con artists. They may come from kleptocracies (societies ruled by thieves, or more accurately by Thieves' Guilds and like organizations), or just kingdoms where anarchy reigns and every person has to look out for himself.

NOMAD CULTURE

Of the nine tribes of the Dalrei, all but one had moved east and south that season, though the best grazing for the eltor was still in the northwest, as it always was in summer.

—the nomadic Dalrei travel the plains in *The Summer Tree*, by Guy Gavriel Kay

Fantasy stories, particularly Epic Fantasies, often feature peoples who wander over the landscape rather than remaining in one fixed location. The most common of these are the “horse nomads,” superbly skilled at mounted warfare, but others (such as Gypsy-like traveling merchants and entertainers) are certainly possible. Because their wealth must be easy to transport, it's also easy to steal, so nomads of all sizes and genders learn to fight early and well.

SEAFARING CULTURE

“What land are you from, my lord?”

“No land. We are the Children of the Open Sea.”

Arren looked at his keen face. He looked about him at the great raft with its temple and its tall idols ...; at the people busy at their work, weaving, carving, fishing, cooking on raised platforms, tending babies; at the other rafts, seventy at least, scattered out over the water in a great circle perhaps a mile across. ... It was a town, and under its floors was the abyss.

—Arren and Ged come to the raft-town of the sea-dwellers in *The Farthest Shore*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

Some cultures have a sort of symbiotic relationship with the sea. They may engage in extensive maritime trade, or they may live completely at sea, coming ashore only periodically for supplies the ocean cannot provide. In any case, the members of this society learn early on how to handle many different types of watercraft. They sometimes develop more sophisticated sailing skills, or even learn how to read the signs to determine what tomorrow's weather will be like.

TRADER CULTURE

Some Fantasy societies or peoples are best-known for their skill at trading and bargaining. In these societies, virtually everything comes down to money; even information has its price, carefully negotiated.

TRADER CULTURAL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- | | |
|---|---|
| 3 | Trading (PRE Roll) |
| 6 | 6 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
Bureaucratics, Conversation, High Society, Oratory, Persuasion, Charm, Streetwise, any Background Skill |
| 4 | Contacts (4 points' worth; player's choice) |

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 13

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

WARRIOR CULTURE

Fantasy literature and movies contain many races or cultures known primarily for their members' martial prowess. Examples include the Haruchai of Donaldson's "Thomas Covenant" novels and the Gnomes of *The Sword Of Shannara*. Typically tough, strong, and skilled with a variety of weapons, characters from warrior cultures often embrace elaborate codes of honor that keep their societies from descending into eternal, anarchistic warfare. Others care only about victory, regardless of how they achieve it.

WARRIOR CULTURAL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 3 | +3 STR |
| 2 | +1 DEX |
| 2 | +2 CON |
| 2 | +2 BODY |
| 6 | WFs (6 points' worth) |

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 15

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- (15) Psychological Complication appropriate to culture (Code Of Honor, Belligerent, Hair-Trigger Temper, or the like)

ENVIRONMENT/ ANCESTRY TEMPLATES

In addition to race (and possibly culture), designers of Fantasy Hero characters also have to consider the environment those characters grew up in. Fantasy literature and games contain dozens of examples of races living under the waves, deep beneath the earth, in the mountains, or the like. Similarly, some characters have unusual ancestry, such as Merlin's demonic blood or the curse of lycanthropy. These Templates represent those conditions.

As always, the GM should forbid any Templates he considers inappropriate for his campaign, and alter others to make them fit his world better if necessary. Additionally, GMs may decide that some Environment/Ancestry Templates shouldn't apply to some types of characters. For example, since dwarves often live underground and in the mountains, the GM may rule that their Template already has aspects of the Deep and Mountain Templates, and forbid dwarven characters to take those Templates (unless they come from a sub-race of dwarves who live far underground all the time).

If an Environment/Ancestry Template provides an ability or Skill the character already receives from his Racial Template, remove it from the Environment/Ancestry Template and adjust the Template's cost accordingly.

DEEP

"Deep" characters live or were raised far underground, where the sun never shines and the only light available comes from fire, phosphorescence, or magic. Characters raised in such environments can see much better in the dark than characters from sunlit lands (they often have much larger eyes, to boot), but suffer correspondingly greater effect from blindingly bright lights (and possibly even any sunlight). They know how to survive underground (where finding food and water often prove difficult) and can breathe even in the stuffy, oxygen-starved "air" of many caverns. They can also climb agilely.

Characters with the Deep Template could have albino-white skin due to lack of exposure to sunlight. However, in many Fantasy settings, they actually tend to have dark or black skin, particularly if they happen to be Evil.



DEEP TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 1 **Deep Dweller:** Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Thin Air)
- 5 **Deep Eyes:** Nightvision
- 3 Climbing (DEX Roll)
- 2 Survival (Underground) (INT Roll)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 11

Value Complications

- 10 **Vulnerability:** 1½ x Effect from light-based Sight Group Flash Attacks (Common)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 10

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- (35) **Physical Complication:** Blindness (All The Time, Fully Impairing)
- (15) **Physical Complication:** Poor Eyesight, suffers -2 to all Sight PER Rolls in sunlight or bright light (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
- (5) **Psychological Complication:** Hatred Of Surface-Dwellers (Uncommon, Moderate)

DIVINE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 30 30 points' worth of increased Characteristics
- 4 **Divine Form:** Life Support (Longevity: lifespan of up to 1,600 years)
- 31 **Divine Awareness:** Infrared Perception (Sight Group), Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group), Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group), Telescopic (+6 versus Range for Sight and Hearing Groups)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 65

Value Complications

- 5 **Distinctive Features:** Divinely Touched (Not Concealable; Noticed And Recognizable; Detectable By Unusual Senses)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 5

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 33 **Holy Aura:** RKA 1d6, Area Of Effect (personal Surface — Damage Shield; +¼), Constant (+½), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½), Only Affects Evil Beings (-½) **plus** Sight Group Images, +4 to PER Rolls, Area Of Effect (2m Radius; +¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½), Only To Create Light (-1), Linked (-½)
- 60 **Divine Shield:** Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%
- (20) **Psychological Complication:** Must Fulfill Holy Purpose/ Quest (Very Common, Strong)



DIVINE

A character with this Template has been touched by the presence of the divine or celestial in some way. (In most settings, this means by a “Good” deity; for Evil deities, see the *Infernal Template*, below.) They may have the blood of a god running in their veins, or perhaps an angelic being “touched” them and granted them power so they could fulfill some holy purpose.

Typically, the increased Characteristics granted by this Template depend on the god associated with the character. A god of war makes his followers stronger and tougher; a god of wisdom or learning makes his smarter and more eloquent. The GM can allow the character to substitute some Skills instead, if appropriate.

ELEMENTAL

Characters with these Templates have some connection to one of the classic Four Elements: Air, Earth, Fire, and Water. They may belong to a race native to an “Elemental Plane,” or an evil wizard may have merged them with an elemental being to create a strange but powerful hybrid. This grants them powers related to the element in question, but may also inflict weaknesses upon them (such as, perhaps, taking extra damage from attacks involving the “opposite” element).

AIR

Characters associated with Air are swift and agile, both of body and of mind. They withstand chill temperatures well, and never lack for air to breathe. They may have additional powers as well.

EARTH

Characters associated with Earth possess the strength and durability of that element. Some even have bodies made partly or wholly of rock. Some Earth characters can move swiftly through the ground, or sense tremors and vibrations so well they can attack an opponent without having to see him.

FIRE

Characters aspected to Fire enjoy a high degree of immunity to damage from heat and flame; their internal fires also keep them comfortable in the coldest weather. Some of them possess other powers, such as the ability to ignite flammable objects or surround themselves with a sheath of fire.

AIR TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

6	+3 DEX
3	+3 INT
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
10	+1 SPD
12	Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environment: Intense Cold)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 41

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +30 **Air Travel:** Add Flight 24m and +3 with Flight
- +10 **Gift Of Air:** To Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing) add Usable Simultaneously (up to eight people at once; +1)
- (10) **Vulnerability:** 2 x STUN from Earth attacks (Uncommon)

EARTH TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

10	+10 STR
5	+5 CON
5	+5 PD
3	+3 ED
3	+3 BODY

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 26

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 30 **Stony Form:** Add Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED)
- 35 **Sense Tremors:** Detect Physical Vibrations (INT Roll) (Touch Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Range, Targeting
- 34 **Passage Of Earth:** Tunneling 12m through 6 PD material, Fill In
- (10) **Vulnerability:** 2 x STUN from Air attacks (Uncommon)

FIRE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

6	+3 DEX
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
20	Internal Fires: Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%; Only Works Against Fire (-½)
4	Internal Fires: Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold, Intense Heat)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 40

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 20 **Fiery Shield:** RKA 1d6, Area Of Effect (personal Surface — Damage Shield; +¼), Constant (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+¼), Inherent (+¼); Always On (-½), No Range (-½)
- 21 **Kindle Fire:** RKA 1 point, Constant (+½), Indirect (Source Point and Path can change from use to use to strike from any angle; +1), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Sticky (only affects flammables; +¼), Uncontrolled (power ends when it runs out of fuel or oxygen, or someone extinguishes the flames; +½); Only Works On Flammable Objects (-0)
- (10) **Vulnerability:** 2 x STUN from Water attacks (Uncommon)



WATER TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

8 **Water Adaptation:** Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater; Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold)

6 **Superb Swimmer:** Swimming +12m

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 14

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

45 **Body Of Water:** Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50% plus Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%

10 **Marine Animal Command:** Animal Handler (Aquatic Animals) (PRE Roll +4)

(10) **Vulnerability:** 1½ x STUN from Fire attacks (Common)

FOREST TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

3 Climbing (DEX Roll)

6 **AK:** Home Forest (INT Roll +3)

4 +4 to Stealth; Only In Woodland Environments (-1)

2 Survival (Temperate/Subtropical Forests) (INT Roll)

4 **Environmental Movement:** Thicketmaster (no penalties in undergrowth)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 19

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

3 Tracking (INT Roll)

4 **Environmental Movement:** Supreme Balance

But through them there came striding up, roaring like beasts, a great company of hill-trolls out of Gorgoroth. Taller and broader than Men they were, and they were clad only in close-fitting mesh of horny scales, or maybe that was their hideous hide; but they bore round bucklers huge and black and wielded heavy hammers in their knotted hands.

—hill-trolls attack the forces of the West in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

WATER

Characters associated with Water are completely at home in that element. They can breathe it as easily as they do air, and can swim in its icy depths without harm and at great speed. Some enjoy a special rapport with aquatic animals, or can even transform their bodies partially into water-form.

FOREST

This Template represents a character who lives in, or is otherwise adapted to, woodland environments. He can move through them easily, hide in them better than most folk can, and knows the lay of the land intimately.

HILL AND MOUNTAIN

Characters and creatures who live in the hills and the mountains are often stronger and tougher than ordinary members of the same race or species — they're made of sterner stuff, just as the land they live in is harder than the land of plains or forests. For example, all Men know to fear ogres, but they fear hill ogres the more for their greater power... and mountain ogres more still.

These two Templates are not cumulative; a Mountain-based character should take just that Template, not both it and Hill.

HILL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

3 +3 STR

2 +2 CON

2 +2 BODY

1 Survival (Temperate Hills) (INT Roll)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 8

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

MOUNTAIN TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

6 +6 STR

4 +4 CON

3 +3 BODY

2 Survival (Mountains) (INT Roll)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 15

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+1 Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Thin Air)

INFERNAL

The rulers of the Infernal Realms grant their followers powers and abilities, just like the Higher Powers of the divine do to theirs. Besides being better than ordinary members of their race (perhaps stronger, perhaps craftier, perhaps swifter, depending on which Demon Lord grants them their powers), they can grow demonic claws, withstand heat and the ravages of age, and have heightened senses. Some have additional powers, such as the ability to surround their bodies with a mantle of hellfire.

INFERNAL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 30 30 points' worth of increased Characteristics
 5 **Infernal Form:** Life Support (Longevity: lifespan of up to 800 years; Safe Environment: Intense Heat)
 5 **Eyes Of Fire:** Infrared Perception (Sight Group)
 6 **Demonic Senses:** +2 PER with all Sense Groups

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 46

Value Complications

- 10 **Distinctive Features:** Infernally Touched (Not Concealable; Causes Major Reaction [fear/loathing]; Detectable By Unusual Senses)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 10

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 13 **Batwings:** Flight 20m; Restrainable (-½)
 40 **Hellfire Aura:** RKA 1d6, Area Of Effect (personal Surface — Damage Shield; +¼), Constant (+½), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½) **plus** Sight Group Images, +4 to PER Rolls, Area Of Effect (2m Radius; +¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½), Only To Create Light (-1), Linked (-½)
 60 **Infernal Shield:** Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%
 (20) **Psychological Complication:** Must Fulfill Master's Purpose (Very Common, Strong)

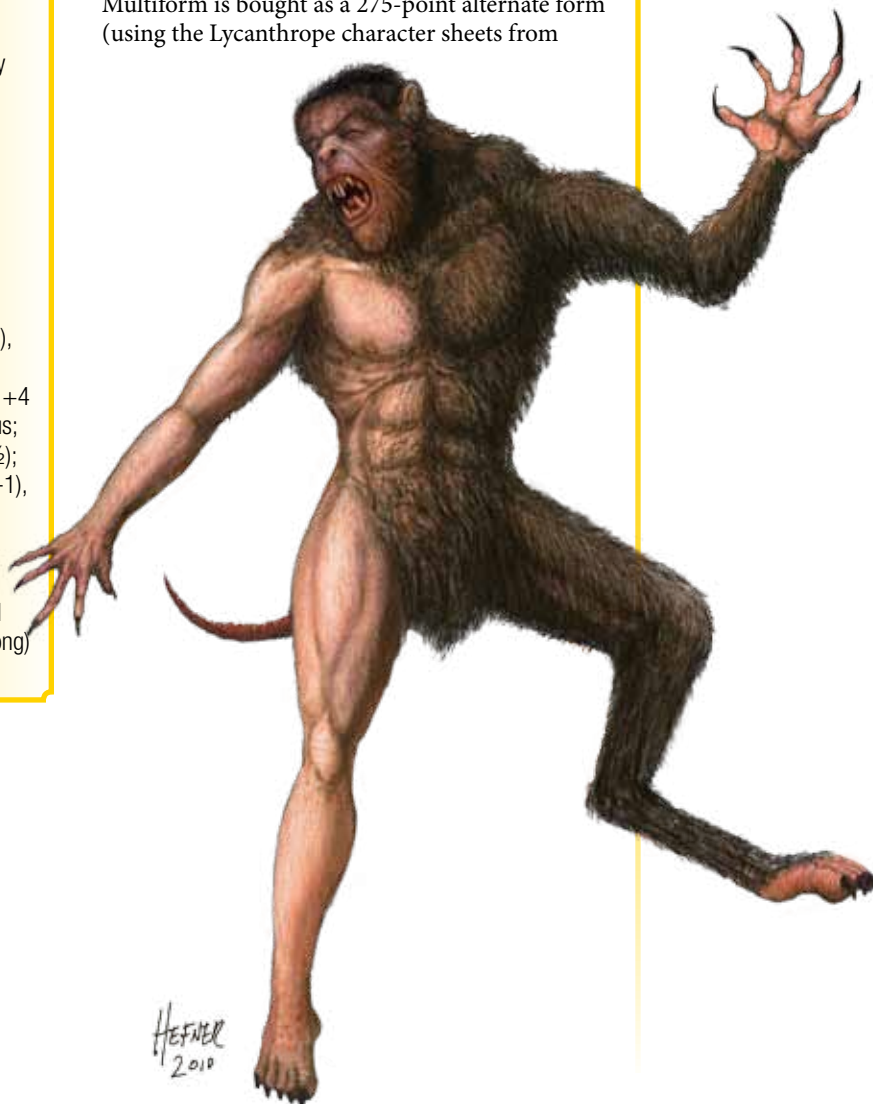
LYCANTHROPE

Lycanthropes are stronger and faster than humans. No mind tricks, no sleight of hand, they are just better.

—Anita Blake encounters some wererats in *Guilty Pleasures*, by Laurell K. Hamilton

Also known as werereatures, lycanthropes are people with the ability to change their shape into that of a particular animal (or, more rarely, an intelligent animal with the power to assume man-shape). Many people consider lycanthropy a curse, a dreaded disease they'd give anything to cure, but some accept (or even revel in) their bestial nature and abilities.

Most lycanthropes possess three forms: a normal human form; a human-animal "mixed" form; and an animal form. The animal form may be physically normal for its kind, or unusually large and strong, but it almost always retains some or all of the character's intelligence. This Template assumes that the character's human (dwarven, elven, goblinish...) form is the "true form," and that the mixed and animal forms are alternate forms bought with Multiform. Here, the Multiform is bought as a 275-point alternate form (using the Lycanthrope character sheets from



LYCANTHROPE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 2 +2 STR
- 4 +2 DEX
- 20 **Were-Form:** Multiform (assume 275-point mixed form and animal form); No Conscious Control (-2)
- 2 **Lycanthropic Swiftiness:** Running +2m
- 1 **Lycanthropic Swiftiness:** Swimming +2m
- 3 **Beast-Senses:** +1 PER with all Sense Groups

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 32

Value Complications

- 25 **Enraged:** when opposed or injured (Common), go 11-, recover 8-
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Bestial Nature (Uncommon, Total)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 40

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +18 **Werebear Package:** Increase to +10 STR and add +5 CON and +5 BODY
- +6 **Wereboar Package:** Increase to +5 STR and add +3 CON
- +6 **Wererat Package:** Increase to +4 DEX and Running +4m
- +8 **Wereshark Package:** Increase to +5 STR and Swimming +6m, and add +3 CON
- +9 **Weretiger Package:** Increase to +5 STR, +3 DEX, Running +4m, and add Leaping +4m
- 8 **Animal Affinity I:** Animal Handler (type of animal character can change into) (PRE Roll +3)
- 20 **Animal Affinity II:** Animal Friendship

SEA TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 8 **Gills And Aquatic Body:** Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater; Safe Environment: High Pressure, Intense Cold)
- 3 **Aquatic Body or Webbed Hands:** Swimming +6m
- 5 **Aquatic Eyes:** Nightvision

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 16

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 5 Replace Life Support (Expanded Breathing) with the designation of water as the default environment in which the character breathes
- +3 Increase Swimming to +12m
- 12 **Fish-Like Tail:** Reduce Running to 0m

The HERO System Bestiary as a guideline), but you should adjust the cost as appropriate for the exact were-form the character has in mind (and which the GM will allow).

This Template assumes the character does not yet have full control over his shape-changing powers; the *No Conscious Control* (-2) Limitation and Complications reflect this. If he has full control, buy them off (possibly substituting an Accidental Change [during the full moon] for the Complications). This Template also assumes the character buys it during character creation; if characters contract lycanthropy during the game, they don't get any points from the Complications required (unless the GM allows this).

See HSB 173-80 for character sheets for several types of lycanthropes and rules for contracting lycanthropy.

SEA

This Template represents a race that lives and breathes underwater (though most can also breathe air). Examples include mer-folk, sea elves, or a race of water-breathing hobgoblins. Some have fish-like tails instead of legs; others have webbed hands and feet. Both can swim well, survive the rigors of the ocean easily, and see in the dark depths.

Characters with this Template often choose the sea as their "default environment," and thus do not need to buy Environmental Movement to avoid or negate its combat penalties (though they would suffer at least a -2 CV on dry land, which they could buy Environmental Movement for). Characters who want to be equally at home both on the land and in the sea must buy Environmental Movement.

SIZE/WEIGHT

Some Fantasy races, such as giants or halflings, are significantly larger or smaller than the defined human norm. The Racial Templates earlier in this chapter account for this, but if you want to create a character from some other race who's unusually tall or small, use the Size/Weight Templates on 6E1 442-45. The *Semi-Large* and *Semi-Enormous* Size/Weight Templates on APG 100 are also appropriate for many Fantasy creatures.

VAMPIRE

This Template represents the abilities a character requires if he becomes a vampire. They come from traditional vampire stories and legends; GMs should alter them to suit the nature of vampires and vampirism in the campaign, if necessary (and perhaps also to conform to the campaign's character-building guidelines, since it features more than 175 Character Points' worth of abilities).

VAMPIRE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 10 **Fangs:** HKA ½d6, Penetrating (+½); No STR Bonus (-½)
- 30 **Drink Blood:** RKA 1d6, NND (defense is not having blood or protective skin or equipment too thick to bite through; +1), Does BODY (+1), Constant (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½), Fangs Must Do BODY First (-½)
- 10 **Claws:** HKA ½d6
- 47 **Hypnotic Gaze:** Mind Control 8d6, Telepathic (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Eye Contact Required (-½)
- 60 **Undead Body:** Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%
- 2 **Undead Body:** Resistant (+½) for 3 PD/1 ED
- 11 **Hard To Slay:** Regeneration (3 BODY per Day), Resurrection (others can stop resurrection by burning the body, driving a stake through the vampire's heart, or cutting off its head and filling its mouth with holy wafers), Resurrection Only (-2)
- 37 **Undead Vitality:** Life Support: Total (except Diminished Eating; including Longevity: Immortality)
- 2 **Swift:** Running +2m
- 5 **Vampire's Eyes:** Nightvision
- 27 **Mist Form:** Desolidification (affected by wind, heat, or cold); Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (-½)
- 35 **Wolf And Bat Forms:** Multiform (assume 150-point wolf or bat form)
- 57 **Call Dark Creatures:** Summon up to 16 110-point wolves, rats, or bats, Expanded Class (+¼), Slavishly Devoted (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Arrive Under Own Power (-½), Summoned Being Must Inhabit Locale (-½)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 333

Value Complications

- 5 **Dependence:** must sleep each night in a coffin containing earth from its gravesite (or any cemetery, if inapplicable) or suffer Weakness (Uncommon, Difficult to obtain)
- 20 **Distinctive Features:** No Reflection (Not Concealable; Causes Major Reaction)
- 20 **Enraged:** at the sight or smell of blood (Common), go 11-, recover 11-
- 0 **Physical Complication:** Human Size
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Cannot Enter A Dwelling Without Invitation (Common, Total)
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Aversion To Garlic (Common, Total)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Must Obey Sire's Orders (Common, Strong)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Will Only Cross Running Water Via Bridges (Uncommon, Total)
- 10 **Psychological Complication:** Considers Humanity Cattle (Common, Moderate)
- 25 **Susceptibility:** to holy objects and places, takes 2d6 per Phase is in contact with them (Common)
- 35 **Susceptibility:** to direct sunlight, takes 2d6 per Segment (Very Common)
- 10 **Vulnerability:** 2 x STUN from Water Attacks (Uncommon)
- 10 **Vulnerability:** 2 x BODY from Water Attacks (Uncommon)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 205

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 47 **Create Vampire:** Severe Transform 10d6 (humans into lesser vampires, heals back through special exorcisms and holy rituals), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Extra Time (minimum of 1 Turn, and often longer; -1¼), No Range (-½), Must Drain All But 1 BODY Of Victim's Blood With Drink Blood, Then Have Him Drink ½d6 BODY's Worth Of Vampire's Blood (-1), All Or Nothing (-½), Limited Target (humans; -½)
- 6 **Vampire's Senses:** +2 PER with all Sense Groups
- +4 Increase Running to +6m





PROFESSIONAL TEMPLATES

Other than race, the thing that broadly defines a typical Fantasy Hero character the best is his profession. Is he a sword-swinging warrior, a spellcasting wizard, a wily thief, a smooth-talking merchant, a pious priest, an eloquent bard, a noble knight?

The following Templates, organized into five broad categories (Priest, Rogue, Warrior, Wizard, and Miscellaneous), represent common professions, occupations, or careers for Fantasy characters. Since they're "generic" — not tied directly to a specific setting — the GM may need to alter them slightly to fit his world, or forbid some of them altogether. For example, if the campaign doesn't have a tradition of mounted combat by heavily-armored warriors, the Knight Template is probably inappropriate for characters.

In addition to the listed Skills and abilities, each Template includes suggestions on several related subjects: the goals and motivations of characters who belong to that profession; Characteristics and other abilities members of that profession might have; Complications appropriate to the profession; how the character might advance

and progress through the game; and what types of equipment the character might carry. These are just suggestions, however; feel free to ignore them and choose something else if that suits the character you have in mind.

When creating a character, remember that Professional Templates are just organizational tools. They group together Characteristics, Skills, and abilities commonly associated with a given type of Fantasy adventurer or character to make the creation process quicker and easier. Unless the GM requires them, you don't have to use one. You can instead buy all of a character's abilities separately, or "customize" the Template by taking only the parts of it you want and discarding the rest. Templates should enhance your creativity, not stifle it.

The Fantasy Hero rules don't place any restrictions on which races can belong to which professions — the whole point of the *HERO System* is to provide as broad a canvas for your character ideas as possible. While some combinations may seem silly (giant cutpurse, halfling barbarian), or may not fit a particular world, that's a matter for the player to cope with or the GM to forbid if necessary. If you want to play a troll jester, and the idea doesn't bother the GM, have fun!

SINGLE-PROFESSION CAMPAIGNS

While the standard Fantasy Hero campaign features characters from a wide variety of professions, that's not the only way to run a game. It's possible to run a campaign where all the characters are of more or less the same profession (such as all warriors or all wizards) or similar professions (such as just warriors and rogues).

For example, take a look at the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*. Every character in it is a warrior, pretty much. Some of the characters are better at certain things (archery, tracking, languages...) than others, but they're all basically warriors. They're so similar you never even learn most of their names during the course of the movie. And yet it's a magnificent film — a wonderful Low Fantasy adventure filled with enjoyable, memorable characters.

The trick to running a campaign like this is for the players to differentiate their characters by something *other than* profession. It's not enough for them to say, "I'm the warrior," "I'm the wizard," "I'll play the priest," and so on. If they're all wizards, for example, they need to distinguish themselves in other ways. Spell, Skill, and gear selection are the obvious choices, but an equally good way is to make sure they all have distinct, memorable personalities, mannerisms, and quirks. You'll probably remember that John played "the ugliest wizard in the world" in that campaign years after you've forgotten what spells the character could cast.

CHARACTERISTICS AND TEMPLATES

Some of the Professional Templates, particularly those for Warriors, include additions to Characteristics. This reflects common levels of STR or other Characteristics found among members of those professions. However, with the GM's permission, a player may change or eliminate that part of the Template if he has an idea for a character who defies or transcends the general stereotype.

MAGIC AND TEMPLATES

Several of the Templates in this section represent professions that cast spells or otherwise use magic in some way. Because the specifics of magic vary from campaign to campaign (see Chapter Four), these Templates simply list an appropriate Skill and allot a number of points with which the character can buy spells or mystic powers. If the campaign doesn't use a Skill for magic, remove that from the Template or substitute whatever the campaign does use (*e.g.*, a Talent).

PRIEST TEMPLATES

When I, in my turn, assumed the scarlet pontificals and the brazen rod of my office in the Year of the Whispering Shadow, I swore by the Gray Ritual of Khif, by the Vooric Sign, by the Weedy Monolith, and by the might and glory of terrible Ythogtha, that my god should achieve his triumph and his revenge during my pontificate.

—the wizard-priest Zanthu swears to exalt his god above all others in “The Thing In The Pit,” by Lin Carter

Priests are characters who devote their lives to the worship of a god (or perhaps of a pantheon of gods; the specifics vary from religion to religion and campaign to campaign). They range from monks who never leave the inside of their monastery (and hence make poor Player Characters!), to druids, to “warrior priests” who accompany kings and nobles into battle.

Examples of priests from legend and Fantasy literature include many different characters in Katherine Kurtz’s Deryni novels, Friar Tuck, the *kuakgan* of Elizabeth Moon’s *Deed Of Paksenarrion* trilogy, Gereint from Guy Gavriel Kay’s *Fionavar Tapestry* trilogy, Brother Umphred in Jack Vance’s *Lyonesse* Trilogy, various nameless cultists and their leaders from Fritz Leiber’s stories of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, the acolyte Harsan from M.A.R. Barker’s *The Man Of Gold*, and Archbishop Turpin from *The Song Of Roland*.

RELIGIOUS RANK

All Priest Templates include the *Religious Rank* Fringe Benefit at the 3-point level, representing a priest who’s more influential and respected than a local priest. You can adjust this amount upward or downward as appropriate.

CONGREGATIONS

A priest PC may or may not have his own congregation; this depends upon the nature of his religion, his church’s hierarchy, his personal power, and the nature of the campaign. If the PCs travel frequently, the character almost certainly won’t have a congregation, since he doesn’t stay put long enough to develop one (and his religion, if it’s formally organized, won’t assign him to a parish if he doesn’t stay there). If the campaign takes place in a small, defined region, a character might attract a group of the faithful whom he leads in religious services.

Unless a priest exerts extensive control over the congregation’s activities, he shouldn’t buy them as Followers; in most cases they’re just an element of the campaign, though they may count as DNPCs. In any event, the GM shouldn’t let the congregation get too large unless the PC priest has assistants. Otherwise the character has to spend most of his time ministering to the needs of his “flock,” leaving little time for adventuring.

PRIESTS AND MAGIC

In most Fantasy settings, priests have magical powers. These may be spells, just like those of wizards, or they may be “miracles” granted by the priest’s deity (see page 299). These Templates assume priests have magic, and include a *Faith* Skill (a form of the *Power* Skill) and an allotment of points with which to buy magic. If priests do not have mystic abilities in the game, simply remove these points from the Template.

PRIESTS AND THE UNDEAD

In many Fantasy settings, at least some types of priests have special powers relating to the undead. Priests devoted to Good deities can turn or destroy the undead; priests of Evil deities can command them. A character who wants this ability should buy the *Turn Undead* Talent on page 143, or construct a similar ability on his own.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRIEST

This Template represents a Fantasy priest who doesn’t devote himself to crusades and quests. He may serve in a village or city temple, study religious scripture in a distant monastery, or wander from place to place preaching the word of his god.

Contemplative Priests usually have holy powers related to protection, healing, and succor. They can cure disease or injury with a touch and a word, create light amid the darkness, ward off starvation by creating food from thin air, and keep people warm during the chill of winter. Having one around makes Fantasy-era life a lot more tolerable and comfortable... not to mention survivable!

Typical Goals And Motivations: Besides their devotion to, and desire to promote, their god and their religion, Contemplative Priests can have many motivations. Some genuinely want to help their congregations, and take vows of poverty so they can donate as much money as possible to the poor. Vows of chastity and silence are also appropriate, especially for monks. Others are haughty and aloof, with a “holier than thou” attitude justified (in their minds) by the fact that the god has favored them with special powers. Some become caught up in church politics, caring more for offices and religious power than the needs of the faithful.

In more corrupt societies, Contemplative Priests may cynically milk the faithful for all they’re worth and live secret lives of sybaritic luxury (see Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* for several religious officials who fit this mold). Such priests may really be rogues, not true priests, lacking both Faith and priestly spells, but still having the *Religious Rank* Fringe Benefit to represent the influence and authority of their position.

Typical Abilities: Since the *Faith* Skill depends on EGO, most Contemplative Priests have high EGO scores, reflecting their piety, devotion to duty, and willpower to defy the enemies of the faith. Religious studies require mental acuity as well, so high INTs are also common. A Contemplative Priest who preaches frequently needs a high PRE



to improve his oratorical abilities, while one who works the fields to provide his own supper may have higher than normal STR or CON.

Suggested Complications: All Contemplative Priests by default have a strong devotion to their god and their faith. Some may have as much attachment to “the faith” — to a particular branch of theology, or to the church as an institution — as to the god, usually reflected by a separate Psychological Complication. Some religions may impose strictures on priests’ behavior, such as a vow of chastity or a vegetarian diet, and if this sufficiently restricts the character may qualify as a separate Psychological Complication as well. Followers of opposing religions may Hunt a Contemplative Priest. Callous or arrogant priests may have a Negative Reputation. A Contemplative Priest with an acolyte or devoted follower may take him as a DNPC.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRIEST TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

5	+5 EGO
30	30 points’ worth of magic spells and powers
5	Faith (EGO Roll +1)
2	KS: Religious Doctrine 11-
1	Literacy
3	Oratory (PRE Roll)
3	Persuasion (PRE Roll)
2	PS: Priest Of [Religion] 11-
3	Fringe Benefit: Religious Rank
1	Fringe Benefit: Right To Marry
6	6 points’ worth of Skills from the following list: Acting, Conversation, Deduction, Healing, High Society, Stealth, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 61

Value Complications

25	Psychological Complication: Devotion To The God And His Purposes (Very Common, Total)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 25

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+5	Itinerant Priest: Add +1 CON and two AKs or CKs at 11- each, and add Riding, Survival, and Trading to the Skill choice list
+6	Monk: Add two KSs at 11- each and PS: Scribe 11-, and add Scholar to the Skill choice list
+3	Village Priest: Add +1 for Oratory and add Animal Handler (character chooses category), reduce Religious Rank to 2 points, and add Jack Of All Trades to the Skill choice list

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Staff, dagger, or club

Armor: Light armors, such as leather

Gear: Holy symbol, copy of sacred text(s), belt pouch, scroll pouch

Clothing: Everyday robes, ritual vestments, traveling robes

Progression: As Contemplative Priests become more experienced and grow in power, they usually improve their *Faith* Skill and increase the amount of points they spend on magical powers. They also broaden their Skill lists, often picking up lots of useful KSs, PSs, and Languages in addition to more Skills from the choice list in the Template. Depending on the nature and needs of the campaign, they may become more like Crusading Priests, developing their martial abilities to help de Persuasion (PRE Roll) fend the faithful and protect themselves on adventures.

CRUSADING PRIEST

*Has heard him well that Archbishop Turpin,
No man he’ld hate so much the sky beneath;
Spurs of fine gold he pricks into his steed,
To strike that king by virtue great goes he,
The hauberk all unfastens, breaks the shield,
Thrusts his great spear in through the carcass
clean*

—Archbishop Turpin slays the Saracen king Corsablix in *The Song Of Roland*, trans. by Charles Scott Moncrief

Not all priests are content to minister to the needs of a congregation or spend endless days studying holy books. Some view their priestly role as a more active one. They want to convert the heathen, smite the infidel, burn the heretic, punish the blasphemer, take part in (or lead) religious crusades, proselytize, go on quests for their god, and recover long-lost sacred relics. These Crusading Priests learn the arts of both religion and warfare, combining the power of the sword with the power of divine magic.

Crusading Priests may use their magic for healing and defense much like Contemplative Priests do, but they can also use it more aggressively. They can blast demons with holy fire, inflict curses on unbelievers, temporarily imbue themselves or others with the chief qualities of their god, and dispel opposing forces.

Typical Goals And Motivations: In addition to the motivations and goals for the Contemplative Priest, any of which the Crusading Priest might share in his own way, the Crusading Priest wants to accomplish great things for his religion. He’s not content just to study and preach; he prefers to *do* things. Psychological Complications such as *Driven To Convert Nonbelievers* or *Must Smite Evil* are appropriate, particularly if the Crusading Priest receives his commands and instructions directly from his deity. Some Crusading Priests go over the line, becoming narrow-minded zealots who lose sight of the true goals of the faith.

Typical Abilities: Crusading Priests have more or less the same religious abilities as Contemplative Priests, but add to them military Skills. They often have the higher-than-average STR, DEX, CON, defenses, and SPD of the Warrior (see below), though not at quite the same level as most Warriors since they have many other abilities to spend points on.

Suggested Complications: Many different Psychological Complications, including the ones listed above, are ideal for the Crusading Priest. Some Crusading Priests may have a Negative Reputation for abuse of their power, or a squire DNPC. Injuries from former battles may have left the Crusading Priest with a Physical

Complication. If the Crusading Priest has been directly “touched by the gods” and given a mission on their behalf, he may have a Distinctive Feature similar to the one in the Divine Template.

Progression: Crusading Priests usually start out as, if you will, “footsoldiers for the gods,” spending time on the front lines in the fight against Evil (or Good) and unbelief. As they become more powerful, they usually gain both more magical powers (more spells, an improved Faith roll, and so forth) and improved martial skills (more WFs, Combat Skill Levels, a Martial Arts package). Some eventually rise to become commanders of entire religious armies who lead crusades against enemy religions and realms.

CRUSADING PRIEST TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

5	+5 EGO
25	25 points' worth of magic spells and powers
5	Faith (EGO Roll +1)
2	KS: Religious Doctrine 11-
2	KS: of main enemy or the like 11-
1	Literacy
3	Oratory (PRE Roll)
2	PS: Priest Of [Religion] 11-
2	WF: Common Melee Weapons
3	Fringe Benefit: Religious Rank
1	Fringe Benefit: Right To Marry
6	6 points' worth of Skills and Perks from the following list: Charioteering, Combat Skill Levels, Conversation, Deduction, Healing, High Society, Interrogation, Persuasion, Riding, Tactics, Weapon Familiarity, Fringe Benefit: Military Rank, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 57

Value Complications

25	Psychological Complication: Devotion To The God And His Purposes (Very Common, Total)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 25

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+13	Demonhunter: Add KS: Demonology (INT Roll) and +10 points' worth of magical powers
+15	Marshal: Add +1 to Oratory, +1 with All Combat, and Tactics
+15	Warrior-Priest: Add Martial Arts package appropriate to chosen weapon
+8	Witchfinder: Add KS: Witchcraft (INT Roll) and Interrogation (PRE +1)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Sword, mace, battle axe, spear, and/or lance, or any weapon sacred to/used by the character's god

Armor: Medium to heavy armors, such as chainmail

Gear: Holy symbol, copy of sacred text(s), military banners and pennants, horse

Clothing: Field clothes, everyday robes, ritual vestments



DRUID TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

5	+5 EGO
25	25 points' worth of magic spells and powers
5	Faith (EGO Roll +1)
8	Animal Handler (8 points' worth)
5	AK: druid's grove, local natural areas, or the like (INT Roll +2)
2	KS: Druidic Doctrine 11-
5	KS: Flora And Fauna (INT Roll +2)
2	KS: Herbalism And Healing-Lore 11-
3	Oratory (PRE Roll)
3	Persuasion (PRE Roll)
2	PS: Druid 11-
2	Survival (choose one category)
2	WF: Common Melee Weapons
3	Fringe Benefit: Religious Rank
1	Fringe Benefit: Right To Marry
6	6 points' worth of Skills and Talents from the following list: Climbing, Conversation, Deduction, Healing, Literacy, Riding, Stealth, Tracking, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill, Bump Of Direction, Environmental Movement: Thicketmaster

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 79

Value Complications

25	Psychological Complication: Devotion To The God And His Purposes (Very Common, Total)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 25

OPTIONS

Cost	Option
40	Animal Friend: Add one Follower built on 200 Total Points (an appropriate animal of the druid's choice)
+52	Beastmaster: Improve Animal Handler to 15 points' worth, and add eight Followers built on up to 150 Total Points (appropriate animals of the druid's choice)
33	Druidic Shapechanging: Multiform (assume one animal form built on 250 Total Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½)
24	Grove Power: Aid Druidic Powers 2d6, Expanded Effect + Variable Effect (all Druidic Magic spells and powers simultaneously; +4), Delayed Return Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Minute; +1); Aid Self Only (-1), Only In Druid's Own Grove (-1)
+4	Woodland Wanderer: Add two more AKs at 11- each

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Staff, spear, dagger, falchion, sickle, or sling

Armor: Light to medium armors, such as leather

Gear: Holy symbol, copy of sacred text(s), mistletoe and other herbs

Clothing: Everyday robes, ritual vestments

DRUID

The Kuakgan came closer. His robe, as she remembered, was dark green, patterned in shades of green and brown with the shapes of leaves and branches.

—Paksenarrion goes to Master Oakhollow, the *kuakgan* (druid) of Brewersbridge, in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

Druids are a special type of priest — a nature priest, or priest who serves a god of some phenomena of nature. Although only loosely related to the historical persons of the same title, they have many of the same trappings. Instead of temples, they usually worship at stone circles and other sacred sites, and instead of chapels they maintain holy groves (which sometimes enhance their powers). They are at home in natural settings, and can commune with bird and beast almost as easily as with other people. They know the properties of leaf, and herb, and stone; their best-beloved plant is mistletoe, which they harvest with golden sickles and use to cast their spells. In settings with faerie-folk, the druids often act as intercessors between them and mortal Men.

Druidic magic relates to and involves nature. It can control natural phenomena (wind and weather, plant growth), or even harness those powers for combat. For example, one common druidic spell makes the plants in an area grow and entangle the druid's enemy; another makes the druid's skin as tough as bark so that he can better resist injury. Other druidic spells call, command, or calm animals.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Besides the standard priestly motivation of serving the gods (or “nature spirits,” or the like), in most Fantasy settings druids act to protect natural environments. They try to prevent over-forestry, over-hunting, excessive clearing of trees for farmland, the pollution of streams by tanneries, and the like. In particular, they defend sacred druidic sites... with force, if necessary.

Typical Abilities: Druids need high INT, EGO, and PRE like ordinary priests; PRE in particular helps them, since it governs Animal Handler, the Skill they often use to interact with beasts. More militant druids may have higher STR or DEX, or Combat Skill Levels, making them better fighters. They could also have abilities that allow them to move and survive in the wild: Life Support (Immunity) to animal venoms (or the ability to brew poisons from plants); the power to see through animals' eyes (Clairsentience); and so forth.

Suggested Complications: Druids tend to have the same sorts of Complications as other priests, perhaps with a slight change of focus. A few druids identify so closely with nature that they develop a hatred of Men, sometimes even performing human sacrifices to the gods of nature.

Progression: As druids advance in power, they increase the depth of their learning and wisdom about the natural world, and in the process expand their magical powers as well. In addition to acquiring more spells or similar abilities, some gather to them entire menageries of animals who protect them and do their bidding. Others gain the ability to assume the forms of animals, and sometimes even other natural objects such as rocks and trees.

Although druids don't necessarily have an organized religious hierarchy the way most priests do, they may acknowledge some druids as leaders based on their powers and lore-mastery. You can reflect this by increasing the cost of the character's *Religious Rank* Fringe Benefit. Increased authority brings greater responsibility, though, so ascending the ranks may not suit adventuring druids.

SHAMAN

"Your Way was the Way of the shaman. The magician's Way, though not its mage's aspect. Intuition, rather than ritual. Do you see?"

—Raven conveys wisdom to Kieran in *Moonheart*, by Charles de Lint

The shaman is a type of priest (or priest-wizard) found among many "primitive" peoples, including many humanoids such as goblins and orcs. Their faith involves a mixture of spirit worship and a nature worship of a somewhat less sophisticated (though no less potent) sort than the druid.

Typically, shamans possess the power to call on spirits (particularly nature spirits) to do their bidding. In many settings, this restricts them considerably, for they can only communicate with whatever spirits are at hand, and must negotiate with them to get them to perform tasks. In other settings, shamanistic spirit-control is just another special effect for "magic," and shamans can work their spells as quickly and easily as other spell-casters. Other shamanistic powers and abilities typically include healing magics, foretelling the future, visiting the spirit realm, potion-brewing, and, oftentimes, political influence among his tribe, clan, or people.

Typical Goals And Motivations: First and foremost, shamans want to serve the spirits they worship. This means performing the proper ceremonies and making the proper sacrifices to keep them appeased (especially evil or malevolent spirits), preventing people from defiling areas sacred to the spirits, and making sure the tribe observes all *tabus* (taboos, restrictions) laid down upon it. Kindhearted shamans also want to keep

SHAMAN TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

5	+5 EGO
25	25 points' worth of magic spells and powers
5	Faith (EGO Roll +1)
4	Animal Handler (4 points' worth)
2	KS: Flora And Fauna 11-
2	KS: Herbalism And Healing-Lore 11-
3	KS: Shamanism And Spirit Lore (INT Roll)
2	KS: The Spirit World 11-
3	Persuasion (PRE Roll)
2	PS: Shaman 11-
2	Survival (choose one category)
1	WF (1 point's worth)
3	Fringe Benefit: Religious Rank
1	Fringe Benefit: Right To Marry
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Acting, Climbing, Conversation, Deduction, Healing, Lipreading, Mimicry, Navigation (Marine), Oratory, Riding, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, Tracking, Trading, Ventriloquism, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 66

Value Complications

25	Psychological Complication: Devotion To The Spirits And Their Purposes (Very Common, Total)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 25

OPTIONS

Cost Option

13	Casting The Bones: Clairsentience (Sight Group), Precognition; Precognition Only (-1), No Range (-½), Vague And Unclear (-½)
5	Spirit Travel: Extra-Dimensional Movement (to a single location in the Spirit Realm); Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Hour's meditation and ritual; -3)
25	Totem Animal Companion: Add one Follower built on 125 Total Points (an appropriate animal of the shaman's choice)
var	Totem Animal Power: Add a power appropriate to the shaman's totem animal

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Club, dagger, or spear

Armor: Light armor, such as furs or leather

Gear: Medicine bag, fetishes, decorative items, bones, feathers, potions

Clothing: Everyday clothes, ritual garb

the tribe or clan in good health (and, if appropriate, maintain fighting morale); selfish or wicked shamans use their abilities to inspire fear and gain secular power.

Typical Abilities: Shamans need high EGOs and PREs to perceive and deal with spirits, and a high INT doesn't hurt, either. Many shamanistic rituals require exertion and endurance, so a high CON and END aren't inappropriate; neither is higher-than-average STR (especially among an aggressive



tribe in which the shaman is a war-leader). Shamans often possess a wide variety of Skills, often ones used to maintain the facade of power (such as Sleight Of Hand).

Many shamans have *totem spirits* — special spirits with whom they identify and who, theoretically, pay special attention to them. Usually these spirits take the form of an animal: Jaguar, Spider, Bear, Deer, Hawk, and so forth (depending on the environment the shaman lives in, of course). An experienced shaman may develop powers related to his totem; for example, an Owl shaman may have Nightvision.

Suggested Complications: In addition to their religious devotion (which usually includes a healthy dose of superstition), a shaman might find himself Hunted by a spirit (evil or otherwise) whom he offended, or by a political enemy within the tribe. He may have a Negative Reputation for cursing people who offend him, or for casually inflicting fear. A desire to gain power and wealth might lead to several Psychological Complications, while ritual scarification or frightening face-paint would qualify as a Distinctive Feature in some settings.

2



Progression: Most shamans start out relatively weak; they need fetishes, lengthy rituals, drugs, or other means to call forth the spirits, and must dicker with them for favors and power. As they gain greater proficiency, conjuring the spirits becomes easier and quicker, and eventually they respond to his merest call. In game terms, you can reflect this by gradually buying off the Limitations on the shaman's spells. Additionally, as a shaman becomes more powerful, he usually gains secular power as well; multiple tribes may start to seek his counsel and obey his interpretations of omens.

ROGUE TEMPLATES

"I steal things," Fly began. "Oh, not like I tried with you. Never at sword's point. I go to a place and find out where valuable things are kept. I figure out how to get to them. I leave fast afterward and dispose of the items at a good distance from the places I acquired them. Sometimes I'm commissioned to obtain a particular thing. On other occasions I'm strictly on my own."

—Fly explains himself to Dilvish in *Dilvish The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

"All good thieves must know how to take risks."

—Taurus explains one of the essences of the thief's trade to Conan in "The Tower Of The Elephant," by Robert E. Howard

"Rogue" is a general term in Fantasy literature and gaming for various shady, devious, or criminally-inclined character types, such as thieves, assassins, spies, and bandits. But not all are necessarily ne'er-do-wells; bards, jesters, and bounty hunters fit into this broad archetype as well.

Rogues typically rely on agility and cleverness, rather than muscle or magic, to accomplish tasks and achieve their goals. High DEXs and SPDs, relatively light armor, and smaller weapons are the order of the day for most. Most prefer civilized areas — cities, large castles, and the like — but a few, such as the bandit, thrive in the wild.

Examples of rogues from legends and literature include the Gray Mouser, Elric of Melniboné's companion Moonglum, Silk from David Eddings's *The Belgariad* series, Deth from Patricia McKillip's "Three Stars" trilogy, Vlad Taltos of *Jherog* and other novels by Steven Brust, Andrew Offutt's Shadowspawn (from the *Thieves' World* anthologies), Kalam from Steven Erikson's novels, Taliesin, and the reluctant burglar Bilbo of *The Hobbit*.

ROGUE

Shevatas was wiry and lithe, as became a master-thief of Zamora. His small round head was shaven, his only garment a loin-cloth of scarlet silk. Like all his race, he was very dark, his narrow vulture-like face set off by his keen black eyes. His long, slender and tapering fingers were quick and nervous as the wings of a moth. From a gold-scaled girdle hung a short, narrow, jewel-hilted sword in a sheath of ornamented leather. ... This was Shevatas, a thief among thieves, whose name was spoken with awe in the dives of the Maul and the dim shadowy recesses beneath the temples of Bel, and who lived in songs and myths for a thousand years.

—a description of the renowned thief Shevatas from “Black Colossus,” by Robert E. Howard

A thief was [Thangobrind], of very high repute, being patronised by the lofty and elect, for he stole nothing smaller than the Moomoo’s egg, and in all his life stole only four kinds of stone — the ruby, the diamond, the emerald, and the sapphire; and, as jewelers go, his honesty was great.

—from “The Distressing Tale of Thangobrind the Jeweller,” by Lord Dunsany

Cugel was a man of many capabilities, with a disposition at once flexible and pertinacious. He was long of leg, deft of hand, light of finger, soft of tongue. ... He had known many vicissitudes, gaining therefrom a suppleness, a fine discretion, a mastery of both bravado and stealth.

—a description of Cugel the Clever from *The Eyes Of The Overworld*, by Jack Vance

This Template encompasses a wide variety of scoundrels, thieves, agile “troubleshooters” and “finders of lost treasure,” likeable frauds, and clever killers. They run the gamut of the Fantasy underworld, though not all are truly criminals *per se*. Some may have developed their skills as military scouts or spies, and now use them as adventurers; others deliberately trained for an adventuring career in the abilities most suited to their talents and personalities.

Typical Goals And Motivations: The primary motivating factor for most rogues is money — gold, filthy lucre, treasure, riches! This may cause personality conflicts with more noble-minded fellow heroes, or force the rogue into the role of long-suffering “manager” who keeps an eye on

THE MANY FACES OF THE ROGUE

While you can use this Template to create whatever type of rogue you like, most fall into one of several archetypical categories, such as:

Burglar: A “second-story man,” a thief who specializes in breaking and entering jobs. In a Fantasy setting, this usually involves a lot of dexterous climbing and bypassing of deadly traps. From the Skill choice list, pick Acrobatics, Breakfall, Climbing, Contortionist, Lockpicking, and Security Systems.

Cutpurse: A thief who specializes in pick-pocketing, slitting purses, and other up-close, nimble-fingered work. From the Skill choice list, pick Fast Draw, Shadowing, and Sleight Of Hand; Lockpicking and Security Systems are also good choices.

Explorer: An “expert treasure-seeker,” a person who seeks out old ruins, dungeons, and caverns to explore in search of lost (or pilferable) riches. Since this line of work exposes the explorer to all sorts of threats both mundane and magical, he usually belongs to a band of adventurers with whom he splits both risks and rewards. The explorer excels not only at detecting and evading traps, but at deciphering codes and long-lost scripts in maps, tomb inscriptions, and the like. From the Skill choice list, pick Climbing, Cryptography, Fast Draw, Lockpicking, and Security Systems.

Mountebank: A con man, scoundrel, and trickster. He relies on his personal charm and quick wits to earn his ill-gotten gains. Some mountebanks also possess more “banal” thieving skills. From the Skill choice list, pick Acting, Conversation, High Society, Persuasion, and Charm. Bureaucratics, Gambling, Forgery, Shadowing, and Sleight Of Hand are also common mountebank Skills.

Some mountebanks make use of an additional resource: magic. In High Fantasy settings where many types of characters learn how to cast spells, mountebanks often know spells of illusion, deception, misdirection, persuasion, manipulation, and other such arcane trickery.

Spy: An agent of some government or other organization who attempts to gather secret data about his employer’s potential enemies and rivals, and conducts other covert operations. From the Skill choice list, pick Acting, Conversation, Cryptography, Forgery, High Society, and Charm — but virtually any Skill on the list would be appropriate for many spies.

Silent as specters, the tall and the fat thief edged past the dead, noose-strangled watch-leopard, out the thick, lock-picked door of Jengao the Gem Merchant, and strolled east on Cash Street through the thin black night-smog of Lankhmar, City of Seven-score Thousand Smokes. ... But tall, tight-lipped Slevyas, master thief candidate, and fat, darting-eyed Fissif, thief second class, brevetted first class for this operation, with a rating of talented in double-dealing, were not in the least worried. Everything was proceeding according to plan. Each carried thonged in his pouch a much smaller pouch of jewels of the first water only, for Jengao, now breathing stertorously inside and senseless from the slugging he’d suffered, must be allowed, nay, nursed and encouraged, to build up his business again and so ripen it for another plucking.

—a theft takes place in “Ill Met In Lankhmar,” by Fritz Leiber



the practicalities of daily life while his comrades worry about more philosophical matters like Good versus Evil. Other rogues enjoy the excitement of their “job,” or the challenge of matching wits with an adversary.

Typical Abilities: Most rogues’ abilities relate to agility, nimbleness, or charisma. They almost uniformly have high DEXs and SPDs, and most increase their INT and PRE as well. Thugs and legbreaker-types favor STR and CON over DEX in some instances. Otherwise, rogues mostly spend their points on Skills. The choice list in the Template contains the most common rogue Skills, but many others are also appropriate.

Suggested Complications: The most common Complication for any rogue is Hunted — the authorities usually pursue him (sometimes more than one authority at once!), and rogues have a way of picking up other enemies during their adventures (jealous husbands, vengeance-minded victims, and the like). Psychological Complication: Greedy is another classic; most rogues get into the business out of love of money. Some add, or substitute, *Thrillseeker* instead; it’s the action and thrill of pulling off a daring theft that interest them as much as the gold. Many rogues have Negative Reputations as well, or Social Complications based on their “criminal records.”

ROGUE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

10	+5 DEX
10	+2 OCV
10	+2 DCV
5	Stealth (DEX Roll +1)
5	Streetwise (PRE Roll +1)
3	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Thrown Knives/Axes/Darts
18	18 points’ worth of Skills and Perks from the following list:

Acrobatics, Acting, Breakfall, Bribery, Bureaucratics, Climbing, Concealment, Contortionist, Conversation, Cramming, Cryptography, Deduction, Disguise, Eavesdropping, Fast Draw, Forgery, Gambling, High Society, Interrogation, Lipreading, Literacy, Lockpicking, Mimicry, Persuasion, PS: Appraising, Security Systems, Charm, Shadowing, Sleight Of Hand, Survival (Urban), Trading, Ventriloquism, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill, Jack Of All Trades, Well-Connected, Contact

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 61

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Dagger, short sword

Armor: Light armors, such as leather

Gear: Climbing tools, lockpicks and other thieves’ tools, belt pouches, writing kit, counterfeit coins

Clothing: Dark clothing appropriate to the setting

Progression: The usual career advancement path for a rogue is to get better and better at the Skills he has, and to acquire others as the game goes on. Others may branch out, picking up more fighting skills (particularly Deadly Blow or Martial Arts for their favored weapons), or even dabbling in magic just a bit. In Fantasy settings featuring Thieves’ Guilds and other forms of organized crime, the character could rise to lead the Guild, or even start his own Guild.

ASSASSIN

He sipped his wine delicately, watching me. All of his motions were slow and controlled. I thought I could see where a dagger was hidden up his right sleeve; I noticed a couple of bulges where other weapons might be in his cloak. He probably noticed the same in mine. ... He had those eyes that never seemed capable of opening to more than slits. Like mine, say. Kragar was right; this was an assassin.

—Vlad Taltos sizes up a fellow assassin in *Jhereg*, by Steven Brust

He moved in, and my right sleeve dagger was in my hand. Then I was past him, ducking under his arms. Six inches of steel were buried, at an upward angle, between his fourth and fifth ribs, twisted to notch on his sternum. I stepped into the room as I heard vague moaning and coughing noises from behind me, followed by the sound of a falling body. Contrary to popular myth, the guy would probably remain alive for over an hour. But contrary to another popular myth, he would be in shock and so wouldn’t be able to do anything to keep himself alive.

—Vlad Taltos commits an assassination in *Yendi*, by Steven Brust

Assassins are professional killers. They mix the agility and sneakiness of the rogue with the fighting skill of the warrior in a lethal combination. They range from cultists serving dark gods, to professionals trained by militaries and spy organizations, to sociopathic mercenaries who simply enjoy killing. Whatever their type, no one denies how dangerous they are.

Typical Goals And Motivations: To determine an assassin’s motivations, ask yourself why he decided to become an assassin and who trained him. An assassin who works for a religious or quasi-religious organization (such as the historic Hashishim) has a very different perspective on his work than one who enjoys killing and happily does it for a hefty fee. Assuming the GM allows PCs to take this Template, most PC assassins have fairly “noble” goals and motivations; they usually received their training from the military, and have now decided to use their skills for adventuring.

Typical Abilities: Like rogues, assassins need high DEXs, INTs, and SPDs, but they also tend to have reasonably high STR, CON, and EGO as well — it takes muscles and willpower to deliberately kill another person in cold blood. Some have many Contacts and other Perks to help them get the job done and get away. They may also have abilities like the *Weaponmaster* Talent or Martial Arts that make them deadly fighters.

Suggested Complications: Typically, assassins have the same types of Complications as rogues.

Progression: Like rogues, assassins tend to advance in power by becoming better and better at what they do — killing. Their attacks become deadlier and more accurate, and they learn more ways of doing their job. An assassin who starts out as little more than an agile thug may eventually pick up Skills relating to poison use, impersonation, or even explosives (in settings that have gunpowder). Some drift into military pursuits, becoming less like rogues and more like warriors, while others delve into dark black magics that help them maim and slay.

ASSASSIN TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 7 Stealth (DEX Roll +2)
- 5 Streetwise (PRE Roll +1)
- 5 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Garrote
- 20 20 points' worth of Skills and Perks from the following list:
Acrobatics, Acting, Breakfall, Bribery, Bureaucrats, Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Concealment, Contortionist, Cramming, Deduction, Defense Maneuver, Disguise, Fast Draw, High Society, Interrogation, Lipreading, Literacy, Lockpicking, Mimicry, Penalty Skill Levels, PS: Brew Poison, Rapid Attack, Security Systems, Shadowing, Sleight Of Hand, Two-Weapon Fighting, Ventriloquism, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill, Well-Connected, Contact

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 37

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Dagger, sword, crossbow

Armor: Light to medium armors, such as leather

Gear: Climbing tools, lockpicks and other thieves' tools, belt pouches

Clothing: Dark clothing appropriate to the setting



BANDIT

For the ten-thousandth time he cursed the Northlander savage and his gang of bandits, whose elusive track they followed. The bold young Valkarthan raider had been harrying the caravan routes for the past six months, and his depredations cut deeply into the revenue of Arzang Pome[.]

—Dorgand Tul pursues Thongor and his band of bandits in “Keeper Of The Emerald Flame,” by Lin Carter

Also known as an outlaw, highwayman, or wolf’s-head, a bandit is a rogue, thief, and perhaps killer who lives in the wilderness. He (often together with a group of other bandits) preys upon hapless travelers, lone farmsteads, and the like. In a gentler vein, you could also use this Template for a military scout or like character — a sort of variant on the ranger (see page 98).

Typical Goals And Motivations: As with so many other rogues, money is the bandit’s chief motivation. In some campaigns he may be a rebel, driven into the wilderness by a powerful and oppressive lord whom he’s determined to overthrow. Such bandits limit their attacks to the lord’s men, leaving innocent folk be (and often helping them resist the lord’s laws and taxes).

Typical Abilities: Bandits need not only high DEXs, but respectable STR, CON, and BODY ratings as well, the better to survive in the wild and fight off soldiers and other bandits. A good INT, or some Enhanced Perception, helps them remain alert at all times. Rob from the rich, give to the poor—style bandits may have the *Positive Reputation* Perk, or a lot of Contacts (people they've helped).

Suggested Complications: Most bandits find themselves Hunted by the local lord and his soldiers, since they have to remain close enough to civilization to find people to rob and thus expose themselves to official reprisals. Distinctive Features in the form of battle scars, lopped noses or ears, or brandings are fairly common.

Progression: The longer bandits remain bandits, the tougher they tend to become as fighters. Their thieving skills (such as they may be) often remain static, while their martial prowess increases. A bandit PC may become powerful enough to lead his own band of cutthroats, and perhaps even “go legit” by becoming more of a mercenary captain than a bandit chieftain.

BANDIT TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 3 Riding (DEX Roll)
- 3 Stealth (DEX Roll)
- 2 Survival (choose one category) (INT Roll)
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
- 12 12 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
Acrobatics, Animal Handler, Breakfall, Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Concealment, Contortionist, Deduction, Fast Draw, Gambling, Interrogation, Lipreading, Literacy, Mimicry, Penalty Skill Levels, Shadowing, Streetwise, Tactics, Tracking, Trading, Ventriloquism, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 24

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Sword, axe, dagger, spear, sling, bow

Armor: Light to medium armors, such as leather or chainmail

Gear: Horse, bedroll and tent, flint and tinder, rations

Clothing: Everyday clothes, cloak

BARD

Through this forest of sorcery and a society governed by the sword travels Felimid mac Fal — Bard of Erin, descendant of the Druids and the Tuatha de Danann... — armed only with his harp and the fierce magical power of his poetry....

—from the back cover text of *Bard*, by Keith Taylor

“Then I learned just how much more there is to harpering than playing an instrument.”

—Sebell explains the breadth of a harper's job to Menolly in *Dragonsinger*, by Anne McCaffrey

Bards are adventuring musicians. They may be wandering troubadours and jongleurs, always searching for another place to play or seeking a new legend or tale, and bringing the news with them as they travel. Others are court minstrels, earning accolades and rewards by playing for a patron king or noble.

With the proper Skill selection, and by altering the music-related Professional Skills to more appropriate ones (such as Stage Magic and Buffoonery), you can use this Template to create jester characters, an excellent choice for some lighthearted or comedic Fantasy Hero games.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Bards who become adventurers usually do so for love of a good story. A bard may get tired of telling stories of heroes and decided to become a hero himself, or he may attach himself to a band of heroes in the hope of becoming famous by chronicling their deeds. Others want to learn the latest gossip and news from around the world, or seek ancient lays and tales in ruins and forgotten places.

Typical Abilities: A bard needs a high DEX (manual agility for playing instruments, juggling, and other tricks), INT (for remembering and reciting tales, and being observant), and PRE (to help his performance and speaking skills). In some cultures, bards are also fighting men with high STR and CON; in others, they're regarded as having mystical powers, and may be able to cast spells (either normally, or via song).

Bards tend to have *lots* of Background Skills: AKs and CKs acquired during their travels; knowledge of history based on their studies; Languages picked up through exposure or deciphering ancient lore-books; and so forth. At a minimum, they need knowledge of legends, tales, and other obscure lore so they can create songs and stories with which to entertain their audiences.

Quite a few bards have Luck.



Suggested Complications: Court minstrels usually have it made, but other bards tend to be always short of funds; Poor or Destitute may be appropriate. A troubadour who can't resist a little dalliance with the ladies may find himself Hunted by cuckolded husbands or vengeance-minded older brothers. Psychological Complication: Curiosity is a natural for almost any bard... and a natural way for the GM to lure him (and his comrades) into an adventure.

Progression: It usually doesn't take long for a bard to reach a satisfactory level of musical ability. After he's rounded out his core bardic Skills, he usually chooses one of three career paths. First, he can emphasize his military skills, becoming more like a warrior. Second, he can become more of a scoundrel, concentrating on roguish Skills. Third, in settings or cultures which consider the bard a part of a mystic or druidic tradition, he can develop magical powers and spells (whether directly related to his music or not). In some cases he becomes more like a druid, in others more like a wizard.

BARD TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

3	Charm (PRE Roll)
3	Conversation (PRE Roll)
3	High Society (PRE Roll)
3	KS: Legends And Lore (INT Roll)
3	KS: Tales And Stories (INT Roll)
1	Literacy
3	Oratory (PRE Roll)
3	Persuasion (PRE Roll)
10	PSs (10 points' worth pertaining to music)
12	12 points' worth of Skills, Perks, and Talents from the following list: Acrobatics, Acting, Breakfall, Climbing, Concealment, Contortionist, Conversation, Cramming, Deduction, Disguise, Gambling, Lipreading, Lockpicking, Mimicry, Riding, Security Systems, Shadowing, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, Streetwise, Survival, Trading, Ventriloquism, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill, Jack Of All Trades, Well-Connected, Contact, Perfect Pitch

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 44

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

20	Bardic Magic: Add 20 points' worth of spells and/or magical powers
5	Bardic Memory: Eidetic Memory

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Rapier, dagger, short sword, staff, sling

Armor: Light armors, such as leather

Gear: Musical instruments, music documents, writing kit, wine

Clothing: Travel clothing, fine/performance clothing

BOUNTY HUNTER

“The first method I tried was simply to sneak out and run for it. But the Xylarians were used to this and easily caught me; a whole company of the army — the so-called Royal Guard — is made of men expert with the net and the lariat, whose task it is to see that the king escape not.”

—Jorian tells Rhithos the Smith of his failure to escape from his unwelcome kingship in *The Goblin Tower*, by L. Sprague de Camp

Like the bandit, the bounty hunter mixes the skills of rogue and fighter. But the bounty hunter uses his abilities to track down and capture or slay deadly monsters, ferocious beasts, and wanted criminals.

BOUNTY HUNTER TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 3 Climbing (DEX Roll)
- 2 KS: Monsters 11-
- 2 KS: Ferocious Beasts 11-
- 3 Stealth (DEX Roll)
- 2 Survival (choose category) (INT Roll)
- 3 Tracking (INT Roll)
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
- 12 12 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
Animal Handler, Combat Skill Levels, Concealment, Fast Draw, Gambling, Interrogation, Lipreading, Literacy, Mimicry, Penalty Skill Levels, Riding, Shadowing, Streetwise, Tactics, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 31

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 30 **Animal Companion:** Add one Follower built on 150 Total Points (an appropriate animal of the bounty hunter's choice)
- 17 **Dragonhunter:** Add KS: Dragons (INT Roll +2) and Deadly Blow (HKA +1d6 versus dragons)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Sword, dagger, axe, bow, crossbow

Armor: Light to medium armors, such as leather or chainmail

Gear: Flint and tinder, bedroll and tent, horse

Clothing: Travel clothing, cloak, sturdy boots

Typical Goals And Motivations: Most bounty hunters work for bounties — fees paid for the successful capture or killing of a creature or person. For example, perhaps the local lord has decided to rid his lands of wolves and offers a gold piece for every wolf's head brought to him. Other bounty hunters, purer of motive or perhaps devotees of a religion that mandates good deeds, track down criminals to bring them to justice, and wild beasts to end their depredations.

Typical Abilities: Bounty hunters usually have higher than average STR, CON, DEX, INT, and PRE — all of which are important to their work. They may not have as high STR as a warrior, or as high DEX as a pure rogue, but they're more than a match for the average outlaw or panther.

In addition to the abilities listed in the Template, bounty hunters often have a lot of AKs and Languages (since they travel a lot), and perhaps a few Contacts as well. They may also expand their Survival to multiple environments.

Suggested Complications: Bounty hunters may be Hunted (Watched) by the local authorities, who distrust their motivations, or Hunted outright by enemies (such as the families of men they've apprehended, or vengeful dragons they attacked but failed to slay). In societies that scorn their activities, a Social Complication may apply. An animal they once stalked may have scarred them (a possible Distinctive Feature).

Progression: As bounty hunters become more skilled and powerful, they usually become either more warrior-like (perhaps transforming into quasi-rangers or mercenary soldiers) or more rogue-like. Of the latter type, some develop their climbing, stalking, and hiding skills so they can more easily pursue and capture prey; others take the path of the assassin and develop their ability to deal death to their foes.

WARRIOR TEMPLATES

“That would be no good,” said [Gandalf], “not without a Warrior[.] I tried to find one, but warriors are busy fighting one another in distant lands[.]”

—Gandalf explains to Thorin why burglary is preferable to fighting the Dragon in *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

“I don’t know how you can feel tired,” R’Kan said nearby, stripping off his armor, his now-visible woolen tunic tight about his chest and arms. His compact body bulged with knotty muscles, rock-hard to the touch, the coiled strength of a seasoned fighter.

—a description of the dwarven warrior R’Kan from “The Wizards Are Dying,” by John L. Jenkins

Ahmed ibn Fadlan: *I am not a warrior.*
Herger the Joyous: *Very soon, you will be.*

—the Northmen and Ahmed prepare for a Wendol attack in the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*

Warriors, generically speaking, are Fantasy characters who make their livings primarily by virtue of their skill at arms. Footsoldiers, duelists, city guards, knights, martial artists, and barbarian tribesmen all qualify, as do many other character types. Warriors are a popular choice for Fantasy Hero gamers. They’re easy to build, easy to play, and highly effective in action-oriented situations (particularly combat).

For most warriors, STR, DEX, CON, OCV, DCV, PD, END, BODY, and STUN are the most important Characteristics — a warrior needs to hit accurately and strongly, but also has to take a blow in return occasionally. The tactical mix of STR (hitting hard) versus DEX and OCV (swift reactions and hitting accurately), coupled with the use of Combat Skill Levels, Martial Arts, and other abilities, are what distinguish one type of fighting man from another.

Examples of warriors from legends and literature include Robert E. Howard’s Conan and Kull, the female samurai Tomoe Gozen in Jessica Salmonson’s novels, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Boromir, and Éomer in *The Lord Of The Rings*, Fafhrd, Elric of Melniboné, Karl Edward Wagner’s swordsman Kane, the Three Musketeers (and D’artagnan!), Elizabeth Moon’s paladin Paksenarion, all of King Arthur’s knights, and thousands of others.

WARRIOR (HEAVY FIGHTER)

He rode upon a strong dappled horse with flowing mane and tail, and his stirrups and bridle were inlaid with silver. The spike of a helmet projected from the middle of his silken turban and he wore a shirt of chain mail. By his side hung a curving scimitar; a round shield studded with bosses of brass hung at his back, and his right hand grasped a lance.

—Shasta sees a Calormene warrior in *The Horse And His Boy*, by C.S. Lewis

Broadly speaking, you can divide Fantasy warriors into two groups: heavy fighters and light fighters. A *heavy fighter* relies on great strength, large weapons, and heavy armor for his tactical advantage. He hits hard, and he can absorb hard blows in return. He prefers melee combat to ranged fighting, but can wield a bow or crossbow accurately if need be. If he rides a horse into battle, it must be a large, strong one to carry him, his armor, and his weapons for long periods of time.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Heavy fighters are such a broad group that it’s difficult to pin any specific motivations on them as a whole. Some become warriors because their size and strength makes it an obvious career choice, or because they

The first was a man attired in the silver-chained, engraved armour of the city of Dharu, the Forge of Yan Kor. He was in his middle years, massive as the plinth of a fortress, heavy through the shoulders and upper arms, and almost without a neck, his shaven head seeming to sit directly upon his torso. His breastplate, pauldrons, and gorget of fine steel exaggerated this massiveness.

His was an imposing figure of physical power[.]

—a description of Baron Ald of Yan Kor in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker



can make more money as soldiers or mercenaries than as plowmen or laborers. Others enjoy the adrenaline of fighting, or even the bloodshed of killing. Some feel great loyalty toward a popular leader, or a cause (such as a rebellion against an unjust lord).

Typical Abilities: As noted above, physical Characteristics, such as STR and STUN, are the warrior's meat and drink. Sometimes a heavy warrior buys some extra SPD for added flexibility, or Combat Skill Levels to counteract the drag of his armor (if any; see page 225).

Suggested Complications: Enraged/Berserk is an obvious choice for bloodthirsty warriors. A fighting man often makes enemies, so he could have a Hunted or two pursuing him. Oaths of loyalty count as Psychological Complications, as do *Loves To Fight*, *Overconfidence*, and *Code Of Honor*.

Progression: Warriors (heavy or otherwise) start out with a lot of combat effectiveness, and don't necessarily need to get a lot more to remain competitive as the heroes gain experience and power. An occasional additional Combat Skill Level or two may do the trick; more than that, and the warrior may unbalance the campaign. The

same may occur if he attempts to match the light fighter for speed and agility. Instead, he should consider branching out, developing other Skills and interests. For example, if he comes from a noble family, or has the king's favor, he might serve as a diplomat or ambassador, learning some Interaction Skills in the process. Or he might focus on some intellectual pursuits and hobbies.

WARRIOR (LIGHT FIGHTER)

Then [Fafhrd], dropping back a swift step, readied for a thrust from the other.

But there was no need. A narrow ribbon of bloodied steel, followed by a gray glove and arm, flashed past him from behind and transfixing the last bravo[...] ... [W]ith a comic twist of his nose and a sidewise half-grin [the Gray Mouser] admitted, "You'd have got your second man easily enough. I stole him from you to demonstrate my speed."

—the Gray Mouser shows that speed and skill can be as effective as strength in "Ill Met In Lankhmar," by Fritz Leiber

Compared to a heavy fighter, a *light fighter* relies less on main strength than on agility, nimbleness, and accuracy. He's stronger than a normal person, of course; countless hours of weapons practice and other athletic activities give him that. But he can't lift as much as the heavy fighter, nor can he wield such heavy weapons or strike such heavy blows. He's often as much a Rogue, in some ways, as a Warrior.

Instead, the light fighter relies on "skill" (though that's not to say heavy fighters aren't skilled). He does damage by striking with precision — the right part of the target at just the right time. In *HERO System* terms, this means he tends to have a high DEX, OCV, DCV, and SPD, coupled with Combat Skill Levels, Martial Arts with his favored weapon (typically a rapier or other light sword), and perhaps some unusual abilities like Two-Weapon Fighting, Deadly Blow, and Weaponmaster. Instead of wearing heavy armor, he sticks with lighter, more comfortable forms of protection (such as leather armor), relying on his skill at dodging and parrying to keep himself safe.

Duelists and swashbucklers are the most stereotypical form of light fighter, but they're not the only one. Gladiators, in the classic Roman sense, could qualify as light fighters due to their paucity of armor (though many of them use large shields, an unusual choice for a light fighter). Archers and rangers (see below) are usually light fighters.

Typical Goals And Motivations: For the most part, light fighters have the same goals and motivations as heavy fighters, though "swashbuckler" types don't just want to win the fight, they want to do it with style and panache. If there's a chandelier, they have to swing on it; if there's a *bon mot* to utter during the clash, they want to say it. Many of them want thrills and excitement, whether they get

WARRIOR (HEAVY FIGHTER) TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

5	+5 STR
6	+3 DEX
5	+5 CON
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
16	Combat/Penalty Skill Levels (16 points' worth)
4	Knowledge Skills (4 points' worth pertaining to fighting and military matters)
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Analyze, Armorsmith, Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Healing, Penalty Skill Levels, Riding, Stealth, Tactics, Tracking, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 56

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

(15) **Psychological Complication:** Loves To Fight (Common, Strong)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Swords, axes, hammers, maces, polearms, crossbows

Armor: Medium to heavy armors, such as chainmail and plate armor

Gear: Horse, metal polishing kit, replacement weapon parts, banners and pennants

Clothing: Everyday clothes, fighting clothes

them on the dueling ground or by sneaking into a willing maiden's bedchamber under her father's nose.

Typical Abilities: DEX and SPD, first and foremost, with OCV and DCV not far behind. While light fighters have more STR, CON, PD, and STUN than average, they need high CVs and lots of Actions to use their fighting style to best effect. They often round this out with various abilities that enhance their style, such as Combat Luck.

Suggested Complications: Psychological Complication: Thrillseeker is an obvious choice for many (even if you rename it *Swashbuckler's Attitude* or the like to better fit the character). So are Hunteds and Rivals — persons the character has insulted, embarrassed, beaten, cuckolded, or otherwise annoyed. A Negative Reputation for arrogance, dishonorable conduct, casual use of deadly force, or the like may also fit (whether it's deserved or not). Swashbuckler types have a tendency to act first and consider the consequences later, which may or may not qualify as a Psychological Complication but usually makes the game more fun.

Progression: Similar to the heavy fighter. Rather than constantly increasing his DEX and CSLs, or trying to match the heavy fighter's STR, the character usually works better in the game if he branches out into other areas of endeavor as the game progresses.

ARCHER

Rackhir took one Pig before it could move three paces. His bow was off his back and strung and a red-fletched arrow nocked and shot, all in a second.

—Rackhir the Red Archer shows his speed and skill in *Elric Of Melniboné*, by Michael Moorcock

At that moment there was a sharp twang. Legolas had loosed his bow. There was a hideous yell, and the leaping shape thudded to the ground; the elvish arrow had pierced its throat.

—Legolas demonstrates the legendary elvish skill at archery in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

An archer is a light fighter who specializes in ranged combat using the bow (or, more rarely, the crossbow). Able to hit a troll in the eye from a hundred paces, he significantly expands an army's, or an adventuring party's, tactical options. He wears light armor so he can move quickly, and usually carries a short weapon (such as a dagger, short sword, or hand axe) for close-in fighting.

WARRIOR (LIGHT FIGHTER) TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

3	+3 STR
14	+7 DEX
5	+5 CON
15	+3 OCV
15	+3 DCV
20	Combat/Penalty Skill Levels (20 points' worth)
4	Knowledge Skills (4 points' worth pertaining to fighting and military matters)
12	12 Character Points' worth of Martial Arts, Deadly Blow, or Weaponmaster
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
12	12 points' worth of Skills and Talents from the following list: Acrobatics, Analyze, Breakfall, Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Defense Maneuver, Fast Draw, Healing, Martial Arts, Oratory, Penalty Skill Levels, Persuasion, Rapid Attack, Riding, Stealth, Tactics, Tracking, Trading, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill, Combat Luck, Deadly Blow, Lightning Reflexes

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 104

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

10	Swashbuckler's Luck: Luck 2d6
6	Ha-Ha! A Mere Scratch!: Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Rapier, longsword, dagger

Armor: Light to medium armors, such as leather

Gear: Horse, metal polishing kit

Clothing: Everyday fine clothes, fancy fine clothes, hat with stylish feather

Typical Goals And Motivations: In general, similar to other warriors. Some archers are driven to prove they're "the best," that they can make any shot no matter how long the odds, and have difficulty refusing a challenge.

Typical Abilities: In addition to a high DEX and OCV, an archer often has Enhanced Perception bonuses, and perhaps even a few levels of Telescopic for Sight; he has to see his target clearly to shoot accurately. Additional Penalty Skill Levels to overcome the Range Modifier or targeting penalties. Many have extra STR only for archery (see *Archer's Strength*, page 148).

Suggested Complications: Generally similar to those of the light fighter, though perhaps without quite so much of a swashbuckling attitude. In fact, some archers might have the Psychological Complication *Coward*, since they prefer to remain well back from the battle and not expose themselves to danger.



ARCHER TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

3	+3 STR
16	+8 DEX
3	+3 CON
15	+3 OCV
10	+2 DCV
6	+2 with Bows and Crossbows
8	Range Skill Levels: +4 versus Range Modifier for Bows and Crossbows
4	Knowledge Skills (4 points' worth pertaining to fighting and military matters)
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
12	12 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Fast Draw (Bows), Healing, Martial Arts (Ranged), Penalty Skill Levels, Persuasion, Rapid Attack (Ranged), Riding, Stealth, Tactics, Tracking, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, Weapon-smith (Muscle-Powered Ranged), any Background Skill, Combat Archery, Rapid Archery

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 81

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Bow, crossbow, dagger, short sword

Armor: Light armors, such as leather

Gear: Quivers, extra bowstrings and arrowheads, belt pouch, horse

Clothing: Field or traveling clothes

Progression: While archers use some of their Experience Points to maintain their superiority as ranged combatants, usually they also expand their repertoire. They often improve their ability to fight in HTH Combat, perhaps by changing lower-cost Combat Skill Levels to 10-point Levels with All Combat, or by buying off the only for archery restriction on their extra STR. In High Fantasy campaigns, they may develop “arcane archery” powers — the ability to place short-term enchantments on their arrows before firing them.

BARBARIAN

He saw a tall powerfully built figure in a black scale-mail hauberk, burnished greaves and a blue-steel helmet from which jutted bull's horns highly polished. ... A broad shagreen belt with a golden buckle held the scabbard of the broadsword he bore. Under the horned helmet a square-cut black mane contrasted with smoldering blue eyes. ...

“You are no soft Hyborian!” she exclaimed. “You are fierce and hard as a gray wolf. Those eyes were never dimmed by city lights; those thews were never softened by life amid marble walls.”

“I am Conan, a Cimmerian,” he answered.

—a description of Conan, the greatest of the Fantasy barbarians, in “Queen Of The Black Coast,” by Robert E. Howard.

The barbarian is an unusual combination of heavy and light fighter. He has the strength and large weapons of the heavy fighter, but typically favors lighter armors and agility in combat like the light fighter. Couple this with a few outdoorsman Skills, and you've got a powerful, flexible fighting man.

The archetypical Fantasy barbarian is a big, hulking, loincloth-wearing fellow with gigantic muscles and a weapon too big for ordinary men to lift. However, plenty of other character types could qualify: whipcord-lean desert nomads; mountain-dwelling Pictish warriors; chariot-riding spearmen; forest tribesmen; mounted or ship-borne raiders; and more. Nor must barbarians be male; many “primitive” peoples taught (or allowed) women to fight alongside men.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Barbarian motivations vary. Some just want to be left alone to live their lives, but find themselves drawn into an adventuring career against their wills (perhaps to oppose an evil lord who wants to exterminate the tribe, to avoid a horrific magical curse, or because the chieftain of his tribe exiles him for some sin). Others revel in bloodshed and raiding, attacking any who are weaker than they to seize plunder and prove their superiority over “civilized” folk. Some want to attract barbarian followers to establish

a raiding band or army of their own. A few are caught by the lure of civilization and can't resist sampling what the cities have to offer... though they never entirely lose their barbarian attitudes or toughness.

Typical Abilities: Barbarians usually spend a lot of points on Characteristics, since they need high scores in almost all of the physical ones (STR, DEX, CON, OCV, DCV, STUN, and so forth). Then they allocate points to the Combat Skill Levels, Martial Arts, Talents, and other abilities needed to keep themselves safe without wearing heavy armor. If possible, they save a few points for special abilities, such as Combat Luck, Berserk Fury (page 136), or Rapid Healing (page 141).

Suggested Complications: In general, as for heavy fighters. Many barbarians glory in battle, which you can represent with an appropriate Psychological Complication and perhaps even an Enraged (when in combat). Barbarians often feel scorn or contempt for people from civilized regions, and express their disdain frequently. Many barbarians come from tribes with traditional enemies, leading to Hunteds and hatreds. In an all-barbarian campaign, an intra-tribal Rivalry would be appropriate.

Progression: Barbarians in a campaign usually progress and grow by expanding their horizons. While they maintain their fighting abilities, they also spend Experience Points on new skills to reflect their exposure to other peoples, places, and things during the course of their adventures. While they may never truly become "civilized," they often end up far more "refined" by the end of the campaign than they were when it began.

COMMANDER

But he looked at the fell faces of the Captains and their deadly eyes, and fear overcame his wrath.

—the Mouth of Sauron cannot stand against the valor of the Captains of the West in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Characters can take the Commander Template in addition to any other Warrior Template, though it's most common for Warrior (Heavy Fighter), Knight, and Paladin. It represents a character who's a skilled and seasoned leader of fighting men. He knows how to inspire soldiers, keep their morale high, and get the best from them in battle.

This Template doesn't include any of the *Military Rank* Fringe Benefits (page 131), since it's possible for a man to be a natural-born leader without having any formal office or rank. However, most characters with this Template do take that Fringe Benefit.

BARBARIAN TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 42 +5 STR, +5 DEX, +7 CON, +2 OCV, +2 DCV
- 16 Combat/Penalty Skill Levels (16 points' worth)
- 4 Knowledge Skills (4 points' worth)
- 2 Survival (choose one category) (INT Roll)
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
- 6 6 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
 - Acrobatics, Breakfall, Charioteering, Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Healing, Navigation (Marine), Penalty Skill Levels, PS: Sailing (or Combat Sailing), Riding, Stealth, Tactics, Tracking, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, Weapon-smith, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 74

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +1 **Desert Nomad:** Select Riding from Skill choice list, add Life Support (Diminished Eating: need only eat and drink once per day)
- +2 **Forest Tribesman:** Select Climbing and Tracking from Skill choice list, add +1 OCV with Bows
- +2 **Horse Raider:** Select Riding from Skill choice list, and add +1 with Riding
- +2 **Sea Raider:** Select Navigation (Marine) and PS: Sailing from Skill choice list, and add PS: Predict Weather 11-
- (15) **Psychological Complication:** Loves To Fight (Common, Strong)
- (10) **Psychological Complication:** Scorns "Civilized" People And Practices (Common, Moderate)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Swords, spears, axes, bows

Armor: Light to medium armors, such as leather or chainmail

Gear: Flint and tinder, whetstone, horse

Clothing: Furs, skins, leather clothing

COMMANDER TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 8 +3 INT, +5 PRE
- 3 KS: Heraldry (INT Roll)
- 3 Oratory (PRE Roll)
- 3 Riding (DEX Roll)
- 7 Tactics (INT Roll +2)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 24

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

He was superb, the half-naked young barbarian, his bronze body thewed like some savage god. Black and heavy as a vandar's mane, his unshorn hair fell across his broad naked shoulders, framing a stern, impassive face, strong-jawed and manly for all his youth.

Beneath scowling black brows, his strange gold eyes blazed with sullen, wrathful, lion-like fires. Few men could meet the gaze of those samber, burning eyes, for behind them smoldered the fighting fury of a barbarian, whose savage heart had never learned the cooler temper of civilized men.

—Lin Carter describes his own version of Conan, Thongor the Barbarian, in "Keeper Of The Emerald Flame"



KNIGHT

“In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I give you the right to bear arms and the power to mete justice.”

“That duty I will solemnly obey, as knight and as king.”

“Rise, King Arthur. I am your humble knight, and I swear allegiance to the courage in your veins. So strong it is, its source must be Uther Pendragon.”

—Uriens knights Arthur and proclaims his loyalty to him in the movie *Excalibur*

The stranger came over a ridge. He bestrode a tall horse, snowy white, with flowing mane and proudly arched neck[.] The rider was in full plate armor, his visor down so that he showed no face; white plumes nodded on the helmet, his shield was blank and black, all else shimmered midnight blue. He halted and let Holger approach him.

When the Dane was close, the knight lowered his lance. “Stand and declare yourself!”

—Holger Carlsen encounters a strange knight in *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, by Poul Anderson

The knight is a type of heavy fighter who specializes in mounted combat. Furthermore, he usually owes allegiance to a lord or noble, and follows a special code of honor and courtly conduct known as *chivalry*. In non-European-style cultural contexts, the nature of the knight's code of honor may change, but not the fact that he follows a code. A Japanese *samurai* could take this Template and redefine chivalry as the code of *bushido*, for example.

Knights typically use the lance and the sword in combat, but may favor an axe or mace instead of a sword after the initial lance charge. Though

they often know how to use weapons like bows and crossbows, they rarely employ them in combat, considering them “dishonorable.”

Typical Goals And Motivations: Knights have several common motivations (though, as always, there are members of the profession who buck the trend and choose other paths). First, they try to follow the code of chivalry. The precepts of chivalry may vary slightly from campaign to campaign, but they generally include death before dishonor, giving obedience to superiors and receiving deference from inferiors, scorn for the ignoble and dishonorable, striving to attain personal glory in all endeavors (but particularly combat), courage, respect for women and one's peers, and following the tenets of courtly love.

Second, a knight swears fealty to and obeys a liege lord. Usually this means a king, though some other royal or noble person (an emperor, duke, or pasha) would do. Whatever his liege lord commands, the knight does, even if it exposes him to peril or death (and it often does).

Third, a knight seeks adventure. Knights often engage in *errantry*, riding out into strange or wild areas in search of challenges with which to test themselves — everything from encountering and jousting with new knights, to slaying dragons, to rescuing kidnapped maidens, to saving villages from fearsome beasts.

Typical Abilities: A knight needs the physical Characteristics of a heavy fighter, and more. He must be skilled in the saddle, able to fight without difficulty while mounted. As someone belonging to, or inducted into, the higher ranks of society, he needs a respectable PRE and some Interaction Skills. He's often well-versed in the courtly arts, able to read, write, and compose poetry. In a feudal society, he may have his own castle and lands (a Base). A “hedge knight” (one of slightly lower station, often with a smaller home or territory) may develop skills with farming and trading to keep his lands productive. On the other hand, a knight who rules a prosperous demesne may have Money and Followers.



Suggested Complications: Most, but not all, knights take the Complications listed under “Options.” Those who do not may take opposite Complications, such as a scorn for chivalry or a wicked tendency to take advantage of those who follow its code. Some are cruel and bloodthirsty, slaying out of hand even foes who offer honorable surrender; others oppress their peasants (possible DNPCs) grievously. A GM might allow a knight to take his heraldic symbols as a Distinctive Feature.

Progression: Knights are such well-rounded individuals, so experience and growth usually mean gradually increasing all their abilities. Over time, they may come into a position to buy the *Commander* Template, or events in the campaign may increase their political power so they have to buy more *Fringe Benefit* Perks.

MARTIAL ARTIST

Variol and Tamarantha were in no less danger. They lay motionless under the onslaught, and their four Bloodguard strove extravagantly to preserve them. Some of the attackers risked arrows; the Bloodguard knocked the shafts aside with the backs of their hands. Spears followed, and then the Cavewights charged with swords and staves. Weaponless and unaided, the Bloodguard fought back with speed, balance, skill, with perfectly placed kicks and blows. They seemed impossibly successful. Soon a small ring of dead and unconscious Cavewights encircled the two Lords.

—the Bloodguard demonstrate their unarmed fighting skills in *Lord Foul's Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

A martial artist is a warrior who fights with his bare hands (he may use weapons, particularly unusual ones like nunchaku or sais, but he doesn't depend on them). Through his combination of skill, speed, and accuracy, he can deliver lethal blows that make him a match for any armed warrior.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Many martial artists are ascetics or monks who simply wish to live a life of quiet contemplation. Unfortunately for them, their abilities tend to attract challengers and opportunities for adventure, and as noble-minded heroes they must respond appropriately. Others are elite warriors, sworn to serve a particular leader or organization with their unusual fighting abilities. Still others are, like swashbucklers, light-hearted *bon vivants* who just want to enjoy life and show off their fighting skills.

Typical Abilities: High DEX, OCV, DCV, and SPD are a must for martial artists, who often wear little or no armor. Long hours of fighting practice toughen them up, leading to high STR, CON, PD, and STUN. Their style of fighting often encompasses many other skills, such as acrobatic maneuvering, climbing, advanced dodging and

KNIGHT TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

5	+5 STR
6	+3 DEX
5	+5 CON
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
8	Combat/Penalty Skill Levels (8 points' worth)
3	High Society (PRE Roll)
2	KS: Heraldry 11-
2	KS: Knights 11-
2	Riding Skill Levels: +2 OCV versus Mounted Combat penalties with all attacks
7	Riding (DEX Roll +2)
3	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Lance
2	Fringe Benefit: Knight
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Conversation, Healing, Literacy, Penalty Skill Levels, Oratory, Persuasion, Riding, Charm, Stealth, Survival, Tactics, Tracking, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill, Mounted Warrior

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 61

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 34 **Squire:** Reduce to +3 STR, +2 DEX, +3 CON, 3 points' worth of CSLs, no Riding Skill Levels, Riding without the +2, Fringe Benefit: Squire, and 3 points' worth of Skills from the choice list
- (10) **DNPC:** Squire (Frequently, Normal, Useful Skills)
- (15) **Psychological Complication:** Code Of Chivalry (Common, Strong)
- (15) **Psychological Complication:** Religiously Devout (Common, Strong)
- (25) **Social Complication:** Subject To Liege Lord's Orders (Very Frequently, Severe)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Sword, lance, battle axe, mace, dagger

Armor: Medium to heavy armors, such as chainmail or plate armor; shield

Gear: Horse, barding, heraldic banners and pennants

Clothing: Field clothes, fine/court clothes

blocking, and the like. In High Fantasy or martial arts-oriented campaigns, they may develop all sorts of weird martial arts or *chi*-based powers (see *HERO System Martial Arts* for hundreds of example abilities, and other ideas and suggestions for martial artist characters).

Suggested Complications: Many martial artists follow a code of honor of some sort (a Psychological Complication). This may be similar to the



knight's code of chivalry (particularly in regard to helping the downtrodden), and/or it may include a series of unusual strictures (cannot eat meat, must never kill an animal, cannot fight on Thursdays...). A martial artist's Reputation as a skilled fighter may help him (a *Positive Reputation* Perk), but may also attract challengers and alert people to his abilities (a *Negative Reputation* Complication). He may attract students who want to learn from him (DNPCs), or enemies who want to take vengeance on him or eliminate him so he cannot interfere with their plans (Hunted).

Progression: Martial artists usually progress by expanding the scope of their martial abilities. They learn more Martial Maneuvers, add some Extra DCs, and develop special powers related to their fighting style or athletic prowess (again, see HSMA for numerous ideas along these lines). In a High Fantasy campaign, they may also learn some magic so they can cast spells to boost their abilities even further.

MARTIAL ARTIST TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

3	+3 STR
16	+8 DEX
15	+3 OCV
15	+3 DCV
5	+5 PD
10	+1 SPD
3	Acrobatics (DEX Roll)
3	Breakfall (DEX Roll)
10	Combat/Penalty Skill Levels (10 points' worth)
20	Martial Arts (20 points' worth)
3	Stealth (DEX Roll)
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
8	8 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Defense Maneuver, Fast Draw, Healing, Martial Arts, Penalty Skill Levels, Persuasion, Rapid Attack, Riding, Streetwise, Survival, Tracking, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 115

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

6	Supreme Dodging: Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
(10)	DNPC: Student (Frequently, Normal, Useful Skills)
(15)	Psychological Complication: Code Of Honor (defined by player) (Common, Strong)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Sword, staff, dagger, bow, unusual martial arts weapons

Armor: Light armors, such as leather

Gear: Flint and tinder, horse, begging bowl

Clothing: Traveling clothes, everyday clothes

PALADIN

With a shout she called on the High Lord, and light swept up from her upraised arm, pure white radiance revealing two of the spider figures only a few lengths away, and a mass of orcs behind them.

—Paksenarrion uses her power to create holy light to reveal evil attackers in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

A paladin is a holy warrior, a fighter who serves some god or sacred cause. Most paladins serve the gods of Good, truth, justice, and light, but Evil deities can have paladins, too — their abilities just differ.

Most paladins are heavy fighters, or at least favor relatively heavy weapons and armor, but this is not required. What sets them apart from other warriors is that the gods they serve grant them special powers. These usually vary from god to god and church to church, but some common ones include: the power to “lay on hands” to heal injuries and cure disease; the ability to create light; enhanced combat abilities against evil creatures (particularly the undead, demons, and the like) and/or the enemies of the church; a priest-like ability to turn undead beings; and the power to inspire others.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Paladins live to serve. They devote their whole being to obeying the dictates of their god (who may speak to them, directly or indirectly, on occasion), and usually by extension his priests and temple on earth. They doggedly pursue evildoers and the enemies of the faith to destroy them or bring them to justice.

Typical Abilities: Paladins combine the abilities of warriors and priests. As such they have both the high physical Characteristics of a fighter (STR, CON, PD) and the high mental and spiritual Characteristics of a religious man (INT, EGO, PRE). They have both military and religious skills (not to mention paladin powers), but are often well-educated, and so could have a wide variety of Background Skills.

Suggested Complications: Similar to those of a Crusading Priest. Paladins sometimes become too wrapped up in their crusades, blinding themselves to true justice and Good in an effort to accomplish some goal they perceive as worthwhile.

Progression: As they gain experience and power, most paladins choose one of three routes. First, they may become more warrior-like, developing their fighting skills and abilities to high levels (and perhaps buying the *Commander* Template). Second, they may become more priest-like, focusing on religious matters and perhaps even turning into Crusading Priests with divine spells. Third, they may become more mystic, gaining additional paladin powers and improving the ones they already have.

SAMPLE PALADIN POWERS

Call Forth Light: The paladin can cause his hands or body to glow with a bright, but not blinding, light.

Sight Group Images, +4 to PER Rolls (22 Active Points); No Range (-½), Only To Create Light (-1). Total cost: 9 points.

Demonlayer: The paladin has sworn an oath to slay demons and devils, and his god has given him special powers to harm them in combat.

Deadly Blow (+1d6 Killing Attack versus demons). Total cost: 16 points.

Detect Evil: The paladin can perceive the presence of evil — not only overt evil such as demons or black magic, but the truly evil intentions of thinking beings. The GM determines what qualifies as “evil” and thus what the paladin can perceive. At first, this power only works to sense evils within 2m of the paladin. As time goes on, the paladin develops this power, learning to sense distant evils and distinguish between types of evil (in game terms, he adds the *Discriminatory* and *Range Sense* Modifiers).

Detect Evil (INT Roll) (no Sense Group). Total cost: 10 points.

Evil's Bane: The paladin's holy powers make him strike harder and more accurately when he fights evil beings, or his god has gifted him with a holy aura that burns Evil.

Deadly Blow (+1d6 Killing Attack versus Evil). Total cost: 19 points.

Lay On Hands: By laying his hands on an injured person's wounds and uttering or thinking a short prayer, a paladin can heal the wound. However, he can only summon the power to do this a few times a day.

Simplified Healing 4d6 (40 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), 4 Charges (-1). Total cost: 16 points.

Righteous Courage: The paladin's holy purpose and gifts shield him from the fear caused by evil beings and dark magics. He can extend this protection to others near him as well.

Power Defense (20 points) (20 Active Points); Only To Protect Against Fear-Based Presence Drains And Like Attacks (-2) (total cost: 7 points) **plus** Usable By Nearby (+1) for Power Defense (20 Active Points); Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½) (total cost: 13 points). Total cost: 20 points.

PALADIN TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

5	+5 STR
6	+3 DEX
5	+5 CON
3	+3 EGO
5	+5 PRE
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
30	30 points' worth of paladin powers
8	Combat/Penalty Skill Levels (8 points' worth)
2	KS: Religious Doctrine 11-
4	Knowledge Skills (4 points' worth)
1	Literacy
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Armorsmith, Charioteering, Climbing, Combat Skill Levels, Deduction, Healing, High Society, Interrogation, Oratory, Penalty Skill Levels, Persuasion, Riding, Stealth, Streetwise, Tactics, Tracking, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 89

Value Complications

25	Psychological Complication: Devotion To The God And His Purposes (Very Common, Total)
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Total Value Of Template Complications: 25

OPTIONS

Cost Option

35	Paladin's Warhorse: Add a medium warhorse (a Follower built on 175 Total Points)
3	Faith (if necessary for use of paladin powers or spells) (EGO Roll)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Sword, battle axe, spear, mace

Armor: Medium to heavy armors, such as chainmail or plate armor

Gear: Horse, barding, flint and tinder, bedroll and tent

Clothing: Travel/fighting clothes, everyday clothes, fine clothes



“[A] paladin exists not to avoid conflict, but to bring it into the open.”

—Paksenarrion explains the nature of paladins in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

RANGER TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

3	+3 STR
10	+5 DEX
5	+5 CON
8	Combat/Penalty Skill Levels (8 points' worth)
2	AK: home region, or patrolled/protected region 11-
2	KS: Flora And Fauna 11-
3	Climbing (DEX Roll)
3	Stealth (DEX Roll)
3	Survival (6 points' worth)
7	Tracking (INT Roll +2)
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons
9	9 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Acrobatics, Breakfall, Combat Skill Levels, Fast Draw, Healing, Navigation, Penalty Skill Levels, Persuasion, Rapid Attack, Riding, Tactics, Trading, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill, Animal Friendship, Beast Speech, Combat Archery, Deadly Blow, Rapid Archery, Weaponmaster

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 59

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

30	Animal Friend: Add one Follower built on 150 Total Points (an appropriate animal of the ranger's choice)
4	Archer Ranger: Add +2 OCV with Bows
16	Humanoid Hunter: Add Deadly Blow (+1d6 Killing Attack versus Humanoids)
21	Monster Hunter: Add KS: Monstrous Beasts (INT Roll +2) and Deadly Blow (+1d6 versus monsters and fantastic beasts)
4	Woodland Commando: +4 to Stealth; Only In Woodland Environments (-1) (character may substitute any one other environment for woodlands, if preferred)
4	Woodland Wanderer: Add two more AKs at 11- each

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Sword, axe, spear, staff, dagger, bow, sling

Armor: Light to medium armors, such as leather or chainmail

Gear: Flint and tinder, hatchet, bedroll and tent, fishing line, horse

Clothing: Outdoor clothes (for various seasons)

RANGER

But in the wild lands beyond Bree there were mysterious wanderers. The Bree-folk called them Rangers, and knew nothing of their origin. They were taller and darker than the men of Bree and were believed to have strange powers of sign and hearing and to understand the languages of beasts and birds. They roamed at will southwards, and eastwards even as far as the Misty Mountains; but they were now few and rarely seen. When they appeared they brought news from afar, and told strange forgotten tales which were eagerly listened to; but the Bree-folk did not make friends of them.

—Frodo and his companions first learn of Rangers in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

““Strider” I am to one fat man who lives within a day’s march of foes that would freeze his heart, or lay his little town in ruin, if he were not guarded ceaselessly. Yet we would not have it otherwise. If simple folk are free from care and fear, simple they will be, and we must be secret to keep them so.”

—Aragorn explains the nature and task of the Rangers in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

“If you bring a Ranger with you, it is well to pay attention to him[.]”

—Gandalf gives good advice in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

“Here are my Cords — Thew, Hurn, Grace, and Rustah. They are hunters. While they learn the ways of the Ranyhyn and the knowing of the Manethralls, they protect the Plains from dangerous beasts.”

—Manethrall Lithe introduces Thomas Covenant and the Lords of Revelstone to the rangers of the Ramen in *Lord Foul’s Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

A ranger is a woodland warrior, a light fighter accustomed to spending time in forests and other wilderness areas. He frequently works as a scout or frontier patroller for a king or noble, or he may serve another organization (such as a circle of druids or a temple) as a protector of the wilds.

Occasionally rangers specialize in pursuing or hunting certain “prey.” Some are experts at the ways of orcs, goblins, and other generally evil humanoids, others choose monsters and monstrous beasts as their quarry.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Rangers' motivations vary, though most are good- or kind-hearted people rather than cruel or evil. Some want to protect the wilderness in general, or a defined area of wilderness (a border with another kingdom, their tribal homelands, a peaceful shire their prince has ordered them to watch over). On the other hand, some are master hunters, less interested in protecting the wild than in defending people against the dangers that lurk within it. Still others are "outlaws," hiding in the wilderness while they foment rebellion against, and strike back at, unjust or evil rulers.

Typical Abilities: As light fighters, rangers rely both on STR and DEX when fighting. They usually have high CONs, too, since spending so much time outdoors and in rough country makes them fit and tough. Because they frequently rely on their ability to perceive things, a high INT or Enhanced Perception also helps.

Suggested Complications: A ranger may become so used to the wilderness and/or his own company that he has difficulty in city environments or with others (this could be a Social Complication, or Psychological Complication: Claustrophobia or Demophobia, if severe enough). He may have sworn an oath to protect a certain region or certain people which restricts his freedom of action. If he has rebelled against an evil lord, he may adopt a Social Complication: Secret Identity to protect himself.

Progression: First and foremost, a ranger becomes a better warrior, and a better outdoorsman, as he gains Experience Points. He uses those points to round out and improve his initial Skill selection, and often to buy some extra Combat Skill Levels or Martial Arts maneuvers. After reaching his desired level of competence in those fields, he usually branches out, perhaps becoming more of a military leader and commander. Another option, particularly in High Fantasy campaigns, is for him to learn limited druidic magic, and perhaps even gain some special abilities (such as shapechanging).

WARRIOR-MAGE

One archetypical Fantasy character not specifically covered by the Templates in this section of Chapter Two is the *Warrior-Mage*. Depending on the setting and the preferences of the GM and players, this can mean:

- a wizard who's also been trained in the skills of weapons and warfare, and tends to use them sometimes to defeat his foes instead of magical power;
- a warrior who also knows some spells or has some minor magical powers; or
- a warrior who's been trained in a special style of magic that enhances his combat abilities.

To create the first type of warrior-mage, buy the *Wizard* Template and add +3 STR, WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, and +1 HTH (total cost: +15 points). To create the second type, buy an appropriate Warrior Template, then add +3 INT, +3 EGO, and 20 points' worth of spells and magical abilities (total cost: +26 points). To create the third type, buy an appropriate Warrior Template, then add +3 INT, +3 EGO, and 25 points' worth of spells and magical abilities that augment the character's fighting skills (total cost: +31 points).



The fair was bustling now, and the lane quite crowded. Gray-robed enchanters, black-hooded diabolists, astromancers in violet robes with silvery mitres on their brows, smiling and half-naked young witches with sea-green hair and amber eyes, gaunt sorcerers in scarlet from Ulphar and Darinth, enigmatic seers and diviners from the north and even a few swarthy magisters from dark Gorgonia across the ocean on the shores of great Thuria, all were here for the great fair.

—Tirion the Glad Magician observes the attendees at Atlantis's Fair of the Magicians in "The Seal Of Zacon Sathla," by Lin Carter

WIZARD TEMPLATES

[The twelve wizards] had often discussed means of enticing or persuading or coercing one or more practitioner of the Secret Sciences to join them on the slopes of Mount Ong, and it was the Archimage himself who most frequently voiced the opinion that their thirteenth member should be a sorcerer. As the enclave already consisted of an Archimage, a karcist, a theomancer, a witch, a haruspex, an alchemist, a warlock, a necromancer, a conjurer, a magician, an astrologer and a theurgist, there were few occult disciplines not represented among them. Thus they could pick and choose as to adding to their enclave a diabolist, a sorcerer, a thaumaturge or an enchanter.

—the group contemplates adding a coveted thirteenth member to its ranks in "The Twelve Wizards Of Ong," by Lin Carter

Wizards — people who can work or wield magic in some fashion — are a staple of all but the lowest of Low Fantasy. They range from aged, grey-bearded scholars barely able to cast simple spells anymore to powerful young spellcasters who can devastate entire castles or armies with a single incantation.

Unlike priests, whose magic comes from the gods they serve, wizards' power comes through innate ability and/or training. The stereotypical wizard spends long hours poring over ancient tomes, memorizing lengthy spell formulae or teaching himself all there is to know about *k'tash* demons. However, Fantasy contains many other types of spellcasters, including those who have a natural or self-taught talent for manipulating magical energy, those whose powers only work through devices they create or forge, and those whose spells function more like mental powers.

Examples of wizards from legends and literature include Gandalf the Grey and Saruman the White from *The Lord Of The Rings*; Merlin; Alodar from Lyndon Hardy's *Master Of The Five Magics*; the Lords of Revelstone from Stephen Donaldson's "Thomas Covenant" books; Allanon from *The Sword Of Shannara*; Ged from Ursula LeGuin's "Earthsea" novels; Elric of Melniboné; Lin Carter's Kellory the Warlock; Turjan of Miir, Rhialto the Marvellous, and many other characters from Jack Vance's "Dying Earth" stories; Merlin; and countless others.

WIZARD

Cathwar, like all wizards Genlon had ever heard of, was reluctant to speak plainly of things to be. Instead, he spoke cryptically, embedding his meaning in the heart of a thicket of riddling words.

—Genlon ponders the ways of wizards in *Grey mantle*, by John Morressy

"Strange ways make a strange man, I always say, meaning a wizard."

—the merchant Vorten offers his opinion of wizards in "Birth Of A Wizard," by Marie Desjardin

This Template represents a typical spellcaster, call him what you will (wizard, mage, magician, sorcerer, spellslinger, warlock...). It reflects extensive learning and practice with a craft that's part Arcane Art, part Secret Science. Some hide themselves in their towers and laboratories, increasing their magical powers through experimentation and study; others are adventurers, traveling through the wide world to defeat danger with their magic and reap the rewards due to the bold.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Wizards' motivations vary as much as their spells. Many are fascinated by magic and its power, and seek magical lore and items for the sheer joy of collecting them. Others see magic as a road to power, both arcane and mundane; they want to use their spells and abilities to rule over other people, or to achieve some other great goal. Some are kind and good; others utterly evil.

Typical Abilities: Wizards need high INTs to master their spells and make their studies go more smoothly. Many have high EGOs as well, since power tends to draw those of strong mind, and casting spells often involves forcing reality to bend to one's will. In settings where spells require arcane gestures, mages may have high DEXs. Beyond that, wizards tend to save their points for spells, related magical abilities (such as Magesight, page 140), and Knowledge Skills.

Suggested Complications: Wizards are often reclusive, arrogant, suspicious, superstitious, cruel, condescending, or the like, any of which may constitute a Psychological or Social Complication. They sometimes must swear oaths or vows to gain their magical powers — a Psychological Complication, or perhaps a Social Complication: Harmful Secret if revelation of the vow costs the wizard his powers. An enemy wizard may curse the character, creating any one of a host of Complications (Dependence, Physical Complication, Susceptibility, Vulnerability...). Other spellcasters may be Rivals, or Hunt the wizard to steal his magic or his life. Evil wizards may have Negative Reputations.

Progression: Rare indeed is the wizard who can't think of a way to spend Experience Points! If nothing else, a wizard can buy more spells and mystic powers. But wizards also like to have lots of Skills and Languages, and may want to expand their horizons a little bit to learn some swordplay or other trades.

WIZARD TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

50	50 points' worth of spells and magical abilities
13	Magic (INT Roll +5)
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore (INT Roll)
3	KS: a type or school of magic (INT Roll)
12	Knowledge Skills (12 points' worth)
1	Literacy
3	Spell Research (INT Roll)
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
	Acting, Analyze Magic, Animal Handler, Bureaucrats, Concealment, Conversation, Cramming, Cryptography, Deduction, Demolitions (if appropriate to setting), Embalming, Forgery, Gambling, Healing, High Society, Inventor, Oratory, Persuasion, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill, Magesight

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 91

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

+42	Adept: Increase to 80 points' worth of spells and abilities and add +3 to Magic, the two defined KSs, and Spell Research
-54	Apprentice: Reduce spells and powers to 15 points, Magic to INT, the two defined KSs to 8-, the undefined KSs to 4 points' worth, Spell Research to 8-, and the Skill choice list to 3 points' worth
10	School-Taught Mage: Add 8 points' worth of Contacts (professors, fellow students, and the like) and AK: School 11-
30	Familiar: Add one Follower built on 150 Total Points (an appropriate familiar of the wizard's choice)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Staff, dagger

Armor: At most, light armors such as leather

Gear: Spellbooks, spell components, pouches (belt, scroll, wand)

Clothing: Wizard's robes, wizard's hat

A WIZARD BY ANY OTHER NAME

While you can use this Template to create whatever type of wizard you like, most fall into one of several archetypical categories, such as:

Conjurer: A wizard whose magic primarily focuses on summoning beings and beasts (often demons and other mystical creatures). One who specializes in the conjuration of infernal beings may be known as a *Karcist*, a *Diabolist*, or a *Demonologist*. Define the school KS as Conjunction, and define one KS to represent the character's knowledge of the types of beings he often summons (such as KS: Demons, KS: Birds, or the like).

Elementalist: A wizard whose magic involves one or more of the four classical elements (Air, Earth, Fire, Water). Elementalist wizards (particularly Fire Mages) are popular in High Fantasy games, where they're often the most powerful type of "combat spellcaster." Define school KS as appropriate type (Elementalism, Fire Magic, Air Magic, or the like).

Enchanter: A wizard who crafts magical items, either for his own use or for others. For example, he may be an arcane blacksmith, forging enchanted blades that kings and knights covet. Define school KS as Enchantment; character may substitute relevant PSs (such as Blacksmith or Sewing) for the undefined KSs if desired.

Loremaster: A loremaster lacks the sheer magical power of more adventuresome wizards, but he more than makes up for it through his deep learning and wisdom. He's as much a sage or scholar with some minor spells as he is a true wizard. Reduce spells and magic powers to 20 points' worth and Magic roll to INT, increase KSs to 25 points' worth, and add +3 with all Intellect Skills and KSs, Only When Character Has Access To His Library (-1) (total cost: 7 points) (-10 to Template cost).

Necromancer: A wizard specializing in the magic of death, undeath, and life force. Necromancers' selection of spells is relatively limited, but they often make up for it through sheer power and the terror they tend to inspire in others. Most necromancers are evil, but they don't necessarily have to be. Define school KS as Necromancy, define one KS as The Undead, and make Embalming one of the Skill picks.

Oracle: A wizard who specializes in magic of finding, perceiving, and prophecy. In some Fantasy Hero campaigns, oracles can also master magic of concealment and deception. Oracles aren't appropriate for many games, since their ability to foresee the future makes them unbalancingly effective. Define school KS as Divination, and define one KS as History.

Psi-Mage: Known by various names in various settings, a "psi-mage" is a wizard whose spells and magical talents involve mental powers or the ability to affect the target's mind. A psi-mage can read the truth in a liar's thoughts, communicate in dreams over vast distances, and control another person's mind. In many settings, people hate and fear psi-mages because of the intrusiveness and dangerousness of their powers (possibly a Social Complication). Define school KS as appropriate (e.g., as "Sorcery" in setting which uses that term for this type of magic).

Wild Talent: Not all wizards gain their spells through study and learning. In some settings, certain people — "wild talents" — have an innate gift for magic. In short, they can cast spells without any formal training. Their power may be crude and unfocused at first, but as they get better with practice, they often develop additional powers. The *Magic Skill* in this case reflects natural ability and force of will, and should be based on EGO rather than INT. Remove all KSs (-18 to cost of Template).

ALCHEMIST

On his way he passed the hovel of the shaggy and unkempt old alchemist, Phlommel: a miserable lean-to, a mere shack, filled with stench and bubbling messes, belching forth at that moment a nauseating yellow smoke. He could picture the wild-eyed old souffleur within, acid-stained smock flapping about his skinny shanks, his flying beard smelling of sulphur, as he hopped busily about from alembic to athanor, from crucible to cucur-bite, amid roaring fires, seething smokes, and amazing fluids. ... In his croaking voice, rusty from disuse, Phlommel reported happily that he had achieved the Green Lion transformation and was well on the way to synthesizing the Azoth, as the ultimate goal of all the sages of his profession was called.

—Chan the karcist passes the residence of the alchemist Phlommel, and later Phlommel reports on his work, in “The Twelve Wizards Of Ong,” by Lin Carter

ALCHEMIST TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

50	50 points' worth of “formulae” for creating potions, dusts, and the like
13	Alchemy (INT Roll +5)
2	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 11-
2	Knowledge Skills (10 points' worth)
1	Literacy
3	SS: Alchemy (INT Roll)
3	Spell Research (INT Roll)
6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Acting, Analyze Magic, Animal Handler, Bureaucratics, Concealment, Conversation, Cramming, Cryptography, Deduction, Demolitions (if appropriate to setting), Embalming, Forgery, Gambling, Healing, High Society, Inventor, Oratory, Persuasion, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 80

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +15 **Alchemist's Shop:** Add a Base built on 75 Total Points (the character has an alchemist's shop in some town or city)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Staff, dagger

Armor: At most, light armors such as leather

Gear: Alembics, retorts, and other alchemical laboratory gear

Clothing: Robes (often stained)

Alchemists specialize in the creation of potions, elixirs, dusts, unguents, and similar magical substances. Instead of learning incantations, they learn formulae and mixtures; instead of casting spells they quaff potions or throw magic dust at their foes.

For more on potion creation and use, see page 322.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Similar to those of other wizards. Additionally, in High Fantasy settings, alchemists are usually to some extent tradesmen, creating potions for sale to adventurers, nobles, and wizards; as such, they may share the motivations of merchants.

Typical Abilities: Alchemists need a high INT to learn their formulae and apply them properly, and should spend at least a few points on DEX so their hands remain firm when mixing volatile substances. They tend to be physically weak, and sometimes compensate for this with potions.

Suggested Complications: Years of exposure to alchemical fumes, not to mention experiencing the occasional laboratory explosion, leaves many alchemists a little addle-minded or forgetful (a possible Psychological Complication). Laboratory-related accidents could also leave them palsied or crippled (a Physical Complication), with oddly-colored skin (a Distinctive Feature), or many other problems.

Progression: Alchemists advance like wizards — they spend their Experience Points on more potion formulae and magical substances. They usually expand their Skill base as well, learning more KSs and SSs (to the extent the GM feels it's appropriate to have “science” in his campaign). Some become engineers, assisting with sieges and construction projects.

WITCH

The hag bent over the brazier. Its upward-seeking gray fumes interwove with strands of her downward dangling, tangled black hair. Its glow showed her face to be as dark, jagged-featured, and dirty as the new-dug root-clump of a blackapple tree. A half century of brazier heat and smoke had cured it as black, crinkly, and hard as Mingol bacon. Through her splayed nostrils and slack mouth, which showed a few brown teeth like old tree stumps irregularly fencing the gray field of her tongue, she garglingly inhaled and bubblingly expelled the fumes.

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser consult a witch for advice in Fritz Leiber's “In The Witch's Tent”

The witch is a female spellcaster who practices Witchcraft, an unusual form of magic. Witchcraft as it's typically envisioned combines low wizardry (“hedge magic”), some druidic-style nature magic (and even shamanistic spirit-magic),

potion-brewing, candle magic, black magic (hexes, curses, and the like), and some conjuration. Although often regarded as weak and petty by “true” wizards, witches can possess great power. Male witches are called *warlocks*.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Similar to those of other spellcasters. In Fantasy literature, legends, and fairy tales, witches are often depicted as spiteful, malicious, cruel loners, and this may be true in Fantasy roleplaying campaigns as well. However, sometimes young, beautiful, kind-hearted women have witchy powers....

Typical Abilities: Similar to those of other spellcasters. Witches who live in the wild (in a lonely cottage in the woods, for example) may also have higher-than-average CON to help them survive.

Suggested Complications: Similar to those of other spellcasters. Witches at war with each other often use curses as weapons, so it's not unusual to find one with a curse of ugliness or the like on her.

Progression: Similar to other spellcasters.

To earn the words of power [Ged] did all the witch asked of him and learned of her all she taught, though not all of it was pleasant to do or know. There is a saying on Gont, Weak as woman's magic, and there is another saying, Wicked as woman's magic. Now the witch of Ten Alders was no black sorceress, nor did she ever meddle with the high arts or traffic with Old Powers; but being an ignorant woman among ignorant folk, she often used her crafts to foolish and dubious ends. ... She had a spell for every circumstance, and was forever weaving charms. Much of her lore was mere rubbish and humbug, nor did she know the true spells from the false. She knew many curses, and was better at causing sickness, perhaps, than at curing it. Like any village witch she could brew up a love-potion, but there were other, uglier brews she made to serve men's jealousy and hate.

—a description of the witch of Ten Alders from *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

- Weapons:** Staff, dagger
- Armor:** At most, light armors such as leather
- Gear:** Cauldron, herbs and minerals,
- Clothing:** Everyday clothing, black pointed hat



WITCH TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 50 50 points' worth of spells and magical abilities
- 13 Magic (INT Roll +5)
- 3 KS: Arcane And Occult Lore (INT Roll)
- 2 KS: Flora And Fauna 11-
- 2 KS: Herbalism And Healing-Lore 11-
- 3 KS: Witchcraft (INT Roll)
- 8 Knowledge Skills (8 points' worth)
- 2 SS: Alchemy 11-
- 3 Spell Research (INT Roll)
- 2 Survival (choose one category) (INT Roll)
- 6 6 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
Acting, Analyze Magic, Animal Handler, Bureaucratics, Concealment, Conversation, Cramming, Cryptography, Deduction, Demolitions (if appropriate to setting), Embalming, Forgery, Gambling, Healing, High Society, Oratory, Persuasion, Sleight Of Hand, Stealth, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 94

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- +20 **Black Magic:** +20 points' worth of spells and magic abilities (must be spent on curses, hexes, and other black magic powers)
- 25 **Familiar:** Add one Follower built on 125 Total Points (an appropriate familiar of the witch's choice)
- 10 **Flying Broom:** Flight 20m; OAF (-1)
- 33 **Witchform:** Multiform (assume one animal form built on up to 250 Total Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½)
- (25) **Psychological Complication:** Devotion To Demonic Patron And His Purposes (Very Common, Total)



MISCELLANEOUS TEMPLATES

The following Templates don't fit any of the above four categories, but do crop up frequently in Fantasy literature.

CRAFTSMAN

"This is more to my liking," said the dwarf, stamping on the stones ... "There is good rock here. This country has tough bones. I felt them in my feet as we came up from the dike. Give me a year and a hundred of my kin and I would make this a place that armies would break upon like water."

—Gimli proclaims the skill of dwarven stone-masons in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

This Template represents any of the typical workers and craftsmen found in Fantasy literature and gaming campaigns — blacksmiths, innkeepers, rat-catchers, artists, tailors, builders, miners, and dozens more. Many heroes start their careers as humble craftsmen until adventure comes knocking on their doors.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Most craftsmen just want to live their lives in peace, not have to work too hard, and make a good profit for their labors. But somehow or another they get sucked into an adventure. Some common reasons for this include: protecting homr or family; a quest to find the materials need to craft a wondrous item; or seeking a teacher.

Typical Abilities: A craftsman's abilities depend on his craft. Tailors, artisans, and the like need better-than-average DEX scores due to the precision their work requires. A blacksmith or farmer needs STR and CON to perform hard labor all day long. An innkeeper needs INT to tally costs and keep customers' orders straight.

Suggested Complications: These can vary as wildly as the crafts themselves. Some craftsmen suffer crippling on-the-job injuries (Physical Complications), while others have Rivalries with competing craftsmen. Some take great pride in their job, but others think nothing of bilking a foolish customer with bad work (Psychological Complications).

Progression: In most game campaigns, a craftsman doesn't get any better at his chosen craft as the game progresses. Once he begins to have adventures, he learns Skills and abilities more appropriate to adventuring careers, such as warrior or wizard.

CRAFTSMAN TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 3 KS: related to main PS (INT Roll)
- 3 PS: player's choice (Characteristic-based)
- 4 Professional Skills (4 points' worth)
- 3 Trading (INT Roll)
- 3 3 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
 - Acting, Animal Handler, Bureaucrats, Concealment, Conversation, Gambling, High Society, Oratory, Persuasion, Riding, Charm, Stealth, Streetwise, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 16

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 3 **Artisan:** KS is Art History (or other appropriate subject), and main PS is Painter, Sculptor, Composer, or the like; add +1 DEX and +1 INT
- 6 **Blacksmith:** For KS substitute SS: Metallurgy (INT Roll), main PS is Blacksmith, and Skill pick is Weaponsmith; add +3 STR, +2 CON, and WF: Axes/Maces/Hammers/Picks
- 1 **Cook:** KS is Foodstuffs (or Herbalism), and main PS is Cook; add WF: Knives
- 0 **Healer:** KS is Herbalism And Healing-Lore; substitute Healing for main PS
- 10 **Innkeeper:** KS is Local Gossip And Current Events, and main PS is Innkeeper; add 50-point Base (the inn or tavern he owns)
- 5 **Miner:** KS is Gems And Minerals, and main PS is Mining; add +2 STR, +2 CON, and WF: Axes/Maces/Hammers/Picks

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Miscellaneous knives, or tools that double as weapons

Armor: At most, cloth or thin leather

Gear: Tools and implements pertaining to job

Clothing: Work/everyday clothes

MARINER

Beyond all other pursuits the strong men of Númenor took delight in the Sea.[.] From the fisherfolk were mostly drawn the Mariners, who as the years passed grew greatly in importance and esteem. ... Thereafter seafaring became the chief enterprise for daring and hardihood among the men of Númenor.

—a description of Númenorean seacraft from *Unfinished Tales*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Also known as a sailor (or when criminally inclined, a corsair or pirate), a mariner is a person who makes his living working on boats and ships. He knows how to sail a ship (including working the sails and rigging, tying knots, and so forth), how to navigate on the water, and even how to fight off boarders.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Most sailors yearn for a safe voyage and high profits, so that they have lots of money to spend when they make land. A few take to the sea specifically for the adventure of it, and pirates of course want rich plunder and occasionally a good fight.

Typical Abilities: Working on a ship is hard work; mariners need both STR and DEX to accomplish their daily tasks. Most develop a higher-than-average CON because of the rigors of the sea. Some become highly accomplished swimmers.

Suggested Complications: Mariners often have peglegs, hooks, or eyepatches to replace limbs or eyes lost to injury (Physical Complication). They may have Psychological Complications reflecting their “live for today, think nothing of tomorrow” attitude (*Spendthrift*, for example). Other sailors may become Rivals. Too many mistakes on the job, or a run of bad luck, could earn a mariner a Negative Reputation.

Progression: Mariners who become adventurers usually drift toward the warrior occupations, developing their fighting skills to become quasi-marines. Others may learn water and weather magics, becoming ships’ mages, or devote their lives to the gods of the sea as priests. Corsairs may augment their sailing Skills with rogue abilities, including an extensive network of Contacts to help them dispose of stolen treasure.



MARINER TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 3 Climbing (DEX Roll)
- 2 Navigation (Marine) (INT Roll)
- 2 PS: Knot-Tying 11-
- 3 PS: Sailing (INT Roll) or Combat Sailing (DEX Roll)
- 3 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Nets
- 4 Transport Familiarities (4 points' worth related to watercraft)
- 3 3 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
 - Acrobatics, Acting, Animal Handler, Bureaucrats, Concealment, Conversation, Gambling, Oratory, Persuasion, PS: Predict Weather, Charm, Stealth, Streetwise, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill
- 1 Swimming +2m

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 21

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Cutlass, dagger, belaying pin

Armor: At most, light armors such as leather

Gear: Tools for shipboard work, rope, hammock

Clothing: Everyday clothes

MERCHANT

“You are aware that trade is highly competitive in this city, Lord Elric. Many merchants vie with one another to secure the custom of the people. Bakshaan is a rich city and its populace is comfortably off, in the main.”

—the merchant Pilarmo tells Elric of Melniboné about trade in Bakshaan in *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, by Michael Moorcock

Merchants are the businessmen of the Fantasy world. They range from fast-talking shopkeepers to bold caravan leaders and sea captains who journey across wastelands and forbidding seas to reach important markets. Regardless of what they trade and how, all merchants have one thing in common: a desire for profit.

Typical Goals And Motivations: Besides the aforementioned desire to make lots of money, merchants don't really have too many motivations in common. Some are honest traders; others swindle their customers whenever they can. They tend to support anything that improves the conditions for trade.

MERCHANT TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 3 Bribery (PRE Roll)
- 3 Persuasion (PRE Roll)
- 3 PS: Merchant (INT Roll)
- 7 Trading (INT Roll +2)
- 6 6 points' worth of Skills from the following list:
Acting, Animal Handler, Bureaucratics, Concealment, Conversation, Forgery, Gambling, High Society, Navigation, Oratory, PS: Sailing, Riding, Charm, Streetwise, Survival, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 22

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

- 5 **Prosperous Merchant:** Add Money (5 points)
- 10 **Wealthy Merchant:** Add Money (10 points)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Sword, dagger

Armor: At most, cloth or thin leather

Gear: Writing kit, sample trade goods, abacus

Clothing: Everyday clothes appropriate to income

Typical Abilities: Most merchants have high INTs and PREs, since they have to keep track of accounts, negotiate deals, and remain observant. Those who lead dangerous trading expeditions may have good physical Characteristics and a few fighting or survival Skills. Those who engage in a little smuggling on the side may have some roguish Skills.

Suggested Complications: Other merchants in the same area or field are Rivals, and may even become Hunteds if competition is fierce. *Greedy* and similar Psychological Complications are also quite common.

Progression: Merchant-adventurers usually develop more adventuring-oriented Skills as they gain Experience Points. If they've done well enough in business to take the *Money* Perk, they can certainly hire the finest weapons instructors to teach them the arts of swordplay, or wizards to instruct them in the ways of magic.

NOBLE

“As for me,” said Imrahil, “the Lord Aragorn I hold to be my liege-lord, whether he claim it or no. His wish is to me a command.”

—Imrahil expresses his opinion of Aragorn's nobility and rights in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Most Fantasy campaigns feature kingdoms and other governments with persons of higher social station than average — nobles, in other words. They may gain their titles through birth, merit, or other methods, but the end result is the same: a person with, at least in theory, greater social prestige, influence, and wealth. A noble who has the ear and favor of the king (or other powerful officials) may himself become a “power behind the throne,” or receive other special appointments and rewards (such as ambassadorships, knighthoods, or trade monopolies).

This Template assumes the character comes from the lower ranks of the nobility (he's a baronet or the like). If you want a more influential or powerful noble, increase the value of his Fringe Benefit (and perhaps other Skills and Perks accordingly).

Typical Goals And Motivations: All nobles want to maintain, and if possible, increase their personal power, influence, and prestige. But what they do with that authority varies. Some use their position to perform good works, study esoteric subjects, further the causes of the king, or create great works of art. Others selfishly exploit their noble station for everything they can get, regardless of how many lessers they insult, oppress, or degrade along the way.

Typical Abilities: PRE is the most important Characteristic for nobles, who have to interact with (and impress) other people on a daily basis. A good INT and EGO also help. Nobles with a penchant for hunting, jousting, or military pursuits improve their physical Characteristics as well.

Suggested Complications: Anyone with power and influence tends to attract adversaries, such as other nobles eager to replace or humiliate him (Rivals), or even to have him permanently disposed of (Hunted). Most nobles have at least one Psychological Complication related to their social status, such as *Noblesse Oblige*, *Haughty*, or *Exploits Lessers*. Some have large families they have to support (DNPCs).

Progression: If possible, nobles usually like to increase their wealth, prestige, and influence, though campaign factors may prevent this (for example, if the character is one of seven dukes in the kingdom, the only way to move up the social ladder might be to start a rebellion and usurp the throne). But they can always develop more Contacts and increase their Interaction Skills. Otherwise, they often spend Experience Points dabbling in various hobbies and entertainments (PSs and KSs), or pursuing interests such as warfare or wizardry.

NOBLE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

3	+3 PRE
3	Conversation (PRE Roll)
3	High Society (PRE Roll)
3	Fringe Benefit: Lordship
5	Money: Well Off
6	6 points' worth of Skills or Perks from the following list: Acting, Bribery, Bureaucratics, Concealment, Gambling, Oratory, Persuasion, Riding, Charm, Stealth, Survival, Tracking, Trading, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill, Well-Connected, Contact

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 23

Value Complications

None

Total Value Of Template Complications: 0

OPTIONS

Cost Option

100	Castle: Add a Base built on 500 Total Points
+5	Rich Demesne: Increase Money to 10 points' worth
+10	Vast, Rich Demesne: Increase Money to 15 points' worth
(5)	Genteel Poverty: Remove Money
(10)	Psychological Complication: Oath Of Feudal Loyalty (Common, Moderate)

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapons: Sword, dagger, lance

Armor: Medium to heavy armors, such as chain-mail or plate armor

Gear: Just about anything they want, within reason

Clothing: Fine, even rich, clothing





CHARACTERISTICS

Most *HERO System* gamers start designing their characters by purchasing Characteristics. Several Characteristics, and related issues, have important implications for Fantasy Hero games.

CHARACTERISTIC MAXIMA

Fantasy Hero campaigns typically impose Characteristic Maxima (6E1 50) as a default for the campaign. But in some cases the GM may want to reconsider that decision. For some High Fantasy games in particular, such as ones where the PCs are all demi-gods and the like, the Characteristic Maxima rules don't make much sense, and may even inhibit the "feel" the GM wants to create. In campaigns like that, allowing characters to buy high Characteristics without any cost doubling may work well.

VARYING CHARACTERISTIC MAXIMA BY RACE

Some GMs also like to vary the Characteristic Maxima for different races. This allows some races to buy Characteristics to some limit above 20 without doubling the cost, or lowers the doubling threshold to make it harder for some races to reach 20 and higher. For example, maybe dwarves can have CON up to 23 and elves can have INT up to 23 before the doubling takes effect, but elves can only have CON 16 before doubling sets in.

Since there's no guarantee how many Character Points each character will spend on each Characteristic, there's no way to create a uniformly balanced method of applying this sort of change. Therefore, each GM must decide for himself how to vary the Characteristic Maxima breakpoints for different races. Many GMs try to "balance" the effect by imposing an equal amount of "upgrades" and "downgrades" to each race, or by applying downgrades in some other proportion to upgrades. For example, if elves can have up to INT 23 without doubling (a possible savings of 3 points), then perhaps they can only have STR 17 before doubling (a possible extra cost of 3 points). Even with careful consideration, though, house rules like this tend to lead to unbalanced characters or negatively affect players' choices when creating characters; GMs should consider carefully before implementing them.

CHARACTERISTIC RANGES

Fantasy Hero is a Heroic genre, and therefore most characters will have most of their Primary Characteristics in the 10-20 range. This can cause problems of uniformity. In many campaigns, it's rare to see a warrior with a STR less than 20, a wizard with INT less than 20, or a rogue with DEX less than 20. Furthermore, because some Characteristics cost relatively few points to increase, it's not uncommon to see characters with unusually high ratings in Characteristics not associated with that character type — such as wizards with STR 15-20.

This potential uniformity is an important feature of the *HERO System*, one that allows players to build whatever characters they want. But it may cause problems in some campaigns, particularly those where GMs and players want to emphasize the differences between the various major archetypical characters. If "Characteristic uniformity" causes a problem in your game, consider some of the ideas for setting the Characteristic Maxima on 6E1 50.

Another possibility is to assign a useful bonus to a Characteristic that makes characters want to buy it in unusual amounts, instead of amounts ending in 0, 3, 5, and 8. For example, suppose you establish a house rule saying that if two characters have the same DEX (a not uncommon occurrence in a Fantasy Hero campaign), the character with the highest INT gets to act first in a Phase. This prompts at least some characters to spend a little more on INT, since an INT of 16 is better than one of 15 even though they both generate the same INT Roll and PER Roll. Proceed with caution, however; most such changes indirectly benefit some character type more (wizards, in this case, since they already want to have a high INT), and you may accidentally create a game balance problem. Similarly, you could rule that in Skill Versus Skill Contests involving Skills based on the same Characteristic, ties go to the character with the highest Characteristic.

He felt for strength like the towers of el-Narana; for lightness like those gossamer palaces that the fairy-spider builds 'twixt heaven and sea along the coasts of Zith; for swiftness like some bird racing up from the morning to sing in some city's spires before daylight comes.

—Shepparalk the centaur goes to seek a wife in "The Bride Of The Man-Horse," by Lord Dunsany



CHARACTERISTICS

STRENGTH

[Herger throws Ahmed a Northman's longsword]

Ahmed ibn Fadlan: *I cannot lift this.*

Herger the Joyous: *Grow stronger!*

[Later, after Ahmed has the sword cut down to a scimitar]

Weath the Musician: *When you die, can I give that to me daughter?*

—the Northmen value strength in *The Thirteenth Warrior*

Strength suffers from the potential problems of Characteristic uniformity and balance described above to a greater degree than any other Characteristic. Since STR only costs 1 Character Point per point and can increase the damage a character does with HTH weapons, it's tempting for many players to buy some for their characters even if that's not really appropriate given a character's nature and background. Therefore, GMs may want to examine characters' STR scores closely and require them to scale back if they seem to have high STR for no good reason other than "rules benefits."

Nevertheless, high STR scores are appropriate for many Fantasy Hero characters; after all, Hercules, the archetypical strongman, is a High Fantasy character. Many races, ranging from giants to dwarves, possess great strength in varying degrees, and can use it effectively in combat. Gamemasters should monitor such characters closely, to make sure they don't unbalance the game, but shouldn't forbid them outright unless they're inappropriate for the campaign.

FANTASY STRENGTH TABLE

The STR Table on 6E1 43 mostly includes examples from modern-day and future periods. Here's a version of the table more applicable to Fantasy games. The weights are approximate, and often based on the nearest equivalent in the table; not every horse and rider weighs 800 kilograms. The weight of many objects, particularly things like weapons, can vary considerably from time to time and place to place.

Strength	Lift (kg)	Damage	Example
1	8.0	—	Two-handed sword (or any smaller weapon), arbalest, large metal shield
2	16.0	—	Chainmail hauberk, tavern bench
3	25.0	½d6	Suit of plate armor
5	50.0	1d6	Suit of plate barding
8	75.0	1½d6	Dwarf
10	100.0	2d6	Man, elf
13	150.0	2½d6	Man in armor and equipment
15	200.0	3d6	Two men, wild boar, barrel of beer, python
18	300.0	3½d6	Two men in armor and equipment
20	400.0	4d6	Grizzly bear
23	600.0	4½d6	Sailboat, horse
25	800.00	5d6	Horse and rider, large polar bear
28	1,200.0	5½d6	Two horses
30	1,600.0	6d6	Two horses and riders, catapult
35	3,200.0	7d6	Small elephant
40	6,400.0	8d6	Large elephant, small trebuchet
45	12.5 tons	9d6	Heavy trebuchet
50	25.0 tons	10d6	Small standing stone
55	50.0 tons	11d6	Whale, large standing stone
60	100.0 tons	12d6	Two large standing stones
65	200.0 tons	13d6	
70	400.0 tons	14d6	
75	800.0 tons	15d6	
80	1.6 ktons	16d6	Small stone bridge
85	3.2 ktons	17d6	Large stone bridge
90	6.4 ktons	18d6	Enormous stone bridge
95	12.5 ktons	19d6	
100	25.0 ktons	20d6	Castle

DEXTERITY

Diving under Aragorn's blow with the speed of a striking snake he charged into the Company and thrust with his spear straight at Frodo. The blow caught him on the right side, and Frodo was hurled against the wall and pinned.

—an orc-chieftain of Moria attacks Frodo in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Although most closely associated with rogues and light fighters, DEX is a popular Characteristic for any type of character, since it governs who attacks first (a crucial consideration in an often-deadly genre) and provides the roll for several important Skills. It's not uncommon to see a group of Fantasy Hero characters who all have DEXs clustered in the 15-20 range, making it difficult for characters who should be noteworthy for their agility and adroitness to truly stand out from the crowd. The GM may want to encourage characters to look at OCV, DCV, Combat Skill Levels, Agility Skill Levels, Lightning Reflexes, and leave pure DEX to rogues, light fighters, and the like.

CONSTITUTION, BODY, AND STUN

In a genre where Killing Attacks are the norm and combat occurs frequently, most heroes can justify at least a few extra points of CON, BODY, and/or STUN to keep themselves from dying like flies and getting Stunned/Knocked Out each Turn. Some, particularly warriors and members of certain races (centaurs, dwarves, dragon-folk), can easily have CON or BODY 20, or higher. Since high CON and BODY tend to encourage "heroic" actions by characters, Characteristic uniformity causes far fewer (if any) problems compared to STR or DEX.

INTELLIGENCE

He could see Faramir's face, which was now unmasked: it was stern and commanding, and a keen wit lay behind his searching glance.

—Frodo evaluates Faramir in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Wizards usually have high INT, and so do many priests; other characters, like rogues, often buy up their INT to reflect cleverness and improve PER Rolls (and rolls with many Skills). Characters who hit the Characteristic Maxima for INT, or who shouldn't have an overall high INT, should consider Enhanced Perception or Skill Levels with Intellect Skills.

EGO

His leg began to throb beneath its dressing, but he had lived in the Houses of Pain for more than the lifetimes of Men, and he put the feeling far from his thoughts.

—Dilvish's willpower allows him to withstand pain in *Dilvish The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

"But then, strength of will is the quintessence of the master wizard."

—Handar comments on one of Alodar's virtues in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

In many Fantasy Hero campaigns, EGO serves as the main Characteristic for priests. It represents the force of will, piety, and faith necessary to channel the power of the divine. And since many spells involve Mental Powers, a high EGO helps spellcasters in general. Faith and magic aside, at least a few points of EGO are appropriate for almost any Fantasy hero — heroes should have great willpower, and EGO reflects that.

PRESENCE

"But happily your Caradhras has forgotten you have Men with you ... [a]nd doughty Men, too, if I may say it[.]"

—Boromir proclaims his bravery and strength in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

He stood up, and seemed suddenly to grow taller. In his eyes gleamed a light, keen and commanding.

—Aragorn impresses the hobbits with his Presence and majesty in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Bearing, courage, and force of personality are the hallmark of many Fantasy characters, particularly military leaders and certain types of wizard. In fact, in some games, especially some Epic Fantasy stories, these attributes are paramount — more important even than mighty arms or wise minds. PRE represents these qualities, so high PREs occur frequently in many Fantasy Hero campaigns. Characters who don't necessarily want to be impressive themselves, but who are fearless, jaded, or blasé, can buy some extra PRE with the -1 Limitation, *Only To Protect Against Presence Attacks*.

"One must use his wits in dealing with maledictions."

—Cugel congratulates himself on avoiding a curse in *The Eyes Of The Overworld*, by Jack Vance



SPEED

Characteristic uniformity occurs frequently with SPD (though this isn't necessarily a bad thing; it may make combats go more smoothly). Most Fantasy Hero characters have SPD 3 or 4; a few pay the extra cost for SPD 5 to be *really* fast. SPDs beyond 5 are usually reserved for magical creatures (such as demons or air elementals), or for characters using enhancement magics.

Because SPDs in Fantasy hero tend to cluster at the low end of the scale, even a single extra point of SPD can offer a character (or monster) a significant advantage. It not only allows him to take more actions in combat, but it increases his overall movement speed and ability to Recover from injuries and END use. Gamemasters should examine any character with an unusually high SPD (above 4) to make sure he won't unbalance the campaign.

PHYSICAL DEFENSE AND ENERGY DEFENSE

In a game where the average Damage Classes in attacks tend to be fairly low, and where armor (Resistant Defense) is readily available without the need to spend Character Points, a high PD (and to a lesser extent, high ED) may create significant game balance problems in combat-oriented campaigns. Combined with the defense provided by armor (and perhaps spells), a high PD or ED may protect a character from most STUN damage. Only the highest STUN Multipliers, or unusual spells, have a chance of Stunning him (much less Knocking him Out). Gamemasters should carefully evaluate each character's total defense when determining how much PD or ED he'll allow a character to buy.

ARCANE DEFENSE

Because the *HERO System* uses several different Power mechanics to create ways to harm or hinder, each with its own defense, there's no universal defense against any sort of magic. (But see *Damage Negation And Damage Reduction*, page 148.) However, some GMs may want to allow for that sort of defense to make it easier to buy "anti-magic" spells or create monsters with inherent resistance to any sorcery. One possible way to do this is to allow characters and creatures to buy a new Characteristic, *Arcane Defense* (AD).

AD provides defense against any magical effect. It doesn't matter whether it's physical, energy, a Drain, an NND, a Transform, a Flash, or something else, AD defends a character against it if it's created by magic. (However, AD is not Resistant, so it offers no protection against magical Killing Attacks unless the character buys Resistant (+½) for it.) It would even protect against a magical Entangle (by reducing the BODY of the Entangle 1 point per point of AD). If two Characteristics could protect against an effect (for example, both ED and AD could protect against a magical fire-blast), the character may choose which one to use, and may vary this choice from attack to attack. Thus, AD can be *extremely* effective; GMs may

want to limit how much characters can buy, or reserve it solely for special NPCs, monsters, and spells.

Gamemasters who want to use AD have to decide how much a character starts the game with, and what it costs to increase that base amount. Given AD's effectiveness and unusual nature, it's entirely possible that all characters start with AD 0. However, since PD and ED both start at 2, many GMs prefer to do the same with AD. Since AD covers both physical and energy damage and can be really effective, so it should be fairly expensive — at least 2 Character Points per point, and perhaps more (it could even become *really* expensive, like 5 Character Points per point). The GM should set the cost so that most characters buy few (if any) points of AD, but those who consider it a worthwhile purchase can buy at least a little if they're willing to sacrifice something else.

ENDURANCE

"But [Orcs] go with great speed for all that," said Aragorn, "and they do not tire. ..."

"Well, after them!" said Gimli. "Dwarves too can go swiftly, and they do not tire sooner than Orcs. But it will be a long chase: they have a long start."

"Yes," said Aragorn, "we shall all need the endurance of Dwarves."

—Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas prepare to chase a band of orcs in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

As a Heroic genre, Fantasy Hero uses the rule that STR costs 1 END per 5 points (not 10), while Powers and the like still cost 1 END per 10 Active Points. Even allowing for that, and for the END cost of Encumbrance (6E2 45-46), many characters (particularly non-spellcasters) have far more END than they generally need. This makes it easy for them to Push (when appropriate), which may cause problems during the game.

If this issue arises in the campaign, the GM should consider using the Long-Term Endurance rules (6E2 132-33) as a balancing factor, at least for some characters. Over the course of a long day of fighting and adventuring, a warrior subject to the LTE rules becomes more and more tired until he *must* rest. This works particularly well in Low Fantasy games and other campaigns stressing "realism."

See also page 224 regarding END and armor, and page 274 regarding END and magic.



DM [narrating]:

You are too weary to go on tonight. You must rest, and there is nowhere else [but the top of Weathertop] around to make camp.

Player 1: *We'll just sleep at the bottom of the hill, then.*

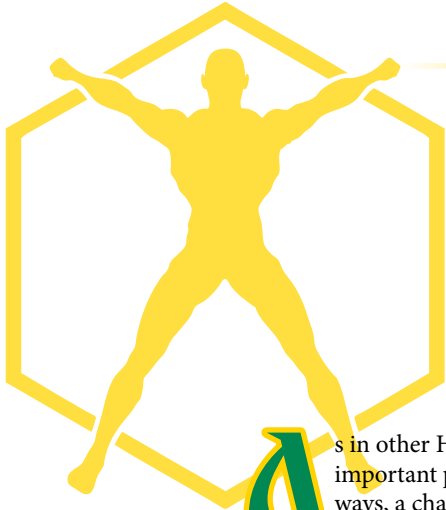
DM: *You're so tired that the ground here is not restful enough. You need to rest in the more comfortable area on top of the hill.*

Player 1: *Then probably we don't have the energy to climb the hill anyway.*

DM: *No, you have just enough energy to climb the hill, but not enough energy to go on or look for someplace else to camp.*

Player 1: *That is a very specific level of tired.*

—the DM tries to lead the players where he wants them to go in "DM Of The Rings," a webcomic by Shamus Young



SKILLS

As in other Heroic genres, Skills play an important part in Fantasy Hero. In many ways, a character's Skills define him (in game terms) more than any other game element. This section contains both general Skill rules for the Fantasy genre, and specific notes on how various Skills function in *Fantasy Hero*.

“Reasoning that, if the gods had in sooth condemned me to the life of a wandering adventurer, I had best be a good one, I studied whatever might be useful for that career. I learnt to speak Mulvani and Feridi and Shvenic. I practised not only with the conventional arms but also with the implements of men beyond the law: the sandbag, the knuckle duster, the strangler’s cord, the poison ring, and so on. I hired Merlois the actor to teach me the arts of disguise, impersonation, and dialectical speech.

“During the last year of my reign, also, I gathered a squad of the most unsavory rogues in the Twelve Cities: a cutpurse, a swindler, a forger, a bandit, a founder of cults and secret societies, a smuggler, a blackmailer, and two burglars. I kept them in luxury whilst they taught me all their tricks. Now I can scale the front of a building, force a window, pick a lock, open a strongbox, and — if caught in the act — convince the householder that I am a good spirit sent by the gods to report on his conduct.

“As a result of these studies I have become, one might say, a good second-rater in a variety of fields.”

—Jorian explains his training to Rhithos the Smith in *The Goblin Tower*, by L. Sprague de Camp

GENERAL RULES

The following general rules apply to Skills in Fantasy Hero games.

SKILL MODIFIERS

Gamemasters may want to incorporate the following optional rules and guidelines for Skill modifiers into their Fantasy campaigns. See also APG 23-31 (various types of Skill Modifiers; the ones for being injured, for moving, and for stealthy Skill use are particularly appropriate for many Fantasy Hero games) and page 225 of this book (regarding penalties for wearing armor).

ENCUMBRANCE

Encumbrance penalties to Agility Skills, listed on 6E2 132-33, often come into play during Fantasy games due to the armor and other gear characters must carry with them. Gamemasters may wish to impose the Encumbrance penalty on some other Skills; for example, overloaded characters may find it difficult to be suave or convincing (*i.e.*, to use Interaction Skills well).

THE TIME CHART

The Time Chart assumes a more-or-less Earth-like world, with the four standard seasons, a single moon, and the like. But many Fantasy worlds don't fit that model. Some have multiple moons, areas of perpetual night, magically long winters, or seasons that change at the whim of the gods. Therefore, the GM may want to consider creating a campaign-specific Time Chart for his Fantasy Hero game. (Review the sidebar on 6E2 18 before beginning.)

Unless the campaign world has *really* odd time calculations, usually the GM only needs to start thinking about changing the Time Chart above the level of 1 Hour. If the campaign world has a day that's significantly longer or shorter than 24 hours, a change may be appropriate (particularly if multiple suns or moons allow characters to track time changes easily). The altered day may affect the length of weeks, months, and years, which results in changes further down the Time Chart. If the campaign world's day is around 24 hours long, the GM should proceed down the Time Chart until he reaches the point where a difference with the real world results, and then start tracking the changes.

Example: *Andy decides to run a Fantasy Hero game. He creates a campaign world, Telgaria, that has three moons. He uses the moons as the basis for many of the world's religions and customs, including the calendar. He decides the day contains 24 hours, and that most Telgarians divide both day and night into three lunadi of four hours each. A week consists of nine days, and each month has three weeks. This gives each month a total of 27 days, equal to the period of the largest moon (the different periods of the other two moons have some religious significance, but that won't affect the Time Chart). The year has nine months, which the Telgarians divide into three utami, or "seasons," of three months each (winter, spring/early summer, and late summer/autumn). With these changes in mind, Andy creates the following alternate Time Chart:*

1 Segment
1 Phase
1 Turn (Post-Segment 12)
1 Minute
5 Minutes
20 Minutes
1 Hour
1 Lunad (4 Hours)
1 Day
3 Days
1 Week (9 Days)
1 Month (27 Days)
1 Utam (a season of 3 months)
1 Year
5 Years
25 Years
1 Century

SKILL MAXIMA

In some games, particularly grittier Low Fantasy or Swords And Sorcery campaigns, the GM should consider imposing a Skill Maxima (see 6E1 51). That way characters who want to be really skilled at something have to pay extra, but are more likely to be distinctive.

EVERYMAN SKILLS

For ease of campaign creation and play, GMs may wish to use the generic *Fantasy Everyman Skills* list in the accompanying sidebar. But instead the GM could create one or more campaign-specific lists of Everyman Skills. This increases the "flavor" and individuality of the campaign, and may even allow players to better differentiate characters from different backgrounds.

The question then becomes: on what basis should the GM construct an Everyman Skill list? Should a list depend on where a character was raised, or by whom, or on some other factor? Some possibilities include:

Culture: Since culture can vary tremendously even within a given race or region, some GMs may want to devise Everyman Skill lists based on cultural types. Using this method, the GM establishes a framework of universal Everyman Skills that every character has, plus lists of additions or changes based on specific cultures. Thus, people who come from a Riding Nomad culture would have Riding as an Everyman Skill, while those who come from a people dependent upon fishing, water trade, and/or coastal raiding have TF: Small Wind-Powered Boats.

Kingdom: If the kingdoms in a Fantasy world are sufficiently distinct, the subjects of each one may have their own Everyman Skill lists (though again, some Everyman Skills, like Stealth, would occur everywhere). Residents of the Free City of Tavrosel might have Survival (Urban), while the subjects of the mountainous realm of Valicia have Survival (Mountains), and the subjects of the theocratic Hargeshite Empire of Vashkhor all learn KS: Hargeshite Religious Doctrine during childhood.

Race: A popular choice for many Fantasy Hero campaigns is to base Everyman Skills on race, effectively making them Everydwarf, Everyelf, and Everygoblin Skill lists (though some Skills, such as Deduction, occur in every race's list). This works particularly well in games where each race follows distinct, well-defined stereotypes. Thus, dwarves might all have PS: Blacksmith, PS: Stonecraft, and Survival (Mountains), while all elves have Survival (Temperate/Subtropical Forests) and Tracking. A character raised by a race other than his own would take that race's Everyman Skill list; thus, a dwarf raised by humans wouldn't have Blacksmith as an Everyman Skill.

Region: Since kingdoms can be big or small, some GMs prefer to create Everyman Skill lists based on region or geography instead. Coastal peoples have TF: Small Wind-Powered Boats, arctic ones have TF: Skiing, peoples living in inhospitable regions have an appropriate *Survival* Skill, and so forth.

Religion: If religion plays a dominant role in the campaign world, adherents of different religions may have distinct Everyman Skill lists. At the very least, the GM should add KS: [Religion's] Doctrines And Practices to the Everyman Skill list, allowing characters to define exactly which religion they grew up in.

FANTASY EVERYMAN SKILLS

- Acting
- Climbing
- Concealment
- Conversation
- Deduction
- AK: Home country or region 8-
- Native Language (4 points' worth, no literacy)
- Paramedics (Healing)
- Persuasion
- One PS at 11- (a character's job, hobby, or the like)
- Shadowing
- Stealth





SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

The following rules and suggestions apply to Skills in Fantasy Hero. See also *HERO System Skills*, which has advanced rules for all the *HERO System Skills* that may be appropriate for many Fantasy campaigns. As always, these rules are optional; the GM may use them (or not) and change them (or not) as he sees fit.

INTERACTION SKILLS

In some Fantasy worlds, characters of one race have difficulty interacting with characters of any other race — for some reason (magical curse, ancient racial enmity, “alienness”), they have difficulty relating to them. This occurs most often in Low Fantasy and other settings where non-human races are rare, though some High Fantasy games feature intense racial hatreds.

To reflect this discomfort, GMs can impose a penalty on all Interaction Skill rolls between members of two different races: -2 for relatively similar races; -4 for dissimilar races; and -8 (or more) for greatly different races (like a human and a sentient, underground octopus).

TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

Most Skills involving the use of advanced technology — Bugging, Computer Programming, Electronics, and so forth — have no place in most Fantasy games. A few, such as Demolitions,

Security Systems, and Systems Operation, have low-tech or specialized applications noted below. You should assume that any Fantasy game taking place in a technologically advanced setting (such as many Urban Fantasy games) features any Skills appropriate to the time, place, and technology.

ACTING

Characters may have difficulty acting like members of another race. When a character impersonates a member of a race other than his own to a character who knows what members of that race are like, he suffers a -2 to -5 penalty to his Acting roll. He can eliminate this penalty by buying bonuses to Acting *Only To Impersonate [Race]* (-1), or by succeeding with a KS: [Race] roll. Gamemasters may also wish to impose some of the penalties from Disguise (HSS 173-76) on Acting rolls.

ANALYZE

Besides Analyze Style and Analyze Combat Technique, Skills often possessed by warriors, *Analyze Magic* also occurs in many Fantasy games. Analyze Magic allows a character to evaluate the magical abilities and powers of a spellcasting character. Usually wizards are the only ones who know it, but it's possible for priests, rogues, or anyone else to learn to use it through direct observation.

Analyze Magic has several uses. First, a character who sees another character cast a spell can make an Analyze Magic roll to identify the spell in question (this is an Action that takes no time). Even if the character can't identify the spell and

its effects precisely, he can figure out what a spell does generally (if it isn't immediately obvious). For example, a sorcerer could recognize that a supposed blessing is actually a spell to influence the target's mind. The GM may impose a penalty on the roll if the character doesn't have an appropriate KS of the style of magic being used or has not in some other manner been exposed to that type of magic.

Second, a character who can cast spells or use magic himself can employ Analyze Magic in the way described on 6E1 64: to evaluate the other character's power relative to his own, deduce who trained him, and perhaps to gain a tactical advantage over him. With a successful Analyze Magic roll, a character might identify a spellcaster's mentor or school ("Only students of the Five Elements Temple cast fireballs using that particular gesture"), his knowledge and raw power ("He says the words so sloppily! He is not trained well, for all his power..."), and perhaps even deduce secret aspects of the magic or gain a tactical advantage ("He couldn't cast such spells without a demon's help — which tells me just how to fight him!")

Analyze Magic does not allow a character to design a new spell, or operate an unfamiliar magic item; for such feats, see Spell Research (under Inventor) and Power: Magic Skill. Analyze Magic may, however, act as a Complementary Skill for such attempts. For instance, a mystic trying to reconstruct a spell he saw another mystic use has a better chance of success if he analyzed the spell when he saw it cast.

ANIMAL HANDLER

Druids, rangers, horse nomads, and other characters who work with or around animals frequently have this Skill. See HSB 12-17 for detailed rules about it.

ARMORSMITH

In most campaigns, creating or repairing metal armors is a function of various Professional Skills — PS: Blacksmith, or perhaps even PS: Armorsmith. However, the GMs for games where armor plays an important role and/or frequently needs repair (such as some Low Fantasy campaigns) may wish to use the optional *Armorsmith* Skill (HSS 354).

AUTOFIRE SKILLS

These Skills are generally inapplicable to Fantasy games, which lack Autofire weapons. However, the GM might allow a character to take them for use with an Autofire spell or enchanted weapon.

BUGGING (EAVESDROPPING)

At the GM's option, Fantasy characters can interpret Bugging as *Eavesdropping*, the ability to find the best places from which to spy on and overhear people. In this case, Eavesdropping acts as a Complementary Skill for the character's PER Roll when he attempts to overhear or spy on someone. Eavesdropping may also Complement the *Shadowing* Skill in some situations.

BUREAUCRATICS

The monastery was charged with more than just religious obligations, of course: the district capital, Paya Gupa, lay some two hundred Tsan to the south. This place thus served as both shrine and local administrative centre. The Prior and his officers were empowered to settle land disputes, register claims, maintain records, license merchants, regulate trade, and even deal with criminal cases of a minor sort.

—a description of a tiny part of the vast Tsolyani bureaucracy in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

While most people associate this Skill with modern government agencies and like institutions, in truth many medieval organizations could be equally complex. The medieval Chinese governments had a bureaucracy as Byzantine as any in history, for example. Thus, this Skill is perfectly appropriate for Fantasy characters.

CHARM

In realistic Fantasy settings, using Charm for seductive purposes is only possible among members of the same race. Humans can seduce humans, and dwarves can seduce dwarves, but a human and a dwarf typically cannot become romantically involved. Among members of a race from radically different cultures, GMs may wish to apply a penalty of -1 to -3 to reflect differing standards of romantic behavior.

In less realistic or High Fantasy worlds, where many races mix and mingle, inter-race seductive Charm is possible. Consult the Fantasy Race Charm Table and apply all relevant modifiers. For "human," read "member of the character's own race," and make other appropriate changes.

If characters simply use Charm to make friends or ingratiate themselves, the GM should reduce or eliminate the penalties described above. Even if a human and a dwarf can't start a romance, they can certainly become boon companions.

Then Loki praised the Dwarfs more and more, and he made more and more promises to them. He charmed them all, although they were an unfriendly and a suspicious folk.

—Loki befriends the Dwarves and obtains gifts from them for the Aesir to make up for his mischievous cutting of the goddess Sif's hair in *The Children Of Odin*, by Padraic Colum



FANTASY RACE CHARM TABLE

Racial Form	Skill Modifier
Externally very similar to humans	-0
Minor differences from human	-1
Non-human but mammalian	-2
Nonmammalian vertebrates	-4
Invertebrates	-6
Non-material/no physical form	-8
Additional Modifiers	
Race is asexual	-2
Race has specific mating cues (e.g., scent, color)	-2

CLIMBING

The Nemedian gripped the rope and, crooking a knee about it, began the ascent; he went up like a cat, belying the apparent clumsiness of his bulk. The Cimmerian followed. The cord swayed and turned on itself, but the climbers were not hindered; both had made more difficult climbs before.

—Conan and Taurus climb the tower in “The Tower Of The Elephant,” by Robert E. Howard

Fantasy characters frequently find themselves scaling city or tower walls, climbing mountains, clambering out of dank pits, and so forth. See HSS 109 for detailed rules on Climbing, include modifiers for the type of surface climbed, equipment used, and other factors.

COMBAT DRIVING (CHARIOTEERING, COMBAT SAILING)

Crescens was ahead as they swept under the Imperial Box, but his ferocious burst of speed had forced his horses wide on the curve. And Scortius of the Blues, leaning madly over to his left again, his entire upper body outside the bouncing, careening chariot, the great bay horse pulling the other three downward, had curled inside him only half a length behind as they exploded out of the curve into the far straight with eighty thousand people on their feet and screaming.

—a chariot race is neck-and-neck in *Sailing To Sarantium*, by Guy Gavriel Kay

While Fantasy lacks cars for characters to drive, you can recast this Skill in several different ways to make it applicable to the genre.

The first is *Teamster*, the ability to drive wagons and manage the teams of animals that pull them. Since this rarely requires any sort of combat application, the GM may just let characters buy the appropriate TFs (and use DEX Rolls to handle high-speed chases if they ever occur).

The second is *Charioteering*, the ability to steer a chariot and handle the animals pulling it. An important Skill for many ancient cultures (such as the Romans and the Irish), it could easily become a part of many Fantasy worlds.

The third is *Combat Sailing*. See *HERO System Vehicles* for more information on this Skill.

COMBAT PILOTING

Some Fantasy settings feature flying ships, flying carpets, and other aerial vehicles. In those games, characters would use Combat Piloting to operate and steer such vessels. Otherwise this Skill has no application in Fantasy games.

COMBAT SKILL LEVELS

Freeing his sword, he slashed savagely down on the neck of the man as he stooped in reflex and then pirouetted to drive his blade into the face of the next. ... Yelling loudly, he raised his sword overhead and, with swift right and left slashes, tore through their ranks.

—Feston ably defends the castle Iron Fist against attackers on the battlements in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Fantasy characters often buy Combat Skill Levels, particularly for weapons. Here are a few clarifications and additional rules. See also HSMA 199.

COMBAT SKILL LEVELS AND DRAWN WEAPONS

The GM decides whether characters must have their weapons drawn to apply Combat Skill Levels bought with those weapons. In most cases, it makes sense for the GM to rule that a character can't use his CSLs with a weapon unless he's drawn that weapon. However, in some cases it may be appropriate to allow a character to use weapon CSLs for some purposes (DCV, primarily) even if he hasn't drawn the weapon yet — for example, if he's expecting trouble but doesn't want to provoke anyone (or perhaps reveal his position) by unsheathing his blade first.

COMBAT SKILL LEVELS WITH MAGIC

A Combat Skill Level with a character's spells (or some subset of the character's spells, such as “Wind Magic”) is a 3-point or 5-point CSL, depending on how many spells it can apply to. Unless the GM rules otherwise, such a CSL can apply to both HTH and Ranged spells that are part of the defined group. With the GM's permission, spellcasters can also buy 8-point CSLs with *All Spells*.

CRYPTOGRAPHY

Espionage is a part of many Fantasy settings, and characters involved in spy escapades may often find use for Cryptography. The Skill applies normally against mundane codes. If a code or cipher involves magic (such as coded writing that periodically changes form), the character suffers a stiff penalty: -3, and often more; or decoding the text may simply be impossible without the magical command word.

Cryptography also crops up as a way for characters to read ancient, obscure, or dead languages. A wizard may buy the *Translation Only* (-½) version of the Skill so he can read old grimoires and scrolls, while a rogue may learn it so he can decipher inscriptions on tombs and directions on ancient treasure maps.

DEMOLITIONS

Demolitions is available as a Skill in Fantasy settings that feature gunpowder or other explosives. The GM may rename it *Sapper*, to reflect the fact that it's most often learned by sappers ("combat engineers" who tunnel under castle walls to place explosives designed to knock the walls down). Some alchemists may learn this Skill for dealing with volatile mixtures they create.

DISGUISE

The first door, wide open, showed an untenanted room full of racks of garments, rich and plain, spotless and filthy, also wig stands, shelves of beards and such, and several wall mirrors faced by small tables crowded with cosmetics and with stools before them. A disguising room, clearly.

—Fahrd and the Gray Mouser see the Thieves' Guild's disguising room in "Ill Met In Lankhmar," by Fritz Leiber

A character who wants to disguise himself to look like a member of another race may run into problems. It's hard for a two-armed, six foot tall human to make himself look like a four and a half foot tall dwarf, or a six-armed serpent-man. See pages HSS 173-76 for applicable rules and modifiers covering things height, posture, limbs, skin types, and other factors.

DIVINATION

This optional new Intellect Skill from HSS 355 is highly appropriate for Fantasy Hero. It works particularly well in lower-magic campaigns, like many Low Fantasy and Swords And Sorcery settings, where the efficacy of fortunetelling is dubious at best.

FAST DRAW

"He stands not alone," said Legolas, bending his bow and fitting an arrow with hands that moved quicker than sight.

—Gimli, Aragorn, and Legolas confront the Riders of Rohan in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Gamemasters may rule that a character cannot Fast Draw a weapon unless it's instantly or readily available. For example, a character with a strung bow or a cocked crossbow could use Fast Draw to draw and fire an arrow or bolt, but could not use Fast Draw to instantly string the bow or cock the crossbow. That's a form of weapon preparation, not "drawing" the weapon, so it means the weapon isn't "readily available" for use. (See also pages 196-98.)

FEINT

The optional new *Feint* Skill described on HSMA 200 is highly appropriate for Fantasy Hero campaigns, particularly Low Fantasy and Swords And Sorcery games that feature a lot of HTH Combat.

FORENSIC MEDICINE (EMBALMING)

A favorite Skill of necromancers and death-cult priests, Embalming allows a character to preserve a body against the ravages of time. For game purposes, assume a body decays completely in 1 Month. If a character makes his Embalming roll exactly, increase that to up to six months. For every point by which a character makes his Embalming roll, a corpse remains more or less undecayed for one step down the Time Chart.

At the GM's option, characters with Embalming can also make crude judgments regarding a person's cause of death.

HIGH SOCIETY (COURTIER)

"I became the bodyguard of a minor noble and observed from his retinue the workings of the court. I saw the whispered conversations, the hints of special knowledge, the alliances, the coercions, the allegiances that shifted with each interpretation of the actions of the king. It took me some while to understand the rules of the games at court, and once I learned I did not care to play."

—Cedric explains how he learned High Society in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Many Fantasy games rename High Society as *Courtier*. Courtier not only provides the standard benefits of High Society, but gives the character knowledge of, and insight into, court intrigues, politics, and personalities. For example, a character could make a Courtier roll to figure out who at court is an ally of the Queen, what sort of plot the Royal Wizard may be hatching based on his movements and contacts, or to remember the names of all the minor nobles from the western marches.

A character visiting a strange court may not be able to make full use of his *Courtier* Skill. If he has no prior knowledge of the names of nobles, learning them may take time regardless of how much his roll succeeds by, and he may not have the subtle understanding of court interactions that is so important to this Skill. The GM may impose penalties of -1 to -3, as appropriate. The same holds true when a character visits a court of another race. Appropriate KSs can negate these penalties.

After a shampoo and a rinse, Tamara was transformed from a light-skinned, golden-haired northerner to a nut-brown, black-haired southerner. Every time she got a glimpse of herself in the mirror, her reflection looked like some strange twin sister staring back at her.

—Tamara disguises herself to hide out from the city guard in "Black Lotus Moon," by Tom Moldvay





High Society can also help mystics treat with gods, faerie-folk, and other powerful supernatural creatures who value social graces (or at least proper subservience). Offending the king is bad enough; offending a god or spirit may make the character's life an unending hell (as Odysseus learned).

Courtier can also represent a character's skill at "social combat" — that is, at witty repartee and forcing one's enemies and rivals into embarrassing situations. Generally you should roleplay this sort of interaction, but in some circumstances the GM may want to have the "combatants" each make Courtier rolls, adding +1d6 to their Presence Attacks for each point by which the roll succeeds. Then they roll Presence Attacks; the character with the best result wins the "duel."

INTERROGATION (TORTURE)

In many Fantasy settings, gathering information from a prisoner isn't a very subtle process. Thus, most Fantasy Hero GMs rework this Skill as *Torture*, since it concentrates almost wholly on forcing a subject to talk by causing him physical pain.

Torture usually requires proper equipment (whips, knives, thumbscrews, the rack, the iron maiden, red-hot iron bars...), though a skilled torturer can improvise in a pinch. A character may buy a well-equipped torture chamber as a laboratory with a *Torture* Skill that acts as a Complementary to his own Skill.

INVENTOR (SPELL RESEARCH)

"Master Lectonil, I fear you disparage young Beliac here greatly. He does not compose the ritual elements into magic squares, it is true, but his constructions in three dimensions are made with equal rigor and have produced new objects and lines of research undreamed of just ten years ago."

—a magician of the Cycloid Guild defends Beliac's work on new types of magic in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

In Fantasy campaigns featuring gnomish tinkerers, alchemist-engineers, and the like, this Skill may apply in its normal manner. However, the GM should be careful not to let characters make too many wholesale changes to existing technology unless he's willing to change the nature of the campaign. A single invention like the stirrup, the *gastraphetes*, or gunpowder could completely alter the nature of warfare, castles, politics, or other aspects of the setting. See HSS 106 for some guidelines for normal use of Inventor that could also apply in Fantasy campaigns.

The artist was named Doctor Jest and the art he practiced was a performing art rather than a creative one (though he could argue otherwise with some conviction): the art of drawing secrets from those who kept them.

—**Doctor Jest tortures some southlanders to learn what they know of Imrryr's defenses in *Elric Of Melniboné*, by Michael Moorcock**

SPELL RESEARCH

In most Fantasy games Inventor usually functions as *Spell Research*, the Skill by which wizards and other spellcasters research and create new spells.

As a rule of thumb, researching a spell requires a minimum of 1 day per 10 Active Points in the spell (the GM may increase or decrease this time as he sees fit). This assumes access to a reasonably complete arcane library; worse/better libraries may add/subtract from the time needed. The character can also obtain bonuses by taking extra time beyond the required minimum.

At the end of the time period, the character makes a Spell Research roll, at a penalty of -1 per 10 Active Points in the spell (again, the quality and contents of the library may modify this penalty). If the roll succeeds, the character has created a new spell, which he must pay for according to the standard rules of the campaign. If it fails, he may have created the spell incorrectly and not know it (a disaster waiting to happen...), or he may simply not have found or created the spell.

Modifying an existing spell (say, to add an Advantage, remove a Limitation, or increase the dice of effect) is easier than creating one from scratch. The minimum time is 1 day per 20 Active Points, and the penalty to the roll is -1 per 20 Active Points. At the GM's option, the character can base the time and penalty only on the point cost difference between the two versions of the spell, rather than the overall points in the modified spell.

See Chapter Four for more information on magic and creating spells.

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

"I have sought knowledge beyond the dreams of ordinary men[.]"

—Anra Devadoris confronts Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser in "Adept's Gambit," by Fritz Leiber

Characters in Fantasy Hero games frequently buy Knowledge Skills. They broaden the character's background, link his other Skills together, and provide him with information and wisdom he might otherwise have trouble obtaining. Some examples of KSs common to Fantasy games include:

KS: Arcane And Occult Lore: This KS, virtually mandatory for wizards, represents a broad knowledge of the occult, arcane matters, and other topics of wizardly lore. A character might use it to identify a famous enchanted item (or even one not so famous), remember the name of a wizard who lives in a particular city, discern the relationship between two similar spells, or recite the Seven *Principia* of the Secret Sciences.

KS: Dragons: A character with this KS is well-versed in dragon-lore. He knows what types of dragons exist, their general attributes and habits, the names and histories of famous dragons, which dragons are currently alive (and where), and so forth.

KS: Flora And Fauna: The character has a broad knowledge of plants and animals — their properties, their behavior, whether they're edible (and if so, how to treat/prepare them). The GM may penalize the roll for environments the character hasn't spent a significant amount of time in (or require him to buy it by the same categories used for Survival, such as KS: Temperate Flora And Fauna).

KS: Heraldry: A valuable skill for captains and heralds, KS: Heraldry grants general knowledge of the coats of arms and other identifying symbols used by nobles and knights. A character would make a roll with it to recognize an obscure coat of arms, identify the meaning of a particular symbol within a coat of arms, and so forth.

KS: Herbalism And Healing-Lore: The character has extensive knowledge of healing practices and the properties of herbs. This Skill cannot substitute for Healing or PS: Healer, but is often Complementary to them.

KS: Legends And Lore: Often known by bards and wizards, this Skill reflects a character's knowledge of general lore, legends, and history. He recognizes names from myth and folklore, and can tell the stories that made them famous. He knows a lot of "old wives' tales" and may even discern the wisdom lurking within them.

KS: Orcs: The character knows all about orcs — their customs, fighting skills, tribes, culture (such as it is), and habits. In a confrontation with a group of orcs, this Skill may provide him with valuable insight or clues to help him defeat them. (A character could buy similar KSs for trolls, ogres, and the like.)

KS: Style Of Magic: A specialized form of KS: Arcane And Occult Lore relating to a particular type or school of magic, such as Necromancy, Demonology, Conjuraction, Alchemy, or Thaumaturgy. It provides the same sort of information, but in more detail about this one subject; the GM may allow the character to make a roll to identify well-known spells and enchanted items associated with that particular type of magic.

Given the scale of many Fantasy settings, the GM may want to use the "Specificity Of Knowledge Skills" rules on HSS 210 to determine the appropriate penalties for knowing obscure facts. On the other hand, characters should receive bonuses to know commonplace or noteworthy facts (or may not even have to roll to know them at all).



"There are few among mortal Men who know more of Orcs; and I do not hunt them in this fashion out of choice."

—Aragorn explains himself to Éomer in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

[After weeks of listening to the campfire talk of the Northmen, Ahmed finally speaks to them]

Herger the Joyous:

Where did you learn our language?

Ahmed ibn Fadlan:

I listened!

[Later, Buliwyf approaches Ahmed]

Buliwyf: You can draw sounds?

Ahmed ibn Fadlan:

Draw sounds?

Yes, I can draw sounds... and I can speak them back.

—Ahmed demonstrates his facility with languages and his literacy in the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*

In a second room, from which pushed air heavy with the reeks of metal and oil, older student thieves were doing laboratory work in lock picking. One group was being lectured by a grimy-handed gray-beard, who was taking apart a most complex lock piece by weighty piece. Others appeared to be having their skill, speed, and ability to work soundlessly tested — they were probing with slender picks the keyholes in a half dozen doors set side by side in an otherwise purposeless partition, while a supervisor holding a sandglass watched them keenly.

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser spy on the Thieves' Guild's lockpicking practice in "Ill Met In Lankhmar," by Fritz Leiber

LANGUAGES

"It is related, priest Harsan, that you have been anointed a Scholar Priest of the Second Circle. What was the Labour of Reverence that brought you to this exalted status?"

"My — my Prior, it was a study of the language of the ancient Empire of Llyan of Tsamra..."

"Would you then become a grammarian?"

"Languages come as easily to me, Sire, as swimming to a fish."

—Prior Harringgashte inquires into Harsan's knowledge of Llyani in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

Most Fantasy worlds feature a plethora of languages for characters to learn. Not only can races have multiple languages among themselves (much like humans on Earth have English, French, Norse, Swahili, and so on), but typically each race has at least one language unique to it. Thus, characters can become fluent in Dwarvish, Elvish, Goblin-speak, or even Draconic!

Some other languages that occur in many Fantasy settings include: Common (a "common tongue" spoken extensively throughout the world, usually developed for purposes of trade and travel [and to save GMs and players the difficulty of roleplaying communications problems]); Thieves' Cant (a heavily developed argot used by thieves, assassins, and the like, usually limited to subjects of interest to them); and wizards' tongues (special languages developed for spellcasting, wizardly communication, talking with spirits, or the like).

In most Fantasy campaigns, characters aren't literate by default. They must pay +1 Character Point for the ability to write a language (or, at the GM's option, to write any language they've paid Character Points for). On the other hand, in some campaigns, such as ones focused on the doings of nobles and courtiers in a highly-developed medieval society, the GM may want to give all PCs Literacy for free.

Gamemasters who enjoy creating languages for their Fantasy worlds may also want to develop a Language Familiarity Table showing the relationship between the various languages. This not only helps to "flesh out" the setting, it encourages characters to take languages by providing a slight cost savings. And don't forget that some Fantasy languages (such as the tongues of demons or elementals) may be so "alien" to characters that they cost extra.

LOCKPICKING

Jorian felt for the keyhole on the outer side of the lock plate and inserted the wire. His hand shook so that he could hardly find the hole. Manipulating the wire from inside the cage proved awkward, but after some fumbling the bolt clicked back.

—Jorian frees himself from Rhithos's cage in *The Goblin Tower*, by L. Sprague de Camp

A classic ability of the burglar, explorer, and other types of rogues, Lockpicking functions normally in the Fantasy genre — though the locks are more primitive than modern security devices, so are the tools used to pick them, which keeps the playing field level. The accompanying text box provides suggested modifiers for various types of locks.

But Fantasy thieves have to contend with something more than just the quality of the lock: magic. The GM must decide whether a character with mundane Lockpicking abilities can pick magical locks, or magically sealed mundane locks. The answer typically depends on the nature and type of the spell/enchanted item involved. If the spell simply enhances an ordinary lock, then normal Lockpicking can probably open it — though there's a penalty to the roll (that's how such a spell would be built, as Change Environment to impose penalties on Lockpicking). If the spell magically seals or locks something (a door, a chest, or the like), then ordinary Lockpicking probably *cannot* open it, no matter how skilled the character is — countermagic spells are required. As a good rule of thumb, if the spell imposes penalties on the Lockpicking roll, allow one at the indicated penalty. If it uses some other method (Telekinesis or Barrier, for example), then Lockpicking won't work; characters need countermagic instead.

LOCKS

Type Of Lock	Lockpicking Modifier
Poor quality	+1
Average quality	-0 to -3
Above Average quality	-4 to -5
High quality	-6 to -7
Very high quality	-8 to -9
Superb quality	-10 or greater

Alternately, if the GM prefers, he can require a Skill Versus Skill Contest to determine the outcome of a Lockpicking attempt. A Poor lock has an 8- roll, and an Average one an 11- roll; every step down the table below Average adds +3 to the roll.

See HSS 226 for detailed information and rules about Lockpicking.



MARTIAL ARTS

Martial Arts are a common feature of Fantasy games. Not only is it possible to have Asian-like cultures with “traditional” sorts of unarmed martial arts (like the Haruchai from Stephen Donaldson’s “Thomas Covenant” novels), but weapon-based styles proliferate.

HERO System Martial Arts has hundreds of real-world styles you can use in your Fantasy Hero games (including a section about Fantasy Martial Arts on pages 226-29 with five example styles). If you want styles appropriate to a European-style setting, take a look at Arte dell’Abbracciare, Bojutsu (Staff-fighting), Boxing (Ancient), Dirty Infighting, Fencing, Kampfringen, Khridoli, Knifefighting, Naginatajutsu/Sojutsu (as “Spearfighting”), Stickfighting, Swordfighting, Weapons Combat, and perhaps Pankration, Savate, Whipfighting, or Zipota. If you need Asian flavor, you have dozens of additional choices. If necessary, you can rename the art and its maneuvers to suit your Fantasy setting.

The Weapons Combat style works well for most types of heavy weapons fighting. But if you want, you can go so far as to come up with individual fighting styles for specific weapons or weapon combinations. See Knifefighting and Swordfighting in HSMA for two examples.

MECHANICS

In most cases, Mechanics isn’t an appropriate Skill for Fantasy games; Fantasy worlds typically have no engines to work on. However, characters could still use this Skill for such chores as building and repairing wagons, siege engines, winches, millwheels, and the like. In campaigns featuring

magicomechanical engineering and the like, Mechanics may become a fairly common Skill. As with Inventor, the GM should not allow characters to use Mechanics to make world-altering technological changes, unless that’s what the GM wants.

NAVIGATION

“Dawn will be with us soon,” Moonglum said. “The Orgian citadel lies six hours’ ride from here by my working, south-south-east by the Ancient Star, if the map I memorized in Nadsokor was correct.”

“You have an instinct for direction that never fails, Moonglum. Every caravan should have such a man as you.”

—Elric compliments Moonglum’s navigational skills in *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, by Michael Moorcock

In most Fantasy settings, characters can only buy the Land and Marine forms of Navigation, since air and space travel don’t exist. Unless the setting has fairly sophisticated clocks and compasses, characters must typically rely on the stars and natural landmarks to find their way successfully. If they cannot perceive these things for some reason (such as bad weather), they should suffer a -3 (or greater) penalty to their rolls (if they’re allowed to roll at all).

In games involving aerial vehicles or mounts, or planar travel, the Air and Dimensional versions of Navigation also become available. A flying character, or character who frequently uses flight spells, could also buy Navigation (Air).

[Olga cleans Ahmed's wound]

Ahmed ibn Fadlan:

Ow!

Olga: That is a woman's sound. ...

Ahmed [softer]: Ow.

Olga: You complain much.

Ahmed: What is that?

Olga: Cow urine.

Ahmed: Cow urine?

Olga: Boiled down.

Ahmed: No, no. Don't put that filth on

me. Water, clean water.

Olga: As you wish.

Tomorrow the pus will run, and you'll have a fever.

—Olga applies her healing skills to Ahmed's injury in the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*

When Ged knelt and put his hands on the child, he thought [it was the redfever, and that the child would die that night], and he drew back a moment. In the latter months of his own long sickness the Master Herbal had taught him much of the healer's lore, and the first lesson and the last of all that lore was this: Heal the wound and cure the illness, but let the dying spirit go.

—Ged considers whether to use his healing spells in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

PARAMEDICS (HEALING)

Later they stopped, dismounted, and Zarozinia put herbs that Elric had given her upon Moonglum's wounded arm and began to bind it.

—Zarozinia ministers to Moonglum's injury in *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, by Michael Moorcock

"Now he is a marvel, the Lord Elfstone: not too soft in his speech, mind you, but he has a golden heart, as the saying is; and he has the healing hands."

—Ioreth comments on Aragorn's healing skills in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Healing, the Fantasy version of Paramedics, allows characters to perform basic medical chores. When treated as a "scientific" discipline, it may be known as *Chirurgieon* instead. In most Fantasy societies, there's no formal training for doctors, so a character with this Skill *is*, in effect, a doctor — someone the community looks to for healing and medicines.

Healing includes some knowledge of folk remedies and herbalism as well as medical procedures for repairing wounds and so forth. In some settings, this Skill may also involve the use of minor healing magics: ritual chants, hedge magic-type spells, potion-like poultices, and so forth. If so, these are a function of the Skill roll; the character isn't required to buy any spells in addition to Healing.

Realistically, Fantasy-era medicine is spotty at best. While healers and chirurgieons could perform some basic tasks (treating minor illnesses, setting broken bones, stitching up light wounds), much of their "science" was based on utterly incorrect notions of how the body worked, what caused (and cured) diseases, and so forth. In many cases, the "treatments" involved were either completely ineffectual, or did far more harm to the patient than good. As a result, almost anyone who suffered a serious wound, or contracted a serious illness, was as good as dead — it just took a few hours or days for him to die.

But of course, many Fantasy Hero games aren't all that realistic. In the interest of drama and adventure, it's perfectly appropriate to let characters use Healing to effect minor "repairs" (restoring perhaps 1 BODY per wound treated; see 6E2 122). This includes preventing infection, something medieval medicine was often quite poor at. After all, it's not very heroic to be laid low by gangrene and fever instead of the swords of one's enemies or the fire of a dragon!

PENALTY SKILL LEVELS

Fantasy characters often buy Penalty Skill Levels; they're a good way to reflect a high degree of combat skill without increasing overall OCV. For example, archers frequently buy Range Skill Levels, and Targeting Skill Levels remain popular with warriors of all stripes. Three Targeting Skill Levels ensure the character can always strike his opponent's chest, yielding good STUN damage with Killing Damage weapons.

Another form of PSL for Fantasy games is *Riding Skill Levels*. A character on a mount suffers a -2 OCV penalty (6E2 31) for fighting from horseback (griffinback, dragonback, giant eagleback...). Riding Skill Levels halve or remove that penalty.

In campaigns where the GM imposes a DCV penalty for wearing armor, he may also allow characters to buy *Armor Skill Levels* to cancel that modifier. See page 225.

See the *Talents* section, below, for several abilities built with PSLs.

POISONING

The optional *Poisoning* Skill from HSS 367 is appropriate for many Fantasy characters (such as assassins) and games (such as a city- or politics-based game where killing off one's rivals is an acceptable way of getting ahead).

POWER

The *Power* Skill takes three primary forms in Fantasy games:

Magic: The first is *Magic*, which many campaigns use as the Required Skill Roll for spellcasting. Typically this only represents a character's ability to cast spells or use magical abilities; it doesn't involve knowing any arcane lore or the like (that requires a Knowledge Skill of some type). It's usually based on INT, but that may vary depending on the magic system in the campaign (see page 281). (See page 281 for more information on using this Skill within magic systems.)

Faith: The second is *Faith*, sometimes instead known as *Prayer* or *Miracles*. Priests make a roll with this Skill to invoke the power of their gods and "cast spells." It's usually based on EGO, but that, too, may vary.

Fighting Tricks: The third is *Fighting Tricks*, which is bought by melee-oriented characters to represent their ability with a chosen weapon. This can be Archery Tricks, Brawling Tricks, Dagger Tricks, Sword Tricks, Axe Tricks, or tricks with any other specific weapon the character wields. Characters must buy *Fighting Tricks by specific weapon type*; they cannot buy the Skill to apply to all weapons. (For these purposes, "Brawling" — the use of the fists to fight — counts as a "weapon," provided the character doesn't have an unarmed Martial Arts style.) See *Fighting Tricks*, page 186, for more information.

PROFESSIONAL SKILL

As with Knowledge Skill, Professional Skill occurs frequently in Fantasy games, since characters often learn how to perform a wide variety of minor chores as they're growing up. Some possible Fantasy-based PSs include:

Appraiser: A character with this PS knows how to evaluate the worth and quality of items of value, such as artwork, jewelry, gemstones, and the like (in short, the sorts of things PCs tend to find as treasure). If the character makes his roll exactly, he estimates the value within 3d6% (the GM decides whether the estimate is too low or too high). If he makes it by 1, he's within 2d6%; if by 2, within 1d6%; if by 3 or more, he knows the exact value. If he misses the roll, he wildly mis-estimates the item's value, to his detriment. (Alternately, the GM may require characters to use Trading to appraise the value of goods; see HSS 339.)

Avener: A person in charge of a stable. Should also have Riding, or at least TF: Equines.

Bailiff: The high-ranking servant in charge of overseeing a manor. He may simply be responsible for household management and accounts, or he may have some authority over local laws and courts. A *Steward* or *Seneschal* holds the same job in a castle or large demesne.

Beggar: A poor person who must seek alms from others. He knows who to approach for a handout, and how; he usually also has Persuasion and Survival (Urban).

Blacksmith: An ironworker, capable of forging tools, nails, horseshoes, and the like. He must have Armorsmith or Weaponsmith to create weapons and armor, since those are specialized crafts.

Other types of smiths common in medieval settings include Coppersmiths, Goldsmiths, Silversmiths, and Tinsmiths. In a Fantasy world, some smiths might specialize in magical metals or substances such as elven-silver or blood iron (see page 209).

Bookbinder: In societies where books are fairly common or plentiful (such as many High Fantasy worlds), a bookbinder creates blank books for people to write in, or binds written pages together to form a book. Many priests and wizards learn this trade as part of their training.

Brew Poison: A character with this PS can brew poisons. See HSEG for information on creating poisons.

Brewer: Someone who brews beer. In Fantasy Hero games, this PS may also cover the skill of distilling harder liquors.

Carpenter: A person who can build wooden structures, furniture, and other objects with tools. Related professions include Cabinetmaker, Shipwright, and Woodworker.

Champion: A fighter-for-hire who participates in trials by combat for money. If he loses, he suffers

the same punishment as whoever hired him. In most times and places, champions were poorly regarded; they and their children usually have a Social Complication reflecting this.

Chandler: A candle-maker.

Clockmaker: In settings with technology advanced enough to create clocks, this person makes them (usually for wealthy nobles and merchants).

Cooper: A barrel-maker.

Cordwainer: A shoemaker and, to some extent, worker in leather.

Cutler: A knife-maker and -sharpener. He also made or sharpened other tools, such as scythes and scissors.

Innkeeper: A person who owns and operates an inn (if it's just a tavern, he's a Tavernkeeper). He usually has several related PSs, such as Baker and Brewer — or at least has workers who do.

Jewelrymaker/Lapidary: A worker in gems. He can inlay precious stones on objects, create beautiful jewelry, and so forth. He may have PS: Goldsmith as well, or work closely with a goldsmith.

Lawyer: A person well-versed in the law who prepares writs and contracts, and in appropriate settings represents clients in court.

Leatherworker: One who crafts clothes and other items of leather. He can create leather, cloth, and hide armors; this takes approximately 6 hours per point of PD the armor provides. The Leatherworker roll suffers a penalty equal to the armor's PD. Fixing damaged leather, cloth, or hide armors takes roughly 10-20% percent of this time, based on how badly damaged the armor is.

Mercenary: A soldier-for-hire, very common in some war-torn Fantasy settings. In addition to copious military Skills (WFs, Combat Skill Levels, perhaps even Martial Arts), he probably has Tactics and several Area or City Knowledges.

Painter: An artist who paints portraits, murals, and the like. Similar Skills include Sculptor, Limner, Enameler, and so forth.

Peddler: A wandering low merchant and dealer in small goods, a vital economic link for villages too small or isolated to have true merchant traffic. In wartime, a peddler may serve as a spy or courier, in the process developing some espionage-related Skills.

Poacher: A person who illegally hunts and kills game (such as the deer in the King's Forest, where only the king himself may hunt). Typically has WF: Bows, Tracking, Stealth, and Survival.

Scribe: A professional writer/reader who makes money because he has Literacy and most people in Fantasy societies do not. He might work "freelance" in the marketplace, or serve as a secretary or clerk for a noble or institution. Some scribes

"We make good armour and keen swords, but we cannot again make mail or blade to match those that were made before the dragon came. Only in mining and building have we surpassed the old days."

—Glóin tells Frodo of the skills of the Dwarves of Dale in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

"My father was Evor the clockmaker[.] He tried to apprentice me in the making of clepsydras. But my hands, while steady enough on bridle, sword, plow, or tiller, proved too big and clumsy for such fine work. I mastered the theory, but the practice eluded me. ... Next he apprenticed me to Fimbri the carpenter, in Ardamai. But after a month Fimbri sent me home with a bill for all the tools that I, not having yet learnt to control my strength, had broken. Then my father apprenticed me to Rubio, a merchant of Kortoli..."

—Jorian tells Rhithos the Smith of his early failures to learn a trade in *The Goblin Tower*, by L. Sprague de Camp



also interpreted laws or worked as lawyers. A Scribe must have Literacy.

Shepherd: A person who herded and looked after sheep. Similar professions include Swineherd and Herdsman (cattle).

Sheriff: From “shire reeve,” this term refers to a local judicial official responsible for enforcing the laws in a district or region (a shire), and for overseeing the local court system. Appointed by the local noble or the king, he served at that person’s pleasure. He often had one or more assistants working with him, and could become a major local power.

Siege Engineer: The character knows how to conduct engineering operations, such as undermining walls or “zeroing in” a catapult, pertaining to a siege.

Stew-holder: The owner and operator of a brothel.

Tailor: A person who sews, repairs, and decorates clothing.

Tinker: A person who repaired, and sometimes made, small metal items. Many were travelers like peddlers (or peddlers themselves), though large towns or cities could support a tinker shop or two.

Usurer: A person who loans money for interest (in other words, a sort of medieval loanshark). Most usurers should take Money, and a Social Complication to represent the fact that other people despise them (and, historically, the Roman Catholic Church denounced them).

Wainwright: A person who made and repaired carts and wagons. Should also have PS: Carpenter and Mechanics.

Wireworker: A person who makes, and sometimes works in, wire. The process of drawing wire was developed on Earth in or about the early 1300s, but may occur much earlier in societies that have magic.

RIDING

“But I say,” pleaded Shasta, “If I’m not to hold on by the reins or by your mane, what am I to hold on by?”

“You hold on with your knees,” said the Horse. “That’s the secret of good riding. Grip my body between your knees as hard as you like; sit straight up, straight as a poker; keep your elbows in.”

—Bree the Narnian horse teaches Shasta how to ride in *The Horse And His Boy*, by C.S. Lewis

First Duncan saw the griffin and then he saw the woman who rode it, and for a moment he stood rooted to the ground.

The woman was dressed in leather breeches and a leather jacket, wore a white stock at her throat. In her right hand she carried a battle axe, its blade glistening in the sun. ...

The griffin cocked its large eagle head at Duncan, appraising him with a glittering golden eye. ... Its huge wings were folded far back and high, leaving room for its rider.

—Duncan Standish and his friends meet Diane in *The Fellowship Of The Talisman*, by Clifford Simak

Since mounted travel and combat are so commonplace in Fantasy settings, Riding is an important and common Skill. In routine circumstances, a character can ride any mount for which he has a Transport Familiarity without making a roll. Things like a pleasant ride or gallop through the countryside, pulling a wagon full of hay, or jumping a small obstacle for fun don’t require a Skill Roll. Only when the character tries something unusual, or is in stressful conditions (such as combat or an emergency), does he have to make a roll to ride. See HSB 17-19 for advanced rules for Riding.

SCIENCE SKILL

Science Skills don’t occur frequently in most Fantasy settings; methods of thinking about the world hadn’t often reached “scientific” levels of accuracy and knowledge during the low-tech periods most Fantasy games emulate. Some SSs that might be appropriate would include Astrology, Alchemy, Mathematics, Metallurgy, Natural Sciences, and Philosophy.

In High Fantasy games, or games featuring magicomechanical technology, Science Skills may become more prevalent. Specialization could develop as sages and scholars study the cultures of other races or delve in ruins for lost lore (Anthropology, Archaeology), examine the properties of different rocks and minerals (Mineralogy), expand upon healers’ knowledge of herbs (Botany), or make systematic study of local animals (Zoology). Dwarfish and gnomish tinkers might have some Engineering-related SSs.



SECURITY SYSTEMS

Saris examined the wooden door, using a magnifying glass to inspect the lock mechanism.

“I can pick the lock easily,” he announced. “But disarming the traps will take a bit of time. As far as I can tell, this lock is not only protected by a poison needle trap, which is fairly standard, but by a second trap. I can see the edge of a small tube pointing through the lock into this room, so I assume the second trap triggers some sort of sleeping gas or poison dust. I know how to disconnect both traps, at least in theory.”

—Saris prepares to disarm some traps in “Black Lotus Moon,” by Tom Moldvay

Thieves and burglars know and use this Skill to detect and disarm mechanical traps — concealed pits and deadfalls, poison-coated pins and darts, collapsing ceilings, and so forth. See HSS 271-75 for numerous examples and additional rules.

As with Lockpicking, the GM must decide whether an ordinary Security Systems roll suffices to find or disarm a magical trap. If the magic involves penalties to Security Systems rolls, usually a Skill Roll (at the listed penalty) will find or disarm the trap; otherwise, it probably won't.

SLEIGHT OF HAND

In one room young boys were being trained to pick pouches and slit purses. They'd approach from behind an instructor, and if he heard scuff of bare foot or felt touch of dipping hand — or, worst, heard clunk of dropped leaden mock-coin — that boy would be thwacked. Others seemed to be getting training in group-tactics: the jostle in front, the snatch from behind, the swift passing of lifted items from youthful thief to confederate.

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser watch the Thieves' Guild teaching thieves pickpocketing in “Ill Met In Lankmar,” by Fritz Leiber

A favorite of thieves and tricksters everywhere, Sleight Of Hand has many applications in Fantasy settings.

The first is picking pockets and slitting purses. Larcenous-minded characters may work the crowds on the streets of a Fantasy city or in a Fantasy bazaar, helping themselves to whatever unobservant victims happen to be carrying. You can find basic rules for picking pockets on 6E1 89, or more advanced, detailed rules on HSS 303.

The second is slipping poison into someone's food or drink during a meal. To do this, a character has to get close enough to the food or drink to touch it, then find an excuse to reach near the

food or drink so he can covertly drop the poison in. In game terms, you can run this as a Skill Versus Skill Contest pitting Sleight Of Hand versus a PER Roll, coupled with a bit of roleplaying.

The third is a way for spellcasters to disguise what they're doing with confusing gestures or prestidigitation. At the GM's option, a character who has a spell with the Limitation *Gestures* can hide those gestures from onlookers by making a Sleight Of Hand roll at -1 per 10 Active Points in the spell.

SPELL

In some Fantasy Hero campaigns, the magic system requires spellcasters to buy each spell as a Skill. See page 268 for more information, including suggested costs.

SURVIVAL

“[W]e can't last the night here without a fire. It gets too cold. ... Unless you have some magic that would keep us warm, or that would hide the fire...” ...

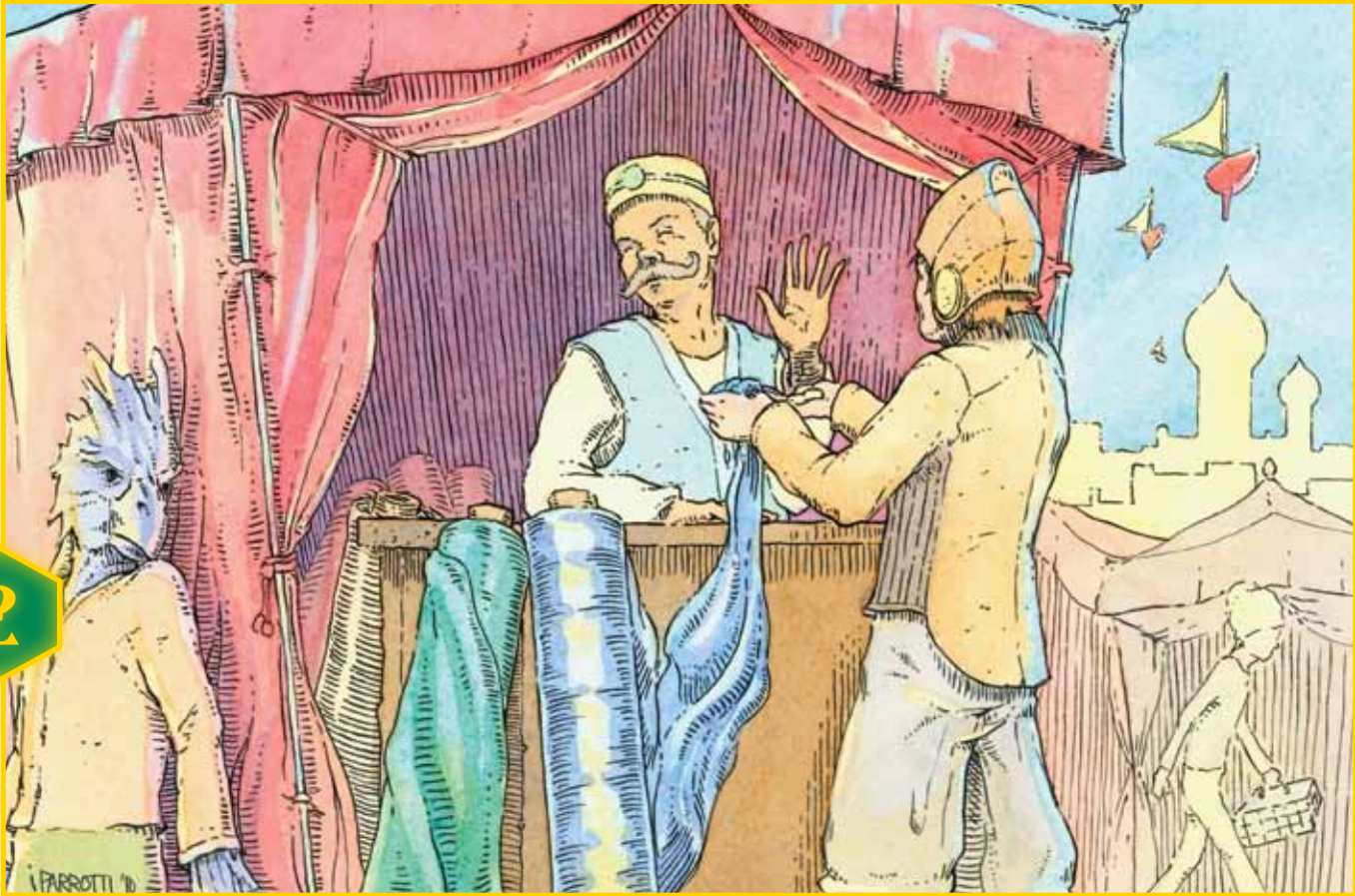
“Brr,” he said. “A fire is much better than magic.”

—Tenar builds a fire to keep herself and Ged alive in *The Tombs Of Atuan*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

This Skill is quite common among Fantasy characters, who often spend a great deal of time in the outdoors and must hunt and forage to survive. (In fact, in some campaigns the GM may make Survival with a single environment subcategory an Everyman Skill.) Since Fantasy wildernesses usually hold far greater perils than wild areas in mundane settings (dragons, man-eating plants, venomous flying tree-squids...), GMs may want to give characters with Survival a greater chance to avoid those perils. A Survival roll, perhaps at an appropriate penalty, tells the character what the prominent local dangers are, and some ways to protect himself from them. For example, a ranger exploring the Chekuru Jungle might be aware that the chief dangers it holds are the fire-fever (a deadly disease of unknown origin) and the fierce jungle leopard. He also knows that keeping a smoky fire burning at night helps to stave off fire-fever, and that the fire also tends to scare away the nocturnal leopard — thus giving him an edge over someone who doesn't have Survival.

In Fantasy games featuring a lot of dungeon-delving and exploration of “lands” below the surface, characters can take *Underground* as a 2-point environment category for Survival. A character with Survival (*Underground*) knows how to make and use crude light sources, what sort of dangers caves and caverns hold, where to find water and food underground, which types of cave-fungus are edible, and so forth.





And the captain [was wrath,] for the merchant had offered him a price for his merchandise that the captain declared to be an insult to himself and his country's gods[.] But the merchant waved his hands, which were of great fatness, showing the pink palms, and swore that of himself he thought not at all, but only of the poor folk in the huts beyond the city to whom he wished to sell the merchandise for as low a price as possible, leaving no remuneration for himself.

—the captain of *Bird of the River* and a merchant of *Perdondaris* negotiate a sale in “Idle Days On The Yann,” by Lord Dunsany

SYSTEMS OPERATION

This Skill generally has no applicability in pre-industrial settings, such as Fantasy campaigns, though it would apply in games featuring magico-mechanical technology or the like. In more traditional Fantasy settings, the GM might allow characters to buy Systems Operation to reflect their knowledge of, and ability to use, low-tech signaling systems (signal fires, semaphore-type flags, drum networks, and the like). Additionally, the GM might require characters to use Systems Operation to work complex siege engines, instead of just buying a Weapon Familiarity.

In High Fantasy games with copious magic, it's possible that wizards would buy Systems Operation (perhaps renamed) as the Skill with which to use crystal balls and similar enchanted items. They might even have the ability to engage in “magic warfare” instead of electronic warfare as they jam other wizards' communication spells, perform divination rituals to pinpoint enemies to target with attack spells, and so forth.

TRADING

The defining Skill of merchants and their ilk, Trading is also often known by craftsmen, alchemists and wizards who sell enchanted items, and thieves who have to dicker with fences for their pay. In a Fantasy culture that conducts transactions based mainly on barter, characters may find this Skill less useful, since it's not as easy to split a horse or a barrel of beer as it is to negotiate a price change.

WEAPON FAMILIARITY

“No, no, no,” the taller of the two growled. “If he thrusts with both hands equally extended, push your staff perpendicular to it. If you do not, he will slide around your guard and drive home like this.” With these words he dropped his left hand from his stick and, swinging with his right, soundly thumped it against the ribcage of his opponent.

—Warmaster Cedric gives the young nobleman Dartilon a lesson in staff-fighting in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Weapons combat is important to most Fantasy campaigns, making this Skill a crucial one (even mandatory for many types of characters). That may mean that charging only 2 Character Points for the ability to use a large number of weapons is unbalanced, or at least makes too many characters too similar. In that case, the GM may want to consider expanding the WF rules in some way. Perhaps the most extreme possibility is to make every weapon in the list on pages 190 and 195 a separate WF, though that leads to some illogical outcomes (like a character knowing how to use longwords but not bastard swords, or hammers but not maces). A simpler solution might be to remove Common Melee Weapons and Common Missile Weapons as 2-point categories and make each of their subcategories a 2-point category.

A character with WF can perform *basic* maintenance and upkeep on the weapons he knows how to use — things like keeping them clean, sharpening them, and the like. He cannot repair broken weapons, modify or customize the weapon, perform major maintenance, or the like; that requires Weaponsmith.

WEAPONSMITH

Regin worked for days in his smithy and Sigurd never left his side. At last the blade was forged, and when Sigurd held it in his hand fire ran along the edge of it.

Again he laid the shield that had the image of the Dragon upon it on the anvil of the smithy. Again, with his hands on its iron hilt, he raised the sword for a full stroke. He struck, and the sword cut through the shield and sheared through the anvil, cutting away its iron horn.

—the sword Gram, given to the Volsungs by Odin, is re-forged from its broken halves, as recounted in *The Children Of Odin*, by Padraic Colum

This Skill becomes very important in most Fantasy Hero games, with their emphasis on armed combat. Typically the only categories that apply are Muscle-Powered HTH and Muscle-Powered Ranged, though a setting with gunpowder would allow for Firearms, and one featuring alchemical firebombs might let characters buy Incendiary Weapons.

EXPANDING THE WEAPONSMITH CATEGORIES

Some GMs may find “Muscle-Powered HTH” and “Muscle-Powered Ranged” categories far too broad for the type of game they want to run. For a more detailed Fantasy version of Weaponsmith, use these categories instead (the character still gets one for free when he buys the Skill; additional ones cost 1 Character Point apiece):

- Arrows, Bolts, And Darts
- Axes And Picks
- Bows
- Crossbows
- Flails
- Maces And Hammers
- Spears And Polearms (includes javelins, lances)
- Swords And Daggers

WEAPONSMITHING TIMES

The accompanying table lists the modifiers and times required to build a weapon from scratch. This assumes sufficient tools (anvil, hammers, carving knives, and the like) and supplies of metal or wood; if this is not the case, the GM should extend the time required and/or increase the modifier, as appropriate.

Example: *Dougal has Weaponsmith (Swords And Daggers) 13-. He wants to make a longsword for his friend Drago. The GM rolls a 3, so it will take 11 hours.*

Dougal decides to make Drago a particularly well-balanced sword, one with the “Accurate” feature. That imposes a -2 on his roll and increases the time necessary to 22 hours.

WEAPONSMITHING TIMES

Type Of Weapon	Modifier	Time
Arrow/Bolt	-1	½ hour
Axe	-1	2 + 1d6 hours
Bow	-3	2 + ½d6 hours
Crossbow	-4	3 + 1d6 hours
Dagger	-2	4 + 1d6 hours
Flail	-3	4 + 1d6 hours
Hammer	-0	1 + ½d6 hours
Lance	-1	2 + ½d6 hours
Mace	-1	2 + 1d6 hours
Pick	-1	2 + ½d6 hours
Polearm	-2	2 + ½d6 hours
Sword	-3	8 + 1d6 hours
Throwing Blade	-2	2 + 1d6 hours

Modifier: The penalty to the Weaponsmith roll needed to successfully create the weapon. If the character fails the roll, the weapon may still work, but less well — reduce the DCs of damage it can cause by 1 per point by which the character failed the roll.

Time: The amount of time needed to make the weapon. The lower end of the range assumes the best tools and facilities, few (if any) interruptions, and perhaps the help of apprentices. The upper end of the range assumes either a lack of these things, or taking extra time to make the weapon as good as possible, add decorative touches, and so forth.

For one-and-a-half-handed weapons, multiply the listed time by 1.2. For two-handed weapons (other than polearms and lances), multiply the listed time by 1.5.

Fine Weapons: For each “fine” or “masterwork” feature, or Advantage, the weaponsmith wants to add to the weapon (see page 209), increase the modifier by -2. For the first such feature, multiply the time required by 2; for each additional feature, add .5 to the multiplier.

Poor Weapons: For each “poor” feature, or Limitation, the weaponsmith adds to the weapon (see page 209), reduce the modifier by 1 (minimum of -1 for weapons with -3 or -4 modifiers, minimum of -0 otherwise) and the time by half an hour.





PERQUISITES

Most Perks are appropriate for Fantasy Hero campaigns. Anonymity and Computer Link generally are not, since most Fantasy settings lack extensive records and computers.

CONTACTS

Fantasy characters can have many different types of Contacts — local lords and officials who help them out from time to time, innkeepers and bards who provide them with the latest news and gossip, priests and wizards who use magic powers on their behalf, high-ranking members of the Thieves' Guild, and so forth. The accompanying table lists cost modifiers for typical Contacts.

FANTASY HERO CONTACTS

Contact	Cost
Lord/noble, minor (1-4)*	+1 (very useful Skills/resources)
Lord/noble, major (5-9)*	+2 (very useful Skills/resources)
Lord/noble, powerful (10-14)*	+3 (extremely useful Skills/resources)
Lord/noble, very powerful (15+)*	+4 (extremely useful Skills/resources, access to major institution)
Priest	+1 (access to major institution) (if appropriate)
Spellcaster	+1-2 (very useful Skills/resources)
Spellcaster, powerful	+3 (extremely useful Skills/resources)
Temple/church	x3 (organization)
Thieves' Guild	x3 (organization)

*: The numbers in parentheses indicate the value of the Contact's **Fringe Benefit: Lordship** Perk in points. For example, a Duke has 8 points of Lordship, so he counts as a "major noble" and therefore costs at least +2 points. The GM may increase or decrease the modifiers as he sees fit for specific characters or to better suit his campaign.

For the **Lordship** Fringe Benefit, substitute Military Rank or Religious Rank if appropriate.

SPIRIT CONTACTS

At the GM's option, some characters (primarily certain types of spellcasters) can use Contact as a form of *faux* conjuration. Instead of using Summon, the character represents his relationship with a spirit, faerie, demon, god, or the like by buying him as a Contact.

"Spirit Contacts" automatically have *at least* very useful abilities or resources (+1, or more). If they can call on others of their kind, consider that equivalent to "access to major institution" or "significant Contacts of his own" (+1 in either case). If they have a good relationship with the character, add +1-2 points; if they're slavishly loyal, add +3. If he can access a group of spirit Contacts (such as "any nature spirit"), he must apply the x3 multiplier for "organization Contact."

After making all additions, subtractions, or other multiplications, the character must apply a "spirit Contact multiplier" to the cost. The lowest multiplier, for the weakest sort of spirit Contacts, is x2. The GM may increase the multiplier proportionately to the power of the spirit Contact. While an ordinary nature-spirit or imp might cost only x2, a magically powerful faerie or minor demon would be x3-x5, and a powerful demon or god could be x6 or more.

A character may only be able to get in touch with his spirit Contact at a particular place, during a particular time, or after performing a specific task or ritual. This generally doesn't merit any cost savings, though the GM can grant one if it seems appropriate. Any such preparations do not count as "devoting substantial time" to finding the spirit Contact.

When a character wishes to speak with his spirit Contact, he must take any necessary preparations and then make his roll. If the roll fails, the Contact does not respond. If the roll succeeds, the Contact responds, and now the character must somehow persuade him to do what the character wants. Don't forget the Contact Modifiers Table! Since the character has to negotiate with his Contact for services or assistance, the modifiers in the Table may come into play frequently.

2

"I mean, look," he continued, "you've built up, from scratch, a spy ring that's one of the best in the Jhereg..."
 "Not true," I cut in. "I don't really have a spy ring at all. There are a lot of people who are willing to give me information from time to time, and that's it. It isn't the same thing."

—Vlad Taltos dissembles to Kragar in *Jherag*, by Steven Brust

FAVOR

Favor plays an especially prominent role in Fantasy Hero games. Many adventures start with repaying a Favor, and many NPCs prefer to bestow Favors for services rendered rather than money or enchanted items. If the PCs save the life of a powerful wizard, the king, or someone of similar prominence, the Favor they obtain is worth far more than gold in the right circumstances. It's just up to the GM to create those circumstances later in the campaign....

In some Fantasy cultures, Favors arise frequently — in fact, entire economies might depend on them, rather than on money or barter. In such situations, refusing a Favor, or refusing to grant one when appropriate, could constitute a grievous insult (one which the PCs will undoubtedly have to perform some heroic task to undo).

FOLLOWER

Vetch marveled at the little creature, and once put up his hand to stroke it, but the otak snapped its sharp teeth at him. He laughed. "They say, Sparrowhawk, that a man favored by a wild beast is a man to whom the Old Powers of stone and spring will speak in human voice."

"They say Gontish wizards often keep familiars," said Jasper, who sat on the other side of Vetch. "Our Lord Nemmerle has his raven, and songs say the Red Mage of Ark led a wild boar on a gold chain."

—Vetch and Jasper discuss Ged's familiar, the otak, in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

...and above the door there hung the head of a unicorn in which dwelt the familiar demon of Malygris, in the form of a coral viper with pale green belly and ashen mottlings.

—a description of the familiar of Malygris, greatest wizard of Atlantis, in "The Last Incantation," by Clark Ashton Smith

Although not as common as kid sidekicks in Golden Age Champions adventures, Followers appear frequently in Fantasy literature and games. Some of the most common include:

Animal Companion: Druids, rangers, and "beastmaster" type characters often have animal companions. Typically the animal not only looks impressive, it serves some purpose — it can fight, perform reconnaissance, or otherwise assist the character. Some common animal companions include hawks (or other raptors), wolves, hunting cats, bears, and serpents.

Apprentice: Wizards often have young apprentices to assist them with chores and their other mundane needs, and sometimes an apprentice

gets to go on an adventure. Apprentices may have a minor magical power or two, but generally shouldn't be built on more than half the Total Points their master is built on (and often much less).

For "apprentice," you can easily substitute other young assistants, such as the temple acolyte who serves a priest, or a young thief-in-training who accompanies a rogue.

Faithful Steed: A particularly common form of animal companion, the faithful steed is a well-trained (and sometimes magical) horse who serves a character (usually a warrior of some sort). The faithful steed often has the intelligence to understand spoken commands well, and can fight viciously if necessary.

Familiar: Wizards often have small animals as familiars, or magical companions. Some legends claim the familiar whispers in the wizard's ear, teaching him spells and imparting arcane lore; other people say the presence of the familiar enhances the wizard's powers. In any event, a familiar can provide the same services as an ordinary animal companion. To create one, apply the *Familiar* template (HSB 30) to an ordinary animal; you may also want to increase the animal's INT or add other abilities. See also page 274.

Squire: The squire is, in essence, an apprentice to a knight or other warrior. He polishes and maintains his master's armor and weapons, sees to his master's horse, makes camp, and performs other menial chores in exchange for being taught the fighting arts. Squires have some military skills, but generally shouldn't be built on more than half the Total Points their master's built on (and often much less).

FOLLOWERS, CONTACTS, AND DNPCs

You should take care to distinguish between Followers, Contacts, and DNPCs when buying a "secondary" character for your main character.

A Follower is, generally speaking, extremely loyal and devoted to the character, and does whatever he says. He is with the character pretty much all the time (or at least, whenever the character wants him). He tends to be a well-developed character, with his own personality, history, and abilities.

A Contact, even a "slavishly loyal" one, differs from a Follower in several ways. First, he's not always available. Second, he won't necessarily do *anything* for a character, the way a Follower will. Followers are more well-rounded, more developed, and more in the player's sphere of control. Contacts have a certain ambiguity about them; they're just not quite as reliable.

A DNPC, regardless of his exact in-game relationship with the PC, exists primarily to cause the character difficulty. He's available when the GM needs him to be, and does what the GM needs him to; the PC has no actual control over him at all. He may have some handy Skills or resources, but even with those the trouble he causes should outweigh his usefulness.

The animal was gigantic, a stallion the size of a Percheron but with more graceful build, sleek and black as polished midnight. It was not tethered, though an elaborate fringed pair of reins hung from a headstall chased with silver and arabesques. On its back was a saddle, high in pommel and cantle, also of ornamented leather; a sweeping silken blanket, white with an embroidered black eagle; and a bundle of some kind[.]

—Holger Carlsen meets his companion, the noble warhorse Papillon, in *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, by Poul Anderson



For example, consider Bertrand the squire. If Bertrand loyally accompanies his master Sir Dinsmore everywhere, does what's asked of him without complaint, and would risk his life for Sir Dinsmore if necessary, he's probably a Follower. If he's clumsy, stubborn, uncooperative, lazy, takes unnecessary risks (requiring Sir Dinsmore to rescue him), or otherwise acts as a constant source of aggravation and distraction, he's probably a DNPC. If he stays back at the castle while Sir Dinsmore goes about on errantry, he may function more as a Contact than anything else.

FRINGE BENEFIT

While many Fringe Benefits are helpful in a Fantasy context, a few require special mention: Lordship; Military Rank; Membership: Religious Rank; and Membership: Guild Member.

LORDSHIP

Ahmed ibn Fadlan: *What do you suppose the potentate of this camp calls himself?*

Melchisidek: *Oh, emperor, at the very least.*

— Ahmed sardonically comments on the smallness and roughness of the Northmen's encampment in the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*

The *Lordship* Fringe Benefit represents a character's position in, and authority deriving from, a government or other rulership hierarchy. Many Fantasy societies have political structures similar to the feudal governments of Western Europe, but many other types of governments or series of positions could apply — indeed, enterprising GMs could even make up their own, entirely new ones! The accompanying table contains suggested

Fringe Benefit values for positions based on Earth cultures; GMs can use this table as inspiration and a guideline for their own cultures if necessary. (The relationships between the various titles and ranks are often approximate; precise correlation isn't always possible.)

Most nobles, particularly in Fantasy literature, are wealthy; they should have the *Money Perk* (see below), and often a *Base* (a demesne with a manor house, castle, or the like) as well. However, more than a few down-on-their-luck nobles, with little more to their names than their titles, have existed throughout history; such characters could easily find their way into your Fantasy Hero game.

On the other hand, the privileges of nobility come with responsibilities. If a noble holds land, he must take care of the peasants who live on it (though some nobles honor this duty more in the breach than the observance). He also has to pay taxes. Whether he owns land or not, he owes service to his liege lord. Depending on the time and place, this can range from significant responsibilities (fight for his lord, maintain a road) to the trivial or symbolic (bring his lord a rose on New Year's Day every year). His lord may call upon him to go on a quest (or a crusade), or give him the power to administer Low Justice (*i.e.*, to judge minor disputes among lower-ranking persons; in *HERO System* terms this requires another Fringe Benefit).

A noble who neglects his duties — particularly the paying of taxes and rendering of military service — incurs his lord's displeasure, and perhaps punishment. Depending on the severity of the offense, he may be required to pay a fine or provide a special service; if appropriate, the lord may strip him of his title and give it to another person (in which case, the character does not get back the Character Points he spent on the Perk).

LORDSHIP TABLE

Value	Culture			
	Western Europe	Germanic	Arabian, Turkish	Indian
1	Squire	Junker		
2	Knight, Chevalier	Ritter		
3	Baronet, Seigneur	Ritter	Sheik	Nawab
4	Baron, Thane	Freiherr, Baron		
5	Viscount	Waldgraf	Pasha	
6	Earl, Count	Graf, Landgrave	Bashaw	
7	Marquis	Margrave, Pfalzgraf	Bey	
8	Duke	Herzog	Amir, Emir, Dey, Atabeg	
9	Grand Duke	Grossherzog		
10	Prince	Fürst		
12	Crown Prince	Prinz		
15	King	König	Shah, Sultan, Malik	Rajah, Nizam
20	Emperor	Kaiser	Padishah, Caliph	Maharajah

The relationship of ranks from different cultures is, in many cases, approximate at best. Different cultures and regions applied the same title in different ways, sometimes even from one tribe to the next, making any valid comparison little more than a guesstimate.





MILITARY RANK

“I will stay a half year with you — perhaps more — if you’ll have me. Not as a captain, though. It would not be fitting for me to take high rank from you; there are those here who have earned it.”

“None more than you. ... Let’s see. Suppose you go back in Arcolin’s cohort [as a corporal].” ...

An hour later, Paks had a sword at her side and the maroon tunic of Phelan’s Company on her back.

—Paksenarrion rejoins her old mercenary company in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

In some Fantasy settings, military ranks are a part of being a noble (*i.e.*, of the *Lordship* Fringe Benefit), but in most the privilege of commanding an army, navy, or part thereof is separate from *Lordship*. (This is particularly true for settings in which large companies of mercenaries play an important role.) Some commoners can rise far through the ranks of the military, and a noble only gets high command if the king awards it to him. See the accompanying table for suggested Fringe Benefit costs for typical Fantasy military ranks.

“Remember, the Thieves’ Guild is powerful in our city: to make your living as a thief here you must join the guild, or fight both your brother thieves and the city guard each time you attempt a robbery. And to enter the guild, you must pay a heavy fee in gold.”

—Kaman Thuu reminds Thongor of the way things are in “Thieves Of Zangabal,” by Lin Carter

MEMBERSHIP: RELIGIOUS RANK

Characters who belong to large religious organizations — churches, temples, cults, and the like — need a form of Membership, *Religious Rank*, to reflect that. The accompanying table gives suggested values based on Earth religions; GMs should adjust it and change the titles to suit the campaign setting.

The benefits to *Religious Rank* are many. In addition to the support of the organization, a cleric can usually find food and shelter when traveling (either from local churches and temples, or from faithful who take him in for the night). He usually receives a degree of respect and deference from others, even nobles. See page 383 for more information.

Any character with this Fringe Benefit must also buy the *Right To Marry* Fringe Benefit.

MEMBERSHIP: GUILD MEMBER

Trade guilds flourished in many cities in medieval Europe, and equivalent organizations existed elsewhere. Fantasy literature and games often expand upon this concept, creating Thieves’ Guilds, Assassins’ Guilds, Mages’ Guilds, and the like.

Belonging to a guild confers several benefits. First, it gives the character the right to practice a particular profession or sell a particular type of good within that guild’s area of authority (as defined by its charter, usually granted by the king or a similar official). Second, it gives the character access to the guild’s collective knowledge and wisdom regarding guild-related matters. Third, it allows him access to resources he otherwise could not afford. For example, a trade guild can put together an expedition to a far-off country by allowing the members to buy shares, whereas no single member could afford to mount that expedition on his own.

MILITARY RANK TABLE

Value	Rank
1	Corporal
2	Sergeant
3	Lieutenant
4	Captain
5	General
6	Marshal

GMs should adjust this chart for cultural context and army size. The overall leader of a tiny army shouldn’t necessarily pay for the full General or Marshal rank, and the war-leader of a tribe of orcs or a band of Vikings shouldn’t either.



RELIGIOUS RANK TABLE

Value	Rank
1	Monk
2	Local Priest
3	Priest
4	Abbot, archimandrite
5	Bishop, High Priest
6	Archbishop
7	Cardinal
8	Leader of the religion: Pope, Patriarch, Dalai Lama, archpriest, or the like

These values assume a religious organization that’s an important societal institution. If a church wields great political influence (such as in a theocracy), the GM may require priests to also pay for “noble” title to represent their secular authority. If the church is weak or powerless, this Fringe Benefit may cost less.

GUILD MEMBER TABLE

Value	Rank
1	Apprentice
2	Senior Apprentice
3	Journeyman
4	Senior Journeyman
5	Master Craftsman/ Merchant

On the other hand, guild membership comes with certain responsibilities. Typically the character must pay dues, either a flat fee or some percentage of his annual sales. The guild may call on him to use his wisdom and experience to help junior members, or require him to take on apprentices. If the guild becomes involved in a trade war, he has to help fight it whether he wants to or not.

The accompanying table has suggested values for guild membership. These values assume a relatively large and prosperous guild; reduce the cost for less well-off guilds, and increase it for extremely large, powerful guilds. A successful guild member may also need to buy Money, Contacts, and other Perks.

MONEY

The treasure was there, heaped in staggering profusion — piles of diamonds, sapphires, rubies, turquoises, opals, emeralds; zikkurats of jade, jet and lapis lazuli; pyramids of gold wedges; teocallis of silver ingots; jewel-hilted swords in cloth-of-gold sheaths; golden helmets with colored horsehair crests, or black and scarlet plumes.

—Shevatas the thief finds a wondrous treasure-hoard... and then dies at the hands of its guardian in “Black Colossus,” by Robert E. Howard

Buliwyf: *I have only these two hands. I will die a pauper.*

King Hrothgar: *You will be buried as a king.*

Buliwyf: *A man might be thought wealthy if someone were to... draw the story of his deeds, that they may be remembered.*

Ahmed ibn Fadlan: *Such a man might be thought wealthy indeed.*

—Buliwyf laments his lack of worldly goods, but recognizes a greater wealth, in the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*

As in any Heroic game, the *Money* Perk has importance in Fantasy Hero because characters can buy lots of equipment with money instead of Character Points. However, since each Fantasy setting has a different economy, currency, and such, the GM has to define how much wealth each level of Money grants. See page 366 for more information.

Here, it was said, the half-demoniac sorcerer had carved a mountain's pinnacles into walls, domes, and turrets, and had leveled the rest of the mountain to a flat space about them. This space he had covered with loamy soil, produced by magic; and therein he had planted curious baneful trees from outlying worlds, together with flowers that might have been those of some exuberant hell.

—a description of a wizard's sanctum in “The Maze Of Maal Dweb,” by Clark Ashton Smith

Since many classic Fantasy stories involve a quest for treasure or valuable objects, GMs may not want to let a character start the game with too much Money — otherwise, what incentive does the character have to adventure? While there are lots of excellent ways for characters to spend money (repairing dragon-ravaged villages, donating to worthy causes, buying a round of ale for the house to celebrate a great victory, purchase their own ship, and so forth), it's also quite possible that characters will want to use their money to buy better armor, weapons, enchanted items, and other things that could cause significant problems in the game. In Fantasy fiction it's almost unheard-of for characters to keep the great wealth they find; inevitably they can't take it with them or it somehow gets snatched away.

POSITIVE REPUTATION

“I have come to you, alchemist Saxton, because I have inquired carefully and the street gives you the reputation of an honest man.”

—Alodar explains his decision to learn alchemy from Saxton in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Positive Reputation is a perfectly appropriate Perk for Fantasy Hero games. Powerful wizards, skilled assassins, mighty warriors, and wily rogues can all make a name for themselves in the annals of the fantastic. However, since news, and thus reputations, spreads much more slowly in most Fantasy settings due to the low level of communications technology, GMs may forbid characters to buy Positive Reputations beyond a medium-sized group. (This wouldn't necessarily apply in High Fantasy settings where crystal ball transmissions take the place of television, wizards talk with each other frequently by means of spells, or other means of rapid news transmission exist.)

VEHICLES AND BASES

Because Fantasy Hero is a Heroic genre, GMs should generally allow characters to buy Vehicles and Bases with money, rather than Character Points — though characters are always free to spend points on these Perks if they prefer.

Vehicles in Fantasy campaigns can take many forms: chariots; magic-powered wagons; ships of every size and style; flying carpets; hot air balloons; teleportation cabinets; dragon-pulled air-carriages; magicomechanical walking golems with space inside for a “driver”; and many more. See *HERO System Vehicles* for examples of many such craft (or technological examples you can easily convert to “magic vehicles”). A clever GM may use a Vehicle as the springboard for an adventure — what happens, for example, when the characters' Vehicle goes wildly off-course, stranding them in a strange and hostile land?

The archetypal Base in Fantasy settings is the castle. Ranging from the prosaic and mundane (Iron Age hill-forts, grey stone castles), to glittering palaces of marble, to castles and towers that float through the air by magic, they provide shelter, comfort, and defense. The grounds, often extended to vast sizes, represent the castle owner's demesne. At the GM's option, a character may have to pay more for a demesne (grounds) that are especially productive and valuable, or which occupies a particularly defensible location. See the accompanying table for costs, and *The Ultimate Base* for extensive rules on creating castles and other Fantasy Bases in the *HERO System* (including several examples).

DEMESNE TABLE

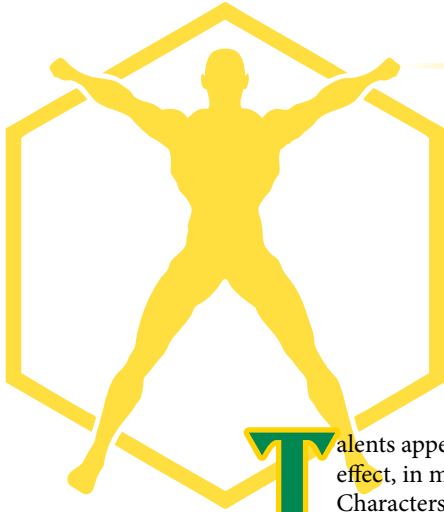
Cost	Resources/Condition
+0	Uninhabited <i>or</i> very poor resources
+20	Lightly developed/inhabited <i>or</i> poor resources
+40	Average developed/inhabited <i>or</i> average resources
+80	Heavily developed/inhabited <i>or</i> good resources
+100	Extremely developed/inhabited <i>or</i> very good resources

Cost	Location
-10	Difficult to defend location
+0	Average location
+10	Easily-defended location

As he approached through the slim alabaster columns of the arcade, Chan observed the famous [aerial] gondola[.] The slim-hulled boat was constructed of light, polished wood: perhaps twenty feet from stem to stern; it was equipped with three comfortable chairs bound firmly to the inner structure with leather thongs. A silken canopy shielded the occupants from the sun and elements, raised on twisting, gilded poles. ... Chan had heard much of the famous vessel but had never chanced to see it before, and much less to venture upon the unstable winds therein.

—a description of Doctor Pellsipher's renowned flying boat from "The Twelve Wizards Of Ong," by Lin Carter





TALENTS

Talents appear frequently, and to great effect, in many Fantasy Hero games. Characters in the Fantasy genre often tend to have minor abilities and powers that you can easily simulate with Talents, be they existing Talents or new ones created just for Fantasy campaigns.

COMBAT LUCK

This Talent works well for any Heroic genre, including Fantasy in particular. By providing a way for characters to have some innate Resistant Defense, it keeps them from dying too quickly during ambushes, assassination attempts, and other situations when they might not wear armor. It could represent a wily thief's enhanced ability to dodge, a minor protective spell cast on a character by a wizard, the divine protection of the god a character worships, or many other things.

The defense provided by Combat Luck adds to other types of defense, including worn armor. Because of this, the GM may want to restrict armor-wearing characters' ability to buy this Talent — it could make them too tough. If the unarmored or modestly-armored light fighter, rogue, and wizard can have Combat Luck, but the thickly-armored heavy fighter cannot (since he's already got plenty of PD/ED from his armor), the game may have a better defensive "balance."

COMBAT SENSE

Often referred to in a Fantasy context as "blindfighting," this Talent works well for races used to sensing things without their eyes (such as some Deep races), warriors who frequently fight at night or in dark dungeon corridors, and the like.

DANGER SENSE

Some intuition or perhaps a charm warned Kandive when Turjan slipped through the purple hangings. Kandive leapt to his feet. "Go!" he ordered the girl. "Out of the room quickly! Mischief moves somewhere near and I must blast it with magic!"

—Kandive's spells alert him to peril in "Turjan Of Miir," by Jack Vance

In Fantasy settings, Danger Sense most often occurs as a mystic ability possessed by wizards, or "divine insight" granted to a priest by his god. However, experienced warriors and rogues often take the Intuitional form of this Talent to represent their well-honed ability to perceive threats. "Something's not right here...."

EXISTING TALENTS

The following notes, suggestions, options, and guidelines apply to existing Talents for *Fantasy Hero*. Talents not mentioned generally function as described in 6E1, though some (Absolute Time Sense, Lightning Calculator, and Speed Reading, for example) are rarely appropriate.

ANIMAL FRIENDSHIP

Morgon sat down on a bench beside them. The dog left Aia to scent him curiously, and he realized then with a slight shock, that it was a wolf. Other animals lay curled by the fire: a red fox, a squat badger, a grey squirrel, a pair of weasels white as snow in the rushes.

Aia said tranquilly as she scratched the wolf's ears gingerly, "They come in from the winter, Har's friends."

—from *The Riddlemaster Of Hed*, by Patricia McKillip

This Talent is very common in Fantasy — moreso than any other genre. It's appropriate for rangers, druids, lycanthropes, and many other types of characters who associate closely with animals.

BUMP OF DIRECTION

Dwarves, members of Deep races, and other characters who live (or spend a lot of time) underground frequently have this Talent. It represents their innate ability to find their way without normal visual cues like the movement of the sun. It's also handy for rangers, mariners, and other characters who do a lot of traveling, since Fantasy-era maps are often notoriously unreliable.

TALENTS AS SPELLS

If a character wants to buy a Talent as a spell, he should apply the necessary Power Modifiers to the cost of the Talent itself. He doesn't have to re-build the Talent as a Power and then create his spell. He should only do that if he wants to make significant changes to the Talent, or the GM requires him to for some reason.

DANGER SENSE

He considered the idea of having Yyrkoon secretly assassinated, but he knew that such a plan would almost certainly come to nothing. Yyrkoon was a sorcerer of immense power and doubtless would be forewarned of any attempt on his life.

—Elric considers how to deal with his troublesome cousin in *Elric Of Melniboné*, by Michael Moorcock

DEADLY BLOW, WEAPONMASTER

These two related Talents are tailor-made for light fighters, rogues, assassins, and many similar characters. By redefining them slightly (and changing some of the Limitations used to build them), they're also appropriate for spellcasters who are particularly adept at casting certain types of attack spells, or using magic in certain situations.

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Many forms of Environmental Movement work well in Fantasy settings. An Inuit-like people might have Icewalking; some forms of mer-men have Environmental Movement: Land (costs 4 Character Points); many thieves and rangers take Supreme Balance because of their climbing skills; and many a comedic Fantasy character suffers no drunkenness penalties.

Characters accustomed to moving and fighting in forests and other wilderness areas often buy a form of Environmental Movement called *Thicketmaster*. It cancels the penalties for being in undergrowth, thickets, or the like (-2 DCV, -1 OCV, similar to Cluttered/Cramped areas), and costs 4 Character Points.

If a character naturally comes from an unusual environment, the GM may allow him to define his home environment as his "default environment." In that case, he doesn't suffer any of the penalties associated with that environment, but does suffer penalties on normal land (hence the Environmental Movement: Land version of this Talent mentioned above). This most often applies to aquatic races, who define the water as their default environment.

SIMULATE DEATH

This Talent has several uses in the Fantasy genre. First, it can represent a magical ability of wizards, priests, and some magical creatures to "sleep" for long periods (centuries, even). Second, some mystic martial artist or monk characters gain this ability by learning to consciously control the autonomic functions of their own bodies.

STRIKING APPEARANCE

"Of course Raederle can't live on a farm. She is the second most beautiful woman in the three portions of An[.]"

—Rood of An fails to assuage Morgon of Hed's worries about winning the hand of Raederle of An in *The Riddlemaster Of Hed*, by Patricia McKillip

This Talent is highly appropriate for Fantasy Hero campaigns. Women in Fantasy are frequently described as beautiful, and often know how to make their beauty work in their favor...

UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR

This Talent most often appears in Fantasy settings in "comprehend speech" or "read any language" spells. The GM should also buy this Talent normally for demons, faeries, gods, and similar magical beings, representing their arcane ability to understand any speech or writing.

NEW TALENTS

The following Talents appear in many Fantasy campaigns. As always, the GM should review and approve them before allowing PCs to buy them.

To make it easy for GMs and players to adapt these Talents to different Fantasy settings, these new Talents are presented using the standard HERO System ability template, with options where appropriate. As noted in the templates, some of them cost END to use. Some require the character to succeed with some sort of Skill Roll (usually a form of Power: Fighting Tricks, such as Archery Tricks). Typically these abilities should be subject to Skill Versus Skill Contests using the same Skill, so that skilled characters can have tense duels or confrontations with one another, but the final decision on that's up to the GM.

This section certainly doesn't exhaust the possibilities for new Talents and similar abilities in Fantasy Hero! For example, Chapter Three of HSMA has dozens of martial arts-related special abilities that would adapt well to many Fantasy settings, as would some of the Heroic Talents in *Pulp Hero*.

BEAR HUG

Effect: NND for up to 20 STR
Target: One character
Duration: Instant
Range: No Range
END Cost: 2
Skill Roll Penalty: -2

Description: Following a successful Grab, the character squeezes his opponent so hard and so quickly that he forces all the air from the victim's lungs — sometimes merely stunning the opponent, other times causing him to pass out. A breastplate stops a Bear Hug, but less rigid armor like a chain shirt doesn't.

Game Information: NND for up to 20 STR (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing] or rigid covering over the torso [Hit Locations 10-12]; +1) (20 Active Points); Must Follow Grab (-½), Requires A Brawling Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 10 points.

UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR

[Pharesm] brought forth a wad of tangled gray tissue. "In order to facilitate your search I endow you with this instrument which relates all possible vocables to every conceivable system of meaning." He thrust the net into Cugel's ear, where it swiftly engaged itself with the nerve of consonant expression. "Now," said Pharesm, "you need listen to a strange language for but three minutes [for you to] become proficient in its use."

—the sorcerer

Pharesm gives Cugel the ability to understand any language in *The Eyes Of The Overworld*, by Jack Vance



STRIKING APPEARANCE

"I find her quite appealing, at least from this distance."

Dhrun said pensively, "Someday a man will look deep into her blue eyes and there he will drown, and never be saved."

—Aillas and Dhrun discuss the Princess Madouc in *Madouc*, by Jack Vance

BEAST SPEECH

The king was full of odd wizardry, Morgon discovered. He could speak to owls and wolves.

—Morgon learns of Har's ability to talk to certain beasts in *Harpist In The Wind*, by Patricia McKillip

"Can you speak with all the animals? Those birds yesterday, and bees —"

"It's a Kuakgan's craft to learn the nature of all creatures: trees and grass as well as birds, beasts, and bees.

When you know what something is ... you can then begin to speak its language."

—Master Oakhollow explains one of his druidic powers to Paksenarion in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

BERSERK FURY

In an instant he was the center of a hurricane of stabbing spears and lashing clubs. But he moved in a blinding blur of steel. Spears bent on his armor or swished empty air, and his sword sang its death-song. The fighting-madness of his race was upon him, and with a red mist of unreasoning fury wavering before his blazing eyes, he left skulls, smashed breasts, severed limbs, ripped out entrails, and littered the deck like a shambles with a ghastly harvest of brains and blood.

—an enraged Conan fights a shipful of pirates in "Queen Of The Black Coast," by Robert E. Howard

BEAST SPEECH

Effect: Telepathy 4d6 (Animal class of minds), Communication Only

Target: One animal

Duration: Instant

Range: No Range

END Cost: 0

Description: Like Dr. Doolittle, the character can "talk to the animals." This doesn't guarantee they'll respond, be amicable, or comply with his requests, but it often helps to establish friendly relations... particularly if the character offers the animal some food.

When a character uses this Talent, he speaks to the animal with his normal speech (which other characters can hear, and understand if they know it). The animal responds using its speech, which sounds like ordinary animal sounds to others (barks, meows, growls, squeaks, and the like), but which the character can understand as speech.

When a character purchases this power, the GM must decide how well animals communicate. It's most fun, and most in keeping with the genre, to make them nearly as intelligent as humans (if not equally or more so), and thus to allow them to communicate with full comprehension. Gamemasters desiring greater "realism" may have animals' conversation turn constantly to subjects that interest them (e.g., food and warmth).

Of course, this Talent isn't necessary in Crossworlds or High Fantasy games with talking animals; everyone can already speak to animals in such settings.

Game Information: Telepathy 4d6 (Animal class of minds), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (30 Active Points; No Range (-½), Communication Only (-¼), Incantations (throughout; -½), Perceivable (-¼). Total cost: 12 points.

BERSERK FURY

Effect: Aid STR 3d6, Side Effect (character becomes Berserk)

Target: Self

Duration: Instant

Range: Self

END Cost: 2

Description: The character has the ability to work himself into a bloodthirsty rage while in combat. When he becomes berserk, his Strength increases and he feels less pain, but he also loses the ability to distinguish friend from foe; he simply attacks the person nearest to him with the most powerful attack he can muster, and he never takes defensive actions.

Game Information: Aid STR 3d6 (18 Active Points); Only Aid Self (-1), Only When Fighting (-½), Side Effect (automatically becomes Berserk in combat while Aid remains in effect, can only make 11- recovery rolls after all Aided points fade; -½), Cannot Be Used Again Until All Points Fade (-¼) (total cost: 5 points) **plus** Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25% (15 Active Points); STUN Only (-½), Only When Fighting (-½), Side Effect (-½), Linked (lasts only as long as Aid lasts; -½) (total cost: 5 points). Total cost: 10 points.

Options:

- 1) *Weakening Berserk:* Some forms of Berserk Fury described in legend and literature leave the berserker exhausted and weak as a kitten after his rage leaves him. To simulate this, apply a second Side Effect (automatically suffers Drain STR and CON 3d6 when all Aid points fade, points return at the rate of 5 per 20 Minutes; -2) to the Aid. This reduces the cost of the Talent to 8 points.



BULL RUSH

Effect: Does Knockback for up to 20 STR, Only With Move Throughs

Target: One character

Duration: Instant

Range: No Range

END Cost: 1

Skill Roll Penalty: -1

Description: The character is skilled at charging an opponent, taking him off his feet, and tossing or knocking him aside, whether by coming in low and grabbing his legs or simply by using brute force. Normally, characters can only do Knockdown; with this Talent a character can do Knockback when performing a Move Through.

Game Information: Does Knockback (+¼) for up to 20 STR (5 Active Points); Only With Move Throughs (-½), Requires A Brawling Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 2 points.

CATCH AND RETURN

Effect: Reflection, Only Versus Thrown Objects

Target: Self

Duration: Instant

Range: Self

END Cost: 1

Skill Roll Penalty: -1

Description: The character is so familiar with daggers, and has such well-honed reflexes, that he can snatch a dagger (or like object) thrown at him out of the air and throw it back at his attacker in one smooth motion.

Game Information: Reflection (30 Active Points' worth) (20 Active Points); Only Versus Thrown Objects (-¾), Requires A Dagger Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 9 points.

COMBAT ARCHERY

Effect: +5 OCV with Bows, Only To Prevent Hitting Non-Enemies When Firing Into Melees

Target: Self

Duration: Constant

Range: Self

END Cost: 0

Description: A character with this Talent is an expert at firing arrows into melee — he can do so with much less risk of accidentally hitting a friend or ally.

In game terms, this Talent provides +5 OCV with Bows that only serves to prevent the character from accidentally hitting non-enemies when firing into a melee. If he fires into a melee and misses, but misses by 5 or less, he does not hit his intended target, but he does not hit any friends either (he could still hit another enemy, as described by the rules on 6E2 43-44). If he misses by 6 or more, he still accidentally hits someone other than his intended target.

At the GM's option, characters can buy this Talent for other types of attacks than archery — Combat Knife Throwing, for example — by re-defining what the Combat Skill Levels apply to.

Game Information: +5 OCV with Bows (15 Active Points); Only To Prevent Hitting Non-Enemies When Firing Into Melees (-2). Total cost: 5 points.

Options:

- 1) *Less Skillful Combat Archery:* The character has to succeed with an Archery Tricks roll to get the OCV bonus. Add Requires An Archery Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 4 points.

COMBAT SPELLCASTING

Effect: +3 OCV with one spell

Target: Self

Duration: Constant

Range: Self

END Cost: 0

Description: The character is adept at casting a particular spell in battle. He has practiced with that spell extensively to increase his accuracy with it.

Game Information: +3 OCV with one spell. Total cost: 6 points.

Options:

- 1) *True Combat Spellcasting:* Some “battle mages” have an even greater ability to cast spells in combat. They receive a +3 OCV bonus with *all* spells they cast. Change to: +3 OCV with All Spells. Total cost: 24 points.

CRIPPLING BLOW

Effect: Drain Physical Abilities 1d6

Target: One character

Duration: Instant

Range: No Range

END Cost: 4

Skill Roll Penalty: -4

Description: A character with this Talent knows how to strike blows that cripple, or inflict other long-lasting harm on, his targets. By hamstringing an enemy, he can reduce that enemy's ability to walk or run. By striking a blow to the arm, he can reduce a target's manual dexterity and ability to attack accurately. A thrust to the right vital organ can reduce a target's health and hardiness. However, healing magic or methods can reduce the effects of this attack.

In game terms, this Talent allows a character to use various Drains against a target — Drain Running, Drain DEX, and Drain CON, in the above three examples. The character must have a bladed weapon to do this, and the attack does not also inflict BODY damage (it just causes a Drain). The GM decides what types of Drains he will and will not allow a character to make with this Talent. The victim can heal the injury more quickly via magic, surgery, or the like: every point of BODY



EVASIVE

In a fourth [room], the floor was padded in part and instruction was going on in slipping, dodging, ducking, tumbling, tripping, and otherwise foiling pursuit.

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser observe the Thieves' Guild training its members in evasive techniques in "Ill Met In Lankmar," by Fritz Leiber

obtained by applying Healing (either the Skill or the Power) to the injury removes 2 points of the Drain effect.

Crippling Blow requires a successful Skill Roll to use. This example assumes the character's using daggers to attack, but a character can buy different versions of this Talent by redefining the Limitations. At the GM's option, he can define it as working with any bladed weapon by redefining the OIF and changing the Required Skill to a DEX Roll.

Game Information: Drain Physical Abilities 1d6, Variable Effect (any physical body-based power one at a time, see text; +½), Delayed Recovery Rate (character heals the damage as if Recovering BODY; +2¾) (42 Active Points); OIF (daggers of opportunity; -½), Healing BODY Heals Effect (see text; -½), No Range (-½), Requires A Dagger Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 14 points.

Options:

- 1) *Skillful Crippling Blow:* The character's such a skilled HTH combatant that he can automatically inflict a Crippling Blow. Remove Requires A Dagger Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 17 points.
- 2) *Crippling Shot:* The character can perform a Crippling Blow attack by shooting the target with arrows, or hitting him with thrown daggers. Change to OIF (bow and arrows of opportunity) and Requires An Archery Tricks Roll (or Dagger Tricks, depending); and change No Range (-½) to Range Based On Bow (-¼) (or on STR, depending). Total cost: 15 points.
- 3) *Crippling Punch:* The character inflicts crippling injuries with his bare fists! Remove OIF (-½) and change to Requires A Brawling Tricks Roll. Total cost: 17 points.

DIVINE FAVOR

Effect: Luck 3d6, Only When Serving The God's Purposes

Target: Self

Duration: Persistent

Range: Self

END Cost: 0

Description: A god or gods looks out for the character, blesses him, protects him from harm, and provides other assistance... at least some of the time, and only as long as the character serves the god's purposes.

"Divine favor" or "the blessings of the gods" could justify an almost limitless number of abilities you could represent as Talents. This particular version uses Luck, but many other possibilities exist (such as various types of Skill Levels).

Game Information: Luck 3d6 (15 Active Points); Only When Serving The God's Purposes (-½). Total cost: 10 points.

Options:

- 1) *Strong Favor:* Increase to Luck 5d6. 25 Active Points; total cost 17 points.
- 2) *Weak Favor:* Decrease to Luck 2d6. 10 Active Points; total cost 7 points.

EVASIVE

Effect: Desolidification, Only To Protect Against Attacks, Character Must Abort To Use

Target: Self

Duration: Instant

Range: Self

END Cost: 6

Skill Roll Penalty: -3

Description: The character has a special knack for dodging blows, deadly traps, and sometimes even spells at the last second.

In game terms, this Talent functions as Desolidification that only serves to protect the character from damage — and only when he Aborts and makes a Required Skill Roll. The special effect is that the character ducks, dodges, or otherwise avoids the attack. If that's not possible (as with area-affecting attacks), this Talent won't work.

Game Information: Desolidification (affected by any Area-affecting attack), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); Only To Protect Against Attacks (-½), Character Must Abort To Use (-1), Instant (-½), Requires A DEX Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -¼). Total cost: 18 points.

FASCINATION

Effect: +25 PRE, Only To Make "Stop And Listen To Me" Presence Attacks

Target: Self

Duration: Persistent

Range: Self

END Cost: 0

Description: A character with this Talent has such a melodious voice, or such a knack for speaking or singing, that he can almost instantly attract an audience. He has a harder time getting the attention of distracted people (people who are in the middle of a battle, for example), but sometimes his power even works on them.

In game terms, this Talent provides +25 PRE, only for making Presence Attacks with a single command: stop what you're doing and just listen to me. If the character achieves a PRE +30 result, the affected beings do nothing but listen to him (at lesser levels of effect, they may only listen for a Phase, at most, as indicated by the Presence Attack Table). Once the character stops talking or singing, the effects of the ability fade rapidly (sometimes instantly). This may mean he has to beat a hasty retreat if he used to power to calm ferocious beasts or keep his enemies from attacking him.

Game Information: +25 PRE (25 Active Points); Incantations (throughout; -½), Only To Make "Stop And Listen To Me" Presence Attacks (-1). Total cost: 10 points.



FEARLESS

Effect: Power Defense (20 points) and Mental Defense (20 points), Only To Resist Fear

Target: Self

Duration: Persistent

Range: Self

END Cost: 0

Description: The character possesses such great courage that virtually nothing can terrify him — not even fear-spells or demonic fear-auras. In game terms, this counts as 20 points of Mental Defense and Power Defense that only apply against fear-generating powers (such as Drain PRE, Mind Control, and Change Environment; see page 414). Generally, the GM should rule that this provides absolute immunity to fear (via the Absolute Effect Rule), but he may allow some strong fear attacks to overcome the defenses in the usual manner.

Game Information: Power Defense (20 points) (20 Active Points); Only To Resist Fear (-2) (total cost: 7 points) **plus** Mental Defense (20 points) (20 Active Points); Only To Resist Fear (-2) (total cost: 7 points). Total cost: 14 points.

Options:

- 1) *Aura Of Fear Protection:* The character can extend his ability to resist fear to nearby friends, though this can quickly tire him out. Add Usable By Nearby (+1) as a naked Advantage for both powers. 20 + 20 = 40 Active Points; 7 + 7 = total cost 14 points; total cost for overall power 28 points.

FOLLOW-THROUGH ATTACK

Effect: Trigger (when kills an opponent) for up to HKA 4d6

Target: One character

Duration: Instant

Range: No Range

END Cost: 3

Description: A character with this Talent is accomplished at striking down multiple foes in combat. After he kills one enemy, he may immediately make another attack against any enemy in HTH Combat range. He doesn't have to use this Talent, he can decide when to use it and against whom.

In game terms, this Talent consists of a naked *Trigger* Advantage on any weapon the character uses (up to a total of HKA 4d6 — if the character can do more damage than that, he must either limit himself to 4d6, or increase the cost of the Talent to compensate). The Trigger is “when character kills an opponent in battle.” The Trigger takes a Half Phase Action to re-set, so the character can only make one Follow-Through Attack per Phase (even if the original attack involves Autofire, a Multiple Attack, or other means of hitting multiple targets, or he kills the target he hits with his Follow-Through Attack). He must make an Attack Roll to hit the follow-through target.

Game Information: Trigger (when character kills an opponent in battle with an HKA weapon, activating Trigger takes no time, resetting Trigger requires a Half Phase Action; +½) for up to HKA 4d6 (30 Active Points); OIF (weapons of opportunity; -½). Total cost: 20 points.

Options:

- 1) *Less Skilled Attack:* This form of the Talent only works if the character succeeds with a Sword Tricks Roll. Add Requires A Sword Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 15 points.
- 2) *True Follow-Through Attack:* Some characters are so accomplished at Follow-Through Attacks that they can make more than one per Phase, provided the targets are close enough (the first must be within 2m of him when he Triggers the attack, each additional target must be within 4m of the last target he attacked, and all targets must be within 8m of his position when he started the attack). This allows a warrior to plow through entire hordes of low-powered foes in mere Phases. As long as he keeps hitting and killing his enemies, he can continue the slaughter, though he can only reach foes within a certain distance of himself when he starts the Follow-Through Attack.

Technically, the character should remain in the same spot he was when he started the Follow-Through Attack. However, it makes more sense to put him next to the last foe he killed (if there are no more left he can attack) or failed to kill, even if this means he would make more than a Half Move with his Running during the course of the Phase. The GM makes the final decision.

Change the Talent to: Area Of Effect (8m Radius Selective; +¾) for up to HKA 4d6, Trigger (when character kills an opponent in battle with an HKA weapon, activating Trigger takes no time, resetting Trigger requires a Half Phase Action; +½) (67 Active Points); OIF (weapons of opportunity; -½), Character Must Attack Foes In Area In Order Of Proximity (-0), Attack Does Not Work/Ends If Foes Not Close Enough (see text; -½), Attack Stops If Character Fails To Kill Any Target (-½). Total cost: 27 points.

FORCE BACK

Effect: +4 OCV with Shove

Target: Self

Duration: Constant

Range: Self

END Cost: 1

Skill Roll Penalty: -1

Description: This Talent allows a character to press his foe hard, forcing him to take a step back. As defined here it's bought as a Sword Trick, since it typically requires a large weapon (rather than, say, a dagger), but the GM can permit characters to buy it for other types of weapons if desired.

Game Information: +4 OCV with Shove (8 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½), Requires A Sword Tricks Roll (-½), Target Is Only Moved Back 1m Maximum (-0). Total cost: 4 points.

FEARLESS

“Courage is found in unlikely places.”

—Gildor advises Frodo in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien



INSPIRE

Pity filled his heart, and great wonder, and suddenly the slow-kindled courage of his race awoke. He clenched his hand. She should not die, so fair, so desperate! At least she should not die alone, unaided.

—Éowyn's bravery and despair give rise to Merry's courage to face the Lord of the Nazgûl in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

**INSPIRE**

Effect: Aid PRE 1d6, Only Aid Others
Target: Voice Range Selective
Duration: Instant
Range: No Range
END Cost: 1

Description: The character's voice inspires courage and confidence in his allies and those he protects, giving them the ability to withstand fear. He must spend a Full Phase to use this Talent, and when doing so must focus on it so thoroughly that his DCV is halved.

In game terms, when the character uses this power, he adds 1d6 points to the PRE of all persons friendly to him, or whom he chooses to inspire, for a brief period. Treat this as equivalent to an Aid; the gained points fade accordingly. The effect only works on allies who can hear the character speak, sing, or otherwise communicate verbally.

Game Information: Aid PRE 1d6, Area Of Effect (Voice Range Selective; +1¼) (13 Active Points), Concentration (½ DCV; -¼), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Incantations (voice range; -¼), Only Aid Others (-½). Total cost: 5 points.

Options:
 1) *Strong Inspiration:* Increase to Aid 2d6. 27 Active Points; total cost 11 points.

**MAGESIGHT**

Effect: Detect Magic
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has the ability to perceive magic and enchantments, ranging from the spells on a magic sword to mind-stealing spells placed on helpless individuals. Despite the name, Magesight does not actually depend on the ability to see; the character can “perceive” or “feel” the presence of magic even when blind.

In its simplest form, Magesight requires the character to touch or stand next to the object or phenomenon he wishes to perceive magic on and concentrate. If his PER Roll succeeds, he perceives the magic, but that's all he can tell — he doesn't know what type of magic is involved or the like. More experienced or skilled characters can use Magesight at a distance whenever they wish, and can learn much more about what they perceive — the type or school of magic involved, for example, and perhaps even more.

With the GM's permission, characters could customize this Talent. They could, for example, make it simulate the Sight Group, or add more Sense Modifiers (such as Analyze or Targeting). See page 149 for more on Detect Magic.

He sensed it with the witch-sight of his forefathers before he saw it with his eyes.

—Elric's perceives the approach of Quaolnargn in *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, by Michael Moorcock

Game Information: Detect Magic (INT Roll) (no Sense Group). Total cost: 5 points.

Options:

1) *True Magesight:* Increase to Detect Magic (INT Roll) (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Range, Sense. Total cost: 17 points.

**MAGIC**

Effect: Enables character to cast spells or otherwise practice the magical arts
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent (or Inherent)
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: As discussed on page 269, in some settings characters who want to cast spells must buy a Talent to know how. The cost and nature of the Talent varies based on the nature of magic in the campaign.

Game Information: Varies.

**MOUNTED WARRIOR**

Effect: +2 Penalty Skill Levels versus mounted combat penalties
Target: Self
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: A character with this Talent is an expert at fighting from horseback (or while riding any other sort of mount). He doesn't suffer the standard -2 OCV penalty for fighting from horseback.

Game Information: +2 Penalty Skill Levels versus mounted combat penalties with all attacks. Total cost: 6 points.

Options:

- 1) *Mounted HTH Warrior:* The character's OPSLs only apply in HTH Combat. Change to: +2 Penalty Skill Levels versus mounted combat penalties with all HTH Combat attacks. Total cost: 4 points.
- 2) *Mounted Ranged Warrior:* The character's OPSLs only apply in Ranged Combat — which typically means he's a skilled archer while mounted. Change to: +2 Penalty Skill Levels versus mounted combat penalties with all Ranged Combat attacks. Total cost: 4 points.

MOUNTED WARRIOR

The sound of galloping hooves approached; he turned to find a black horse lunging break-neck along the bank of the pool. The rider was a young woman with black hair streaming wildly. ... One hand clutched the reins, the other flourished a sword.

—Turjan of Miir meets T'sais in “Turjan Of Miir,” by Jack Vance

PROTECTED BY FATE

Effect: Resistant Protection (20 PD/20 ED), Hardened (+¼), Impenetrable (+¼) plus Power Defense (20 points) plus Mental Defense (20 points)

Target: Self

Duration: Persistent

Range: Self

END Cost: 0

Description: This Talent is similar to Combat Luck, but protects the character to a much greater degree. Some Fantasy characters have a Destiny (see page 15), and until they're in a position to fulfill that Destiny, the hand of fate protects them. The defenses offer no protection against any threat directly connected to the character's Destiny (including attacks made by any foes he's specifically destined to confront and, hopefully, slay).

Game Information: Resistant Protection (20 PD/20 ED), Hardened (+¼), Impenetrable (+¼) plus Power Defense (20 points) plus Mental Defense (20 points); all Does Not Work Against Fated Attacks (see text; -0). Total cost: 130 points.

PROTECTED BY FATE

Then Beren sprang out from behind a rock, and slew the captain, and taking the hand and the ring he escaped, being defended by fate; for the Orcs were dismayed, and their arrows wild.

—his fate protects Beren in *The Silmarillion*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

RAPID ARCHERY

Effect: Autofire (3 shots; +¼) for up to RKA 4d6

Target: One character

Duration: Instant

Range: Based on bow used

END Cost: 1

Skill Roll Penalty: -1

Description: This Talent allows a character to fire arrows much more quickly than normal — up to three per Phase, instead of one — if he succeeds with an Archery Tricks roll.

Game Information: Autofire (3 shots; +¼) for up to RKA 4d6 (15 Active Points); OIF (bow and arrows of opportunity; -½), Requires An Archery Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 7 points.

Options:

- 1) *Skillful Rapid Archery:* Remove Requires An Archery Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 10 points.
- 2) *Rapid Throwing:* Instead of firing arrows rapidly, the character can throw daggers rapidly. Change to: Autofire (3 shots; +¼) for up to RKA 3d6 (11 Active Points); OIF (daggers of opportunity; -½) and Requires A Dagger Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 5 points.

RAPID HEALING

Effect: Regeneration (1 BODY per Hour)

Target: Self

Duration: Persistent (but see text)

Range: Self

END Cost: 0

Description: The character recovers from the effects of wounds quickly. For every full hour he rests, he regains 1 BODY. He may still *look* injured, but a short period of rest is all he needs to return to fighting trim despite his appearance.

For purposes of this Talent, the GM defines what constitutes “rest.” Sitting and relaxing in even slightly comfortable surroundings (in a cave, beside a campfire, in bed, while riding in a cart) should qualify. In some cases a GM may even allow a character to “rest” when walking or riding easily. Any significant exertion, including running or hard riding, prevents the character from regaining 1 BODY that hour.

Game Information: Regeneration (1 BODY per Hour); Requires Rest (see text; -0). Total cost: 8 points.

Options:

- 1) *Rapider Healing:* Increase to Regeneration (1 BODY per 20 Minutes). Total cost: 10 points.
- 2) *Cinematically Rapid Healing:* The character shakes off the effects of injuries so swiftly he barely has to stop fighting. Increase to Regeneration (1 BODY per Minute). Total cost: 14 points.

RIPOSTE

Effect: Trigger for up to HKA 4d6

Target: One character

Duration: Instant

Range: No Range

END Cost: 4

Skill Roll Penalty: -4

Description: This Talent is appropriate for skilled, swift fighters (including many light warriors and rogues). It represents a character who's so good at weapons combat that whenever someone strikes him, or he Blocks an attack, he can instantly strike back, inflicting his weapon's damage (including bonus damage from STR). (At the GM's option, a character can buy this ability for other weapons by changing the Required Skill Roll, and if appropriate substituting HA +12d6 for HKA 4d6.)

Game Information: Trigger (when character is hit by or Blocks an enemy's attack and wants to strike back, activating Trigger takes no time, resetting Trigger is a Zero Phase Action; +¾) for up to HKA 4d6 (45 Active Points); OIF (weapon of opportunity; -½), Requires A Sword Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 22 points.



SHAPECHANGING

He made another desperate bid for freedom then. He dropped into the wild current of the Cwill, let it whirl him, now as a fish, now a dead branch, through deep, churning waters[.] He pulled himself onto the snag finally, a wet, bedraggled muskrat, and picked his way across the branches onto the shore.

—Morgon tries to escape the shape-changers pursuing him by using his own shape-changing powers in *Harpist In The Wind*, by Patricia McKillip

**SHAPECHANGING**

Effect: Multiform (assume predefined 300-point form)
Target: Self
Duration: Instant
Range: Self
END Cost: 6

Description: Many Fantasy characters — wizards, druids, even some rangers and dragons — can change their shape. Typically this means changing into the shape of some beast or monster, though other shapes are sometimes possible.

(Because Shapechanging is nothing more than a Limited type of Multiform, you can, with the GM's permission, alter it to suit your character. You can make it so the forms are built on more or fewer points, reduce the effect of the Limitations (or eliminate them entirely), apply the *Instant Change* Adder, and so forth. However, remember that as you change the Talent to make it easier to use and/or more powerful, it becomes more like a "superpower" and less like a Fantasy ability, which may not fit the nature and feel of the campaign.)

Game Information: Multiform (assume predefined form built on 300 Total Points) (60 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV throughout period of change; -1), Costs Endurance (to change shape; -½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼). Total cost: 16 points.

Options:

- 1) *Expanded Shapechanging:* Increase to any 8 forms. 75 Active Points; total cost 20 points.
- 2) *Superior Shapechanging:* Increase to any 64 forms. 90 Active Points; total cost 24 points.
- 3) *Dangerous Shapechanging:* Add Personality Loss (20 Minutes; -1¼). Total cost: 12 points.

**SKILL MASTER**

Effect: +3 with one Skill
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character has developed a high level of proficiency with a single Characteristic-based Skill, such as Climbing, Deduction, Navigation, or Stealth. He chooses one Skill when he buys this Talent, and receives a +3 bonus for all uses of that Skill.

Game Information: +3 with one Skill. Total cost: 6 points.

Options:

- 1) *Greater Skill Master:* Increase to +3 with all Intellect or Interaction Skills (total cost: 12 points) or +3 with all Agility Skills (total cost: 18 points).
- 2) *True Skill Master:* Increase to +3 with All Non-Combat Skills. Total cost: 30 points.

**SPELL AUGMENTATION**

Effect: Aid Magid 4d6
Target: Self
Duration: Instant
Range: Self
END Cost: 1 Charge

Description: Once per day, the character can call upon hidden reserves of power and talent to improve the force and effectiveness of one of his spells.

In game terms, this Talent provides an Aid 4d6 to one spell or magical power. If the spell is an Instant spell, the points fade immediately after the spell affects the target; if it's a Constant or Persistent spell, they fade at the normal rate, and all fade immediately if the spell ends before they all fade.

Game Information: Aid Magic 4d6, Variable Effect (any one Magic spell or power at a time; +½), Trigger (mental command, activating Trigger takes no time, resetting Trigger requires a Half Phase Action; +½) (48 Active Points); Only Aid Self Only (-1), Restricted Duration (see text; -¼), 1 Charge (-2). Total cost: 11 points.

**STORM OF STEEL**

Effect: Autofire (5 shots; +½) for up to HKA 4d6
Target: One or more characters
Duration: Instant
Range: No Range
END Cost: 3
Skill Roll Penalty: -3

Description: Some Martial Artists are so swift and deadly with a blade that they can hit an opponent multiple times in the blink of an eye, or strike several nearby opponents in the time it takes an ordinary warrior to hit just one. (At the GM's option, a character can buy this ability for other weapons by changing the Required Skill Roll, and if appropriate substituting HA +12d6 for HKA 4d6.)

Game Information: Autofire (5 shots; +½) for up to HKA 4d6 (30 Active Points); OIF (weapon of opportunity; -½), Requires A Sword Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 15 points.

**THROWN WEAPON**

Effect: WF: Thrown Sword (or the like)
Target: Self
Duration: Persistent
Range: Self
END Cost: 0

Description: The character can throw his sword accurately. (At the GM's option, characters can buy this Talent for other HTH weapons, though that also means buying an appropriate form of the *Power* Skill.)

Game Information: WF: Thrown Sword (1 Active Point); Requires A Sword Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 1 point.



TRACKLESS STRIDE

Effect: Flight 6m, Invisible Power Effects (leaves no tracks), Only In Contact With A Walkable Surface

Target: Self

Duration: Constant

Range: Self

END Cost: 1

Description: The character can move so stealthily and lightly that he leaves no tracks upon the ground (not even on sand or snow), and does not trigger ground-based traps involving pressure (such as many deadfalls or pit traps). He cannot move very fast while doing this, however; nor can he walk on surfaces that wouldn't ordinarily support his weight (such as water, snow, cliff faces, and the like).

Game Information: Flight 6m, Invisible Power Effects (leaves no tracks; +¼) (7 Active Points); Only In Contact With A Walkable Surface (-¼). Total cost: 6 points.

Options:

- 1) *True Trackless Stride:* Not only does the character leave no tracks, he's so light-footed and swift that he can walk on surfaces that ordinarily wouldn't support his weight. Change to Only In Contact With A Surface (-¼); no change in cost.

TURN UNDEAD

Effect: +60 PRE, Only To Make Presence Attacks Against Undead Creatures

Target: Self

Duration: Persistent

Range: Self

END Cost: 0

Description: Many priests, paladins, and other “holy” characters have the mystic ability to banish or destroy the most foul of evil creatures, the undead. Conversely, some necromancers and evil priests can command the undead, bringing them into service. Common parlance refers to this as “turning” the undead, even when it doesn't literally involve making them flee.

In game terms, Turn Undead is a special form of Presence Attack. All undead have PRE; undead built as Automata take a Physical Complication, *Affected By Necromancy*, that makes them vulnerable to Presence Attacks based on necromantic magic, this Talent, and like abilities. (See HSB 281-300 for some examples, or the accompanying sidebar.) If the undead was Summoned with the *Amicable* Advantage, don't forget to take the Psychological Complication into account when determining the Presence Attack's effects.

The *Turn Undead* Talent provides a character with extra PRE for purposes of making Presence Attacks to repel, destroy, or control undead beings. At the PRE +10 to +30 levels, the Presence Attack functions as described on 6E2 135-37, though it requires a Full Phase Action. However, characters can also achieve the PRE +40 level, at which point any undead affected by the Presence Attack are utterly destroyed (usually they shatter or turn to dust).

TRACKLESS STRIDE

“But I say: let a ploughman plough, but choose an otter for swimming, and for running light over grass and leaf, or over snow — an Elf.” With that he sprang forth nimbly ... and his feet made little imprint in the snow.

—Legolas demonstrates the light-footedness of Elves in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

UNDEAD PRESENCE

The following are the PRE ratings for undead creatures listed in *The HERO System Bestiary*. These reflect “typical” members of the “species”; individuals may vary considerably from this norm (particularly among intelligent undead, such as vampires and liches). The GM can use these figures as guidelines for assigning PRE scores to other types of undead.

Undead	PRE
Ghost	20
Ghoul	15
Lich	30
Mummy	20
Skeleton	13
Specter	30
Vampire, Lesser	15
Vampire, Greater	25
Wight	20
Wraith	20
Zombie	13

When using this Talent, a character typically must declare his desired level of effect. If he achieves that result or higher, he succeeds; if not, he fails completely. However, in appropriate circumstances, the GM may allow a “failed” Presence Attack to achieve a lesser result. The GM may also choose to allow characters to use this Talent against infernal or divine beings.

A character can only affect a single undead being at once with this Talent. However, for each +5 points of effect on his Presence Attack roll, he may double the number of undead he affects (two for +5, four for +10, eight for +15, and so forth). If a character faces multiple types of undead at once, he must target the most powerful undead (as judged by the GM) first. A single use of Turn Undead could affect different undead creatures at different levels. For example, a result of 55 would destroy a skeleton, but only cow a greater vampire. Some undead may buy extra PRE only to resist turning (a -1 Limitation).

Game Information: +60 PRE (60 Active Points); Only To Make Presence Attacks (-1), Only Works Against Undead Creatures (-1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Limited Effect (see text; -1), Only When Serving The God’s Purposes (-½). Total cost: 12 points.

Options:

- 1) *Stronger Turning:* As built, this Talent assumes a relatively low level of power — enough to have a chance of destroying a single weak undead (such as a skeleton), but not much more. Characters can increase the power of the Talent at a cost of +2 Character Points per +10 PRE.
- 2) *Focused Turning:* In some Fantasy settings, a character who can Turn Undead requires a focus for his mystic power — a holy (or unholy) symbol, typically. In Urban Fantasy games, a cross or Star of David does the trick; in High Fantasy worlds, there may be dozens of gods, each with his own unique symbol. To simulate this, add OAF (holy symbol; -1) to Turn Undead. This reduces the cost to 10 Character Points (and the cost of +10 PRE to 1.7 Character Points).

WHIRLWIND ATTACK

Effect: Area Of Effect (2m Radius) for up to HKA 4d6

Target: One character

Duration: Instant

Range: No Range

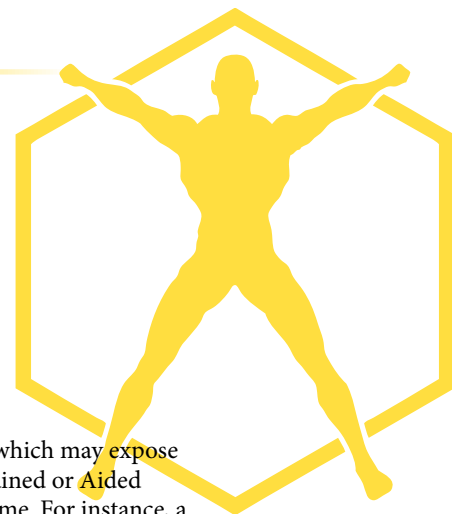
END Cost: 2

Skill Roll Penalty: -2

Description: A warrior with this ability is feared throughout the land, for he has the skill to strike many opponents at once. Enemies who surround him do so at their peril! (At the GM’s option, a character can buy this ability for other weapons by changing the Required Skill Roll, and if appropriate substituting HA +12d6 for HKA 4d6.)

Game Information: Area Of Effect (2m Radius; +¼) for up to HKA 4d6, Personal Immunity (+¼) (19 Active Points); OIF (weapon of opportunity; -½), Requires A Sword Tricks Roll (-½). Total cost: 9 points.

POWERS



Powers have many uses in Fantasy Hero campaigns. While they're most often associated with spells, you can also use them to create weapons, special abilities, and the like. For example, if you want your character to be fleet of foot, you can buy him a few extra meters of Running. Many of the new Talents listed above are built with Powers.

This section describes some intriguing or interesting uses (both magical and mundane) for Powers in Fantasy settings. Obvious ones — such as using Blast and RKA for many types of attack spells, or Clairsentience for crystal balls — aren't listed, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're inappropriate for Fantasy Hero. Information more appropriate solely for the chapter on magic can be found there.

ADJUSTMENT POWERS

In Fantasy games, all spells and related magical powers have the same special effect: Magic. That means a Drain or other Adjustment Power with Variable Effect (+½) can affect any of a wizard's spells (or even more than one spell at once, if the power has the *Expanded Effect* Advantage). But this general rule leaves several issues for the GM to decide.

First, are there *different* types of magic in the campaign setting? For example, maybe priestly magic and wizardly magic are so distinct that Adjustment Powers affect them differently. A character would have to specify Wizard Magic or Priest Magic as the special effect his Adjustment Power works against; "Magic" alone is not enough.

Second, what special or fantastic abilities qualify as "magic" for purposes of Adjustment Powers? Would a cleric's *Turn Undead* Talent fall into the "magic" category, or a dragon's fiery breath, or an undead creature's very existence? This has important implications for how Suppress Magic fields and similar powers function in the game. Typically, most monsters' and fantastic beasts' abilities — flight, deadly breath, regeneration, hypnotic singing, and the like — qualify as "magic" for the purposes of such powers, but they may not in some campaigns.

Third, some spells have *multiple* special effects. For example, a Fireball Spell is both Magic and Fire. Obviously an Adjustment Power that affects Magic works against it, but will an Adjustment Power that affects Fire also work against it?

Typically the answer is "yes," which may expose the Fireball Spell to being Drained or Aided more than once at the same time. For instance, a Drain Fire and Drain Magic would both reduce it, and a Drain Fire could be counteracted by an Aid Magic. (Standard rules for applying multiple versions of the same Adjustment Power to the same ability apply.) However, in some games the GM may rule that the only special effect a spell has is Magic; others may rule that "Magical Fire" is a separate special effect category of its own.

Although Dispel is not an Adjustment Power, the campaign ground rules for Adjustment Powers should also apply to it.

DEFENSE POWERS

"I don't feel any different."

"That's how you should feel."

"Is there anything special that I should do to invoke its defense, should the need arise?"

"No, it is entirely automatic. But do not let that dissuade you from exercising normal caution about things magical. Any system has its weak points."

—Black the demonic golem-horse casts a protective spell on Dilvish in *Dilvish, The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

In most Fantasy settings, the standard Defense Power used to create protective spells is Resistant Protection. Depending on the special effect, it can simulate a fiery mantle that shields a character from fire attacks, a glowing field of arcane energy that deflects attacks away from a wizard, a personal shield of mystic force, and many other defensive spells. Resistant Protection is used primarily to construct suits of enchanted armor and a few spells that change the caster's skin (such as a druid's skin-to-bark spell). Resistant (+½) is used to build monsters with innate Resistant Defenses (such as really tough skin), or some spells that simulate such abilities. (See page 278 for further discussion of defensive spells.)

If the GM uses the optional *Arcane Defense* Characteristic (see page 111), characters can buy it for Defense Powers at the Power's cost for PD and ED.



Javan dipped deep into his brother's mind, shocked to find that Alroy had only the most rudimentary of shields.

—Prince Javan uses his burgeoning Deryni mystic powers to gauge the extent of his brother's powers in *The Harrowing Of Gwynedd*, by Katherine Kurtz

MENTAL POWERS

Mental Powers appear frequently in Fantasy campaigns as spells of fascination, domination, illusion, mind-reading, sleep, and the like. In some Fantasy settings, such as the one depicted in Katherine Kurtz's "Deryni" novels, magic and psionic powers are essentially the same thing. This raises some issues regarding the "classes of minds" rules.

As discussed on 6E1 149, Mental Powers work against specific classes of minds. For Fantasy Hero purposes, the GM must decide what the "Human" class of minds includes. Of course it includes any type of human being, no matter what his cultural or geographic background. In High Fantasy campaigns, it typically also extends to other humanoid races — dwarves, goblins, elves, trolls, giants, and the like. But in other campaigns, this isn't the case; a character must buy his Mental Powers as affecting the "Alien" class of minds to affect races other than his own. Some Fantasy settings may even add classes of minds, like Undead or Draconic (see APG 66 for further discussion).

Because of the prevalence of "Alien" minds in many Fantasy Hero campaigns, applying the classes of minds rules precisely as written may unbalancingly restrict Mental Powers (particularly when they're used to define magic spells, which according to the rules of many magic systems should affect everyone the same). The GM should consider adopting some of the suggestions on APG 66 to minimize any negative impact.

BASED ON CON (-1)

The *Based On CON* (-1) Limitation works perfectly for simulating various types of magic that depends on consumed Foci — certain types of potions, witch doctors' mind-controlling drugs, the sorcerous black lotus poison that makes the victim speak only the truth, and so forth. Most such powers also take the Limitation *OAF Fragile* and *Charges*.

MOVEMENT POWERS

Other than basic Running and Swimming, and Flight for flying creatures, Movement Powers don't appear much in many Fantasy Hero campaigns. Even in a High Fantasy campaign, a GM may want to restrict the characters' access to long-range Teleportation and the like, since such abilities can have a significant effect on the game and the campaign world. In a setting where mages can easily teleport across continents, that probably affects commerce, defense, and many other aspects of society... often in ways that negatively impact the "feel" of the setting. On the other hand, if the GM builds "easy travel" into the setting from the start (as in Steven Brust's "Vlad Taltos" novels), it can add to the campaign's flavor and distinguish that game from similar campaigns.

Tamurello circled the wagon. He rubbed the wheels and the rims with a blue jade talisman. He went to the horses, lifted their legs and wiped their feet with the stone. ... "Now! You are ready! Be off with you and away! Shimrod approaches fast. Fly low, fly high, but fly to Tintzin Fyral!" Carfilhiot jumped to the driver's seat, took up the reins. ... The horses lunged forward into the air. Westward over the forest careened the wagon of Dr. Fidelius, high above the highest tree tops, and the folk of the forest looked up in awe[.]

—Tamurello assists Faude Carfilhiot to escape from Shimrod and Aillas in *Lyonesse*, by Jack Vance

ABSORPTION

In many Fantasy campaigns, the most common use for Absorption is for a "specialist" spellcaster to Absorb powers similar to his own: a fire mage can Absorb from Fire powers; the dreaded Winter Wizard grows stronger whenever someone uses an Ice/Cold-based spell or ability against him. In some games, particularly High Fantasy campaigns that concretize concepts like "Good" and "Evil" into nigh-tangible things, you can extend this concept further. Imagine a Dark Lord villain who can Absorb any attack used against him in hatred, fear, or anger; or a necromancer who can Absorb any attack that would cause his death and use it to boost his BODY.

Absorption also has plenty of intriguing uses for enchanted items. Examples include a suit of enchanted armor that becomes tougher (Absorption to PD and/or ED) whenever someone strikes it with a physical attack, or a Wizard's Staff that provides more power for its user whenever he's struck with a spell (Absorption to the END of an Endurance Reserve).

AID

Aid has literally dozens of uses in Fantasy Hero games. It forms the basis for many different types of magic that improve characters' abilities — spells of strengthening, swiftness, vitality, wisdom, and more. It also forms the basis for numerous special abilities, such as the *Berserk Fury* and *Spell Augmentation* Talents (see above) and many enchanted items. See the accompanying sidebar for some examples of these types of Aid.

When designing a spell or ability, consider whether Aid or some other power (such as Characteristics) simulates the effect the best. Aid works when the "boost" can vary from time to time — when the outcome of the use of the power is uncertain. A flat power (such as +10 STR or Running +8m) makes more sense when the character wants or needs predictable results.

BARRIER

He called his charm, the Spell of the Omnipotent Sphere. A film of force formed around his body, expanding to push aside all that resisted.

—Mazirian frees himself from a predicament by invoking the Omnipotent Sphere in "Mazirian the Magician," by Jack Vance

Wizards often use Barrier to build various types of "protective wall" spells. By mixing and matching the types of defenses available, a spellcaster can create a wide variety of effective defenses.

As noted in the rulebook, a character can use a Barrier to englobe a target. If the target is human-sized or smaller, a Barrier has to be at least 4m long or tall to englobe him. Larger or smaller



targets require proportionately larger or smaller Barriers — typically, +1m of Wall for each +1m of height (if the GM knows the target's girth, he can use that instead for more precise calculations).

CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

Stepping before the others, Cei Shalpan flung his hands high and cried out in a loud voice, intoning guttural words in a language never meant to be spoken on earth. Overhead, in an empty autumn sky, clouds began to swirl and gather. The heavens grew dark in an instant, and a monstrous smoke-colored cloud churned directly above their heads.

—Cei Shalpan summons a storm in *Grey mantle*, by John Morressy

This flexible, versatile Power has countless applications in Fantasy Hero games, ranging from weather control spells, to causing plants to bloom, to creating “shadows” that inspire fear. However, GMs should be sure that any such abilities (a) stay within the Fantasy genre, (b) don't create such a significant effect that the character should use some other Power instead (like Aid or Transform), and (c) don't violate the rule against providing “positive effects” (such as a bonus to CV or a Skill Roll). Characters often Link another power to Change Environment to create just the right effect.

FANTASY HERO POWERS

Boots Of Swiftmess: These enchanted boots enhance a character's Running speed for a short time — long enough to escape from danger, hopefully.

Aid Running 6d6 (36 Active Points); OIF (-½), Aid Self Only (-1), 4 Charges (-1). Total cost: 10 points.

Divine Strength: A priest can call upon the power of his god to enhance his own (or another person's) physical abilities with a touch of the Divine. This spell only works if the priest is in his god's favor and he (and the target of the spell) are serving the god's purposes.

Aid STR, DEX, CON, and PRE 3d6, Expanded Effect (four Characteristics simultaneously; +1½) (45 Active Points); Only When Serving The God's Purposes (-½), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Faith Roll (-½), 1 Charge (-2). Total cost: 10 points.

Spell Of The Mighty Undead: Necromancers use this spell to make skeletons, zombies, mummies, and the like stronger.

Aid STR 4d6 (24 Active Points); OAF Fragile Expendable (rune-carved finger-bone wrapped with the sinew of a bear, Difficult to obtain; -1½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Necromancy Roll (-½), Only Aid Others (-½), Only Works On Undead Beings (-1). Total cost: 5 points.

CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics resembles Aid in most cases, except that it works better for situations where characters want to know exactly how much of a “boost” they’ll get from an ability or spell. See the accompanying text box for some examples. As they demonstrate, Characteristics often works best for special abilities and powers. Most spells that boost abilities should use Aid, so the results aren’t quite as predictable. Enchanted items can use either Power.

FANTASY HERO POWERS

Archer’s Strength: The character has extra STR that only helps him draw powerful bows.

+10 STR (10 Active Points); Only To Draw Bows (-1). Total cost: 5 points.

Mirror Of Scrying: The character can use this large enchanted mirror to view far-off scenes. He can extend to others the ability to see what he sees as well; anyone who doesn’t receive the power sees only a normal mirror.

Clairsentience (Sight Group), 64x Range (25,600m), Usable Simultaneously (up to eight people at once; +1) (100 Active Points); OAF Bulky Fragile (-1¼). Total cost: 36 points.

No Fear: The character possesses such bravery that fear-spells and the terrors of powerful monsters leave him unaffected.

+20 PRE (20 Active Points); Only To Resist Fear-Based Presence Attacks (-2). Total cost: 7 points.

Ring Of Swift Reactions: This enchanted ring grants the wearer the ability to act more swiftly in combat.

+1 SPD (10 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 7 points.

Spell Of The Spider: Upon invoking this spell, the character can crawl on walls and ceilings like a spider.

Clinging (10 STR or less), Usable By Other (+¼), Time Limit (duration of 5 Minutes per caster’s circle of power; +¾) (20 Active Points); OAF Expendable (spider’s leg, Easy to obtain; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 7 points.

CLINGING

Wizards often use Clinging for “wall-climbing” spells and the like. Since they may use this power on someone other than themselves, they may, with the GM’s permission, define it as granting a flat 10 STR or less instead of the target’s normal STR (the “or lower” applies if the target’s normal STR is less than 10). That way the spell doesn’t grant more ability to a giant than to a human being. However, in that case the GM should automatically “increase” the spell’s STR to the target’s normal STR if that’s necessary to ensure that the Clinging effect can support his weight.

DAMAGE NEGATION AND DAMAGE REDUCTION

Elkon fought bravely as the huge beast feinted, dipping and rearing and striking suddenly with his serpentine neck. Blow after prodigious blow rained on that long neck, the dragon’s scales tinkling from the shock of them; but the blade left no more mark than a skein of yarn would have made.

—the dragon’s invulnerability thwarts Elkon’s attack in “Dragon’s Fosterling,” by Ruby S.W. Jung

You can use Damage Negation and Damage Reduction to create “resistance” abilities for characters. For example, a magical creature may have “Magic Resistance” to represent his innate ability to withstand any type of magic (Magic Damage Reduction, 75%; costs 60 points), a giant boar might be able to resist poisons thanks to the thick layer of fat underneath his skin (Poison Damage Reduction, 50%; costs 30 points), and a fire elemental might have a high degree of immunity to fire damage (Damage Negation, -12 DCs, Only Works Against Fire (-½); costs 40 points).

Similarly, many Fantasy creatures can only be harmed by silver weapons, enchanted weapons, or some other limited form of attack. You can simulate this with a combination of Damage Reduction and Resistant Protection:

Only Harmed By Silver Weapons: Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75% (60 Active Points); Does Not Apply Versus Silver Weapons (-½) (total cost: 40 points) **plus** Resistant Protection (30 PD) (45 Active Points); Does Not Apply Versus Silver Weapons (-½) (total cost: 30 points). Total cost: 70 points.

“Cinematic” Damage Negation or Damage Reduction is appropriate for many Fantasy characters. This simulates the ability of characters in fiction and movies to withstand incredible amounts of damage and still keep fighting. As with the *Rapid Healing* Talent (page 141), the character may *look* injured, but that’s just for effect; he’s still largely unharmed. Some examples:

Fantasy Resilience I: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25% (30 Active Points); Activation Roll 12- (-¾), Must Be Aware Of Attack (-¼), STUN Only (-½). Total cost: 12 points.

Fantasy Resilience II: Damage Negation (-4 DCs Physical and Energy) (40 Active Points); Must Be Aware Of Attack (-¼). Total cost: 32 points.

DISPEL

Dispel appears frequently in most Fantasy campaigns, particularly High Fantasy ones, as Dispel Magic (a common spell for wizards). Most forms of Dispel Magic have the *Variable Effect Advantage*, but some have enough power to affect multiple Magic spells or powers at once via Expanded Effect. See *Adjustment Powers*, above, for a discussion of what qualifies as “magic” for purposes of Dispel.

In campaigns featuring multiple types of magic, characters may want to have Dispel Magic spells that can only affect a specific type of magic (such as only necromancy, or only sorcery). To do this, buy Variable Effect as a naked Advantage and take an appropriate Limitation (typically a -½, but it depends on how common that type of magic is). Otherwise a character would pay the same for Dispel Necromantic Magic as for Dispel Magic, even though it's less effective. (Alternately, the GM could reduce the value of Variable Advantage to +¼ for these purposes.)

DRAIN

Drain works well for numerous Fantasy effects. Besides some poisons, it's perfect for spells that harm a target without inflicting physical injury. Examples include spells of weakness (Drain STR), clumsiness (Drain DEX), confusion (Drain INT or EGO), and fear (Drain PRE).

By extending the recovery duration for a Drain for long periods (months, years, even centuries), you can create “curses” (such as a Curse of Palsy, a Drain DEX where the points return at the rate of 5 per Year). At the GM's option, a character who buys the recovery rate of a Drain as 5 points per Month (or longer) may define it as recovering as if it were an injury. Instead of regaining a flat 5 points per Month, the target gets his REC worth of points of the Characteristic back per Month, as if he were naturally healing BODY damage. (Regeneration or Healing may or may not heal the damage more quickly, depending on special effects and the GM's judgment.)

SUPPRESS

A common weapon in many wizards' arsenals, Suppress forms the basis for many “anti-magic” or counter-magic spells. Using the “Suppression field” rules, you can create “anti-magic zones” where spells and magical powers function poorly... or perhaps not at all. For example, a powerful mage might establish a large Suppression field around his tower with Personal Immunity, so that only he could cast spells at full effect in his sanctum.

ENHANCED SENSES

“There's only one thing those maggots can do: they can see like gimlets in the dark. But these Whiteskins have better night-eyes than most Men, from all I've heard[.]”

—Uglúk comments on the abilities of other Orcs in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Unusual Senses appear in most Fantasy settings with great frequency. First, many non-human races have them. For example, elves have Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group) to reflect their ability to see in even the weakest starlight or moonlight. Deep creatures have Nightvision, which allows them to see without hindrance in the pitch-black darkness of underground caverns.

Wizards often use Detect in spells (and in the *Magesight* Talent described above). A Detect Magic spell with the right modifiers can instantly determine the type, nature, and strength of any magic or enchanted item a character encounters (see below), and Detect Gold (or Treasure) often reveals hidden wealth. In games where “Evil” and “Good” are defined concepts, Detect Good or Detect Evil let a character ascertain the nature of strange beings he encounters.

Enchanted weapons often have the ability to detect a specific type of foe. An example would be an elven axe that glows whenever it perceives orcs. An item with an inherent Sense starts with a PER Roll of 9- (unless the item itself has an INT), but you can improve by buying it some Enhanced Perception.

DETECT MAGIC

“Do you see it?”

As Ged looked round the room his wizard's eye caught one stone of those that made the floor. It was rough and dank as the rest, a heavy unshapen paving-stone: yet he felt the power of it as if it spoke to him aloud.

—Ged's power to perceive magic serves him well in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

At its base level, Detect Magic only tells a spellcaster two things: first, that a person or item is magical; second, how intense that magic is. It won't reveal what spells a caster knows, or what type of magic he practices. It won't tell a character what type of magic created an item, what powers it possesses, how it's powered, or the like. For example, if a person used Detect Magic on a Wand Of Withering, he would learn that the item is magical, and that its powers are fairly strong (say, about a 7 on a 1-10 scale), but nothing more. If he used Detect Magic on Kasdrevan, he would learn that Kasdrevan is a powerful spellcaster.



A Detect Magic power with Discriminatory (which would include Detect Magic that's assigned to the Sight Group) can perceive the types of magics a person practices, approximately how many spells he knows in each of those types of magic, and approximately how powerful those spells are (within, say, +/-25% of Active Points or DCs). When used on an enchanted item, Discriminatory Detect Magic reveals the types of magics in an enchanted item, what powers the item has (and their approximate strength, as with people), and the item's source of power (but not how many Charges it has, if any). For example, if a character used Discriminatory Detect Magic on the Wand Of Withering, he also learns the wand contains Necromancy magic, that it emits a beam that inflicts approximately 10 DCs of withering damage on living targets, and that it's powered by Charges. If he used that Sense on Kasdrevan, he'd learn Kasdrevan is a spellcaster who practices Elemental Magic and Wizardry, that he divides his spells in roughly equal proportion among those arcana, and that most of his spells have around 60 Active Points.

A Detect Magic power with Analyze can perceive exactly what types of magic a character practices, what spells he knows, and how powerful those spells are. It also perceives everything about the power in an enchanted item — exactly how many powers it has, how strong they are in game terms, and how many Charges it has (if any). However, it *cannot* perceive the item's command word (see page 321). For example, Analyze Detect Magic would perceive exactly how many spells and mystic powers Kasdrevan has, and how many Active Points or DCs they have. If used on the Wand Of Withering, it would tell the character that the wand is a Wand Of Withering, it emits a beam with a 40m range that does RKA 4d6 damage to living beings, and it has 23 Charges left that Never Recover.

FANTASY HERO POWERS

Paralytic Touch: Some Fantasy monsters can paralyze their victims with but a touch. This may represent a magical ability, a form of poison, or the like.

Entangle 4d6, 4 PD/4 ED, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+1) (80 Active Points); No Range (-½). Total cost: 53 points.

Tangling Vines: A spellcaster can use this spell to make moderate- to large-size plants and vines come to life, grab a nearby target, and wrap themselves around him so he cannot move.

Entangle 4d6, 4 PD/4 ED (40 Active Points); OIF (appropriate plants of opportunity; -½), Limited Range (60m; -¼). Total cost: 23 points.

EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL MOVEMENT

Turjan watched a moment, then at last squared himself and uttered the Call to the Violent Cloud.

All was quiet; then came a whisper of movement swelling to the roar of great winds. A wisp of white appeared and waxed to a pillar of boiling black smoke. A voice deep and harsh issued from the turbulence.

“At your disturbing power is this instrument come; whence will you go?”

“Four Directions, then One,” said Turjan. “Alive and unharmed must I be brought to Embelyon.”

The cloud whirled down; far up and away he was snatched, flung head over heels into incalculable distance. Four directions was he thrust, then one, and at least a great blow hurled him from the cloud, sprawled him into Embelyon.

—Turjan travels to another realm in “Turjan of Miir,” by Jack Vance

In High Fantasy games featuring travel between multiple planes of existence (the Astral Plane, the Ethereal Plane, Hell, the Elemental Planes, or what have you), this power becomes crucial. It usually involves some large, stationary object such as a magic mirror, a pentagram, or an enchanted doorway, or requires a spell that's difficult to cast for some reason (extensive preparations, valuable expendable Foci, high penalty to the Skill Roll). Only in the highest of High Fantasy does planar travel become easy.

In games other than High Fantasy, the GM may not allow characters to buy Extra-Dimensional Movement, or may require them to buy it with even more restrictions than those listed above. In fact, it may simply be a plot device — if the GM wants to send the PCs to Valhalla for some reason, he'll arrange a way; otherwise, they stay in their home plane.

Aside from actual plane-walking, characters can use Extra-Dimensional Movement to create various sorts of wards and enchanted items. For example, if a character builds a “magic chest” to store his treasure using Extra-Dimensional Movement, no one can open that chest unless they have the appropriate ability or spell with the *Trans-dimensional* Advantage. Gamemasters should evaluate any such constructs carefully, though, since they may cause game balance problems.

EXTRA LIMBS

Many Fantasy races have Extra Limbs, usually bought as Inherent because they're a normal, natural part of that race's biology. For example, lizard-folk often have tails (these take the *Limited Manipulation* Limitation), and serpent-folk and demons may have multiple arms.

Characters with multiple fully manipulable limbs raise some issues for HTH Combat. If a character wants to strike with weapons in two or more hands during the same Phase, he needs the Skill *Two-Weapon Fighting*, which has rules addressing the use of more than two limbs (see 6E1 92-93). If he has Off-Hand Defense, he only gets a +1 DCV maximum, regardless of how many weapons he wields. However, the character can perform a HTH Multiple Attack with the special effect of “I’m wielding multiple weapons.”

A multi-limbed combatant could also carry two or more shields. To determine the effect, compare the DCV ratings of all the shields. Take the smallest value, then add +1 DCV to it for each additional shield. For example, if a six-armed character carries four shields — two small shields and two normal shields — he gains +4 DCV (+1 for the least protective, a small shield, with another +1 per additional shield). The GM may, at his options, impose an OCV penalty (no more than -1 per shield after the first) for characters wielding multiple shields if he believes they would interfere with the character’s ability to attack.

FLIGHT

Rhialto affected his boots with the Spell of Lightsome Striding, which allowed him to walk through the air, high or low, at his pleasure.

—Rhialto uses magic to fly in *Rhialto the Marvellous*, by Jack Vance

Flight exists as a magical power in Fantasy Hero games, but it tends to be rare. Only in High Fantasy games can wizards routinely and easily fly; in most subgenres, they walk or ride like other characters.

A more restricted form of Flight — levitation, or moving slowly up and down in the air — occurs more frequently, since it does less harm to the “feel” of the genre. *Levitation* is a -½ Limitation for Flight. It indicates that the character can only fly straight up or straight down (he can, however, use his meters of Flight to maintain his position against the wind, if necessary). Normal rules for moving with or against gravity (6E2 25) apply, so the character can descend faster than he ascends. Most forms of levitation involve no more than about 10m of Flight, but characters can buy more meters if they prefer.

HEALING

Healing has many uses in Fantasy campaigns. Healing-spells and powers are the most popular abilities in the arsenals of priests and paladins, for example. Most Fantasy uses of Healing involve either the Simplified Healing option, or Healing BODY. The option for applying Cumulative to Healing (APG 102) is appropriate for some Fantasy campaigns. Similarly, in some High Fantasy campaigns, the GM may want to dispense with the restrictions on repeated use of Healing

and let characters with Healing-based abilities use them as often as they want on the same target.

Fantasy is one of the few genres where outright Resurrection powers are often appropriate. Particularly in some types of High Fantasy, characters can die and be brought back to life with astonishing regularity.

HEALING INANIMATE BEINGS AND NONLIVING OBJECTS

Generally, the GM should limit Healing to living creatures and PCs (regardless of how the PC is defined — a golem PC could be Healed), unless some Limitation restricts this use. The GM also typically restricts the use of Healing BODY to forms of life relatively similar to the character using the Healing — a character’s Spell Of Healing doesn’t work on trees or insects, for example.

However, with the GM’s permission, characters can buy Healing specifically for other types of creatures/objects, defined with Limitations so that it cannot affect normal beings or PCs. For example, a druid might have the ability to heal trees, defined as Healing BODY, Only Works On Trees (-2). A battle-mage might have a spell that repairs breached castle walls, defined as Healing BODY, Only Works On The Walls Of Bases (-1).

“Somebody, fetch a Healer!” ...

Tavis... eased his fingers into the wound as far as he could. ... [H]e plunged himself into a Healer’s trance with dizzying speed and cast out with his powers, trying to begin assessing the worst of the damage.

—Tavis O’Neill tries to use his healing powers to save the life of Ansel MacRorie in *The Harrowing Of Gwynedd*, by Katherine Kurtz

She rested her hand on his side, where she thought the ribs might be broken. She did not know what to expect. ... All at once the bruise beneath her hand began to fade. ... Under her hand his breath came longer and easier.

—Paksenarrion uses her nascent paladin powers to heal Ansuli in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

FANTASY HERO POWERS

Feather’s Flight: This spell allows a character to rapidly speak a word of power and stop himself from falling. Instead, he wafts gently to the ground, like a feather dropped from a window, and suffers no harm when he lands.

Flight 6m, Trigger (spoken word of power, activating Trigger takes no time, resetting Trigger requires a Half Phase Action; +½) (9 Active Points); Gliding (-1), Limited Movement (character cannot gain altitude, and must move at least 24m downward for every 2m forward; -½). Total cost: 4 points.

Spell Of Wound-Binding: With this priestly spell, a character can heal sword-slashes, fix broken bones, and otherwise mend injured characters. It uses the optional rules for decreasing the duration between re-uses of Healing.

Simplified Healing 3d6, Decreased Re-use Duration (6 Hours; +¼) (37 Active Points); OAF (holy symbol and drops of holy water; -1), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Only When Serving The God’s Purposes (-½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Faith Roll (-½). Total cost: 7 points.

Mending-Spell: A wizard can use this spell to mend simple objects, such as crockery, furniture, or the like. It won’t work on most technological devices, objects that have multiple moving parts, and the like.

Healing BODY 2d6 (20 Active Points); Only To Mend Broken Simple Objects (-1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 7 points.



IMAGES

Jasper worked an illusion-charm for her. A white tree he made spring up from the stone floor. Its branches touched the high roof-beams of the hall, and on every twig of every branch a golden apple shone, each a sun, for it was the Year-Tree. A bird flew among the branches suddenly, all white with a tail like a fall of snow, and the golden apples dimming turned to seeds, each one a drop of crystal. These falling from the tree with a sound like rain, all at once there came a sweet fragrance, while the tree, swaying, put forth leaves of rosy fire and white flowers like stars.

—Jasper creates an illusion for the Lord and Lady of O in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

Illusions, particularly visual ones, are a staple of Fantasy magic (particularly in Fantasy roleplaying games). In most cases, Images, not Mental Illusions, is the best way to create illusion spells and abilities, since multiple characters can perceive them (and sometimes discern that they're not real). Besides the obvious "illusion of attacking dragon" and the like (most of which involving both the Sight and Hearing Groups), characters can use Images for mimicry and "triggered message" spells (Hearing Group Images), to make foul food smell and taste better (Smell/Taste Group Images), and so forth. Less common, but equally as useful in some cases, are illusions that create false magic or conceal existing magic (Images to Detect Magic), create or conceal impressions of evil (Images to Detect Evil), create or conceal impressions of peril (Images to Danger Sense), and the like.

Images is also used to create spells that provide light (see, for example, the *Call Forth Light* ability that's part of the Paladin Template earlier in this chapter). See page 415 for more on light sources.

INVISIBILITY

"It is I, Arya, Do not work a spell against me." ... Beautiful Arya stood before them, now dressed in heavy wools and high boots, a long gray cloak hung about her shoulders.

"How in the name of Aar did you [approach us unseen?]"

Faendril cut the dwarf short. "Either the ring on her left hand, or the cloak. Which is it, Arya?"

"The cloak," she said, and drew it closed. As the folds met, she vanished.

—Arya demonstrates the power of her Cloak of Invisibility in "The Wizards Are Dying," by John L. Jenkins

Invisibility spells, and items which grant literal invisibility (such as a *tarnkappe* or Bilbo's "magic ring"), occur commonly in Fantasy. Similarly, boots that allow utterly silent movement, or spells that conceal one's scent from hunting dogs, also exist in Fantasy games and stories. Don't forget that any Focus providing Invisibility must be Inobvious, or it remains visible (though GMs may waive this rule, if appropriate). However, since an Expendable Focus is consumed by the casting of the spell, a character can have an Obvious Expendable Focus for an Invisibility-based spell without violating the standard rule.

As indicated in the rules, if an Invisible character attacks with a weapon, the weapon becomes visible as he attacks. This doesn't apply to the character's ordinary punches (ones made with just

his bare fists and STR). If the character gets extra STR or HA dice from an Inobvious Focus, the GM must decide if that object constitutes a “weapon.” For something like an enchanted gauntlet or glove, typically the Invisibility would cover it — for a club, typically it would not. The GM should allow the character the benefit of being Invisible, but without giving him the equivalent of the *Invisible Power Effects* Advantage for many of his attacks.

LIFE SUPPORT

[H]e uttered the Charm of Untiring Nourishment and entered the cool waters. He plunged deep through the Lake of Dreams, and as he stood on the bottom, his lungs at ease by virtue of the charm, he marveled at the fey place he had come upon.

—Mazirian pursues T’sain underwater in “Mazirian the Magician,” by Jack Vance

While Fantasy settings usually feature fewer hostile environments than Science Fiction ones, Life Support does have its uses in this genre. For example, a wizard might have a spell that granted him and his friends the power to breathe underwater (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater, Usable Simultaneously or Usable By Nearby), a fire elemental has Safe Environment: Intense Heat, and an assassin could regularly ingest tiny doses of his favorite poisons to build up an Immunity to them.

Gamemasters should allow characters used to underground or high-elevation environments, such as many Deep races and mountain tribes, to take a 1-point form of Expanded Breathing, *Thin Air*. This allows a character to breathe without hindrance in thin, stuffy, or foul air, such as on mountaintops or in caverns far beneath the surface. See page 418 for more information on such conditions.

LUCK

“Luck often enough will save a man, if his courage hold.”

—Buliwyf comments on the role of chance in combat in the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*

As noted in the *Divine Favor* Talent (page 138), Luck is an excellent way to represent a character who has the gods (or other such powerful beings) looking out for him from behind the scenes. It’s also a popular ability among some types of rogues.

The *Liavek* shared-world novels posit a magic system in which the ability to cast spells requires the wizard to place his luck inside an object. You could create a similar system by requiring wizards to buy all spells with the *Focus* and *Requires A Luck Roll* Limitations (see APG 144).

MENTAL ILLUSIONS

Suddenly everything about her was extremely beautiful and desirable. Far more so than moments before. He recognized the feeling, though the knowledge in no way detracted from the impression. Glamourie. He had felt it years before in his homeland. She was magically enhancing her natural appeal.

—Dilvish is the target of an illusion-spell in *Dilvish, The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

While Images work best for creating illusions that lots of people can see, Mental Illusions is usually the most appropriate power for an illusion only one person can perceive — one a spellcaster projects directly into the target’s mind. As with Images illusions, though, the spell is mostly likely to succeed if the caster does some “groundwork” in advance or takes advantage of the surroundings. Having a dragon appear out of nowhere and seem believable is likely to require a high Effect Roll (unless, perhaps, the spellcaster can make it seem like an act of conjuration). But having a dragon crawl out of a cave in a dark, dank woods where the targets have already seen “proof” of the dragon’s existence (charred animal corpses, claw-marks on trees) is highly believable. Copying many spells’ effects may also be highly believable, assuming the spellcaster has a reputation for power and proficiency.



FANTASY HERO POWERS

Wind-Movement And Cat-Footfall: With this spell, a mage can render himself unseen by human eyes and unheard by human ears. Only those who get very close to him have any chance to perceive him.

Invisibility to Sight and Hearing Groups (25 Active Points); OAF Fragile Expendable (piece of mirror wrapped in black velvet, Difficult to obtain; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Side Effects (all PER Rolls made to perceive character for the next hour are at +3; -½). Total cost: 7 points.

Crystal Ball Of Locating: This enchanted crystal sphere allows a character to track down a specific person, then view the area around him. The user usually attempts to achieve the +20 “target is unaware of the Mind Scan” effect; if not, the target automatically knows when the character has found him.

Mind Scan 12d6, +10 OMCV (80 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Cannot Attack Through Link (-1), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Requires A Magic Roll (-½) (total cost: 17 points) **plus** Clairsentience (Sight Group), 2,000x Range (400,000m) (75 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Linked (-½), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Requires A Magic Roll (-½) (total cost: 18 points). Total cost: 35 points.

Barkskin: This spell turns the character’s skin to rough, tough bark, thus granting him some protection against attacks.

Resistant Protection (4 PD/2 ED) (9 Active Points); OAF Expendable (small piece of bark, Easy to obtain; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Perceivable (-¼). Total cost: 3 points.

MIND CONTROL

[H]e projected a mental command for Alroy to sleep — and was astonished when the king’s eyelids fluttered and then closed.

—Prince Javan uses his burgeoning Deryni mystic powers to mentally control his brother in *The Harrowing Of Gwynedd*, by Katherine Kurtz

A classic ability of many Dark Lords and evil sorcerers is to sap other peoples’ willpower and make the victim follow orders unquestioningly — an obvious example of Mind Control. But plenty of more restricted uses exist. With the right Limitations, you can use Mind Control to create powers or spells of emotion control, fear infliction, and the like.

MIND LINK

Mind Link appears frequently in various guises in Fantasy settings. In psionic-based magic systems, it’s a common way for wizards to communicate. In other systems, it can represent a mage’s innate link or bond with his familiar, a Summoned being, or an intelligent magic sword; you can also use it to build a spell that carries a spellcaster’s whispered words directly to the ear of the person he wants to speak with.

MULTIFORM

From Frigga, the wife of Odin, Loki borrowed the dress of falcon feathers that she owned. He clad himself in it, and flew to Jötunheim in the form of a falcon.

—in need of speed, Loki takes the form of a falcon in *The Children Of Odin*, by Padraic Colum

Shape-changing occurs more often in Fantasy than perhaps any other genre, and Multiform is the best Power for creating most such abilities and spells. The *Personality Loss* and *Reversion* Power Modifiers are particularly appropriate for Fantasy shapeshifting spells.

Most Fantasy shape-changing involves taking on the shapes of various animals and monsters. *The HERO System Bestiary* has character sheets for dozens of animals (both real and fantastic), making it easy to construct and use Multiform-based spells.

POWER DEFENSE

Since spell effects often involve Drain or Transform, many wizards (particularly those who get involved in spell-duels with other mages) find it worthwhile to buy at least a few points of Power Defense. Many defensive magic items also provide some Power Defense.

SHAPE SHIFT

Almost immediately, fire flared on Marek’s candle, its light gilding the placid planes of his face — which then began to waver and change. Lines sank across the youthful brow, along jowls suddenly less firm; grey began to thread through hair no longer so dark or so glossy. Within seconds, two Hombards sat entranced before Miklos and the Healer Cosim.

—Marek uses his Deryni powers to take on the shape of another man in *The Bastard Prince*, by Katherine Kurtz

As contrasted to Multiform, Shape Shift is ideal for spells that change some feature or aspect of a wizard’s body but don’t alter his abilities or general humanoid form. Examples include a disguise-spell to alter a character’s appearance, a spell to mimic the form and body odor of orcs so the PCs can sneak past the orcs’ guard dogs, or an illusion-spell that makes a character look, feel, smell, and sound like a dragon.

SKILLS

Slowly, quietly, she crept out of her room, putting a spell on her feet to keep them silent.

—Asgara uses magic to be stealthy in “Dragon’s Fosterling,” by Ruby S.W. Jung

Many spells use the *Skills* Power to represent the ability to accomplish some task. For example, you could build a Spell Of Unlocking as a high Lockpicking roll with appropriate Limitations, and in a Low Fantasy game a healing-spell might just provide a Paramedics (Healing) roll instead of using the *Healing* Power.



SUMMON

When he had meditated for more than five hours Elric took a brush and a jar of ink and began to paint both walls and floor with complicated symbols, some of which were so intricate that they seemed to disappear at an angle to the surface on which they had been laid. At last this was done and Elric spreadeagled himself in the very centre of his huge rune, face down, one hand upon his grimoire, the other (with the Actorios upon it) stretched palm down. The moon was full. A shaft of its light fell directly upon Elric's head, turning the hair to silver. And then the Summoning began. ...

"Arioch! It is Elric of Melniboné who summons thee."

—Elric conjures his patron god Arioch for the first time in *Elric Of Melniboné*, by Michael Moorcock

They went on and came to a chamber whose walls were hung with silk that rippled black and crimson like leaping flames. From the vast, complex pentacle traced with glowing chalks against a floor of black marble, the nature of this third chamber was easy to guess. They needed not the stench of brimstone that permeated the air to know that this room was given over to the wizard's conjurations. Here he performed those forbidden rituals whereby he might summon up demons from below or spirits from beyond. The very air tingled with unholy magic.

—Thongor and Ald Turmis find Athmar Phong's summoning-room in "Thieves Of Zangabal," by Lin Carter

This Power represents a classic Fantasy ability: the spellcaster's power to conjure demons from other planes, call animals to him with but a single word of power, and the like. You can also use it to represent characters' abilities to build or create things that they don't literally "conjure" — such as a necromancer's ability to create undead beings or a priest's power to fashion a golem.

Of course, Summon is a "stop sign" power, and with good reason — giving a character the ability to call up an entire army on a moment's notice could significantly unbalance the game. The GM may need to exercise some control over PCs' use of Summon. For example, in many Fantasy stories, Summoning powerful beings requires special preparations (a magic circle, a blood sacrifice, and so on). In game terms, you can represent this with hefty Limitations: Concentration, Extra Time, Focus, Requires Multiple Users, Requires A Roll, Side Effects (Summoned being attacks character), and so forth. That prevents the character from effortlessly conjuring hordes of monsters to help him fight battles.

VARIABLE SUMMONING

Typically, a character defines the number of beings he can Summon and how powerful they are when he buys a Summon ability — for example, any four animals built on up to 200 Total Points, or one demon built on 600 Total Points. However, since Summon is so common in some Fantasy settings, the GM may want to allow for greater flexibility.

For a +¼ Advantage, *Variable Summon*, a character can Summon more of a weaker type of creature. When he buys Summon he defines the standard number of beings he can Summon and how powerful they are (i.e., how many Total Points they're built on). For every 10% fewer Total Points, he can *double* the number of beings he can Summon. To buy Variable Summon, typically a Summon must also have the *Expanded Class* Advantage.

Example: *Saākiv buys a Spell Of Calling Forth The Lesser Undead: Summon up to four Undead creatures built on up to 200 Total Points, Expanded Class (undead; +¼), Variable Summon (+¼) (100 Active Points). Thus, if he Summons, say, skeletons built on 200 Total Points, he can Summon four of them, as specified. But if he Summons only 180-point skeletons (i.e., ones built on 10% fewer Total Points), he can Summon eight of them (twice as many as usual). If he Summons 160-point skeletons, he can Summon 16 of them; and so forth.*

BANISHING SUMMONED BEINGS

What ye call up, ye must be able to put down. Besides just killing Summoned beings, Fantasy Hero characters have several ways to get rid of them.

The most common is Dispel Summon. An attacker may target this at either the Summoned being or at the character who used Summon. In the latter case, only the character's Power Defense matters; in the former case, use either the character's or being's Power Defense, whichever is most appropriate. An attacker may use Dispel Summon at any time — the same Segment the being appears in, the next Phase, a minute later, the next day, or what have you. However, the GM may rule that at some point banishment is no longer possible because the Summoned being has "acclimated" to his current location or plane of existence.

Less common, but also effective in some instances, are Drain Summon or Suppress Summon. Both require the attacker to "remove" or "cancel out" all the Active Points in the Summon before the Summoned being vanishes. In the case of Suppress, once the character stops maintaining the effect, the Summoned being automatically re-appears in the same condition as when he "left."

Typically a character may automatically "banish" an *Amicable* being he's Summoned simply by asking/instructing it to leave. The GM may change this rule if appropriate.





Oele gestured again and it was as if the shorter man had been seized by a giant hand and cast sideways across the room.

—Oele uses magic to ensure that a fight remains fair in *Dilvish, The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

His dream became one of Vlana dancing sinuously[,] a vision which would have irked Mor beyond endurance; fortunate indeed that she was not at that moment using her power of reading minds at a distance.

—Fafhrd escapes his mother's unwelcome mind-reading in "The Snow Women," by Fritz Leiber

TELEKINESIS

Telekinesis allows you to build all sorts of interesting spells and magical abilities. Many of these are fairly low-powered — “wizard’s assistant” spells that let a mage pick up objects across the room or work other minor effects. But some Telekinesis spells are enormously powerful, such as earth-moving spells in which wizards pick up enormous boulders or blocks of worked stone (40 STR Telekinesis, Only Works On Earth/Rock (-½)).

TELEPATHY

“You dislike killing. There are other methods of defense. I could teach you to look into a man’s mind[.]”

—Har offers to teach Morgon to use the power within him in *The Riddlemaster Of Hed*, by Patricia McKillip

In many High Fantasy settings, particularly those featuring psionic-based magic, Telepathy is a common basis for various spells of communication and interrogation. Powerful evil sorcerers may use it on characters from afar to discern their intentions and weaknesses before facing them in combat; a wizard-king might use Telepathy spells to keep his courtiers honest, or to determine who’s telling the truth in a legal dispute.

In other Fantasy sub-genres, Telepathy exists, but it’s usually less powerful and/or more Limited. For example, a druid might use Communication Only (-¼) Telepathy to create the ability to “speak with animals,” or a Low Fantasy wizard might have the power to “see what lies in the hearts and minds of men” (Telepathy 6d6, Requires A PER Roll).

TELEPORTATION

Shimrod tossed his few belongings into a sack, crushed the twig in his fingers and called out: “Willow, willow, take me now where I must go!” Shimrod felt a rush of wind and the ground whirled beneath him. He glimpsed upland forests, the peaks of the Teach tac Teach ranked in a long line to north and south; then he slid down a long chute of air to the deck beside the entry to Murgen’s stone manse Swer Smod.

—Shimrod instantly transports himself to Murgen’s sanctum in *The Green Pearl*, by Jack Vance

He wondered, as he rounded the final curve, if Yrth had walked up the stairs every night to the top of the tower, or if he had practiced the enviable art of displacement, moving from point to point in the wink of an eye.

—Morgon considers the possibilities of teleportation in *The Riddlemaster Of Hed*, by Patricia McKillip

Teleportation serves as a basis for many High Fantasy spells (it’s far too flashy and powerful for most other subgenres). In some settings, wizards criss-cross continents at will with Teleportation spells, maintaining friendships, romantic liaisons, and networks of spies without exposing themselves to the inconveniences of mundane travel.

In some settings, Teleportation Gates (6E1 301) exist. Sometimes they're commonplace — every wizard of a certain power level has one or two — while in other settings Gates are rare artifacts of ancient civilizations, with strategic significance for those who control them.

The frequent use of Teleportation can have a definite impact on the game. For one thing, it makes “encounters on the road” adventures difficult or impossible to run; for another, it may give the characters too much ability to escape danger. To control the use of Teleportation in the game, GMs may want to impose certain restrictions on it. Perhaps it requires elaborate preparations (such as magic circles and Extra Time), only works at certain times of the day, or can only transport characters to specific locations (based on the “ley lines” of magic that gird the world, or specific circles of standing stones, or the like).

TRANSFORM

One of the most versatile Powers in the *HERO System*, Transform has dozens of uses in the Fantasy genre. These range from the classic “man into frog” spell, to the petrification abilities of some magical creatures, to changing water into wine. It's also the Power used for creating objects out of thin air (assuming no other Power is appropriate) and for enslaving other beings

for a long time (a “Mental Transform” as described in the rules).

Fantasy Transforms usually define the recovery condition as “another application of this spell or a similar spell, or the character voluntarily ending the effect.” “Similar spell” includes Dispelling, Draining, or Suppressing the magic so the target spontaneously reverts to his proper form. A few Transforms, such as crippling curses, may heal normally.

Many Fantasy Transforms have the *All Or Nothing* (-½) Limitation, since they either work or they don't. Other appropriate Limitations for reducing the cost of expensive Transforms include Limited Target, Limited Range, and Concentration.

“Can you teach me to transform Lady Desdea into an owl, if only for a day or so?”
“Transformations are complicated,” said Shimrod. “Each step is critical; if a single syllable went awry, Lady Desdea might become a harpy or an orc, with the whole countryside at peril. You must delay transformations until you are more experienced.”

—Shimrod explains transformation spells to Madouc in *Madouc*, by Jack Vance



FANTASY HERO POWERS

Assume Animal Form: Many Fantasy wizards can take on the shape of birds and beasts... though a mage must beware not to keep an animal's form for too long, lest the beast's personality overwhelm his own.

Multiform (16 animals built on up to 220 Total Points each) (64 Active Points); Costs Endurance (to change only; -½), Extra Time (Extra Phase; -¾), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Incantations (throughout casting; -½), Personality Loss (1 Hour; -1), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 15 points.

Call Animals: A favorite of many druids and wizards, this spell summons local animals to talk to or assist the caster.

Summon up to four animals built on up to 300 Character Points each, Expanded Class (animals; +½) (105 Active Points); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Gestures (throughout; -½), Incantations (throughout; -½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Arrives Under Own Power (-½), Summoned Being Must Inhabit Locale (-½). Total cost: 17 points.

Fireweaving: With this spell, a wizard can “pull” flame to him, hold it in his hands and shape it, “throw” it at a target, touch it to a flammable object, and so on.

Telekinesis (30 “STR”; see APG 122) (45 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Only Works On Fire (-1), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 15 points.

Imperial Doorway: In the Kaldarian Empire, the Imperial Order of Wizards has set up “doorways” between major cities. Any citizen can buy, or be granted, the right to use the doorways for instantaneous travel (in game terms, this is a 3-point Perk).

Teleportation 20m, Area Of Effect (2m Radius; +¼), Constant (+½), MegaScale (1m = 1,000 km; +1¾), Usable Simultaneously (up to two people at once; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (90 Active Points); OAF Immobile (-2), Gate (-½), Only To Pre-Defined Locations (-¼). Total cost: 24 points.

Mouth Of Truth: This spell causes a small mouth to appear on the target's forehead. If the target speaks a lie during the duration of the spell, and the Effect Roll of the spell is sufficient for the caster to realize the target is lying, the mouth instantly pipes up to tell the truth.

Telepathy 12d6 (60 Active Points); OAF (silver mouth-and-tongue pendant; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Only To Determine If Target's Lying And What The Truth Is As He Knows It (-1), Perceivable (everyone nearby can hear the mouth; -¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). Total cost: 14 points.



POWER ADVANTAGES

Many Fantasy spells (and other powers) have Advantages — after all, the ability to make spells better and more effective than a weapon is one reason mages buy them, instead of just learning swordplay. Advantages also help to distinguish spells, making one mage's spellcraft different from another's.

Some Advantages are discussed not in this section, but in Chapter Four, because their use in creating and casting magic spells requires more detailed discussion of options and implications than appropriate for this section of the book.

AFFECTS DESOLIDIFIED

Since Desolidification doesn't occur frequently in Fantasy, neither does Affects Desolidified, but it does have a few uses. First, it's ideal for ghost-cutting enchanted swords, spells that affect ghosts, and the like. Since virtually all Fantasy forms of Desolidification have "Magic" as their special effect, characters should not be allowed to buy the +¼ level of Affects Desolidified as "only against Magic"; to qualify for the cheaper form, they have to specify some more restrictive special effect.

Second, Affects Desolidified is appropriate for defenses and other spells that are supposed to affect *anything*. To keep out literally anyone, a magic wall needs Affect Desolidified, just in case there are mages or monsters with "astral form" or "pass through walls" powers.

ALTERNATE COMBAT VALUE

ACV is a great Advantage for creating unusual spells. For example, a wizard whose magic depends on "the power of mind and will" might buy most of them as using OMCV versus DMCV to make the Attack Roll, which increases his odds of hitting most targets.

AREA OF EFFECT

Area Of Effect is a popular Advantage for many types of Fantasy spells. It's perfect for creating combat magic designed to hurt many enemy soldiers at once (such as a fireball or deadly hailstorm), make a spell more accurate (via 1m Radius Accurate), and the like. It's also useful for stationary enchantments that affect everyone that enters a specific area, such as Suppression fields, or the Aid PRE that helps everyone who enters a temple. The *Conforming* option (APG 134) is handy for simulating many unusual spells.

ATTACK VERSUS ALTERNATE DEFENSE

AVAD (including NND) is perfect for defining spells with unusual defenses. Magic is, well, *magic*, and that means it can often affect people who can brush off ordinary attacks without difficulty. Some campaigns might even define all magic as AVAD/NND *by default* (for free), but make the defense well-known and fairly common so that spellcasters can't easily humble everyone they meet.

Deadly Fantasy attacks, such as the lethal poisons of wyverns or the terrifying necromantic spells of liches, often take NND in conjunction with Does BODY. This can make attacks unbalancingly effective, so the GM should examine any such spells or abilities closely before allowing them in play.

Clever characters may come up with some unusual applications for this Advantage, and the GM should review those powers closely as well. For example, imagine an NND Presence Attack to create a Spell Of Irresistible Fear, or an NND Suppress anti-magic charm.

CUMULATIVE

Cumulative provides an excellent way to create slow, subtle effects that nevertheless have great power — an appropriate sort of thing for many Low Fantasy and Epic Fantasy magic systems. A voodoo practitioner, for example, might have Cumulative ritual spells to take control of or harm his victims. Some strange sorts of battle magic might use Cumulative to slowly build up mystic force to the point where it inflicts significant harm on soldiers.

DAMAGE OVER TIME

Damage Over Time is tailor-made for creating relatively slow-acting spells (such as curses), poisons, and similar abilities. But don't forget that it's a "Caution Sign" Power Modifier; the GM should review DoT powers carefully to make sure they won't unbalance the campaign or unfairly hinder some characters.

DELAYED EFFECT

This Advantage is highly appropriate for Fantasy spells. Many magic systems (see Chapter Four) impose some restriction on how many spells a wizard can cast and/or maintain at once, to prevent spell-casting characters from becoming

2

To his left and but a few paces from him came a crackling burst of fiery light near the illuminated fingers of an outstretched hand. It moved away from the hand as swiftly as his eye could follow, erupting with a heated roar, a flaming red sphere that grew from the size of a fist to that of a spear's length across. Long tongues of fire streamed behind the torrid ball of spell-substance that yet grew in magnitude, that now lit the entire passage with a devouring brightness. ... Deihm threw up his hands and covered his eyes as the passage exploded with thunderous waves of heat and flame, the trolls' horrid death-cries barely heard in the fireball's detonation.

—Faendril kills a group of trolls with a fireball spell in "The Wizards Are Dying,"
by John L. Jenkins

too powerful. Delayed Effect is one of the best mechanisms for this, since it requires just such a restriction, but gives characters a countervailing benefit: the power to prepare spells in advance, thus diminishing the effect of the Limitations on them. Examples include priests who pray for grants of divine power they can use throughout the day, or alchemists who prepare potions for use later.

However, in some cases, GMs may need to prevent characters from loading spells down with too many Limitations, then getting around those Limitations via Delayed Effect. If so, the GM can classify Limitations on spells as either Storing or Release. *Storing* Limitations apply only to the preparation of the spell (the casting of it beforehand), while *Release* Limitations apply when the character activates the spell during the game. That way the GM can let characters take some appropriate Limitations that would render a spell unusable during game play (such as lots of Extra Time) as Storing, but define others (such as Increased Endurance Cost) as Release-only to prevent characters from abusing the Delayed Effect privilege too much.

If a character takes Extra Time as a Release Limitation, the minimum time for activation is a Full Phase, since Delayed Effect spells automatically take a Half Phase to activate. Note also that the rules already define Requires A Roll as a Release Limitation.

Generally speaking, it's best if the GM only allows characters with Constant Delayed Effect spells to pay END for them for one use when they prepare them. That way the character doesn't pay END when he activates the spell during the game, but does have to pay END to maintain it in later Phases. Alternately, the GM can let the character pay as much END as he wants into a "pool" for the spell when he prepares it, then draw on that pool at activation; when the pool runs out, the spell expires automatically (the character can also deactivate it normally if he wishes, but can't pay more END to keep it in effect longer).

A character may, if he chooses and has free "slots" available, cast a Delayed Effect spell normally — without any prior preparation and subject to all its Limitations at the time of casting. However, the GM may alter this rule to prevent casters from doing this if he prefers.

SELECTING DELAYED EFFECT SPELLS

Delayed Effect requires some restriction on how many spells a character can have active at one time (such as INT/5 spells, or the like). Normally, if a character prepares a spell for casting later, that prepared spell occupies a "slot." That forces the character to guess in advance what spells he'll need and prepare them. This isn't a significant problem in a magic system that allows a character to buy spells without Delayed Effect, or in which the GM allows a character to cast a spell with Delayed Effect normally (see above). But in a magic system where characters can only cast prepared spells, spellcasters may suffer difficulties

when they need to use a particular spell in their arsenals, but don't have it prepared for casting.

In those systems, the GM may, if he wishes, allow characters to prepare more spells than they have available "casting slots." He must establish some limit on the number of prepared spells ("preparation slots"), but that limit should be significantly higher than the character's number of casting slots. Examples include three times the character's number of casting slots, or a number equal to the character's INT. A character may prepare the same spell more than once so that he fills two or more preparation slots with it — that way he can use it multiple times if necessary.

To counterbalance the fact that a prepared spell does not occupy a casting slot, *any* spell activated (cast) occupies a casting slot, even if it's an Instant spell. In effect this limits not the number of spells a character can have active at one time, but the number of spells he can cast per time period. The GM must decide how often casting slots "refresh" — how soon characters can use them again. Depending on the nature of magic and the campaign, once per scene, once per hour, once per day, or once per week might all be appropriate.

Example: *Kasdrevan is a PC wizard in a campaign where all spells must have Delayed Effect and must be prepared in advance. The GM says spellcasters can have preparation slots equal to two times their casting slots, and that casting slots equal the character's INT/5 (a character can buy up the number of casting slots using the normal rules for Delayed Effect). Kasdrevan has INT 19, so he has four casting slots. That means he can prepare eight spells in advance, then select from among those eight when deciding how to use his four casting slots. He chooses the following spells: Lightning Bolt, Lightning Bolt, Lightning Bolt, Healing Spell, Healing Spell, Mesmerize, Wizard's Shield, and Far-Sight.*

During an adventure, Kasdrevan gets involved in a battle and uses Wizard's Shield, one Lightning Bolt, and one Healing Spell. Even though Lightning Bolt (RKA) and Healing Spell (Healing) both involve Instant Powers, casting each of them used up one of Kasdrevan's casting slots. Thus, he only has one casting slot left. The magic system defines casting slots as refreshing on a once per day basis, so Kasdrevan must wait until tomorrow to get his three "used" casting slots back for use. If he casts his fourth allowed spell, he won't be able to cast any more spells until his slots refresh.

INCREASED SLOTS

The rules allow a character to obtain more slots by paying extra for his *Delayed Effect* Advantage. If a character has multiple spells, potions, or the like with Delayed Effect, he uses the *smallest* number of slots indicated by any of the *Delayed Effect* Advantages. In other words, if a character wants to have extra Delayed Effect slots, he has to pay the increased Advantage cost for *every* Delayed Effect power he has.



Mazirian made a selection from his books and with great effort forced five spells upon his brain: Phandaal's Gyrator, Felojun's Second Hypnotic Spell, The Excellent Prismatic Spray, The Charm of Untiring Nourishment, and the Spell of the Omnipotent Sphere. This accomplished, Mazirian drank wine and retired to his couch.

—Mazirian memorizes the spells he needs to pursue an adversary in "Mazirian the Magician," by Jack Vance



DIFFICULT TO DISPEL

Given the prevalence of Dispel and Suppress in Fantasy games, this Advantage becomes correspondingly more common and valuable. Even a single level of Difficult To Dispel goes a long way toward protecting a spell from Dispel Magic and similar powers.

DOES KNOCKBACK, DOUBLE KNOCKBACK

Since most Fantasy Hero games do not use the Knockback rules (see page 188), these Advantages have no place in them. They would apply normally in a Fantasy game that did use Knockback. At the GM's option, even if the campaign doesn't use Knockback as a ground rule, applying Does Knockback to a spell allows it to do Knockback.

INDIRECT

Indirect works extremely well for many magical effects. Spells often disregard barriers with ease, or should strike at a target from an unusual direction, and Indirect simulates that. Imagine, for example, a stone-mage's spell that causes a hand made of earth to grow from the ground to grasp the target, or a druid's power to call down lightning bolts or hail from the stormy skies. A conjurer might summon lesser imps to attack his foes, and use Indirect to simulate the fact that he can make them appear anywhere within range... such as right next to or behind their target.

MEGASCALE

He flung his mind forward, miles ahead along the road, where a trader driving a wagon-load of cloth was whistling away his boredom. He filled Raederle's mind with the same awareness and gripping her hard, pulled her forward into it. A moment later he was lying with her at the bottom of the big covered cart[.]

—Morgon uses his power of “displacement” to save himself and Raederle from attack in *Harpist In The Wind*, by Patricia McKillip

MegaScale is a fairly rare Advantage for magic in most games, though it may be more applicable in High Fantasy games to create long-range Teleportation spells and the like. One common Fantasy use is with Clairvoyance, to create crystal balls that can view any place in the world. It's also used for certain curses and other spells that should affect a target wherever he is — they're bought with Area Of Effect (1m Radius Accurate) and then the Area is MegaScaled to equal the size of the world.

PERSONAL IMMUNITY

Personal Immunity suits many Fantasy Hero campaigns very well. It allows a wizard to ignore the effects of his own spells, which may prove handy if he wants to see through his own Darkness field or an enemy mage Reflects his Mystic Bolt back at him.

In some games, the GM uses a predefined list of spells for the game that spellcasting PCs must choose from. In such settings, if a character has Personal Immunity to a spell, it applies not only to that spell when he casts it, but when other mages cast it against him. If this causes problems in the game, the GM might only allow the Personal Immunity to apply to other mages' spells if they are equal to or less than the character in power (however the GM defines "equal"); more powerful wizards' use of the spell bypasses his Immunity.

RANGE ADVANTAGES

Wizards frequently apply these Advantages, particularly *No Range Modifier* and *Line Of Sight*, to spells. After all, what does magic reck of distance? — many spells should have as great a chance to hit someone at the furthest point of their Range as someone standing right next to the spellcaster. And for that matter, many spells should work against targets a long way away, which may require Increased Maximum Range.

TIME LIMIT

This Power Modifier is the standard way to create spells and other abilities that last for a defined period of time, even if there's some variation to it (like "1 Minute per point the Skill Roll succeeds by"). See Chapter Four for more information.

TRIGGER

Many curses and long-term attack spells take Trigger, sometimes as a way of forcing the victim to obey the spellcaster. If a person knows that he's going to suffer a wasting disease "when the next full moon arises," he may obey the spellcaster's orders in exchange for a promise to remove the spell before it takes effect. If a king fears that an enemy army plans to attack at dawn, he may have his battle mages cast a Spell Of Weakness on the enemy to take effect at ten minutes after dawn, allowing the king's soldiers to kill the debilitated enemy troops easily.

And of course, Trigger has many other uses with spells. Wizards often use it to set magical traps to protect their sanctums, or to create "quick-cast" spells (like *Feather's Flight* on page 151) that they can use instantly. In High Fantasy settings, powerful mages often have a special Teleportation escape spell Triggerred by various defined conditions (such as a spoken command word or when the character has less than 3 BODY left).

USABLE ON OTHERS

Many different types of spells could have, or even require, this Advantage. For example, if a character wanted to create a Spell Of Spider-walking that allowed him, or anyone he cast it upon, to walk on walls, he'd need to apply Usable By Others. That's what lets him cast the spell on someone else — he just chooses himself as the target if he wants to walk up walls. Usable By Nearby allows wizards to create spells that lets all their friends fly, breathe underwater, become invisible, or the like as long as they remain close to him.

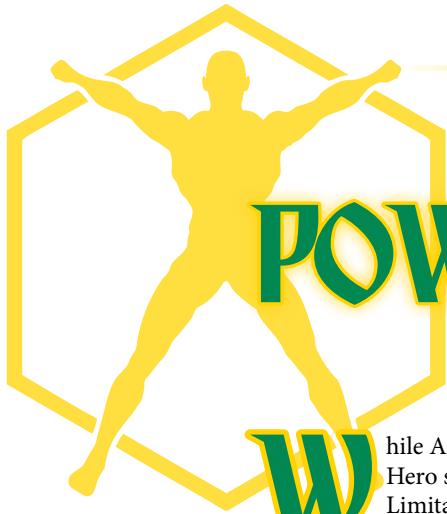
VARIABLE ADVANTAGE

This Advantage is a handy way for a spellcaster to create one spell that he can alter slightly for tactical benefit. When facing a heavily-armored knight, he makes the spell Armor Piercing; when he's tired and needs to conserve END, he makes it Reduced Endurance (0 END).

VARIABLE SPECIAL EFFECTS

Like Variable Advantage, this Advantage allows a spellcaster to design one spell and use it in a variety of ways — one Phase it's a Fire Bolt, the next it's an Icicle Blast, and the next it's a Mystic Dart. When combined with Variable Advantage, it can turn one spell into a "miniature Variable Power Pool."





POWER LIMITATIONS

While Advantages may give a Fantasy Hero spell real “punch,” it’s the spell’s Limitations that really define it. Most magic systems are constructed, at least in part, around the Limitations spells must take. For example, a system that says all wizards must use magic staves and words of power to cast spells (*i.e.*, that all spells require the *Focus* and *Incantations* Limitations) differs from one in which all magic requires time, force of will, and skill (*i.e.*, that says all spells must have the *Concentration*, *Extra Time*, and *Requires A Roll* Limitations). Even within a given magic system, different “classes” of spells may require different Limitations: a ritual magic ceremony has *Concentration*, *Extra Time*, and *Requires Multiple Users*; whereas a combat magic spell has none of those Limitations, but might require a *Focus*, *Gestures*, and *Incantations*. Sorcery spells may need *Concentration* and *Increased Endurance Cost*, while Necromancy spells require elaborate and expensive *Foci*.

Some Limitations, including *Concentration*, *Duration* Limitations, *Endurance* Limitations, *Extra Time*, *Requires A Roll*, and *Side Effects*, are not discussed in full in this section, but in Chapter Four. Their use in creating and casting magic spells requires more focused discussion of options and implications than appropriate for this section of the book.

CHARGES

While Charges (either as a Limitation or an Advantage) usually don’t apply to spells, they do have several applications in Fantasy settings.

First, they’re useful for Ranged weapons, such as bows or slings, that come with supplies of ammunition.

Second, they frequently apply to enchanted items. A magic wand may be able to project a lightning bolt 50 times before it needs “recharging”; a potion may have four doses in a single bottle; a scroll with a spell that a character can recite (and thus cast) may only be used once, and then the writing fades and the scroll becomes an ordinary roll of paper.

Third, in some cases GMs use Charges to define how magic systems work. For example, in Jack Vance’s *The Dying Earth*, wizards must “memorize” spells. They can cast a memorized spell one time, and then it fades from their memory. To cast it again, they must re-memorize the spell. One way to define such a magic system would be for each spell to have 1 Charge (the GM simply assumes that PC spellcasters always have “memorized” their full complement of spells — *i.e.*, all the spells they’ve paid Character Points for).

DELAYED USE

A power with this Limitation (a form of Limited Power) cannot be used until a certain amount of time has passed since it was last used. This can represent a “cooldown” period before a weapon can be fired again, a mystical restriction that prevents a spell from being cast more than once per hour, or the like. If a power cannot be used for 1 extra Phase after it was last used (*i.e.*, it can’t be used in consecutive Phases, just every other Phase), Delayed Use is a $-\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation. For each additional step down the Time Chart, the value of the Limitation increases by $\frac{1}{4}$ (thus, $-\frac{1}{2}$ for 1 Turn, $-\frac{3}{4}$ for 1 Minute, -1 for 5 Minutes, and so on).

Delayed Use is most appropriate for attacks and other abilities that a character could typically use repeatedly or at will. If a power isn’t one a character would use that way, the GM may reduce the value of the Limitation, even to -0 .

Example: *Arkelos (SPD 4) has a Fireball Spell with Delayed Use (1 Phase; $-\frac{1}{4}$). He casts the spell on his Phase in Segment 3. When his Phase in Segment 6 occurs, he can’t cast the spell again, because he has to delay 1 Phase between castings. When his Phase occurs in Segment 9 he can cast it again.*

Suppose that Arkelos took Delayed Use (1 Turn; $-\frac{1}{2}$) instead. Then he’d have to wait an entire Turn between castings, meaning he probably won’t be able to use the Fireball spell more than once or twice in the typical combat.



FOCUS

The *Focus* Limitation is a cornerstone of many magic systems (in addition to its numerous mundane uses, such as for building weapons). In some settings, all mages must have a Wizard's Staff to cast spells, and priests need holy symbols to create miracles. In others, spellcasters need "material components" such as bat's wings, a small ruby, a vial of blood, or a copper tube incised with arcane sigils. Defining the right type of Focus for a spell gives that spell flavor and individuality. When universally applied, Focus helps to make a magic system and spells feel like magic, rather than like psionics or superpowers.

OBVIOUSNESS

Most Fantasy Foci are Obvious, either because of their appearance (elaborately-carved staffs, jeweled fetishes, rune-carved bones...), or the way they're stored (raven's feathers wrapped in black velvet, a piece of red silk string tied in a complex pattern of knots). Some easily-obtained or common Expendable Foci (such as coins or a knife) might qualify as Inobvious because their "ordinary" purpose disguises their role as magical Foci, but that's up to the player and/or GM to decide. A magic ring that seems ordinary and has no apparent involvement in the spellcasting process (for example, it doesn't glow when the wearer casts spell) might also qualify as Inobvious.

ACCESSIBILITY

Most magical Foci — wands, material components, Wizard's Staffs, and the like — qualify as Accessible. Foci that can easily be disturbed or invalidated, such as a magic circle drawn in the ground or an easily-torn magic robe, also count as Accessible. A few, such as the aforementioned magic ring, would be Inaccessible.

If a character has a multiple-part Focus that has a mix of parts (some Accessible, some Inaccessible), use the lower of the two values for it. For example, if a character has a mystic sword (OAF) that only works when wielded while wearing an enchanted gauntlet (OIF), he uses the lower value (OIF, -½) for the combination, even though the sword is Accessible.

If a character has a unique Focus for his spellcasting, such as his Wizard's Staff, losing it may not permanently deprive him of his powers. At the GM's option, the character may be able to reforge or re-create a unique Focus, though this should require a lot of time, effort, and expense. If the character succeeds, the old Focus loses all its "power," which transfers to the new Focus.

MOBILITY

Most Fantasy Hero spellcasters prefer Foci that are Mobile — staffs, material components, and similar items they can carry with them. After all, adventurers usually do a lot of traveling, so PC wizards don't want to tie themselves down with Bulky or Immobile Foci. However, Immobile Foci are quite common for certain types of summonings and ritual spells. Examples include special pentagrams or circles of standing stones

permanently built into a place of mystic significance, a sacred pool, or an altar on which an evil priest performs human sacrifices to augment his powers. Such Immobile Foci often qualify for the *Arrangement* bonus (an additional -¼ value) in many instances.

EXPENDABILITY

Magic Foci such as a wand, a Wizard's Staff, or a ring are not expendable. They act as the enabling mechanism for a character's spells, and as such work for any spell he casts, as often as he needs. On the other hand, in many Fantasy settings, magic requires "material components" that get used up each time a character casts a spell. For example, to cast a Fireball, a wizard may need a piece of charcoal with a fire-rune carved into it; to conjure a demon he may need toads' hearts, human blood, and three small emeralds.

The value of the Expendability portion of Focus depends on the rarity and expense of the expendable materials. For an additional -0 Limitation, the Focus is *Easy* to get. Characters can normally obtain what they need without difficulty, often by gathering it themselves. Easy Expendable Foci rarely require any Skill to manufacture; either they're not made, or just about anyone can make them. If the character must spend money for the Focus, it costs a small amount (typically no more than one-fifth of an average working man's daily wage), and even then he may get a lot of the material for his money. Examples include oak leaves, horse's hair, or mud.

For an additional -¼ Limitation, the Focus is *Difficult* to obtain. This can mean one or more of four things. First, it's not so commonplace that anyone can find or acquire it easily — perhaps it's a little rare, or maybe it only comes from certain places. Second, if it's something a spellcaster would ordinarily buy, it may have a high (but not outrageous) price tag. Typically, no more than ten times an average working man's daily wage suffices to buy one casting's worth of the Focus. Third, if it's a manufactured item, it requires an appropriate Skill to make, such as PS: Coppersmith or PS: Engraving. Fourth, there may be some slight work or danger involved in acquiring it; perhaps it's mildly illegal to own, or it comes from a source that requires effort to reach safely. Examples include an iron disk incised with a rune, *thumara* flower petals from a distant country, shards from a weapon used in battle, or the fangs of a bear.

For an additional -½ Limitation, the Focus is *Very Difficult* to obtain. This means much the same as Difficult, but to an increased degree. For example, the material may cost as much as 100 times an average working man's daily wage for one casting's worth, or a character must have a higher degree of Skill (typically a base roll +4) to successfully make the item. If a character can gather the item, it's probably a lot harder to find or more dangerous to get. Just possessing the item may be highly illegal, or inflict a temporary Social Complication on the character. Examples include exotic drugs brewed by alchemists using flowers

From one of the many earthenware jars resting on a bench near the window, he poured a substance which seemed like dried blood mottled with the hardened blue venom of the black serpent.[.] Over this, he muttered a swift incantation, scooped the stuff into a crucible and hurled it at the mirror, one arm shielding his eyes. A crack sounded, hard and sharp to his ears, and bright green light erupted suddenly and was gone. The mirror flickered deep within itself, the silvering seemed to undulate and flicker and flash and then a picture began to form.



—Theleb K'aarna uses material components and a mirror to cast a spell of far-seeing in *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, by Michael Moorcock

"Come, make the evening lively. What do you need for your magic-making? A few slaves — the blood of virgins? We shall arrange it."

"I'm no mumbling shaman — I need no such trappings."

—Drinij Bara, on the other hand, requires no such appurtenances in *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, by Michael Moorcock

from distant realms, human blood, dragon's scales, or a small gemstone.

For an additional -1 Limitation, the Focus is *Extremely Difficult* to obtain. This means much the same as Very Difficult, but to an increased degree. For example, the material may cost as much as 1,000 times an average working man's daily wage (or more!) for one casting's worth, or a character must have a higher degree of Skill (typically a base roll +8) to successfully make the item. If a character can gather the item, it's very difficult to find, or extremely dangerous to obtain. Possession of the item may expose the character to diseases, a curse, or an instant death sentence if he's discovered. Examples include a human sacrifice, demon's blood, scales taken from a specific living dragon, a large gemstone, or an elaborately-sculpted golden candelabrum.

The GM should define the Expendability of a Focus based on the "average" locations and events of the campaign. Obviously, oak leaves aren't exactly easy to obtain in a desert — but if the characters normally adventure in areas where oak trees exist, it's best to describe oak leaves as an Easy Expendable Focus, even if the characters occasionally have trouble acquiring them.

Expendable components usually bear some relationship to the nature and purpose of the spell based on the principles of *sympathy* (like mirrors or produces like) and/or *contagion* (once together, always together). For example, a Spell Of Shadow-Weaving may use a piece of black cloth as a Focus (blackness sympathetic to blackness), or a Spell Of Wound Infliction may require a sword (or piece of one) that's been blooded in battle. Keeping this in mind, the GM may allow characters to substitute a "lesser" component for an Expendable Focus, provided the substitution has some of the same sympathetic/contagious attributes. However, this usually means the character suffers a decrease in the power and/or effectiveness of his spell. For instance, instead of using a sword blooded in battle for his Spell Of Wound Infliction, a wizard who only has a blooded dagger might use it, but at a Required Skill Roll penalty of -2 and a loss of one-third of the DCs in the spell.

In some High Fantasy campaigns, merchants (often retired wizards themselves) in large cities operate "spell component stores" where wizards can purchase the materials they need to cast spells, and commission the creation of unique or expensive Expendable Foci. This may affect the availability and/or expense of components, causing GMs to increase or decrease the difficulty of obtaining them. For example, if garnets from the Tungara Hills are a Difficult Expendable Focus, but a consortium of spell component merchants establishes a monopoly over the trade and raises prices, it may suddenly become a Very Difficult Expendable Focus.

One of the benefits to Expendable Foci is that they can be easy to replace. If the character

loses his supply of mandrake root, he can obtain some more. In some respects this makes Expendable Foci seem more like Inaccessible "Foci of opportunity," but characters can still buy them as Accessible if appropriate.

DURABILITY

It's not uncommon for non-Expendable magical Foci to be Unbreakable. After all, they're *magic*, and that makes them special. It's particularly appropriate for one-of-a-kind enchanted items of great power to be Unbreakable... almost. The only way to unmake such a Focus is a single unique method, often one involving a great quest or sacrifice. Frodo's quest to destroy the One Ring in *The Lord Of The Rings* is the classic example of this sort of thing, and shows how the quest to break a magical artifact could form the basis for an entire Fantasy Hero campaign.

On the other hand, Expendable Foci are almost always Breakable; that's one of the things that makes them Expendable — characters can lose them through breakage as well as use. Fragile non-Expendable Foci, such as a delicate wand carved from ivory — are also Breakable.

APPLICABILITY

Magical items and spell components have one of three types of Applicability. The first is Personal; many enchanted items only work for a single person, for example. The second is Universal; some items provide their magical powers to anyone who owns them.

The third, and in many Fantasy settings the most common, is *restricted Universal*. In this case all the members of a particular group of people can use the item, but no one else can. Examples include magical axes that display their mystic powers only when wielded by dwarves, or many types of enchanted items that only wizards can use. Expendable Foci usually fall into this category; they're Universal, but only among people who know (*i.e.*, have paid Character Points for) the spell they work with.

One common Fantasy method of making a Focus into a restricted Universal Focus is to give it a *command word* (see page 321). Anyone who possesses the item and knows the command word can invoke the item's power. Usually this is about the same as a Personal Focus, since the item's creator won't reveal the command word to anyone else (and the magic in the item makes it impossible for anyone to learn the command word just by listening to him use it). However, it may be possible for other persons to learn the command word through trickery, torture, Telepathy, Persuasion, or like means.

If an item's user actually has to speak the command word in a loud, clear voice, the item should take the *Incantations* Limitation as well. If he only has to whisper it, or can just think it, he gets no Limitation value for it.



GESTURES

“Now then: hold your thumb and finger thus. Whisper ‘Fwip’ and jerk your chin toward whatever nuisance you wish to abate.”

—Twisk the fairy teaches her daughter Madouc how to cast the “Tinkle-Toe” spell on persons who bother her in *Madouc*, by Jack Vance

Gestures is another classic Limitation for Fantasy spells — even in High Fantasy games, spellcasters often have to make mystic hand-motions to invoke magic power. See page 284 for more information and optional rules.

A character can have both Accessible Focus and Gestures as Limitations on the same spell, even though both have some similar restrictions — Entangling or Grabbing the character stops him from using a power with that Limitation — because they also impose their own distinct difficulties on the character. For example, an Accessible Focus can be stolen from a character, while a Gesture cannot; or a character could be so encumbered, or in so confined a space, that he can't make the sweeping motions needed for Gestures, even though he can reach his Accessible Focus. If the GM doesn't think such conditions would arise at least once every few games, he should consider disallowing Gestures.

For standard spells in FH campaigns, which take a minimum of a Half Phase to cast, assume for the sake of the *Gestures* Limitation that the character makes the Gestures during the Segment in which the character casts the spell, up until his DEX occurs in the initiative order and he actually gets his Phase and casts it. For spells or abilities that require Extra Time, the Gestures take place during the entire span of Extra Time.

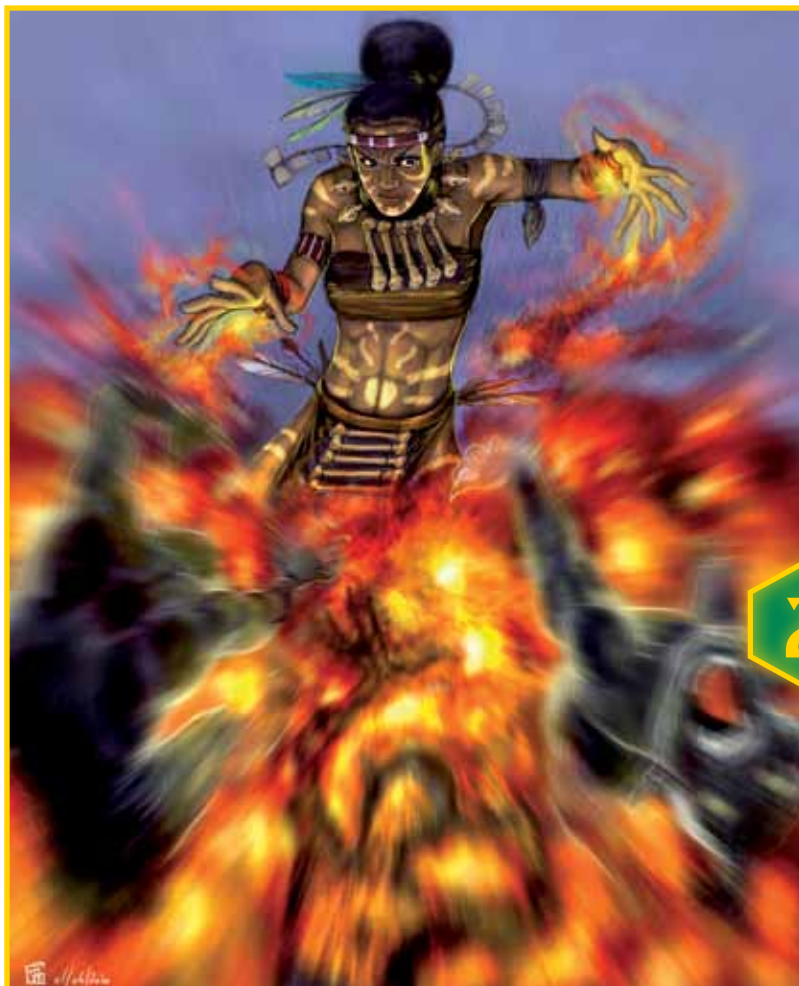
INCANTATIONS

Characters apply Incantations to Fantasy Hero spells just as often as they use Gestures. Even in High Fantasy games, spellcasters often have to speak words of power or chant mystic invocations to evoke magic power. See page 285 for more information and optional rules.

For standard spells in FH campaigns, which take a minimum of a Half Phase to cast, assume for the sake of the *Incantations* Limitation that the Incantations take place during the Segment in which the character casts the spell, up until his DEX occurs in the initiative order and he actually gets his Phase and casts it. For spells or abilities that require Extra Time, the Incantations take place during the entire span of Extra Time.

LIMITED POWER

As the catch-all Limitation, *Limited Power* works with Fantasy spells and abilities in an almost infinite number of ways. Here are examples of a few common or interesting uses of Limited Power for Fantasy Hero games:



ONLY WORKS AGAINST (SPECIFIC RACE) (VARIES)

It's not uncommon for Fantasy characters to devise spells that only work against specific races or types of beings. For example, an elf-hating orc shaman might create a Spell Of Elf Barbecuing (RKA, Only Works Against Elves), while a dragon-hunting mage might have special spells that Only Work Against Dragons.

The value of this Limitation depends on two factors. The first is how common the race is, overall, in the campaign setting. If the race is *rare* (very few left alive, almost never encountered), the Limitation is worth -2 to -1. If the race is *uncommon* (periodically encountered, may be encountered more frequently near a rarely-visited homeland), it's worth -½. If the race is *common* (as most PC races such as humans, elves, and dwarves tend to be in High Fantasy games), it's worth -¼.

The second, and more important, factor is how often the character with the spell or ability will, on the average, encounter members of the defined race whom he'd want to use the spell or ability against. Even if Deep Elves are rare in the campaign setting as a whole, if the focus of the campaign is for the characters to descend into the depths of the earth and attack the Deep Elves' vast underground city, then the PCs will encounter Deep Elves far more often than normal, and so should get a reduced value for this Limitation.

[Gandalf's] voice rolled like thunder.

“Naur an edraith ammen! Naur dan i ngaurhoth!”

There was a roar and a crackle, and the tree above him burst into a leaf and bloom of blinding flame. The fire leapt from tree-top to tree-top. The whole hill was crowned with dazzling light.

—Gandalf casts a fire-spell to ward off attacking wolves in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

POWER FRAMEWORKS

Power Frameworks usually only apply to Fantasy Hero campaigns in the context of magic systems — in some games, spellcasters can buy their spells in Power Frameworks, or define a specific spell with multiple applications as a single Power Framework. See page 267 for further discussion.

If the GM allows spellcasters to have at least some types of

2 Power Frameworks, he may also want to consider letting characters with other types of mystic abilities have Frameworks, too. For example, a “mystic martial artist” character might create a Multipower of Hand-To-Hand Attacks to represent various martial arts strikes.

On the other hand, no matter how common dwarves are on the continent of Thangador, if the campaign involves a quest to the lost continent of Gwerin, where dwarves are rare, the PCs should get the -2 value for *Only Works Against Dwarves*, since they’re not in a position to take advantage of dwarves’ high population back on Thangador.

The same considerations apply to spells that *do not* work against a specified race, but you should reduce the Limitation values — a spell that Does Not Work Against (A Rare Race) takes a -¼ Limitation, for example. You can also use the values indicated above for different *types of people*, based on their commonality (such as nobles, wizards, royalty, thieves, or city guards).

ONLY WHEN SERVING THE GOD’S PURPOSES (-½)

A common restriction for priestly spells and abilities gained as gifts from the gods, this Limitation signifies a power that only works because of the approval and sufferance of some deity (defined when the character buys the power). If the character tries to use the power for something the god wouldn’t approve of, the power doesn’t work. If the character tries to cast a beneficial spell on a character the god dislikes, the spell doesn’t work. If the character tries to use the power to defy the god, or to go against the god’s expressed wishes and commandments, the power doesn’t work. If the character violates his oaths to his god, the power doesn’t work. If the character continues to disobey or resist the will of the god, he may remove the power from the character *permanently* (the character loses the Character Points spent on it forever). In that case, the only way to regain use of the power is to regain the god’s favor via atonement. Typically this involves a dangerous quest or the like, usually one the character must perform without the benefit of his god-granted abilities.

Of course, disobeying or defying a god is not the same thing as disobeying or defying his priests, temples, or other representatives. A priest PC could suffer the extreme disfavor and scorn of his superiors at the Church Of Holy Light, but as long as his god approves of him, he retains any powers with this Limitation.

See page 252 for more on “divine magic.”

REQUIRES LIGHT TO USE (-¼)

This Limitation applies to magic scrolls, grimoires, and other powers that require a character to read something. Without sufficient light for him to read, he cannot use the power.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY (VARIES)

This Limitation represents a spell or other ability that only works during certain pre-defined time periods, or when other similar, infrequently-occurring conditions exist. The most common example in Fantasy literature are spells a wizard can only cast “when the stars are right.”

As indicated on the accompanying table, the value of this Limitation depends on two things. The first is how often the circumstance occurs; the minimum frequency for this Limitation is once per Month. The second is how long the window of opportunity remains open. The default is 1 Day; this does not change the value of the Limitation. If the window remains open longer, the value of the Limitation decreases by ¼ per step down the Time Chart. If the window remains open for a shorter period, the value of the Limitation increases by ¼ per step up the Time Chart.

Example: *Kasdrevan knows a potent demon-summoning spell that conjures a demon prince (a 1,500-point creature) and binds him to service for a single task. However, the spell only works during a conjunction of the stars Nevara and Pegaros that occurs but once per century. Furthermore, the conjunction remains in effect for just 20 Minutes. Kasdrevan builds the spell this way:*

Summon one 1,500-point demon prince, Slavishly Loyal (+1) (600 Active Points); OAF Expendable (human sacrifice, Extremely Difficult to obtain; -2), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Extra Time (5 Minutes; -2), Gestures (both hands throughout; -1), Incantations (throughout; -½), Requires A Magic Roll (no Active Point penalty; -0), Side Effects (demon attacks caster; -1), Window Of Opportunity (once per Century, window remains open for 20 Minutes; -7¼), Demon Prince Only Performs One Task Per Day (-2). Total cost: 33 points.

NO CONSCIOUS CONTROL

Since most magic spells are, by definition, controlled by the person who casts them, the Limitation rarely occurs in most Fantasy games. Players and GMs sometimes use it to represent mysterious magical devices whose operation characters cannot entirely fathom, or “wild magic” abilities a character can’t control.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TABLE

Time Period	Value
1 Month	-2
1 Season (3 months)	-3
1 Year	-4
5 Years	-5
25 Years	-6
1 Century	-7
5 Centuries	-8
2,500 Years	-9
10,000 Years	-10
50,000 Years	-11
250,000 Years	-12
1 Million Years	-13



PERCEIVABLE

As noted on 6E1 387, spellcasters often take a form of this Limitation called *Noisy*. It signifies that any magically-sensitive person (including, at a minimum, other spellcasters) can detect the use of the spell if they're nearby. The definition of "nearby" may depend on the circumstances, but at a minimum it means (a) any sensitive within Line Of Sight of the character and/or the spell effect, and (b) any sensitive within 100m of the character and/or the spell effect, whether he has LOS and regardless of any intervening ordinary physical obstacles.

RANGE LIMITATIONS

All of the Range Limitations are useful for defining various spell effects. Many magical effects lose power the further they travel (Reduced By Range) or cannot reach the full Range described by the standard rules (Limited Range).

REQUIRES A ROLL

The most common use for the "Activation Roll" form of this Limitation in a Fantasy setting is defining the coverage of armor. It is relatively uncommon as a Limitation for spells, though it might reflect a "wild magic" that a wizard exerts imperfect control over through natural talent, rather than training (Requires A Skill Roll usually represents the skill and training better). Activation Roll is also useful for magical items a character cannot always use successfully, or the magicomechanical devices of the Age of Ancients that no longer work reliably due to age or damage.

The *Burnout* and *Jammed* options occur even less frequently in Fantasy Hero games. However, they might represent some unusual spells or forms of magic that can "tap out" reservoirs of magical energy easily, or which don't work in defined circumstances the spellcaster cannot keep track of (such as the alignment of stars and planets).

[F]or Cugel, attaining even a single spell was a task of extraordinary difficulty. One day, while applying a spatial transposition upon a satin cushion, he inverted certain of the pervulsions and was himself hurled backward into the vestibule.

—Cugel fails his Magic roll and suffers a Side Effect in *The Eyes Of The Overworld*, by Jack Vance



COMPLICATIONS

Most Complications work in the normal fashion in Fantasy Hero campaigns. Here are a few notes on non-standard applications. Gamemasters should also refer to page 410 for information on using Complications in the campaign.

GENERAL SOURCES FOR FANTASY COMPLICATIONS

The Fantasy genre has several sources for Complications that occur less frequently (or not at all) in other genres. These include:

CURSES

Curses — evil magic spells placed on a character by some enemy, or even by accident — could explain virtually any Complication (even ones like Susceptibility and Vulnerability that Fantasy PCs generally don't take). Some examples include curses of weakness (Physical Complication), ill fortune (Unluck), extreme ugliness (Distinctive Features), shyness (Psychological Complication), loathing (Social Complication), frogs and insects coming out of the character's mouth when he speaks (Distinctive Features, and possibly more!), palsy (Physical Complication of penalties on DEX Rolls), and so on. Note that these curses are all distinctively disadvantageous; "curses" that benefit the character are bought as powers (such as lycanthropy, which is bought as a Multiform).

Getting rid of this sort of curse requires more than just a strong Dispel spell — after all, the curse is a Complication, not a Power. The character has to save up enough Experience Points to buy off the Complication *and* find a plausible in-game explanation for how he gets rid of it. For example, maybe he has to go on a quest to locate the one wizard who can remove the curse, or to find the ingredients the wizard needs for his de-cursing spell. A curse is a powerful thing, so lifting it should be one of the character's prime motivators; he shouldn't just get rid of it as if he were taking off a dirty shirt.

"[H]e that loosed the shaft shall break his bow and his arrows and lay them at my son's feet; and he shall never take arrow nor bear bow again. If he does, he shall die by it. That curse I lay on him."

—Mim the petty-dwarf curses his son's killer in *Unfinished Tales*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

RELIGIOUS VOWS AND STRICTURES

Priests, paladins, and many other devout characters are subject to restrictions on their conduct based on the dictates of their god, rules of the religion they belong to, and so forth. Some of these restrictions are trivial matters best used for "color" and character development ("Thanks for the chair, but I always have to sit on the floor"), but they often rise to the level of Complications.

Most religious vows and strictures qualify as Psychological Complications: they dictate the character's actions and attitudes in many situations, but don't physically handicap him. Examples include vows of poverty, silence, chastity, or diet; a requirement to pray three specific times a day in a specific way; or a refusal to carry more than a predefined number of enchanted items. Note that many of these vows don't hinder the character *too* much, so they're worth relatively little as Complications (maybe even zero points).

But some religious restrictions may qualify as other types of Complications. If a priest has to pray and perform a special ritual every morning or lose his magical powers and spells, that's a Dependence (or perhaps a Physical Complication). If a sect of ascetics has a deep distrust, even hatred, of women, that may qualify as a Social Complication. If all the priests of a particular religion have to paint their faces with pigs' blood every day, their odd appearance and smell may count as a Distinctive Feature.

Of course, characters can take vows of a non-religious nature. A wizard who belongs to a secret league of spellcasters may take a vow to always respond to the league's requests for assistance or forfeit his powers (a Physical Complication). A warrior who joins a special order of knights may swear to uphold the order's honor and creed (a Psychological Complication).

"The king lives," Charlan breathed, "but he commands your presence." ...

"Brother Javan," the abbot said pointedly, "this is highly irregular. You are under obedience to this Order. And where is the rest of your habit?"

"I mean no disrespect, Father Abbot, but I am under a higher obedience to my king, who is my brother," Javan replied[.]

—Javan dispenses with his religious vows to assume the throne upon his brother's death in *King Javan's Year*, by Katherine Kurtz

THE GODS

...and about the feet of the gods they fought against each other and slew one another for the honour of he gods, and for the glory of the name of the gods. And round them in the valley their cities that they had builded with the toil of their hands, they burned for the honour of the gods, where they died for the honour of the gods, and the gods looked down and smiled.

—the gods make men's lives miserable in "For The Honour Of The Gods," by Lord Dunsany

Attracting the unfavorable attention of a god or two cost Odysseus a ten-year journey home instead of the few months' worth of travel he expected, plus other hindrances to boot. Fantasy Hero characters may likewise gain Complications because they deliberately or accidentally insult some god (gods are, after all, notoriously touchy and temperamental), or hinder his plans on earth. A god could inflict just about any sort of Complication on a character.

CHARACTER THEMES AND GOALS

The very first part of this chapter discusses the concept of characters' themes and goals. If your character has a theme, a goal, or both, his Complications may reflect that. In many cases, his theme and/or goal indicate Psychological Complications: if his goal is "become wealthy, powerful, and win the hand of Princess Lavira," perhaps he's *In Love With Princess Lavira* or *Greedy*. If his theme is "devotion to duty," perhaps he's *Extremely Loyal* to a particular NPC (or even another PC).

But it may help you develop your character if you think beyond just the Psychological Complications associated with this theme and/or goal. For example, suppose the character's goal is "depose the King and set his noble-hearted brother on the throne." Why does the character dislike the King so much? Well, perhaps the King, when he was just a prince, insulted the character and then, in a duel, dealt him a crippling wound. The crippling wound — definitely cause for revenge — might be a Physical Complication, Distinctive Feature, or even Vulnerability. Or maybe the King is an accomplished sorcerer who long ago placed a curse on the character's family, and only by deposing and slaying him can the character lift it. Maybe the brother is but a child, the character's DNPC, and the character wants to see him on the throne as part of his duty to guide the child through life.

ACCIDENTAL CHANGE

Accidental Change isn't common in the Fantasy genre, but it does occur, primarily with characters who have the Power *Multiform* as a natural ability. The best example is probably werewolves and other lycanthropes, who may change uncontrollably during nights of the full moon. Similarly, any other character with an "alternate" or "hidden" form might change under the right circumstances. A dragon who frequently assumes the form of a man to mingle with humans might Accidental Change back to his true form if injured; a character who's a half-demon might change to his powerful (but uncontrollable) quasi-demonic form if he becomes Enraged.

DEPENDENCE

Dependence occurs relatively rarely in Fantasy, but is possible. For example, a wizard's powers may depend on ingesting a rare drug once per full moon, or a cursed character might have to perform a strange ritual every day to prevent the curse from taking full effect. Most Fantasy Dependences involve loss of powers, incompetence, or weakness instead of damage.

DEPENDENT NPC

Many Fantasy characters have DNPCs. An apprentice, a squire, a younger cousin eager for adventure, or a pet could qualify as a DNPC. In a comedic Fantasy campaign, a wizard's familiar might be a DNPC with Useful Noncombat Skills instead of a Follower, since the trouble it causes more than makes up for whatever help it provides the character.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

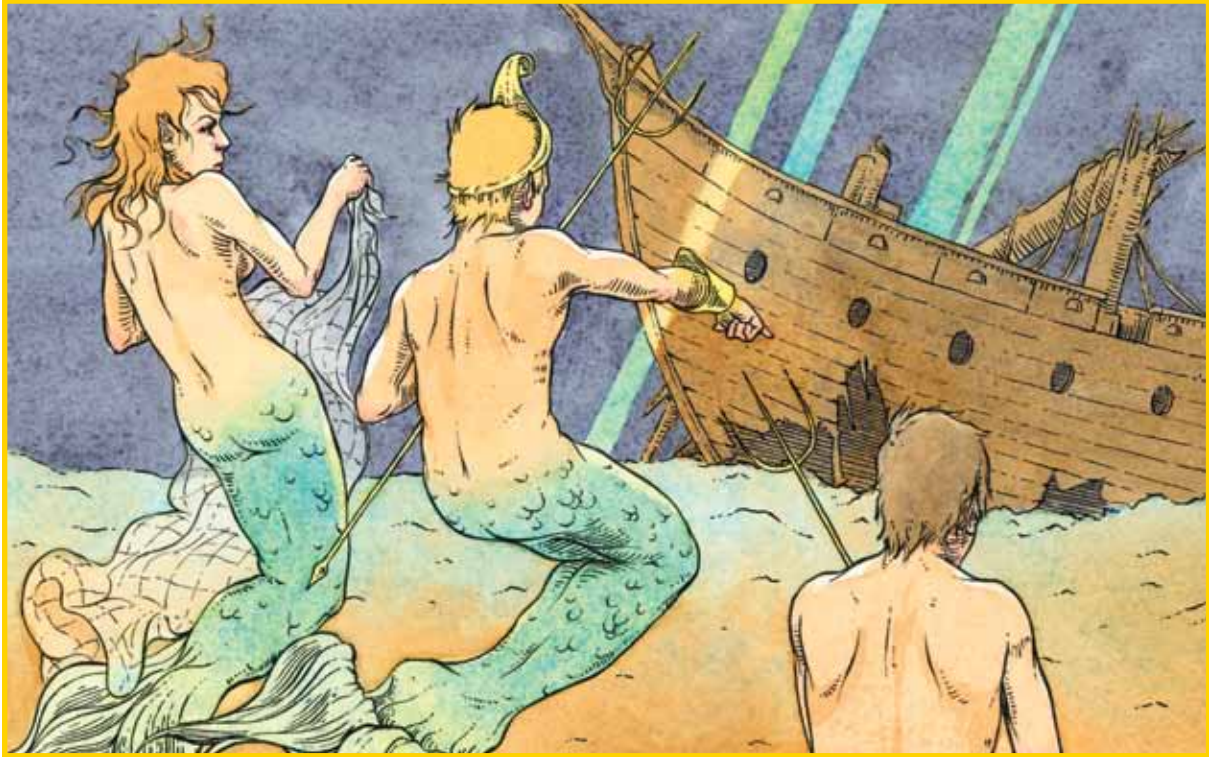
In a High Fantasy campaign featuring a wide range of races (perhaps even ones from other dimensions, such as demons and angels), few (if any) races should get a *Distinctive Features* Complication (few of the Racial or Environment/Ancestry Templates listed earlier in this chapter have it, for example). In that sort of campaign, a race should qualify for Distinctive Features only if there's some significant hindrance or restriction related to it — for example, a Distinctive Feature defined as a noxious body odor that offends most other races, or a race so reviled throughout the world that everyone automatically distrusts its members. Even then, don't forget to apply the *Not Distinctive In Some Cultures Or Societies* -5 point modifier, if appropriate; a dwarf isn't distinctive in his homeland. (See also *Interracial Society* on page 343.)

In Low Fantasy and Swords And Sorcery campaigns, where most characters are human and other races are rare, any non-human race might qualify for Distinctive Features. It all depends on how disadvantageous the GM considers "non-human appearance" to be. Remember, just looking different isn't necessarily enough to earn Complication points; the non-human character has to suffer because of his appearance for some reason.

By magic potions and the chanting of runes, by rare herbs had [Elric] been nurtured, his strength sustained artificially by every art known to the Sorcerer Kings of Melniboné. And he had lived — still lives — thanks to sorcery alone, for he is naturally lassitudinous and, without his drugs, would barely be able to raise his hand from his side through most of a normal day.

—Elric uses drugs and spells to overcome his natural feebleness in *Elric Of Melniboné*, by Michael Moorcock





The existence of magic opens up new possibilities for Distinctive Features. All spellcasters might have a Distinctive Feature, *Magic Aura*, that only other spellcasters can perceive. A curse might make a character hideously, distinctively ugly, or impose some similar identifying attribute on him (such as rats following him wherever he goes). On the other hand, if readily-available magic makes it easy to conceal Distinctive Features, few features may count as anything other than “Easily Concealed.”

ENRAGED/BERSERK

Enraged and Berserk don’t occur frequently in Fantasy settings, but do sometimes exist. Berserk is most commonly associated with “berserkers,” warriors who work themselves into a frenzy of rage and bloodlust that lets them fight harder and resist pain better (see the *Berserk Fury* Talent in the *New Talents* section of this chapter for an example of this sort of ability; berserkers may also buy other Characteristics and powers that only work when they’re Berserk). Similarly, some humanoid species, such as orcs and ogres, may have a tendency to go Berserk. Fantasy races with racial enemies — such as dwarves and goblins in some campaigns — may become Enraged when facing their ancestral foe.

HUNTED

Fantasy characters develop enemies as readily as characters in other genres. Some Fantasy campaigns feature “racial adversaries” that lead to characters being Hunted by entire races — for example, every elf may be “Hunted by orcs,” because all orcs will attack elves on sight unless prevented. A “racial Hunted” qualifies as “More Powerful” if the enemy race has reason to pursue the character on a regular basis. It’s only

As Powerful or Less Powerful if the race has no reason to take specific notice of the character, so that its members just attack him whenever opportunity arises.

Of course, Fantasy PCs may have more typical personal Hunteds — other characters who hate and want to kill them. A character whose background involves an illicit affair with a nobleman’s wife may be Hunted by that nobleman... or by an assassin in his pay. Wizards and priests often develop bitter feuds with others of their kind.

NEGATIVE REPUTATION

Things had grown too hot for Shard, captain of pirates, on all the seas that he knew. The ports of Spain were closed to him; they knew him in San Domingo; men winked in Syracuse when he went by; the two Kings of the Sicilies never smiled within an hour of speaking of him; there were huge rewards for his head in every capital city, with pictures of it for identification — and all of the pictures were unflattering.

—Captain Shard’s Negative Reputation comes back to haunt him in “The Loot Of Bombasharna,” by Lord Dunsany

Adventurers are a colorful lot, and it’s not uncommon for them to develop Negative Reputations. However, in Fantasy games, where the lack of high technology makes news travel slowly, GMs may require characters to restrict their Negative Reputations to relatively small groups (for -5 Character Points). Magic may counteract this “communications gap” in some High Fantasy settings, particularly regarding wizards and other spellcasters.

Battle-madness claimed him now. The blood-blaze that had frightened Kiteke lit his eyes and snarling curses spilled from his lips as he fought his way closer to Chitendu.

—battle-fury grips Imaro in *Imaro*, by Charles Saunders

“My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.”

—Inigo Montoya’s pronouncement upon finding the man who killed his father, whom he’s been pursuing for years, in the movie *The Princess Bride*

PHYSICAL COMPLICATION

“They let me loose,” he growled. “But first they held my hand — my right hand — my sword hand — in the fire till it was black and dead. It was so that I could never bear a sword against them, they said.”

—Kellory tells of his maiming at the hands of the Thungoda in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

Physical Complications bedevil many Fantasy characters (assuming the setting lacks the healing magic to repair or overcome these problems). In some cases, the Physical Complication actually helps define the character because it's such an important part of his background. For example, Lin Carter's character Kellory the Warlock became a wizard when barbarians destroyed his village and burned his right hand so he could never wield weapons. Elric of Melniboné suffers from debilitating physical weakness that forces him to use drugs to maintain his strength... or to rely on a symbiotic “partnership” with the evil sword Stormbringer, which feeds him the vitality of anyone whose soul it steals.

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPLICATION

But his oath held him, and he did not fly, then or ever, to the Archipelago.

—the Dragon of Pendor is constrained by his promise in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

In Fantasy stories, it's not uncommon to find races whose members all tend to have the same Psychological Complication. For example, all orcs may have *Hatred Of Elves*, while the Gorthundan horse-nomads all subscribe to an unusual, and detailed, code of honor that often leads them to do foolhardy things like challenging other people to duels. Devout belief in and devotion to a god occurs frequently in many Fantasy settings (not surprising, given that the gods manifest through priestly magic and perhaps even occasional earthly appearances!). Feudal oaths of loyalty, and adherence to the code of chivalry, dictate the actions of many honorable knights and nobles — and in any type of Fantasy setting, unrequited love may lead a character to go on bold adventures to attract the favorable attention of the object of his affection. Some villages' societal or cultural peccadilloes may rise to the level of imposing a Psychological Complication on all the natives (as in many of Jack Vance's “Dying Earth” stories).

RIVALRY

“Very well. Remain here and die. I will go to the House of All Keys. Iosmut will do what I ask, or perhaps Thode will have the courage.”

Banheen's professional pride was stung. “Iosmut and Thode?” he snorted in contempt. “Those two are nothing but stupid bullies. They couldn't steal mud from the gutter.”

—Banheen expresses a poor opinion of his Rivals in *Greymantle*, by John Morressy

Rivalries occur frequently in Fantasy games. In a Low Fantasy game centered around politics and warfare, a character who has a position at court almost certainly has a Rival or two who wants to torpedo his career and advance in his place. A master swordfighter may develop a Rivalry with other skilled swordsmen who want to make themselves look good by defeating him. In High Fantasy games, wizards and priests often develop Rivalries as they try to outdo one another in magical power and skill, be the first to uncover some ancient mystic artifact, or the like. Dragons may have Rivalries with one another, too... much to the chagrin of any people who live between the dragons' respective territories.

SOCIAL COMPLICATION

Social Complications are a fact of life in many Fantasy campaigns, which depict societies not as “enlightened” as those of modern-day Earth. Slavery exists in many of them, as does extreme prejudice against persons from different races, religions, or kingdoms (see M.A.R. Barker's world of *Tékumel* for many examples of both phenomena). Soldiers, or adventurers beholden to a royal patron, may be Subject To Orders. Persons who defy a powerful religious organization may be Excommunicated or Shunned, restricting their ability to interact with others.

SUSCEPTIBILITY AND VULNERABILITY

Generally, these Complications only apply to various monsters and monstrous races. For example, vampires, demons, and other Evil beings may suffer injury when on sacred ground or exposed to sacred relics. However, PCs may acquire Susceptibilities and Vulnerabilities as a result of curses, lost arcane duels, the disfavor of the gods, or the like.

The mysteries and paradoxes of the voyage were now illuminated. It seemed that Cugel's innate chivalry and sense of decency had been exploited and his easy trustfulness had been turned against him. But now the game would change!

—Cugel takes a self-serving view of the situation in *Cugel's Saga*, by Jack Vance

“But, despite your ferocious words — forgive my frankness — I sense in you honesty, nobility even, a love of fair play, and a hatred of torture.”

—Vlana senses Fafhrd's innate heroic qualities in “The Snow Women,” by Fritz Leiber

The laws which ruled the small universe were exact. Status was graduated with the finest of discrimination, from high degree to the lowest of the low. Each knew his quality and understood the delicate distinction between the next highest (to be minimized) and the next lowest (to be enforced and emphasized). Some encroached beyond their station, generating tension; the sharp stench of rancor hung in the air. Each scrutinized the conduct of those above, while concealing his own affairs from those below.

—the social life of Haidion castle in *Lyonesse*, by Jack Vance





FANTASY EQUIPMENT

Skills, abilities, and magic alone aren't always enough to see characters through to victory. They need the right gear: weapons, armor, tools, and more.

This section includes an example equipment table listing the price, BODY, PD, ED, and mass of various items adventurers might want to have. The price list has prices in gold pieces (GP), silver pieces (SP), and copper pieces (CP), and is based on the following economic assumptions:

- 10 copper pieces = 1 silver piece; 10 silver pieces = 1 gold piece
- The economy is primarily silver-based; gold coins are rare, and most folk use copper coins only for trivial purchases.
- Average daily wage for an unskilled manual laborer: 1 silver piece (skilled labor is worth more, depending on various economic factors)
- Average yearly expenses for a family of four: 50 gold pieces
- Average room for one night at an average inn: 2 silver pieces
- Average meal at an average inn: 1 silver piece
- Average mug of ale at an average inn: 2 copper pieces
- Average price of a loaf of bread: 2 copper pieces
- Listed items are reasonably available; the law of supply and demand may alter prices (see the Price Modifiers Table on page 359).
- In a campaign using this price list, all PCs start the game with 300-500 SP (this may not represent actual cash in hand, but equipment obtained earlier in their lives from patrons, as battle-trophies, and the like).

He and his followers were well armed and accoutered. Some of the men bore coils of rope and grappling-hooks to be employed in the escalade of the steeper crags. Some carried heavy crossbows; and many were equipped with long-handled and saber-bladed bills which, from experience, had proved the most effective weapons in close-range fighting with the Voormis. The whole party was variously studded with auxiliary knives, throwing-darts, two-handed scimitars, maces, bodkins, and saw-toothed axes. The men were all clad in jerkins and hose of dinosaur-leather, and were shod with brazen-spiked buskins.

—Ralibar Vooz and his men prepare to hunt the great beasts and monsters of the Eiglophan Mountains in “The Seven Geases,” by Clark Ashton Smith

This price list is *not definitive* — it's simply one example that you can use if you want. The GM should consider creating one or more price lists for his own campaign if this one isn't suitable, and he can always change any of the prices listed here. See pages 357-66 for more information on Fantasy economics.

As usual for Heroic campaigns, Fantasy Hero characters do not pay Character Points for equipment. Instead, they buy it with money. The GM may, if he chooses, make them pay Character Points for particularly valuable or useful equipment.



“FINE” AND “POOR” EQUIPMENT

The price list assumes the listed items are of average quality and in reasonable working order. Characters may purchase “fine” items (better than average versions), or if they’re strapped for cash can settle for “poor” items (lower-quality versions).

For weapons and armor, see pages 209 and 221 for rules about fine and poor versions. For every “fine” quality a weapon or suit of armor has, double its price (thus, two fine qualities mean the price is four times the listed amount). For every “poor” quality, reduce the price by 20% (one-fifth of the current price; thus, an item with two poor qualities costs 64% of its listed price).

For sectional armor, the GM can take two approaches. First, he can determine what percentage of the body a piece of armor covers, and use that percentage of the price; second, he can figure the overall “average defense” of the armor a character wears and use the price of a standard suit with that PD/ED.

For other items, “fine” usually means they have one of the following qualities: +1 BODY; +1 PD or ED; +1 to Skill Rolls performed with the item (if appropriate); ornamentation and decoration (gilding, silvering, engraving, adding gems, much higher quality base materials, and so forth). Each “fine” quality doubles the item’s price, and each may only be applied once except for “ornamentation and decoration,” which a character can apply as often as the GM allows. Gamemasters should carefully evaluate any items that provide Skill Roll bonuses; these can easily unbalance the game if not regulated.

For other items, “poor” usually means they have one of the following drawbacks: -1 BODY (items with 1 BODY cannot apply this); -1 PD or ED (items with 1 PD or 1 ED cannot apply this to that defense); -1 to Skill Rolls performed with the item (if appropriate); poor appearance or quality. Each “poor” quality reduces the item’s cost by 20% of its current price (as for weapons and armor, above). Characters may apply any of these negative attributes as often as they like and the GM will allow; usually no more than one of each is appropriate.

FANTASY HERO PRICE LIST

Price: The price of the item in silver pieces (SP), gold pieces (GP), or copper pieces (CP). See the text for information on the values of these coins.

BODY, PD, and ED: The BODY and defenses of the item. In the case of items made primarily of one material, the PD/ED usually depends on the object's material, and the BODY on its size. In the case of items made of two or more materials, the PD/ED usually represents an averaging or balancing of the materials' PD/ED, and the BODY depends on the object's size.

Mass: The object's weight in kilograms (1 kg = 2.2 pounds), unless some other unit of measure is noted.

Notes: Any additional information about the object.

Item	Price	BODY	PD	ED	Mass	Notes
WEAPONS						
Axe						
Axe, Battle	30 SP	6	4	4	1.6	
Axe, Francisca	28 SP	5	4	4	1.2	
Axe, Great	36 SP	8	4	4	2.1	
Axe, Hand (Hatchet)	16 SP	3	4	4	0.6	
Axe, Small	20 SP	4	4	4	0.9	
Blowgun						
Blowgun	2 SP	2	2	2	0.1	
Blowgun Darts (10)	2 SP	1	1	1	.03	
Bows						
Arrows, Normal (10)	4 SP	1	1	1	0.4	
Arrows, Blunt (10)	4 SP	1	1	1	0.4	
Arrows, AP (10)	10 SP	1	1	1	0.4	
Bow, Heavy	25 SP	2	2	2	1.1	
Bow, Light	15 SP	2	2	2	1.0	
Bow, Medium	20 SP	2	2	2	1.0	
Bow, Very Heavy	30 SP	2	2	2	1.2	
Bow, Very Light	12 SP	2	2	2	0.9	
Longbow, Heavy	30 SP	3	2	2	1.3	
Longbow, Light	20 SP	3	2	2	1.1	
Longbow, Medium	25 SP	3	2	2	1.2	
Longbow, Very Heavy	35 SP	3	2	2	1.4	
Clubs						
Baton/Shillelagh	6 SP	4	3	3	1.2	
Club	9 SP	5	4	4	1.5	
Club, Great	17 SP	7	5	4	2.0	
Club, War	14 SP	6	5	4	1.8	
Stick	5 SP	3	2	2	0.9	
Crossbows						
Arbalest	45 SP	6	4	4	8.0	
Bolts, Normal (10)	4 SP	1	1	1	0.4	
Bolts, Blunt (10)	4 SP	1	1	1	0.4	
Bolts, AP (10)	10 SP	1	1	1	0.4	
Crossbow, Heavy	33 SP	5	4	4	6.4	
Crossbow, Light	25 SP	4	4	4	1.6	
Flails						
Flail	18 SP	4	4	4	2.0	
Flail, Battle	33 SP	5	4	4	2.2	
Flail, Bladed	23 SP	4	4	4	2.0	
Flail, Large	28 SP	5	4	4	2.3	
Flail, Military	25 SP	4	4	4	2.0	
Flail, War	18 SP	4	4	4	2.6	
Flail, War, Large	23 SP	4	4	4	3.0	
Morningstar	28 SP	4	4	4	1.5	
Gunpowder Weapons						
Bullets (10)	10 SP	1	4	4	0.6	
Gunpowder (1 pint)	40 SP	1	1	1	0.1	
Handcannon, Small	40 SP	3	5	5	2.0	
Handcannon, Large	50 SP	5	5	5	2.6	
Matchlock Rifle	70 SP	5	3	3	1.6	
Matchlock Pistol	60 SP	4	3	3	1.0	
Wheellock Rifle	90 SP	5	3	3	1.5	
Wheellock Pistol	80 SP	4	3	3	1.0	
Hammers						
Hammer	15 SP	5	4	4	1.3	
Hammer, Small	12 SP	4	4	4	1.0	
Hammer, War	19 SP	5	4	4	2.0	
Lances						
Lance, Light	25 SP	6	3	3	4.0	
Lance, Medium	30 SP	7	3	3	6.0	
Lance, Heavy	35 SP	9	3	3	8.0	
Maces						
Mace	20 SP	5	5	5	1.5	
Mace, Great	30 SP	6	5	5	2.0	
Mace, Small	15 SP	4	5	5	1.3	



Item	Price	BODY	PD	ED	Mass	Notes
Maul	25 SP	5	5	5	2.5	
Picks						
Pick	18 SP	4	5	5	1.3	
Pick, Great	28 SP	6	5	5	1.5	
Pick, Military	23 SP	5	5	5	1.4	
Pick, Small	15 SP	4	5	5	1.0	
Poison (1 dose, in glass vial)						
Weak	30 SP	1	1	1	0.2	Antitoxin costs the same amount Drain CON ½d6, NND per minute for 3 minutes
Mild	60 SP	1	1	1	0.2	RKA 1 point, NND per minute for 5 minutes
Average	90 SP	1	1	1	0.2	RKA 1d6, NND per 5 minutes for 10 minutes
Strong	150 SP	1	1	1	0.2	RKA 1d6, NND per 5 minutes for 15 minutes
Deadly	200 SP	1	1	1	0.2	RKA 1d6, NND per minute for 4 minutes
Lethal	250 SP	1	1	1	0.2	RKA 1d6, NND per minute for 5 minutes
Extremely Lethal	300 SP	1	1	1	0.2	RKA 1d6, NND per 6 seconds for 36 seconds
Pole Arms						
Awl Pike	25 SP	5	3	3	2.0	
Glaive	35 SP	6	3	3	2.1	
Guisarme	28 SP	6	3	3	2.1	
Halberd	38 SP	6	4	4	2.3	
Javelin	18 SP	4	3	3	0.8	
Military Fork	26 SP	5	3	3	1.8	
Partisan	22 SP	5	3	3	2.0	
Pike	35 SP	6	3	3	2.2	
Pole Axe	31 SP	5	4	4	2.2	
Ranseur	30 SP	5	3	3	2.0	
Spear, Long	32 SP	6	3	3	2.2	
Spear, Medium	27 SP	5	3	3	2.0	
Spear, Short	22 SP	4	3	3	1.7	
Trident	28 SP	5	4	4	1.5	
Voulge	35 SP	5	3	3	2.1	
Quarterstaff	2 SP	4	3	3	1.0	
Slings						
Bullets (10)	10 SP	1	4	4	0.6	
Sling	13 SP	2	2	2	0.3	
Sling, Small	8 SP	1	2	2	0.1	
Staff Sling (Fustibal)	16 SP	3	2	2	0.4	
Swords And Knives						
Cinquedea, Long	22 SP	5	5	5	1.3	
Cinquedea, Short	18 SP	5	5	5	1.2	
Dagger/Dirk	9 SP	3	5	5	0.8	
Falchion	23 SP	4	5	5	1.5	
Knife	4 SP	2	5	5	0.4	
Main Gauche	13 SP	3	5	5	0.8	
Rapier	20 SP	5	5	5	1.0	
Scimitar/Tulwar	24 SP	5	5	5	1.1	
Stiletto	12 SP	3	5	5	0.7	
Sword, Bastard	28 SP	6	5	5	1.7	
Sword, Broad/Long	24 SP	5	5	5	1.2	
Sword, Great	36 SP	7	5	5	3.5	
Sword, Short	16 SP	5	5	5	1.1	
Sword, Small	14 SP	3	5	5	0.9	
Thrown Weapons						
Shuriken/Darts (10)	10 SP	1	5	5	0.4	
Throwing Club (1)	3 SP	3	3	3	0.4	
Throwing Knife (1)	7 SP	2	5	5	0.5	
Whip	5 SP	2	2	2	0.3	
ARMOR						
See page 217 re: armor BODY. Mass is the weight of a full suit of armor						
Chainmails						
Chainmail	150 SP	18	6	6	20	
Double Mail/Bar Mail	200 SP	21	7	7	28	
Reinforced Chainmail	200 SP	21	7	7	28	
Cloth And Hide Armors						
Heavy Cloth	20 SP	3	1	1	3.5	
Padded Cloth	40 SP	6	2	2	5.0	
Woven Cord	40 SP	6	2	2	5.0	
Heavy Animal Hides	50 SP	9	3	3	7.0	
Leather Armors						
Soft Leather	30 SP	3	1	1	3.5	
Heavy Leather	50 SP	6	2	2	5.0	
Cuir-Bouilli (Boiled Leather)	75 SP	9	3	3	7.0	
Plate Armors						
Plate And Chain	275 SP	21	7	7	28.0	
Plate Armor	350 SP	21	7	7	28.0	
Field Plate Armor	500 SP	21	7	7	28.0	
Full Plate Armor	800 SP	24	8	8	40.0	



Item	Price	BODY	PD	ED	Mass	Notes
Reinforced Leather Armors						
Studded Soft Leather	36 SP	3	1	1	3.5	
Ring Armor (Soft Leather)	75 SP	9	3	3	7.0	
Bezainted Soft Leather	80 SP	9	3	3	7.0	
Jazeraint Soft Leather	80 SP	9	3	3	7.0	
Studded Heavy Leather	75 SP	6	2	2	5.0	
Ring Armor (Heavy Leather)	90 SP	12	4	4	10.0	
Bezainted Heavy Leather	90 SP	12	4	4	10.0	
Jazeraint Heavy Leather	90 SP	12	4	4	10.0	
Studded Cuir-Bouilli	90 SP	9	3	3	7.0	
Ring Armor (Cuir-Bouilli)	100 SP	15	5	5	14.0	
Bezainted Cuir-Bouilli	110 SP	15	5	5	14.0	
Jazeraint Cuir-Bouilli	110 SP	15	5	5	14.0	
Scale Mails						
Brigandine	100 SP	12	4	4	10.0	
Lamellar (Splint Armor)	125 SP	15	5	5	14.0	
Banded Mail	150 SP	18	6	6	20.0	
SHIELDS						
Buckler						
Wooden	8 SP	2	3	3	1.0	
Metal	15 SP	2	5	5	2.0	
Spiked Buckler						
Wooden	12 SP	3	3	3	2.0	
Metal	20 SP	3	5	5	3.0	
Small						
Wooden	15 SP	3	3	3	2.0	
Metal	25 SP	3	5	5	3.0	
Medium						
Wooden	20 SP	4	3	3	4.0	
Metal	30 SP	4	5	5	5.0	
Large						
Wooden	25 SP	6	3	3	6.0	
Metal	35 SP	6	5	5	7.0	
Tower						
Wooden	30 SP	7	3	3	8.0	
Metal	40 SP	7	5	5	10.0	
BARDING						
See pages 220-21 re: armor BODY. Mass is the weight of a full suit of barding						
Chainmails						
Chainmail	450 SP	18	6	6	40	
Double Mail/Bar Mail	600 SP	21	7	7	56	
Reinforced Chainmail	600 SP	21	7	7	56	
Cloth And Hide Armors						
Heavy Cloth	60 SP	3	1	1	7.0	
Padded Cloth	120 SP	6	2	2	10.0	
Woven Cord	120 SP	6	2	2	10.0	
Heavy Animal Hides	150 SP	9	3	3	14.0	
Leather Armors						
Soft Leather	90 SP	3	1	1	7.0	
Heavy Leather	150 SP	6	2	2	10.0	
Cuir-Bouilli (Boiled Leather)	225 SP	9	3	3	14.0	
Plate Armors						
Plate And Chain	825 SP	21	7	7	56.0	
Plate Armor	1,050 SP	21	7	7	56.0	
Field Plate Armor	1,500 SP	21	7	7	56.0	
Full Plate Armor	2,400 SP	24	8	8	80.0	
Reinforced Leather Armors						
Studded Soft Leather	108 SP	3	1	1	7.0	
Ring Armor (Soft Leather)	225 SP	9	3	3	14.0	
Bezainted Soft Leather	240 SP	9	3	3	14.0	
Jazeraint Soft Leather	240 SP	9	3	3	14.0	
Studded Heavy Leather	225 SP	6	2	2	10.0	
Ring Armor (Heavy Leather)	270 SP	12	4	4	20.0	
Bezainted Heavy Leather	270 SP	12	4	4	20.0	
Jazeraint Heavy Leather	270 SP	12	4	4	20.0	
Studded Cuir-Bouilli	270 SP	9	3	3	14.0	
Ring Armor (Cuir-Bouilli)	300 SP	15	5	5	28.0	
Bezainted Cuir-Bouilli	330 SP	15	5	5	28.0	
Jazeraint Cuir-Bouilli	330 SP	15	5	5	28.0	
Scale Mails						
Brigandine	300 SP	12	4	4	20.0	
Lamellar (Splint Armor)	375 SP	15	5	5	28.0	
Banded Mail	450 SP	18	6	6	40.0	



Item	Price	BODY	PD	ED	Mass	Notes
SIEGE ENGINES						
Ballista, Bolt (1)	20 SP	4	3	3	3.0	
Ballista, Stone (1)	5 SP	7	6	10	4.0	
Ballista, Heavy (Bolt)	200 SP	7	5	5	90	
Ballista, Light (Bolt)	100 SP	4	4	4	60	
Ballista, Light (Stone)	100 SP	4	4	4	60	
Battering Ram	40 SP	8	5	5	45	
Boiling Oil (1 barrel)	40 SP	—	—	—	20	
Boiling Tar (1 barrel)	50 SP	—	—	—	20	
Catapult	500 SP	9	5	5	2 tons	
Dropped Rock	0 SP	6	6	10	20	
Mangonel, Onager	400 SP	7	5	5	1 ton	
Siege Tower	500 SP	12	4	4	6.4 tons	
Spring Engine	500 SP	7	5	5	1.5 tons	
Trebuchet, Heavy	900 SP	12	5	5	12.5 tons	
Trebuchet, Light	750 SP	9	5	5	6.4 tons	
CLOTHING						
Baldric	5 SP	1	2	2	0.4	
Belt	3 SP	1	2	2	0.2	
Boots						
Hard, High	18 SP	2	2	2	0.8	
Hard, Normal	15 SP	2	2	2	0.5	
Soft, High	12 SP	1	1	1	0.3	
Soft, Normal	8 SP	1	1	1	0.1	
Cape						
Heavy	14 SP	1	1	1	1.0	
Light	8 SP	1	1	1	0.5	
Dress/Gown						
Heavy	10 SP	1	1	1	1.0	
Light	6 SP	1	1	1	0.5	
Gloves	10 SP	1	1	1	0.2	
Hat						
Heavy	4 SP	1	1	1	0.1	
Light	3 SP	1	1	1	0.05	
Loincloth	1 SP	1	1	1	0.01	
Pouch, Belt						
Large	5 SP	1	2	2	0.3	
Small	3 SP	1	2	2	0.2	
Robe						
Heavy	11 SP	1	1	1	1.2	
Light	7 SP	1	1	1	0.6	
Slippers/Moccasins	3 SP	1	1	1	0.02	
Tabard	6 SP	1	1	1	0.02	
Trews						
Heavy	6 SP	1	1	1	0.2	
Light	4 SP	1	1	1	0.1	
Tunic						
Heavy	8 SP	1	1	1	1.0	
Light	5 SP	1	1	1	0.5	
Vestments, priestly	30 SP	2	1	1	2.0	
FOOD, DRINK, AND LODGING						
Ale or Beer (1 mug)						
Poor quality	1 CP	—	—	—	—	
Average quality	2 CP	—	—	—	—	
High quality	1 SP	—	—	—	—	
Bread (1 loaf)	2 CP	—	—	—	—	
Cheese (1 wheel)	1 SP	1	0	0	0.3	
Inn, room (1 person for 1 day)						
Space in the common room	2 CP	—	—	—	—	
Poor quality	1 SP	—	—	—	—	
Average quality	2 SP	—	—	—	—	
High quality	5 SP	—	—	—	—	
Liquor (1 drink)						
Poor quality	5 CP	—	—	—	—	
Average quality	1 SP	—	—	—	—	
High quality	4 SP	—	—	—	—	
Liquor (1 bottle)						
Poor quality	3 SP	—	—	—	—	
Average quality	5 SP	—	—	—	—	
High quality	20 SP	—	—	—	—	
Mead (1 mug)						
Poor quality	1 CP	—	—	—	—	
Average quality	2 CP	—	—	—	—	
High quality	1 SP	—	—	—	—	
Meal (for one person)						
Poor quality	5 CP	—	—	—	—	
Average quality	1 SP	—	—	—	—	
High quality	2 SP	—	—	—	—	



Item	Price	BODY	PD	ED	Mass	Notes
Meat (1 shoulder)	3 SP	1	0	0	0.4	
Pipe, smoking	2 SP	1	0	0	0.01	
Rations (1 day)	1 SP	1	0	0	0.2	
Tobacco (1 pouch)	5 CP	1	0	0	0.02	
Wine (1 glass)						
Poor quality	2 CP	—	—	—	—	
Average quality	4 CP	—	—	—	—	
High quality	2 SP	—	—	—	—	
Wine (1 bottle)						
Poor quality	1 SP	—	—	—	—	
Average quality	2 SP	—	—	—	—	
High quality	10 SP	—	—	—	—	
MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT						
Acid (one glass flask)	20 SP	1	1	1	0.3	RKA 1d6, Penetrating, Constant, Uncontrolled
Backpack	5 SP	3	2	2	1.8	
Barrel (wooden)	10 SP	5	3	3	10	
Basket (wicker)	1 SP	1	1	1	.01	
Bell						
Large	50 SP	6	5	5	30.0	
Small	15 SP	2	5	5	1.0	
Tiny	20 SP	1	3	3	0.03	
Block and tackle	20 SP	3	3	3	2.0	
Book, blank						
Large	100 SP	2	1	1	4.0	
Small	60 SP	1	1	1	1.5	
Bottle						
Clay	2 SP	1	1	2	1.0	
Glass	5 SP	1	1	3	1.0	
Steel	20 SP	3	5	5	2.0	
Bucket	5 SP	2	3	3	0.8	
Brazier	6 SP	3	3	6	1.0	
Camping/Outdoor Gear						
Bedroll	2 SP	1	1	1	1.0	
Blanket	2 SP	1	1	1	0.5	
Camp bed	25 SP	3	3	3	13.0	
Hammock	6 SP	1	1	1	1.4	
Tent, canvas	15 SP	1	1	1	8.0	
Pavilion	100 SP	3	1	1	40.0	
Candle						
Normal	2 CP	1	0	0	0.01	
Timed (1 hour)	5 CP	1	0	0	0.01	
Case						
Metal	30 SP	3	5	5	1.0	
Wooden	13 SP	3	3	3	0.6	
Chain (1 meter)	30 SP	4	5	5	2.0	
Chalk (1 piece)	2 CP	1	1	1	0.01	
Chest						
Large, Metal	50 SP	5	5	5	10.0	
Large, Wooden	30 SP	5	3	3	4.0	
Small, Metal	30 SP	4	5	5	5.0	
Small, Wooden	20 SP	4	3	3	3.5	
Chirurgeon's tools						
Instruments	60 SP	2	2	2	0.5	
Supplies (10 patients' worth)	10 SP	1	0	0	0.1	
Climbing gear (other than rope, grappling hook)	20 SP	2	3	3	0.2	Adds +2 to Climbing rolls
Clock	200 SP	3	3	3	4.0	
Compass	200 SP	1	1	1	0.02	
Cooking Gear						
Kettle, iron	25 SP	4	5	7	12.0	
Pan, iron	12 SP	2	5	6	2.0	
Pot, iron	17 SP	3	5	7	4.3	
Disguise kit (10 disguises' worth)	20 SP	1	0	0	0.1	
Firewood (1 day's worth)	4 CP	2	3	3	8.0	
Fishing Gear						
Hook and line	6 CP	1	1	1	0.01	
Net (8m square)	25 SP	2	2	2	2.5	
Flask						
Clay	3 SP	1	1	2	0.8	
Glass	6 SP	1	1	3	0.8	
Steel	23 SP	3	5	5	1.6	
Flint and steel	8 CP	1	1	1	0.01	
Glassware, laboratory (per piece)	40 SP	1	1	2	0.1	
Goblet						
Crystal	100 SP	1	1	2	0.1	
Glass	35 SP	1	1	2	0.1	
Gold	100 SP	2	3	3	0.3	
Silver	80 SP	2	3	3	0.2	



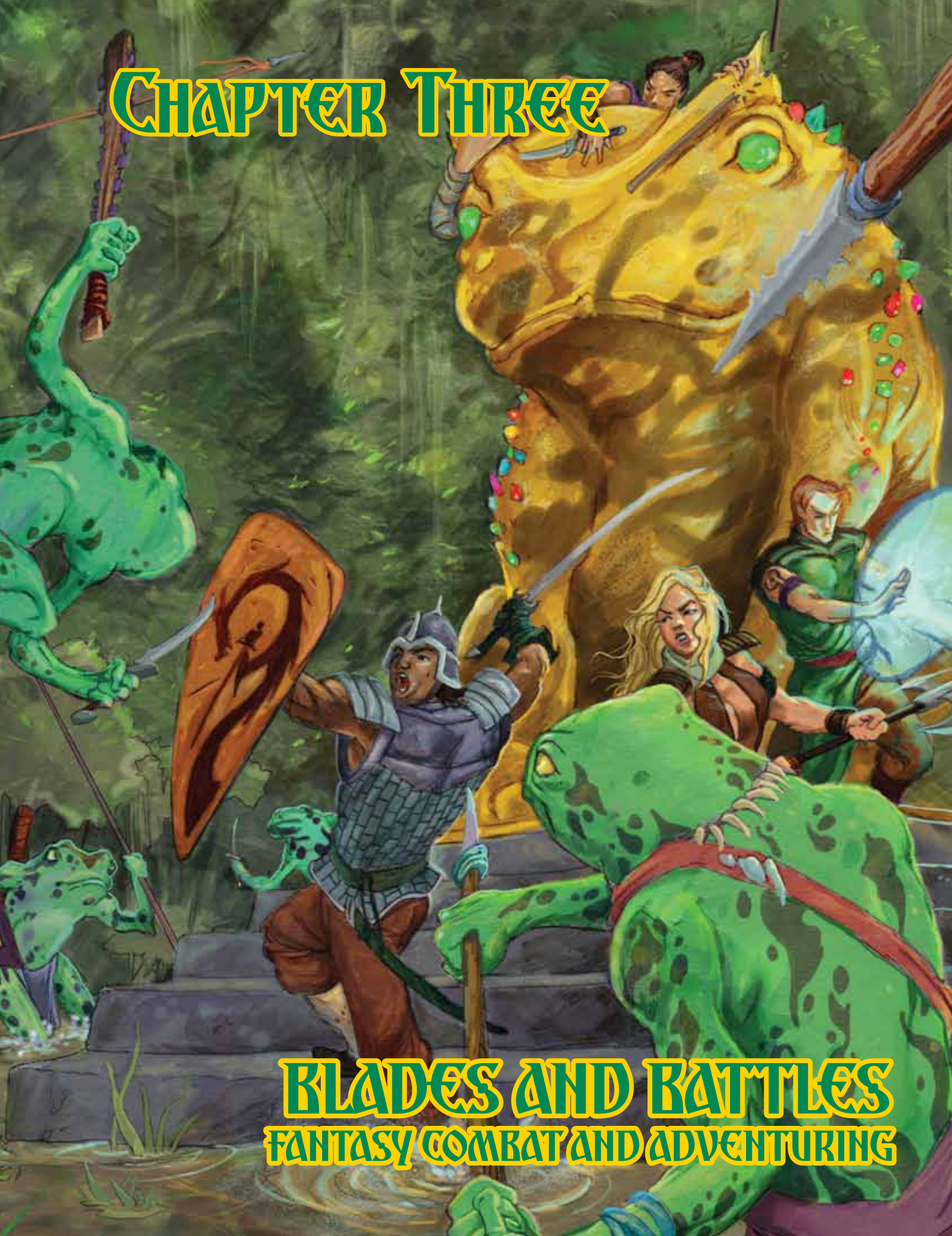
Item	Price	BODY	PD	ED	Mass	Notes
Grappling hook	10 SP	3	3	3	1.8	
Herbs and plants						
Belladonna (1 bunch)	1 SP	1	0	0	0.01	
Garlic (1 clove)	1 CP	1	0	0	0.01	
Holly (1 bunch)	1 SP	1	0	0	0.01	
Mistletoe (1 bunch)	1 SP	1	0	0	0.01	
Wolfsbane (1 bunch)	1 SP	1	0	0	0.01	
Holy Symbol						
Iron	30 SP	1	4	6	0.1	
Silver	80 SP	1	4	4	0.1	
Wooden	10 SP	1	3	3	0.03	
Holy Water (1 glass flask)	5 SP	1	1	1	0.3	
Hourglass	55 SP	1	1	1	0.5	
Ladder (4m long)						
Metal	60 SP	5	5	5	15.0	
Wooden	12 SP	4	3	3	5.0	
Lantern						
Bullseye	50 SP	2	1-2	4	1.0	
Hooded	35 SP	2	1-2	4	0.9	
Locks						
Poor quality	3 SP	1	2	2	0.2	Cost is in addition to item to be locked +1 to Lockpicking attempts
Average quality	6 SP	1	2	2	0.3	-0 to Lockpicking attempts
Above Average quality	12 SP	1	2	2	0.3	-3 to Lockpicking attempts
High quality	15 SP	2	2	2	0.3	-6 to Lockpicking attempts
Very high quality	25 SP	2	2	2	0.4	-9 to Lockpicking attempts
Superb quality	50 SP	2	3	3	0.5	-12 to Lockpicking attempts
Magnifying glass	200 SP	1	1	1	0.04	x10 Microscopic Sight
Manacles						
Poor quality	10 SP	3	5	5	0.8	+1 to Lockpicking attempts
Average quality	25 SP	3	5	5	1.0	-0 to Lockpicking attempts
Above Average quality	35 SP	3	5	5	1.3	-3 to Lockpicking attempts
High quality	50 SP	3	5	5	1.5	-6 to Lockpicking attempts
Very high quality	60 SP	3	5	5	1.8	-9 to Lockpicking attempts
Superb quality	100 SP	3	5	5	2.0	-12 to Lockpicking attempts
Mirror, Small						
Silver	35 SP	1	3	3	0.07	
Silvered glass	25 SP	1	1	1	0.05	
Steel	15 SP	1	5	5	0.1	
Mug/tankard						
Clay	3 CP	1	1	1	0.03	
Pewter	2 SP	2	3	3	0.1	
Musical Instruments						
Drum, Large	20 SP	3	3	3	3.0	
Drum, Small	12 SP	2	3	3	1.0	
Fiddle	32 SP	2	2	2	1.0	
Harp, Large	150 SP	4	3	3	12.0	
Harp, Small/Lapharp	80 SP	3	3	3	5.0	
Lute	30 SP	3	3	3	3.5	
Lyre	30 SP	3	3	3	3.0	
Mandolin	30 SP	3	3	3	3.5	
Pipes, Metal	20 SP	2	4	4	0.3	
Pipes, Wooden/Recorder	5 SP	2	3	3	0.1	
String (any stringed instrument)	1 SP	1	0	0	—	
Zither	35 SP	3	3	3	3.5	
Needle, iron/steel	2 SP	1	1	1	—	
Oil (1 liter, in clay bottle)	5 SP	2	1	1	0.5	
Pick (mining)	15 SP	5	4	4	4.5	
Reference Library (1 subject or topic)						
Large	6,000 SP	—	—	—	300+	
Small	3,000 SP	—	—	—	150+	
Pole						
Metal (2m long)	14 SP	4	5	5	4.0	
Wooden (4m long)	2 SP	4	3	3	1.8	
Rope						
Hair (16m)	12 SP	3	2	2	5.0	
Hemp (16m)	10 SP	2	2	2	5.0	
Silk (16m)	30 SP	3	2	2	2.5	
Sack, leather	3 SP	2	2	2	0.3	
Scale, small	36 SP	2	4	4	2.0	
Shovel/spade	22 SP	3	4	4	3.0	
Signet ring	45 SP	1	3	3	—	
Soap (per cake)	4 CP	1	0	0	0.01	
Spike, iron	8 SP	2	5	5	0.5	
Spyglass	600 SP	1	1	1	0.5	+8 versus Range for Sight Group



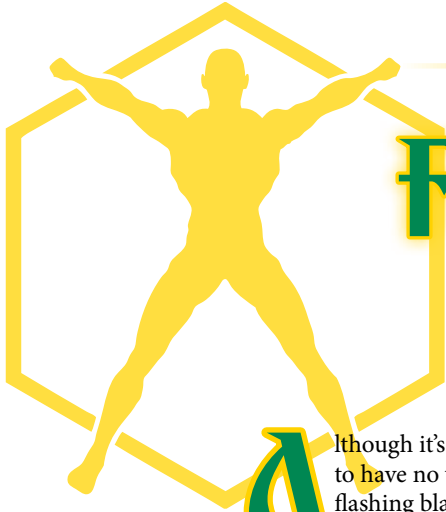
Item	Price	BODY	PD	ED	Mass	Notes
Thieves' Tools						
Poor quality	40 SP	1	1	1	0.1	-1 to Lockpicking, Security Systems rolls
Average quality	90 SP	1	1	1	0.1	+0 to Lockpicking, Security Systems rolls
High quality	180 SP	1	1	1	0.1	+1 to Lockpicking, Security Systems rolls
Tools						
Chisel	6 SP	2	5	5	0.5	
Crowbar	15 SP	3	5	5	2.3	
Hammer	3 SP	2	3	3	x	0.9
Nails (10)	2 SP	1	2	2	0.2	
Saw	3 SP	2	3	3	0.6	
Torch	1 CP	2	3	3	0.3	
Vial						
Clay	6 SP	1	1	2	0.8	
Glass	12 SP	1	1	3	0.8	
Steel	30 SP	3	5	5	1.6	
Waterskin	8 SP	1	1	1	0.04	
Whetstone	5 CP	1	2	2	0.08	
Whistle, tin	10 SP	1	1	1	0.01	
Wire (4m long coil)	18 SP	2	4	4	2.0	
Writing Supplies						
Ink (1 ounce, in glass vial)	18 SP	1	1	1	0.4	
Paper (1 sheet)	8 SP	1	0	0	—	200 sheets of paper weigh 1.0 kg
Parchment (sheet)	3 SP	1	0	0	—	160 sheets of parchment weigh 1.0 kg
Pen, writing	5 SP	1	1	1	0.01	
Quill	1 CP	1	0	0	—	
Sealing wax (.5 kg)	3 SP	1	1	1	0.5	
Vellum (1 sheet)	5 SP	1	0	0	—	120 sheets of vellum weigh 1.0 kg
LIVESTOCK AND TRANSPORTATION						
See <i>The HERO System Bestiary</i> for information about animals; see <i>HERO System Vehicles</i> for information about vehicles						
Bit, bridle, and tack	15 SP	1	2	2	0.5	
Bull	40 SP	22	7	5	600	
Cart	50 SP	8	4	4	100	
Cat, Domestic	5 SP	5	2	2	4.2	
Chariot	50 SP	12	3	4	80	
Chicken	5 SP	3	1	1	3.0	
Cow	30 SP	16	7	5	450	
Dog						
Guard	25 SP	9	5	3	25	
Hunting	35 SP	9	3	2	25	
Pet	5 SP	5	2	2	12	
War	40 SP	12	5	3	30	
Donkey or mule	20 SP	13	5	4	350	
Elephant	120 SP	30	12	9	4,500	
Feed, Horse (per day)	6 CP	5	0	0	5.0	
Horse						
Draft Horse	35 SP	18	8	4	800	
Pony	22 SP	13	5	4	350	
Riding Horse	25 SP	15	6	4	600	
Warhorse, Heavy	60 SP	18	8	6	800	
Warhorse, Light	40 SP	16	7	4	600	
Warhorse, Medium	50 SP	17	8	4	700	
Pig	30 SP	12	3	2	100	
Pigeon, Carrier	3 SP	2	1	1	0.3	
Saddle — saddles for mounts other than horses are double cost (or more)						
Military	40 SP	6	2	2	15.0	
Pack	15 SP	3	2	2	7.0	
Riding	22 SP	4	2	2	12.0	
Saddlebags	15 SP	3	2	2	3.0	
Sled/sledge	80 SP	10	4	4	160	
Stabling (per day)	5 CP	—	—	—	—	
Wagon	75 SP	13	4	4	150	
SERVICES						
Chirurgeon (per visit)	4 SP	—	—	—	—	
Guide/Scout (per day)	3 SP	—	—	—	—	
Manservant/Maidservant (per day)	2 SP	—	—	—	—	
Lawyer (per day)	6 SP	—	—	—	—	
Porter (per day)	1 SP	—	—	—	—	
Spellcasting	Varies	—	—	—	—	
Torchbearer	1 SP	—	—	—	—	



CHAPTER THREE



BLADES AND BATTLES
FANTASY COMBAT AND ADVENTURING



FANTASY HERO COMBAT

Although it's possible for Fantasy stories to have no violence or armed conflict, flashing blades and marching armies are central elements of most Fantasy tales, particular those told through gaming. This chapter deals with those issues, and includes expanded weapons and armor lists and rules, additional information about genre uses of Combat Modifiers and Maneuvers, and rules for mass combat.

ENTERING COMBAT

Torqual advanced a step and slashed out with his sword. Aillas jumped aside and the stroke went for naught. Torqual swung again but the stroke slid off Aillas' blade.

—Aillas and Torqual begin to fight in *The Green Pearl*, by Jack Vance

Gamemasters and players may wish to consider the following options and rules for Fantasy Hero combat.

DRAMATIC VERSUS REALISTIC COMBAT

The GM, after seeking input from the players, should decide whether he wants the combat in his game to emphasize *realism* or *drama*. The two aren't mutually exclusive, of course, but they do tend to have some strong differences. High Fantasy usually favors dramatic combat, and Low Fantasy realistic combat; Swords And Sorcery and Epic Fantasy can go either way.

The deck of the wargalley became a mad swirl of sword and shield, without pattern, as the two forces engaged. Alodar jabbed point first at the man on his right, while hastily raising his shield to the left to ward off an axe swinging down from a seeming giant. The blow numbed his arm, but he instinctively stepped forward to pass beyond the thrust of his foes as his own followers closed to engage them. The man on his left screamed and fell, spouting blood from neck and arm, as Quantos' marines pressed on the attack. The trained fighters drew together and formed a line about Alodar. With him as the center, they began slashing forward to midship.

—a shipboard battle goes well for Alodar in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

“Realistic” combat pays attention to realistic details about combat and makes an effort to simulate them in the game, either to increase verisimilitude or make combat a less attractive option for PCs (sometimes both). Although there's considerable debate (even among learned scholars) as to what is or is not “realistic” when it comes to simulating medieval warfare, typically realistic game combat does at least some or all of the following: uses all the optional damage rules (such as Bleeding); discourages most fancy “stunts” and maneuvers by imposing harsh CV and Skill Roll penalties for performing them; uses one or more rules for weapon and shield breakage; imposes some sort of penalty on wearers of heavy armor to reflect the heat and weight of it.

“Dramatic” combat, on the other hand, tends to take its cues from Fantasy novels and movies. The emphasis is less on a “realistic” depiction of armed combat than on running an enjoyable combat that maximizes the scope of the characters' options and the usefulness of their many abilities. Of course, different levels of “dramatic” can exist; one campaign might allow just about any sort of hair-raising, swashbuckling stunt, while another simply ignores the more annoying or time-consuming “realistic” rules to speed game play. In contrast to “realistic” games, dramatic games tend to use fewer optional damage rules (sometimes none except for Hit Locations), don't worry about weapon and shield breakage, and encourage stunts and clever maneuvers by granting bonuses (or at least imposing no penalties).

The degree to which the GM emphasizes “realism” or “drama” does a lot to provide flavor and feel for the campaign, and it influences character design as well. In a realistic game, players have to give some thought to how their characters cope with the nature and effects of combat, which may mean buying more CON or BODY to withstand injury, or more END so they can wear armor longer. In a dramatic game, players often design characters with special fighting styles and other unusual abilities to take advantage of the more “free-form” concept of battle.

The *HERO System* rules already handle the dramatic side of combat pretty well; that's part of the nature of the system. Most of the optional and additional rules in this chapter hew more toward “realism” than drama.

MOUNTED AND AERIAL COMBAT

The larger man rose to a stand in his stirrups, whipping the yew bow from its case. With his left hand he bent it against the stirrup, with his right he drew the upper loop of the string into place. Then his left hand slipped down the bow to the grip and his right reached smoothly back over his shoulder for an arrow. Still guiding his horse with his knees, he rose even higher and turned in his saddle and sent an eagle-feathered shaft whirring. Meanwhile his comrade had placed a small leaden ball in his sling, whirled it twice about his head, so that it hummed stridently, and loosed his cast.

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser fight from horseback in “The Jewels In The Forest,” by Fritz Leiber

6E2 30-32 covers the subject of mounted combat. Since mounted combat occurs more often in Fantasy than other genres, Fantasy Hero GMs should review those rules before starting the campaign, and periodically before running scenarios that will probably feature mounted combat.

In some High Fantasy settings, mounted combat may take place in the air, pitting characters riding pegasi, dragons, hippogriffs, manticores, griffins, rocs, and other fantastical flying beasts against each other. The rules for mounted combat generally apply to aerial mounted combat without any changes, but GMs and players should keep several things in mind.

First, mounts using Flight have a Turn Mode, making them less maneuverable than horses. They can also fight in three dimensions, which may make it a little difficult to keep track of the combat or prepare for every enemy tactic.

Second, aerial mounted combat is more likely than ground mounted combat to involve Ranged attacks. If an aerial battle takes place wholly at Range, the GM may want to adapt the rules for Dogfight Combat (APG 188). If two or more aerial combatants close to HTH Combat range, resolve their fight normally.

Third, due to the danger of falling from high in the air, saddles for aerial mounts are usually sturdier and strap the rider in more strongly. This provides a +2 bonus to any Riding rolls to avoid being “unhorsed” by an attack (or a -2 OCV on attackers’ Unhorse maneuvers), and acts as -4m Knockback Resistance in the event the campaign uses the Knockback rules. However, the saddle’s firm grip should also hinder the character. The GM determines the exact drawback, but typical ones include: increasing the damage of attacks by +1-2 DCs, since characters can’t “roll with” the blow to any degree; imposing a small penalty on DEX; or imposing a -1 to -2 penalty on CV.

ROLEPLAYING COMBAT

As you read through this chapter, remember not only the strategic aspects of the rules, but the roleplaying aspects as well. Often players and GMs look at combat solely as an exercise in tactics, strategy, and power-gaming, but in fact it has a lot of roleplaying potential.

When running a fight, you can best realize this potential if you “talk out” your battles as much as possible. This simply means describing what your character does in real-world terms rather than just game terms. “I hit him with my Offensive Strike” is a lot less exciting than “I knock his shield out of position with my own shield, pivot to the right, and deliver a powerful slash right to his side!” Roleplaying combat is fun, adds an important dimension to the battle, and can even result in some tactical bonuses — such as when the GM likes a maneuver’s description so much he awards a Surprise Move bonus to the character.

When describing attacks this way, you don’t have to use Hit Location penalties. A player can say, “Okay, I hit him in the head!” without taking a -8 OCV penalty. As long as the character doesn’t receive the game benefits of hitting someone in the Head (x2 BODY, x2 NSTUN, and so forth), he doesn’t suffer the penalties either. A “described shot” to the Head does ordinary damage, it’s just portrayed that way to make the combat more enjoyable. Of course, if the character wants the extra damage for hitting his opponent in the Head, he can take the -8 OCV penalty for his attack in the usual way.



COMBAT MODIFIERS

The following guidelines, notes, and options apply to Combat Modifiers in a Fantasy context. A Modifier not discussed typically follows the standard rules and/or needs no further description for Fantasy purposes.

AUTOFIRE

Autofire rarely occurs in Fantasy settings. Characters who can fire a Ranged weapon quickly usually simulate that with Multiple Attack, and few spells have the *Autofire* Advantage. If a character does have an Autofire attack for some reason, the normal rules apply.

BEHIND COVER

Being Behind Cover occurs frequently in Fantasy games; characters like to crouch behind stone walls, in ditches, or behind boulders to avoid enemy archers and spellcasters. (And since melee combat is so common in the genre, the “Firing Into Melee” rules on 6E2 43 often come into play as well.) Since Fantasy Hero games typically use the Hit Location rules, the normal Behind Cover OCV penalties don’t apply. Instead, the attacker simply aims for an un-Covered part of the target’s body, applies the OCV penalty from the Hit Location Table for that part, and makes his Attack Roll.

BOUNCING AN ATTACK

In general, Bouncing An Attack isn't used in Fantasy Hero; Ranged weapon attacks like sling bullets and crossbow bolts don't ricochet well, and neither do Ranged spells. However, the GM may, in his discretion, allow a character to Bounce some attacks. For example, he might let a skilled archer "skip" an arrow off the cobblestones beneath a wagon to hit someone hiding behind that wagon.

ENCUMBRANCE

Encumbrance (6E2 45-46) plays an important role in many Fantasy games. Fantasy characters need to carry a lot of equipment — armor, weapons, food, adventuring gear — and they often acquire lots of heavy treasure (such as chests of gold pieces). For purposes of calculating Encumbrance, you should count not just worn/carried items, but items held in the hand as well.

MULTIPLE ATTACKERS

The Multiple Attackers penalty to a character's DCV works well for relatively "realistic" Fantasy combats, in which masses of weaker foes can easily overwhelm and defeat a single powerful foe. But it may not be appropriate for more dramatic games, including many High Fantasy campaigns, where brawny warriors can mow down legions of foes without suffering so much as a scratch in return. Similarly, in some Low Fantasy "swash-buckling" campaigns, a skilled swordsman should have no difficulty taking on several less-skilled foes.

SPREADING AN ATTACK

This Modifier rarely applies in Fantasy Hero games. Most common Fantasy missile weapons — bows, crossbows, slings, and the like — take the *Beam* Limitation, and GMs typically establish "no Spreading" as a default campaign rule for spells. But if the GM allows Spreading, use the standard rules.

Aillas feinted a lunge, but Torqual's heavy blade darted up and Aillas would have been spitted had he attempted more, and he understood that Torqual was a swordsman of skill as well as strength.

Torqual again attacked, driving Aillas back, and Aillas fended off a series of blows any of which might have cut him in two, apparently each time by a hair's-breadth. On the last stroke Aillas counterthrust savagely, touching Torqual's shoulder, and Torqual was forced to jerk back with an effort in order to recover.

—Aillas and Torqual continue their fight in *The Green Pearl*, by Jack Vance

COMBAT MANEUVERS

The following guidelines, notes, and options apply to Combat Maneuvers in a Fantasy context. A Maneuver not discussed typically follows the standard rules and/or needs no further description for Fantasy purposes.

You may also want to review Chapter Six of HSMA, which has many other notes, suggestions, and rules for Combat Maneuvers not reprinted here. It also has extensive information about Martial Maneuvers in general, which are not mentioned below because they apply normally in Fantasy Hero campaigns.

STANDARD COMBAT MANEUVERS

BIND

At the GM's option, characters can use a new Standard Combat Maneuver, *Bind*. It's described on HSMA 243.

BLOCK

Several weapon-related situations common to Fantasy games affect Block. You may also want to review the optional rules on breaking weapons and shields (page 215). See also the rules for Interposing in the *Optional Combat Rules* section of this chapter.

BLOCK, SHIELDS, AND OFF-HAND DEFENSE

As noted on 6E2 211, a character can use his shield to Block and apply the shield's DCV bonus as an OCV bonus to the Block. But of course, if a character chooses to use his shield's bonus for OCV for a Block, obviously he can't also use it for DCV until his next Phase... though of course the Block itself may provide a DCV modifier. (The same applies to using the Off-Hand Defense DCV bonus with Block; see 6E1 114 or 6E2 58).

OPTIONAL COMBAT MANEUVERS

In most Fantasy Hero campaigns, characters cannot use the following Optional Combat Maneuvers with Ranged weapons: Blazing Away, Pulling A Punch, and Suppression Fire. In some cases the Limitations on a weapon (particularly Extra Time) may prevent characters from using Maneuvers like Hipshot and Hurry. Typically the GM establishes this as a campaign default rule, so weapons get no Limitation for it, but the GM can grant exceptions if appropriate. For example, see page 196 regarding Multiple Attack and archery.

In most Fantasy Hero campaigns, characters cannot use the following Optional Combat Maneuvers with spells: Blazing Away, Hipshot, Hurry, Pulling A Punch, Snap Shot, and Suppression Fire. Typically the GM establishes this as a campaign default rule, so spells get no Limitation for it (but see page 276), but the GM can grant exceptions if appropriate.

NEW OPTIONAL FANTASY HERO COMBAT MANEUVERS

The following new Optional Combat Maneuvers are appropriate for Fantasy campaigns. Game-masters should review them and decide whether to incorporate them into the game. (See also the *Flail Maneuver* on page 193.)

SET VERSUS CHARGE

This Combat Maneuver (which differs from the Standard Combat Maneuver Set) allows a character to use a weapon to resist the effects of a charging foe (such as a knight on horseback, an angry boar, or a berserk ogre rushing at him to cleave him in two).

To perform a Set Versus Charge, the character needs two things. First, he needs a long, thrusting weapon — typically a spear, glaive, trident, or other polearm. The GM may, at his option, allow characters to Set Versus Charge with other large, long weapons, such as greatswords.

Second, since Set Versus Charge only works against charging opponents, the character needs to be prepared. Typically this means he Holds his Action in anticipation of the charge. Set Versus Charge requires a Full Phase.

A character who declares a Set Versus Charge must state that he is doing so, and which direction he's preparing for a charge from (he doesn't have to indicate the specific target he's setting against, since that really depends on who chooses to charge him — he just has to face the right direction). When the charging attacker comes within range (based on the length of the weapon the character uses), the character makes his Attack Roll. If the character's weapon is longer than the charging attacker's weapon, the character's Attack Roll occurs before his opponent gets to make an attack. If the two have equal-sized weapons, their attacks on each other occur simultaneously. If the charging attacker has a longer weapon, he gets to make his Attack Roll first, and if he succeeds may ruin the character's Set Versus Charge (for example, by Stunning the character).

Set Versus Charge adds +0 OCV, +0 DCV. If the character's Attack Roll succeeds, the charging attacker takes the normal damage for the weapon (including bonuses from the character's STR, any Combat Skill Levels applied, and the like), increased by the charging attacker's velocity — add +1 Damage Class for each full 6m of movement the charging attacker had. (See 6E2 99-102 for more information on Adding Damage.P)

Typically a Set Versus Charge hits the rider of a mount, not the mount. The character may declare that he's aiming for the mount instead, or the GM may roll randomly to determine whether rider or mount takes the blow.

Example: Orcs (DEX 15, SPD 3) riding giant wolves (Running 22m) attack the village of Timberton. Sir Gareth (STR 15, DEX 18, SPD 4) and his companions defend the hapless hamlet. Sir Gareth has a Medium Spear (a Long weapon); in Segment 3 he decides to Set Versus Charge. The orcs approach from the west, so Sir Gareth faces that way. Since the orcs only have SPD 3, he must Hold his Phase in Segment 3 until they get to him.

In Segment 4, when the orcs get a Phase, the charge arrives. Sir Gareth is prepared, with his spear-butt planted firmly in the ground (braced by his foot) and the spearhead aimed at an approaching orc. As a Long weapon, the spear has +2m reach, so Sir Gareth gets to attack first. When the orc gets within range of his weapon, Sir Gareth rolls to hit. He has a base OCV 6, and two Combat Skill Levels applied to OCV, giving him an OCV of 8. The orc is DCV 5. Sir Gareth rolls an 11 and hits! The orc runs full into the spear. The spear does a base of 1½d6 Killing Damage (5 DCs), and Sir Gareth adds +1 DC because his STR (15) exceeds the weapon's STR Minimum (10) by 5. Additionally, he adds +1 DC for each full 6m of the orc's movement. The wolf was using Running 22m, so Sir Gareth can add +3 DCs (if the wolf had Running 24m, Sir Gareth could add +4 DCs). So, the weapon does 5 + 1 + 3 = 9 DCs of damage, or 3d6 Killing! Sir Gareth rolls 14 BODY and skewers the orc.

SHIELD WALL

Two or three characters with shields can help defend each other by establishing a *shield wall* so their "zones of protection" overlap. To establish a shield wall (which requires a Zero Phase Action for each character involved), a character with a shield must stand right next to another person with a shield. Both characters must face the same way and agree to participate in the shield wall. If these conditions apply, both characters in the shield wall get +1 DCV. If a character has two people forming a shield wall with him, one on each side, he receives a +2 DCV bonus. Of course, if the character moves out of the shield wall, he loses this bonus.

Characters may only establish a shield wall with small, medium, or large shields.

[As the Wendol cavalry charges toward them, Buliwyf tosses Ahmed ibn Fadlan a large pole sharpened to a point on one end]

Ahmed: What do I do with this?

Buliwyf: Put your foot on it... and stand!

—our heroes prepare to resist a cavalry charge in the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*



FANTASY HERO OPTIONAL COMBAT MANEUVERS

Maneuver	Phase	OCV	DCV	Effects
Bind	½	+0	+0	Binds weapon with STR Versus STR Contest
Set Versus Charge	1	+0	+0	Weapon + target's v/6 damage
Shield Wall (1 side)	0	—	+1	
Shield Wall (2 sides)	0	—	+2	
Unhorse	½	-1	+0	Knocks target from saddle, does STR/5 + target's v/10 in d6 of Normal Damage

UNHORSE

A character may use this Optional Combat Maneuver to knock a person off a horse (or other mount). To do this, the character must have a Long weapon (typically a spear or other pole arm) or a quarterstaff. The Maneuver is a -1 OCV, +0 DCV attack.

To Unhorse a target, the character makes an Attack Roll. If the roll succeeds, he knocks the target off his horse, doing dice of Normal Damage equal to the attacker's STR divided by 5 (*not* his weapon's damage), +1d6 for every full 10m the mount moved in that Segment (or the last Segment in which it moved, if it didn't move that Segment). The target can make a Breakfall roll at -1 per 2d6 damage (if he has that Skill) to take half damage (or no damage if the roll succeeds by half).

The Unhorse maneuver assumes the target doesn't expect someone to try to knock him from the saddle. If the GM believes the target is prepared, the attacker suffers an additional -3 OCV with his Unhorse maneuver. Additionally, some types of saddles, such as the aerial mount saddle described above, impose penalties on Unhorse because they hold the rider so firmly in place.

FIGHTING TRICKS

A character can purchase *Fighting Tricks* — a form of the *Power Skill* — to represent his ability with his chosen weapon. This can be Archery Tricks, Brawling Tricks, Dagger Tricks, Sword Tricks, or tricks with any other specific weapon the character wields. Characters must buy *Fighting Tricks* by *specific weapon type*; they cannot buy the Skill to apply to all weapons. (For these purposes, "Brawling" — the use of the fists to fight — counts as a "weapon," provided the character doesn't have an unarmed Martial Arts style.) A character can purchase *Fighting Tricks* with any weapon type he wishes (Axe Tricks, Mace Tricks, and so on), but the four types mentioned above are the most common.

Fighting Tricks has four uses. First, a character can use it to impress others (and in many Fantasy settings an impressive reputation can be just as effective as actual ability). Second, many of the new Talents described in Chapter Two require an appropriate *Fighting Skill* to execute. Lastly, with the GM's permission a character can use *Fighting Tricks* in conjunction with an Attack Roll to perform a maneuver or stunt not explicitly covered by the rules, or to perform a one-time trick normally defined using Talents or Powers — for example, to keep an inexperienced opponent from drawing a weapon without harming him. In other words, *Fighting Tricks* serves as a default when no other rule or ability applies.

BEING IMPRESSIVE

Sometimes, at the GM's discretion, a character might gain a bonus from clever use of this Skill while attempting to be impressive — a Surprise Move bonus or +1-2d6 for a Presence Attack are appropriate. But in general, proper use of *Fighting Tricks* for this purpose is less about benefitting from additional dice, bonuses to OCV, and the like, and more about being cocky, either to show an arrogant disdain for one's opponent or to prove one's magnificent prowess with one's chosen mean of dispatching foes.

As a rule of thumb, as long as a character isn't doing damage or an action doesn't have an impact on combat, and the action is reasonably plausible (and entertaining), he can simply use a *Fighting Tricks* roll — sometimes in conjunction with an Attack Roll, sometimes not, depending on the circumstances — to accomplish the feat. This is sometimes called a "flourish." (For actions that do cause damage or do have a major impact on combat, he must purchase a Talent, such as the ones described in Chapter Two, or some similar ability he creates himself).

Some example "flourishes" include:

ARCHERY FLOURISHES

- With a precisely-placed shot, the character can pin a target to the wall by his clothes. This doesn't stop the target from running away — in other words, it's not an Entangle — but it might make him freeze in his tracks with fear.
- When participating in an archery competition, the character can hit an opponent's arrow that's already stuck in the target, splitting it in two.

BRAWLING FLOURISHES

- The character knocks his opponent between the eyes, causing the foe's eyes to involuntarily cross and stay that way for several seconds. This does no permanent harm or damage, but the target looks pretty ridiculous and may suffer a -1 to -2 penalty on Sight PER Rolls during that time.
- Once the character has successfully Grabbed an opponent, he can use Brawling Tricks to add some impressive flourishes to his grappling, such as twirling the hapless opponent above his head, rubbing the poor guy's face in something unpleasant on the ground, or spinning him like a top.

DAGGER FLOURISHES

- With a flurry of dagger throws, the character can pin a target to the wall by his clothes. This doesn't stop the target from running away — in other words, it's not an Entangle — but it might make him freeze in his tracks with fear.
- Throwing two daggers in rapid succession, the character first knocks a mug down the bar and under the tap, then knocks the tap to pour his beer with the second dagger. Though this an impressive way of getting a beer, tavernkeepers don't always appreciate it.

3

Aillas struck out; the blade was deflected. He tried once more; Tauncy wrenched and the sword flew from Aillas' hands. "Once more," said Tauncy. "See how it goes? Flick, slide, off, away! You may drive down the weapon with all your weight; I interpose, I twist! the sword leaves your grasp; I stab where your armor gaps; in goes the sword and out comes your life."

—Tauncy teaches Aillas the skill and benefits of using a short, skillfully-wielded blade to disarm a more heavily-armed foe in *Lyonesse*, by Jack Vance



SWORD FLOURISHES

- In between blows and blocks, the character flips up his sword, allowing it to twirl above his and his opponent's head. Impressively, the sword always lands in the character's hand just in time to block a blow or make the next slash.
- The character slices through the strings of a person's breeches or flicks the buttons off his shirt, leaving him wearing rags (if anything at all).
- In conjunction with a successful Disarm, the character knocks a mug of beer out of a person's hand and catches the mug by thrusting his blade through the handle.

BEING IMPRESSIVE IN A SKILL VERSUS SKILL CONTEST

Sometimes when two duelists (or other characters with the same sort of *Fighting Tricks* Skill) meet, proving one's superiority over the other is more a matter of impressive swordwork than hacking the other into little pieces — especially in the confines of a city, palace, or place where the authorities frown on murder. You can handle this situation with a series of Presence Attacks and Skill Versus Skill Contests using *Fighting Tricks*.

The character with the highest DEX goes first. He engages his foe in a Skill Versus Skill Contest. If he succeeds, he makes a Presence Attack; to win, he requires a PRE +10 result. If he fails, then the opponent goes next. This continues, and each subsequent time a character succeeds in the Skill Versus Skill Contest, he receives a cumulative

+1d6 to his Presence Attack. The encounter ends when one of the characters makes a successful Presence Attack, which forces his foe to back off, disengage, or admit that he's outmatched... for now.

The GM can raise or lower the required result of the Presence Attack to better suit the circumstances. When facing off against an opponent who has a particularly harsh commander and has orders to capture the character, the required result might be PRE +30. When against some nameless bravo or bully in some rundown tavern, the required result might be PRE.

A character scoring a critical success during the Skill Versus Skill Contest always wins (without even making a Presence Attack), unless his foe also scores a critical success. A character suffering a critical failure loses, often in dramatic and humiliating fashion.

OTHER COMBAT RULES

The GM may also want to consider the optional rules on 6E2 127-28 (for ground-fighting, guarding areas, ignoring opponents, and interposing), and the ones on HSMA 254-55 (targeting wounds and twisting the blade), all of which tend to be appropriate for most Fantasy campaigns.

"I am a sexy shoeless god of war!"

—halfling ranger Belkar Bitterleaf revels in combat atop a pile of hobgoblin corpses in "The Order Of The Stick," a webcomic by Rich Burlew

HIT LOCATIONS

Fantasy Hero GMs may want to consider using the rules on APG 173-74 about increasing Killing Damage when the Hit Location rules are used. This tends to make combat bloodier (and thus perhaps something characters tend to avoid), which may suit the feel of some Fantasy campaigns perfectly.

3

DAMAGE

This section contains guidelines, advice, and optional rules pertaining to damage and its effects. In addition to the material discussed below, the GM may also want to consider using the following optional rules, which work well for some types of Fantasy gaming: mystery damage (6E2 118); critical hits and fumbles (6E2 118); STUN damage in Heroic campaigns (6E2 119); and healing and recovering damage (6E2 121).

OPTIONAL EFFECTS OF DAMAGE

Most Fantasy Hero campaigns are Heroic-level games, and as such often use the various optional effects of damage: Wounding, Hit Locations, Impairing, Disabling, Knockdown (but not Knockback), and Bleeding. Of these, the Hit Location rules are most often used; almost all Fantasy Hero campaigns have them in place.

Whether the GM chooses to use the other optional rules (or even the Hit Location rules) depends on several factors. First and foremost, how much attention, effort, and detail do the GM and players want to put into combat? The optional rules provide a lot more information about what goes on in a battle, how characters get hurt, and the effects of their injuries. If that level of detail helps you visualize and roleplay combat, the optional rules are worth considering. However,

you should be aware that bringing the optional rules into the game tends to slow combat down. Instead of just rolling damage and subtracting defenses, you now have to account for the part of the body the attack hit, possible impairing effects, loss of blood, and the like.

Second, how "realistic" do you want your Fantasy campaign to be? The optional rules all favor the grim and gritty nature of "reality" instead of the more "dramatic" presentation of the basic rules. Ordinarily characters don't have to worry about things like laming wounds, bleeding, and infection — either in the game, or in most Fantasy literature and movies. Introducing the optional rules into your game emphasizes the "realistic" feel, which may not be what you want.

Third, what subgenre does your campaign belong to? This relates to the second question. Low Fantasy games, and many Swords And Sorcery games, tend to be more "realistic," and therefore more likely to use the optional rules — they fit the "feel" of those subgenres well. On the other hand, High Fantasy games, and most Epic Fantasy games, tend to diverge much more strongly from "reality," and as such are less likely to use the optional rules (other than Hit Locations). After all, it's usually not very dramatic or heroic for an adventurer to bleed to death after a battle.

RELATIVE POSITIONS

Not all combats take place on level ground. Sometimes, warriors find themselves fighting on uneven terrain, which may affect their ability to hit each other. If the campaign uses the Hit Location rules, the Special Hit Locations table on 6E2 110 can help you resolve this situation. Take a look at the options and choose the one that best represents the situation the combatants find themselves in. For example, during a siege, defenders atop the castle walls may hurl objects down at their attackers; you could resolve that as a Head Shot. If two swordsmen duel with rapiers up and down a stairway (or on a steep hillside), the one "above" the other would make High Shots, while the one lower down the incline makes Body Shots or Low Shots.

If the campaign doesn't use Hit Locations, the GM should simply assign appropriate OCV and/or DCV modifiers to reflect the relative positions of the two fighters. In the duel on the stairway, the fighter lower down the incline might suffer a -2 DCV, representing the advantage the other character has in the fight.

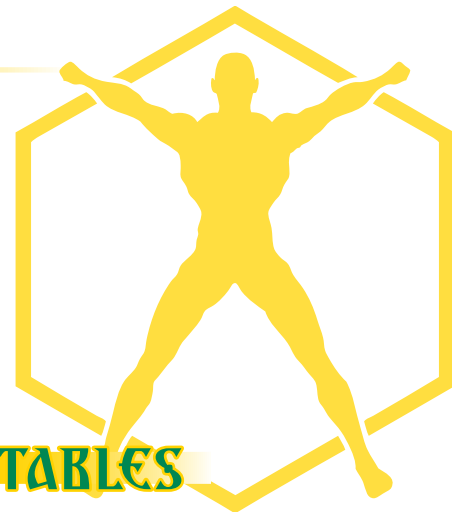
DEATH AND DYING

In Fantasy settings, where sharp pointy things are swung at characters on a regular basis, wizards can cast lethal spells, and monsters have enormous fangs and claws, the possibility of dying is a real one, despite the "dramatic heroism" that the *HERO System* encourages. But where magic exists, death isn't necessarily permanent!

One definitional issue the GM needs to establish for his campaign is the nature of death and resurrection. Some things to consider include:

- How likely is it that PCs will die? In most campaigns, the answer is "not very," but in games with readily-available resurrection spells, death may be a frequent and temporary thing.
- Is it possible to resurrect a dead character with magic? In most campaigns the answer is "No," since that establishes some dramatic impact and danger, but more than one Fantasy world has resurrection spells available.
- If resurrection is possible, how common/easy is it? Just because it's possible to resurrect a dead PC doesn't mean it happens all the time. In some settings practically every priest has a Raise From The Dead spell; in others only a few wise saints, specially gifted by the gods, can perform such miraculous "healing." Player Characters in the former setting are likely to take all sorts of risks they'd ordinarily avoid because they know they won't stay dead for long; in the latter setting their actions often won't be any different than the would be if there was no resurrection.

WEAPONS



WEAPONS TABLES

The accompanying weapons tables on pages 190-91 and 195 — one for HTH Combat weapons and one for Ranged Combat weapons — provide *HERO System* statistics, write-ups, and notes for dozens of weapons appropriate to Fantasy Hero. You can use these as guidelines to create your own if a weapon you want's not listed here. See also HSMA 257-60, which has dozens more Asian melee weapons.

EXPLANATION OF HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS TABLE

Most melee weapons are well-known to the average gamer and require no explanation. The text below provides information on some of the more obscure or unusual ones, as well as other useful data. Readers interested in learning more should consult some of the books in the non-fiction section of the Bibliography.

WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

This section provides descriptions of weapons which require them. Weapons that need no description (such as most swords and daggers) are not described.

AXES

Axes consist of a wooden handle with a heavy chopping blade at one end. Compared to a sword an axe has more ability to cut through armor, but it's less controllable, precise, and versatile. Some are single-bit (they just have one cutting edge); others are double-bit (with a blade on both sides of the haft, giving the weapon a little more tactical flexibility but making it heavier [add +1 to STR Minimum]); some are single-bit but have a spike opposite the blade (same rules as for double-bit axes, or a character could buy the axe as a Multi-power and consider the spike a lower-powered HKA with Armor Piercing). Characters can wield most of them effectively in one hand, though the battle axe works better in two hands, and the great axe requires two. The francisca and hand axe are both weighted for throwing.

Paks took the axe, which now felt comfortable in her grip. The basic stroke, he had explained, was much like the sideswing in longsword — but for using two hands.

—Paksenarrion tries to learn how to use the battle axe in *Divided Allegiance*, by Elizabeth Moon

Except in some martial arts-oriented Fantasy campaigns, Fantasy Hero combat usually involves lots of weapons: swords, axes, bows, daggers, and many, many more. This section has expanded weapons lists, plus rules for building and using weapons. You may also want to refer to Chapter Six of HSMA, which has an extensive list of Asian and martial arts weapons.

Boromir had a long sword, in fashion like Andúril but of less lineage, and he bore also a shield and his war-horn. ... Gimli the dwarf alone wore openly a short shirt of steel-rings, for dwarves make light of burdens; and in his belt was a broad-bladed axe. Legolas had a bow and a quiver, and at his belt a long white knife. The younger hobbits wore the swords that they had taken from the barrow; but Frodo took only Sting[.] ... Gandalf bore his staff, but girt at his side was the elven-sword Glamdring[.]

—the Fellowship prepares to set out in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

“The first thing I noticed about him, just that first impression you understand, was that he couldn't be a poor man. Or boy, or youth, or whatever he was then. Not with all those weapons on him. From the shagreen belt he was wearing ... swung a curved dagger on his left hip and on the right one of those Ilbarsi “knives” long as your arm. Not a proper sword, no. Not a military man, then. That isn't all, though. Some few of us know that his left buskin is equipped with a sheath; the slim thing and knife-hilt appear to be only a decoration. ... I've been told he has another sticker strapped less than comfortably to his inner thigh, probably his right. ... [And t]here's a throwing knife in that leather and copper armet on his right upper arm, and another in the long bracer of black leather on that same arm.”

—the merchant Furtwan Coinpinch describes Hanse's armaments in “Shadowspawn,” by Andrew Offutt

FANTASY HERO HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	OCV	Damage	STUNx	STR Min	BODY	Def	Mass	A/R Cost	Length	Notes
Axes										
Axe, Battle	+0	2d6	+0	13	6	4	1.6	46/16	M	1½H
Axe, Francisca	+0	1½d6	+0	12	5	4	1.2	45/17	M	Can Be Thrown
Axe, Great	+0	2d6+1	+0	16	8	4	2.1	53/16	M	2H
Axe, Hand (Hatchet)	+0	1d6	+0	6	3	4	0.6	26/10	S	Can Be Thrown
Axe, Small	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	4	4	0.9	31/13	M	
Hammers And Maces										
Hammer#	+0	1d6	+1	10	5	4	1.3	27/10	M	
Hammer, Small#	+0	1d6-1	+1	8	4	4	1.0	22/9	M	
Hammer, War#	-1	1d6+1	+1	13	5	4	2.0	36/11	M	1½H
Mace	+0	1d6+1	+0	10	5	5	1.5	31/12	M	
Mace, Great	+0	2d6	+0	15	6	5	2.0	46/14	M	2H
Mace, Small	+0	1d6	+0	8	4	5	1.3	23/10	M	
Maul#	+0	1½d6	+1	18	5	5	2.5	45/13	M	2H
Picks										
Pick#	+0	1d6 AP	+0	11	4	5	1.3	27/10	M	
Pick, Great#	+0	1½d6 AP	+0	14	6	5	1.5	45/13	M	2H
Pick, Military#	+0	1d6+1 AP	+0	13	5	5	1.4	36/13	M	1½H
Pick, Small#	+0	1d6-1 AP	+0	8	4	5	1.0	22/9	M	
Clubs										
Baton/Shillelagh	+0	3d6 N	—	8	4	3	1.2	23/9	M	
Club	+0	4d6 N	—	10	5	3	1.5	31/11	M	
Club, Great	+0	6d6 N	—	15	7	3	2.0	46/13	M	2H
Club, War	+0	5d6 N	—	12	6	3	1.8	38/12	M	1½H
Stick	+0	2d6 N	—	5	3	3	0.9	15/5	S	
Swords And Knives										
Cinquedea, Long	+0	1d6+1	+0	13	5	5	1.3	31/12	M	
Cinquedea, Short	+0	1d6	+0	11	5	5	1.2	23/9	M	
Dagger/Dirk	+0	1d6-1	+0	6	3	5	0.8	21/8	S	Can Be Thrown
Falchion	+1	1d6+1	+0	14	4	5	1.5	33/12	M	
Knife	+0	½d6	+0	4	2	5	0.4	17/7	M	Can Be Thrown
Main-Gauche	+0	1d6-1	+0	7	3	5	0.8	22/9	S	+2 OCV with Block/Bind/Disarm
Rapier	+1	1d6	+0	10	5	5	1.0	23/9	M	
Scimitar/Tulwar	+0	1d6+1	+0	11	5	5	1.1	31/12	M	
Stiletto#	+0	½d6 AP	+0	5	3	5	0.7	20/8	S	Can Be Thrown
Sword, Bastard	+0	1½d6	+0	13	6	5	1.7	38/13	M	1½H
Sword, Broad/Long	+0	1d6+1	+0	12	5	5	1.2	31/12	M	
Sword, Great	+1	2d6	+0	17	7	5	3.5	48/15	M	2H
Sword, Short	+0	1d6	+0	10	5	5	1.1	23/9	M	
Sword, Small	+0	1d6-1	+0	8	3	5	0.9	19/8	M	
Polearms										
Awl Pike#	-1	1d6+1 AP	+0	14	5	3	2.0	39/12	EL	2H, Set
Glaive	+0	2d6+1	+0	16	6	3	2.1	55/17	L	2H, Set
Guisarme	-1	2d6	+0	16	6	3	2.1	48/13	L	2H, Set, Unhorse
Halberd	+0	2d6+1	+0	17	6	4	2.3	55/17	L	2H, Set, Unhorse
Javelin	+0	1d6+1	+0	10	4	3	0.8	38/15	L	Can Be Thrown
Military Fork	+0	1½d6 RP	+0	13	5	3	1.8	40/12	L	2H, Set
Partisan	+0	1d6+1	+0	9	5	3	2.0	33/11	L	2H, Set
Pike	-1	2d6+1	+0	15	6	3	2.2	56/16	EL	2H, Set
Pole Axe	-1	2d6	+0	13	5	4	2.2	48/14	L	2H
Ranseur	-1	2d6	+0	13	5	3	2.0	48/14	L	2H, Set



Weapon	OCV	Damage	STUNx	STR Min	BODY	Def	Mass	A/R Cost	Length	Notes
Spear, Long	-1	2d6	+0	14	6	3	2.2	49/14	EL	2H, Set
Spear, Medium	+0	1½d6	+0	12	5	3	2.0	47/18	L	Set, Can Be Thrown
Spear, Short	+0	1d6+1	+0	10	4	3	1.7	38/15	L	Set, Can Be Thrown
Trident	-1	2d6 RP	+0	13	5	4	1.5	55/17	L	Can Be Thrown
Vouge	-1	2d6+1	+0	15	4	3	1.0	55/15	L	2H, Set, Unhorse
Flails										
Flail	+0	1d6	+0	9	4	4	2.0	28/11	M	Flail
Flail, Battle	+0	2d6	+0	18	5	4	2.2	57/17	M	2H, Flail
Flail, Bladed	+0	1d6+1	+0	13	4	4	2.0	38/14	M	Flail
Flail, Large	+0	1½d6	+0	16	5	4	2.3	47/16	M	Flail
Flail, Military	-1	1½d6	+0	15	4	4	2.0	47/14	M	1½H, Flail
Flail, War#	+0	1d6	+1	13	4	4	2.6	33/12	M	Flail
Flail, War, Large#	+0	1d6+1	+1	18	4	4	3.0	45/16	M	Flail
Morningstar	+0	1½d6	+0	15	4	4	1.5	47/16	M	Flail
Unusual Melee Weapons										
Lance, Light	+0	1d6+1	+0	10 †	6	3	4.0	34/11	EL	Only On Horseback
Lance, Medium	+0	1½d6	+0	13 †	7	3	6.0	41/13	EL	Only On Horseback
Lance, Heavy	+0	2d6	+0	15 †	9	3	8.0	49/14	EL	Only On Horseback
Quarterstaff	+1	4d6 N	—	10	4	3	1.0	33/10	M	2H
Whip	+0	½d6 RP	+0	5 †	2	2	0.3	15/9	Text	+6m Range, can Grab

KEY

#: Weapon has a +¼ Advantage that affects how damage is added with STR, velocity, and the like (see 6E2 99-102)

†: STR Minimum Doesn't Add To Damage

1½H: One-And-A-Half-Handed Weapon

2H: Two-Handed Weapon

AP: Armor Piercing

Can Be Thrown: The weapon has the *Range Based On STR* (+¼) Advantage.

E: Energy damage

Flail: Can perform the *Flail* Combat Maneuver (page 193) (*i.e.*, it has Indirect (+¼))

N: Normal Damage (all other weapons do Killing Damage), bought as a Hand-To-Hand Attack (but to which characters add damage only by exceeding the STR Minimum)

No horse: Characters cannot wield this weapon while mounted (a -¼ Limitation)

Only On Horseback: Characters can only wield this weapon while mounted (a -½ Limitation)

RP: Reduced Penetration (-¼)

Set: Characters can use this weapon to perform the *Set Versus Charge* Combat Maneuver (see page 185)

Text: Refer to the text for information.

Unhorse: Characters can use this weapon to perform the *Unhorse* Combat Maneuver (see page 186)

All HTH Combat weapons are built as HKAs (or HAs) with the Advantage *Reduced Endurance* (0 END; +½) and the Limitations *OAF* (-1), *Real Weapon* (-¼), and *Strength Minimum* (varies). Many also have the *Required Hands* Limitation.

OCV: This is applied as a bonus or penalty against all attacks made with the weapon. OCV bonuses are bought as a 2-point Combat Skill Level with the Limitations *OAF*, *Required Hands*, and *Real Weapon*. OCV penalties are a minor Side Effect (automatically occurs; -½) for the weapon. Until the penalties on a weapon reach the 30 Active Point level (which is highly unlikely to ever occur), the Side Effect remains at this value. Even if a weapon has both OCV and RMod penalties, it takes only one Side Effect until the penalties exceed 30 points.

Damage: The amount of damage the weapon does. For further information and discussion, see the text boxes on 6E2 200 and 201, and the *Realistic Damage*, *Equal Damage*, and *Bashing*, *Slashing*, and *Piercing Damage* options on page 205 of this book.

STUNx: This is the STUN Multiplier for Killing Damage weapons (a +0 means “no modification”; use the standard ½d6 STUN Multiplier). Apply the STUNx modifier to the STUN Multiplier roll (or to the STUNx for the Hit Location struck, if the campaign uses Hit Location rules). For example, if a character with a War Flail (STUNx +1) hit an opponent in the Head, the total STUNx would be 6.

STR Min: STR Minimum. See 6E2 199 for rules. Remember to apply the Adding Damage rules on 6E2 99-102 when using STR to increase the damage of a weapon bought with Advantages.

BODY: The weapon's BODY.

Def: The weapon's PD and ED.

Mass: The weight of the weapon in kilograms.

A/R Cost: The Active Point/Real Point cost of the weapon.

Length: The weapon's length — Short, Medium, Long, or Extra Long. See 6E2 201 for more information.

Notes: This catch-all category includes any information not listed elsewhere.



Then Morgoth hurled aloft Grond, the Hammer of the Underworld, and swung it down like a bolt of thunder. But Fingolfin sprang aside, and Grond rent a mighty pit in the earth, whence smoke and fire darted.

—Morgoth's hammer fails to strike the Elf-lord Fingolfin in *The Silmarillion*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

HAMMERS AND MACES

...and now he was come again, bringing ruin, turning hope to despair, and victory to death. A great black mace he wielded.

—the Lord of the Nazgûl comes to the battlefield in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Hammers and mauls are simple weapons — a metal or wooden haft with a blunt mass of metal on the end. Sometimes the “hitting end” is spherical, at other times it’s shaped more like a hammer used to drive nails. The war hammer, which is of the latter type, also has a short blade projecting from the back of the hammer, with which the wielder can more easily pierce armor if necessary. Thanks to their heavy impact, hammers have a +1 Increased STUN Multiplier.

Maces are similar to hammers, but more powerful. In place of a single mass of metal they usually have four to six metal flanges, or sometimes a spiked ball. This gives it greater hitting and armor-penetrating power than a hammer.

PICKS

Coming late and fresh to the field the mailed warriors of Náin, Grór's son, drove through the Orcs to the very threshold of Moria, crying “Azog! Azog!” as they hewed down with their mattocks all who stood in their way.

—a recounting of dwarvish pick-fighting during the War of the Dwarves and Orcs in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Similar to axes, picks are metal- or wooden-hafted weapons with a single blade that looks something like a dagger or sword-point projecting from one end. Some versions are picturesquely known as “crow’s bills” because of this. The heavy, sharp head and force of the swing provide excellent armor-penetrating power (*i.e.*, the *Armor Piercing Advantage*).

CLUBS

Conrad was a massive man. Towering close to seven feet, he was heavy even for his height. A garment made of sheep pelts hung from his shoulders almost to his knees. In his right fist he carried a heavy wooden club fashioned from an oak branch.

—a club-wielding warrior in *The Fellowship Of The Talisman*, by Clifford Simak

Clubs are heavy wooden weapons, the relatively primitive precursors to hammers and maces. They range from batons and shillelachs easily wielded in one hand, to the two-handed great clubs favored by ogres and their ilk.

If necessary, the GM can use the statistics for clubs for various “impromptu” weapons characters acquire. For example, if a character in a barfight uses a stool to smash someone, the GM could consider that the equivalent of a Club (perhaps with -1 OCV because it’s an awkward object not designed as a weapon).

SWORDS AND KNIVES

Each of the brothers bore in his right hand a long and coldly glittering scimitar; and Vokal also carried in his left a like weapon, which he offered to the prince, explaining that these scimitars had been tempered to a muttering of lethal runes, and inscribed afterwards with unspeakable death-spells. Yadar, preferring his own sword, declined the wizard weapon[.]

—enchanted blades enter the story of “Necromancy In Naat,” by Clark Ashton Smith

The most common and significant weapons in the Fantasy genre are swords, daggers, and similar bladed weapons. Most are so well-known that they need no explanation. They come in literally thousands of varieties, with many different lengths, blade widths, curvatures, point styles, and preferred methods of use. If you don’t find a specific type of sword listed, adapt the nearest equivalent weapon on the table and use its statistics. For example, if you want your character to carry a large *kukri* knife, you might use the write-up for the Short Sword.

The *cinquedea* is an Italian weapon from the early 1500s; its name means “five fingers,” the blade’s width at the hilt. It comes in both short sword and broadsword lengths. Although a little heavier than comparative blades, it’s also a little sturdier; if you’re using the weapon breakage rules (page 215), give both versions +1 BODY (this costs +1 Character Point; see page 210).

The *falchion* comes in two varieties: a heavy chopper-like blade that’s wider near the tip than at the hilt; and a more narrow version, equally wide through its length, with a slight backwards curve and a clipped point. Although not much longer than a short sword, it has excellent slashing and stabbing power.

The *main-gauche* is a European fencing dagger. It has a heavy hand-guard (6 PD/6 ED Resistant Protection on an Activation Roll 11- for the hand holding it) and extra-long quillions. It’s especially good at, and so receives an extra +2 OCV for, Maneuvers with the Bind, Block, and Disarm elements.

The *rapier* is a long, narrow stabbing sword, a fencing weapon popular with “swashbuckler” type warriors and other light fighters. Fast and relatively light, it often has an elaborately-shaped and decorated hilt, guards, and other furniture.

The *scimitar* (or *shamshir*) is a curved Middle Eastern sword meant for slashing (particularly



from horseback). The *tulwar* is an Indian version of the same weapon. Some tulwars are heavy and thick-bladed; increase their BODY by +1 and their STR Minimum to 12.

A *bastard sword* is somewhat longer and heavier than a longsword, with a longer hilt as well. A swordsman can wield it one-handed, but for best effect uses two.

Broadsword, or *longsword*, typically refers to straight-bladed, double-edged swords of the type popular in Europe and depicted in countless Fantasy illustrations. Most had blades from 61 to 90 cm (25-35 inches) long; a few had only a single edge or other variations.

A *greatsword*, or two-handed sword, is the largest sword of all. Requiring two hands to wield, it usually has a dull ricasso (the part of the blade right above the guard) so the fighter can grasp it either entirely by the hilt, or with one hand on the hilt and the other on the ricasso. In the latter mode, it could be used almost like a short staff, giving it a great deal of offensive flexibility — in addition to making broad, sweeping strokes if necessary, the wielder could stab, jab, block, trip, or even smash his opponent with the pommel. Examples include two-handed Scottish claymores, the German *zweihaender*, and many similar blades.

Short swords are similar to longswords, but have shorter blades — typically from 40 to 60 cm (15-24 inches) long. Examples include the Roman *gladius*, the Greek/Iberian *kopis/falcata*, and some Celtic and Greek leaf-bladed swords.

A *smallsword* is a short dueling weapon fashionable among European gentlemen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; it's sort of the "short sword version" of a rapier. It would make a good weapon for light fighters and in "swashbuckling" campaigns.

SPEARS AND POLEARMS

Polearms are various weapons with long (up to 2-3 meters) wooden shafts tipped by various blades and points. The differences between them are often minor, based on the shape, nature, and number of blades, axe-heads, spikes, barbs, and spear-points attached to the "business end" of the weapon. The most popular polearm, and in fact one of the most popular weapons of all, is the spear, which unlike most polearms can usually be thrown.

FLAILS

A flail has three parts: a metal or wooden haft, two or more chains attached to one end of the haft; and metal balls or weights attached to the end of the chains. The differences between various types of flails depend mainly on the number and length of the chains and what's attached to them. One well-known type, the *morningstar*, has a single chain with a large, spiked metal ball on the end.

The benefit to flails is not only that the chain-and-weight arrangement allows the wielder to obtain extra momentum and power for strikes, but that the chain can arc around a shield to hit the target behind it. To use this *Flail Maneuver*, the wielder takes a -1 penalty to his OCV, but may then ignore the target's DCV bonus from a shield (the target still gets the benefits of any Combat Skill Levels he has assigned to DCV). The OCV penalty effectively makes the Flail Maneuver pointless against a small shield (which only provides +1 DCV), but the maneuver becomes quite effective against larger shields.

The ability to perform the Flail maneuver is bought as a naked Advantage: Indirect (+¼) for the Active Points in the flail, with the Limitations OAF (-1), Required Hands (varies), Real Weapon (-¼), and Side Effects (-1 OCV, always occurs; -½).

The proprietor [of the Tiger's Eye], whose name was Snake, was hardly less exotic than her goods, though she was a native Liavekan. ... Not the least exotic of her attributes was her skill with the long whip of the caravan driver. Unlike the dress, the tool came with her when she left the trading routes. But away from its natural place, the whip became a tool of a different sort, and when asked about it, Snake would turn the subject.

—a description of the whip-wielding merchant Snake from “Badu’s Luck,” by Emma Bull, in the *Liavek* shared-world anthology

UNUSUAL WEAPONS

The *lance* is a large, heavy, spear-like weapon with a long wooden shaft and a large double-edged blade on the end. It’s designed for use on horseback (only mounted persons can use it, a $-\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation), and primarily only when charging (i.e., performing a Move By or Move Through); if a character tries to use one in other ways, the GM may reduce the damage slightly (and should keep in mind the weapon length rules on 6E2 202). It requires WF: Lance, which encompasses all forms of the weapon. With the force of a charging horse behind it, the lance is a powerful weapon indeed!

The *quarterstaff* is a thick cylindrical piece of wood about five to six feet long. It requires two hands (and WF: Staffs) to wield, but can strike lightning-fast flurries of blows (a form of Multiple Attack). Furthermore, a character who loses or breaks his staff can easily make another one out of an appropriate sapling or branch.

The *whip* is a long, braided length of leather, sometimes studded with bits of metal and having a metal tip. By flicking it forcefully at a target within 6m, the wielder can inflict painful wounds and welts. Wielders can also use it to grab objects, or even swing across small gaps. It does relatively little damage to armored foes (in fact, it has the *Reduced Penetration* Limitation), but against exposed flesh is a vicious weapon (one often favored by Evil characters).

Cost Power

- 7 **Whip:** Multipower, 15-point reserve; all OAF (-1)
- 1f **1) Whip Slash:** RKA $\frac{1}{2}d6$; OAF (-1), Limited Range (6m; $-\frac{1}{4}$), Reduced Penetration ($-\frac{1}{4}$), Real Weapon ($-\frac{1}{4}$), Strength Minimum (5; STR Minimum Doesn't Add To Damage; $-\frac{3}{4}$)
- 1f **2) Whip Grab:** Stretching 6m, Reduced Endurance (0 END; $+\frac{1}{2}$); OAF (-1), Always Direct ($-\frac{1}{4}$), No Noncombat Stretching ($-\frac{1}{4}$), Cannot Do Damage ($-\frac{1}{2}$)

Total cost: 9 points.

ARMOR PIERCING AND BLUNT ARROWS

Some arrows are built with sharp, chisel- or needle-like points so that they penetrate armor more easily. In *HERO System* terms, they have the *Armor Piercing* Advantage.

If you want to figure the Active and Real Point cost of a bow with armor piercing arrows, you can simply apply *Armor Piercing* to the weapon as a whole. For example, a Medium Longbow with armor piercing arrows would cost 38 Active Points, 10 Real Points. If you want to derive the cost difference for the armor piercing arrows, just subtract the Active and Real Point costs listed in the Ranged Weapons Table from these numbers (thus, the arrows alone “cost” 5 Active Points, 2 Real Points).

On the other hand, some arrows have blunted heads so they’re less likely to cause serious injury. In *HERO System* terms, these do the same number of DCs of Normal Damage as the arrow normally does of Killing Damage; the Character Point cost is typically identical.

However, since Fantasy Hero is a Heroic genre where characters buy equipment with money rather than Character Points, what really matters is not the difference in points, but the difference in *cost*. That way a character could, for example, buy a quiver of normal arrows, but then pay extra for three armor piercing arrows to use in emergencies. See page 174 for a suggested price for armor piercing, blunt, and regular arrows.

EXPLANATION OF RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

The following sections discuss the use of various Ranged weapons. You should also check the *Combat Maneuvers* section for any other relevant information.

CHARGES

The number of Charges listed for each weapon reflect the number of arrows (or the like) easily carried, the number commonly issued to soldiers, the standard unit packaged for sale, or similar considerations. Since characters in a Heroic-level game like Fantasy Hero don’t pay Character Points for their weapons, the number of Charges doesn’t really matter too much; an archer with enough money can buy and carry 50 arrows if he wants — he’s not restricted to 10 simply because that’s what the table says.

RANGED WEAPONS AND FOCUS

Bows, crossbows, and slings are all OAFs, but they use the multiple Focus rules on 6E1 380 because they require two objects to work: the projecting device (bow, crossbow, sling); and the projectile (arrow, bolt, sling stone). They don’t receive any extra Limitation for this.

Because the component Foci are separate, characters can affect them separately. It’s possible, for example, to fire an enchanted arrow with a mundane bow, or a normal arrow with a magic bow... or to have a magic bow *and* magic arrows whose mystic effects add together. (See pages 327-28.) Similarly, if you apply an Advantage to the attack (such as *Armor Piercing* to reflect particularly sharp arrows), it only affects one part (the arrow/bolt), even though it applies to the overall attack. There’s no such thing as an “armor-piercing bow” that makes every arrow it fires *Armor Piercing*; effects like that depend on the ammunition used, not the firing mechanism.

A more complex, but more technically “correct,” way to build a bow or crossbow is as two different Foci, each providing a different ability: the arrow/bolt (an HKA) and the bow/crossbow (a naked *Ranged* Advantage allowing the user to use the arrow/bolt against targets at range, plus bonus HKA dice for “heavier” bows to increase the damage the arrow/bolt does). The naked *Ranged* Advantage would have to be bought to cover enough Active Points to deal with armor-piercing arrows and the like.

Similarly, you could define a sling as a bullet/stone (an object with defined PD + BODY that a character can throw with his STR) plus the sling itself (extra STR, only to increase throwing damage and distance). Again, that’s far more complex than necessary for most game purposes.

FANTASY HERO RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUNx	STR		Def	Mass	Shots	Max Range	A/R Cost	Notes
					Min	BODY						
Bows												
Bow, Very Light	+0	+0	1d6-1	+0	5 †	2	3	0.9	10 RC	120m	15/4	2H, Conc
Bow, Light	+0	+0	1d6	+0	8 †	2	3	1.0	10 RC	150m	19/5	2H, Conc
Bow, Medium	+0	+0	1d6+1	+0	9 †	2	3	1.0	10 RC	200m	25/6	2H, Conc
Bow, Heavy	+0	+0	1½d6	+0	10 †	2	3	1.1	10 RC	250m	31/7	2H, Conc
Bow, Very Heavy	+0	+0	2d6	+0	13 †	2	3	1.2	10 RC	300m	37/9	2H, Conc
Longbow, Light	+0	+1	1d6+1	+0	10 †	3	3	1.1	10 RC	200m	26/7	2H, Conc, no horse
Longbow, Medium	+0	+1	1½d6	+0	12 †	3	3	1.2	10 RC	250m	32/8	2H, Conc, no horse
Longbow, Heavy	+0	+1	2d6	+0	15 †	3	3	1.3	10 RC	300m	38/9	2H, Conc, no horse
Longbow, Very Heavy	+0	+1	2d6+1	+0	18 †	3	3	1.4	10 RC	350m	45/11	2H, Conc, no horse
Crossbows												
Crossbow, Light	+0	+1	1d6+1	+0	12 †	4	4	1.6	10 RC	200m	26/6	2H, Conc, †1
Crossbow, Heavy	+0	+1	1½d6	+0	14 †	5	4	6.4	10 RC	250m	32/7	2H, Conc, †1
Arbalest	+0	+2	2d6	+0	16 †	6	4	8.0	4 RC	300m	32/7	2H, Conc, †2
Slings												
Sling	+0	-1	1d6+1	+1	8 †	2	2	0.3	10 RC	200m	30/7	2H, Conc
Sling, Small	+0	-1	1d6-1	+1	6 †	1	2	0.1	10 RC	120m	18/4	2H, Conc
Staff Sling (Fustibal)	+0	+0	1½d6	+1	10 †	3	2	0.4	10 RC	250m	37/9	2H, Conc
Thrown Weapons												
Shuriken/Darts	+0	+0	1d6-1	+0	5	1	5	0.4	9 RC	RBS	24/10	Autofire (5 shots)
Throwing Club	+0	+0	3d6 N	—	8	3	3	0.4	Text	RBS	Text	
Throwing Knife	+0	+0	1d6	+0	7	2	5	0.5	4 RC	RBS	19/6	
Gunpowder Weapons												
Handcannon, Small	+0	-6	1d6 AP*	+0	13 †	3	5	2.0	6	150m	19/3	Act 8-, Conc, †T, 2H
Handcannon, Large	+0	-4	1½d6 AP*	+0	14 †	5	5	2.6	6	250m	31/4	Act 9-, Conc, †T, 2H
Matchlock Rifle	+0	-3	1½d6 AP*	+0	13 †	5	3	1.6	6	250m	31/4	Act 11-, Conc, †T, 2H
Matchlock Pistol	+0	-4	1d6 AP*	+0	12 †	4	3	1.0	6	150m	19/3	Act 11-, Conc, †T
Wheellock Rifle	+0	-3	1½d6 AP*	+0	12 †	5	3	1.5	6	250m	31/5	Act 12-, Conc, †T, 2H
Wheellock Pistol	+0	-4	1d6 AP*	+0	11 †	4	3	1.0	6	150m	19/4	Act 12-, Conc, †T
Other Weapons												
Blowgun	+0	+0	1 point	-1	2 †	2	2	0.1	10 RC	60m	6/1	2H, Conc, †

KEY

2H: Two-Handed Weapon

Act: Activation Roll

AP*: The weapon has a naked Advantage, *Armor Piercing*, with the Limitations *OAF*, *Real Weapon*, *Required Hands*, *Concentration*, *Extra Time*, and *Only Works Against Low-Tech Armors* (-¼)

Conc: Concentration (½ DCV “throughout” the loading and/or firing process, see text; -½)

N: Normal Damage (all other weapons do Killing Damage)

No horse: Characters cannot fire this weapon while mounted (a -¼ Limitation)

RBS: Range Based On STR

RC: Recoverable Charge

†: STR Minimum Doesn't Add Damage

‡: Extra Time (Full Phase to use; -½)

‡1: Extra Time (1 Phase to reload between shots; -¾)

‡2: Extra Time (2 Phases to reload between shots; -¾)

‡T: Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼)

Ranged weapons are built as RKAs with some or all of the following Limitations: *Focus* (OAF; -1), *STR Minimum*, *Required Hands*, *Real Weapon*, *Beam*, and *Charges* (indicating the number of rounds of ammunition the average user carries).

OCV: This is applied as a bonus or penalty against all attacks made with the weapon; see the *Hand-To-Hand Weapons Table* for more information.

RMod: This represents a modifier to the weapon's accuracy at Range. Positive values (bought as 1-point Penalty Skill Levels versus the Range Group with the *Focus* and *Required Hands*

Limitations) help to offset the standard Range Modifier; negative values (a minor Side Effect (automatically occurs; -½)) add to it. RMod can never raise a character's base OCV, it can only negate penalties.

Damage: The amount of damage the weapon does.

STUNx: This is the STUN Multiplier for Killing Damage weapons (a 0 means “no modification”; use the standard ½d6 STUN Multiplier). Apply the STUNx modifier to the STUN Multiplier roll (or to the STUNx for the Hit Location struck, if the campaign uses Hit Location rules). For example, if a character with a Sling (STUNx +1) hit an opponent in the Head, the total STUNx would be 6.

STR Min: STR Minimum. See 6E2 199 for rules. Remember to apply the Adding Damage rules on 6E2 99-102 when using STR to increase the damage of a weapon bought with Advantages.

BODY: The weapon's BODY.

Def: The weapon's PD and ED.

Mass: The weight of the weapon in kilograms.

Shots: The standard amount of ammunition carried by a user of the weapon. Typically a character can only fire/throw/shoot one round of ammunition in a Phase; thereafter he must reload his weapon (or ready a new one). Reloading/readying may or may not take time; see the text.

Max Range: The weapon's maximum Range in meters. Of course, its effective range — the range over which it's likely to hit a target — is much less, thanks to the Range Modifier.

A/R Cost: The Active Point/Real Point cost of the weapon.

Notes: This catch-all category includes any information not listed elsewhere.



Phaer stood, drawing the bow. Above them more and more coils had risen, and the front of the creature was moving downslope to their left. He stepped forward, looking along the monster's length, ... then shot quickly and threw himself down. The arrow flew true, and sank into the monster's scales as if they were cheese.

—a Lyonyan ranger uses archery to slay a fearsome monster in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

BOWS

Legolas turned and set an arrow to the string, though it was a long shot for his small bow.

—Legolas hopes to hit a Moria orc with a long bowshot in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Bows are curved lengths of wood (and/or other materials) that use tensile strength to fire arrows (long shafts of wood with a sharp stone or metal arrowhead on the front, and feathers or other materials on the back to provide balance, stability, and accuracy in flight). A bowstring connects the two ends of the bowshaft, and the archer nocks an arrow to the string, draws it back (bending the bow in the process), and then releases it. The bowshaft, as it returns to its normal “shape,” propels the arrow toward the target with great force.

The stiffer (stronger) the material(s) used to make the bow, the more strength the archer needs to draw it into firing position, and the greater force the bow fires the arrow with (and hence the more damage it does). The weapon's STR Minimum reflects this; a weak man lacks the muscles to use the heavier bows effectively.

Bows come in numerous shapes, including curved, recurved, double-curved, asymmetric, and B-shaped. The simplest are made just of wood, but more advanced versions (“composite” or “compound” bows) are made of two or more materials (typically wood [in one or more layers], horn, bone, and sinew). Composite bows are sturdier and stronger than simple bows; at the GM's option, they add +20m to a weapon's maximum range.

Archers normally carry their bows unstrung, since keeping a bow strung for a long time stretches and weakens the string. Stringing a bow requires a Full Phase Action, though a character with Fast Draw (Bows) can reduce this to a Half Phase Action if he succeeds with a roll. At the GM's option, for each full hour a character keeps a bow strung, reduce the damage it does by 1 point (-1 point after one hour, -2 points after two hours, and so forth until damage reaches 0 and the bowstring becomes useless).

FIRING A BOW

Loading a bow — drawing an arrow (from a quiver or other container) and nocking it to the string — requires a Half Phase Action (unless the character succeeds with a Fast Draw (Bows) roll, in which case it becomes a Zero Phase Action). Firing a bow — pulling the string back, aiming quickly, and releasing the arrow — is an Attack Action.

If a character has (and uses) 5 or more points of STR above the STR Minimum of a bow, he may load and fire a bow as an Attack Action (without the need for a Fast Draw roll) if he accepts a -2 OCV penalty for rushing. This allows him to move

and then fire his bow, but does not eliminate the half DCV penalty described below. Fast Draw cannot reduce the time required for this.

Firing an arrow accurately requires an archer to stand still and focus on what he's doing. This halves his DCV until his next Phase. (In game terms, bows have the Limitation *Concentration* (½ DCV; -¼).) At the GM's option, a character who has the capacity to move (*i.e.*, who's not using up his entire Phase loading, pulling, and firing his bow) may fire his bow defensively. This eliminates the half DCV modifier, but imposes a -4 OCV penalty on his arrow shot (reflecting the fact that he's dodging around and not fully concentrating on accurate archery).

At the GM's option, an archer can use the *Multiple Attack Combat Maneuver* with a bow to fire a maximum of two shots. Normal rules for Multiple Attack apply (but remember that a character's DCV can only be halved once, and it's already halved due to the bow's *Concentration Limitation*).

Characters can use normal bows (sometimes called shortbows) from horseback without difficulty. Longbows, on the other hand, are too large for mounted archers to use; they take a -¼ Limitation to reflect this. Firing from horseback incurs the normal -2 OCV penalty (see 6E2 31), though characters may buy the *Mounted Warrior Talent* from Chapter Two to counteract this.

CROSSBOWS

“I waste it with my crossbow!”

—Bob's frequent cry during gaming sessions in the *Knights Of The Dinner Table* comic book

The crossbow, a more technologically advanced weapon than the bow, consists of a rifle-like stock with a bow mounted horizontally on the front. The bow is made of wood, composite materials, or even steel; it's thick and strong, and its string likewise, allowing for high tension and thus excellent range and penetration capabilities. The crossbowman fires it from the shoulder, similar to a modern rifle, making it quite accurate. An *arbalest* is a large, heavy crossbow requiring a mechanical wheel-crank or like mechanism to pull because of its extremely high tension.

A crossbow fires a missile called a *bolt*, or sometimes a *quarrel*. Bolts are similar to arrows, though usually shorter and often a bit thicker of shaft. Some hunting crossbows fire small pellets instead (these typically do ½d6 Killing Damage).

A crossbow is always strung, but it's normally not carried already drawn and loaded with a bolt — it's too easy for the bolt to fall out of the groove that holds it in place, or for the weapon to discharge accidentally. (Carrying a crossbow readied for long periods of time can also warp the weapon, ruining its accuracy; permanently reduce its RMod by -1 for every hour it's carried loaded.



3

If a character carries a loaded crossbow, the GM should have him make a DEX Roll whenever he experiences any unusual or drastic physical action, including moving at Noncombat speeds, trying to mount a horse, getting hit by an attack, making an attack with another weapon, Dodging, Blocking, or falling. The roll has a penalty of -0 to -5, depending on how drastic and violent the action is. If the roll succeeds, the crossbow remains loaded and ready to fire. If the roll fails by 1-3, the bolt falls out, but the crossbow remains cocked. If the roll fails by 4 or more, the crossbow discharges; if necessary, have the character make a roll at 0 OCV to see if he hit anyone in front of the weapon.

FIRING A CROSSBOW

Loading a crossbow — pulling back and cocking the bowstring, and then putting a bolt in the groove in front of it — requires a Full Phase, or two Full Phases for an arbalest (the weapon has the *Extra Time* Limitation to reflect this). A crossbow's STR Minimum represents the STR needed to pull the string back. This involves putting the crossbow on the ground bow-first, holding it in place with one foot, and drawing the string up with the hands. If a character has a mechanical aid (belt-and-claw, goat's-foot lever, cranequin, or the like), reduce the STR needed to ready the crossbow by 3. (Arbalests *require* mechanical aids, and do not benefit from this rule; the STR Minimum represents the STR needed to operate

the mechanism quickly and use the heavy weapon properly.) A character can fire a loaded crossbow properly with a STR 3 less than the listed STR Minimum.

While drawing and loading a crossbow, a character is at half DCV. However, this penalty does not apply to a character firing a loaded crossbow. This is simulated with the *Concentration* Limitation ($\frac{1}{2}$ DCV, but reduced by $\frac{1}{4}$ because the penalty doesn't apply once the weapon is loaded; -0).

At the GM's option, if a character has (and uses) 5 STR more than the STR Minimum of a crossbow, he may load it as a Half Phase Action if he succeeds with a DEX Roll (if the roll fails, he has wasted a Half Phase). This also eliminates the half DCV penalty described above. A character with Fast Draw (Crossbows) who succeeds with a roll can load a crossbow as a Half Phase Action with no DCV penalty, but must have a STR of at least the STR Minimum -5 to do so (or STR Minimum -8 if he has a cocking mechanism). (For an arbalest, a successful Fast Draw (Crossbows) roll lets a character load it as a Full Phase Action, but does not eliminate the DCV penalty.)

Firing a loaded crossbow requires an Attack Action. Characters cannot Multiple Attack with crossbows. Characters can fire crossbows from horseback (at the usual -2 OCV penalty), but cannot draw and load them while mounted.

RANGED ATTACKS QUICK REFERENCE TABLE

Action	Time Required	OCV*	DCV
Bow, firing normally	Full Phase	—	½
Drawing/nocking arrow	Half Phase	—	½
Pulling/firing arrow	Attack Action	—	½
Bow, firing with Fast Draw roll	Half Phase	—	½
Drawing/nocking arrow	Zero Phase	—	½
Pulling/firing arrow	Attack Action	—	½
Bow, loading and firing with +5 STR	Attack Action	-2	½
Bow, firing defensively*	Full Phase	-4	—
Drawing/nocking arrow	Half Phase	—	—
Pulling/firing arrow	Attack Action	-4	—
Bow, firing with Multiple Attack*	Full Phase	-2	½
Drawing/nocking arrows	Half Phase	—	½
Pulling/firing arrows	Attack Action	-2	½
Bow, firing from horseback	Full Phase	-2	½
Drawing/nocking arrow	Half Phase	—	½
Pulling/firing arrow	Attack Action	-2	½
Bow, stringing	Full Phase	—	—
Bow, stringing with Fast Draw roll	Half Phase	—	—
Crossbow, loading	Full Phase	—	½
Crossbow, loading with +5 STR*#	Half Phase	—	—
Crossbow, loading with Fast Draw*	Half Phase	—	—
Arbalest, loading	2 Full Phases	—	½
Arbalest, loading with +5 STR*#	Full Phase	—	½
Arbalest, loading with Fast Draw*	Full Phase	—	½
Crossbow or arbalest, firing loaded	Attack Action	—	—
Crossbow or arbalest, firing from horseback	Attack Action	-2	—
Sling, loading	Half Phase	—	½
Sling, loading with Fast Draw	Zero Phase	—	½
Sling, firing	Attack Action	—	½
Sling, firing from horseback	Attack Action	-2	½
Thrown weapon, throwing	Attack Action	—	—
Gunpowder weapon, loading and firing	1 Turn	—	½
Gunpowder weapon, loading and firing with Fast Draw	2 Full Phases	—	½
Gunpowder weapon, firing loaded	Attack Action	—	½
Gunpowder weapon, firing loaded from horseback	Attack Action	-2	½
Blowgun, loading and firing	Full Phase	—	½
Blowgun, loading with Fast Draw	Zero Phase	—	½
Blowgun, firing loaded	Attack Action	—	½
Blowgun, loading and firing from horseback	Full Phase	—	½

*: This rule is used only at the GM's option.

#: Also requires a DEX Roll.

BOWS VERSUS CROSSBOWS

The *HERO System* statistics for bows and crossbows tend to reflect the “dramatic reality” common to genre adventure fiction, which usually emphasizes and favors bows. They also reflect standard *HERO System* rules about calculating range and so forth. However, this doesn't necessarily simulate “reality” as well as it might for gamers who prefer a high degree of “historical accuracy.” Although scholars differ and quibble about various aspects of bows and crossbows and how they measure up (especially given the wide range of types of the various weapons), you can generally accept the following as historically correct.

The crossbow has, on the average, a longer range than the English longbow. A heavy steel-bowed crossbow's maximum range was around 380 yards (360 meters), while that of the longbow was around 280 yards (255 meters). Of course, both weapons' effective ranges were much shorter than this, and variations in equipment could affect these results.

The greater range of the crossbow implies greater force of impact at effective ranges (meaning, in game terms, that crossbows should do at least a little more damage than bows).

The longbow requires more training to learn to use effectively than a crossbow. An English saying states that to train an archer, you begin by training his grandfather. On the other hand, training someone to use a crossbow is relatively quick and simple.

The longbow has a greater rate of fire. A trained archer could fire, on the average, about six aimed arrows per minute, or twelve without significant aiming. A crossbowman, on the other hand, could fire one bolt per minute if he had to cock his crossbow by hand, or up to four per minute if he had a mechanical aid such as a belt-and-claw.

To represent these differences in game terms:

1. Alter the damage ranges on the weapons so that an arbalest does RKA $2\frac{1}{2}d6$, and the other weapons scale down from there.

2. After determining a bow's or crossbow's range using the standard rules (Base Points x 10m), use *Increased Maximum Range* and *Limited Range* to adjust the weapons' ranges to the proper maxima.

3. Add Extra Time (Extra Phase; $-\frac{3}{4}$) to all bows, and Extra Time (1 Minute; $-1\frac{1}{2}$) to all crossbows. You can then define mechanical aids like goat's-foot levers as buying the Extra Time for crossbows down to 1 Turn.

4. Make “Bows” a 2-point Weapon Familiarity of its own, separate from Common Missile Weapons, but keep Crossbows as a 1-point WF.

SLINGS

There was a whirring sound, ending in a muted snap. The Mouser had decided to get a blow in. It is not easy to swing a sling while lying prone on a ledge, but the Mouser's missile cracked into the furry bushes close to the black blowgunner, who immediately ducked out of sight.

—the Gray Mouser makes good use of his sling in “The Seven Black Priests,” by Fritz Leiber

A sling is a simple but effective method of increasing throwing power and distance to the point where small, round missiles become potentially lethal. It consists of a small leather pouch with two strings attached, one of which has a loop on the end. The user places the missile in the pouch, whirls the sling around to build up force, then releases the unlooped string to “throw” the missile. To improve power, accuracy, and range, the slinger could attach his sling to a rigid handle, creating a staff-sling (a *fustibal*).

The missiles “fired” by a sling are called *bullets*; they're made of lead and are ovoid-shaped. If necessary, a slinger can substitute appropriately-shaped stones instead. The damage listed for slings assumes bullets; if a character uses sling stones instead, reduce the damage by 1 DC.

Loading a sling requires two hands, but whirling and firing it only one. Loading it requires a Half Phase Action (or a Zero Phase Action, if the slinger succeeds with a Fast Draw (Slings) roll; this does not eliminate the DCV penalty). Firing a sling counts as an Attack Action. The slinger has to stand still and concentrate on what he's doing, so he has only half of his DCV until his next Phase. A character cannot use a sling to make a Multiple Attack, but can load and fire one from horseback.

THROWING NORMAL WEAPONS

Characters may sometimes want to throw ordinary melee weapons, such as clubs, battle axes, and greatswords. With the GM's permission, they may do so, but at a -3 OCV penalty. The range is based on throwing STR, and the character *also* suffers the -4 unbalanced, non-aerodynamic addition to the Range Modifier.

If a character takes a 1-point Weapon Familiarity with throwing a specific type of melee weapon — WF: Thrown Swords, WF: Thrown Axes, WF: Thrown Polearms, and so forth — he can eliminate the -3 OCV penalty. He still suffers from the Range Modifier penalty and balance/aerodynamic penalty, however.

THROWN WEAPONS

Aillas learned the use of bow, sword and the recondite art of the Galician bandits: knife-throwing. “This use of the knife,” stated Tauncy, “is neither courteous nor knightly. It is, rather, the desperado's resource, a ploy of the man who must kill to survive the evening. The thrown knife suffices to a range of ten yards; beyond, the bow excels. But in cramped conditions, a battery of knives is a most comfortable companion. ... I consider the knife a most elegant weapon. Even apart from its efficacy, there is beauty in its flight, as it cleaves hard to its target; there is a spasm of pleasure as it strikes home deep and true.”

—Aillas learns the virtues of knife-throwing in *Lyonesse*, by Jack Vance

In addition to spears and javelins (perhaps the most common hurled weapons in most Fantasy settings), thrown weapons include darts and shuriken, throwing knives, and throwing clubs.

Throwing knives are knives forged and shaped for throwing rather than HTH Combat (unlike daggers, which are meant for melee fighting but can easily be thrown). They have a sharp front point, but dull edges and little (if any) hilt. They're built with RKA, but at the GM's option characters can use them in HTH combat to do ½d6 Killing Damage at a -1 OCV penalty.

Throwing clubs include war boomerangs and similar weapons — clubs designed for throwing as much as for HTH Combat. They're built as a Multipower:

Cost Power

- 5 **Throwing Club:** Multipower, 15-point reserve; all OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), STR Minimum (8; -½)
- 1f **1) HTH Club:** HA 3d6 (add damage via STR Minimum); OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼), STR Minimum (8; -½), Real Weapon (-¼)
- 1f **2) Thrown Club:** Blast 3d6; OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), STR Minimum (8; -½), Real Weapon (-¼), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼), Lockout (cannot use either slot until Charge is recovered; -½)

Total cost: 7 points.

THROWING AIDS

Several cultures that relied on javelins and thrown spears developed devices to improve their warrior's ability to throw. Examples include the *atlatl* of the Aztecs, the *woomera* of the Australian Aborigines, and the *amentum*, a cord tied to the spear-shaft by the Romans. All of these devices had the effect of “lengthening” the thrower's arm so he could throw his weapon further.

In *HERO System* terms, you can build one of these devices this way: +5 STR (5 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only To Increase Throwing Distance (-1) (total cost: 2 points).



GUNPOWDER WEAPONS

He set one down and used both hands to release the double mechanism of the one pistol, then repeated the process with the other. He opened the pair of pouches at his right side and went through the ritual of loading the guns. He had bought the pistols through this very shop a few years before. The mechanisms were made by Tichek locksmith Erigo Niola, the barrels by metalsmith Fereth Loyale, and the stocks and grips, at Snake's recommendation, by master jeweler Kentanno Reffina of Trader's Town. They were far more reliable than the more common wheellock or matchlock; he could expect at least three of his charges to go off when firing all four. ... After loading both pistols, he stuck them into the wide black leather belt that supported his rapier and knife.

—Dashif gets his pistols back from Snake in “An Act Of Contrition,” by Steven Brust, in the *Liavek* shared-world anthology

Some Fantasy Hero campaigns may take place in settings where people have invented gunpowder and firearms. In the real world, crude gunpowder weapons first began appearing in the early to mid-1300s, and by the late 1500s had largely replaced bows and crossbows. In a Fantasy Hero campaign setting, the commonality of gunpowder weapons, and the extent to which people know about them, is up to the GM; to many folk, they may seem as magical as any wand or enchanted blade.

The earliest firearms — handcannons, matchlocks, and wheellocks — were all smoothbore (non-rifled), muzzle-loaded firearms. They were slow and difficult to load and fire (in game terms, Extra Time (1 Turn) for each shot, plus Concentration (½ DCV throughout; -½), prone to failure (Activation Roll), and inaccurate (Side Effects for Range Modifier penalties). They suffered from numerous other difficulties, such as not working if the powder got wet, and “cook-offs” of powder if the weapon got too hot from repeated firing (making the weapon explode in the user's hands, a GM-imposed Side Effect).

Most early firearms were rifles. Handcannons begin appearing around the mid-1400s, with true pistols developed in the late 1400s-early 1500s.

A *matchlock* weapon uses a smoldering “match” (a small twist of thick string, basically), which the trigger mechanism lowers into a pan of priming powder. The need to keep the match lit makes the weapon difficult or impossible to use in rainy or windy weather, as well as slow to fire when first used. A *wheellock* generates a spark for the priming powder by striking pyrite against steel; it's a more technologically advanced, easy to use, and expensive weapon (though it's more primitive than the later snap-hance and flintlock mechanisms).

At the GM's option, a character who succeeds with a Fast Draw (Early Firearms) roll can reduce the time required to load and fire a gunpowder weapon to two Full Phases. Firing the weapon constitutes an Attack Action. Characters can fire gunpowder weapons from horseback (though the noise may spook the animal), but cannot load them while mounted.

BLOWGUNS

[P]rotruding from the brown fur of his cloak was a wickedly barbed little dart, thickly smeared with [poison]. ... “I think I see him,” called the Mouser, peering down cautiously over the protected ledge. “A little fellow with a very long blowgun[.] ... Now he lifts the gun to his lips. Watch yourself!”

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser encounter a blowgun-wielding priest of Klesh in “The Seven Black Priests,” by Fritz Leiber

The blowgun, a weapon common to many early cultures, consists of a long, hollow tube and darts. The user fires the darts by inserting them in the back end of the tube, aiming, and then blowing into the tube. The darts themselves do little damage, but the user normally tips them with a poison or disease-causing agent.

Loading and firing a blowgun takes a Full Phase. At the GM's option, a character who succeeds with a Fast Draw (Blowguns) roll can load the weapon as a Zero Phase Action, and then fire it as an Attack Action. Characters may use and reload blowguns while riding mounts.

SILENT WEAPONS

None of the Ranged weapons in this section are bought with the Advantage *Invisible Power Effects* (Hearing Group) to make them silent, so they're still noisy enough to attract attention. But at the GM's option, a skillful character can make some weapons — bows, thrown blades and darts, and blowguns — harder to hear. (Crossbows, gunpowder weapons, and thrown clubs all make too much noise to overcome this way.) The character makes a DEX Roll at -1 for each DC in the attack (including any DCs added by STR, Combat Skill Levels, or other means), or an appropriate Fighting Tricks roll at half that penalty. If he fails, the attack is as audible as normal. If he succeeds exactly, attempts to hear the weapon in use are at -1 to PER Rolls; for each 1 point by which the roll succeeds beyond that, increase the penalty by -1.

POISONS

Although not “weapons,” precisely, poisons are commonly used in many Fantasy settings. Besides the threat of venomous animals, characters may have to deal with unscrupulous courtiers introducing poison into their food and drink at the King’s feast, assassins wielding poison-smearing blades, jungle tribesmen with poisoned blowgun darts, and the like.

See 6E2 210 for general rules about poisons, HSB 32-33 for animal venoms that you can easily adapt as blade poisons, and HSEG for advanced and expanded rules for creating and using poisons.

CLASSIFYING POISONS

Since the defense against most poisons is Life Support (Immunity), you should classify any poison you create (thus defining the proper Immunity for it). You have two options.

First, you can use the categories already defined for Immunity (APG 104). Although simple and easy, this method lacks Fantasy flavor.

Second, you can create categories specific to your Fantasy Hero campaign, based on the source of the poison, who makes it, and other factors. The accompanying sidebar provides an example system, using as a guideline a cost of 2 Character Points for poisons specific to a race, group, or location, and 3 Character Points for poisons from specific types of animals or plants.

EXAMPLE POISONS

Here are four example poisons created specifically for use in Fantasy campaigns.

JEKKARA’S WINE

Named for the God of Death, this ingestible poison works well with beer or ale, whose taste it resembles (-2 PER to detect in those substances; +0 to detect in any other food). The victim feels no effect for the first hour, giving the poisoner time to escape. Thereafter he becomes ill, and typically dies within the next few minutes, though a strong (i.e., high BODY) victim may survive.

RKA 1d6, NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Damage Over Time (five increments, one per Minute for 5 Minutes, defense only applies once, cannot be used again on same victim until all increments accrue; +2) (75 Active Points); OAF Fragile (easily spilled or diluted poison; -1¼), No Range (-½), Must Be Ingested (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 1 Hour after victim consumes poison; -3), 1 Charge (-2). **Total cost: 9 points.**

RED TEARS

A contact poison typically used for traps, Red Tears takes its name from the effect it has on the victim. Within a few minutes of getting it on his skin or in his bloodstream, the victim becomes violently ill (often vomiting), and blood begins to ooze from his eyes as if he were crying bloody tears (it may also ooze from the mouth, nose, and under the fingernails). Death almost inevitably follows shortly thereafter.

RKA 1d6, NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Damage Over Time (five increments, one per Minute for 5 Minutes, defense only applies once, cannot be used again on same victim until all increments accrue; +2), Trigger (when character touches poisoned object, resetting Trigger requires 1 Turn; +¼) (79 Active Points); OAF Fragile (easily spilled or diluted poison; -1¼), No Range (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 5 Minutes after victim touches poisoned object; -2), 4 Charges (-1). **Total cost: 14 points.**

SILVERLEAF CHUMETHA POISON

One of many poisons developed by the feared Silverleaf Guild (a notorious band of assassins), *chumetha* is an injected poison used primarily on throwing blades and daggers. It causes almost instant pain, if not death.

RKA 1d6, NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Damage Over Time (five increments, one per 6 Segments for 30 Segments, defense only applies once, cannot be used again on same victim until all increments accrue; +3) (90 Active Points); OAF Fragile (easily spilled or diluted poison; -1¼), No Range (range, if any, must be supplied by thrown weapon; -½), HKA Must Do BODY (-½), 4 Charges (-1). **Total cost: 21 points.**

ZAEL DUST

Made by alchemists and assassins from the powdered skulls of skeletons once animated by necromancers, manticore blood, and certain mushrooms from the southern jungles ground into a fine powder, Zael dust (named for its creator) creates a cloud of poisonous fumes lethal enough to kill any who breathe it.

RKA 1d6, NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Area Of Effect (8m Radius; +½), Constant (+½), Damage Over Time (five increments, one per 6 Segments for 30 Segments, defense only applies once, cannot be used again on same victim until all increments accrue; +3) (105 Active Points); OAF Fragile (easily spilled or diluted poison; -1¼), No Range (range, if any, must be supplied by thrown weapon; -½), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Turn (dust cloud lingers this long, but victims can only be poisoned once; -1¼). **Total cost: 26 points.**

“They died without a sound!” muttered the Cimmerian. “Taurus, what was that powder?”

“It was made from the black lotus, whose blossoms wave in the lost jungles of Khitai, where only the yellow-skulled priests of Yun dwell. Those blossoms strike dead any who smell of them.”

—Taurus silently kills five lions with poison powder in “The Tower Of The Elephant,” by Robert E. Howard

Rolan pulled his throwing knife free. With his other hand he reached into his left belt pouch and removed a small glass bottle, half full of a gummy blue liquid. He examined the vial with distaste. Rolan had done not a little killing in his lifetime, but he did not approve of poisons. ... Generally, he felt that poison usage was the way of fools and cowards, and was better left to the assassins[.] Time, however, was now in short supply and Rolan was outnumbered. Hobgoblins and their kin were also not worth the time spent in debating moralities.



—Rolan gives in to expediency and decides to use poison in “Honor Among Thieves,” by Roger Moore

EXAMPLE FANTASY IMMUNITIES

Cost	Poison
3	Animal Poisons (other than serpent and spider poisons)
2	Deep Elf Poisons
2	Orcish Poisons
3	Plant Poisons of the Eastern Realms
3	Plant Poisons of the Western Realms
3	Serpent Poisons
2	Poisons of the Silverleaf Guild
3	Spider Poisons
2	Tornathian Ingested Poisons
2	Toxins of Thûn
3	Turakian Poisons

MAKING WEAPONS

Players often like to create special weapons for their PCs, and some GMs want to expand the weapon lists, build enchanted weapons to give PCs, and the like. The basic rules for this are on 6E2 198-206. This section includes some expanded and optional rules for building weapons using the *HERO System* rules.

BALANCING WEAPONS AND ARMOR

When creating weapons and/or deciding what weapons PCs can take in the campaign, the GM should consider the balance between “offense” and “defense,” along with related issues like how fast he wants combats to run.

Unless you want combats to end quickly, with lots of wounds delivered in just a few Phases, some parity should exist between the average DCs of damage done by weapons (including bonuses obtained via the Adding Damage rules) and the defense provided by armor. An attack that does roughly average damage should inflict a slight wound, or even no wound, on a character with average defenses. For example, if the average Resistant Defense in the game is 5 (based on characters wearing mostly leather and chain armors), then the average weapon should probably do about 5-7 DCs of damage. That means an average of about 5-7 BODY damage per attack from a Killing Damage weapon, or 0-2 points of BODY actually inflicted on the average target.

If you prefer a quicker game, restrict the types of armor available, or boost the damage of weapons. If the average PD/ED is 5, but the average weapon does 7-9 DCs, the average Killing Damage hit inflicts 2-4 BODY, with the potential to do significantly more. That brings fights to an end much more quickly. On the other hand, if you want to favor defense over offense, decrease the damage weapons do, or make heavier armors (chain and plate, or magical enhancements of lesser armors) more readily available.

DIFFERENT BLADES

In a Fantasy setting, it's possible for races or cultures to develop their own unique versions or variants of the standard weapons described in this section. Most of these “different” weapons are simply varieties of standard weapons with spiky bits for added coolness. There are some principles to keep in mind, however. One is that size matters — a race uses weapons appropriate to its members' average size and strength (see 6E2 203). Anatomy also factors in. Long-limbed races go for swinging weapons like axes and broadswords; short-limbed species may prefer thrusting weapons. It's also worth considering the anatomy of what the race usually fights. Races with natural body armor may develop armor-piercing hand weapons like rapiers and daggers, or whips and garrotes to entangle and strangle.

COMBAT VALUE AND RANGE MODIFIERS

Most weapons do not provide any sort of bonus to, or impose a penalty on, the wielder's OCV or Range Modifier. However, some weapons allow for great flexibility of use or striking power (reflected by an OCV bonus), or have greater than normal accuracy over range (reflected by a bonus that counteracts Range Modifier penalties). On the other hand, some weapons are awkward to use, or not as accurate as normal, leading to OCV and RMod penalties.

Fantasy weapons that provide a bonus to OCV rarely, if ever, have more than a +1 OCV bonus. OCV bonuses are bought as 2-point Combat Skill Levels with the Limitations *OAF*, *Required Hands*, and *Real Weapon*. OCV penalties are a minor Side Effect (automatically occurs; -½) for the weapon.

Fantasy weapons that provide a bonus to RMod rarely, if ever, have more than a +2 RMod bonus. You can build this bonus as 1-point Penalty Skill Levels versus the Range Group with the *Focus* and *Required Hands* Limitations.

OCV and RMod penalties are defined as a *Side Effect* Limitation on the weapon. This is a minor or trivial effect worth a base of -¼, doubled because it automatically occurs when anyone uses the weapon, for a total of -½. This same value applies until the total penalties on a weapon reach the 30 Active Point level (calculate the cost using negative Combat Skill Levels and Penalty Skill Levels) — something that's highly unlikely to ever occur.

Gamemasters should be wary of building Fantasy weapons with too many OCV or RMod bonuses, for several reasons. First, they're not appropriate if you want to stress even the slightest amount of “realism.” If one weapon were inherently much more accurate than any other, everyone would have long ago adopted it and abandoned all others — and history shows that never happened. Second, too many positive modifiers can unbalance the game. If characters can hit their foes too easily, combat loses a lot of its suspense and becomes a simple bloodbath, with the outcome determined mainly by who attacks first.

Similarly, don't impose too many penalties on weapons — if a weapon is too badly hindered, no one wants to use it. While fairly heavy RMod penalties are appropriate for some weapons (like early firearms), in most cases you should keep the OCV penalties at no more than -1, and the RMod penalties at no more than -4.

3

“I would have thee make a sword, a sword that will be mightier and better shapen than any sword in the world. Thou canst do this, Regin, for thou art accounted the best swordsmith amongst men.”

—Sigurd asks Regin to make him a sword in *The Children Of Odin*, by Padraic Colum



DAMAGE

There's no specific formula for establishing the Damage Class rating for a weapon. Some of the factors that affect the calculation include: size of the striking part of the weapon; the momentum the wielder can develop while delivering a blow; speed of use; and dramatic interpretation of the weapon's effects. The lists in this book attempt to reasonably balance all these factors, but some GMs may prefer different approaches. (See also the text box on 6E2 200.) Some possibilities include:

REALISTIC DAMAGE

Some GMs may want more "realistic" weapon damage numbers. Since there's no defined, objective way to measure the cutting, smashing, and piercing effects of Fantasy weapons, any attempt to alter the tables for pure "realism" is likely to prove frustrating and ultimately fruitless. If you want "realistic" weapons damage, the best way to achieve this is to do a lot of research on the subject yourself, then come up with a set of weapon write-ups that suit your own informed opinions and beliefs on the subject. The Bibliography lists many good books you can start with.

EQUAL DAMAGE

Gamemasters who are concerned about characters choosing weapons based solely on their perceived game benefits can eliminate the problem by making all weapons virtually the same in most respects. For example, perhaps every weapon, regardless of size or configuration, does 1d6 Killing Damage (or 3d6 Normal Damage) and has a STR Minimum of 10. Or, perhaps the GM groups weapons into three size categories — Light (STR Min 8), Average (STR Min 13), and Heavy (STR Min 18) — with all weapons in each

category doing 1d6+1, 1½d6, and 2d6 Killing Damage, respectively (or the equivalent amount of Normal Damage).

The rationale behind this approach is simple: it's just as easy for a character to die when stabbed to death with a dagger as it is when he's jabbed with a spear or slashed in two by a greatsword. Fantasy roleplaying games tend to assume that the larger the weapon, the bigger the wound it inflicts and thus the greater chance of death. While there's some logic to that, the fact remains that a small dagger wound can kill a man as quickly and easily as a massive sword-thrust. What really matters is *the skill with which the character wields the weapon*, not its size or configuration.

Under this system, characters who want to inflict more than the weapon's base damage have several options. First, there's STR; the more powerful a character's muscles, the more powerful the blows he can deliver. Second, characters can buy Skills like *Martial Arts* (to create a weapon-based style, like *Swordfighting*) or Talents like *Deadly Blow* and *Weaponmaster*, or construct similar abilities of his own. These abilities reflect a character's weapon skills with a damage bonus. Third, they can take other abilities that represent their skill with weapons. For example, a few Targeting Skill Levels makes a seemingly puny dagger-wielding rogue deadly dangerous — because he can target the Vitals or Head with ease.

See the accompanying text box for one possible weapons system using equal damage, including an explanation of the balancing choices made where variations occur. Many other such weapons systems are possible; it all depends on what the GM wants to emphasize in his campaign's HTH Combat and his own personal preferences about the way melee combat should work.

OPTIONAL EQUAL DAMAGE HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	OCV	Damage	STUNx	STR Min	Length	Notes
Axes						
Axe, Battle	+1	1½d6	+0	13	M	1½H
Axe, Great	+0	2d6	+1	18	M	2H
Axe, Hand (Hatchet)	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	S	Can Be Thrown
Axe, Small	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	M	
Hammers And Maces						
Hammer, War	+1	1½d6	+0	13	M	1½H
Mace	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	M	
Mace, Great	+0	2d6	+1	18	M	2H
Clubs						
Club	+0	4d6 N	—	8	M	
Club, Great	+0	6d6 N	—	18	M	2H
Club, War	+0	5d6 N	—	13	M	1½H
Swords And Knives						
Dagger/Dirk	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	S	Can Be Thrown
Falchion	+0	1½d6	+0	13	M	
Rapier	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	M	
Sword, Bastard	+1	1½d6	+0	13	M	1½H
Sword, Broad/Long	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	M	
Sword, Great	+0	2d6	+1	18	M	2H
Sword, Short	+0	1d6+1	+0	8	M	
Polearms						
Halberd	+0	2d6	+0	18	L	2H, Set, Unhorse
Javelin	+0	1d6	+0	10	L	Can Be Thrown
Spear, Medium	+0	1½d6	+0	13	L	1½H, Set, Can Be Thrown
Spear, Short	+0	1d6	+0	10	L	Set, Can Be Thrown
Unusual Melee Weapons						
Lance	+0	1½d6	+0	13 †	EL	Only On Horseback
Morningstar	-1	1½d6	+0	13	M	Flail
Quarterstaff	+0	4d6 N	—	8	M	2H, +1 DCV

3

This system of weapons damage is based on the default premise that all weapons are organized into three size categories: Light (STR Min 8), Average (STR Min 13), and Heavy (STR Min 18). All weapons in each category do 1d6+1, 1½d6, and 2d6 Killing Damage, respectively (or the equivalent amount of Normal Damage). That way a character with 18-20 STR inflicts the exact same damage with all weapons.

However, once that basic pattern is set down, various weapons are adjusted slightly to take into account their special advantages or drawbacks. For instance, weapons that provide more reach, can be thrown, or allow the user to perform special Maneuvers or attacks may do slightly less damage or have slightly higher STR Minima to compensate.

For example, look at the Light weapons. The Hand Axe and Small Axe are virtually identical 1H weapons, except that the former is Small and can be thrown, and the latter is Medium (+1m Reach). These are regarded as being roughly equivalent choices, so both do 1d6+1 damage with an 8 STR Minimum. The Mace, Club, Dagger/Dirk, Rapier, Broad/Long Sword, and Short Sword all fit into this same category; most are similar to the Small Axe, with the Dagger/Dirk being like the Hand Axe.

On the other hand, the Javelin and Short Spear do 1d6+1, but they're Long weapons and can be thrown — two significant advantages compared to the "typical" Light weapon. To balance that out a bit, their damage is reduced to 1d6 and STR Minimum increased to 10. The Quarterstaff is a typical Light weapon but requires two hands (a drawback compared to 1H Light weapons, which allow their users to also use a shield). To compensate,

the Quarterstaff provides its wielder with +1 DCV, representing the ease of blocking attacks with the versatile weapon.

In the Average weapon category, the default is 1½d6 damage, 1H use, and Medium length. Weapons that deviate from that default in good or bad ways are adjusted unless their drawbacks and advantages balance out. The Battle Axe, War Hammer, and Bastard Sword all require 1½H use, so they get +1 OCV in exchange. The Medium Spear is Long, can be thrown, and can be used to perform the Set Versus Charge maneuver, making it a better than average Medium weapon. To compensate, it's changed to a 1½H weapon; if the GM doesn't think that's enough, he could impose a -1 OCV penalty as well. The Lance is even longer — Extra Long — but it can only be used on horseback (and at full effectiveness only in certain situations), and thus is considered reasonably balanced as-is. The Morningstar is a Medium weapon but can perform the Flail maneuver; to compensate it's given a -1 OCV penalty.

The Heavy weapons — the Great Axe, Great Mace, Great Sword, and Halberd — are all 2H weapons, which poses a problem because in a system where the damage is all the same, sword-and-shield or two-weapon fighting styles are better than using a single two-handed weapon. To compensate, the first three all get a +1 STUN Multiplier. (For purposes of this weapon system, this Advantage doesn't affect the rate at which STR adds damage to the weapon.) However, the Halberd is Long and can perform the *Set Versus Charge* and *Unhorse* Combat Maneuvers, which are considered to balance out its two-handedness.

BASHING, SLASHING, AND PIERCING DAMAGE

To add a little variety to the weapons chart, some GMs like to group weapons into three categories, based on the way they inflict damage: Bashing; Slashing; and Piercing.

Bashing weapons inflict damage by crushing and mashing flesh and bone with a more or less blunt surface. They include hammers, maces, and clubs.

Slashing weapons inflict damage by slicing, chopping, or cutting through the target's body with a sharp edge. Many swords and daggers (particularly curved-bladed ones) are designed to do Slashing damage, as are axes.

Piercing weapons inflict injury by piercing and penetrating the target's body with a sharp point. Arrows, picks, and spears do damage this way, as do swords and daggers when used to thrust rather than cut.

It's possible for some types of weapons to do more than one type of damage. Many swords can both Slash and Pierce, for example, and some battle axes and war hammers have a sharp spike on the back side that lets them do Piercing damage (though perhaps less than their full DCs with Slashing and Bashing damage, respectively).

To make these classes of damage meaningful, the GM needs to distinguish between them in some way. Here are some suggestions:

- Bashing damage weapons: weapon automatically has +1 STUN Multiplier (or an additional +1) if the wielder succeeds with a STR (or DEX) Roll when he attacks; leather and plate armors only provide half PD against Bashing weapons
- Slashing damage weapons: weapon gains +1 DC (which counts as base damage) against targets with no Resistant Defense (or when it hits a Hit Location with no Resistant Defense) if the wielder succeeds with a STR (or DEX) Roll when he attacks; leather armors only provide half PD against Slashing weapons
- Piercing damage weapons: weapon is automatically Armor Piercing if the wielder succeeds with a STR (or DEX) Roll when he attacks (if weapon is already Armor Piercing, it becomes double AP); chainmail and like armors only provide half PD against Piercing weapons

Similarly, characters can buy some forms of defense as more effective against one or two types of damage. Some of the undead creatures in *The HERO System Bestiary* have greater resistance to certain categories of damage, for example. A defense that only protects against two types of damage generally gets a -½ Limitation; a defense that only protects against one type of damage generally gets a -1 Limitation.

STUN MULTIPLIER

Killing Damage weapons have a STUN Multiplier. Most use the standard STUN Multiplier — ½d6 — which is indicated in the weapons tables as “+0” (meaning no modification). However, a few take the *Increased STUN Multiplier* Advantage and add +1 to the STUN Multiplier. This usually represents a very heavy, solid weapon, or one that strikes with a particularly forceful impact. Gamemasters should be wary of adding more than a +1, or at most +2, STUN Multiplier to a weapon. A weapon can take the *Decreased STUN Multiplier* Limitation.

STRENGTH MINIMUM

The STR Minimum defines the amount of STR required to wield a weapon effectively, as defined by the rules on 6E2 199-200. Most Ranged weapons, and even a few HTH weapons, also apply the *STR Minimum Cannot Add/Subtract Damage* additional Complication, signifying that the nature, construction, or use of the weapon prevents wielders from doing any extra damage because of high STR.

Setting the STR Minimum on a weapon is an art more than it is a science, requiring careful thought and an awareness on the GM's part of how he wants to simulate various weapons. While common sense and an appreciation for game balance dictate that high-damage weapons generally shouldn't have low STR Minima, and low-damage ones generally shouldn't have high STR Minima, even that guideline doesn't always apply. There's no one particular factor that defines what a weapon's STR Minimum is or should be. Besides the considerations discussed in the text box on 6E2 200, some of the things you should think about when setting a STR Minimum include:

WEIGHT AND CONFIGURATION

The first thing most gamers think about when it comes to establishing a STR Minimum is a weapon's weight. Most medieval weapons weighed roughly two to five pounds (approximately 1 to 2.3 kg) (some were lighter, some heavier, of course). That's enough to provide significant striking power, but not enough to tire the wielder out too quickly. After all, some battles lasted for hours, so a warrior had to keep swinging his weapon again and again, and if it were too heavy, he'd soon lack the strength to do that!

However, while a weapon's weight should definitely influence its STR Minimum, it's far from the only consideration. The weapon's size, shape, and materials — its configuration, in other words — are also important. A weapon with its center of mass on one end (such as with most hammers, maces, and battle axes) is often harder to hold up and wield than one that distributes its mass more evenly throughout (such as some swords and spears). An oddly-configured weapon may not actually weigh more than an evenly-configured weapon... but it often *feels* like it does.





GAME BALANCE

Since the STR Minimum rules are part of a game system, you should keep game balance in mind when using them. If you set the STR Minimum too low on a high-damage weapon, it becomes too attractive to power-gamer type players, and they'll have their characters use that weapon regardless of whether that makes sense (common or dramatic). On the other hand, if you set the STR Minimum on a weapon too high, it may discourage players from having their characters use that weapon even when it would make sense for the character to do so.

The Light/Medium/Heavy system described above under "Equal Damage" provides an example of a game balance-influenced system of STR Minima. The STR Minima for the different types of weapons are set so that a character tends to do the same amount of damage with a weapon no matter what his STR. For example, a STR 18 character does 2d6 Killing Damage with any weapon. Thus, while fair in a game balance sense, this system (and others like it) also tends to be bland.

Game balance should *never* be the sole consideration for establishing a STR Minimum. It's not possible to mathematically model reality that precisely, and it defies common sense and one's sense of "realism" to give a light-weight weapon a high STR Minimum solely to balance it against other weapons. Setting STR Minima based on some sort of "formula" (such as some percentage of the Active Points in the weapon) is also likely to result in ridiculous outcomes such as some weapons with such high STR Minima that almost no character can wield them properly. Game balance should guide the STR Minimum decision, but never dictate it.

STANDARD MODIFIERS

All weapons are built with several Power Modifiers.

REDUCED ENDURANCE

All weapons without Charges take the Advantage *Reduced Endurance* (0 END), because the END to wield them depends on the character's STR, not on the Active Points in the Attack Power(s) used to build the weapon. However, the GM can change this if he wants to make weapons cost more or less END to wield.

To make a weapon cost more END to wield, take Reduced Endurance only at the half END (+¼) level, or don't apply it at all. To wield a weapon like this, the character has to pay *both* the END for the STR to wield it and the END for the Power(s) used to build it. This would be appropriate for some large, heavy, and/or awkward weapons, such as a troll's maul (when wielded by a human).

To make a weapon cost less END to wield, you can build into the weapon a naked *Reduced Endurance* Advantage for the STR used to wield it. For example: Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) for up to 25 STR (6 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 3 points) (plus Required Hands, if appropriate). A weapon like this only costs half as much STR-based END to wield, as long as the character uses no more than 25 STR with it. Any STR used over 25 would cost END at the standard rate (1 END per 5 STR, in a Heroic campaign). A weapon could even be bought to cost 0 END to wield, though that could cause significant game balance problems.

REAL WEAPON

Weapons require constant maintenance, or else they lose their effectiveness. Characters must clean and sharpen their swords and knives, lest they become too dull and rusty to cut through anything harder than butter; and they must keep bowstaves and bowstrings in good working order. Similarly, some weapons just can't damage some things (or only damage with difficulty) — for example, it's not normally possible to cut through a brick wall with a knife. The *Real Weapon* (-¼) Limitation reflects these sometimes unpleasant realities. Here are some guidelines to help GMs adjudicate the effects of the Limitation in addition to the ones on 6E2 200-01.

First, a character must devote time to maintaining his weapons, or else they'll become fouled, rusty, and hard to use. Any time a character uses a weapon in battle, he must spend at least 1 Minute cleaning the weapon. He can wait until the end of the day and clean it once after multiple uses, but this may take longer. For every two days that pass without a character cleaning his weapon, either (a) reduce its OCV by 1; or (b) reduce the damage it inflicts by 1 point. If the weapon ever reaches -10 OCV, or has so many damage penalties it could never inflict damage, it falls apart or is otherwise useless, and cannot be repaired. Repairing lesser OCV or damage penalties requires an appropriate Weaponsmith roll and at least 5 Minutes per -1.

Second, edged weapons (such as axes and swords) become dull over time if not sharpened. For each full hour of combat, the weapon does -1 point of damage (thus, -1 after one full hour, -2 after two full hours, and so forth). The GM should interpret what constitutes "an hour" of combat in a narrative/dramatic sense; it doesn't literally mean 3,600 Phases in which a character strikes a blow with the weapon. Returning the weapon to fighting sharpness requires the use of a whetstone (or like sharpening device) and 1 Minute per full hour of use.

Third, as noted above, some weapons just can't accomplish some tasks. "Cutting" through a stone wall or the iron bars of a jail cell with a dagger or sword is pretty much impossible in a "realistic" sense, for example, regardless of what the *HERO System* rules say. Hours of picking at the mortar or sawing at the bars might do the trick, assuming a character had the time and could repeatedly re-sharpen his weapon, but few adventures allow for such activity. As a general guideline, when characters use weapons to attack inanimate objects like statues, compare the weapon's Damage Classes to the PD of the object. If the DCs are less than the PD, the weapon cannot inflict significant damage on the object — at most, perhaps 1 BODY damage per full Turn of hacking at it. If the DCs equal the PD, the weapon can inflict at most 1 BODY per Phase with a successful attack (roll the damage normally, and reduce it to 1 BODY if the weapon does more than that). If the DCs exceed the PD, the weapon can damage the object normally.

At the GM's option, If a character uses a weapon to strike a firm blow against a hard, unyielding

object — such as a stone wall, or the iron bars of a jail cell — he may damage his weapon. If the object's PD exceeds the weapon's DCs, the weapon takes 1 BODY damage. When it takes all its BODY in damage, it breaks, snaps, cracks, or otherwise becomes useless until repaired.

Real Weapon may also affect how much damage a character can add to a weapon; see 6E2 201.

Gamemasters should also take the shape/configuration of both weapons and objects into account when characters use them to attack inanimate objects. Chopping through a wooden door with an axe is easy, given their comparative shapes; slashing through one with a sword is more difficult. See page 419 for more information.

ADVANCED WEAPON CREATION RULES AND GUIDELINES

Once you have the basics of a weapon in place, you can think about adding to or improving it.

ADVANTAGES

One common way to improve a weapon, or differentiate it from similar weapons, is to apply an Advantage to it. Most Advantages aren't appropriate for weapons, but some of the ones that are include:

Armor Piercing, Penetrating: Both of these Advantages represent weapons that have an improved ability to penetrate the target's armor. Typically this indicates that the weapon has an especially sharp edge or point, as with stilettos, awl pikes, and armor piercing arrows. However, it can also indicate that the weapon smashes the target with such force that a substantial portion of the impact effects the target even though the weapon doesn't actually cut through or puncture armor. Many enchanted blades also take one of these Advantages to represent their ability to pierce mundane armor with ease.

Increased Maximum Range: Ranged weapons that have the ability to travel further than indicated by the standard *HERO System* rules take this Advantage. In some cases it's bought as a naked Advantage for the weapon with Limitations like *Concentration* or *Extra Time*, reflecting the effort needed to prepare and fire the weapon to attain the best range possible.

Increased STUN Multiplier: Another way to represent weapons that have a particularly forceful impact is to give them an Increased STUN Multiplier. See above for more information.

Indirect: Flexible weapons, such as flails and morningstars, take Indirect at the +¼ level to simulate their ability to perform the Flail Maneuver (page 193). Characters designing other weapons that incorporate chains or ropes may want to apply it as well.

Range Based On STR: The Advantage form of this Power Modifier simulates HTH Combat weapons characters can easily throw if necessary — spears, daggers, small axes, and the like.



LIMITATIONS

One Limitation — Focus — is required for weapons, which are objects and thus can be taken from their owners. Many other Limitations aren't appropriate for weapons, but a few crop up frequently. In addition to Charges for Ranged weapons, and Required Hands, they include:

Activation Roll: A weapon with this Limitation is unreliable — it doesn't always work. Early firearms take it; so should any other relatively complicated weapon and weapons based on new technologies that haven't yet been perfected.

Concentration: This represents a weapon that requires the character to focus on using it to the exclusion of other actions, such as dodging or moving around. It's used for most Ranged weapons.

Extra Time: Many Fantasy-era Ranged weapons take time to prepare. The user must prepare them, load them, carefully aim them, and then finally fire. Extra Time simulates this perfectly; it's often grouped with Concentration.

Increased Endurance Cost: A heavy or awkward weapon might take this Limitation to increase the END cost the character must pay when using STR to wield the weapon. This is allowed even though the weapon also takes Reduced Endurance.

Limited Range: The standard *HERO System* rules give some Ranged weapons too much range. If so, you can apply this Limitation to decrease a weapon's range back to reasonable levels.

Mounted Limitations: Being on horseback (or other types of mounts, in High Fantasy games) affects the use of some weapons. A few weapons, such as lances, only work when the wielder is mounted (a $-1/2$ Limitation). On the other hand, characters cannot use many weapons, such as longbows, while on horseback (a $-1/4$ Limitation). Some weapons, like crossbows, can't be drawn, prepared, or loaded by a character who's mounted, but can be fired from horseback if already loaded; they don't take a Limitation because of this.

Reduced Penetration: Some weapon designers use this Limitation to represent a weapon with multiple tines or striking areas that hit the target simultaneously, such as tridents and military forks. It's not required, but helps to differentiate such weapons from spears and the like.

Side Effects: In addition to the Side Effect of OCV or RMod penalties (see above), a weapon might inflict other penalties on the user. For example, a heavy, awkward weapon might also decrease the wielder's DCV by 1-2 — representing the fact that he can't dodge or move quickly while holding it, or bring it into position quickly enough to parry many attacks. If the weapon already has an OCV and/or RMod penalty Side Effect, the GM must decide whether to fold other Side Effects into its $-1/2$ value or to apply a second Side Effect with its own value.

UNUSUAL MATERIALS

Except for a few all-wooden weapons (like clubs), most weapons are made at least partly of metal. Even if they have wooden hafts, the striking part of the weapon — the blade, point, or head — is metal. In most Fantasy settings, that metal is steel.

However, some settings — such as games taking place during the Bronze Age, or in bizarre worlds like M.A.R. Barker's *Tékumel*, where iron and steel are extremely rare — that's not necessarily the case. Even in worlds that have steel, not everyone may make weapons out of it. Some people may lack Iron Age technology, not have a supply of iron and charcoal to turn into steel, or have some other reasons (religious restrictions, magic, personal comfort) for preferring non-steel weapons.

Additionally, many Fantasy settings feature unusual, exotic, and even mystical metals and substances that characters can craft weapons with. The *mithril* of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth is perhaps the best known example; other possibilities include star-iron (meteoric iron), dwarven steel, glasses and crystals with the strength of metal, and so on.

The substance used to make a weapon does not affect the damage it does, but may alter its PD/ED. This generally only matters if you're using the weapon breakage rules (see page 215), but may also be a part of the *Real Weapon* Limitation. For example, some substances, even when characters can forge them into workable weapons, may be so soft that they dull easily (-1 point of damage per 10 minutes instead of per hour). Or, the GM may reduce the weapon's DCs for purposes of determining what substances it can cut through when the character uses it to try to hack through a wall, door, or the like.

The accompanying table provides suggested PD/ED values for substances other than steel. A steel weapon has PD/ED 5 (for Fantasy Hero weapon purposes, do not use the Focus rule that determines PD/ED as Active Points divided by 5). Other substances' PD/ED is represented as an increase or decrease of that PD/ED — for example, "+1 PD/ED" means to add 1 to 5, for a total of PD/ED 6. In game terms, a weapon with greater PD/ED has the *Durable* (+0) modifier to Focus, while one with less PD/ED has a -0 version of the *Fragile* modifier. Note that these rules assume that it's steel-made striking part of the weapon that's being replaced; adding, say, bronze to the wooden haft of a weapon with a steel head will probably *strengthen* that weapon (at least in some situations), not make it worse, since bronze is tougher than wood.

Example: A war hammer has a steel head, giving it PD/ED 5. If it were made of ordinary iron, it would have -1 PD, or 4.

A dagger made of steel has PD/ED 5. One made of elven-silver (+1 PD) has PD/ED 6 instead, while a Greek hoplite's bronze (-2 PD/ED) dagger has only PD/ED 3.-

HIGH- AND POOR-QUALITY WEAPONS

Not every blade that comes out of the weapon-smith's forge is an average weapon. Some are made by master craftsmen with great skill and precision, turning them into weapons far better than normal ones. Others are legendary blades with qualities befitting a hero's weapon. But some are badly made, or have suffered such wear and ill-use that they're no longer as good as they once were.

In game terms, characters can have *fine* (also called "masterwork") and *poor* weapons. The weapons listed in the tables earlier in this chapter are "average" versions — they have the same Damage Classes, OCV modifiers, and STR Minima for typical weapons of their type. But PCs are heroes, and sometimes an "average" weapon isn't enough for an above-average PC... or his greatest enemy!

At the GM's option, characters can use the following rules and guidelines to create exceptional weapons, or to represent below-average versions of weapons. Gamemasters are, of course, free to change the Character Point costs of these improvements (or drawbacks) to suit their campaigns, or even to give them to characters' weapons for free to represent events that occur during game play. Additionally, where the rules provide Character Point totals for unusual abilities (such as the "reroll" ability) that aren't built using the standard *HERO System* rules, *those abilities apply only to weapons*. Characters may *not* buy them as personal abilities.

These abilities do *not* represent enchantment or magical enhancement, but rather improved quality of materials, crafting, or the like. Additionally, these abilities sometimes represent "legendary" attributes possessed by famous or noteworthy weapons. They're a great way to distinguish a special or wondrous weapon from typical weapons without having to resort to the catch-all explanation of "magic." But of course, they can also represent enchantments (minor or otherwise) placed on a weapon if you want them to.

BUYING FINE AND POOR WEAPONS

When designing a fine or poor weapon, you should use the Character Point costs listed below to re-calculate the overall Active and Real Point costs of the weapon. Since Fantasy Hero characters don't pay Character Points for their weapons, making a weapon "fine" or "poor" generally only affects the weapon's monetary cost. The Active and Real Point costs usually just help the GM evaluate whether the weapon is balanced for the campaign. However, to prevent fine weapons from becoming too common in the game, the GM may require characters to pay Character Points for them, using one of two methods:

- the cost of improvements themselves, calculated as (improved weapon's Real Point cost) - (normal weapon's Real Point cost), with some predefined minimum cost (such as 3 Character Points)
- a flat cost, such as 5 Character Points

In either case, if the character loses the weapon, he permanently loses the points spent on it... though the GM may allow him to go on a quest to regain the weapon, reforge it, or have another one made, and spend the "lost" points on that.

Example: *Wendell is running a Fantasy Hero game and wants to create a special (but not magical) longsword to place in a dragon's treasure-hoard — an important reward for the PCs after a long and grueling quest! Furthermore, he wants to use the sword as inspiration for another adventure or two. So he decides to create Marclave, a famous blade once wielded by the hero Argandus Morgenstern. The inscription on the blade — "Two Hands, One Heart" — refers to an ancient prophecy the PCs must learn about, and which will involve them in another quest. To make Marclave special, Wendell decides it has +1 OCV, that it does 1½d6 damage instead of the normal 1d6+1 of a longsword, and that its heroic qualities inspire the wielder, allowing him to strike more quickly than normal. A normal longsword costs 31 Active Points, 12 Real Points; here's what Marclave costs:*

HKA 1½d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (37 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), STR Minimum (13; -½) (total cost: 13 points) plus Reach +1m (1 Active Point; total cost 1 point) plus +1 OCV (5 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼) (total cost: 2 points) plus +1 Lightning Reflexes with Marclave (1 Active Point); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼) (total cost: 1 point). Total cost: 44 Active Points; 17 Real Points.

Since a normal longsword costs 12 points, Marclave would cost (17-12) 5 Character Points if a character built it for himself, or if Wendell made characters pay for all fine weapons to maintain game balance. However, since Wendell's giving the weapon out as treasure, he won't charge the lucky character any points at all.

FINE WEAPONS

Fine weapons may have one or more of the following abilities, or any other the GM sees fit to allow. The GM should evaluate any improvements a character wants to apply to a weapon carefully, to ensure they're balanced for the campaign.

Accurate: The weapon may grant a +1 OCV bonus to the wielder (or, rarely, +2 or more), or for a Ranged weapon, bonuses to counteract the Range Modifier. See page 195.

Advantaged: The weapon is so potent that it has some Advantage most weapons of its type lack — such as Armor Piercing or Penetrating, or even Indirect (allowing it to perform the Flail Maneuver as a way of simulating its ability to slip past a target's shield, even if it's not a flexible weapon).



Material	PD/ED
Steel	PD/ED 5
Bronze	-1
Copper	-2
Coral (magical)	-2
Crystal (magical)	+0
Dwarven steel	+2
Elven-silver	+1
Glass (magical)	-1
Horn	-2
Iron	-1
Ivory	-3
Leather (magical)	-2
Stone	-1
Wood (magical)	-1
Wood (normal)	-2

"Magical" refers to ordinary substances created or augmented by mystical or alchemical processes that make them strong enough to hold an edge and stand up to the wear and tear of being used as a weapon. Ordinary glass, crystal, leather, and the like are generally useless for making feasible weapons.

Biting: Some weapons do more damage than normal. Typically, a fine weapon gets a +1 point of damage bonus (this costs 5 Character Points for a Killing Damage weapon, 2 Character Points for a Normal Damage weapon). Some truly exceptional weapons may get an entire +1 DC bonus (recalculate the weapon's overall cost accordingly).

Alternately, some truly wondrous weapons may allow a character to reroll poor damage rolls. The character may reroll all results of "1" that come up on the damage dice. That means he always does at least 2 BODY per die when he rolls damage. This costs 20 Character Points.

Heroic Strike: A few weapons have such great accuracy that the wielder can reroll any Attack Roll made with them that misses by only 1. This costs 10 Character Points.

Alternately, some weapons may allow a character to reroll any one failed Attack Roll per day, no matter how much it missed by. This costs 3 Character Points.

Marvelously Light I: The weapon costs the wielder less END for the STR used to wield it. See page 206 regarding the Character Point cost for this ability.

Marvelously Light II: The weapon somehow doesn't seem to weigh as much as ordinary weapons — perhaps it inspires strength in the wielder, or it's made of some unknown metal. This lets a character strike harder with it, thus inflicting more damage in many cases. You can buy this by decreasing the weapon's STR Minimum.

Noble Appearance: The blade inspires loyalty and bravery in the wielder's allies, fear and dread in his foes. You can buy this as +5 PRE (sometimes more) (5 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), Only For Making Presence Attacks While The Weapon Is Drawn (-1½) (total cost: 1 point).

Silvered: The weapon's striking surfaces are covered with silver so it can affect lycanthropes and similar creatures. This does not cost Character Points, but should cost a lot of money in-game.

Stunning Blow: Some Killing Damage weapons strike with a mightier impact, thus doing more STUN damage. Buy this as a +1 (or greater) Increased STUN Multiplier (+¼ Advantage per +1).

Sturdy: The weapon is harder to break or damage. It has +1 (or more) PD/ED or BODY, and perhaps some Power Defense to resist Dispel and Drains. Each +1 PD/+1 ED costs 3 Character Points, each +1 BODY costs 1 Character Point; and each point of Power Defense costs 1 Character Point.

Swift-Striking: The weapon is so light and easily-handled that it lets the character attack more swiftly. This is bought as Lightning Reflexes for this one attack; most weapons grant no more than a +3 DEX bonus.

Throwable: The weapon is balanced for throwing (even if it's not normally a hurled weapon). You can buy this as Penalty Skill Levels to cancel balance and/or aerodynamicity penalties.

Unreal Weapon: The weapon doesn't have the *Real Weapon* Limitation, meaning it always stays sharp, clean, and ready for action without any effort on the wielder's part. It may also, in the GM's discretion, cut through walls and doors more easily than a normal blade.

Other Improvements: Some other possible improvements, that cost no Character Points but help to make a blade distinctive, include:

- **Ornamentation:** gilding or silvering; gems in the pommel, hilt, or along the length, carved designs or incised runes on the blade; and so forth
- **Unwavering:** when stuck in the ground, a tree, or the like, the blade doesn't wobble or shake; it's as still as a mountain
- **Unrustable:** regardless of how much moisture it's exposed to, the weapon never rusts (magical rusting attacks can still affect it, though)
- **Distinctive ring:** when drawn from the sheath or struck against metal or stone, the weapon emits a distinctive ring or tone if the wielder wants it to

POOR WEAPONS

Poor weapons may have one or more of the following drawbacks (most of which are just the reverse of Fine weapon qualities), or any other the GM sees fit to impose.

Some of these Poor attributes are represented as Side Effects. If the weapon already has an OCV or RMod penalty Side Effect, the GM must decide whether to fold other Side Effects into its -½ value or to apply a second Side Effect with its own value.

Awkward/Heavy: The weapon is unusually heavy, awkward to wield, bulky, or otherwise difficult to handle. You can represent this in one or more of several ways: increase the weapon's STR Minimum; change Reduced Endurance (0 END) to (½ END) (see page 206); apply Increased Endurance Cost to increase the END needed for the STR to wield the weapon (a Side Effect; if not folded into a negative OCV Side Effect, it's a -¼, always occurs, for a total of -½); and/or add the *Bulky* Modifier to its *Focus* Limitation.

Fragile: The weapon is easier to break or damage. It has -1 (or more) PD/ED or BODY than normal. You can represent this with the *Fragile* Modifier to the *Focus* Limitation (worth -0, unless it reduces the weapon to 1 PD/ED, in which case it's worth -¼).

Inaccurate: The weapon is not as accurate as most of its kind. You can simulate this with a Side Effect (see page 191).



Restricted: The weapon is so weak or difficult to use that it has some Limitation most weapons of its type lack — such as Limited Range for a bow, or Activation Roll for a sword (representing that sometimes even an accurate blow does no damage).

Slow-Striking: The weapon is so difficult to wield that it slows down the character's combat reflexes. This is a -1 (or greater) penalty to DEX only for purposes of determining who acts first in a Segment. You can buy this as a Side Effect (if not folded into a negative OCV Side Effect, it's a $-\frac{1}{4}$, always occurs, for a total of $-\frac{1}{2}$).

Weak Strike: The weapon's blows are weak, and thus far less likely to hurt those it strikes. You can simulate this in one or both of two ways: first, decrease the Damage Classes the weapon has; second, apply the *Decreased STUN Multiplier* Limitation.

Other Drawbacks: Some other possible negative qualities, which save no Character Points but still make a blade less enjoyable to wield, include:

- **Poor appearance:** the weapon is rusty or notched; has numerous visible repairs; it looks as badly-made as it is.
- **Ill repute:** The weapon has a poor reputation. Perhaps an evil man once committed foul deeds with it, or it supposedly carries a curse that makes its wielder accidentally slay innocent people, or the like.

USING WEAPONS

Ankush was no fool. Stumbling backward, he found that one of the Guard was thrusting a sword-hilt into his hand. He grasped it gratefully. Then he darted forward, feinting at her head, shifting the stroke to slice into one leather-covered calf. She spun away, her morning-star ripping around so that it arced toward his own skull. He dropped to his knees beneath the stroke. That was the last mistake of his life, for she followed through on the spin of the ball, whirling in a circle and catching him in the face with all the added force of the circular motion.

—Skeara defeats Thurigon's bodyguard in "Thurigon Agonistes," by Ardath Mayhar

After a character has made a weapon, he needs to know how to wield it. Basic weapon-use Skills and rules (Weapon Familiarity, Combat Skill Levels, how to attack, and so forth) are described in detail in 6E1 and 2. This section provides some expanded and optional rules for weapon use. See also the *Combat Modifiers* and *Combat Maneuvers* sections earlier in this chapter.

One benefit to using most weapons is that they extend a character's Reach. See 6E2 201-02 for rules about weapon length.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT WEAPON

He fought... quickly, efficiently, expressionlessly, cleaving the leader's shoulder plate in a stroke that cut through the man from shoulder to stomach in one raking movement which peeled back armour and flesh, rupturing the body so that a great scarlet gash appeared in the black metal and the leader wept as he slowly died[.] Stormbringer let out a great metallic purr of pleasure and Elric directed arm and blade about him, emotionlessly slaying the horsemen as if they were unarmed and chained, so little chance did they have.

—Elric slaughters his foes in *Stormbringer*, by Michael Moorcock

CONCEALING WEAPONS

A character's ability to conceal a weapon on his person (or elsewhere) depends on its size. See 6E2 175-76; the Concealed Objects Table lists the Concealment modifiers for a number of weapons, and the GM can easily come up with others by using them as guidelines.

The first thing to consider about weapons use is: what weapon should my character use? There are several things you should consider when making this decision.

First and foremost, consider the nature of your character and what weapons are most dramatically appropriate for him. Fantasy Hero is a roleplaying game, not a wargame, so choosing a weapon solely for its game benefits — because it does the most damage, for example — often isn't the best approach. Instead, think about your character's experiences in life, his appearance, his Skills and abilities, the type of tasks he performs as a member of an adventuring party, and the role he usually takes in combat. If it “makes sense” for your character to wield a short sword, then he should have a short sword — don't choose the longsword simply because it does more damage, or the morningstar because the character can perform that nifty Flail Maneuver with it. If you're concerned about your character's ability to hold up his end of the battle, buy some abilities to go with the weapon, such as Martial Arts, Weaponmaster, or Targeting Skill Levels.

Think of this approach as similar to planning a novel or movie. When creating a protagonist, the writer of a Fantasy story doesn't sit down and think, “Hmmm, which weapon does the most damage? I'd better take that one!” Instead, he considers what weapon works best *for the story*, looks best for the character visually, and generally seems most appropriate. At least at first, leave the game considerations aside and focus on drama and adventure.

That being said, it's usually appropriate and worthwhile to give *some* consideration to a weapon's good points and bad points as defined by the *HERO System* rules, particularly when two or more weapons seem equally well-suited to your character. Think about whether it might help your character to do a little less damage but avoid a -1 OCV penalty, what sort of Combat Skill Levels the character has, whether the character can use his STR to best effect with a low STR Minimum weapon, whether the character needs a weapon that's lightweight and/or easily concealed, and what sort of Combat Maneuvers the character wants to perform with the weapon.

FIGHTING METHODS

When deciding what weapon to use, you should also consider the four primary methods of fighting with weapons: one weapon; two weapons; weapon and shield; and unarmed. Each has its benefits and drawbacks in *HERO System* terms, and so may influence your choice of weapon.

ONE WEAPON

Lord Rannarsh whipped a gleaming sword from its gold-worked scabbard and rushed in, cutting, thrusting, stabbing. The Mouser gave ground slightly, his slim blade flickering in a defensive counter-attack that was wavering and elusive, yet deadly. He brought Rannarsh's rush to a standstill. His blade moved so quickly that it seemed to weave a net of steel around the man. Then it leaped forward three times in rapid succession. At the first thrust it bent nearly double against a concealed shirt of chain mail. The second thrust pierced the belly. The third transixed the throat. Lord Rannarsh fell to the floor, spitting and gagging, his fingers clawing at his neck. There he died.

—the Gray Mouser slays an enemy in a sword-duel in “The Jewels In The Forest,” by Fritz Leiber

A character who fights with one weapon and no shield usually has several drawbacks to overcome. First, he lacks the protection of a shield, so he's likely to get hurt more. Second, if he loses or breaks his weapon, he may find himself unable to fight effectively. Third, he may have difficulty performing some types of Combat Maneuvers.

On the other hand, using one weapon represents the “pure offense” end of the combat spectrum well — it allows the character to concentrate solely on using that one weapon. He can invest in cheap Combat Skill Levels to improve his accuracy and damage. If it's a two-handed weapon (which it usually is, at least for PCs), he can inflict significant damage with it. If he can do enough damage, and has a high DEX so he usually strikes first, the lack of a shield may not cause him too many problems.

TWO WEAPONS

The Northerner parried Gnarlag's right-hand sword with the brazier and his left-hand sword with the guard of his own weapon, which he managed simultaneously to thrust through the bravo's neck.

—Fafhrd uses an impromptu shield to defeat Gnarlag of the Two Swords in “The Cloud Of Hate,” by Fritz Leiber

Fighting with two weapons includes literally using one weapon in each hand (such as a rapier in the right, and a main-gauche in the left), fighting with a weapon that allows for a flurry of attacks (such as a quarterstaff), and even some forms of weapon-and-shield fighting in which the character uses his shield as much as a bashing weapon as a form of defense.

Fighting with a weapon in each hand has several benefits. First, if the character buys Off-Hand Defense, he gets bonuses to his DCV and to Blocking (see page 184). Second, if the character buys an appropriate ability or Skill — such as Two-Weapon Fighting (and possibly Rapid Attack and Defensive Attack) — he can make more than one attack in a Phase without suffering significant difficulty. (He can, of course, make a Multiple Attack normally, suffering the penalties for doing so.)

However, to get the benefit of using two weapons, the character definitely has to spend some Character Points on related abilities; the *HERO System* has no specific “fight with two weapons” Combat Maneuver that all characters can use for free. And some of those benefits — such as the +1 DCV from Off-Hand Defense — aren’t necessarily as worthwhile as having a shield, or wielding a single large weapon. Two-weapon fighting methods also tend to halve the character’s DCV, take a Full Phase, and/or reduce his OCV, all of which may cause problems. But for some light fighters and rogues, the two-weapon fighting method “fits” perfectly, so they’re willing to spend the points to overcome those problems.

See 6E2 38 for some suggestions about building two-weapon fighting abilities.

WEAPON AND SHIELD

Combat now settled down in earnest, sword and shield against axe and shield.

—having slain their respective horses, Earl Hrorik and Earl Murdoch continue their duel to the death in *King Javan’s Year*, by Katherine Kurtz

For many warriors and other characters, the weapon and shield method of fighting strikes the perfect compromise between offense and defense. It leaves one hand free to wield weapons such as most swords, spears, axes, and maces, while giving the character a higher DCV, a better chance to Block attacks, and even the chance to shield-bash a foe (see page 226). It’s a method well-suited to many different character conceptions.

However, as a compromise, it lacks a little bit on both the offense and defense ends of the spectrum. The character usually doesn’t do quite as much damage as he would with the one- or two-weapon methods (unless he buys abilities to compensate, like CSLs, Martial Arts, or Weaponmaster), and may have difficulty performing some Combat Maneuvers. Furthermore, the extra weight of the shield may cause Encumbrance problems.

UNARMED

A few Fantasy warriors, particularly those from Asian-like cultures, opt to fight without any weapons at all. Instead, they buy an unarmed Martial Arts style and rely on their speed, skill, and agility to keep them safe in combat.

The unarmed method of fighting definitely has a few benefits. Unburdened by weapons and a shield, and usually not by heavy armor either, the character can take full advantage of his DEX, SPD, and movement. Points other characters spend on weapons-oriented abilities he can spend on personal abilities — things that enemies cannot take away from him. He does high STUN damage, which can be particularly effective in Fantasy Hero games.

However, in the long run, the significant disadvantages of unarmed fighting in a world of armed and armored warriors often outweigh the advantages. Without heavy armor, the unarmed warrior is vulnerable to high-damage attacks — and a high DCV can only protect a character for so long (and not at all against Area Of Effect attacks and the like). Unless the character spends a lot of points on Extra Damage classes, he may not have enough dice to inflict significant STUN or BODY damage on his foes. He may also have problems striking unusual foes (dragons, demons, fire elementals, and so on), and suffers a penalty for Blocking armed attacks.

JOUSTING

Perhaps the best-known form of fighting with the lance (a common Long weapon) in medieval Europe wasn’t actually a true “fight” at all — it was a type of military game or competition known as *jousting*. The purposes of jousting were to help a knight practice (and show off) his mounted combat skills and to entertain the onlookers. Most jousting competitions were held as part of tournaments or fairs.

Jousting involved the use of the lance. Early jousts, and even later *jousts à outrance* (“jousts of war”), used regular lances, though sometimes with blunted points. Later jousts, including *jousts à plaisance* (“jousts of peace”), switched to *rebated* lances, which were padded or blunted (often by placing a *coronel*, or crown-shaped iron tip, over the point); this decreased the chance of a serious injury occurring. (In game terms, convert a rebated lance’s damage to the equivalent DCs of Normal Damage.)

The joust itself involved the two competitors charging at each other while wearing full armor. In later jousts, knights wore specially-made armor, reinforced on the left (where the blow was struck), difficult to move in or see out of, and nearly twice as heavy as war armor — and thus suitable only for jousting. In early jousts, nothing defined the field of competition or separated the competitors, often leading to collisions and injury. Later jousts took place in a special jousting ground called the *lists*, and had a rope, wooden fence, or the like — known as a *tilt barrier* — erected down the middle of the course to keep the competitors apart. (From this, jousting was also known as “tilting.”)

The priests had turned their backs upon him; but, as if they had foreseen his every action, two of them wheeled about with the swiftness of tigers, dropping the handles of bone that they carried. One of them struck the knife from Phariom’s hand with a movement that the eye could barely follow in its snaky darting. Then both assailed him, beating him back with terrible flailing blows of their shrouded arms[.]

—Phariom falls afoul of the martial arts skills of the priests of Mordiggian in “The Charnel God,” by Clark Ashton Smith



Suddenly given their heads, the battle chargers bolted, whinnying defiance as heavy hooves pounded down the sun-parched footing of the battleground. Lance tips winked in the sun as they dropped, just before the two engaged, but deft shieldwork deflected both blows, splintering Hrorik’s lance full along its length and spinning Murdoch’s out of his hand.

—Earl Murdoch and Earl Hrorik begin their duel with jousting in *King Javan’s Year*, by Katherine Kurtz

The Mouser made a very small parry in carte so that the thrust of the bravo from the east went past his left side only a hair's breadth. He instantly riposted. His adversary, desperately springing back, parried in turn in carte. Hardly slowing, the tip of the Mouser's long, slim sword dropped under that parry with the delicacy of a princess curtsying and then leaped forward and a little upward, the Mouser making an impossibly long-looking lunge for one so small, and went between the

two scales of the bravo's armored jerkin and between his ribs and through his heart and out his back as if all were angelfood cake.

—the Gray Mouser deals with a foe in “Ill Met In Lankmar,” by Fritz Leiber

As he charged, with the tilt barrier on his left, the knight kept his lance raised. Right before impact, he lowered and couched it, tucking it in his right arm and holding it diagonally across his horse's neck so it could hit the knight charging at him. The knights scored the most points for hitting his opponent in the head, and fewer points for a torso hit; hits on the legs or the horse cost the knight points. Shattering the opponent's lance also won points, so to enhance the drama of the competition knights sometimes used hollow or jointed lances. (In game terms, these have only half the BODY of a normal lance.)

A jousting objective was to score a hit on his opponent, and hopefully so solid a hit that it unhorsed the foe. In a tournament, the loser of a joust was removed from the tournament, and perhaps forced to pay a ransom or surrender his expensive arms and armor. The winner of a tournament received the accolades of his peers, a rich purse from the sponsor of the tournament, and perhaps a kiss from the lady to whom he had pledged himself in courtly love.

In game terms, you can determine the outcome of a joust with normal Attack Rolls. If either contestant scores a hit, roll the Hit Location as a High Shot to determine where he hit. Check to see if the roll would do Knockback; if so, the victim must make a Riding roll at -1 per each 4m of Knockback (or fraction thereof) to maintain his seat; otherwise he falls from the saddle (see page 186 for possible damage).

SPECIAL MANEUVERS FOR WEAPONS

Sometimes all the Fantasy Hero weapons tend to seem a little too similar — each of them does a certain amount of damage in the same way, and there's not much to differentiate them. If you'd like to make the different types of weapons more distinct, consider granting a special ability or maneuver to each one — a “trick” that characters can only take advantage of when wielding that weapon.

Generally, special weapon maneuvers don't cost any Character Points (either for the weapon itself, or the character wielding it); they're just an extra benefit assigned by the GM. The weapon maneuvers listed below are just suggestions; you could easily develop others.

Axes: Thanks to their shape and momentum, axes can penetrate deep into a target's body if swung forcefully enough. When a character performs a Haymaker with an axe, he adds +5 Damage Classes, instead of the usual +4.

Flails: Flails can perform the Flail Maneuver (page 193). (This is built into their cost because characters can do it even in campaigns that don't use special weapon maneuvers.)

Hammers and Maces: Even when they don't actually pierce armor, hammers and maces strike with such power that they can still break bones and inflict other serious injuries. If the wielder's Attack Roll succeeds by 3 or more, these weapons have a Penetrating effect.



Picks: The configuration of a pick allows it to pierce armor with great efficiency, yet still inflict deadly blows. If the wielder's Attack Roll succeeds by 3 or more, he adds damage from STR as if the weapon did not have the *Armor Piercing* Advantage.

Polearms: Polearms have several possible special maneuvers. First, their length gives them advantages other weapons lack. Second, many of them are the only weapons with which characters can perform the optional *Set Versus Charge* and *Unhorse* Combat Maneuvers.

Quarterstaff: A staff is a dangerous weapon because the person wielding it can quickly strike multiple blows, while also having an excellent tool for blocking. If the character makes a DEX Roll as a Half Phase Action, he may do one of two things. First, he can choose to gain +2 to Block (the bonus lasts until his next Phase if not used immediately). Second, he can choose to make two staff attacks against one foe, or one each against two foes who are both engaging him in HTH Combat with Short or Medium weapons. This counts as a Multiple Attack that only takes a Half Phase and has no OCV penalty (the halving of DCV still applies).

Swords And Daggers: Blade weapons are excellent all-around combat tools; in addition to slashing, stabbing, or thrusting with them, the wielder can also use the flat or pommel to perform a Club Weapon maneuver. Short bladed weapons provide +1 Lightning Reflexes for themselves only; Medium bladed weapons receive a +2 OCV bonus for Disarms.

WEAPON AND SHIELD BREAKAGE

Gamers who play in some Low Fantasy campaigns, and other games stressing "realistic" combat, often have to worry about breaking their weapons and shields. Combat places a lot of stress and strain on a warrior's equipment, and eventually blades and shields can break — particularly when they block powerful attacks, or attack something hard and unyielding.

When a character uses a weapon or shield to Block, compare the weapon's or shield's PD to the base (un-Advantaged) Damage Classes of the attack (not the damage done, the Damage Classes as a number). If the DCs exceed the blocking object's PD, the object takes 1 BODY damage (it's been "dinged," notched, or had part of it cut off). (At the GM's option, a particularly powerful attack may do more BODY, perhaps even as much as 1 BODY per point of difference between the DCs and the PD.) When the object takes BODY damage equal to its BODY, it's useless — either broken in pieces, or with so little of its essential parts left that it can't function as it's supposed to.

If a character doesn't specifically use his shield to perform the *Block* Combat Maneuver, but an attack misses him by equal to or less than the shield's DCV bonus, the shield "blocked" the attack (that's why it missed), and the shield may take damage as described above. At the GM's option, every 2 BODY damage done to a shield reduces its DCV bonus by 1. This represents the reduction in "cover" it provides as attacks shear away sections of it.

Sometimes a character deliberately attacks another person's weapon, rather than the person himself, in the hope of breaking it. A typical weapon has PD 3-5 (based on what it's made from; see pages 174, 209 for specifics), and targeting it specifically entails an OCV penalty of -4 to -6 (similar to attacking the Hand). If a character attacks the wooden haft or handle of a weapon, use PD 3 or the weapon's PD, whichever is lower. The GM may impose a small OCV penalty (-1 or -2) in addition to the penalty for attacking the weapon itself, since the character's trying to hit a specific part of a small object. On the other hand, if a character deliberately attacks another character's shield, the GM may grant him an OCV bonus equal to the shield's DCV bonus (or some fraction thereof), since the defender normally makes at least some effort to use his shield to protect himself.

For weapon attacks against inanimate objects, see page 207.



Finesse was not the barbarian giant's style. He hammered blow after blow on the rapier with his longsword until the thinner blade snapped in two.

—Arngrim defeats a merchant's guardsman in "Black Lotus Moon," by Tom Moldvay



ARMOR

With so many weapons around, it's not surprising that characters look for ways to protect themselves. Armor represents a character's last defense against the damage of an attack (after DCV and such defensive actions as Dodging, Blocking, or using a shield). Armor's defense subtracts from the damage done by attacks like any other form of defense (such as the character's innate PD and ED).

Armor is built using the *Power Resistant Protection* with the Limitations *OIF* (-½), *Real Armor* (-¼), and *Mass* (typically Normal Mass, -1) (see 6E2 210-11 for more information). For the sake of simplicity, it provides both PD and ED in equal amounts. In "realistic" campaigns, armor's ED should be half of its PD (and armor may offer no protection at all against some types of damage, such as falls). Imagine, for example, how little protection a suit of plate armor would offer against a wizard's lightning bolt!

"Bilbo had a corslet of mithril-rings that Thorin gave him. I wonder what has become of it? ...

"What?" cried Gimli, startled out of his silence. "A corslet of Moria-silver? That was a kingly gift!"

"Yes," said Gandalf. "I never told him, but its worth was greater than the value of the whole Shire and everything in it."

[Later, after all but Gandalf have escaped from Moria and Aragorn's checking Frodo for injuries]

Gently he stripped off Frodo's old jacket and worn tunic, and gave a gasp of wonder. Then he laughed. The silver corslet shimmered before his eyes like the light upon a rippling sea. Carefully he took it off and helped it up, and the gems on it glittered like stars, and the sound of the shaken rings was like the tinkle of rain in a pool.

"Look, my friends!" he called. "Here's a pretty hobbit-skin to wrap an elven-princeling in! If it were known that hobbits had such hides, all the hunters of Middle-earth would be riding to the Shire."

"And all the arrows of all the hunters in the world would be in vain," said Gimli, gazing at the mail in wonder. "It is a mithril-coat. Mithril! I have never seen or heard tell of one so fair. Is this the coat that Gandalf spoke of? Then he undervalued it."

—the rest of the Fellowship marvels at Frodo's chain-mail in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

ARMOR AND RACE

Now she led Merry to a booth among the lodges of the king's guard; and there an armourer brought out to her a small helm, and a round shield, and other gear.

"No mail have we to fit you," said Éowyn, "nor any time for the forging of such a hauberk; but here is also a stout jerkin of leather, a belt, and a knife."

—the Riders of Rohan do their best to outfit a halfling with war-gear in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

When a character uses a suit of armor meant for a different race, penalties may apply depending upon the size, shape, and weight of the armor. For example, if a lizard-man puts on a suit of armor made for a human, he'll find it uncomfortable because human armor doesn't accommodate his reptilian tail. An ogre's armor may be too heavy or bulky for smaller races, and a dwarf will have difficulty wearing human armor (and vice-versa). At the GM's option, this sort of discomfort or difficulty may result in a negative modifier for the character's actions. Some possibilities include:

- increase the weight of the armor solely for purposes of calculating the character's Encumbrance penalty
- a penalty to all DEX-based Skill Rolls made while wearing the armor
- a penalty to OCV while wearing the armor
- a penalty to DCV, or to Dodge, while wearing the armor
- a reduction in DEX while wearing the armor

You should also consider what Hit Locations armor designed for another race protects. For example, non-tailed races may find that the seat of the pants remains exposed if they wear armor manufactured by races with tails. The GM must determine the exact game effects.

TYPES OF ARMOR

The army was on the march at last. There were the knights, gleaming in richly wrought plate armor, colored plumes waving above their burnished sallets. ... They were followed by the light cavalry on rangy steeds. The riders were typical hillmen, lean and hawk-faced; peaked steel caps were on their heads and chain-mail glistened under their flowing kaftans. ... The mercenaries brought up the rear. ... Clad from head to foot in chain-mail, they wore their vizoreless head-pieces over linked coifs. Their shields were unadorned[.]

—the army of Khoraja marches to war in “Black Colossus,” by Robert E. Howard

The accompanying table lists the types of armor available in most Fantasy games. Gamemasters can add to the list as appropriate for the campaign setting.

EXPLANATION OF ARMOR TABLE

CLOTH AND HIDE ARMORS

These forms of “armor” often barely qualify as such.

Heavy Cloth: Various types of heavy woven materials. Heavy Cloth is often indistinguishable from ordinary clothes; and in fact most sturdy clothing (adventurers’ and workmen’s wear) counts as Heavy Cloth (this does *not* include peasants’ everyday garb, courtiers’ fancy robes, or the like).

Padded Cloth: Two or more layers of Heavy Cloth with padding sewn in between them to absorb the impact of blows. This looks much less like ordinary clothes than Heavy Cloth, but may be mistaken for clothes at a distance, in bad light, or if well-made.

Woven Cord: Thick cord or rope woven into flat matting and used as protective wear. It’s obviously armor (as are all heavier armors except for Soft Leather and Heavy Animal Hides).

Heavy Animal Hides: The most protective type of armor available without chemical treatments, reinforcement, or metal, Heavy Animal Hides is just that: thick animal skins. It may be mistaken for clothing when worn by some persons (such as barbarians or shamans).

ARMOR TABLE

Armor Type	Defense	A/R Cost	Weight Of A Full Suit
Cloth And Hide Armors			
Heavy Cloth	1	3/1	3.5 kg
Padded Cloth	2	6/2	5 kg
Woven Cord	2	6/2	5 kg
Heavy Animal Hides	3	9/3	7 kg
Leather Armors			
Soft Leather	1	3/1	3.5 kg
Heavy Leather	2	6/2	5 kg
Cuir-Bouilli (Boiled Leather)	3	9/3	7 kg
Reinforced Leather Armors			
Studded Soft Leather	1	3/1	3.5 kg
Ring Armor (Soft Leather)	3	9/3	7 kg
Bezainted Soft Leather	3	9/3	7 kg
Jazeraint Soft Leather	3	9/3	7 kg
Studded Heavy Leather	2	6/2	5 kg
Ring Armor (Heavy Leather)	4	12/4	10 kg
Bezainted Heavy Leather	4	12/4	10 kg
Jazeraint Heavy Leather	4	12/4	10 kg
Studded Cuir-Bouilli	3	9/3	7 kg
Ring Armor (Cuir-Bouilli)	5	15/5	14 kg
Bezainted Cuir-Bouilli	5	15/5	14 kg
Jazeraint Cuir-Bouilli	5	15/5	14 kg
Scale Mails			
Brigandine	4	12/4	10 kg
Lamellar (Splint Armor)	5	15/5	14 kg
Banded Mail	6	18/6	20 kg
Chainmails			
Chainmail	6	18/6	20 kg
Double Mail/Bar Mail	7	21/8	28 kg
Reinforced Chainmail	7	21/8	28 kg
Plate Armors			
Plate And Chain	7	21/8	28 kg
Plate Armor	7	21/8	28 kg
Field Plate Armor	7	21/8	28 kg
Full Plate Armor	8	24/9	40 kg

Defense: The PD and ED provides, equivalent to Resistant Protection of the same amount.

A/R Cost: The Active Point/Real Point cost of the armor.

Most armors come in “light” and “heavy” versions. A light version provides -1 PD/-1 ED and is somewhat lighter; a heavy version provides +1 PD/+1 ED and is heavier. Since the weights in the table above are standardized by PD/ED, use the weight listed for the appropriate PD/ED (heavy full plate [9 PD/9 ED] weighs 56 kg; 10 PD/10 ED armor would weigh 80 kg.).

THE SPECIAL EFFECTS OF ARMOR

As with virtually everything else in the *HERO System*, special effects are paramount when it comes to armor. Often a player wants to outfit his character with a particular type of armor that suits the character’s appearance or activities — such as leather armor for a ranger or rogue — but ends up choosing heavier armor (such as chain mail) to get the higher defense.



Special effects allow you to define your character’s armor however you want. As long as you accept the penalties, restrictions, and other rules for a particular type of armor, you can describe it to suit your vision of your character. Thus, a character can have a suit of leather armor that provides PD 6/ED 6, as if it were chainmail. However, it weighs 20 kg just like a suit of chainmail, and imposes the same DCV or DEX penalties as chainmail — even though the leather armor listed in the *Armor Table* only provides PD 3/ED 3 and weighs 7 kg.



3

His scarlet robes were tattered, his corslet of overlapping bronze plates was rent and hewn, his black plaits of hair braided with gold were drenched with blood.

—scale mail fails to protect a Southron warrior in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

LEATHER ARMORS

These armors consist of treated or untreated leather without any additional reinforcement.

Soft Leather: Any untreated, medium-weight leather (animal skin). It often resembles ordinary leather clothing, and in fact most leather garb counts as Soft Leather.

Heavy Leather: Like Soft Leather, but thicker, stiffer, and heavier. This looks much less like ordinary clothes than Soft Leather, but may be mistaken for clothes at a distance, in bad light, or if well-made.

Cuir-Bouilli (Boiled Leather): This armor consists of heavy leather boiled, shaped, and hardened to provide more protection (though at the cost of some flexibility). A popular choice among many light fighters, rogues, and non-warrior types... and also among war-leaders who want to equip their soldiers cheaply.

REINFORCED LEATHER ARMORS

These armors are leather armors reinforced with metal. They provide more protection than unaugmented leather, but aren't as protective as metal armors (on the other hand, they weigh less).

Studded Leather: Leather armor reinforced with metal studs, or sometimes metal strips.

Ring Armor: Leather armor with metal rings sewn onto it.

Bezainted Leather: Named after a medieval coin, this is leather armor with metal discs (sometimes overlapping) sewn onto it.

Jazeraint Leather: This is leather armor with metal scales sewn onto it. It's as much a form of scale mail as leather armor.

SCALE MAILS

Scale mails consist of metal scales laced, sewn, or riveted together to form a protective garment. Some versions had a cloth or leather backing as well. In the eyes of many Fantasy characters, they're a "poor man's mail," used by people who want the benefits of metal armor but cannot make, buy, or otherwise obtain chainmail.

Brigandine: This multi-layered armor consists of metal scales (usually horizontal rectangular ones) sewn in between two layers of heavy cloth or leather. The scales usually overlap upwards slightly. The rivets that hold the plates together often show through the upper layer of cloth, and might be gilded or otherwise decorated.

Lamellar Armor: Also called splint armor or laced armor, lamellar has a series of thick metal "splints" or scales, sometimes slightly convex, laced together (and to a backing of cloth or leather). The size of the splints depends on the part of the body covered; the armorer uses small splints at points of articulation, and larger ones over the chest, thighs, and the like. In areas where metal was scarce, or regarded as too heavy, armorers made the splints out of horn, bone, wood, or other substances (see *Armor Materials*, page 220).

Banded Mail: Overlapping, articulated, rectangular metal scales attached to vertical leather strips. Also known as laminated armor.

CHAINMAILS

...and in the making of mail of linked rings, which was first contrived by the smiths of Belegost, [Dwarven] work had no rival ... for the hauberks of the Dwarves were so fashioned that they rusted not but shone ever as if they were new-burnished.

—the quality of dwarf-forged chainmail is described in *The Silmarillion*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Probably the most popular armor among Fantasy characters, chainmail (or just “mail”) consists of small metal rings linked together to form a protective yet relatively flexible garment.

Chainmail: Standard chain armor.

Double Mail: Chainmail made with thicker rings more closely interwoven. Similar to double mail is *bar mail*, in which some of the rings have a vertical bar in the middle.

Reinforced Chainmail: Chainmail with strips of leather woven through the links.

PLATE ARMORS

Well known due to its association with the “knight in shining armor,” plate armors use large, heavy plates of steel to protect the wearer. Leather straps hold the pieces in place and link them together into a whole suit. Although not as flexible as chainmail, plate armor offers the highest degree of protection of any armor.

Plate And Chain: A suit of chainmail reinforced with sections of plate. It offers greater protection than just chainmail without much extra weight or loss of flexibility.

You can also use Plate And Chain to represent types of armor that consist of metal scales linked together by chainmail rings.

Plate Armor: Standard plate armor.

Field Plate Armor, Full Plate Armor: These types of plate armor consist of heavier, better-fitted, better-made plates attached not just by leather straps, but screws and the like.

SECTIONAL ARMOR

While characters often wear the same type of armor over their entire bodies, they don’t have to. For various reasons — to cut down on weight, to reduce cost, or having to use what’s available — they may “mix and match” armor of different types, or even leave some parts of the body unprotected.

THE WEIGHT OF SECTIONAL ARMOR

To determine the weight of sectional armor, which in turn dictates how it affects the character’s Encumbrance rating, you can take one of two approaches. The first, and often the simplest in game terms, is to define sectional armor by *Hit Location*. Thus, the character might have PD/ED 4 armor on his Hands (6), Feet (17-18), and lower Legs (16), PD/ED 6 armor on his Arms (7-8), Vitals (13), Thighs (14), and upper Legs (15), and PD/ED 7 armor on his Head (3-5), Shoulders (9), Chest (10-11), and Stomach (12). The Hit Location Sectional Armor Weight Table provides the weight (in kilograms) for pieces covering each part of the body, based on the amount of PD/ED provided.

The second, and somewhat more historically accurate, approach is to buy armor *in predefined pieces*. This isn’t quite as precise as going Hit Location by Hit Location, but it’s not too dissimilar, and often contributes more to the “feel” of the campaign. The Historical Sectional Armor Weight Table provides the weight (in kilograms) for various pieces of armor used in Europe (consult a reference book if you want to see what the pieces look like).

THE PD/ED OF SECTIONAL ARMOR

If your campaign uses Hit Locations, you can figure out how much PD/ED to apply to an attack based on the location: if a character wearing a PD/ED 6 corselet (Hit Locations 9-15) takes a hit on the Shoulder (9), he applies PD/ED 6 to reduce the damage.

If the campaign doesn’t use Hit Locations, or if the GM considers a particular attack so “general” that no one location bears the brunt of the damage, the character must determine his *Average PD/ED*. You can do this in one of two ways. The first method involves 3 steps:

1. Add the PD/ED covering Hit Locations 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14.
2. Add to the total of (1) the PD/ED covering the Head (locations 3, 4, and 5), *provided* that armor protects at least two of those three Hit Locations. If it does not, do not add it in.
3. Divide the total of (1) and (2) by 7. This tells you the *Average PD/ED* protecting the character’s body.

The first method, while quick, is also a simplification; it takes into account about 70% of a character’s body, including all Hit Locations with better than a $\times\frac{1}{2}$ BODY multiplier. It assumes the character has at least *some* armor on Hit Locations 6-8 and 15-18; if not, the results may be skewed. If the GM feels a character is abusing this system by heavily armoring the counted parts of the body and leaving the others improperly lightly armored, he can reduce the Average PD/ED by 1-2 to compensate.



HIT LOCATION SECTIONAL ARMOR WEIGHT TABLE

Hit Location Name (Roll)	Armor Base Defense							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Head (3)	.02	.02	.03	.05	.06	.09	.13	.18
Head (4)	.05	.07	.10	.14	.19	.28	.39	.56
Head (5)	.10	.14	.19	.28	.39	.56	.78	1.11
Hands (6)	.16	.23	.32	.46	.65	.93	1.30	1.85
Arms (7)	.24	.35	.49	.69	.97	1.39	1.94	2.78
Arms (8)	.34	.49	.68	.97	1.36	1.94	2.72	3.89
Shoulders (9)	.41	.58	.81	1.16	1.62	2.32	3.24	4.63
Chest (10)	.44	.63	.88	1.25	1.75	2.50	3.50	5.00
Chest (11)	.44	.63	.88	1.25	1.75	2.50	3.50	5.00
Stomach (12)	.41	.58	.81	1.16	1.62	2.32	3.24	4.63
Vitals (13)	.34	.49	.68	.97	1.36	1.94	2.72	3.89
Thighs (14)	.24	.35	.49	.69	.97	1.39	1.94	2.78
Legs (15)	.16	.23	.32	.46	.65	.93	1.30	1.85
Legs (16)	.10	.14	.19	.28	.39	.56	.78	1.11
Feet (17)	.05	.07	.10	.14	.19	.28	.39	.56
Feet (18)	.02	.02	.03	.05	.06	.09	.13	.18

HISTORICAL SECTIONAL ARMOR WEIGHT TABLE

Hit Location Name (Roll)	Armor Base Defense							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Full Helmet (3-5)	.16	.23	.32	.46	.65	.93	1.30	1.85
Coif (4-5,9)	.55	.79	1.10	1.57	2.20	3.15	4.41	6.30
Helm (4-5)	.15	.21	.29	.42	.58	.83	1.17	1.67
Cap (5)	.10	.14	.19	.28	.39	.56	.78	1.11
Gauntlets (6-7)	.41	.58	.81	1.16	1.62	2.31	3.24	4.63
Gloves (6)	.16	.23	.32	.46	.65	.93	1.30	1.85
Brassards (7-8)	.58	.83	1.17	1.67	2.33	3.33	4.67	6.67
Vambraces (7)	.24	.35	.49	.69	.97	1.39	1.94	2.78
Rerebraces (8)	.34	.49	.68	.97	1.36	1.94	2.72	3.89
Pauldrons (9)	.41	.58	.81	1.16	1.62	2.32	3.24	4.63
Hauberk (7-14)	2.85	4.07	5.70	8.15	11.4	16.3	22.8	32.6
Corselet (9-15)	2.43	3.47	4.86	6.94	9.72	13.9	19.4	27.8
Byrnie (9-14)	2.27	3.24	4.54	6.48	9.07	13.0	18.2	25.9
Cuirass (9-13)	2.03	2.89	4.05	5.79	8.10	11.6	16.2	23.2
Vest (10-13)	1.62	2.31	3.24	4.63	6.48	9.26	13.0	18.5
Breastplate (9-11)	1.28	1.83	2.56	3.66	5.12	7.32	10.2	14.6
Skirtplate (12-13)	.75	1.06	1.49	2.13	2.98	4.26	5.96	8.52
Chausses (14-18)	.57	.81	1.13	1.62	2.27	3.24	4.54	6.48
Leggings (14-17)	.55	.79	1.10	1.57	2.20	3.15	4.41	6.30
Skirt (14)	.24	.35	.49	.69	.97	1.39	1.94	2.78
Greaves (16-17)	.15	.21	.29	.42	.58	.83	1.17	1.67
Boots (17-18)	.06	.09	.13	.19	.26	.37	.52	.74
Knee Cops (15)	.16	.23	.32	.46	.65	.93	1.30	1.85
Demigreaves (16)	.10	.14	.19	.28	.39	.56	.78	1.11
Anklets (17)	.05	.07	.10	.14	.19	.28	.39	.56

The second method is more comprehensive, but also easier for unscrupulous players to abuse: add up the PD/ED ratings for all 16 Hit Locations, then divide by 16 to determine the Average PD/ED. This system benefits characters who take heavy armor on locations like the Hands and Feet, since they have equal weight in the calculation even though they're hit less frequently than Locations 9-14. However, if a character has reasonably similar types of armor over his body, or a concentration of heavier armor on locations 9-14, this method tends to provide a fairer calculation of Average PD/ED than the first method.

BARDING

Barding is armor for horses and other land mounts or fighting animals, such as elephants or war-dogs (flying and swimming mounts generally cannot wear it; they cannot bear the weight). It can come in just about any form that armor for people can, and provides the same PD/ED. Depending on how well it's made, and how much of the mount it covers, it may weigh only a little more than a full suit of the same armor for a person, or considerably more.

ARMOR MATERIALS

The rules for metal armor assume that armor's made of steel. However, that may not always be the case. A Bronze Age culture would have bronze armor instead, while a tribe living in a swamp with ironwood trees might carve armor out of wood (since metal would rust so quickly it would become useless).

The table below lists the PD/ED and Weight changes when characters substitute some other substance for steel. This includes replacing metal plates in scale, bairnted, or like armors with some other substance. The GM may alter the results slightly in the interest of common sense, dramatic sense, or game balance. Note that these rules assume that the listed material is replacing steel (or ordinary leather, in the case of hardened leather). Adding metal of any type of non-metallic armor may actually improve it — converting it into some form of reinforced leather armor, typically — though the improvement may not be as much as it would be if steel were used.

Material	PD/ED	Weight
Bronze	-1	x1
Copper	-2	x.8
Dwarven steel	+2	x1
Elven-silver	+1	x.8
Horn	-2	x.7
Iron	-1	x1
Ivory	-3	x.8
Leather (hardened)	-4	x.5
Stone	-1	x1.2
Wood	-2	x.8

The two accompanying tables list the weight of different types of barding, based on either the Hit Locations covered (using the Equine Hit Location Table on HSB 42) or the predefined pieces purchased. Note that historically, even the most comprehensive suits of barding leave the horse's lower legs exposed; the Hit Location Sectional Barding Table ignores this reality and lists armor values for all Hit Locations (in case magic or some other means allows characters to create leg armor for horses).

In addition to the listed pieces of armor, some horses had an *escutcheon*, or decorative spike, attached to the chanfron (faceplate). It adds no PD/ED, but might allow the horse to do 1 point of Killing Damage with a head-butt.

All rules that apply to armor for characters apply to animals in barding as well (such as Encumbrance or DCV penalties), unless the GM prefers not to use them for some reason.

HIGH- AND POOR-QUALITY ARMOR

Just like characters can buy weapons that are better or worse than average, they can buy armor that's better or worse than a standard suit of the same type armor. In game terms, characters can have *fine* and *poor* armor. The armors listed in the tables earlier in this chapter are "average" versions — they have the PD/ED and other qualities of typical armors of their type.

At the GM's option, characters can use the following rules and guidelines to create exceptional armors, or to represent below-average versions of armor. Gamemasters are, of course, free to change the Character Point costs of these improvements (or drawbacks) to suit their campaigns, or even to give them to characters' armor for free to represent events that occur during game play. Additionally, where the rules provide Character Point totals for unusual abilities that aren't built using the standard *HERO System* rules, *those abilities apply only to armor*. Characters may *not* buy them as personal abilities.

Note that the abilities do *not* represent enchantment or magical enhancement, but rather improved quality of materials, crafting, or the like. Additionally, these abilities sometimes represent "legendary" attributes possessed by famous or noteworthy armors. They're a great way to distinguish a special or wondrous suit of armor from typical armors without having to resort to the catch-all explanation of "magic." But of course, they can also represent enchantments (minor or otherwise) placed on a suit of armor if you want.

BUYING FINE AND POOR ARMOR

When designing a fine or poor suit of armor, you should use the Character Point costs listed below to re-calculate the overall Active and Real Point costs of the armor. Since Fantasy Hero characters don't pay Character Points for their armor, making a suit of armor "fine" or "poor" generally only affects the armor's monetary cost (see page 175). The Active and Real Point costs usually

HIT LOCATION SECTIONAL BARDING WEIGHT TABLE

Hit Location Name (Roll)	Armor Base Defense							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Head (3)	.03	.05	.07	.10	.14	.20	.28	.40
Head (4)	.07	.10	.14	.20	.28	.40	.56	.80
Neck (5)	.21	.30	.42	.60	.84	1.2	1.68	2.4
Neck (6)	.35	.50	.70	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.8	4.0
Forelimbs (7)	.50	.70	.98	1.4	1.96	2.8	3.92	5.6
Forelimbs (8)	.70	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.8	4.0	5.6	8.0
Body (9)	.80	1.15	1.6	2.3	3.2	4.6	6.4	9.4
Body (10)	.87	1.25	1.75	2.5	3.5	5.0	7.0	10.0
Body (11)	.87	1.25	1.75	2.5	3.5	5.0	7.0	10.0
Stomach (12)	.80	1.15	1.6	2.3	3.2	4.6	6.4	9.2
Vitals (13)	.70	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.8	4.0	5.6	8.0
Hindlimbs (14)	.50	.70	.98	1.4	1.96	2.8	3.92	5.6
Hindlimbs (15)	.35	.50	.70	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.8	4.0
Hindlimbs (16)	.21	.30	.42	.60	.84	1.2	1.68	2.4
Hindlimbs (17)	.07	.10	.14	.20	.28	.40	.56	.80
Hindlimbs (18)	.03	.05	.07	.10	.14	.20	.28	.40
Full Suit	7	10	14	20	28	40	56	80

HISTORICAL SECTIONAL BARDING WEIGHT TABLE

Hit Location Name (Roll)	Armor Base Defense							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Chanfron (3-4)	.875	1.25	1.75	2.5	3.5	5.0	7.0	10.0
Crinet (5-6)	.875	1.25	1.75	2.5	3.5	5.0	7.0	10.0
Peytrel (9-10)	1.75	2.5	3.5	5.0	7.0	10.0	14.0	20.0
Flanchard (11-12)	1.75	2.5	3.5	5.0	7.0	10.0	14.0	20.0
Crupper (13-14)	1.75	2.5	3.5	5.0	7.0	10.0	14.0	20.0
Full Suit	7	10	14	20	28	40	56	80

just help the GM evaluate whether the suit of armor is balanced for the campaign. However, to prevent fine armors from becoming too common in the game, the GM may require characters to pay Character Points for them, using one of two methods:

- the cost of improvements themselves, calculated as (improved suit of armor's Real Point cost) - (normal suit of armor's Real Point cost), with some predefined minimum cost (such as 3 Character Points)
- a flat cost, such as 5 Character Points

In either case, if the character loses the suit of armor, he permanently loses the points spent on it... though the GM may allow him to go on a quest to regain the armor, reforge it, or have another one made, and spend the "lost" points on that.



FINE ARMORS

Fine armor may have one or more of the following abilities, or any other the GM sees fit to allow. The GM should evaluate any improvements a character wants to apply to armor carefully, to ensure they're balanced for the campaign.

Less Blinding: The armor is so cunningly crafted that it doesn't restrict the character's Sight or other senses as much as most suits do. You can buy this as Enhanced Perception to overcome some or all of the PER Roll penalties associated with the armor (see page 225).

Less Restrictive: In campaigns that impose a DCV, DEX Roll, or DEX restrictions on wearing armor, the armor is so well-made that it doesn't inhibit the character's movement as much as a normal suit does. You can buy this as Armor Skill Levels for the wearer (see page 225).

Less Tiring: In games that impose an END cost on wearing armor (see below), the armor is less tiring to wear. You can buy this by applying the *Reduced Endurance* cost to armor (possibly even the variant on page 275 that doesn't reduce the END paid but extends the time period over which a character has to pay END).

Lightweight: The armor is made of an unusual material that's lighter than normal, or is so well-made that it rides on the character's body in a less encumbering fashion. Recalculate the cost of the armor using a version of the *Mass Limitation* less than Normal Mass (-1) — typically Half Mass (-½).

More Protective: The armor provides +1 PD/ED, bought in the manner described on page 221.

Noble Appearance: The armor inspires loyalty and bravery in the wielder's allies, fear and dread in his foes. You can buy this as +5 PRE (sometimes more); OIF (-½), Real Armor (-¼), Only For Making Presence Attacks While The Armor Is Worn (-1) (total cost: 2 points).

Quickly Donned: A wearer can put on or take off the armor in half the time it normally takes. You can buy this as: Teleportation 1m, Usable As Attack (+1¼) (2 Active Points); Only To Don Armor (-2), Extra Time (at least two Phases, more for plate armors; -¾) (total cost: 1 point).

Sturdy: The armor is harder to break or damage. It has +1 (or more) BODY, and perhaps some Power Defense to resist Dispels and Drains. Each +1 BODY costs 1 Character Point; and each point of Power Defense costs 1 Character Point (appropriate Limitations apply, of course).

Unreal Armor: The weapon doesn't have the *Real Armor* Limitation, meaning it always stays clean and ready for action without any effort on the wearer's part.

Other Improvements: Some other possible improvements, that cost no Character Points but help to make armor distinctive, include:

- **Ornamentation:** gilding or silvering; inlaid gems; sculpted plates or pieces; carved designs on the plates; and so forth
- **Unrustable:** regardless of how much moisture it's exposed to, the armor never rusts (magical rusting attacks can still affect it, though)
- **Distinctive ring:** when struck by a weapon, the armor emits a distinctive ring or tone if the wielder wants it to

POOR ARMOR

Poor armor may have one or more of the following drawbacks (most of which are just the reverse of Fine armor qualities), or any other the GM sees fit to impose.

Heavy: The armor is made of an unusual material that's heavier than normal, or is so poorly-made that it rides on the character's body in a more encumbering fashion. Recalculate the cost of the armor using a special version of the *Mass Limitation*, Double Mass (-1½).

Ignoble Appearance: The armor inspires scorn or fear in the wielder's allies, contempt or pity in his foes. You can buy this as a Side Effect (-5 PRE for Presence Attacks while wearing armor, always occurs; -½).

Less Protective: The armor provides -1 PD/ED, bought in the manner described on page 221.

More Blinding: The armor is so badly made that it's even harder to see out of. You can buy this as a Side Effect (double all PER Roll penalties for wearing armor, always occurs; -½).

More Restrictive: In campaigns that impose a DCV, DEX Roll, or DEX restrictions on wearing armor, the armor inhibits the wearer's movement more than a normal suit does. You can buy this as a Side Effect (double all DCV/DEX Roll penalties for wearing armor, always occurs; -½).

More Tiring: In games that impose an END cost on wearing armor (see below), the armor is more tiring than normal to wear. You can buy this by applying the *Increased Endurance Cost* Limitation to armor.

Weak: The armor is easier to break or damage. It has -1 (or more) BODY. Each -2 BODY reduces the armor's cost by 1 Character Point (minimum cost of 1 Character Point).

Other Drawbacks: Some other possible negative qualities, which save no Character Points but still make armor less enjoyable to wear, include:

- **Poor appearance:** the armor is rusty or dented; has numerous visible repairs; it looks as badly-made as it is.
- **Ill repute:** The armor has a poor reputation. Perhaps an evil man once committed foul deeds while wearing it, it supposedly carries a curse that makes its wearer less intelligent, or the like.



USING ARMOR

In many Fantasy games, characters tend to treat armor as if it were no different than clothing — they ignore the difficulties associated with wearing it, and only pay attention to how much protection it gives them. While this certainly simplifies the game, it's not very realistic... and what's worse, it may cause game balance problems. The following guidelines and rules help to make armor both more balanced and more “realistic.”

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the real world, armor brings with it a host of problems and drawbacks. These may have little (or no) effect in game terms, but you should keep them in mind when considering how characters use armor in the game. To the extent you want to incorporate them into your game, the *Real Armor Limitation* reflects them.

First, armor (particularly metal armor) is heavy. While the weight is spread over the body somewhat, it's still a lot of kilograms to carry, and the weight does stress some areas of the body more than others (such as the shoulders). The longer a warrior wears his armor, the heavier it seems to become.

Second, armor is hot and stuffy to wear, and tends to overheat the character quickly. Some

medieval commentators noted that their armies lost nearly as many men to heat exhaustion as to injuries. The longer one had to wear armor, and the hotter or more humid the weather, the worse this problem was.

Third, armor is restrictive. It doesn't significantly hinder movement — modern tests have shown that untrained men can put on a suit of plate armor and then do things like lie down and stand back up, run, jump, and so on. After all, it would be suicidal to put on a suit of armor, no matter how protective, that limited basic movement abilities in combat. But armor's obviously less flexible and more confining than clothing — and the heavier/more rigid the armor, the more restrictive it tends to be. Additionally, some types of helmets restricted the wearer's field of vision, at least slightly.

Fourth, armor is uncomfortable if worn too long. For short periods, it's not particularly difficult to wear, especially if it's properly fitted and put on. But if worn for long periods, particularly during strenuous activities like riding, it could chafe or otherwise discomfort the wearer. Sleeping in armor, particularly heavy armor, was rarely even contemplated, much less engaged in. A character who sleeps in his armor will probably wake up stiff and sore (-3 DEX for several hours after awakening).

Elric sank rapidly, desperately trying to keep the last of his breath in his body. He had no strength to swim and the weight of the armour denied any hope of rising to the surface and being sighted by Magum Colim or one of the others still loyal to him.

—armor proves to be an impediment to survival after Yyrkoon tosses Elric into the sea in *Elric Of Melniboné*, by Michael Moorcock

Fifth, armor requires maintenance. If dinged or cut in battle, it needs repairs. After being worn, it requires cleaning. If it contains metal, it needs regular oiling and polishing to prevent rust. At the GM's option, if a character doesn't take the time to maintain his armor after a period of strenuous use — two days of travel or routine adventuring, one day of battle or adventuring featuring combat — the armor loses 1 PD/ED per week of lack of maintenance (and perhaps quicker if he continues using it), down to half its PD/ED. Alternately, the GM may increase other penalties, such as END cost or time to don.

DONNING ARMOR

Putting on (or removing) armor takes time — and sometimes helpers.

Picking up a shield, or putting on a very simple piece of armor (such as a helmet), takes a Half Phase Action.

Putting on a simple piece of armor (such as a leather, reinforced leather, scale, or chain corselet or hauberk) takes a Full Phase Action. However, this may leave some parts of the body (primarily the limbs and head) at least partly exposed. To put armor on this quickly, the character just grabs the largest, most convenient piece of a suit of armor and gets it on his body as quickly as he can, without fastening every single lace, strap, or buckle.

Putting on an entire suit of cloth/hide, leather, leather, reinforced leather, scale, or chain armor takes four Phases. Typically a character can do this by himself.

Putting on plate armor takes time, and often requires the assistance of a squire or the like. Donning an entire suit of plate takes 5 Minutes — 1 Minute for the torso, and 1 Minute for each limb. If the character doesn't have at least one helper, triple these times.

Removing armor takes the same amount of time. In an emergency, a character with a dagger or similar Short bladed weapon can cut himself free more quickly — one step up the Time Chart — but this makes the armor useless until repaired.

BALANCING ARMOR USE

Armor provides a tremendous benefit in game terms. The PD/ED it offers goes a long way toward keeping a character unharmed (or at least less harmed), and it doesn't cost any Character Points. As a result, most characters — even characters who shouldn't be wearing heavy (or any) armor — tend to have it. Moreover, since armor is so “cheap,” heavy fighters can often find ways to wear lots of it and yet still come close to matching light fighters in terms of DEX and SPD.

Many GMs who consider this a problem in their games institute rules to make wearing armor less attractive. In other words, they change armor so the benefits it provides come with drawbacks. If you've found “armor balance” to be a problem in your campaign, you may want to consider one or more of the following solutions (or use them as guidelines to create some of your own).

ENCUMBRANCE

First, look at the *HERO System* rules for Encumbrance (6E2 45-46). A character who's too heavily loaded down suffers penalties to DCV, DEX Rolls, and movement, and has to spend END every Turn. However, because the rules allow characters with high STR to lift a lot of weight, armor may not hinder them much. For example, a suit of full plate (40 kg) only counts as 10% of the weight limit for a 20 STR character. Even allowing for the weight of his other equipment, his armor doesn't restrict him too much.

If you think armor should be more encumbering, you have several options. First, you can double (or otherwise increase) the weight of armor solely for Encumbrance purposes. For example, a suit of chainmail may only weigh 20 kilograms when put on the scales, but when a character wearing chainmail calculates his Encumbrance, he counts it as weighing 40 kg.

Second, you can change the Encumbrance thresholds. Perhaps penalties start to accumulate at 5% lower than indicated in the table on 6E2 46. Or, perhaps the Encumbrance thresholds depend on *Casual STR* — the amount the character can lift with half his STR — rather than his full STR. Using that system, a character with 20 STR becomes 40% Encumbered just by putting on a suit of full plate, or 20% Encumbered when wearing chainmail.

Third, you can increase the Encumbrance penalties so that even a little bit of Encumbrance proves extremely troublesome. Maybe a character who's 11-24% Encumbered suffers -1 DCV/DEX Rolls and spends 1 END per Turn, with penalties increasing proportionately from there.

ENDURANCE

As mentioned above, by all accounts armor, particularly heavy armor, is tiring to wear. Besides the sheer weight of it, it's extremely hot, which only tires the character out more quickly.

You can represent this “armor fatigue factor” in several ways. First, you can rely on Encumbrance END costs. Because those costs are relatively mild, this is unlikely to make armor unattractive to many characters, but combined with some other penalties it may prove an effective balance to armor's benefits.

Second, you can impose a specific END cost for wearing armor. Typically this means an END cost per Turn, not per Phase (much like Encumbrance). The main issue is how much END to charge, and that depends on how much balancing you think armor needs. For example, perhaps 1-3 PD/ED armor cost 1 END per Turn, 4-6 PD/ED armor costs 2 END per Turn, 7-9 PD/ED armor costs 3 END per Turn, and so forth.

Third, you can treat the END spent to wear armor as particularly tiring. For example, you could rule that Post-Segment 12 Recoveries do not allow characters to Recover END spent to wear armor. The only way to Recover that END is to spend a Phase in combat taking a Recovery, or to wait until the battle is over. Similarly, you could

use the Long-Term Endurance rules (6E2 132) to make it tiring to wear armor for long periods of time. In addition to the per Turn END cost, wearing armor during strenuous activity (like combat) costs a character 1 (or more) LTE per Turn.

DCV AND DEX ROLLS

Perhaps the simplest, and most effective, way to balance armor is to penalize the DEX and DCV of characters who wear it. As noted above, armor, while not overly restrictive, is still more restrictive than clothing — and the heavier the armor, the more restrictive it's likely to be.

Gamemasters who use this method of balancing armor usually establish a penalty to DCV and DEX Rolls (including Agility Skill rolls) based on the amount of PD/ED the armor provides. For example, perhaps every 3 PD/ED or fraction thereof imposes -1 DCV/DEX Rolls: 1-3 PD/ED equals -1; 4-6 equals -2; 7-9 equals -3; and so on.

Other GMs like to introduce a little more variety, or use the type of armor to determine the penalty. For example: cloth and hide armors, -1; leather and reinforced leather armors, -2; scale and chain mails, -3; and plate armors, -4.

Another possibility is to limit the amount of DEX a character can use while armored. For example, a character wearing cloth and hide armors can use his full DEX, regardless of how high it is. A character wearing leather armors can only use DEX up to DEX 20. One wearing reinforced leather armor can use DEX up to 18, one wearing scale or chain mails can use up to DEX 15, and one using plate armor can use up to DEX 13. This affects both initiative and Skill Rolls.

Armor Skill Levels: If the GM imposes DCV and DEX Roll penalties, characters can buy extra DCV to overcome the restrictions, representing their skill and training for fighting in armor. To counteract the DCV penalty, buy Defensive PSLs costing 2 Character Points each (see 6E1 85). To counteract the DEX Roll penalty, buy Agility Skill Levels (6 Active Points each), Only To Counteract Armor Penalties (-1), for 3 Character Points each.

If the campaign limits how much DEX a character can use while armored, each Armor Skill Level raises that threshold by 1 for any armor the character wears.

PERCEPTION ROLLS

At the GM's option, armor's penalty to DCV and DEX Rolls — either as derived from Encumbrance, or using a direct modifier like the one above — also applies to a character's PER Rolls unless he removes (or does not put on) an appropriate piece of armor (the helmet for Sight, the gauntlets for Touch, and the like). To eliminate the Sight PER penalty, a character must doff his helmet; to remove the Touch PER penalty, he must take off his gauntlet; and so forth.

WEARING MULTIPLE ARMORS

While some armors (such as Plate And Chain) combine types of protective wear, in general a character cannot wear two types of armor at once. If he somehow mixes two together, he must either define it as a new type of a single suit of armor (like Plate And Chain), or use the sectional armor rules. A character cannot wear two types of armor and add their PDs/EDs together. (Heavy armors, such as scale, chain, and plate, usually came with padded undergarments to minimize discomfort and chafing, but this doesn't count as wearing Heavy Cloth or Padded Cloth armor in addition to the outer armor.)

ARMOR BREAKAGE

For the sake of quick and easy game play, armor generally doesn't break. Attacks may pierce it, of course, but characters don't have to keep track of a suit of armor's BODY to determine whether it falls apart in mid-battle.

Gamemasters desiring greater "realism" should consider a suit of armor to have BODY equal to three times the armor's PD/ED. Every attack that inflicts BODY damage on the character (in other words, BODY damage accruing to the character after he applies his armor's PD/ED) inflicts the same amount of damage to the armor. Once the armor takes all of its BODY in damage, it's useless — either it falls apart, or it's too full of holes to do any good. At the GM's option, a suit of armor that loses one-third its BODY provides only two-thirds of its PD/ED; one that loses two-thirds of its BODY provides only one-third PD/ED.

As a default rule, characters cannot target armor specifically (*i.e.*, with the intent of damaging it without hurting the person wearing it). However, the GM may allow this at a substantial OCV penalty (-5 or more).

If a character wants to target a hole in his enemy's armor caused by a previous attack that inflicted BODY damage on that enemy, he can do so, but suffers an OCV penalty based on the size of the hole. A large hole (for example, caused by a long cut from a sword) imposes a -4 to -5 OCV modifier. A medium-sized hole (for example, caused by a single axe-blow) imposes a -5 to -7 OCV modifier. A small hole (for example, caused by an arrow, or a stab wound from a dagger) imposes a -7 to -12 OCV modifier. These modifiers take the place of the Hit Location modifiers normally used for Placed Shots (in effect the hole becomes a separate target). If the character succeeds with this attack, the enemy does not get the benefit of his armor's PD/ED against the attack.



SHIELDS

A shield is a large piece of wood and/or metal, usually roughly disc- or rectangular-shaped, worn by a fighter on his off arm (typically his left arm). The fighter uses it to block attacks and protect himself from harm.

In game terms, a shield is bought as a two-slot Multipower. The first slot provides bonuses to DCV, bought as DCV Levels with the *OAF* (-1), *Real Armor* (-¼), *Mass* (Normal Mass; -1), and *STR Minimum* Limitations. For every 5 points (or fraction thereof) a shield's user's STR is below the shield's STR Minimum, reduce the DCV bonus it provides by 1. Additionally, the wielder may apply his shield's DCV bonus as a bonus to his OCV for purposes of Blocking (see page 184).

The second slot allows the character to perform a "shield bash" maneuver. It's a Hand-To-Hand Attack with the *OAF* (-1), *Hand-To-Hand Attack* (-¼), *Real Weapon* (-¼), and *STR Minimum* Limitations. It also has a -½ *Side Effects* Limitation, signifying the fact that the character suffers an OCV penalty equal to the shield's DCV bonus (since shields, especially large ones, aren't primarily intended as weapons and thus awkward to use as such). The spiked buckler also has an HKA slot. Shields and spiked bucklers are a 1-point subcategory of the *Common Melee Weapons* Weapon Familiarity group; characters

without an appropriate WF suffers the standard Unfamiliar Weapon penalty.

Shields also have BODY and PD/ED ratings, for use with the weapon and shield breakage rules (page 215). The shield's materials and size determine its BODY and PD/ED; you can use the *Durable* (+0) and *Fragile* (-0, since shields have more than 1 BODY) modifiers to Focus to simulate differences from the standard Focus breakability rules.

OTHER USES FOR SHIELDS

At the GM's option, a shield that's not in use, but which a character is currently carrying (typically by slinging it on his back) might add +1 (wooden shield) or +2 (metal shield) PD/ED to the character's armor for attacks against the location(s) the shield covers. If characters try to take advantage of this optional rule by carrying extra shields or other such "power gaming" tactics, the GM shouldn't use it.

Fast-thinking characters may come up with other clever uses for a shield. For example, a metal shield might make a useful cooking platter, or a character with a smooth-faced large shield could turn it into an impromptu sled to escape from an enemy during snowy weather.

With a thrust of his huge hide shield he turned Boromir's sword and bore him backwards, throwing him to the ground.

—the orc-chieftain uses his shield as a weapon too in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

3

Shifting his war-board onto his arm, Elric took his own broadsword in both hands and charged the sailors, knocking one off his feet with the lip of the shield and smashing the collar-bone of another. The remaining barbarian skipped aside and thrust his curved sword at Elric's face. Elric barely escaped the thrust and the sharp edge of the sword grazed his cheek, bringing out a drop or two of blood. Elric swung the broadsword like a scythe and it bit deep into the barbarian's waist, almost cutting him in two.

—the strong survive in *Elric Of Melniboné*, by Michael Moorcock

SHIELD TABLE

Type Of Shield	DCV	HA	STR Min	BODY	Def	Mass	Cost
Wooden Shields							
Buckler	+1*	1d6 N	3	2	3	1 kg	4
Spiked Buckler	+1*	1d6 N/½d6 K	5	3	3	2 kg	7
Small	+1	1d6 N	5	3	3	2 kg	4
Medium	+2	2d6 N	10	4	3	4 kg	6
Large	+3	3d6 N	15	6	3	6 kg	7
Tower	+4	3d6 N	18	7	3	8 kg	9
Metal Shields							
Buckler	+1*	1d6 N	4	2	5	2 kg	4
Spiked Buckler	+1*	1d6 N/½d6 K	6	3	5	3 kg	7
Small	+1	1d6 N	6	3	5	3 kg	4
Medium	+2	2d6 N	13	4	5	5 kg	6
Large	+3	3d6 N	18	6	5	7 kg	7
Tower	+4	3d6 N	20	7	5	10 kg	9

KEY

K: Killing Damage

N: Normal Damage

DCV: The DCV bonus provided by the shield. Bonuses marked with an asterisk (*) require the character to make a DEX Roll to obtain them (this counts as an Action that takes no time).

HA: The HA (and, for spiked bucklers, HKA) damage the shield does with a shield bash maneuver.

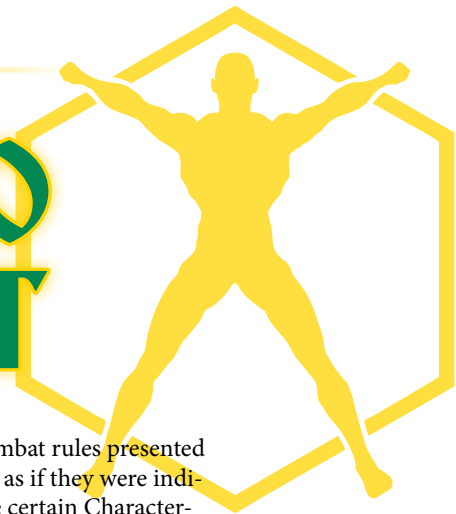
STR Min: STR Minimum.

BODY, Def: The BODY, PD, and ED of the shield, used primarily with the shield breakage rules (page 215).

Mass: The shield's weight in kilograms.

Total Cost: The total cost of the shield as a Multipower (see text).

FANTASY HERO MASS COMBAT



Battles and sieges involving dozens, hundreds, or thousands of soldiers occur in numerous Fantasy stories, novels, and movies. Examples include the Battles of Helm's Deep and the Pelennor Fields in *The Lord Of The Rings*, many battles that take place in Katherine Kurtz's Deryni novels, some of the final confrontations in Jack Vance's *Madouc*, Arthur's final battle at Camlann, the battles depicted in the movie *Braveheart*, conflicts between the men of Melniboné and the men of the Young Kingdoms in Michael Moorcock's Elric novels, and many, many more.

In most Fantasy Hero games, the outcome of a battle depends on considerations of drama and story: the GM determines the winner based on the direction he wants to take the campaign in. If he wants to run a story arc in which the heroes sneak into the Dark Lord's castle to defeat him in one-on-one combat, he lets the Dark Lord's forces defeat the armies of Good so the PCs have something to do (and to give their actions dramatic significance). If he wants the PCs to break the power of the northern orc tribes, then he has the PCs' army deliver a smashing defeat to the assembled orcish legions. If he needs to trap the PCs in a besieged city, he simply declares that a siege has begun and that all efforts to break it have so far failed.

In other situations, the outcome of the battle hangs in the balance — achieving victory (or losing), not the battle's aftermath or effects, is the whole point of the scenario. In these cases, GMs may need rules to determine the results of battles and sieges.

“The new host that we had tidings of has come first, from over the River by way of Andros, it is said. They are strong: battalions of Orcs of the Eye, and countless companies of Men of a new sort that we have not met before. Not tall, but broad and grim, bearded like dwarves, wielding great axes. Out of some savage land in the wide East they come, we deem.”

—Ingold describes some of the evil forces arrayed against Minas Tirith in *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

The Fantasy Hero mass combat rules presented here treat *units* of combatants as if they were individual characters — they have certain Characteristics, make Attack Rolls like a character would, and so forth. But they also use some special rules, such as for morale and the scale of battle, that individual characters do not. The mass combat rules also allow important individuals (the PCs, major NPCs and villains, and the like) to play a significant role in the battle, account for the effects of magic and monsters, and let you determine the outcome of sieges and the effect of siege engines.

BEFORE MASS COMBAT

But he could not tolerate the frustration of waiting and plunged into a whirlwind of activities, manipulating the things that he could understand, seeking ways to combine the virtues of the five arts, to scrape together the meager resources at hand into potent weapons for the battle.

—Alodar tries to use his knowledge of magic to gain some advantages for his army in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Before a mass combat begins, the GM needs to consider several factors.

BATTLEFIELD TERRAIN

To make a battle as interesting as possible, you should have some idea of the terrain involved. Not only can the terrain have strategic and tactical importance, but it really helps everyone visualize the battle if they know what the lay of the land's like. You don't necessarily have to use a map (though they're often helpful), but if the GM at least knows what the terrain is like he can describe it to the players, and perhaps set up a few obstacles units have to worry about.

Additionally, terrain can affect units' ability to move, maneuver, and attack. The accompanying Battle Terrain Table on page 228 lists the basic effects. The GM can modify these effects as he sees fit, or create others using these as guidelines.

BATTLE TERRAIN TABLE

Terrain	Combat Effects	Movement Effects
Clear/Level	—	—
Forest		
Thin	Defender: +2 DCV	x½
Thick	Defender: +4 DCV	x1/3, no mounted troops possible
Hills	—	x½
Mountains	Defender: +4 DCV	x1/3, no mounted troops possible
Rough Ground	—	x½ uphill, x1½ downhill
Settlements		
Village	Defender: +2 DCV	x1
Town	Defender: +4 DCV	x½
City	Defender: +4 DCV	x1/3
Sloped	*	x½ uphill, x1½ downhill
Water		
River	—	Impassable on foot
Stream	Everyone: -2 DCV	x1/3
Swamp	Everyone: -2 DCV	x1/3, no mounted troops possible

*: The combatant that's "above" the other — that occupies the high ground, in other words — receives a +2 DCV, +1 OCV bonus.

STRATEGIC MANEUVERING

Due to the effects of terrain, armies often spend time before a battle maneuvering for position. After all, the side with the best position may start the battle with a significant tactical advantage! Typically, the side that reaches the battlefield first occupies the position most favorable to it, leaving others to make do with less advantageous positions. The DCV modifiers in the Battle Terrain Table reflect these benefits.

Once each side has staked out its position, it may try maneuvers or tactics to change the face of the battlefield to its benefit. Outriders, scouts, and assassins may harass a better-positioned enemy to try to weaken its strength. Its units may shout taunts and jibes at the enemy units in the hope of enraging them enough to make them leave their position. In campaigns with plentiful magic, battle mages may even have spells capable of literally altering the shape of the terrain (or at least creating illusions to trick the enemy into thinking that's what happened).

Of course, in some situations, there's no need to compete for the best position, because the nature of the battle dictates which side stands where. A siege involves well-protected defenders and relatively exposed attackers. If a goblin army has to break through a dwarven army holding a mountain pass, the dwarven position has been established long before battle begins.

ROLEPLAYING BATTLES

The mass combat rules emphasize unit actions, and therefore have a far more "wargame-like" feel than a typical individual character combat. But neither the GM nor the players should forget that Fantasy Hero is a *roleplaying* game first and foremost. Roleplaying can have significant effects on the conduct of a battle.

The most obvious example of this involves the Prominent Characters rules. When a single character can lead a devastating charge, inspire his troops to rally, or afflict the enemy with knee-weakening fear, roleplaying that individual's actions is often important. If a PC gives a truly impressive speech, his Presence Attack to improve his troops' morale or make an enemy unit hesitate may get some bonus dice. On the other hand, by making that Presence Attack he's revealing himself, which may invite a counterattack by an enemy archer or spellcaster.

Similarly, the GM should have at least a capsule description of the personalities and goals of the prominent enemy NPCs. Don't make them faceless generals — give them a reason to be at the battle, or an objective to accomplish during it. For example, maybe an orc chieftain wants to use the battle as an opportunity to weaken a hated rival by ensuring that the rival's troops get killed off, or that the rival himself dies. That could significantly change how he deploys and commands his own troops, making him much more interesting than just another foe the PCs have to slay.

BATTLE SCALE

The mass combat rules treat units much the same as individual characters, but obviously a unit is much larger than a single person. The larger the average unit, the larger the scope of the battle. To simulate this, use the *battle scale* rules. The accompanying Battle Scale Table lists the appropriate modifiers. The GM determines the average size of units in the battle, then consults the table to learn the proper scale.

SIZE OF UNITS; DESIGNATION

For mass combat purposes, the GM should determine the average size of all the units involved in the battle, and then use that to set the scale of battle. The "size" of a unit equals the number of combatants in it. (For an average unit size of 1-3, simply use the normal *HERO System* combat rules.)

The time, distance, and Range Modifier scales apply to *all* units in a battle, even those smaller and larger than average. For ease of play, they also apply to individual characters, prominent or otherwise, participating in a battle. For example, in a battle with an average unit size of 80 persons, if a PC wizard with SPD 4 wants to cast a spell against an enemy unit, each Turn equals 3 Minutes. Therefore, one of his Phases takes 45 seconds (Segments), even though in individual combat his Phase only takes 1 second. He's not

losing any Phases or Actions — the battle simply changes the scale of his conduct.

The *Designation* column provides a convenient shorthand for unit sizes. The GM may ignore it, change the names to give them a more Fantasy feel, or the like.

UNITS OF LARGE CREATURES

In a Fantasy setting, a unit could consist of larger than human creatures, such as trolls or giants. To determine the “effective size” of such a unit, multiply its number of members by its size multiplier indicated in its *Size/Weight* Template (see 6E1 442-45). Thus, a unit of 50 members that are Large (two times human size) counts as a unit of 100 members; one with 50 members who are Huge (eight times human size) counts as a unit of 400 members.

You can apply this method in reverse for units of small creatures.

TIME SCALE

The column headed “1 Turn Equals” represents the *time scale* of a mass combat. While individual combats usually end in seconds, battles take a lot longer — in comparison, masses of men (orcs, ogres, elves, dragons...) move slowly, react to changing situations slowly, and hack one another to pieces slowly.

Units still get the number of Phases indicated by their SPD. A SPD 3 unit gets 3 Phases per Turn, even when the Turn takes 6 Minutes. It’s just that two minutes pass between Phases, instead of four seconds. This simulates the slow and steady process by which one army grinds through another. The unit’s Phase represents the sum total of its activity during that portion of the Turn.

Since the time scale applies to everyone in the battle, it affects individual characters (such as PCs and prominent NPCs). Again, this doesn’t involve the loss of any Phases or Actions, it simply extends the time “between” Phases. The rules for mass combat give the characters’ actions as much impact against units as they would have against individuals in a normal-scale combat.

UNIT SPACE REQUIREMENTS

The “Occupies” column represents the amount of space required for a unit of that size — an individual character typically occupies a space of about 1m radius, but a unit with dozens, hundreds, or thousands of soldiers requires a lot more space. The number listed indicates the radius of the area the unit requires. Calculate the Range Modifier for the unit’s Ranged attacks (or Ranged attacks made against it) from the center point of the area (see *Ranged Combat Between Units*, below).

BATTLE SCALE TABLE

Size Of Units	Designation	1 Turn Equals	Occupies
1-3	Individuals	12 Segments	1 m
4-15	Squad	48 Segments	4 m
16-63	Platoon	90 Segments	8 m
64-249	Company	3 Minutes	16 m
250-999	Battalion	6 Minutes	32 m
1,000-3,999	Regiment	12 Minutes	64 m
4,000-15,999	Division	24 Minutes	125 m

...and so forth



The war-wagons now commanded the plain: grim, dismal vehicles rearing sixty feet into the air, armed with both Red Ruin and barb-drivers. On the first tier and wherever they could cling rode assault troops from East Attack. These were not pretty troops; they were neither handsome, nor clean-limbed nor even dauntless. Rather they were surly veterans of many types and conditions, with only dirt, sweat and foul language in common. ... Such were the troops which had defeated the Twenty Legions, skulking, hiding, striking, feigning death, striking again, screaming in pain but never fear[.]

—Rhialto witnesses the forces of the Bohulic Dukes in *Rhialto The Marvelous*, by Jack Vance

UNITS

In mass combat, individuals don't fight the battle — units do. A unit consists of a group of one or more combatants, though typically units are fairly large (in the dozens or hundreds of soldiers).

CREATING UNITS

Before beginning a mass combat, the GM has to define the average size of all the units involved to determine the battle scale (see above), and also has to determine the sizes of the individual units involved, which may vary wildly from the average. For ease of game play, most GMs try to have no more than three to 20 units per side, and to make as many of them as possible equal in size. If one side significantly outnumbers the other, the GM can represent that either by having more units on the larger side, or an equal number of larger units; for ease of play, it's usually best if no one unit on the larger side has more than four times the number of soldiers in an average size unit.

UNIT SIZE

A unit's size — the number of soldiers or other combatants comprising it — indicates the *Unit Modifier* that affects how it functions in battle. The Unit Modifier Table lists the modifiers for units of various sizes. The Unit Modifier has two primary effects:

1. It adds to a unit's BODY (see *BODY*, below).
2. It reflects the relative size of battling units by affecting their damage rolls. When one unit attacks another, subtract the defender's Unit Modifier from the attacker's Unit Modifier (minimum result of 0). Add the result to the attacker's damage roll (see *Fighting*, below).

UNIT MODIFIER TABLE

Number Of Soldiers In Unit	Unit Modifier
1	+0
2	+2
3	+3
4-5	+4
6-7	+5
8-11	+6
12-15	+7
16-23	+8
24-31	+9
32-47	+10
48-63	+11
64-95	+12
96-124	+13
125-186	+14
187-249	+15
250-374	+16
375-499	+17
500-749	+18
750-999	+19
1000-1499	+20

...and so forth

UNIT CHARACTERISTICS

In addition to having a size and a resulting Unit Modifier, units are defined by Characteristics, just like individuals — though a few of the Characteristics differ slightly. Units cannot improve their Characteristics by spending Character Points, only by improving the average member of, or size of, the unit.

DAMAGE (DMG)

Instead of STR, units have a Characteristic called *Damage (DMG)*. To determine a unit's DMG, figure out the average amount of damage a soldier in that unit can do with his weapon, as modified by STR and any other factor he has paid Character Points for (such as Martial Maneuvers, but excluding Combat Skill Levels). This average damage becomes the unit's DMG. For example, all the members of an ogre unit armed with greatswords can do 4d6 Killing Damage, so the unit has a DMG of 4d6 Killing. A unit of Human soldiers with varying weapons and STRs might do an average of 1d6+1 Killing, so that becomes the unit's DMG. If appropriate, note the unit's weapon next to its DMG.

Units with Ranged weapons also have Ranged DMG (RDMG), which you calculate in the same way from its average Ranged weapon damage.

DEXTERITY

A unit's DEX equals the average DEX of its members. This determines how quickly it attacks and reacts in combat by dictating when its Phase occurs during a Segment.

BODY

A unit's BODY represents how much damage it can absorb before becoming useless. Determining it requires two steps:

1. First, determine the average BODY of all members of the unit.
2. Second, add to that number the unit's Unit Modifier. This tells you the unit's BODY.

See *Determining Damage*, page 233, for more information about unit BODY.

To represent particularly powerful units, one whose members can resist attacks by numerically superior forces without difficulty, characters can buy BODY with the -2 Limitation, *Only To Calculate Unit Body*.

INTELLIGENCE

A unit's INT equals the average INT of its members. It's used in combat when the unit as a whole has to perceive something, see through an Image, or cope with the effects of a Mental Illusion.

EGO

A unit's EGO equals the average EGO of its members. It's used in combat to adjudicate the effect of Mental Powers used against the unit.

PRESENCE

A unit's PRE equals the average PRE of its members. It's used in combat to determine a unit's morale, its ability to inspire fear in others, and the like. See *Morale Rolls*, page 234.

COMBAT VALUES

Units have OCV and DCV, and OMCV and DMCV as well if Mental Powers are a part of the battle. A unit's OCV, DCV, OMCV, and DMCV equals the average of each of those Characteristics of its members. They're used in unit combat just like they are in regular combat, to make (or resist) Attack Rolls.

If all (or nearly all) members in a unit carry a shield, the unit receives the shield's DCV bonus (and bonus to Block, if appropriate). If the members carry different-sized shields, the unit has the average DCV bonus.

SPEED

A unit's SPD equals the average SPD of its members. This tells you what Phases it has during the mass combat Turn.

PHYSICAL DEFENSE, ENERGY DEFENSE

Units have PD and ED, just like characters. A unit's PD/ED equals the average PD/ED of its members based on the armor they wear (or other forms of protection they have).

Units typically have no defense against unusual attack forms (such as Mental Blasts, Drains, and other manifestations of magic), but see *Unit Powers*, below.

MOVE

A unit's MOVE equals the average meters of movement its members have. For a mounted unit, this means the average meters of movement of the mounts.

Most units can only move across the land, so their MOVE depends on Running. Aerial and aquatic units would use Flight and Swimming, respectively. If a unit can move in more than one way, it has multiple MOVEs, one for each mode of movement.

UNIT SKILLS

A unit has a Skill only if every member of the unit has that Skill (or, in the GM's judgment, enough members have it at to make up for those who don't). Primarily this refers to Combat Skill Levels and other Skill Levels; if the members of a unit all have the same type of Level, they can use it to increase OCV, DCV, or damage (as appropriate) per the normal rules.

Other Skills units as a whole might have include Martial Arts, Stealth, and Tactics.

UNIT POWERS

A Unit has a Power only if every member of the unit has that Power (or, in the GM's judgment, enough members have it at to make up for those who don't). A unit of spellcasters or mystical monsters might all have the same power, for example. A unit of warriors all trained to resist wizardry and slay mages might have some Mental Defense and Power Defense.

UNIT COMPLICATIONS

At the GM's option, if every member of a unit has a particular Complication, so does the unit itself. This only matters if the Complication could somehow affect the battle. Examples include Physical Complications inherent to a race, or a unit of orcs whose members all have *Hatred Of Elves* and might break ranks to attack an elven unit.

MOVEMENT

A unit's MOVE indicates how many meters of movement it can take per Phase. Like an individual character, a unit can make a Full Move, make a Half Move and attack, move at Noncombat velocities, and so forth. Terrain may affect movement; see the Battle Terrain Table, above.

Units move in meters, just like regular characters (since, after all, they're composed of people, mounts, and the like). When calculating unit movement, calculate it from the center point of the area occupied by the unit. If that results in one "edge" or part of the unit coming into contact with another unit, typically the unit must stop moving and then move in a different way to go around it (if it's a friendly unit), or engage that unit in combat (if it's an enemy unit).

FACING

Units have facing, just like characters do. The GM (or player controlling the unit) must declare which way the unit faces. If attacked from the front, the unit gets its full DCV, plus any shield bonus. If attacked from the side or rear, it has only half DCV (as if it were Surprised) and doesn't get the DCV bonus for its shield. See *Combat Maneuvers*, below, regarding how units change facing during a battle.

Determining a unit's facing is typically a matter of common sense: which way are most of the members of the unit looking, moving, striking, or shooting? Anyone attacking that "side" of the unit's attacking the front, and that in turn tells you how an enemy can attack from the side or the rear. If necessary, visualize the unit as a simple geometric shape (such as a square or a hex), and use that mental picture to help you determine facing.

"MISSING" CHARACTERISTICS

Units do not have CON because they do not take STUN damage, just BODY (see *Taking Damage*).

Units do not have REC, END, or STUN because those Characteristics don't factor into mass combat.

If necessary, the GM can "restore" one of these Characteristics to a unit to adjudicate a situation that arises in battle — just take the average of the unit members' rating, as for other Characteristics. For example, if you wanted to keep track of "troop fatigue" over the course of a long battle, you could calculate units' END and then apply the Long-Term Endurance rules.



STACKING

Units' ability to "stack" (*i.e.*, for more than one unit to occupy the same area) depends on their size. Only a single unit of the average size that defines the battle scale can fit in a single scaled area; no other unit can stack with it. For example, if the distance scale is 1m = 16m, then only one unit of 200 soldiers can fit in a 16m radius area. Two or more smaller units can stack in a single area if they're small enough (for example, two 100-soldier units can fit in one 16m radius area). Units larger than average occupy more than the average area, of course. Unit leaders or other prominent characters can always occupy the same area as their unit; this doesn't count as stacking.

One unit may not "pass through" another unit occupying an area.

UNIT COMBAT

Mass combat using these rules is basically the same as *HERO System* combat between two individuals; units have Phases, OCVs, DCVs, and Maneuvers just like characters do. However, some rules for individual characters don't apply, and units have some special rules of their own.

ENTERING COMBAT

A unit has a number of Phases equal to its SPD, in the Segments indicated on the SPD Chart on 6E2 17. Units act during the Segment in order of their DEX values, just like individual characters.

Units may take Full, Half, or Zero Phase Actions, and if the GM approves, Actions that take no time. However, if the unit makes a Presence Attack, that counts as a Half Phase Action, not an Action that takes no time. Units may Hold their Actions, or if appropriate Abort to a defensive Action.

FIGHTING

Units fight just like individual characters do. They use the same type of Attack Roll, and apply modifiers to their CVs the same way (though the GM should exercise his good judgment and common sense in determining whether a modifier applies; one unit cannot Grab another and reduce its DCV, for example).

HTH COMBAT BETWEEN UNITS

To engage in HTH Combat, two or more units must be within "HTH Combat Range" with each other, just like regular characters. In other words, the two units have to be next to one another, with at least one "side" of each unit "touching" at least one "side" of the enemy unit.

RANGED COMBAT BETWEEN UNITS

To engage in Ranged Combat, two or more units must be within Range of one another based on the Range of their weapons.

For simplest adjudication, the GM should calculate the Range from the center point of the unit to the center point of the target unit. For example, if a unit of 3,000 human soldiers (which occupies a 64m radius area) has heavy longbows (with a range of 300m), the Range is calculated from the center of the 64m radius area — which means the arrows have to travel over 32 meters' worth of area occupied by that unit's soldiers, and can then hit an enemy unit whose center point is anywhere within the next 268m.

For greater complexity, the GM can calculate the Range from any part of the unit he prefers to any part of the target he prefers. For example, he could determine the Range from the front (the forward-facing "side") of a unit, or from its rear "side."

Calculate the Range Modifier for the unit's Ranged attacks (or Ranged attacks made against it) from the center point of the area that unit occupies (or from whatever point the GM's calculating Range from).

ATTACKING INDIVIDUALS

For ease of game play, an entire unit cannot attack an individual character. If a unit wants to do that, the GM should switch to individual-scale combat and resolve the situation using the Multiple Attackers rules.

COMBAT MODIFIERS

Units don't use most Combat Modifiers; they don't make sense when applied in a mass combat context. However, they do use the following: Behind Cover (if there's enough cover for everyone in the unit); Encumbrance (if everyone, or nearly everyone, in the unit is significantly burdened; use the average STR and weight carried to determine the unit's Encumbrance penalties); Environmental Conditions; and Surprised (such as when one unit ambushes another, or attacks its flank).

Generally, units do not use the Multiple Attackers rules. However, the GM might allow them if multiple units surround and "pin" one unit, or perhaps to simulate situations where a weaker but vastly numerically superior force attacks a small but powerful unit (*e.g.*, a horde of unarmored peasants versus a platoon of experienced knights).

COMBAT MANEUVERS

Units do not use most Combat Maneuvers; they don't make sense when applied in a mass combat context. Most mass combat simply involves one unit using Strikes against another. However, they can also use the following: Block; Brace and Set (if the unit has Ranged weapons); Move By/Through (if the unit is mounted; unit takes one-third of the damage done); and Set Versus Charge.



Typically, units may not use Multiple Attack. However, the GM can, in his discretion, allow this to simulate units of mixed troops or the like. For example, a unit composed partly of swordsmen and partly of archers could have the swordsmen attack the leading edge of an enemy unit HTH while the archers pepper the rest of the enemy formation with arrows, and define this as a Multiple Attack.

If every (or nearly every) member in a unit has the same Martial Maneuver, it can apply to increase the unit's DMG. Units cannot use Martial Maneuvers that make no sense in a mass combat context, such as Martial Disarm, Martial Grab, or Martial Throw.

UNIT COMBAT MANEUVERS

In addition to the standard *HERO System* maneuvers, units may use three special unit-only Combat Maneuvers.

Change Facing: A unit may change its facing. This requires a Half Phase Action and does not modify OCV or DCV, but may change a unit's DCV if it turns to face a flanker that was attacking it at half DCV.

Form Square: A beleaguered unit can "form square" to resist all the enemy units surrounding it. This requires a Full Phase Action and does not modify OCV or DCV. After a unit Forms Square, all of its sides are considered its "front" for purposes of calculating DCV and applying a shield bonus. However, while Formed Square, a unit cannot move more than 2m per Phase. It must Change Facing to face a specific direction if it wants to move more quickly.

Tactical Assistance: If a unit has Tactics (indicating that it's full of experienced, clever soldiers), the unit may make a Complementary Roll to aid Leadership attempts (see page 235). This requires a Half Phase Action.

DETERMINING DAMAGE

If an attacking unit succeeds with its Attack Roll, it rolls its damage based on its *DMG* Characteristic. Several factors modify the damage roll:

1. The unit's Unit Modifier. Subtract the defender's Unit Modifier from the attacker's Unit Modifier. (In most cases, the minimum result should be 0, so that even a small unit has the chance to damage a larger one. However, the GM may allow results of less than 0 if necessary to keep small units from having too great an impact on large ones.) Add the result to the attacker's damage roll.
2. Any Combat Skill Levels assigned to increase damage.
3. mage bonuses from velocity, if a unit performs a Move By/Through.

Example: *The Noble Knights of Val-Darran, a unit fighting on behalf of the Mhendarian Palatinate against an army of orcs, contains 40 knights. This gives it a Unit Modifier of +10. It confronts a unit of 14 orc warriors of the Barren Skull tribe; the orcs have a Unit Modifier of +7. The Noble Knights has DMG 1½d6, and scores a hit! It rolls a total of 8. To this it adds its Unit Modifier minus the orcs' Unit Modifier, or (10 - 7 =) 3 points of damage, for a total of 11.*

Later, the Noble Knights are at the van of the Mhendarian lines when a huge unit of orcs (340 orcs, Unit Modifier +16) begins an offensive. Undeterred by the odds against them, the Noble Knights charge! It has MOVE 24m and performs a Move Through. Despite the OCV penalty for a Move Through, the Knights once again score a telling blow. MOVE 24m adds +4 DCs to a Move Through, giving the unit a DMG of 3d6. The unit rolls 14. It subtracts the defender's Unit Modifier (+16) from its own (+10), giving -6, but the minimum result is zero. Therefore the 14 points of damage remains unmodified.



STUN DAMAGE IN MASS COMBAT

Units do not take STUN damage, only BODY. If an attacker uses Normal Damage weapons, convert them to the equivalent DCs in Killing Damage for mass combat purposes, but describe the casualties as “unconscious” more often than injured or killed. If an attacker uses a STUN-only attack (such as a wide-scale sleep spell), just calculate a “STUN” Characteristic from the unit members’ average STUN scores, or convert to Killing Damage and describe all the casualties as “unconscious.”

3

UNIT DAMAGE SEQUENCE

Here’s a quick-reference for determining the effect of an attack on a unit:

1. Determine how much BODY the unit takes from the attack based on its PD/ED.
2. If damage exceeds 1/3 of the unit’s current BODY, it must make a Morale Roll; see the Morale Table.
3. Based on a failed Morale Roll, or simply on the loss of BODY, the unit may lose Readiness; see the Readiness Table.

TAKING DAMAGE

Once you have determined how much damage the attacker did, the defending unit must find out how much damage it took. Subtract the unit’s PD or ED (depending on the type of attack) from the attacker’s damage. If the result is zero or less, the unit is unaffected by the attack. If the result is a positive number, the unit takes BODY damage, with some important results.

If the damage sustained is less than or equal to one-third the unit’s *current* BODY, nothing special happens. (“Current” BODY means the BODY it has after all previous damage was applied, not its normal starting BODY. For example, a unit with BODY 18 that has taken 8 points of damage has a current BODY of 10.)

If the damage sustained is greater than one-third the unit’s *current* BODY, the unit must make a Morale Roll at the penalty indicated on the Morale Roll Table. However, no Morale Roll is necessary if a unit drops to 0 BODY or below; that indicates the attacker has destroyed (or at least absolutely routed) that unit.

If a prominent character (see below) is part of a unit that takes damage, the GM can either assume he escapes injury, or use the Injury Threshold rules (page 237) to determine if he gets hurt during the clash.

MORALE ROLLS

A *Morale Roll* is a PRE Roll made using the unit’s Presence. It represents a unit’s cohesion, camaraderie, and chance to stay organized and disciplined. Experienced soldiers may buy extra PRE, Only To Improve Unit Morale Rolls (-2); if enough of the members of a unit buy this, it improves the unit’s chance of succeeding with the Roll.

At the GM’s option, a unit with Combat Skill Levels or Penalty Skill Levels (of any type or value) can also apply them to improve Morale Rolls, provided the unit has not yet assigned those Levels in the Segment when it makes the roll. It may Abort to assign Levels in this manner.

If the unit succeeds with its Morale Roll, nothing happens; it maintains its current state of Readiness (see below). If it fails its Morale Roll, it immediately drops one level of Readiness and must make *another* Morale Roll at the same penalty. If it fails again, it drops another level, and must roll again at the same penalty. The unit keeps making Morale Rolls until it succeeds with one or routs.

The GM can also require a unit to make a Morale Roll in other circumstances, such as when significant enemy reinforcements arrive, the unit realizes it’s just walked into an ambush, or an enemy spellcaster or monster afflicts the unit with fear. The GM may impose any modifiers he considers appropriate on these rolls.

Several modifiers apply to Morale Rolls. First, you can use appropriate Presence Attack Modifiers listed on 6E2 136, substituting +/-1 for each +/-1d6. (Do not use the “in combat” modifier.) Second, if the unit has a prominent character (a PC or significant NPC) as its leader, that character may be able to inspire it (see *Leadership*, below). For example, a unit of humans fighting a unit of evil Deep Elves in an underground cavern might suffer a -1 to the roll for “inappropriate setting,” since they’re at a significant disadvantage.

Units of Automata (such as skeletons and zombies) have a Morale Roll based on their PRE, just like other units. While they do not feel fear, their inability to adapt to changing situations may effectively cause them to become disorganized and ineffectual, and the Morale Roll simulates that.

OTHER EFFECTS OF DAMAGE

Damage to a unit can have several other effects besides forcing Morale Rolls.

First, as noted above, a unit reduced to 0 BODY is destroyed (or totally routed). Some survivors may remain, but the unit no longer exists as an effective fighting force.

Second, the unit takes casualties: it loses fighting personnel, making it harder for it to fight well. See *Readiness And Casualties*, below, for specifics.

Third, the unit may suffer a reduction in size, and thus in Unit Modifier. Loss of BODY means loss of people capable of fighting, which affects a unit’s Readiness (see below). It’s usually easiest for the GM to keep the unit’s starting Unit Modifier and just apply the penalties for loss of Readiness. However, some GMs prefer to periodically recalculate a unit’s size, perhaps because the unit Rallies (see below) and reforms. If so, the re-sized unit starts at a state of Fully Ready.

READINESS AND CASUALTIES

All units exist in one of four states of *Readiness*. A unit’s Readiness indicates its degree of cohesion, organization, and preparedness to fight — in short, its “fighting trim.” As a unit’s Readiness drops, so does its ability to fight effectively, as indicated by the Readiness Table.

A unit can lose Readiness in two ways. The first is taking casualties. The GM must determine what percentage a unit’s current BODY is of its normal starting BODY, then use that to determine the unit’s state of Readiness via the Readiness Table. For example, suppose a unit has BODY 24. It takes 12 BODY damage. That puts it at 50% of its starting BODY, so it automatically falls from Fully Ready to Disrupted. Even one more point of BODY will reduce it to Scattered. Second, a unit can lose Readiness by failing Morale Rolls (see above).

MORALE ROLL TABLE

BODY Damage Sustained	Morale Roll Modifier
Less than or equal to 1/3 unit’s current BODY	No roll required
More than 1/3 but less than half unit’s current BODY	-1
Half or more but less than 2/3 unit’s current BODY	-2
More than 2/3 unit’s current BODY	-4
100% or more of unit’s current BODY	N/A; unit destroyed

“Casualties” doesn’t necessarily refer to people killed. Rather it means people who can no longer fight effectively. For many soldiers, this does in fact mean they’re dead. But it could also mean a soldier is too badly injured to fight, has been knocked unconscious, has been afflicted with a paralysis spell, or has run away. The point is that he can no longer participate in the battle as part of his unit. The GM decides exactly what happens to any given unit based on the circumstances.

At the GM’s option, the DCV penalty for being less than Fully Ready doesn’t apply to Ranged attacks — the unit is so widely spread that hitting a target is, if anything, more difficult than when it’s massed together.

READINESS TABLE

State Of Readiness	Casualties	Effect
Fully Ready	85-100% BODY	None
Disrupted	50-84% BODY	-2 to OCV, DCV, and Morale Rolls
Scattered	10-49% BODY	-4 to OCV, DCV, and Morale Rolls
Routed/ Destroyed	0-9% BODY	Eliminated from the battle

RALLYING

Units don’t get Post-Segment 12 Recoveries. Instead, in Post-Segment 12, they get to try to rally. The unit makes a Morale Roll. If the roll succeeds, the unit recovers one step of Readiness (it does not “heal” any BODY, though the GM might explain the special effect of the rally as soldiers who had fled returning to the fray). The GM may forbid a unit to rally from the effects of damage, reserving rallying only for overcoming loss of morale.

A unit may also attempt to rally on any of its Phases. Rallying is a Full Phase Action, requires a successful Morale Roll, and occurs at the end of the Segment (after all other units who have a Phase that Segment have acted). A unit that tries to rally during a Phase may do nothing else (not even Actions which take no time). While rallying, a unit is at ½ DCV. A unit that rallies during Segment 12 also gets the Post-Segment 12 rally attempt.

If appropriate, the GM may define a rally as having two Disrupted or Scattered units combine to reform one unit. This usually requires a prominent character or the like to motivate and command the disparate soldiers to form a new unit. The GM must calculate the new unit’s size, Unit Modifier, and the like. The new unit typically starts as Disrupted, but the GM may declare it Fully Ready if the commander makes a PRE +20 or greater Presence Attack to bring the troops together.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Several unusual factors can influence the outcome of a battle.

PROMINENT CHARACTERS

Most of the combatants in a battle are run-of-the-mill soldiers, warriors, or other troops. Their efforts are just part of the whole of their unit’s actions. But a few combatants have the capacity to influence an entire unit... or even an entire battle. Known as *prominent characters*, this group includes the following:

- any Player Character
- any significant NPC, such as commanders, renowned warriors, leaders of famed units, fighters the PCs know by name or Reputation, and the like
- any other NPC the GM feels deserves to have a special effect on the battle

Prominent characters can take any of the actions described below during battle. They act on their own DEX and SPD, but subject to the time scale of the battle. Of course, a prominent character doesn’t have to act by himself; he can choose to remain part of a unit.

LEADERSHIP

He was a captain that men would follow, that he would follow, even under the shadow of black wings.

—a description of Faramir from *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

First and foremost, a prominent character can lead a unit into battle. Leading a unit requires the *Tactics* Skill. On every one of the unit’s Phases when he’s not involved in some other action, a prominent character may make a *Tactics* roll before the unit takes any Actions. (He must apply Readiness penalties to this roll; it’s harder to lead Disrupted or Scattered troops.) If the roll fails, he has no effect. If the roll succeeds exactly, the prominent character has a +1 that he may apply to the unit’s OCV, DCV, or Morale Roll that Phase. Additionally, for each 2 points by which the roll succeeds, the prominent character gets *another* +1 to apply. The prominent character must decide how to apply this bonus(es) immediately after he succeeds with the roll, and he may split them up if desired (think of them as Skill Levels).

If a unit has two or more prominent characters, only one may try to engage in Leadership. However, other prominent characters who have *Tactics* can make Complementary Rolls to aid the leader’s roll. Additionally, if the unit itself has *Tactics* (indicating that it’s full of experienced, clever soldiers), the unit may make a Complementary Roll to help its leader (this requires a Half Phase Action by the unit).





INSPIRATION

A prominent character may inspire his unit. He can do this in one of three ways.

First, he may make an inspirational speech using Oratory. He does this right before the unit makes a Morale Roll, and it takes a Half Phase Action by him (which usually means he has to have Held his Action). If he fails, he has no effect. If the roll succeeds exactly, the unit gets a +1 bonus on its Morale Roll. Additionally, for each 2 points by which the roll succeeds, the unit gets *another* +1 to its Morale Roll.

Second, a character who doesn't have Oratory can try an inspirational Presence Attack instead. This works just like making an Oratory roll. For every level of effect achieved (PRE, PRE +10, and so on), he adds +1 to the unit's Morale Roll.

Third, he can try to inspire the unit by attempting a great deed. The GM has to determine what constitutes a "great deed"; successfully engaging in combat (see below) usually qualifies. Depending on the greatness of the deed, and how well the character succeeds at it, he may add +1, +2, or more to his unit's Morale Rolls. This effect may even last for longer than the current Phase, if the GM considers that appropriate.

INTIMIDATION

Instead of trying to inspire his own troops, a prominent character may attempt to intimidate, cow, or even terrify an enemy unit. To do this, the character makes an appropriate Presence Attack against the enemy unit (this usually means the enemy must be able to see and hear him, which may expose him to attack). Making this Presence Attack takes a Half Phase Action. The prominent character may add his unit's Unit Modifier to the results of his roll, but if he does so the target unit adds its Unit Modifier to its PRE for purposes of determining the outcome of the attack.

In addition to the standard results of the Presence Attack (making the opponent hesitate and the like), every level of effect achieved (PRE, PRE +10, and so on) imposes a -1 penalty on any Morale Rolls the target unit has to make that Phase.

COMBAT

A prominent character who's really interested in heroism and glory can strike out on his own and fight an enemy unit (or prominent NPC) by himself.

If the character attacks an enemy unit, to a large extent you should treat him as a one-man unit. He can inflict damage on the other unit as if he were a unit; this represents his power, might, heroism, divine favor, luck, magic, or what have you as he cleaves through the press of the foe, casts his enemies down before him, and stacks the dead like cordwood (though the respective Unit Modifiers may hinder his ability to inflict damage). If he does enough damage, he may even singlehandedly force the enemy unit to make a Morale Roll! If the unit attacks him back, it makes an Attack Roll as if he were a unit (*i.e.*, it cannot obtain a Multiple Attackers bonus), but it damages him as an individual character: it does not add its Unit Modifier to increase the damage it does; he applies his Normal Defenses as well as his PD/ED from armor; he can take STUN damage; and so forth.

If the character attacks an enemy NPC, resolve it as a normal individual combat. This may require the GM to temporarily suspend a battle with a large time scale so he can determine the outcome of the personal battle.

RANDOM PROMINENT CHARACTER COMBAT

In some cases, the GM may find it worthwhile to randomly determine what happens to each prominent NPC (or at least each PC) during a battle. This is a four-step process.

First, divide the battle into discrete increments of time. Typically this means Turns, but for a long battle the GM may prefer to use 1 Hour, 6 Hours, or some other time increment.

Second, determine what part of the battle the character spent each time increment in. You can either choose, or you can roll randomly on the Press Of Battle Table.

Third, for each time increment, determine whether the character suffered an injury, using the *Injury* column of the Press Of Battle Table. First the GM rolls 1d6. If the number rolled falls within the indicated range (such as 1-2 for Heavy Fighting), then the GM must roll another die to find out how many points of BODY damage the character took. The number in parentheses indicates how to roll; the minimum result is 0. The character loses the BODY rolled on the damage die; he does not apply his PD/ED or Normal Defenses to reduce this number.

Fourth, prominent characters often have a chance for heroic, brave, noble, or valorous actions in battle. For each time increment, the GM rolls 2d6 for each character and consults the Press Of Battle Table. If the number rolled falls within the indicated range for the part of the battle the character is in that increment, a Noteworthy Event occurs. The GM can make up a noteworthy event, or roll one randomly on the Noteworthy Events Table. Whatever the event is, it should give the character a real chance to shine... but in battle, that also means exposing himself to danger. Typically, a character should only have one, or at most two, Noteworthy Events per battle, but the final decision is up to the GM.

DAMAGE TO PROMINENT CHARACTERS

Even if the GM doesn't use the Random Prominent Character Combat rules above, there's always a chance that a PC or other prominent character gets injured during a battle. In Fantasy novels and movies, whether a character suffers a serious injury depends largely on the needs of the story, and in most cases you should resolve the issue of prominent character injury the same way. The GM should *never* kill a PC as part of the casualties a unit takes, and should only kill a prominent NPC that way if it enhances the game.

That being said, many GMs are reluctant to let characters enter battle without exposing them to at least *some* risk. There are two ways to determine if a PC gets hurt during a battle.

First, the GM can arrange a one-on-one combat between each PC and some prominent NPC during the course of the battle. While this slows down the resolution of the battle itself (because the GM has to freeze the battle and resolve the personal combat using the normal rules), it adds a "personal touch" to each character's battle experiences.

Second, the GM can roll randomly for each character to determine if he got hurt. For each Turn of battle, the GM sets an "Injury Threshold" number — the thicker or more dangerous the battle, the higher the number, though most range between 7 and 12. Each character rolls 1d6 and adds his DCV. If he equals or exceeds the Injury Threshold number, he receives no injury that Turn. If his number is less than the Injury Threshold, he loses ½d6 BODY.

PRESS OF BATTLE TABLE

Roll (2d6)	Location	Injury	Noteworthy Event
2-3	Outskirts	1 (½d6-2)	2-3 on 2d6
4-6	Light Fighting	1-2 (1d6-4)	2-4 on 2d6
7-8	Heavy Fighting	1-2 (1d6-3)	2-5 on 2d6
9-10	Thick Of Battle	1-3 (1d6-2)	2-6 on 2d6
11-12	Heart Of The Battle	1-4 (1d6)	2-7 on 2d6

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS TABLE

Roll (2d6)	Event
2-4	Well-Met In Battle: The character's timely actions save a comrade or ally who was in trouble. The GM may want to resolve this as a combat between the character's unit and the enemy unit attacking the character's comrade's unit.
5	Shattering Assault: The character leads (or makes) an attack on an enemy unit that's so forceful and deadly that he automatically causes the unit to drop one Readiness level. The GM then resolves the rest of the battle between the two normally.
6-7	Heroic Combat: The character comes face-to-face with a significant enemy (possibly a prominent NPC) and must fight him. The GM resolves this as an individual battle (or, to speed play, can resolve it using a single die roll of some sort between the two combatants).
8	Capture The Banner: The character has the chance to capture an enemy banner (or similar token of significance). The GM chooses an appropriate enemy unit and has the PC fight it; if he wins, or makes any one Attack Roll by 5 or more, he captures the banner.
9	Prisoner: The character captures an important enemy figure — a prominent NPC, a commander, or the like — whom he can later interrogate or ransom.
10	Glorious Defense: The character has to defend an important objective: his army's banner, his commanding officer, a crucial part of the line of battle, or the like. Roll his Injury as if he were one Location lower on the Press Of Battle Table (if he's in the Heart Of The Battle, then Injury is 1-5 (1d6+1)), but if he survives, he wins great renown for his valor.
11-12	We Surrender: An enemy unit of equal or lesser size than the character's unit surrenders to him, and possibly even defects to his side.



“Can you imagine an army trying to fight with nothing but swords and daggers? No hurling of death spells. No prescients spying out the enemy’s battle plans. No killer demons beating at unseen protective walls.”

—Aran considers the possibility of a magic-less battlefield in “What Good Is A Glass Dagger?”, by Larry Niven

Huss raised his arm; the tarpaulin dropped from the face of his great display, to reveal a painted representation of Ballant Keep.

3 *... Sebastian ran to the stage, struck fire to a fuse. Watchers inside Ballant Keep saw the depicted keep take fire. Flame erupted from the windows, the roof glowed and crumbled. Inside the tent the two jinxmen, the cabalmen, and the spellbinders methodically took dolls, dipped them into the heat of the braziers, concentrating, reaching out for the mind of the man whose doll they burnt. Within the keep men became uneasy. Many began to image burning sensations, which became more severe as their minds grew more sensitive to the idea of fire. Lord Ballant noted the uneasiness. He signaled to his chief jinxman Anderson Grimes. “Begin the counterspell.”*

—the jinxmen use magic to influence the outcome of a battle in “The Miracle Workers,” by Jack Vance

MAGIC IN MASS COMBAT

Fantasy Hero battles don’t just involve armored men with swords and spears — in a Fantasy realm, magic may play a part in battle as well!

Because magic systems can vary tremendously from one Fantasy world to the next (see Chapter Four), it’s impossible for one set of rules to address every conceivable effect magic could have in or on a battle. What follows are some general notes for the GM and players.

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

The role of spellcasters in combat depends on how common and powerful they tend to be in the campaign world. In a High Fantasy game, armies may come to battle with entire corps of wizards at their command (as in Steven Erikson’s *Gardens Of The Moon*), making a group of mages just one more unit among many (albeit an unusual unit). In such a world, only the most powerful and noteworthy battle mages would achieve “prominent character” status, and soldiers would become accustomed to magical manifestations on the battlefield. On the other hand, in a Low Fantasy or Swords And Sorcery game, spellcasters might be so rare that *any* spellcaster involved in a battle automatically becomes a prominent character (witness Gandalf during the Battle of the Pelennor Fields in *The Lord Of The Rings*). In a campaign like that, the use of magic on the battlefield might be so frightening and deadly that just seeing a wizard cast a powerful spell could force an enemy unit to make a Morale Roll.

Since PC spellcasters automatically count as prominent characters, they can wreak tremendous damage on enemy units with attack spells. The GM may want to have enemy spellcasters available to counteract their magic, or at least give back as good as their side gets. If necessary, the GM may restrict magic so that it only works on a personal scale unless a character specifically designs a spell solely for use as “battle magic.”

DESIGNING BATTLE MAGIC SPELLS

Battle magic refers to spells designed for use in battle — typically against enemy armies and units, but possibly against prominent enemy characters. It comes in two varieties. One type, occurring mostly in High Fantasy campaigns, features spells for individual wizards who fight in the midst of the battle, using their magic where warriors wield blades. This type of battle magic is little different from “combat magic” (quickly-cast spells used by adventuring mages to fight monsters and the like). It takes relatively little effort or concentration on the caster’s part (since he can’t focus very well in the middle of a battle!) and often has a devastating effect on a relatively small battle scale (it works best against small units rather than large ones).

The other type of battle magic is more of a ritual magic. It’s cast by one or more wizards (usually more) who stay on the outskirts of battle, often with the reinforcements and/or the commanders. It takes time and effort to cast

(Extra Time, Concentration, Increased Endurance Cost, and the like), but often has enough scope to affect an entire enemy army or reach a distant enemy commander. Some of the magic used by the jinxmen in Jack Vance’s short story “The Miracle Workers” provides an example of this type of battle magic.

Spellcasters who want to affect entire units (or armies!) should use the *MegaScale* Advantage (+1, or if necessary a larger scale) to create spells that cover a large area.

MAGIC ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Oil-soaked rags attached to long-vaned arrows descended in formation and followed precise trajectories to land in the barbarians’ rear. As each hit the ground, it exploded in a shower of flame that flashed in a display of eye-paining brilliance. Alodar shielded his face from the bursts. As he blinked his eyes back into focus, he saw that where each arrow had struck stood a small, scaly, grotesque form, a miniature of the demons which had confronted him at the foot of Handar’s tower. Without delay the lobster-red devils opened their mouths into wide ovals; from each belched forth balls of fire [to engulf the barbarian warriors].

—demon-summoning magic is used to devastate the opposition in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Generally speaking, in mass combat magic can affect four things: terrain; movement; units; and prominent characters.

MAGIC AND TERRAIN

First, magic can alter or improve the terrain. A defender seeking to protect a particular area might use Change Environment on the ground in front of his position to create a swamp, river, or other obstacle for the attacker to cross — and of course, while crossing it the attacker leaves himself open to direct attack by archers, wizards, and the like. The combat effect for the Change Environment is to reduce the attacker’s DCV to the same extent the terrain would improve the defender’s DCV according to the Battle Terrain Table; this represents the attacking units floundering across marshy ground, struggling to cross a river, leaving themselves exposed to archery, and the like.

Similarly, an attacking unit could cast a spell to Transform the terrain to deprive a defender of his DCV bonus from terrain. Suddenly, the ground shifts and buckles, eliminating cover and slopes so the attacker can charge unimpeded, or the trees in a forest move out of the way to give the attacker’s archers clear shots at the enemy. Such a Transform requires Area Of Effect, typically *MegaScaled*.

Of course, not all terrain changes are necessarily real. An appropriate Image of impassable terrain may often prove just as effective as making an actual change, and cost fewer Character Points.

MAGIC AND MOVEMENT

Sometimes the biggest tactical advantage one army can have over another is the ability to move more quickly. That allows an army to occupy better ground before its adversary can, outmaneuver and outflank an opponent, and if necessary beat an expeditious retreat. The right spells can prove tremendously helpful here. The most mundane of these would be Area Of Effect Aids to Running (sometimes with a Limitation that the spell only applies to horses, to help cavalry but not infantry), or perhaps Flight or Swimming for aerial and aquatic units.

In games with powerful battle magic, movement spells might go beyond just enhancing existing movement. A wizard could grant a unit the power to fly, or even Teleport it across the battlefield (how's *that* for a flanking maneuver?).

MAGIC AND UNITS

A spellcaster can attack an enemy unit with magic. This ranges from the obvious (fireballs, instant-death plagues, swarms of attacking insects, lightning bolts from the sky) to more obscure effects like emotional manipulation, curses, and making weapons fall apart.

If a spellcaster qualifies as a prominent character, he can assault an enemy unit directly with his spells. All he has to do is get close enough to cast them and then let loose. His magic rips into the enemy lines, slaying and dismaying the foe due to his prowess and might. On the other hand, if he's not prominent, he either needs to belong to a unit of similarly-trained mages, or he has to have battle-scaled magic (see above) to affect an entire unit.

Of course, spellcasters aren't limited to attacking the enemy — they can also help their own units. Typically they do this with Aid, but since units' Characteristics depend on the average of the members' Characteristics, the Aid must be an Area Of Effect applied to everyone in the unit (or at least enough members to raise the average). A spellcaster could also cast a spell with Usable By Others to give a unit powers it doesn't normally have. For example, a priest could apply a Blessing Of Righteous Might to an entire army (+1 with HTH Combat, Usable Simultaneously by a huge number of people).

MAGIC AND INDIVIDUALS

Lastly, spellcasters can use magic against prominent characters and other individuals. Usually this means engaging in personal-scale combat, which requires the spellcaster to get fairly close to his target. However, some potent battle magics have Advantages like *Line Of Sight*, *Increased Maximum Range*, and *No Range Modifier* so a wizard can cast them against distant targets — such as an enemy general watching the battle from a hilltop, or a prominent enemy who's wreaking havoc among the spellcaster's units.

SIEGES

The assault was then begun, but the defenders were prepared and held well their walls. Well fortified and well provided was Dilfar. Fighting from a position of strength, the defenders cast down much destruction upon the men of the West.

—the siege of Dilfar begins in *Dilvish, The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

“Have fun storming the castle!”

—Miracle Max wishes our heroes well in the movie *The Princess Bride*

A *siege* is a special type of mass combat situation in which the defender occupies a highly defensive structure — typically a castle, keep, or fortress — while the attacker uses direct assaults, siege engines, and other tactics to try to either batter down the structure's defenses or sneak inside them. Typically the attacker significantly outnumbers the defender (otherwise, the defender could probably meet the attacker in open battle). Sieges were usually long, drawn-out affairs, sometimes lasting years, with periods of intense, highly dangerous activity punctuating long stretches of boredom. The defenders were often more likely to die from starvation or disease than the enemy's weapons... assuming the attacker didn't just give up and leave, or run to escape from arriving reinforcements.

The Ultimate Base (“UBA”) has extensive rules for designing castles (and other Bases), conducting sieges, using siege engines, and Bases in combat generally. That information is not reprinted here. Before staging a siege in your game, you should refer to:

- the descriptions of and rules for castle materials and component structures (UBA 42-66)
- the descriptions of and rules for siege engines (UBA 162-66) (and if appropriate, cannons [UBA 156-58])
- rules for Bases in combat (UBA 190-202), particularly the rules on determining damage to Bases (UBA 196-200), repairing damage to Bases (UBA 200), and sieges (UBA 201-02)



SAMPLE UNITS

Name Of Unit	Size	DMG	RDMG	DEX	OCV	DCV	BODY	INT	EGO	PRE	Def	SPD	MOVE	Morale Roll
Human Units														
Peasant Levies	100	1d6	—	8	3	3	18	8	7	5	1	2	8m	10-
Militia	100	1d6+1	1d6	9	3	3	21	8	8	8	2	2	10m	11-
Soldiers	100	1d6+1	1d6+1	11	4	4	24	10	10	10	4	2	12m	11-
Elite Soldiers	100	1½d6	1d6+1	14	6	6	26	13	12	13	5	3	14m	12-
Knights, Afoot	100	2d6	—	17	7	7	28	15	14	18	7	3	14m	13-
Light Cavalry	100	1½d6	1d6+1	16	7	7	24	13	12	13	3	3	24m	12-
Medium Cavalry	100	2d6	1½d6	15	6	6	25	13	12	15	5	3	22m	12-
Heavy Cavalry	100	3d6	—	16	6	6	28	13	12	18	6	3	20m	13-
Good Troops														
Centaur Cavalry	100	3d6	1d6+1	14	5	5	31	10	10	15	4	3	22m	12-
Dwarven Axemen	100	2d6	—	14	7	7	28	12	13	18	6	3	10m	13-
Elven Archers	100	1d6+1	2d6	18	8	8	26	18	16	23	5	4	14m	14-
Evil Troops														
Goblins	100	1d6	1d6	10	3	3	23	8	8	10	4	3	12m	11-
Orcs	100	1½d6	1d6+1	12	4	4	26	8	8	10	4	3	12m	12-
Ogres	100	3d6	—	14	5	5	33	8	8	15	4	3	16m	13-
Trolls, Common	100	3½d6	—	14	5	5	35	10	10	25	5	5	18m	13-
Skeletons	100	1d6+1	1d6+1	12	4	4	23	5	0	13	2	2	12m	12-
Skeletons, Armored	100	1½d6	1d6+1	14	5	5	23	5	0	15	6	2	14m	13-
Zombies	100	1d6+1	—	10	3	3	23	5	0	13	4	2	4m	12-
Zombies, Armored	100	1½d6	—	11	4	4	24	5	0	15	8	2	6m	12-

Def: The unit's PD and ED.

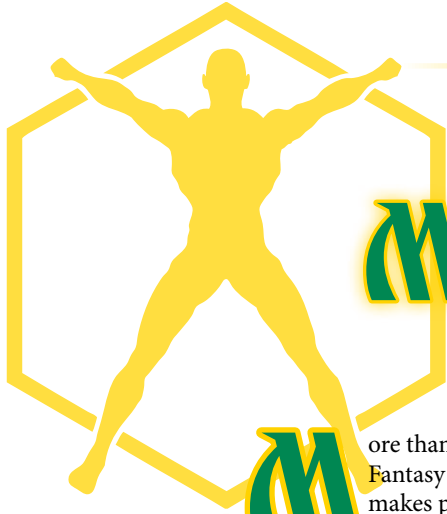


CHAPTER FOUR



ARCANE CREATIONS
MAGIC

MG



MAGIC SYSTEMS

Magic is a practical science, or, more properly, a craft, since emphasis is placed primarily upon utility, rather than basic understanding. ... A spell in essence corresponds to

a code, or set of instructions, inserted into the sensorium of an entity which is able and not unwilling to alter the environment in accordance with the message conveyed by the spell. These entities are not necessarily "intelligent," nor even "sentient," and their conduct, from the tyro's point of view, is unpredictable, capricious, and dangerous.

—Jack Vance explains the basics of how magic works in the 21st Aeon in *Rhialto The Marvellous*

Vaarsuvius: *Even gleaning a fraction of the power I harness on a daily basis would drive you MAD.*

Roy Greenhilt: *I don't think I...*

Vaarsuvius: MAD!

—Vaarsuvius explains his (her?) power to Roy in "The Order Of The Stick," a webcomic by Rich Burlew

More than anything else, what defines Fantasy as a genre is *magic*. Magic makes possible all the impossible things that characterize Fantasy: dragons, evil Dark Lords, flying castles... and of course spellcasting. In most Fantasy Hero games, spellcasters are the most colorful and noteworthy characters, and their actions, duels, and even idle whims sometimes affect the course of the entire world.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about magic is how infinitely malleable it is as a Fantasy concept. Fantasy stories, movies, and games have depicted literally hundreds of different ways of thinking about, using, and working with magic — and they really only begin to scratch the

surface, since magic by its very nature can be just about anything. This chapter looks at some of the many possibilities magic offers in a Fantasy Hero campaign to help guide you through the process of creating your own magic systems, spells, and magical items.

For a GM, the first thing to do regarding the subject of magic is decide on the *magic system* for the campaign. (A player, on the other hand, just has to find out from the GM what the magic system is, and what implications it has for game play.) "Magic system" is gaming shorthand for *the way magic works in the world*. It's a definitional framework that lets the GM and players conceptualize what magic is in the campaign, what characters can do with it, and how it affects the world.

MULTIPLE MAGIC SYSTEMS

While most Fantasy settings only feature one magic system (if for no other reason than this saves the GM work!), there's no reason that has to be the case. It's entirely possible that you could have two, three, or more distinct magic systems in the same setting. For example, in Steven Brust's "Vlad Taltos" novels, there's Eastern witchcraft and Dragaeran sorcery, which arguably would work very differently in game terms.

Besides being willing to do the work to design multiple magic systems (and possibly multiple lists of spells for characters to use), a GM who wants a multiple magic system setting has to do his best to make sure that the different magic systems are balanced against one another. If one system has magic that's more powerful, easier to use, or otherwise "better," on average, than the other systems, characters are naturally going to gravitate toward it. The GM should try to ensure that each system has its strengths and weaknesses, and that each of them is more or less as good/powerful as all of the others.

DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

"Who are you then that you desire not the secrets of magic?"

—T'sain's conduct puzzles Mazirian in "Mazirian The Magician," by Jack Vance

Before you start considering rules, game elements, and other *HERO System* issues pertaining to magic, you should consider how you want to define magic: where it comes from, who can use it (and how), how powerful it can be, and so forth. At this stage, don't think too much about the game mechanics you'll use to simulate these things. Define your magic system first, so that it has the feel you want and fits into your world the way you want it to; then figure out how to use the rules to create it.

WHERE MAGIC COMES FROM

The first issue for you to consider is also the most elementary one: where does magic come from? Magic has to come from some font or well-spring; power doesn't exist in a vacuum. Some of the possibilities include:

MAGIC IS AN INNATE FORCE

He was well-versed in the art of nature-wizardry, but he did not have the reserves of power which the Sorcerer Emperors of Melniboné had possessed when they had ruled the world. His ancestors had passed their knowledge down to him — but not their mystic vitality and many of the spells and secrets that he had were unusable, since he did not have the reservoir of strength, either of soul or of body, to work them.

—Elric laments the limitations on his ability to work magic in *Sailor On The Seas Of Fate*, by Michael Moorcock

Kellory drew in his breath and called upon the inmost resources of his being — hidden wells of strength few mortal men ever disturb. There within him, deeply hidden, as it lies hidden with every man, is a Power which links him to the unseen maze of forces and alignments that constitutes the Plenum[.] He called now upon that Power: few men dare call upon it; but he dared.

—Kellory uses his innermost strength to defeat a monster in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

Perhaps the easiest way to define the source of magic is to describe it as an innate power of persons and beings who can cast spells. This has important implications for some of the issues discussed below. It typically indicates that magic is rare, wielded only by individuals born with a natural talent for it (the same way some people have a natural talent for music or sports), and that only the innately talented can use magic at all. However, that doesn't necessarily have to be the case. You could have a magic system in which *everyone* has some capacity to cast spells, but only some people bother to develop it to the point of usability (much like learning to play a musical instrument — anyone can, but only a small number of people do). In such a system, you could establish varying levels of “magical aptitude,” ranging from “magical genius” to “mystically unaware,” perhaps with Perks, Talents, or Templates defining each level.

If magic is a “personal” power, something that springs from the individual, you must also consider whether powering magic has any negative effects on the spellcaster. The simplest solution, one adopted for many campaigns that use personal magic systems, is that it has no negative effects. Spellcasters can fire Mystic Darts and teleport around all day without tiring themselves or losing anything. This cuts down on bookkeeping in the game (thus speeding game play) and makes spellcasters seem less like learned scholars and more like super-powerful people.

But many GMs find the “no cost” approach a little unrealistic or unbalanced for their games. To prevent spellcasters from running roughshod over their foes, they make personal magic cost the user in some fashion. The most common solution is to make magic cost END — possibly a *lot* of END — so that wizards have to be careful about how many spells they cast, and how quickly. (See page 274 for more on END and magic.) A more extreme solution is to make magic cost something else (or something in addition). Examples include STUN (cast too many spells and you'll pass out) and BODY (“blood magic” — characters must spill their own blood, or sometimes that of another person, to fuel their spells). Of course, these only count as significant restrictions on spellcasting if characters don't have access to easily-used healing magic.

INNATE MAGIC IN GAME TERMS

An innate magic system requires relatively little rules work. Characters buy spells in the established manner for the campaign, and cast a spell based on its Limitations and related campaign ground rules. If you want characters to “power” spells themselves, you may need to require all spells to cost END (*i.e.*, characters cannot buy *Reduced Endurance* on spells, and must apply the *Costs Endurance* Limitations to spells built with Powers that don't innately cost END). Innate magic that costs STUN or BODY in addition to (or instead of) END would represent that with a Side Effect.

MAGIC IS A NATURAL RESOURCE

The flipside of the “innate magic” coin is that magic is a force external to the spellcaster. Instead of being a personal power, it's an “environmental” power — a natural resource a spellcaster can draw upon, in much the same way he can obtain food and water from his surroundings if he has the proper skills. Larry Niven's short story “What Good Is A Glass Dagger?” depicts a setting using this sort of magic system; it refers to the world's magical force as “mana,” an Oceanic term many games with systems like this also use.

Describing magic as an environmental resource raises several other issues for your consideration.



AVAILABILITY

First, is magic uniformly available throughout the world — or, like other resources, is it more available in some places, less so in others? For gaming purposes, it's easiest just to make magic equally powerful everywhere the characters go. However, that ignores many of the intriguing possibilities of environmental magic systems. A more complex but flavorful solution is to vary the level of ambient magical force from place to place. In much the same way the real world has both regions with lots of lakes and desert regions, a Fantasy setting could have “mana-rich” and “mana-poor” areas. In a “mana desert,” spellcasters might not be able to cast spells at all (or they only work at lower levels of power); in a “mana-heavy” region, spells might be much more easy to cast (bonuses to Required Skill Rolls, reduced END costs) or more powerful (Aid 2d6 to all magic, all spells automatically considered Pushed).

As an interesting variant on the general concept of “mana,” perhaps some Fantasy worlds have different “flavors” or types of mana for different types of spells. A graveyard might have strong Necromancy mana, but little mana for powering nature magic; in a forest, the situation reverses. This would require a lot more record-keeping on the GM's part, but would introduce some intriguing tactical and storytelling elements into the game.

EXHAUSTING THE SUPPLY

Second, does use of magic consume the ambient magical force, or does the magical “fuel” always exist? If the pool of “mana” is finite (either in the world as a whole, or in specific regions), that has important implications. It may mean too much spellcasting can deplete a region, making further use of magic impossible (either until the magic replenishes itself somehow, or permanently). Overuse of magic might even use up *all* the world's magic, rendering spellcasters powerless forever.

If overuse can consume the world or regional supply of magical force, you also need to decide how quickly it replenishes itself — if at all. If magical force never returns, or returns so slowly that it effectively never returns as far as the campaign is concerned (much like oil in the real world), that restricts what PCs and their adversaries can do. Magical creatures like dragons have to take care to remain in magic-rich areas, lest the loss of magical force kill them. Dark Lords, powerful sorcerers, and the like probably cannot exist; they depend on plentiful and easily-accessed magic to maintain their existences. Many of the grandiose creations of High Fantasy, such as flying carpets and summoned demonic servants, become impossible, or at least ill-advised. They may represent selfish greed on the part of the owner, just like driving a gas-guzzling automobile during a fuel crisis.

On the other hand, if the magical force can quickly replenish itself — say, in a day or a month — spellcasters don't have nearly as much to worry about. They must take care not to use up all the magic in a region too quickly, lest they leave themselves powerless and vulnerable for a time, but they don't have to worry about running out of magic forever. Player Character mages can cast spells frequently, knowing the next adventure will take them to another region with lots of magical force.

ACCESSING MAGIC

Third, who can use the ambient magic? Can anyone access ambient magic, or only people with the right talent or equipment? Does all magic use ambient force, or do some types rely on the spellcaster's personal energy or another source of power?

ENVIRONMENTAL MAGIC IN GAME TERMS

There are lots of ways to represent an “environmental magical force” setting in *HERO System* terms. Perhaps the most common is to treat the level of mana as an Endurance Reserve that powers any spell cast in a particular region (all spells must cost END, either innately or because they take the *Costs Endurance* Limitation). If spellcasters use too much magic in too short a period of time, they consume the END in the Reserve and cannot cast any more spells until the Reserve's REC replenishes it. The GM sets the REC to simulate how quickly he wants mana to regenerate.

Another possibility is for every spellcaster to have a Variable Power Pool. The VPP has a $-\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation, *Depends On Mana Level*. This means the GM sets an “Active Point” level for each region, and characters can only use as many points' worth of their Pool as that Active Point level. If the Active Point level exceeds the size of a character's VPP, it may even temporarily Aid his VPP so that he can cast more (or more powerful) spells than usual.

Third, mana could reflect the environmental conditions influencing a Required Skill Roll (see page 281).

Fourth, you could create a new Characteristic called *MANA* that reflects a character's ability to manipulate ambient arcane energies. In essence it would resemble END used only for spells — characters would use *MANA* for spells and magical abilities instead of END. They would Recover spent *MANA* through normal REC.

4

“Didn't they tell you what the [Warlock's] Wheel does?”

“Sucks up magic,” said Aran. ...

“Sucks up mana,” the Warlock corrected him.

“Do you know what mana is?”

“The power behind magic.”

“So they taught you that much. Did they also tell you that when the mana is gone from a region, it doesn't come back? Ever?”

—the Warlock explains how magic works to Aran in “What Good Is A Glass Dagger?,” by Larry Niven



4

MAGIC FROM THE GODS

“Much power was entrusted to ... you, Thurigon Tor En-Ne. You knew, in the beginning, that that power was not without restriction. You also knew, once, that you were not unobserved, even in the busy-ness of the gods. I am their observer. I have watched as you went from wisdom to folly, from virtue to villainy. ... Beware, Thurigon. We who set you in your place no longer sustain you!”

—the gods withdraw Thurigon’s magic powers in “Thurigon Agonistes,” by Ardath Mayhar

A third possible source of magic is the gods. Most Fantasy worlds have well-developed polytheistic pantheons of gods (and sometimes multiple pantheons), and in High Fantasy games those gods often interact with mortals on a regular basis. Since the gods created the world, they created magic, too — or at least they control magic so they dictate who can and cannot cast spells. This is the basis for many systems of “divine magic” (see page 252).

In most gods-grant-magic systems, spells take the Limitation *Only When Serving The God’s Purposes* (-½). As described on page 166, this means the character loses the ability to cast the spell if he defies the god, does something the god disapproves of, or the like. In short, to use magic, one must retain one’s god’s favor.

You should decide whether a spellcaster derives all of his powers from one god, or if multiple gods can give the same character mystical abilities (e.g., the war god grants combat magic spells, the god of peace grants healing magic, the sky-god grants weather spells, and so on). The former leads to characters who rigidly follow a specific god’s code of conduct and wishes, since naturally they don’t want to lose their spells. The latter requires you and the players to keep track of more information, but can lead to some interesting in-game situations: what does a character do when he needs to use all of his spells, but each of his choices in a situation is likely to annoy at least one of his patron gods (and thus deprive him of some of his magic)?

SOURCES OTHER THAN GODS

Magically powerful beings other than gods, such as demons or extra-planar entities, may grant spells instead of or in addition to gods. For example, in Jack Vance’s *Rhialto The Marvelous*, casting spells involves compelling powerful summoned beings to create the designated magical effect. Sometimes this takes place instantaneously, so it appears as if the magician cast the spell himself; in other situations the magician must engage in tedious negotiations with the summoned beings.

OTHER POSSIBLE SOURCES

Innate power, ambient magical force, and the gods aren't necessarily the only possible sources of mystic power. Some others you might want to consider include:

The Magic Engine: The gods, the Ancients, or some other beings created a vast engine that lies at the heart of the world and generates magical energy characters can tap.

Materia Magica: Magic infuses various substances found in the world — gems, mistletoe, crystals, mushrooms harvested from faerie circles, dragons' teeth, and many, many more. Some substances can power any spell; others' innate magical energy only works with certain types of spells (or for certain types of spellcasters). In game terms, this is similar to a “mana” system, but with individual bits of magical substances acting as small Endurance Reserves with 0 REC. When a spellcaster uses all of the magic in an object, it crumbles to dust.

Psi-Magic: In a psionic magic system, such as the one in Katherine Kurtz's Deryni novels, magic is a form of mental power. That makes it an innate magic system, at least in part, and may restrict the types of spells characters can cast: magic tends to involve spells that boost or extend personal abilities, instead of flashy effects like fireballs and demon-summoning.

Vampiric Magic: In a “vampiric” magic system, spellcasters require other living beings to fuel their powers. This may mean animals... or people. Drawing on another being's energy this way may weaken or kill that being, which probably means a spellcaster has to enslave them or otherwise force them to supply mystic power. Alternately, as in David Farland's “Runelord” novels, people may voluntarily donate their mystic energy to a spellcaster in exchange for money, promises of protection, or other benefits.

MULTIPLE SOURCES

Of course, you don't have to limit yourself to just *one* source of magic. Many Fantasy Hero campaigns combine multiple sources into a single elegant structure. Wizards use ambient mana and learn spells by studying, while priests have gods-granted powers gained through faith. Sorcerers have innate mystic psionic powers, while necromancers must use the magic locked inside bones and skulls to cast spells. As long as the system makes sense to you, use as many explanations for the origin of magic as you like.

MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY

In some settings, you may also need to consider how magic and advanced technology interact. See page 385 for discussion and suggestions.

THE COMMONALITY OF MAGIC

It was a strange town, and strange also its people, fishermen and workmen and artisans like any others, but so used to the sorcery that is ever at play on the Isle of the Wise that they seemed half sorcerers themselves. ... [N]ot one of them would blink to see a boy turn into a fish or a house fly up into the air, but knowing it for a schoolboy prank would go on cobbling shoes or cutting up mutton, unconcerned.

—the inhabitants of Roke are used to magic in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

Passing Teth Caph Sameth frat house, I found myself on the campus proper. Trismegistus [University] was founded after the advent of modern science, and its layout reflects that fact. The largest edifice houses the Language Department, because exotic tongues are necessary for the more powerful spells[.] ... A ways off is Zoology, carefully isolated behind its pentagonal fence, for some of those long-legged beasties are not pleasant neighbors. ... Only the law school is unaffected. Their work has always been of the other world.

—Steve Matuchek goes to Trismegistus University to study wizardry in “Operation Salamander,” by Poul Anderson

After you choose a source of magic for your campaign, you must decide how common magic is in your Fantasy world. Does it exist everywhere? Do common people know about (and believe in) it, or only spellcasters, adventurers, and nobles? How often does an average person expect to see or meet a wizard?

In large part, this depends on the subgenre you choose for your campaign: if you're running a High Fantasy game, magic's a lot more common than in a typical Low Fantasy or Urban Fantasy game. But even within a subgenre, the commonality of magic can vary wildly. For example, some High Fantasy games feature lots of powerful spellcasters, but still restrict magic to a relatively small class of people with the right degree of talent, intelligence, and opportunity. Other High Fantasy games have so much magic that it takes the place of technology; practically everyone can cast at least a few minor spells, or has access to simple magical devices (toasters with built-in Fire Magic powers, mystic house- and streetlights, self-propelled magic carts, and so on). Although both qualify as High Fantasy campaigns, one has much more common magic than the other.

If you make magic a commonplace thing, it can change the “feel” of the campaign. Instead of spellcasters being the only ones who have magic powers and/or items, just about every character will have something magical — if not a spell or two of his own, at least an enchanted sword or magic frying pan. Spellcasters become distinct not because they can cast spells, but because they can cast far more spells than the average person (and usually spells of greater power, to boot).

Worlds with uncommon magic — perhaps even so uncommon that peasants don’t believe in it — bear more resemblance to the typical settings seen in Fantasy novels and movies, but they may not work well for Fantasy Hero games. “Fantasy” means “magic” to many gamers, and they often expect to see a lot of it in their games. Furthermore, allowing even a single PC to have the ability to cast spells may keep magic from seeming “uncommon” in the world, inhibiting the feel you want to create. Keeping magic uncommon may require you to establish some very specific rules about magic use, such as not allowing characters to create their own spells (they must pick from a list of spells you create) and imposing a high “buy-in” cost for the ability to use magic.

THE POWER OF MAGIC

Related to both the source and commonality of magic is the issue of how powerful magic and spellcasters are (or can be).

When you evaluate mystic power, it helps to compare spellcasters and their spells to other types of characters and their abilities. For example, how does a typical wizard and spell stack up against a typical warrior and sword? If the wizard has spells of equal or greater power, combined with the flexibility of magic, then he’s usually considered more powerful than the warrior. On the other hand, the wizard’s spells may not do as much damage, on the average, than the warrior’s blade; what gives the wizard a possible edge in that situation is his ability to draw on many different spells, some of them with unusual effects (such as Drain or Multiform) that the warrior can’t use. Even if a wizard has spells with greater power than a sword, the Limitations on them (such as Extra Time or Increased Endurance Cost) may inhibit them enough to make him no more than the warrior’s equal. (See pages 277-78 for more discussion of this subject.)

POWERFUL MAGIC

Most Fantasy Hero worlds feature fairly powerful magic; some have spells and spellcasters of immense mystic might. With the right spell, a wizard can destroy a castle, reshape the land, bring entire tribes and nations under his sway, raise people from the dead, or grant wishes. Even comparatively weak combat magic spells — fireballs, rapid conjurations, defense spells, mental domination — can give a spellcaster and his adventuring party so much tactical flexibility that they grant “power” far beyond what their Active Points seem to indicate.

Powerful magic, particularly when it’s easy to cast, has two important implications for the game. First, it tends to make wizards seem less like Fantasy characters and more like superheroes or creatures with innate powers. When blasting an enemy with a Mystic Corruscation is no more difficult than shooting an arrow, the “feel” and flavor of the game may suffer.

Second, it may unbalance the game, or make it harder for the GM to provide real challenges for the PCs. One or two high-Active Point combat spells, coupled with a few general utility spells (such as a Spell Of Teleportation), can really wreak havoc with many Fantasy Hero scenarios. An enemy or device that can stand up to even a powerful warrior can’t necessarily resist a strong attack spell, and few trap designers can build traps that take even simple magic spells into account.

If you want to allow for powerful magic in your game, you have to find a way to address these problems. Some possibilities include:

- establish an Active Point ceiling that restricts how powerful spells can become (see page 272).
- impose restrictions (Limitations) on spells so that even the most powerful have counterbalancing drawbacks. If a wizard’s spell is twice as powerful as a warrior’s sword-blow, but it takes him twice as long to use, game balance isn’t as strongly impacted.
- make countermagic, or the like, more commonly available than it otherwise would be. That way enemies who normally could not resist a wizard’s powers at least have a chance (and a plausible one at that) to stand up to them.
- establish a mystic force, organization, or tradition that restricts and guides characters’ access to and use of powerful magic, so that spell-casting PCs can’t use unbalancingly powerful spells at the start of the campaign.
- set up the magic system so that it contains built-in restrictions on the repeated use of spells. For example, if every spell costs a lot of END, or 1 BODY, to cast, PC wizards won’t be so quick to blast every enemy they encounter with a lightning bolt.

From Hell he had brought a collection of Awful Sayings — spells of such deadly potency as to place the speaker in as great a jeopardy as the victim should their rendering be even slightly less than flawless.

—Dilvish arms himself with mighty magics in *Dilvish, The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

“I am a man,” he whispered. Then he shouted it, so it bounced off the crags and rolled down the pass. “I am a man! A man!” He threw his hands high, and suddenly his eyes were stabbed with white as a shaft of lightning ripped the sky and shattered the peak before him in a crash of fire and sound.



... *Slowly he lowered his hands and stared at them, then looked to the sky and back to his hands, and wondered if the bolt had obeyed the tumultuous nature of the storm, or his signal.*

... *“No man,” he whispered, “controls the lightning. No man’s power could be so great.”*

—Tekk realizes how much his power sets him apart from ordinary folk in *“Birth Of A Wizard,”* by Marie Desjardin

WEAK MAGIC

In some settings, magic really isn't all that powerful. While it's certainly wondrous and spectacular in its own way, it's not necessarily any more effective in the game than any other source of competence (weapons use, good Skill Rolls, lots of Contacts, or the like). Settings with magic of this sort tend to establish low Active Point ceilings for spells, so that spells are no better, on the average, than a well-wielded weapon or high Skill Roll. Wizards may have more flexibility — they can do more than just inflict Killing Damage, for example — and may be particularly effective when using “utility” or healing spells rather than combat magic, but they can't usually bring overwhelming force to bear against the enemy.

But this approach comes with a few drawbacks. First, it may make “spellcaster” a poor choice for a Player Character profession. If a wizard's spells aren't better than weapons, why should a character in a combat-intensive game invest a large chunk of Character Points in them instead of a mere 20-30 points for some WFs, Combat Skill Levels, and Strength? To make magic an attractive “career path,” you have to give the spellcaster some niche to fill that allows him to contribute to the party's success as much as the warrior or the rogue.

Second, weak magic may make it difficult for an adventuring party to complete its adventures. For example, the combat rules for Fantasy Hero make it likely that characters who get into combat

will suffer injuries (*i.e.*, BODY damage) — they may not get hurt every time, but enough battles will leave them battered and bruised. If they don't have magic spells to heal that damage (or make it less likely to occur), they may find many of their adventures short-circuited because pressing forward to the final confrontation could get them killed.

Addressing these problems mostly requires careful planning on the GM's part. If he wants relatively weak spellcasters, he has to arrange the world and the scenarios to make weak magic a viable approach. Challenges shouldn't always involve combat; there should be as much diplomacy, puzzle-solving, espionage, or mysteries (things spellcasters often excel at) as fighting. Or perhaps enough of the enemies the party encounters are vulnerable to magic, or can only be defeated through magic, to give spellcasters an equal role in the party's success.

POWER LEVELS OF SPELLS

Later, when black night lay across the forest, he would seek through his books for spells to guard him through the unpredictable glades. They would be poignant corrosive spells, of such a nature that one would daunt the brain of an ordinary man and two render him mad. Mazirian, by dint of stringent exercise, could encompass four of the most formidable, or six of the lesser spells.

—spells come in different power levels in “Mazirian The Magician,” by Jack Vance

Many magic systems have ways to rank the relative power of spells. In much the same way that a Star Hero setting organizes species based on the sophistication of their technology, or a Dark Champions character categorizes cars by their speed and handling characteristics, a magic system may need to define the comparative quality of spells. This isn't always necessary, but it can add flavor to the campaign and help the GM evaluate the power of spellcasters. To establish “spell ranking” rules for your magic system, you need to decide on what basis spellcasters (or even entire societies) would distinguish spells' power.

RANKING BY RAW POWER

The simplest is raw power — in *HERO System* terms, the Active Points in the spell (and, secondarily, the Real Point cost of the spell, which reflects how Limited it is). For example, perhaps a spell with up to 15 Active Points is a “level one” spell, one with 16-30 Active Points is a “level two,” and so on. For a more complicated system, you might use $((\text{Active Points}/10) + (\text{Real Points}/10)) = \text{spell's rank}$. That way, a 40 Active Point spell with -1 worth of Limitations would be a sixth-rank spell, while one that only had -½ worth of Limitations (*i.e.*, which has the same raw power, but fewer restrictions) would be a seventh-rank spell — it's more powerful overall, so it has a higher rank.

SPELLS THAT DON'T ALWAYS WORK

In addition to sheer raw power — Active Points or Damage Classes in spells — don't forget to consider the issue of reliability. If magic's highly reliable (it always, or almost always, works as intended), that confers more power on spellcasters than in a system where a wizard can't always count on his spells functioning as he wants them to. Reliable magic occurs most frequently in High Fantasy games, low-reliability magic in Swords And Sorcery and Low Fantasy settings.

Sometimes magic is “weak” not because it lacks raw power, but because it doesn't always affect the target. Even if the character casts the spell correctly (*i.e.*, makes his Required Skill Roll and satisfies all other conditions of casting), the target of the spell may avoid its effects — perhaps he dodges out of its way, or maybe everyone has some innate “mystic resistance” that sometimes thwarts spells.

If you want to simulate this sort of magic, you can apply the Limitation *Activation Roll* to spells. The more powerful the spell (and thus the more likely it is to work), the higher the roll, and vice-versa. Alternately, the GM can establish a base roll for all spell Activation Rolls (such as 11- or 12-), then vary that number up or down with modifiers based on his estimate of the target's chances to avoid the spell's effects.

RANKING BY SKILL

Another possibility is to ignore raw power and look instead at the level of skill required to cast the spell. In a game that uses the *Requires A Roll* Limitation for most spells, a spell without the Limitation might be a “first water” spell; one with a -1 per 20 Active Points RSR would be a “second water” spell; one with -1 per 10 Active Points a “third water” spell; and one with a -1 per 5 Active Points roll a “fourth water” spell. What matters is not how many points the spell has, but how difficult the casting is. A wizard with a high enough Magic roll could brag about how easily he casts fourth-water spells, while one who can barely manage a second water spell would still have a lot of learning to do.

In a magic system that lets characters buy access to spells with Skills or Talents, ranking spells by skill often becomes even simpler. For example, suppose that in the world of Vargandia, characters who want to cast spells buy a five-point Talent, *Mystic Potential*. Buying the Talent one time only grants the character access to spells the GM considers the easiest to cast and use (which usually means the least powerful, effective, or sophisticated spells) — “first-level” spells, in other words. If a character wants to cast second-, third-, fourth-, and higher-level spells, he has to buy more Talents at 5 Character Points apiece (and he can only buy them in order, at defined intervals, with the GM’s permission).

RANKING BY EASE OF USE

In some magic systems, what may matter is not sheer power, or wizardly skill, but how easy spells are to use — in other words, how Limited spells

are. This sort of ranking structure works best in magic systems without any sort of Skill Roll or other significant prerequisite for casting spells. For example, maybe a spell with no Limitations whatsoever — an innate magical power, so to speak — is a “Diamond” spell. One with $-\frac{1}{4}$ worth of Limitations is a “Ruby” spell, while one with $-\frac{1}{2}$ of Limitations is an “Emerald,” and so on in $\frac{1}{4}$ increments down the chain of precious stones. One spell could even exist at multiple ranks, so that as a wizard buys off the Limitation on a spell with Experience Points, it goes from being a Corundum spell, to a Topaz spell, to an Emerald, and even to a Diamond (based on how many points he’s willing to invest in it). You can combine a system like this with a “raw power” system to interesting effect. That way, you’d know that a Diamond-7 spell is not only easier to use than a Garnet-7 spell, but has more Active Points than a Diamond-5 spell.

MULTIPLE SPELL RANKING SYSTEMS

You don’t have to limit yourself to a single type of spell ranking structure in your magic system. Different types of magic, different groups of spell-casters, or different nations/tribes may each have their own ways of categorizing a spell’s power. An urbane, sophisticated Mages’ Guild in the setting’s largest city may care mostly about skill and ease of use, while the League of Adventuring Mages looks only at raw power. Elemental mages may consider raw power first and foremost, with ease of use a secondary characteristic; thaumaturges, alchemists, and sorcerers prefer ease of casting because they favor spells with small Active Point totals that they can use commercially.



SPELL RANK DESIGNATION

If you like, you can use spell designations to contribute to the flavor and feel of your magic system, and thus of your Fantasy Hero setting as a whole. Regardless of how you derive them, you can make them feel a bit more “Fantasy” and a bit less like “rules” by giving them imaginative names. Instead of using mundane terms like “level” or “rank,” name your spell categories with more Fantasy-sounding terms. Some possibilities include: circle; sphere; arcana; book; water. You could also simply use different terms for spells of each power category: perhaps the weakest spells are charms; the next weakest are cantrips; and so on through evocations, invocations, and ensorcellments to the most powerful of all, true spells. That way, when a rival wizard uses a Fireball Invocation, the PC wizard knows that his Fireball Ensorcellment is more powerful.

Similarly, instead of using numbers to indicate relative power, use some other series of terms. The “gemstone” system described above provides one example; you could also use the names of metals, fantastic beasts, signs of the zodiac, or anything else that has an archaic or wondrous sound to it. That way characters can refer to “casting a spell of the Circle of Shadow” or “invoking a spell of the Dragon Arcana” instead of saying “I’m using a fourth-level spell.”

POWER LEVELS OF SPELLCASTERS

The ancient shot the Mouser a venomous gaze. “We are, all twelve of us, sorcerers of the First Rank and have been from our youth,” he proclaimed portentously. “As you should swiftly learn were one of us to point but a little finger against you.”

—a powerful wizard threatens the Gray Mouser in “The Lords Of Quarmall,” by Fritz Leiber

You can rank spellcasters as easily as spells. In most Fantasy settings, spellcasters tend to develop rivalries among themselves, so it only makes sense that they’d find a standardized way to evaluate personal power. Ranking spellcasters can also help you control the use of magic in your game.

RANKING METHODS

Many different ways exist to judge the relative power of spellcasters. Some of them include:

Overall Points: In most cases, the simplest method is to look at the character’s total points (Total Points plus Experience Points). As a raw number, that’s a pretty good benchmark for comparing one character to another. If you want a more finely-grained system, you can divide the points into ranks. For example, perhaps every 20 total points equals one “rank,” so a starting character built on 175 Total Points is a Rank 8 character three-quarters of the way to Rank 9.

For more precision, you could vary the rank requirements a bit. Suppose that all wizards are

at “level zero” at 175 Total Points. The spells and magical abilities they know at that stage of their careers reflect the training they received up to the start of the game. To reach level one, a wizard needs to earn 5 Experience Points. Level two requires another 5 Experience Points, but levels three through six require 10 Experience Points each. Levels seven through ten require 15 Experience Points each, and so on.

This form of rating characters may not be a good way to determine spellcasting power, however. Since it looks at total points, it includes points spent on things that have nothing to do with magic power — BODY and many Skills, for example. While it obviously helps a wizard to have high BODY or know lots of Skills, they don’t really have any bearing on the power of his magic.

Active Points In Spells: A method that focuses more precisely on spellcasting power is to add up the Active Points in all the spells (and related magical abilities, such as the *Magesight* Talent) the character has. Then create rank divisions based on total points spent on spells. For example, perhaps a spellcaster with 50 or fewer Active Points’ worth of spells is a rank one spellcaster; one with 51-100 is rank two; 101-150 is rank three; and so on.

This way of determining spellcaster rank has one significant drawback: it doesn’t account for Limitations. A wizard could easily buy a lot of heavily-Limited spells and attain a high rank, even though the Limitations actually mean he’s not as powerful, in the average situation, as another spellcaster with fewer Active Points’ worth of spells but fewer restrictions on how he can use them.

Real Points In Spells: To avoid the “Active Point problem” discussed above, you could instead add up the Real Points a spellcaster spends on spells and mystic abilities, then establish rank divisions. Maybe a character who spends 1-10 points on spells is level one; 11-20 points, level two; 21-30 points, level three; and so on. You could vary the point requirements for each rank so that it’s easy to gain ranks early on, but harder as a spellcaster grows in power.

Magic Roll: In games where spellcasters use a *Magic* Skill to cast spells, they might rank themselves according to the level of their respective Skills. A spellcaster with Magic 13- is better than one with 12-, and one with 20- outranks them both by a wide margin. Perhaps a wizard’s rank equals his Skill Roll divided by 2 (this assumes PC spellcasters start at a relatively high rank, since they probably have rolls of at least 14-).

Combined Methods: If you wanted, you could even combine two or more methods for determining a spellcaster’s power. For example, a character’s rank as a wizard might equal his (Active Points of all spells and magical abilities divided by 20) plus (Real Points spent on all spells and magical abilities), divided by ten. That factors in both raw magical power (Active Points) plus the quality of the spell (Real Points).

GAME EFFECTS OF A SPELLCASTER'S POWER LEVEL

Once you establish a satisfactory method of determining a spellcaster's power rating, you should consider what effect it has in the magic system (if any). It's possible that spellcasters rank their respective power simply for bragging rights, but if you want you can assign an actual game effect to the rank. Some possibilities include:

Delayed Effect Spell Maintenance: If the magic system requires (or allows) spellcasters to use the *Delayed Effect Advantage* (pages 158-59), a spellcaster's rank may determine how many spells he can have active or in use at a time. In a High Fantasy game, maybe he can maintain a number of spells equal to his rank; in games with less powerful magic, perhaps it's the spellcaster's rank divided by two, three, or four.

Spell Use Per Turn: To keep wizards from casting too many spells too quickly, you can restrict them to casting (and/or maintaining) no more than a certain number of spells per Turn — rank divided by five spells per Turn, for example, or perhaps rank divided by three, two, or some other number. If you want to allow greater spellcaster flexibility, you can raise the limit but apply it over a longer time period — spells per hour or per day, for example.

Active Points in Spells: To ensure that spellcasters don't become too powerful — that low-rank wizards don't wield high-rank spells — you can restrict the Active Points in spells based on the caster's power rating. For example, suppose that you have a system of ranks running from 1-20. Perhaps a spellcaster cannot have more Active Points in his spells than his rank times 10. Or maybe it varies by rank: 10 Active Points times rank for ranks 1-10; 20 Active Points for each additional rank above 10.

Expertise: The GM designates each spell with a required spellcaster rank. A character must be at least that rank of spellcaster before he can buy or use that spell. For example, even a "level one" wizard can buy a simple Spell Of Door-Opening, but a wizard must attain at least "level four" before he can buy the Thunderbolt Spell.

SPELLCASTER RANK DESIGNATIONS

"Go back down, shioggua! Go back down. I am a warlock of the Secret Flame. My circle is the Ninth; my sphere the Sphere of Darkness; my god is Azzamungandyr the Lord of the Mysteries. You — may — not — take — the — girl!"

—Kellory threatens a monster by proclaiming his power in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

Naming spellcasters' ranks can add as much to your game as naming spell ranks. A wizard sounds much more wizardly if he refers to himself as belonging to a circle, order, sphere, arcana, ring, league, or the like rather than a "rank" or "level." Claiming membership in "the Order of the Phoenix" or "the Sphere of the Golden Moon" sounds better than being a "rank eight mage."

Wizards may also refer to their ranks with simple designations. One such method, apprentice-journeyman-master-adept, occurs in many settings, but four degrees of rank may not suit some magic systems. You could widen the scope with multiple ranks within each degree (such as bronze apprentice, silver apprentice, gold apprentice), or use some other system of names altogether (such as names derived from the gods of magic or the constellations).

TYPES OF MAGIC

[Alodar's] quest forced him from one exciting branch of magic to another[— Thaumaturgy, Alchemy, Magic, Sorcery.] Finally, only the branch of Wizardry remained — the great, almost lost art of controlling demons.

—from the back cover text of *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

One of the most fundamental questions for many magic systems is this: what types of magic exist? Are all forms of spellcasting essentially the same (as in, for example, M.A.R. Barker's world of *Tékumel*), or does the magic system encompass several different types of magic? In a setting with the latter arrangement, each type or style of magic may have its own rules or methods of use, requiring the GM to create a "magic sub-system" for it. While that sounds like a lot of work, the systems may have similarities that cut down on the chore a little, and in any event the details help to flesh out the world and give the players roleplaying and tactical options to consider during character creation.



ARCANE AND DIVINE MAGIC

Many Fantasy Hero campaigns distinguish between “arcane” magic (the type used by wizards and their ilk) and “divine” magic (the type used by priests, druids, and other spellcasters who derive their powers from the gods). In a system with this dichotomy, priests wield magic, but a decidedly different sort of magic. Wizards acquire their powers through study, but priests get theirs from their god(s). This has several important consequences for how priestly magic works, and what wizards and priests can do with their magic.

First, divine magic usually focuses on different subjects or uses than arcane magic. For one thing, it’s frequently less flashy, though a crusading priest fighting the forces of Evil can certainly call down some awesome powers with which to smite his foes. Generally speaking, arcane magic tends to involve more offensive combat and general utility spells, while divine magic emphasizes healing, protection, self-improvement, defense, and similar tasks. In many magic systems, for example, wizards cannot cast spells of healing and curing; those the GM reserves exclusively for priestly types.

However, there’s one important *caveat* to the above rule: a priest’s spells and magical powers may depend not on the fact that he’s “a priest,” but on the type of god he serves (assuming he only serves one). For example, a god of battle may grant his followers all sorts of combat-oriented magic, but few (if any) healing spells. A goddess of love may grant no attack spells at all, but supply her worshippers with magics that make them the best negotiators and speakers in the realm.

Second, because divine magic is a gift from a god or gods, a character can only use it if he remains in his god’s favor, follows his god’s commandments, and serves his god’s purposes. Typically you represent this with a $-\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation, *Only When Serving The God’s Purposes*, described on page 166. However, the GM may prefer for priests, paladins, and the like to represent this restriction with a Dependence, a Physical Complication, or some other Complication.

Of course, the exact nature of remaining “in a god’s favor” and “serving a god’s purpose” can vary wildly from god to god and religion to religion. A god of peace may revoke any power used to harm another being, while one of war may deny a priest his powers if that priest shows mercy to a defeated foe. A god of animals might require all his priests to eat vegetarian diets, while a god of the sea might dictate that his priests never go more than one league from the ocean. Many different types of restrictions on a priest’s conduct (and thus his magic) may exist; players should question the GM about the religions in his fantasy world and what types of magic their priests use.

COMBAT, BATTLE, AND RITUAL MAGIC

[H]e sprang to his feet and would have tried to kill the monster. But Vacharn described in the air a peculiar sign with his forefinger; and the prince’s arm was suspended in mid-stroke, and his fingers became weak as those of a babe, and the sword fell from his hand, ringing loudly on the dais.

—Prince Yadar is helpless before Vacharn’s sorcery in “Necromancy In Naat,” by Clark Ashton Smith

A distinction not often directly emphasized in Fantasy literature, but of great significance for most Fantasy gaming campaigns, is between combat and ritual magic. *Combat magic* refers to spells designed or intended for use in combat and crisis situations. They usually provide a character with some sort of offensive capability or easily-used tactical advantage (such as the ability to teleport). In game terms, they’re built so a wizard in combat can cast them with relatively little difficulty. They rarely take more than a Full Phase to cast, they rarely require Concentration or anything else that would put a character at a disadvantage in combat. They may have Limitations (Focus, Gestures, and Incantations are all popular), but usually not too many.

Combat magic is not quite the same as *battle magic* (see page 238). Battle magic refers to spells used in mass combat situations, whereas combat magic generally only applies to personal combats.

Ritual magic, on the other hand, is slow and comparatively difficult to use. Ritual spells often take the *Requires Multiple Users* Limitation, which means one person can’t even cast them by himself. Other popular Limitations include Focus (often Immobile and/or Fragile, such as a pentagram), Concentration, Extra Time (lots), Gestures, Incantations, Increased Endurance Cost, Window Of Opportunity, Requires A Roll, and even Side Effects. But the upside to all these Limitations is that ritual magic is often *very* powerful. With ritual magic, spellcasters can inflict curses on targets half a world away, conjure and control demon princes, create kingdom-shattering earthquakes, and the like.

Combat magic is most common in High Fantasy settings, and in Swords And Sorcery settings featuring spellcasting PCs (though they’re more Limited in the latter than the former). On the other hand, combat magic rarely appears in Low or Urban Fantasy worlds. Ritual magic is appropriate for virtually all Fantasy settings.



4

FORMULAIC VERSUS SPONTANEOUS MAGIC

When creating a magic system, you need to decide whether spellcasters are restricted to formulaic magic, or can access spontaneous magic instead or in addition.

Formulaic magic refers to magic based on pre-defined spells, invocations, and formulae. It's a type of magic typically based on a body of lore accumulated over years or centuries. Magic works according to the established methods and traditions, and not in any other way; those who wish to cast spells must learn those methods and traditions.

In a world with *spontaneous magic*, spellcasters aren't quite so restricted. In these settings, magic is more of an inchoate force or resource a talented and/or trained spellcaster can manipulate as he sees fit. Instead of invoking magical power through predefined "circuitry," he imposes his will on magical force and gets it to do what he wants. The more powerful, experienced, and/or well-trained he is, the more easily he can "mold" magic, the more magic force he has access to, and the more magical effects he can create.

In game terms, formulaic magic means spellcasters can only cast the spells they pay Character Points for. Either they buy the spells from lists of spells pregenerated by the GM (or taken from some source like *The HERO System Grimoire*), or they get the GM to approve the spells they design themselves, but either way they can't deviate from their stock of purchased spells. Spontaneous magic, on the other hand, is usually best simulated with a Variable Power Pool. The spellcaster thinks of what he wants to achieve and then builds that effect using the *HERO System* rules; if it fits within his Pool, he can cast that spell. He may have a pregenerated list of "favorite spells," but that's just a time-saver, not a restriction on what he can do.

Some magic systems mix both types of magic. Either a spellcaster has to choose which "path" to follow, or he can mingle the two approaches freely. To encourage the use of spontaneous magic, the GM can even give the character a cost savings on the Variable Power Pool. For example, maybe all spellcasters automatically have a Spontaneous Magic Pool with a Pool equal to the number of Real Points they've spent on formulaic spells. Or maybe the character's *Magic Skill* takes the place of the VPP — to cast a spontaneous spell, the character defines the spell in *HERO System* terms, then makes a Magic roll at a penalty of -2 plus -1 per 5 Active Points in the spell (or the like; see page 282).

Omira now went through the formalities as well, introducing each Master and his discipline — Eldwig of Thaumaturgy, Nujhir of Alchemy, Gorham of Sorcery, Eliborg of Astrology and Divination and Crispian of Wizardry. The Prince greeted them all[.]

—the Five Arts of the Order are named in *Crispian Magicker*, by Mark Lowenthal

SCHOOLS OF MAGIC

One popular approach for many Fantasy Hero games is to group all spells into several “schools” of magic based on subject matter, common Limitations, or the like. (Other terms for “school” include college, arcana, art, circle, book, and so on.) A spellcaster then defines himself as “belonging to” a particular school, or buys spells primarily or exclusively from one school (see below). (For an excellent example of the story potentials inherent in this type of magic system, read Lyndon Hardy’s *Master Of The Five Magics*.)

COMMON SCHOOLS

Each Fantasy setting defines the schools of magic a little differently. Some of the most commonly-used ones include:

Alchemy: The magic of creating potions, elixirs, and other magical substances using arcane formulae and laboratory processes.

Battle Magic: Magic for use in mass combat situations; see page 238.

Body Magic: Magic that enhances or alters a body (usually the spellcaster’s), such as a strength-enhancing spell or a spell of shape-changing.

Conjuration: Also known as Summoning, this is the art of conjuring demons, devils, angels, gods, animals, and other beings so that they magically appear and do the conjuror’s bidding. Most conjuration spells are lengthy rituals, and often pose great danger (since an improperly-summoned or uncontrolled being could easily slaughter the spellcaster [a Side Effect]).

Divination: Magic pertaining to foretelling the future, finding, and sensing.

Elemental Magic: Magic that involves, uses, or manipulates the four classical Elements of Air, Earth, Fire, and Water. Many Fantasy settings add to the list of Elements; common additions include Light, Shadow, Ice, Metal, and Time. Elemental wizards usually have powerful attack and defense spells, but less effective utility spells.

Enchantment: The art of placing magical powers into items. Enchantment often relates closely to Alchemy.

Mental Magic: Magic that controls or manipulates the mind, or which requires mental powers to use (see *Psionics As Magic*, below). In *HERO System* terms, most spells in this school use one or more Mental Powers or Advantages like ACV, AVAD, and LOS.

Naming: Magic based on knowledge and use of the target’s True Name. Spells cast with “generic” True Names (such as “troll”) have less effect than those cast using a being’s specific True Name (such as “Razark”). In settings with Naming magic, most beings have “use names” for everyday purposes and keep their True Names highly secret.

Nature Magic: Magic relating to or involving plants, animals, weather, and other natural

phenomena. Sometimes a part of, or closely related to, Elemental Magic.

Necromancy: Magic relating to or involving death, undeath, and related subjects such as fear and hatred. One of the most limited of all schools, but also one of the most deadly and terrifying. A favorite of Dark Lords, liches, and other such villains.

Rune Magic: Spells cast using carved or incised runic symbols, glyphs, sigils, and symbols. The magic often lasts as long as the rune endures, but ends instantly if something covers up, defaces, or removes it.

Shamanism: Magic involving communication with and control over spirits and the Spirit World. Often considered a type of divine magic instead of arcane magic.

Song Magic: A type of magic featuring sung or spoken incantations, commonly used by bards and similar characters. Often combined with or related to Rune Magic.

Sorcery: This general term for “magic” can be defined in almost any way. In *Master Of The Five Magics*, Lyndon Hardy uses it for Mental Magic; in *The Lord Of The Rings* it refers to dark, evil magics or magics used for evil purposes.

Thaumaturgy: Another general term for magic, similar to Sorcery; it can be defined however the GM prefers. For example, in *Master Of The Five Magics*, Lyndon Hardy uses it for a type of magic that manipulates physical forces and relies on the principles of Sympathy and Contagion (see page 164).

Theurgy: Magic that calls upon Higher or Lower Powers (such as gods, angels, and demons) for arcane power. The spellcaster often assumes some qualities of the being in question while using its power. Kabbalism, in some respects, qualifies as a type of Theurgy.

Voodoo: A style of magic based on the religion of the same name on Earth, featuring fetishes, bizarre ceremonies, and the assumption of the power of a *loa* (god or spirit) by the spellcaster. Often considered a type of divine magic instead of arcane magic.

Witchcraft: A classic form of magic combining nature magic, hedge wizardry, potion-brewing, candle magic, hexes and curses, and sometimes even black magic and devil-worship. It’s usually practiced by women; male witches are known as warlocks. Many spellcasters consider Witchcraft a “low” or “weak” form of magic, but in a Fantasy setting it may be just as powerful as any other school.

Wizardry: Often used as a catch-all term for magic and spellcraft in general, Wizardry can also refer to any spell that doesn’t belong in another category, or common spells knowable by any caster regardless of his school (such as Dispel Magic or Detect Magic).

GAME EFFECTS OF SCHOOLS

Schools don't have to be just a convenient conceptual framework; they can also impact the game. For example, they may dictate how spellcasters buy access to spells. The GM may require a wizard to buy a separate *Magic Skill* for each school he wants to cast spells from: instead of *Magic*, he'd have *Divination Skill*, *Necromancy Skill*, *Witchcraft Skill*, and so forth. That way a spellcaster can "specialize" by having much higher rolls in his preferred schools, but still has the opportunity to learn spells from other schools. Similarly, a character could buy Skill Rolls to improve his ability to use spells from only one or two schools, or buy defenses against just one school's spells.

PSIONICS AS MAGIC

After another few heartbeats, Kelson turned his attention back to the waiting contact, opening his mind to fill with Morgan's message.

Well done, my prince, came Morgan's whispered thought in his mind. I really wasn't certain I could reach you.

—King Kelson and Duke Morgan use Deryni mind-magic to "speak" over long distances in *The Bishop's Heir*, by Katherine Kurtz

Some Fantasy settings define magic not as a distinct phenomena, but as a form of mental or psionic power — something controlled and generated by powerful minds. Katherine Kurtz's Deryni books portray a highly-developed example of such a system, but many others exist.

Typically, a magic-as-psionics system places a heavy emphasis on Mental Powers (and to a lesser extent on sensory magics, and magics that enhance the spellcaster's natural abilities). If a spell involves some other Power, particularly an Attack Power, it usually has Advantages such as *Alternate Combat Value*, *Attack Versus Alternate Defense* (Mental Defense), and/or *Line Of Sight*. Most of the spells are ritual magic, or restricted by Limitations such as *Concentration* and *Extra Time*; combat magic normally remains the province of the most powerful spellcasters, or ones willing to engage in evil practices like leeching mental energy from hapless innocents.

Because of its scientific veneer, magic-as-psionics raises the interesting possibility of inheritable magical talent. If two parents both have mental magical powers, their children will, too; if only one parent has psionic magic, his offspring may or may not inherit his powers, or may have weaker powers than a "full-blooded" mage. This could in turn lead to "psionic dynasties" where magically powerful families repeatedly intermarry to gain and maintain political and mystic power... possibly leading to a higher incidence of insanity and other breeding problems among their children in addition to vast magical abilities.

SPELLS CLASSIFIED BY PURPOSE

A few magic systems prefer to organize spells by the purpose for which they're used. Possible categories include Attack Magic, Blessings, Curses, Hedge Magics (minor useful spells for performing chores and the like), Protective Magics, Sensing Magics, and Travel Magic. While simple, this system has the drawback of telling you relatively little about magic as a whole; the categories tend to be so broad that they don't define things well.

One type of magic-by-purpose found even in systems that use other organizational schema is *countermagic*. This refers to spells used to stop, banish, disrupt, dispel, or otherwise interfere with other spells. In some systems, countermagic consists of a distinct body of separate spells — almost all spellcasters learn at least a simple Dispel Magic spell, while others can go so far as to Absorb, Drain, or Suppress magical energy. In others, any spellcaster can "counter" a spell that he knows. For example, maybe a wizard can negate a spell cast by another wizard if he Holds his Action, then casts the same spell and makes his Magic roll by more than the other wizard.

USERS OF MAGIC

Another defining characteristic of magic systems is who can use magic. Who has the power to learn and cast spells, or to tap into magical forces, or contains within him reserves of arcane energy?

Some possible ways to define who can use magic include:

INNATE TALENT

In some magic systems, people have to possess an innate talent to cast spells. Either you're born with the ability to use magic, or you're not — and if you're not, you can never acquire the ability (barring, perhaps, the intervention of the gods).

Of course, just because a character *has* "the Gift" (the ability to work magic) doesn't mean he automatically knows how to use it. The power to cast spells may one day spring full-blown into his head, turning him from plowboy to sorcerer instantly. But that's rare; even if he suddenly has mystic powers, he may not have any skill with them. It may take time and practice, or the help of an accomplished wizard, before he can cast spells with any degree of precision and control. Prior to that time, he could pose a danger to everyone around him — his powers could suddenly manifest when he gets angry or experiences other strong emotions, for example. Such "wild talents" may eventually grow into powerful mages... if they survive.

Alternately, innate talent for magic may mean the innate talent to *learn* magic. Becoming a wizard still requires long hours spent reading grimoires and performing apprentices' chores — but only some people have the aptitude for the subject. Most folk could read the books and say the mystic words, but nothing would happen, because they lack "the Gift." The character has the Gift, but he can't use it without the proper learning.

[T]he magician went away to the forest's edge, and uttered there the spell that he had made. And the spell was a compulsive, terrible thing, having a power over evil dreams and over spirits of ill; for it was a verse of forty lines in many languages, both living and dead, and had in it the word wherewith the people of the plains are wont to curse their camels, and the shout wherewith the whalers of the north lure the whales shorewards to be killed, and a word that causes elephants to trumpet; and every one of the forty lines closed with a rhyme for "wasp."

—a magician casts a spell in "The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save For Sacnoth," by Lord Dunsany

"And if he prove apt I will keep him as prentice, or see to it that he is schooled as fits his gifts. For to keep dark the mind of the mageborn, that is a dangerous thing."

—Ogion explains what he can do for the young Ged in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin



If a magic system depends on innate talent, the GM has to decide when and how the Gift becomes evident. Do people have it from birth, such that wizards have to place dampening spells on babies to keep them from accidentally transforming their parents into frogs before they're old enough to control their powers? Does it manifest at a particular age (such as age 8, or puberty, or after the character survives 24 winters)? Can it arise on its own, or must an existing wizard sense and “unlock” the Gift within a potential mage? Can other people (or at least other spellcasters) perceive the Gift within a character before it manifests (and if so, can they perceive the potential degree of power the character possesses)? Does it run in bloodlines, so that there are “magic” families and “nonmagic” ones?

In game terms, the idea of a “Gift” for magic usually implies that characters have to buy a Talent to use magic. Such a Talent may simply be the *Magic Skill*, transferred into the Talents so that the GM exerts more control over who buys it. Characters could also spend 1 Character Point on *Latent Magic*, a Talent that lets them “upgrade” to full Talent status at some point after the campaign begins. A “wild talent” typically buys his spells with the *No Conscious Control* Limitation at either the -1 or -2 level (as appropriate), and as he gains Experience Points can buy the Limitation off so the he controls his powers fully.

STUDY

Among Men [the Istari] were supposed (at first) by those that had dealings with them to be Men who had acquired lore and arts by long and secret study.

—the Istari (the Five Wizards) are distinguished from other spellcasters in *Unfinished Tales*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

In some Fantasy Hero campaigns, anyone can potentially learn magic... provided he's got the brains and opportunity to learn. (Though in some cases, a certain innate talent's required as well.) In these settings, wizards record the laws, formulae, and methods of magic in tomes, grimoires, and scrolls. A character who diligently studies these books (perhaps with the help of a master wizard) and possesses the wit to understand them can become a spellcaster. A foolish or stupid character, no matter how much he reads and studies, simply cannot learn to work magic.

In an “anyone can study” setting, the controlling factor for the learning of magic tends to be the teachers. Since knowledge confers power, they keep the knowledge to themselves, passing it on only to people who earn their loyalty, pay for the teaching, or otherwise deserve it. Many a mystic secret may pass from the world forever when the one mage who knows it dies without having ever taught it to anyone... only to be rediscovered centuries later by some intrepid adventuring wizard who explores the ruins of that mage's sanctum.

SPECIFIC RACES

“For this is what your folk would call magic, I believe; though I do not understand clearly what they mean; and they seem also to use the same word of the deceits of the Enemy. But this, if you will, is the magic of Galadriel. Did you not say that you wished to see Elf-magic?”

—Galadriel discusses magic with Samwise in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

In some Fantasy worlds, only a particular race (or races) can cast spells. For example, Elves may be few and widespread, but as a race they are the equal of Men, Dwarves, or Gnomes, for only the Elves have magic, and that balances the scales. In some cases, all races may have the capacity to learn spellcasting, but at least some races have special magics known only to themselves (and which may only work for them).

The “specific races” approach to learning magic is not a popular one for Fantasy Hero, because players generally prefer as unfettered a character creation process as possible. If someone has an unusual concept involving a dwarf who casts spells and is an expert archer to boot, that's what he wants to play — he doesn't want to be told that only humans can use magic. Nevertheless, racially-restricted magic is perfectly appropriate for some campaigns.

ANYONE

In some High Fantasy settings, *anyone* can learn magic, and many people do. A few minutes' worth of study, instruction, or meditation are all that's required for a character to learn a simple spell — one to clear his house of vermin or turn water into ice, for example. It's no different than learning how to use a screwdriver properly or cook a meal. In this sort of game, the only prerequisite for learning magic tends to be having enough Character Points to buy the spells you want.

WIZARDLY DEMOGRAPHICS

The issue of “who can use magic,” and spellcaster demographics in general, usually relates to the commonality of magic. Common magic implies lots of casters (or at least potential casters), while settings with little magic (such as most Low Fantasy worlds) usually have few people who can work magic. Spellcaster demographics may in turn affect many other issues, such as the prices working wizards can command for their spells, the prevalence of Mages' Guilds and similar organizations, and how the general public regards magic and spellcasters. In a Low Fantasy world with rare magic, a wizard or his spells may be so strange and frightening that ordinary folk run screaming from him (or try to stick him with a pitchfork); in a world with lots of magic, no one may think twice if someone transforms into a wolf and runs away.

LEARNING MAGIC

*“My uncle Gerald learned green magic?”
“To the limit of his capabilities. He found
no pleasure in his learning.”*

—a sprite warns Howard Fair
about studying green magic in
“Green Magic,” by Jack Vance

Closely related to the “who can use magic” issue discussed above is the question of how characters who can use magic learn how to.

With an “innate magic” system, characters may not have to learn anything at all. Their inborn magical talent may instinctively tell them how to use it. But a more likely approach, particularly in a Fantasy Hero context, is for the character to start out with relatively little control over his spells and powers (as represented by Limitations like *No Conscious Control*, *Limited Range*, *Reduced By Range*, *Requires A Roll*, and *Side Effects*). As the game goes on, he spends Experience Points to buy off these Limitations, representing his increasing level of control. This may reflect practice at using them (*i.e.*, self-training), or he may establish a relationship with a master mage who can instruct him on the proper use of his Gift. (The latter occurs frequently in Fantasy fiction, but may not work well for a group of Fantasy Hero adventurers who don't stay put in one place for long periods of time.)

In a divine magic system, spellcasters gain their powers with relatively little effort — the gods grant them. This may require daily prayer and devotions, sacrifices, undertaking the occasional quest or holy war, and the like, but the character doesn't have to study dusty old tomes or practice gesturing and incanting. Faith alone brings him power.

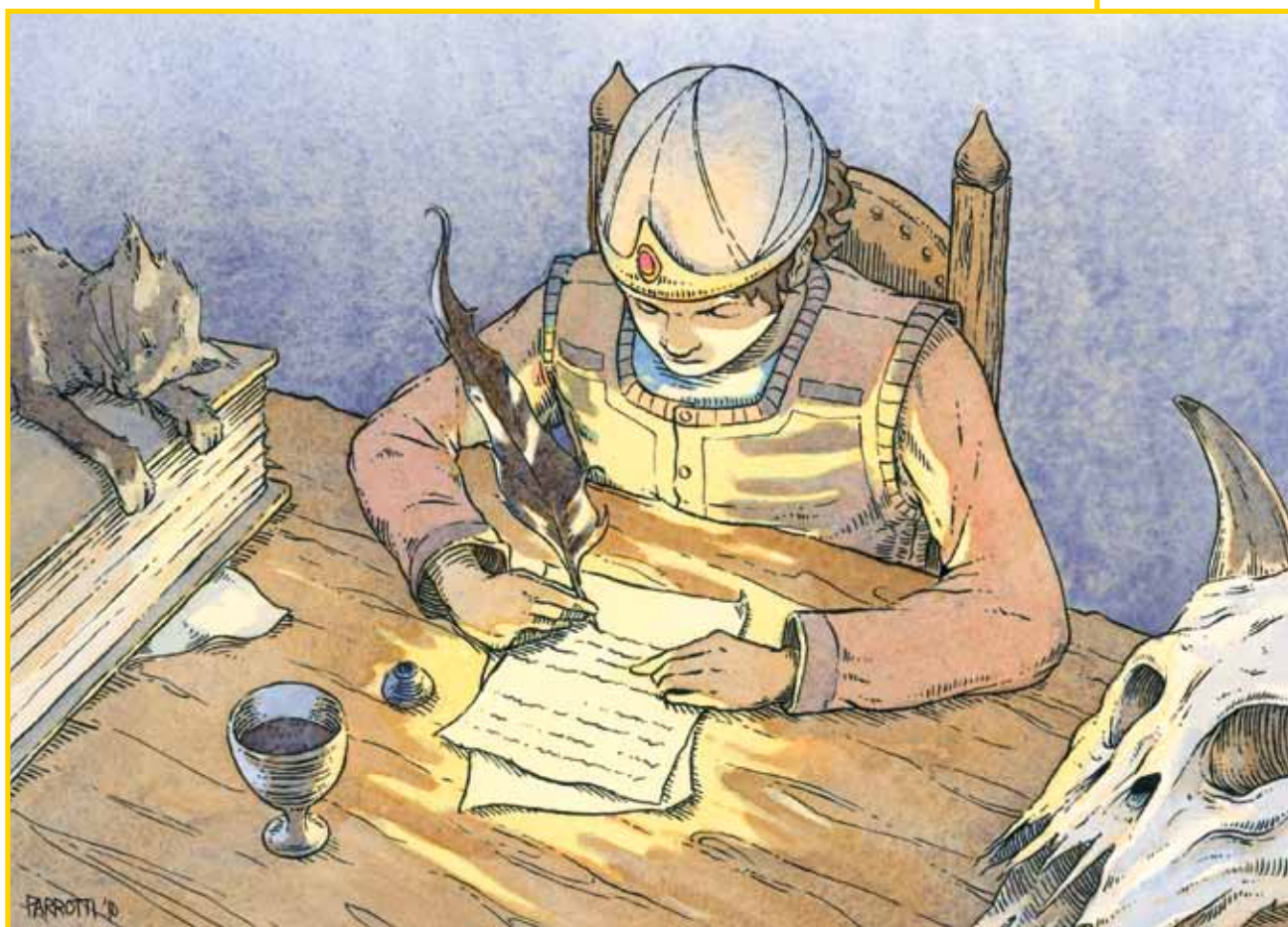
STUDYING

Ged sighed sometimes [for the tedium of studying], but he did not complain. He saw that in this dusty and fathomless matter of learning the true name of every place, thing, and being, the power he wanted lay like a jewel at the bottom of a dry well.

—Ged studies hard to learn magic in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

In most Fantasy Hero campaigns, wizards and similar types of spellcasters learn to work magic through study, memorization, and practice. While spellcasting may require some sort of natural talent or Gift, only characters with the proper knowledge can use their talent. In short, spellcasting is something of a learned skill.

That leads to the question of how the character gets the opportunity to study and learn. Perhaps the most common arrangement is the venerable master-apprentice relationship. A character who has an aptitude for magic enters into an



apprenticeship arrangement with an established wizard. In exchange for training, room, and board, the character agrees to perform chores, wait on his master at table, do the busywork around the alchemy lab, and so forth. After he learns the basics and proves his reliability, the apprentice becomes a journeyman, fit to perform some magical activities on his own and perhaps even train apprentices. In time, after he learns all he needs to know and passes the tests his master (or a “Council of Wizards” or other governing body) gives him, he becomes a master himself. Then he’s free to chart his own course in life and perhaps even take apprentices of his own. In this context, “master” does not necessarily mean “wizard of power,” but rather “wizard who’s satisfactorily completed his training in full.” Most PC spellcasters should qualify as “masters,” though the idea of playing an apprentice or journeyman who’s skipped out on his contract of indenture definitely has roleplaying potential.

Alternately, potential spellcasters in some Fantasy settings attend a school or college for would-be wizards. The School on Roke in Ursula K. LeGuin’s Earthsea novels is the best example of this approach; J.K. Rowling’s “Harry Potter” novels also use it, as does Poul Anderson’s delightful quasi-Urban Fantasy short story “Operation Salamander.” In a gaming context, this sort of system not only grants the character access to a vast library of mystic tomes (schools invariably seem to come equipped with large libraries), but it allows him to meet other mages and develop contacts that he’ll find useful later in life. You could even run an entire Fantasy Hero campaign set in a college for wizards, complete with rivalries, mystical pranks, and competition for the affection of the prettiest witch in the class.

Of course, a few characters don’t have any formal training at all. They somehow obtain access to books of mystic lore and teach themselves spellcraft. This approach is fraught with peril, and may lead to odd “gaps” in a character’s knowledge and skills... but it certainly makes the character stand out from the wizardly crowd.

The GM should consider whether any person, tradition, or group oversees and regulates the study of spellcasting. In some High Fantasy games, characters may have to pass entrance exams to go to Wizards’ School, or the king may require apprentices to purchase “licenses to study sorcery.” A wizard may not be able to take any apprentice he wants; he might have to justify the wisdom of his choice to the Mages’ Council.

STUDYING IN GAME TERMS

How a character studies magic may affect the way you design him in game terms. A character who apprentices himself to a mage usually has that mage as a Contact (assuming the relationship was a positive one), and may also have Contacts among his fellow apprentices. A character who studies at a School for Wizards knows his way around the school and its environs (AK: School) and almost certainly has Contacts among his fellow students and teachers.

If appropriate, the GM may restrict some spells, or types of spellcasting, to particular methods of learning. For example, perhaps characters can learn most types of magic at the Wizards’ College in Besruhan, but can only study Necromancy and Witchcraft via apprenticeship since they’re considered “dark arts.” An established school for wizards may have developed some special spells that only its graduates know, or may be the only place where a spellcaster who wants to learn the lore and spells in Xeldruthak’s Black Tome can find a copy of that book.

METHODS OF CASTING SPELLS

Another issue you should consider when defining your world’s magic system(s) is how characters cast spells. Are spells like innate powers a character can call on at will without much difficulty? Or must a character satisfy certain conditions — such as making mystic gestures, uttering arcane incantations, or possessing a Wizard’s Staff — to invoke his magic? If such restrictions exist, can a character avoid them in some fashion?

For discussion of these issues and how to represent them in game terms, see *Spell Creation And Use*, below.

RESTRICTIONS ON WIZARDS AND SPELLS

When designing a magic system, you should give some thought to what restrictions, if any, exist on the use of magic. In some settings, magic is virtually unfettered — little different from superpowers in a Champions game. However, most Fantasy Hero GMs and players prefer to make magic “feel” different from weapons or innate powers, and one of the best ways to give magic “flavor” is through restrictions on its use.

The other benefit to restrictions is that they give the GM a way to control spellcasters’ conduct — a “lever” with which to move them in the direction the GM desires. For example, in an “ambient mana” system, the restriction is the availability of mana; the GM controls the mage by restricting his supply of mana. In a system that imposes lots of procedures on a mage, the GM can inhibit his power by depriving him of his Focus, his ability to Gesture, or the like.

RESTRICTED CONDUCT

Some magic systems require spellcasters to engage (or not engage) in certain types of behaviors to maintain their powers. A practitioner of divine magic has to possess faith, properly worship his god, follow his god's dictates, and obey any strictures laid down by his deity. Similarly, wizards might believe (correctly or incorrectly) that their conduct affects their powers. In Ursula K. LeGuin's *Earthsea*, some wizards mistakenly believe the power to cast spells depends on their remaining celibate. Marion Zimmer Bradley's mercenary-magician Lythande has to keep a particular fact secret; anyone who uncovers Lythande's secret can steal her magic power. In many settings, spellcasters establish rules for conflicts among themselves, lest a wizardly duel kill thousands of innocent people (or backfire and affect wizards all over the world).

In game terms, you can represent these restrictions with Limitations on spells (like *Only When Serving The God's Purposes* for divine magic), or as character Complications (typically Physical, Psychological, or Social Complications). If a restriction is standard throughout the campaign setting, the GM should tell players how to buy it; otherwise players can design and define restrictions as they want, subject to GM approval.

NUMBER OF SPELLS

Then he sat down and from a journal chose the spells he would take with him. What dangers he might meet he could not know, so he selected three spells of general application: the Excellent Prismatic Spray, Phandaal's Mantle of Stealth, and the Spell of the Slow Hour.

—Turjan chooses and memorizes his spells in "Turjan of Miir," by Jack Vance

In some magic systems, wizards can only cast a limited number of spells per day. For example, in Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth*, magicians must memorize spells, and when they cast them, they forget them — they must re-memorize a spell to cast it again. The mightiest magicians can remember about four to six of the most powerful spells at a single time. Thus, they have to be very careful about what spells they carry, and when they use them, lest they find themselves shorn of power and vulnerable to their enemies.

Limiting the number of spells a character can cast helps to maintain game balance. If a wizard PC buys an easily-cast spell that does 6d6 Killing Damage, and he can use it every Phase, he'll quickly destroy the group's enemies — or else the GM has to artificially alter encounters to prevent the character's power from overwhelming the opposition and making the other characters feel useless. But if he can only cast that spell once per day, once per hour, or once per Turn, it causes far fewer problems in game play.

DUEL ARCANE

As mentioned in the main text, wizards often establish rules governing battles between them. Sometimes a council or governing body lays down rules for all wizards to follow, sometimes all wizards honor an ancient tradition based on practical experience, and sometimes two wizards who want to duel negotiate the terms before the battle begins.

Some of the common provisions governing duels arcane include:

- Restrictions on the type(s) of spells used. Perhaps, as in T.H. White's story of the duel between Merlyn and Madame Mim, the wizards can only use shapechanging spells, or maybe no combatant can use spells built with Mental Powers.
- No direct attacks. Some duels resemble competitions more than battles — each of the wizards wants to out-do the other in some magical feat or contest, not to kill or injure him.
- No killing or permanent injury. The wizards can use attack spells, but the goal is to knock out or incapacitate the foe, not to kill him. A wizard who accidentally inflicts death or serious injury is honor-bound to do his utmost to correct the problem (by, for example, hiring a priest to resurrect the other spellcasters).
- No duels in inhabited areas. Noble-minded wizards don't want to hurt innocent people or destroy property with their duels, so they use wilderness areas or the like for their duels.

In *HERO System* terms, you can restrict the number of spells a character can cast in several ways. First, you can use the *Delayed Effect* rules (pages 158-59), establishing a limit on the spells a character can maintain at once (typically INT/5 spells, or the like). Of course, you can do the same thing without any need for characters to use *Delayed Effect* — just establish a limit of INT/5 active spells for all casters. However, this may not solve the problem of a character casting a spell built with an Instant Power, again and again, without difficulty, since once cast, an Instant spell (or a spell with the Advantage *Trigger*) doesn't count against the limit, even if its effects take a long time to wear off or activate.

Second, you can require all spells to take the *Extra Time* Limitation. If every spell takes a couple of Phases to cast, wizards can only use so many in a Turn. But if their spells aren't sufficiently powerful to justify this sort of delay, spellcasters may find themselves playing second fiddle to warriors and rogues in many situations.

Curious that Lythande should speak of beans on the table, when no one but herself had ever seen a bite of food or a drop of drink pass the magician's lips since the blue star had adorned that high and narrow brow. Nor had any woman in the Quarter ever been able to boast that a great magician had paid for her favors[.]

—Myrtis contemplates the restrictions on Lythande's conduct that enable her to maintain her magical powers in "The Secret Of The Blue Star," by Marion Zimmer Bradley

Third, you can require all spells to take the *Limitation 1 Charge*. That means a character can only cast the spell once per day (or perhaps sooner; see 6E1 372). If a spellcaster wants to cast a particular spell more than once per day, he can buy the *Limitation* down to whatever level of *Charges* he prefers (perhaps with some GM-defined maximum). If spellcasters in the campaign have *Variable Power Pools*, a character can take a 1 *Charge* spell more than once by buying it multiple times through his *Pool*.

Fourth, you can restrict the character's spell-casting based on his power ranking and/or the spell's power ranking (see pages 250, 248). For example, suppose the campaign ranks wizards with power levels from 1-20, and spells with ratings from 1-10. The GM might establish as a campaign rule that a character cannot buy or cast a spell above rating 1 until his power level is at least two times the spell's rating, and that he can only cast spells he has purchased a number of times per day equal to (power level/spell rating). Thus, a power level 10 character could cast 10 rating 1 spells per day, five rating 2 spells, three rating 3 spells, two rating 4 spells, and two rating 5 spells; he can't cast rating 6 spells until he reaches power level 12. At the GM's option, the character can "trade" a higher-rating spell for multiple lower-rating ones (such as one rating 4 spell for two rating 2 spells).

Fifth, you can impose, as a campaign ground rule or a mandatory *Limitation* for all spells, some sort of system that penalizes repeated spell casting within a given timeframe. For example, suppose that for each spell cast within 1 *Turn* of casting another spell, a character suffers a cumulative *Magic* roll penalty (-1, -2, or higher — whatever seems large enough to balance repeated spell-casting). Thus, if a spellcaster has SPD 4 and casts a spell in each of his *Phases*, the spell in *Segment 6* might be at a -2 penalty, the one in *Segment 9* at -4, and the one in *Segment 12* at -6. You can make this penalty even more severe by enlarging the time period: per *Minute*; per 20 *Minutes*; since the character last spent 5 *Minutes* meditating; or the like. Systems like this allow characters to at least *try* to cast lots of spells when it's necessary, but make it difficult enough to force them to conserve their magic on other occasions.

If you create a system that limits the number of spells a character can cast in a discrete period of time, you should consider providing a way for characters to pay *Character Points* for the ability to cast more spells. By buying the right *Skill*, *Perk*, or *Talent*, a character can increase the amount of "mystic ammunition" he carries, so to speak. Since this is a fairly powerful ability, it shouldn't be cheap, or else every spellcaster will buy it — it should cost enough that it represents a definite sacrifice on the character's part.



PROCEDURES

Characters may have to engage in certain procedures when casting a spell. They may need to take a lot of time, focus their energies, make mystic hand-motions, chant in arcane languages, and the like. In *HERO System* terms, these constitute Limitations on the spell; see *Spell Creation And Use*, below, for more information about them.

Perhaps the most common procedure in Fantasy is the need for some type of material component (a Focus). For example, in many settings, a wizard must have his Wizard's Staff to use his magic. The magic system depicted in the *Liavek* shared-world setting uses a variant of this which requires any wizard to embed his "luck" in *some* object (be it a staff, a ring, a headband, or whatever) to give himself the power to cast spells. In other settings, each spell requires its own material component (bat's wings for a Spell Of Flight, a glowing ember for a Fireball spell, and so forth). Regardless of how you define the material component, the end result for game purposes — the fact that someone else can deprive a wizard of some or all of his powers by taking his Focus away — remains the same.

METAL

In some Fantasy gaming settings, metal (or some types of metal, such as iron and steel) interfere with or prevent the casting of spells. Conceptually, this relates to old superstitions about cold iron and magic, but from a game balance perspective, it's often done to prevent wizards from wearing armor and wielding bladed weapons. In the minds of some gamers, the concepts of "wizard" and "armor" just don't mix, and restrictions like these enforce that idea.

If you want to establish this sort of rule for your campaign, you need to decide just how severe a restriction it is. Can a wizard carry *any* metal items, or must he eschew the use of metal altogether (except when required for a spell Focus or built into a magical item, perhaps)? Does wearing armor or carrying metal prevent magic altogether, or simply make it harder to use? Does the restriction apply if the character simply stands near a lot of metal (such as an armored knight), or only when he himself carries/wears metal?

Some common versions of this restriction include:

- If a wizard carries more metal on his person than he could lift with his Casual STR, he cannot cast spells.
- Wizards cannot use metal weapons that do more than 3 DCs of damage.
- If a wizard stands within 2m of 10 kg or more of metal (including any suit of chain or plate armor), he cannot cast spells (or he suffers a Magic roll penalty equal to the PD/ED of, or provided by, the metal).

If you establish a metal restriction on spell-casting, you should consider creating a Talent or other ability spellcasters can buy to avoid (or diminish) that restriction. Otherwise it becomes impossible for players to build some types of "warrior-mage" characters.

REQUIRED LIMITATION VALUE

Rather than imposing specific requirements such as "all spells must have a Focus" or "no spells work if the wizard has more than 10 kg of metal," you can simply impose a blanket Limitation value requirement: all spells must have X worth of Limitations, chosen by the spell's designer. A value of -1 or -1½ is typical, but it depends on how restricted you want spellcasters to be, what specific Limitations (if any) you require for all spells, and other considerations.

FLAVORING MAGIC

The last definitional issue to think about, but in many ways the most important, is the "flavor" you want your system to have, and how you can achieve that flavor.

To a certain extent, the flavor of magic depends on the sub-genre of the campaign. In High Fantasy, magic tends to be common, powerful, and easily used. In Swords And Sorcery, it may or may not be common, but it's usually harder to use. In Low Fantasy, using magic may not even be possible (at least not for PCs); if it is, it takes a lot of time, effort, and preparation. Epic Fantasy could fall into any of these molds, though it often combines relatively rare magic with potentially great power.

Besides defining your magic system properly, the easiest way to infuse flavor into spells and magic is with Limitations (and, to a lesser extent, Advantages). An ability a character can use with few or no restrictions and at will doesn't seem like a "spell" to most people; it feels more like a super-power or divine power. But a power constrained by the Limitations often associated with magic — materials (Focus), making mystic gestures (Gestures), invocations (Incantations), and skill (Requires A Roll) — *feels* like a spell, not a power. Other Limitations, such as *Concentration*, *Extra Time*, and *Increased Endurance Cost* may also be appropriate, particularly in Swords And Sorcery and Low Fantasy. See *Spell Use And Creation*, below, for more details.

- Wizards cannot wear any armor at all besides Heavy Cloth; if they want Resistant Defense, they should obtain it via spells.
- Wizards can wear cloth, hide, and unreinforced leather armors. A wizard who wears armor with any metal in it (beyond a few buckles or rivets) cannot cast spells at all.
- A wizard who wears armor with any metal in it (reinforced leather, scale, chain, and plate armors) suffers a penalty on his Magic rolls equal to the PD/ED provided by the armor.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A casual glance into one of the basic catalogues emphasizes this human orientation; the nomenclature has a quaint and archaic flavor. [For example:]

Xarfaggio's Physical Malepsy ...

The Green And Purple

Postponement of Joy

Panguire's Triumphs of Discomfort

Lugwiler's Dismal Itch

Khulip's Nasal Enhancement

—the names of some spells from the Dying Earth, listed in *Rhialto The Marvellous*, by Jack Vance

Another great way to inject some flavor into your magic system is to give spells properly Fantasy-sounding names. While names like “Fire Bolt” and “Invisibility” certainly explain what a spell does succinctly, they have a dull, generic sound to them. Wizards are creative folk, and it makes sense that they’d apply that creativity to the spells they craft.

Jack Vance’s “Dying Earth” stories provide an excellent example of the effect of spell names. In the Dying Earth, magicians don’t throw Fire Bolts or protect themselves with Invisibility, they cast “the Excellent Prismatic Spray” and “Phandaal’s Mantle Of Stealth.” The names of other spells are similarly evocative — couched in flowery and ancient language, they describe the spell’s visual effects, and perhaps even hint at what the spell does.

As with some of Vance’s spells, it’s often appropriate to identify the spell’s creator as part of the name. This gives your magic system history and depth, and may even inspire scenarios and characters as the PCs endeavor to find out who “Runcifer” was and whether he left behind any other spells besides the two that include his name. Wizards might even compete for naming privileges, changing a spell’s designation to suit their own vanity — such as when Vanderbrook the Wise “improves” Runcifer’s Radical Reactions (a mind-controlling spell) and renames it “Vanderbrook’s Spell Of Suzerainty” in his own honor. What will Runcifer have to say about this slight?

For every adept of the Blue Star knows; it is one of the prices of power. At the world’s end, when all the doings of mankind and mortals are done, the last to fall under the assault of Chaos will be the Temple of the Star; and then, in the Place That Is Not, the Master of the Star will summon all of the Pilgrim Adepts from the farthest corners of the world, to fight with all their magic against Chaos[.]

—the nature and purpose of the Order of the Blue Star is explained in “The Secret Of The Blue Star,” by Marion Zimmer Bradley

SOCIAL ISSUES

Mmatmuor and Sodosma were necromancers who came from the dark isle of Naat, to practice their baleful arts in Tinarath[.] But they did not prosper in Tinarath: for death was deemed a holy thing by the people of that grey country; and the nothingness of the tomb was not lightly to be desecrated; and the raising up of the dead by necromancy was held in abomination.

—one society’s perspective on necromancy in “Empire Of The Necromancers,” by Clark Ashton Smith

Aside from the definitional issues discussed above, you should also consider the role of magic as a social factor. Broadly speaking, how do magic and those who use it interact with each other, and with society in general? Can magic and spellcasters affect society as a whole, and if so, to what degree?

MAGIC ORGANIZATIONS

The first thing to think about is how spellcasters interact with each other. That will tell you a lot about how they fit into a greater society.

DIVINE SPELLCASTERS

In a magic system with divine magic, those who practice it — priests, druids, shamans, and the like — usually belong to or fit into some organized hierarchy. For priests, this tends to be an elaborate church/temple organizational scheme that stretches from an “archpriest” (a pope or patriarch, if you will) all the way down to village priests running tiny parishes. Most such organizations use the medieval Roman Catholic Church, perhaps leavened with a few Fantasy bits here and there, as a sort of model, but it depends on the nature of the god or pantheon worshipped. A nature goddess, for example, may have no churches at all. Even a priest who works by himself, such as the head of a small village shrine or a crusading priest, knows where he fits into the religious hierarchy, and to which superiors he must answer. You can simulate this with the *Religious Rank* Perk (page 131) and a *Subject To Orders* Social Complication (with decreased value for priests who usually spend their time far away from their superiors, such as most adventuring PC priests).

Druids, shamans, witchdoctors, and the like may or may not have similar organizations. Sometimes they have a social rank relating to their place of prominence within a tribe or clan, but no particular connection to other members of their profession. On the other hand, they may come together in “circles” or “moots” to discuss and debate important issues, arrange for the teaching of novices, make promotions within whatever hierarchy exists, and similar matters.

ARCANE SPELLCASTERS

A common trope in much Fantasy literature, particularly Epic and Low Fantasy stories, depicts the wizard as a lone, powerful figure, cut off from the rest of humanity because of the knowledge and magic he carries. Even when he interacts with other people, he often conducts himself in an inscrutable, enigmatic manner that invariably aggravates them.

However, the “lone wizard” concept doesn’t necessarily work well in Fantasy Hero, since gaming tends to be a group activity. While a spellcasting PC can maintain *some* aloofness and superiority of knowledge, ultimately he’s got to get along with his fellow adventurers, since they’re going to experience the same indignities and save each others’ lives many times. Furthermore, unlike the literary wizard, who’s usually the most powerful member of a group of characters, the Fantasy Hero wizard usually has about the same amount of power as any other adventurer in his party. Thus, PC wizards tend to be more open and friendly than many of the wizards depicted in Fantasy literature.

Mages interact with each other in various ways. The master-apprentice relationship, described above, requires a lot of interaction, particularly if the magic system or tradition uses that as the exclusive means of training wizards — only a truly selfish or misanthropic mage would neglect his duty to pass on his craft to a promising youngster. A wizard’s school requires even more mingling with one’s fellow spellcasters.

MAGES’ GUILDS AND ORDERS

Beyond the need to interact to learn, mages sometimes form voluntary associations to share knowledge, further a common goal, pool their resources, or the like. For example, Marion Zimmer Bradley’s mercenary-magician Lythande belongs to the Order of the Blue Star, whose members agree to fight together in the final battle against Chaos and receive certain special powers in return; in Lyndon Hardy’s *Master Of The Five Magics*, some magicians have formed the Cycloid Guild to provide themselves with the resources and knowledge base needed to practice their craft. In many Fantasy Hero campaigns, spellcasters form Mages’ Guilds. The guild provides a meeting-hall for members, a large library for spell research, other useful facilities (such as alchemy labs), and the chance to mingle with one’s learned fellows in a private environment. Additionally, it gives the members one voice in local political and social affairs.

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Of course, not just any wizard can join a mages’ association — most have membership requirements. The payment of dues is an almost universal requirement, and the more powerful or resource-rich the organization, the more expensive the dues (some may even require members to pay with enchanted items instead of coin). Many also have “power” tests: only wizards of a certain level of

power, or higher, can belong (this excludes most apprentices and “amateurs”). Some, like the aforementioned Order of the Blue Star, exact promises, vows, or other obligations from their members.

A mage’s organization may deliberately exclude some potential members regardless of wealth or power. “Wild talents” and other untrained spellcasters are automatically rejected from some Mages’ Guilds (whose members regard them as ignorant and dangerous). The Sorcerers’ Guild won’t let necromancers, witches, wizards, thaumaturges, or seers join, just sorcerers.

Many wizard associations require their members to wear or bear some identifying token (which may qualify them for a *Distinctive Features* Complication). The members of Bradley’s Order of the Blue Star mark themselves with a blue star tattoo on the forehead (which blazes with mage-fire when the member gets angry). The Mages’ Guild of Eagleton might have a stylized eagle pin that all members wear.

MEMBER BENEFITS

In addition to the intangible benefits described above, belonging to a group of allied mages can help a character in other ways. Membership may give him a bonus to Spell Research rolls because of the group’s libraries and laboratories (+2 to Spell Research, Only When On Guild Premises [-1]), the ability to buy magical items from his fellow members at a 20% discount, a network of valued friends and associates (Contacts), and the like.

Most dramatically of all, group membership may give the character special powers and spells (or at least access to them if he wants them). For example, several members of the Mages’ Guild of Eagleton are experts on conjuration magic, and they have made their knowledge freely available to their fellows. As a result, the only spellcasters in the campaign who can buy the spells *Sublime Banishment* and *Magnificent Banishment* are Guild members in good standing. For PC spellcasters, gaining access to this sort of “hidden lore” may be the most useful and exciting thing about joining a mage’s association.

If appropriate, the GM should prepare a Template for membership in the organization. Anyone who wants to become a member has to buy the Template (assuming he meets the qualifications, of course).

RIVALRIES

For the GM, the best thing about having characters belong to a mages’ association is the possibility of rivalries. As powerful, creative people, spellcasters sometimes rub one another the wrong way. As in any organization, inevitably this leads to intra-organization rivalries, factions, and politics — a situation fraught with scenario potential. Similarly, an organization may have a fierce rivalry with another organization, causing their respective members to compete with and even attack each other.

“It’s a lonely way, you know — the way of the necromancer. Yes, to know too much — lacrimae mundi, the tears of the world. ... The days of our kind are numbered. The One God comes to drive out the many gods; the spirits of wood and stream grow silent. It’s the way of things.”

—Merlin philosophizes about the life of a wizard to Morgana in the movie *Excalibur*



Moreover, that [Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and Ningauble of the Seven Eyes,] those two bitter wizardly rivals[,] would have joined forces, that they should apparently be operating together in amity... Something of great note must be afoot!

—two sorcerers overcome their Rivalry to save Lankhmar from the “Bazaar of the Bizarre,” by Fritz Leiber

“In holy ground,” Andrew whispered, gasping. “Oh, the shame of it. In holy ground they put him. And him a heathen wizard, for to be a wizard one must be a heathen, must he not?”

—Andrew expresses shock and dismay at the treatment of a wizard in *The Fellowship Of The Talisman*, by Clifford Simak

PERSPECTIVES ON MAGIC AND SPELLCASTERS

In a roleplaying game like Fantasy Hero, where characters’ ability to interact with NPCs factors into many scenes and adventures, it’s important for you to know how society reacts to magic and those who use it. Peoples’ reaction to magic generally depends on two factors: familiarity and danger.

FAMILIARITY

In a society where magic is common and widespread, the average person probably reacts to it well. It won’t seem mysterious or especially unusual; it’s something he’s seen before, if only a few times, so he knows enough not to let it worry him too much. For example, in Ursula LeGuin’s novel *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, the inhabitants of Roke Island, where there’s a school for wizards, think nothing of seeing magical effects occur; they know it’s probably just some student practicing or playing a prank. Elsewhere in Earthsea mages are far less common, but still accepted, even revered, by laymen, for whom they often cast spells.

In some High Fantasy settings, magic may be so common that ordinary folk treat it as an everyday thing. When virtually anyone can cast a simple cleaning-spell or two, magic’s just another tool, like hammers or cooking pots. In that sort of world, it would take a really powerful spell to attract anyone’s attention.

However, in most Fantasy settings magic isn’t quite as common as all that. It’s the province of a select group of spellcasters, monsters, spirits, and other such folks. Ordinary people may hear about it constantly in tales and gossip, and maybe see it a few times in their lives — in much the same way modern humans hear about celebrities constantly but rarely meet any. When they do encounter it, they’re likely to be suspicious, superstitious, and at least a little fearful.

In some settings, magic may be so rare that people scoff at it. That’s the default for most Urban Fantasy games, and it may apply in Low Fantasy as well. When confronted with this thing they thought did not exist, people may react with curiosity, anxiety, or abject terror.

DANGER

If people perceive magic as dangerous, they’re likely to fear it, and to fear and hate those who wield it (including fantastic beasts like dragons). “Danger,” of course, can mean many things. It could mean that spells themselves endanger people — they have environmental Side Effects, for example. But it’s more likely that the danger results not from the fact of magic itself, but its misuse at the hands of unscrupulous spellcasters. Wizards who engage in casual magical duels on city streets quickly teach people to stay far away from anyone in a robe and pointy hat, since no

one wants to get caught in the crossfire. In some settings, as in Katherine Kurtz’s Gwynedd, people suspect, fear, and hate spellcasters because some of them once usurped the throne and oppressed anyone who couldn’t wield magic. In Gwynedd, some spells are helpful and useful — but after years of being threatened with hammers, people tend to fear even the most innocent carpenter.

On the other hand, if people become used to magic as a positive (or at least neutral) force, they can use it and respect its power without letting the danger it poses sway their emotions. For example, if the village wizard has healing-spells with which he can cure peoples’ injuries and pains, the fact that he can also blast people with lightning bolts won’t make them think of magic as more dangerous or less helpful — it just makes them treat the wizard politely.

In a world with stark differentiation between Good and Evil, the assessment of the danger of magic and its users probably depends on which side a society or group espouses. Evil peoples like orcs and half-demons fear and hate Good spellcasters like Wizards and Druids, and kill them if they can; the Good folk of the plains and cities know that all Necromancers and Sorcerers serve Evil, and the thought of falling into such a spellcaster’s clutches terrifies them even as they seek out the local Wizard to buy a finding-spell.

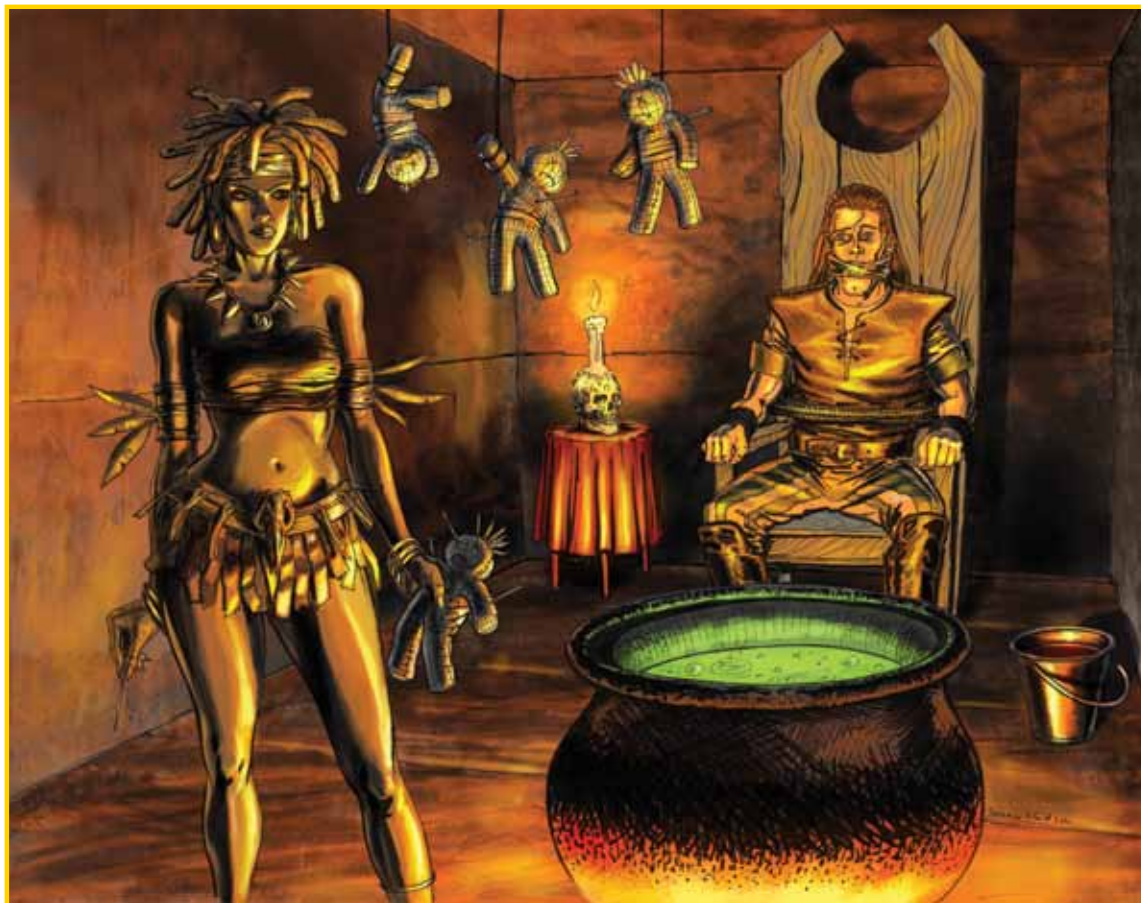
VARIATIONS ON A THEME

People and societies aren’t uniform — even in the most authoritarian or tradition-bound culture, some variation of opinion and belief exists. Therefore, not everyone may react to magic the same way. A person whose son was slain in battle by an enemy wizard may hate and fear all spellcasters, while one whose son was saved from the plague by a Cure Illness cantrip may consider magic a beneficent force. In the magocracy of Arutha, the ruling wizards use their powers to make life easier and better for their subjects, who in return respect all who wield magic honorably — while across the continent, the sorcerer-kings of Shar use spells to brutally oppress the peasants, causing the common folk to loathe all spellcasters. As with anything else, peoples’ individual experiences tend to color their perceptions more than what nationality or group they belong to.

Even within a single society or culture, people may regard different types of spells and spellcasters differently. For example, perhaps the common folk eagerly receive the village priest’s healings and blessings, but they cross the street to avoid even approaching a wizard and his “heathen sorceries.” People might treat wizards, thaumaturges, and alchemists (who all contribute to society commercially) like any other tradesmen, while regarding sorcerers and their mind-reading magics with suspicion (at best), and form a mob to kill a necromancer or witch at the merest rumor of such evil magics.

“The logo [of the eye] is the mark of the sorcerer,” someone behind Alodar muttered. “What risk the queen takes to expose herself so.”

—ordinary folk fear Sorcery and those who practice it in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy



MAGIC'S EFFECT ON SOCIETY

Magic, if commonplace and/or powerful, may affect or alter an entire society. The ways in which this could happen are myriad, but examples include:

Improving Technology: Magic may improve existing technologies, or allow people to invent technologies long before they otherwise would. For example, with Fire Magic to improve the smelting and working of metals, a Fantasy society may develop steel long before real-world cultures did, or steel may become more widespread more quickly.

Replacing Technology: Alternately, magic may simply replace technology. Why spend the time and energy to invent a windmill when you have a grain-threshing spell? Why bother learning to forge steel when magical planes of force make better armor and swords? A society that uses magic to this degree could become highly advanced very quickly — but it remains vulnerable to attack by armies armed with anti-magic devices, and may discriminate against people who can't cast spells.

Utilities: One way to replace some technology with magic, but not change the world completely, is to let societies use minor magics to take the place of modern-day utilities. Fear of housefires and darkened nighttime streets becomes a thing of the past with magical streetlights and lamps.

Diseases and epidemics don't occur as frequently when every house has fresh running water courtesy of aquamantic spells and cities use enchanted sewerpipes to whisk waste away.

Commercial Benefits: Magic can also affect the economy. Wizards and priests may sell their services, offering spellcasting to anyone who can pay the price ("I've got a date tonight; what'll it cost for a Rapturous Beauty spell that lasts for a day?"). Magic may make mass production possible, so that even the poorest peasants have comfortable, warm clothing and nutritious meals every day. Thanks to magic, merchants can offer goods and services (ice in the summertime, fresh food in midwinter) they otherwise could not.

Around The World In A Day: Coupled with general economic benefits, magic could make travel much easier. Using flight-spells, teleportation portals, artificial magical rivers, or the like, people can cross Fantasy realms much faster than they could on foot or horseback — sometimes in the blink of an eye! World-spanning commercial enterprises and franchises become possible, and so do rapid invasions.

I Cannot Tell A Lie: With a court wizard nearby wielding a truth-spell, no one can lie to a king or a magistrate. Magic can help ensure society catches and punishes the guilty, stops con artists dead in their tracks, and so forth. On the other hand, it also makes some crimes much easier to commit — it's hard to stop a burglar who transform a vault door to air, for example.

"You have done credit to your craft tonight, and we have been amply rewarded. We can call ourselves thaumaturges to the queen; Vendora herself has given us leave. No more mending pots or keeping the frost from winter fruit for a single night's meal in the backward outlands. Let us also travel to Ambrosia and ply our craft where the coin is gold, not copper."

—Periac the thaumaturge sees better profit for his spell-casting labors coming his way in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

The thaumaturge held his hands high overhead. In one was the stone from which the chip now affixed to the catapult had been cleft; in the other was the remains of the one consumed in the acid bath. ... He signaled the crews to fire and the projectiles sprang from their beds in unison. An instant later, with the missiles already rising high into the air, the thaumaturge brought the two small stones swiftly together.

The flying rocks wrenched out of their natural trajectories; like sunlight focused with a glass, they converged simultaneously on the ledge. The catapult exploded in a mass of timber, splinters, and dust.

—Bandar's forces use Thaumaturgy to destroy one of the defenders' siege engines in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

People came to [Nushain] more freely and frequently, hearing that he was a soothsayer of some note; and moreover, he was immune from prosecution, owing to the liberal laws of Xylac, which permitted all the sorcerous and mantic arts.

—Nushain the astrologer finds a safer place to practice his arts in "The Last Hieroglyph," by Clark Ashton Smith

MILITARY ISSUES

Magic may have a particularly strong effect on military matters, as discussed on page 238. Even in a setting where magic is neither common nor powerful, armies may very well have the best of what's available (in much the same way that the real-world military develops and uses many technologies long before they reach the civilian sector). The introduction of even small amounts of weak magic into the military arena could completely change the face of conflict. If wizards can teleport inside a castle (or apert an entire unit of soldiers inside), soon the strength of a fortification's anti-magic shields becomes even more important than the thickness of its walls. If flying magical creatures are plentiful, keeps need to create magical surface-to-air defenses to stop them. If a domination spell lets a wizard take over a general's mind from a mile away, soon commanders won't dare to show themselves on the battlefield... at least not without a wizardly bodyguard to shield them from enemy magics.

Military magic has plenty of non-offense-oriented uses as well. Magical communications would allow military units to operate with unheard-of efficiency and precision, and for scouts to alert armies to ambushes well in advance. With clairvoyance spells, reconnaissance of an enemy force becomes easy, and anti-scrying defenses crucial to military secrecy. Precognition spells may make trying to fool the enemy impossible — or they could end war altogether, as the side destined to lose surrenders peacefully.

Similarly, magic changes espionage. When a sorcerer-spy can see through (or walk through!) walls, hiding valuable military documents requires magically-sealed chests or extra-planar storage spaces. Mind-reading spells make it difficult (at best) for a captured spy or officer to withhold secrets. An enchanted code may defy all attempts at decryption.

POLITICAL ISSUES

If magic affects courts and trials (see above), it can similarly alter the nature of politics. Imagine, if you will, a Senate chamber with an enchantment of truthspeaking laid on it so that no one who speaks there can exaggerate or lie — or even an inauguration process that places a spell of truthspeaking directly upon all officeholders! On the other hand, if magic has created substitutes for rapid transit and mass media, the Fantasy world may see the birth of modern-day campaigning techniques as democracy becomes much more feasible in vast realms ("Tune the crystal ball to channel three, honey — I want to see the Senatorial debates").

Magic may make diplomatic missions unnecessary. Rather than having to meet in some distant place to negotiate a treaty, scrying magic lets legates decide on the terms from the comfort of home. And if the King wants to verify compliance with treaty terms, a divination spell tells him what he needs to know.

RULES ISSUES

Once you've decided on the basic concepts and implications of your magic system, it's time to create the structure for the system using the *HERO System* rules. What follows here are some general suggestions and guidelines; the *Spell Creation And Use* section, below, has more specific ideas on subjects like casting methods, spell duration, and the like.

BUYING SPELLS

In the *HERO System*, characters buy their abilities with Character Points, and spells are no different. In some way, characters who want to use magic have to pay points for the privilege, just like warriors pay points for their fighting skills. But there are many things you should consider when deciding how PC spellcasters invest Character Points in magic.

STANDARD SPELL PURCHASE METHODS

Most Fantasy Hero games use one (or more) of four basic spell purchase systems: individual spell purchase; Power Frameworks for spells; spell Skills; and spell Perks or Talents.

INDIVIDUAL SPELL PURCHASE

The default rule for purchasing spells in Fantasy Hero is the simplest, but often the most expensive: characters must pay Character Points for each spell they want individually. They cannot put them in Power Frameworks or get any other sort of "cost break" for them — they have to shell out Character Points for every spell (though the GM may allow them to design individual spells that have multiple effects as Frameworks; see below).

This method has several benefits. First, it's easy to explain and to understand; it involves no complex *HERO System* concepts. Second, it helps the GM evaluate a spellcaster's level of power. Instead of having to judge the effectiveness of a Framework or a bunch of spells purchased at a discount, the GM can look directly at a list of spells, know exactly what each one costs in straightforward *HERO System* terms, and determine whether it could unbalance the campaign. Third, it helps the GM control the spellcaster's power. The character can't suddenly, or for the cost of just a few Experience Points, add a powerful new spell to his arsenal; purchasing a new spell is a major undertaking. Furthermore, increasing the power of individual spells also takes lots of points (and thus time to earn them), so spellcasters don't become too powerful too quickly.

But some of those pluses also have their negative side. For one thing, when a spellcaster has to pay the full Real Point cost for each spell individually, it's difficult for him to become a well-rounded user of magic, with a wide variety of spells for different situations. Even becoming highly proficient in a single area of magic — such

as Fire Spells or Necromancy — is cost-prohibitive, leading to “fire mages” who can’t cast some elementary flame-spells. For another, even if the spellcaster can afford to buy a decent selection of spells, he tends to have trouble advancing in power. Unless the GM hands out Experience Points with a generous hand, the spellcaster has to choose whether to make one of his spells a little more powerful, save up for a new spell, or to improve or add some non-magical ability. Before long, the spellcaster may find himself lagging behind other character types in terms of raw power. (But see *Varying Spell Costs*, page 272, for some ideas about reducing these difficulties.)

SPELL FRAMEWORKS

In some magic systems, characters can purchase spells in Power Frameworks. This tends to reverse the problems and benefits described for individual spell purchase: spell Frameworks allow spellcasters to develop a broad repertoire of spells (either within a particular sphere, or generally), and to add to their arsenals and increase the power of their spells with relative ease over the course of the campaign. But they may let a spellcaster become too powerful too fast, or whip up “just the right spell” for every situation. They also impose a burden on the GM to keep a close eye on the character all the time and try to evaluate the effectiveness of spells in “groups” rather than individually.

Of course, the types of Frameworks allowed affect the degree of benefits and problems involved:

Variable Power Pools: A Variable Power Pool gives spellcasters the greatest flexibility, and with the right “eligibility requirements” (see below) or other restrictions on what spells a character can cast, VPPs suit some Fantasy Hero settings very well. But they tend to pose the worst problems in terms of expanding a character’s power and making it difficult to gauge.

A Spell Variable Power Pool uses the Pool’s value to indicate the total amount of Real Points’ worth of spells a character can have active at any one time, and its Control Cost to govern how many Active Points any one spell can have, per the usual rules for VPPs. By establishing campaign rules governing how big the Pool and Control Cost can be, the GM can establish a system where a spellcaster can have lots of spells but they’re all low-powered, just a few spells that are extremely powerful, or anything in between.

Spell VPPs cannot take the *Limitation Spells Only* or the like. Since that’s all they’re allowed for in a typical Fantasy Hero game, VPPs have that Limitation by default as a campaign ground rule for a -0 value. (If the campaign does feature other VPPs on a fairly regular basis, the GM might allow *Spells Only* as a -¼.)

Multipowers: Multipowers work well for many magic systems. They offer spellcasters a significant degree of flexibility, and the opportunity to buy a large number of spells, for not too great a cost, but still restrict the character’s repertoire.

Many spell Multipowers use Variable slots, particularly if they include a lot of defense spells, Constant spells, or utility spells. That allows spellcasters to vary the power of their spells so they can use two or more at once; it also means a spellcaster can increase his power by increasing the points in the reserve rather than having to buy up both the reserves and the slots. For Multipowers devoted to a single type of spell, Fixed slots are more common.

Even a small Power Framework can become expensive quickly, particularly in a game where characters typically only have 175 Character Points to spend at the start of the game. This may make it impossible for a player to buy a sufficiently large Framework to satisfy his spellcaster’s character conception, or for the character to fit into the game’s magic system properly. In this case, the GM either needs to adapt the system, or has to find a way to give spellcasters a cost break on spell Frameworks. For example, perhaps he could allow spellcasters to apply Limitations to the Pool of a VPP as well as the Control Cost, or divide a Multipower’s reserve cost by five.

Another problem that sometimes arises with spell Multipowers and VPPs is the Active Point cap imposed by the Framework. A lot of spells are complex, with several Powers chained together or other impressive effects that end up costing a lot of Active Points. To afford even one of these spells, a character may have to buy a larger Framework than he generally needs... and then he has the temptation to increase some of his other spells to take advantage of the inflated Active Point ceiling. If you find that this is a problem in your campaign, you could consider granting exceptions to the Active Point restriction on a case-by-case basis — as long as the *Real Point* cost of the spell fits within the reserve or Pool, a character can still buy the spell through his Framework.

Even if the GM doesn’t let characters buy all of their spells in a single Power Framework, he may allow them to define a single spell with multiple applications as a Power Framework (typically a Multipower). For example, suppose that Pelgar’s Incendiary Sphere allows a character to project a fireball. He can vary the size of the fireball, making it large or small to suit his needs, and change it in other subtle ways for best tactical effect. Since the *Area Of Effect* Advantage doesn’t let a character vary the size of an Area, you could create this spell as a Multipower: one slot as a large Area Of Effect (Explosion), one slot as a regular-sized Explosion, a couple of slots as regular Explosions with another Advantage, and an Area Of Effect (1m Radius) for precision spellcasting. The entire Multipower won’t cost too much more than buying a single Fireball spell, but provides the character with a lot more options and makes the spell more interesting.

“Then it is concluded, Trodicar,” Lectonil said. “The [formulae for the] gong of shattering resonance and the well-tempered djinn bottles for the boots of varied prints and the amulet of blinding light. But the everlasting candles we will save for another time.”

“Oh, very well[.] ... By what means are the rituals to be exchanged?”

“By the usual method of the wax-sealed book, two copies, freshly illuminated.”

—Lectonil and Trodicar trade spells in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy



See page 289 regarding the duration of spells in Power Frameworks.



4

SPELL SKILLS

Some magic systems allow characters to buy spells not as powers, but as Skills. They use the *Power Skill*, redefining it as a “Spell Skill” that a character buys for each spell or group of spells he wants to cast. Although spells are written up using Powers and other game elements (and they all have the Limitation *Requires A Roll*), the character doesn’t pay the Real Point cost of the spell. He simply buys the Skill needed to use the spell, in much the same way that a warrior doesn’t pay 15 Character Points for a greatsword, he pays 2 Character Points for WF: Common Melee Weapons. For example, instead of paying 13 Character Points for a Fireball Spell, the character pays 3 Character Points for an INT-Based Roll with the *Fireball Skill*.

Skill-based magic systems require you to address two fundamental issues. The first is what type of Skill a character has to buy to cast spells. Most magic systems use an Intellect Skill that costs 3 Character Points for an INT-based roll, +1 to the roll for each +2 Character Points. However, some GMs prefer other methods. One possible variation is to buy *Spell Familiarities* that work like Weapon Familiarities, but for spells. For 1 Character Point, a character can buy the ability to use any one spell (or all the spells in a tight group, like “Fire Attacks”); for 2 Character Points, a character can buy the ability to use an entire type or category of spells (like “Fire Magic” or “Necromancy”). The *Azgardian Magic* system on page 293 uses Spell Familiarities, for example, though in conjunction with a *Magic Skill* used for the actual casting.

The second issue is how many Spell Skills a spellcaster has to buy. The simplest version of this type of magic system has a character simply buy one *Magic Skill* and then use that to cast every spell he knows. This means you have to provide a way for him to “learn” spells. For example, perhaps the character starts the game with ten spells chosen from *The HERO System Grimoire* (or some other pregenerated list). During the course of the campaign, he can add to this list in several ways: finding long-lost grimoires; buying the knowledge of a spell from another spellcaster for money; defeating an enemy spellcaster and stealing his spellbook; conducting research and creating his own spells; and so on. The player has to keep track of the spells his character’s learned.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, spellcasters have to buy a separate Spell Skill for every spell they know how to cast: Fireball 13-, Invisibility Spell 13-, Spell Of Illusions 13-, Wizard’s Shield Spell 13-, Wings Of Air 13-, and so forth. (In effect, this sort of system treats every single spell as a distinctive Skill, like Acrobatics, Persuasion, or Stealth.) Thus, the minimum cost of any spell is 1 Character Point (for an 8- roll with it), but characters can buy a 10- Proficiency with one for 2 Character Points, or spend 3 Character Points for an INT Roll.

Between these two extremes lies the concept of purchasing Spell Skills by type, school, or classification of magic. In a system like this, a character has one Spell Skill for each type of magic he’s learned how to cast: Necromancy 16-, Wizardry 14-, Alchemy 8-, Sorcery 13-.

(The “Spell Familiarity” concept described above is a variation on this theme, where characters have to spend 1-2 Character Points for the ability to cast entire categories or subcategories of spells.) As with using a single *Magic Skill*, this approach requires you to define how many spells a spellcaster knows at the start of the campaign, and how he can learn more.

The third issue for you to resolve with a Spell Skill system is how Skill Roll penalties apply, if at all. If characters only have to buy a single *Magic Skill*, typically the standard penalty of -1 per 10 Active Points in the spell applies to the roll, since spellcasters can easily afford to buy their one Skill up to a high enough level to counteract the penalty some of the time. On the other hand, if spellcasters have to buy one Intellect Skill per spell, you may want to consider waiving the Skill Roll penalty — having to buy numerous Spell Skills up to a high enough level to cast spells with any reasonable chance of success is probably beyond the means of most PCs (certainly most starting 175-point PCs). Some GMs waive the penalty as a campaign ground rule and keep the value of Requires A Roll the same; others apply the “no Active Point penalty” modifier to Requires A Roll. For a one-Skill-per-school system, the answer depends on how restricted you want spellcasters to be; improving four to six Skills isn’t too difficult, but more than that may hinder characters if the Skill Roll penalty remains the same.

Some GMs vary the Skill Roll penalty from spell to spell, to encourage “specialization” by spellcasters. For example, suppose a magic system has a dozen “schools” of magic. Spellcasters buy one Spell Skill per school, using it to cast any spell from that school. A spellcaster may choose two “prime schools” for which he suffers no Skill Roll penalty, four that have a -1 per 20 Active Points penalty, four that have the standard -1 per 10 Active Points penalty, and two that have a harsh -1 per 5 Active Points penalty. That way each spellcaster has his own strengths and weaknesses.

SPELL PERKS OR TALENTS

As a variation on spell Skills, you could consider having characters buy a special Perk or Talent that represents their ability to cast spells. Typically such systems resemble one-Skill-per-school systems, with characters paying a separate “buy-in” cost for each type of magic they want to use.

With a Perk/Talent system, you have to define what a spellcaster gets for buying the Perk/Talent. Since he doesn’t get a Skill he can roll (unless the Talent provides one), either the system doesn’t require Skill Rolls for spells or he has to buy one or more Skills in addition to his Perk/Talent. Another possibility is that the Perk/Talent grants a character “access” to a pregenerated list of spells, from which he can cast any spell (though there may be restrictions on how well he can cast it, or how often, and he may be able to overcome these problems by spending more points).

COMBINATION SYSTEMS

Some GMs mix and match these approaches. For example, suppose a magic system has ten “schools” of magic (nine arcane, plus divine magic). To gain “access” to the spells of a particular school (spells the GM has already written up), characters have to buy a Talent called *Spell School* for 4 Character Points. To cast spells he has access to, a character uses a *Magic Skill*. The Talent provides a +1 bonus to the Skill Roll when the character casts spells from that school, and he can improve the roll by +1 for every +2 Character Points he devotes to the Talent.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Related to the issue of how characters buy spells is whether spells have “eligibility requirements.” In other words, does the magic system require characters to satisfy some condition before they can buy a particular spell, or category of spells?

Establishing eligibility requirements often increases the GM’s administrative burden, particularly early in the game. But they’re an excellent tool for restricting spellcasters’ power at all stages of the campaign, and often help to give the system the appropriate “feel.”

In most cases, a spell with an eligibility requirement(s) does *not* get to take a Limitation because of it. An eligibility requirement is nothing more than a campaign ground rule governing when characters can buy particular spells. They don’t restrict the actual casting or use of the spell in any way; once the character meets the eligibility requirement and acquires the spell, he can cast it using the standard campaign rules for doing so. Exceptions (such as INT Minima) are noted below.

Some of the most common eligibility requirements include:

REQUIRED SKILLS, PERKS, OR TALENTS

Some of the Skill, Perk, and/or Talent systems described above essentially use the spell-buying method to establish an eligibility requirement: only characters who know the right Skill, or have the right Talent, can use or buy certain types of spells. The cost of the “buy-in,” particularly with Perk and Talent systems, depends primarily on what the GM thinks access to a spell or group of spells is worth; it might even vary depending on how large a group is, or how powerful its spells are. For example, suppose that characters have to buy a *Spell Perk* for each circle of wizardry they want access to. The Circle Of Conjuration costs 5 Character Points because it has few spells and they take a long time to cast. The Circle Of Fire costs 12 Character Points because it has a lot of spells, most of them high-damage attack magics. The Circle of Necromancy costs 8 Character Points; it has relatively few spells, but almost all of them have high Active Point totals or are otherwise extremely effective.



When setting the cost of a required Skill/Perk/Talent, the GM should consider how much of a character's points he wants to "use up" this way. This is primarily important with regard to starting spellcaster characters, since most "eligibility elements" will be bought at or near the start of the campaign. If beginning characters are built on 175 Total Points, then a 10-point *Spellcaster* Perk that allows characters to buy spells uses up about 5% of the character's points. Eligibility requirements that are too expensive can cripple a character; ones that are too cheap allow him to be too powerful too soon. Finding the right balance — such as a high eligibility cost but cheap spells, or vice-versa — is up to the GM based on how he wants his magic system and his world to work.

EXPERTISE

In an expertise-restricted system, each spell has a listed prerequisite: the character must have already spent X Character Points on spells before he can buy this spell. Some spells have a 0-point requirement; those are the simplest, least effective spells spellcasters have to buy first. The typical breakpoints are 10, 20, 30, 40, and so on, but you can arrange the system to have as much granularity as you want.

The benefit to this system is that it allows you to efficiently regulate which spells a wizard learns when. If you consider, say, the *Disintegration Spell* to be particularly powerful, you can put a 50-point expertise requirement on it. That way starting spellcasters can't go around disintegrating every enemy they encounter — in fact, not even moderately experienced mages can buy the spell. Only a truly experienced and puissant wizard has the power and wit to master so potent an incantation! However, occasionally a player may come to you with a valid request for an exception to the general rule. As long as his request doesn't seem likely to lead to abuse and he's got a good reason for it, consider granting it. After all, maybe the heroes will occasionally run into enemy spellcasters whom you've granted exceptions to as well....

INTELLIGENCE MINIMUM

You could, if you wanted, take a page from the weapons design rules and create an "Intelligence Minimum" rule for spells similar to the STR Minimum rule for weapons. Each spell has an INT Minimum — the more powerful or complex the spell, the higher its INT Minimum.

The simplest sort of INT Minimum is just a way of differentiating more powerful/complex spells from the lesser ones — it doesn't have any game effect beyond that. (You can see an example of this in the *Azgardian Magic* system described later in this chapter.) However, it's possible to create INT Minimum rules that function more like STR Minimum. For example: if a character lacks the INT to comprehend the spell fully, for every 5 points (or fraction thereof) which his INT is below the INT Minimum, he suffers the following penalties: -1 OCV with the spell (if applicable); -2 to Required Skill Rolls to cast the spell (if applicable); and -5 Active Points' worth

of effect. For every full 5 points a character's INT is above a spell's INT Minimum, he receives a +2 bonus to Required Skill Rolls to cast it. (Alternatively, he might get a +1 DC increase in the spell's effectiveness, similar to using STR to increase a weapon's damage.)

Unlike other eligibility requirements, INT Minimum *does* qualify for a Limitation, since it restricts the use of the spell more than the ability to buy it. (This assumes, of course, that the penalties listed above apply in the campaign; if not, you must change INT Minimum to impose equivalent penalties, or disallow it as a Limitation.) Use the values for STR Minimum on 6E2199.

POWER RATINGS

The text on pages 247-51 discusses rating systems both for a spell's power and a spellcaster's power. If you have a rating system in your campaign, you can use it as an eligibility requirement. The rule usually works something like this: a character must be power level X or higher to learn and use spells of rank X. Thus, a power level seven character can cast rank one through seven spells, but not spells of rank eight or higher. However, the exact system depends on the number of power levels and ranks you establish and the relationship you want them to have. You could use some other formula (such as needing two power levels for each rank of spell), or even stagger the formula so that characters gain spells quickly early in the campaign but more slowly as they become more powerful.

PREREQUISITE SPELLS

Similar to an expertise system, but usually more complex, a prerequisite system requires characters to buy one or more "prerequisite" spells for each spell they want to buy. The simplest or least powerful spells have no prerequisite; they form the basis for an ascending "tree" of prerequisite spells. The more powerful a spell is, the more prerequisite spells it needs as the "tree" expands further and further out. Most "branches" of the tree cover a common theme or type of spell in a fairly linear succession of weakest to most powerful spells, but sometimes prerequisites cross branches. For example, perhaps *Mystic Dart* is a no-prerequisite spell that serves as the basis of the "Mystic Attacks" branch of the tree. The next spell up the tree, *Mystic Bolt*, has *Mystic Dart* as a pre-req — no character can buy *Mystic Bolt* unless he first buys *Mystic Dart*. The next spell in the chain is *Mystic Beam*, which has both *Dart* and *Bolt* as prerequisites. The fourth of the *Mystic Attack* spells, *Mystic Sphere*, requires the first three spells *and* the *Fireball* spell from the "Fire Magic" branch.

Instead of serving a "gatekeeping" function, some prerequisite systems act as cost reducers. If a character has one prerequisite for a spell, he can buy it at -1 Real Point cost; if he has two prereqs, he buys it at -2 Real Point cost; and so on. (The GM can define a minimum cost for any spell, however.) In a sense, this type of prerequisite system functions like the *Language Familiarity Chart* — a "Spell Familiarity Chart," if you will.

Although establishing a prerequisite system requires a lot of work on the GM's part (and usually the preparation of one or more "tree diagrams" so everyone understands the relationships of the various spells), it has two major benefits. First, it's very flavorful. It simulates the progression from lesser to greater power that takes place in many Fantasy sagas well, and players enjoy the thrill of "qualifying" to buy an important spell. Second, it restricts spellcasters' power, but not too tightly. A character who wants to buy powerful spells can do so — just not quickly or without investing a lot of points in related spells. It makes for a more logical, systemic method of advancement for spellcasters.

AVAILABLE SPELLS

In many Fantasy Hero games, the first question players ask the GM is this: "Do you have a spell list, or can we make up our own spells?" The GM should have an answer ready.

NO/LIMITED INDEPENDENT SPELL CREATION

Preparing a pregenerated list of spells obviously requires a lot of work (unless you use an existing list, such as the one in *The HERO System Grimoire*). This is particularly true if you run a High Fantasy campaign (since the commonality and power of magic in such settings usually means there are lots of spells characters can learn), a campaign with a long history and tradition of magic (which means spellcasters have had a long time to create spells, so a lot of them probably exist), or a campaign featuring many different types or classifications of magic. Each spell needs a basic description and a *HERO System* write-up, at the very least; many deserve an expanded description detailing the spell's history and uses.

However, all that work has its rewards. You know what all the spells are, how they work, and what they can do. You've designed and built them so they fit into your campaign properly, will cause few (if any) game balance problems, and contribute to the "feel" of your setting. All of this helps you control spellcasters' power so they don't run roughshod over your carefully-designed adventures.

If you establish a system like this, you should also let the players know whether characters can alter existing spells or add new ones. The answer may be "no"; in some cases, such as Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth*, the canon of spells is limited, and even the wisest wizards cannot add to it. But in most Fantasy Hero campaigns, spellcasters have some ability to design spells of their own. Usually this involves the *Spell Research Skill* (page 118), a lot of time, access to reference materials (and/or a lab), and money — but a sufficiently dedicated character can do it.

OPEN SPELL CREATION

On the other hand, some GMs don't create a list of pregenerated spells at all — they let the players make up all their own spells, then review and approve them. This has the not insignificant benefit of saving the GM enormous amounts of time and work, with the added attraction of allowing the players to exercise their own creativity and design their spellcaster characters just the way they want. However, the downside is extreme, too: the GM must review all those spells players create. Even if none of your players tries to create a spell that's inappropriate for the setting (or his character), or even worse that could grossly unbalance the game, the spells just might not have the right "feel" for the world. You could even end up with two characters buying the "same" spell in different ways, which just leads to confusion for everyone. Thus, this method works best in the hands of an experienced GM with players he knows and trusts.

REQUIREMENTS AND OPTIONS FOR SPELL CONSTRUCTION

Some magic systems regulate the game elements characters can use to build spells. Typically they require certain elements, forbid others, and make others optional. Primarily this tends to apply to Advantages and Limitations, but based on your preferences and the nature of the world and its magic, many variations are possible. Similarly, many systems have requirements for, or restrictions on, spells' power.

REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Many magic systems define magic in part by requiring all spells to use specific *HERO System* elements. In most such systems, this means mandatory Limitations. The Limitations most often used for this include:

- Concentration
- Costs Endurance
- Extra Time
- Focus
- Gestures
- Incantations
- Increased Endurance Cost
- Requires A Roll
- Requires Multiple Users
- Side Effects

Focus, Gestures, and Incantations are the Limitations most often required for spells; even in High Fantasy settings, spellcasters often need material components, mystic gestures, and spoken invocations to work magic. (In some magic systems, a specific Focus, such as wizard's staff, takes the place of expendable components.) Requires A Roll also occurs with high frequency, often accompanied by Side Effects. The other Limitations apply most often in Swords And Sorcery and Low Fantasy games that restrict or downplay the use of magic, but may be appropriate even in High Fantasy for some particularly powerful or difficult to cast spells.

...until now, at this dim time, with the sun dark, wilderness obscuring Ascolais, and the white city Kaiin half in ruins, only a few more than a hundred spells remained to the knowledge of man. Of these, Mazirian had access to seventy-three, and gradually, by stratagem and negotiation, was securing the others.

—obtaining new spells becomes a task for Mazirian in "Mazirian The Magician," by Jack Vance



Other systems use required Advantages. For example, in a High Fantasy setting with powerful, easily-used magic, perhaps all spells that inherently cost END must take the *Reduced Endurance* (0 END) Advantage. A system could require all non-attack spells to have Usable By Other so a caster can use them on himself or another person. Delayed Effect, a common Advantage in some magic systems, is discussed on pages 158-59.

Of course, a magic system doesn't have to make these (or any other) game elements mandatory. It can simply encourage spell designers to use them by designating them as "favored" or the like. You might even consider increasing the value of a Limitation, or decreasing the cost of an Advantage, to make it a more attractive purchase for spell creators.

FORBIDDEN ELEMENTS

On the other hand, sometimes a magic system forbids spell designers to use certain game elements when designing spells. A system that regards magic as an innate power wielded only by gifted individuals may forbid the use of the *Focus* or *Requires A Roll* Limitation — or even the *Reduced Endurance* Advantage, on the grounds that using magic takes a lot of personal energy. A Low Fantasy magic system intended to keep magic low-powered and ineffective for combat might forbid the use of all (or nearly all) Advantages.

POWER RESTRICTIONS

Some magic systems, particularly those for Swords And Sorcery, Low Fantasy, and even some flavorful Epic Fantasy settings limit the power of magic by imposing an Active Point cap on spells. For example, perhaps characters cannot build a spell with more than 40 Active Points. Some systems vary the cap by spell type — such as 40 Active Points for attack spells, 30 Active Points for defense spells, 20 Active Points for other types of spells. Others vary the ceiling by caster, making it depend on a multiple of the caster's INT, the number of *Use Magic* Talents the character buys, or the like.

While this definitely tends to inhibit spellcasters' ability to overwhelm the opposition with sheer power, it has some potential negative effects you should be aware of when establishing a power ceiling. First, building some magical effects takes a lot of points due to the nature or emphasis of the *HERO System* rules. Players will complain, and rightly so, if they can't create simple spells commonly found in Fantasy literature due to an Active Point cap. Second, restricting a spellcaster's raw power may have the effect of increasing his flexibility. Instead of spending the points to increase the power of a single spell, he buys a larger repertoire of spells with smaller costs. In the end, this may cause the GM more problems than one or two high-powered spells. Third, limiting spellcasters' raw power may place them at a disadvantage compared to warriors, rogues, and other characters.

VARYING SPELL COSTS

Some magic systems vary the cost of spells, making them cheaper or more costly to buy as a way of encouraging certain types of player (or Player Character) behavior, enhancing or restricting spellcaster power, improving game balance, or emphasizing particular aspects of the system. Usually this means increasing or decreasing the final Real Point cost of a spell, but it can mean applying special Advantages or Limitations to the spell only to change the cost. Some of the possible approaches include:

VARYING COSTS BY SPELL TYPE; SPELL DIVISORS

Some systems want to make certain types of spells cost more (or less) than others. For example, perhaps Divination spells cost double the calculated Real Point cost, to discourage PCs from buying them and using them to interfere with the GM's scenarios. On the other hand, maybe the GM sees Alchemy as being very common in the world, so he rules that all Alchemy spells (potion formulae) cost -3 Real Points (minimum cost of 1 point), or half their calculated Real Point cost, or something similar.

If you want to make it extremely easy for spellcasters to buy powerful spells, or a large number of spells, you could go so far as to divide their Real Point cost by some number, such as 3, 5, or 10 (this is usually referred to as a *spell divisor* rule). Then they cost the same as Multipower slots, without any of the restrictions of being in a Multipower.

VARYING COSTS BY CASTER TYPE

A few systems vary spell costs by the type of caster instead of, or in addition to, the type of spell. For example, perhaps wizards (arcane spellcasters) have to pay double the Real Point cost for healing spells and other divine magics, while priests (divine spellcasters) pay double for most attack spells and other arcane magics.

Some GMs use this approach to discourage non-spellcasters from buying spells. In many Fantasy Hero games, particularly High Fantasy ones, there's no specific rule against warriors, rogues, and other non-spellcaster types buying a spell or two if they want. Not only does this step on the wizards' and priests' toes a little, but typically "dabblers" just buy spells that augment something they already do well — such as spells to enhance HTH Combat damage or improve Skill Rolls. This often threatens game balance. To cut down on this problem, you could establish a magic system in which "dabblers" pay extra for spells (double the Real Point cost, +5 points per spell, or the like). This requires you to define "dabbler," but it's not too difficult to find a guideline that suits your game. Some possibilities: anyone who doesn't have a Wizard or Priest Template; anyone who spends less than 10 Character Points on spells; anyone who buys fewer than five spells; anyone with a Magic roll of less than 18-.



POWER ADVANCEMENT

He paused, aware that the Gygian cloak shielded him from every eye; then he hurled against the tent and its occupant the Ninth Morphean Charm of Yammoth. This was the most powerful sleep-compellant ever devised, and he knew that no necromancer could possibly have a defense against it, since only a true magician was learned in the charms of Yammoth.

—Tirion the Glad Magician uses magic to aid his attempt to rob the necromancer Amphoth Mumivor in “The Seal Of Zaon Sathla,” by Lin Carter

The final rules-related issue to consider with regard to how characters buy spells is how spells advance in power.

The default rule in Fantasy Hero is that a spell only becomes more powerful if the character who buys it spends more Character Points to make it more powerful. This tends to preserve game balance and allows for variation among characters of differing power levels.

However, some GMs find this approach dissatisfying for two reasons. First, it doesn't make sense to them that an experienced spellcaster (built on, say, 175 Character Points to start, and with 200 Experience Points) would have a spell that's no more effective than when he bought it as a 175-point beginning wizard... or that some other starting wizard could have a spell equal to his in power. Second, even if an experienced

wizard spends his Experience Points to improve the effectiveness of his spells, that often leaves him with few or no points to spend on other abilities, causing him to lag behind the other PCs in many situations.

If you feel this way, you can arrange your magic system to allow for automatic power advancement for spells. This tends to work best in systems that establish power ratings for spellcasters, as discussed on pages 247-51. As a spellcaster's “power level” increases, the power of all of his spells increases proportionately. Some examples:

- Every increase in power level by 1 automatically adds +5 Active Points to each of a character's spells.
- Every increase in power level by 1 automatically gives a character one 3-point Combat Skill Level with Magic (see page 116) which he can use to enhance the effectiveness of his spells.
- Every increase in power level by 1 entitles a character to buy one *Power Increase Perk* (at a cost set by the GM) that boosts all of his spells by 10 Active Points (or provides him with X points to spend on spells). He doesn't have to buy the Perk if he doesn't want to. He can buy the Perk at a lesser value if he only wants to increase the power of some of his spells (such as only his Fire Magics).
- When a spellcaster's power level increases by 1, he can spend 1 Character Point. That point is multiplied by his power level, giving him that many “spell points” to spend solely on increasing the power of his spells.

Mazirian paused indecisively. It was not good to use so many spells and thus shear himself of power.

—Mazirian becomes concerned about casting too many of his memorized spells in “Mazirian The Magician,” by Jack Vance

But Kellory — now no longer sky-tall and terrible — was no longer looking at her. His dark lean face was pale and drawn and it glistened wetly. He looked, suddenly, exhausted to the point of collapse. Indeed, he staggered and almost fell to his knees.

—the casting of great magic wearies Kellory in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

USING SPELLS

Several magic system rules issues pertain to the use of spells, rather than how characters purchase them.

SPELL ALLOTMENT

The *Number Of Spells* section, on page 259, discusses the possibility of restricting the number of spells a wizard can cast per Turn, per day, or over some other time increment. That may affect other spell use issues, so you should keep it in mind when reviewing the other options in this section.

ENDURANCE

When you develop your magic system, you should decide whether spells cost END. The default Fantasy Hero rule is that spells built with Powers that cost END also cost END, at the standard rate of 1 END per 10 Active Points in the spell. A spell built with a power that inherently costs no END, such as a Spell Of Water-Breathing (Life Support [Expanded Breathing]), does not cost END.

In some systems, you may want *all* spells to cost END. A spellcaster’s END can serve as a regulating mechanism to keep him from constantly casting spells, but for that to work there can’t be any spells that don’t cost END. In this sort of system, any spell that doesn’t cost END already must take the *Costs Endurance* Limitation. (Or you could impose that as a campaign ground rule, for no Limitation value.) Some GMs even go so far as to require all spells to cost *lots* of END, to control how often spellcasters can use their magic (and how powerful spells can realistically become). This involves applying the *Increased Endurance Cost* Limitation at some level to virtually every spell.

FAMILIARS

A *familiar* is an animal companion — often a cat, bird of prey, or other small creature — who aids a spellcaster with his magic. Arcane spellcasters often have them; divine spellcasters rarely do.

In *HERO System* terms, characters buy familiars as Followers (or, if they have no beneficial game effect, as DNPCs). Familiars usually have several powers that make them good companions for wizards. For example, a familiar often has a Mind Link with its master, so it can act as a spy. They may even share senses, so that the wizard can see exactly what the familiar sees.

Familiars often enhance or augment a wizard’s abilities, too. They might make him more magically powerful, more agile, stronger, more skilled, or more perceptive. They might grant him abilities (such as Nightsight) that they possess but he does not.

The *Familiar* Template on HSB 30 provides some suggested *HERO System* write-ups for abilities like these. However, that’s just one way of depicting familiars in game terms; you can certainly come up with your own abilities for familiars if you like.

The magic systems depicted in *The Lord Of The Rings* and Lin Carter’s *Kellory The Warlock* seem to work this way in at least some respects.

Of course, some spells may cost END only to cast. This option works particularly well for spells with the Advantage *Usable By Other* or which have Time Limit. If a Power normally doesn’t cost END, you can simulate this with the $-\frac{1}{4}$ value of *Costs Endurance*. If the Power already costs END to use, simulate it with *Costs Endurance* (to maintain; $-\frac{1}{2}$).

Another option, discussed on page 224 with respect to armor use, involves the Long-Term Endurance rules. Casting spells may automatically deplete the caster’s LTE at some rate (even as much as a one-for-one rate with normal END). Or you may rule that the END used for spells cannot be Recovered via the Post-Segment 12 Recovery, only through regular rest or spending a full Phase to take a Recovery during combat.

Alternately, some magic systems may not involve paying any END for spells. In such systems, found in some High Fantasy settings, wizards and priests can cast spells all day long, Phase after Phase, without tiring themselves out. Either all spells that would normally cost END must include the Advantage *Reduced Endurance* (0 END; $+\frac{1}{2}$), or the GM can grant that ability to spells as a campaign ground rule that costs no points.

PERSONAL SOURCES OF ENDURANCE

“A Balrog,” muttered Gandalf. “Now I understand.” He faltered and leaned heavily on his staff. “What an evil fortune! And I am already weary.”

—using magic tires Gandalf out in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

In most Fantasy Hero magic systems, spellcasters pay their own personal END for spells. This usually helps to restrict how many spells they can use at once, and the general power level of their spells; it also links the tiring effect of spell use with the tiring effect of other activities, so that a caster who’s cast a lot of spells is exhausted in other ways (he may not be able to run far or fast, for example). With the GM’s permission, spellcasters can buy extra END with the Limitation *Only For Spells* ($-\frac{1}{2}$), though this may give them so much END that they can unbalance the game with their spellcasting.

In other magic systems, spellcasters must draw on some external source of power, such as ambient “mana” (page 243) or power they have infused into a Wizard’s Staff. They can buy this as an Endurance Reserve (if you require them to buy it). The amount of END and/or REC the Reserve can have may depend on the local mana level, the character’s power rating, the number of *Spell Use* Perks the character buys, or some other factor — or you could establish no restrictions at all.

Similarly, the GM may require all spellcasters to buy an Endurance Reserve for their spells, on the grounds that magical energy comes from some outside or separate source, not the same END the character uses when running, lifting things, and otherwise exerting himself. By tailoring the END and REC properly, the GM can enhance the flavor of his magic system. For example, if all wizards have Endurance Reserves with lots of END but very little REC (or REC with Limitations like *Limited Recovery* or *Slow Recovery*), that means that a wizard can cast some *really* powerful spells if he has to... at the cost of reducing his spell-casting capability for hours or days. Is it worth the sacrifice to cast a devastatingly effective spell now, or should he reserve his power for later?

In systems that mandate Endurance Reserves, you should decide if characters can use their own END to power a spell after they deplete their Reserves. Some GMs don't allow this at all, or allow it only if the spell has the *Power Can Draw END From Character Or Endurance Reserve* (+¼) Advantage. Other GMs allow spellcasters to use their personal END for spells in emergencies as a campaign ground rule, for no cost. However, they may impose some restrictions on the ability. Instead of paying the regular END cost for the spell, a character using personal END may have to spend two or three times that amount, or can do it only if he Concentrates, takes Extra Time, or succeeds with a Magic roll at -1 per 2 END he wants to use.

EXTERNAL SOURCES OF ENDURANCE

"I'd heard it said that ages ago, at the height of his power, the ma — Jelerak — actually raised this mountain by his conjuring."

"So?"

"If he is sufficiently taxed in this place, I suppose that he might have to draw upon those ancient spells of his for more power. In which case —"

"The mountain might collapse as well as the castle!"

—Dilvish and Reena discuss Jelerak's sources of power in *Dilvish, The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

Another possibility in some systems is drawing on external sources of END to fuel a spell. For example, as indicated in the quote above, a mage might be able to draw on long-lasting spells he cast previously to provide END for his current spells; in this sort of system, the END used to cast a spell remains available as a "resource" that the caster can tap later, but at the price of instantly ending the existing spell (usually with disastrous, or at least undesirable, consequences).

A more common (and perhaps flavorful) method is to allow a spellcaster to use another character's END to fuel a spell. A spellcaster who has no END of his own to spend can use another person's END to power his magic, provided the spellcaster touches that person and the person donates the END voluntarily. ("Voluntarily" in this case means without the use of Mind Control, but would not prohibit the spellcaster coercing the person by, say, threatening the person's loved ones.) However, there's usually a price to be paid — either the END works less efficiently (costing the volunteer 2, 3, or more END for every 1 END the character can use for his spells), or drawing on it hurts the volunteer (causing STUN or even BODY damage, no defense applies). (In systems that don't allow this as a house rule, a spellcaster could achieve the same effect with a Drain END and linked Aid END to himself, or a spell Limited to *Volunteers Only* (-1)... or without such a Limitation, for Evil wizards.)

Lastly, some materials may contain END a character can use. For example, if the GM's running a campaign set in his version of pre-Cataclysm Atlantis, maybe each gram of the mystic metal *orichalcum* can provide 20 END for powering spells; once that's used up, the orichalcum crumbles to dust. Even seemingly ordinary materials, such as bat's wings and certain herbs, might provide END for spells, creating a reason for casters to carry "material components" with them even if spells aren't built with Expendable Focus as a Limitation.

ENDURANCE COSTS FOR CONSTANT SPELLS

The *HERO System* rules require a character who maintains a Constant spell (such as a Change Environment, Flight, or Damage Shield spell) to pay END for that spell every Phase. The *Reduced Endurance* Advantage may decrease this cost, but it doesn't change the requirement to pay END every Phase.

At the GM's option, spellcasters can apply the Advantage *Delayed Endurance Cost* to Constant spells. For a +¼ Advantage, the character pays the END cost for the spell once per Turn. He first pays the END in the Phase when he casts the spell, and in later Turns pays the END on Segment 1 (the GM may, if he wishes, have the character pay END again 12 Segments after he first cast the spell, rather than on Segment 1). The spell remains in effect for the entire Turn, unless the character (a) voluntarily deactivates it, or (b) is Stunned or Knocked Out (in which case the power stops functioning at the end of that Segment, per the normal rules). If the character wants to cast the spell again after it deactivates for any reason, he must pay the END cost for the Turn again.

For a +½ Advantage, the character only pays the END cost for the spell once per Minute (or any time interval longer than 1 Turn the GM agrees to). The cost doesn't increase beyond +½ because paying END even at long intervals is still more restrictive than paying no END (which costs +½).



ENDURANCE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR OTHER LIMITATIONS

At the GM's option, characters can overcome the restrictions (Limitations) on their spells with END. For every ¼ worth of Limitation the character wants to avoid the effects of, the power's END cost increases by one step down the Increased Endurance Cost table on 6E1 374 (when increasing from x7 END, the cost becomes x9 END). If the spell already has Increased Endurance Cost as a Limitation, count the steps down the chart from whatever level of END cost it describes. If the spell costs no END, either it cannot use this rule, or negating the first ¼ Limitation costs x1 END.

Example: *Arkelos has a spell with the Limitations Concentration (½ DCV; -¼) and Extra Time (Delayed Phase; -¼). He's in the midst of a furious battle and needs to get a spell off quickly without exposing himself to counterattack. The GM lets him substitute extra END for the Limitations. The spell normally costs 4 END. Since Arkelos wants to avoid a total of ½ Limitations, he moves the END cost two steps down the Increased Endurance Cost table, to x3 END. He can cast the spell as a Half Phase Action and without concentrating, but it will cost him 12 END!*

Alternately, you may establish some other END-based method for overcoming Limitations. Perhaps avoiding the first ¼ Limitation costs x3 END, with +1 to the multiplier for each ¼ thereafter, or maybe each ¼ Limitation doubles the spell's END cost. The rule should impose significant restrictions on the character; if doing this doesn't cost him enough END to seriously handicap him (for at least a short period), you shouldn't use it, or you should change it until it's sufficiently restrictive.

See also *Using The Magic Skill*, below.

COMBAT MODIFIERS AND MANEUVERS

In Fantasy Hero, as a default, characters cannot use the following Combat Modifiers with spells: Bouncing An Attack; Spreading. The other Combat Modifiers work with spells in appropriate conditions, or if spells have the appropriate Advantage.

In Fantasy Hero, as a default, characters cannot perform the following Combat Maneuvers with spells: Blazing Away, Grab By, Haymaker, Hipshot, Hurry, Move By, Move Through, Multiple Attack, Pulling A Punch, Snap Shot, and Suppression Fire. The GM can allow spellcasters to use the other Maneuvers in appropriate circumstances (e.g., a Disarm when casting an attack spell that strikes with physical force, a Grab with a Telekinesis spell, Set and Brace with a long-range combat spell). He can also grant exceptions to the list above. By the same token, the GM can add to the list above if he doesn't think characters should perform some other Maneuvers.

At the GM's option, a character can buy Martial Arts for use with HTH Combat attack spells, or a Ranged Martial Art (from *HERO System Martial Arts*) for use with Ranged attack spells.

As mentioned, in most Fantasy Hero campaigns, the restrictions listed above are a campaign ground rule, not something characters get a Limitation or Complication for. However, if the GM feels it would be appropriate, he can roll all the restrictions up into one Limitation, *Spell* (-½), and let characters apply that Limitation to attack spells.

USING THE MAGIC SKILL

Most Fantasy Hero magic systems require characters to make Skill rolls to cast spells (via the *Requires A Roll* Limitation; see page 167). The Skill used for this is normally called *Magic* for arcane spellcasters, and *Faith* for divine spellcasters, though you can use other names if you like (and see page 268 for other possible "Spell Skill" systems). Magic attains particular importance in spontaneous magic systems, where characters can make spells up "on the fly" and need this Skill to do so.

In addition to simply allowing characters to cast spells, Magic/Faith can, at the GM's option, have several other game effects.

MAGICAL DISPLAYS

The GM can allow spellcasters to make a Magic roll to perform trivial magical "stunts" to impress people or accomplish equally trivial tasks. Often referred to as "charms" or "cantrips," these abilities include generating and shaping puffs of colored smoke (tiny Images), moving objects small distances (1 STR Telekinesis, can only move an object 1m maximum), lighting candles with a wave of the hand, and so forth.

The GM decides what a character can and cannot accomplish with a "cantrip roll." In some cases, the GM may only allow characters to produce minor magical effects related to spells they've paid points for: a character needs at least one Fire spell to light candles or create colored smoke; he has to have a Telekinesis spell to use that Power in a cantrip. However, sometimes the GM might let a character accomplish a minor magical effect without any "prerequisite" spells (perhaps imposing a -1 or -2 penalty on the Skill Roll to compensate).

NEW SPELLS; ALTERING AND EXPANDING SPELLS

Spellcasters can, with the GM's permission, make Magic rolls to alter their spells slightly, or improve a spell's efficiency or power. Typically a character can only do something like this for a particular spell once or twice during the campaign; if he wants to improve the same spell in the same way repeatedly, he should pay Character Points for that ability in the normal manner for the campaign. To help the GM decide what he should and should not allow a character to do with the *Magic* Skill, see the suggestions and guidelines for the *Power* Skill on APG 39-40.



Example: Arkelos wants to create “rings of fire” around a goblin to keep the goblin from running away. Unfortunately, he doesn’t have a spell that creates this effect, though he does have a Firebolt spell that has 60 Active Points. He decides to try to achieve the effect with his Magic 20-. The rules on APG 39 suggest allowing characters to create new effects with no more than 30% of the Active Points in some similar ability. Unfortunately, 30% of the 60 Active Points in Firebolt is only 18 points, which won’t accomplish much. Arkelos asks the GM to allow him to go to 43%, or 26 points — enough for an RKA 1d6 with Constant and Area Of Effect (1m Radius). The GM agrees, but imposes a -4 penalty on his Skill in addition to the Active Point penalty. Arkelos rolls an 11, making it even with the penalty. Assuming Arkelos can succeed with an Attack Roll to hit the goblin, the greenskin will find himself trapped in rings of flame!

OVERCOMING LIMITATIONS

The text on page 276 discusses the possibility of avoiding a restriction (a Limitation) on a spell by paying extra END to cast it. In systems that require Skill Rolls to cast spells, the GM can instead let spellcasters make their Magic rolls at a penalty to do the same thing. For example, the GM might rule that if a character wants to avoid a Limitation, he can do so by succeeding at his Magic roll with a penalty of -2 for every ¼ worth of value in Limitations he character wants to overcome. (The character has to declare that he wants to do this in advance, of course.) If the character’s roll succeeds, he casts the spell as if it did not have those Limitations; if the roll fails, he does not activate the spell (and suffers any Side Effects, if applicable). The GM may rule that doing this

automatically makes a spell take a Full Phase to cast (or take one step longer down the Extra Time table than it normally does).

If you use this system, you may want to make one exception: Extra Time. The rules on 6E1 59 establish a penalty of -3 for every step up the Time Chart a character wants to perform a task more quickly, so you could use that for the Magic roll to avoid Extra Time instead of -2 per ¼ Limitation.

BALANCING SPELLS

The final rules-oriented issue to consider about magic is how to balance it within the context of the campaign. Because magic varies so much from campaign to campaign, the Fantasy Hero rules can’t establish any hard-and-fast guidelines, but here are a few things you should think about.

ATTACK SPELLS

Attack spells — fireballs, lightning bolts, beams of pure arcane power, curses, spells of weakness, and many, many more — often provide a spellcaster with immense offensive capability. This raises issues not only of game balance but of relative power for GMs and players to consider.

When designing attack spells, GMs and players need to consider how those spells stack up against ordinary weapons. There are plenty of weapons in the tables on pages 190-95 that do 1½-2d6 of Killing Damage. All that a warrior needs to wield them is a Weapon Familiarity and enough STR, leaving him plenty of points to buy Combat Skill Levels, Martial Arts, Weaponmaster, and other game elements that improve his ability to hit and/or to do damage. Thus, it’s not unusual for warriors, rogues, and other weapon-based character types to do 3-4d6 Killing Damage on a regular basis.

Before Rhys Michael could object, the spell was welling up in Dimitri’s mind, spilling over into Rhys Michael’s consciousness but forbidding interference. He flinched from the power now uncoiling from reserves deep inside Dimitri, surging down a muscled arm as Dimitri lifted a cupped right hand above Albertus’ chest. He could sense the energy filling Dimitri’s palm, spreading out to his fingertips; and as that puissant hand turned toward Albertus, the could almost see a ghost-hand of fire plunge downward from the physical one to penetrate the earl marshal’s chest, fiery fingers curving around the pulsing heart and squeezing.

—Dimitri uses magic to kill one of the king’s enemies and make it look like a heart attack in *The Bastard Prince*, by Katherine Kurtz

A spellcaster can cast similarly powerful spells, but in many magic systems he has to pay for each attack spell individually (which gets expensive), succeed with a Skill Roll to cast the spell before he can make his Attack Roll, and subject himself to other restrictions like Concentration and Extra Time. None of these things apply to weapon users, which may make it difficult for the spellcaster to compete with them when it comes to doing raw Killing Damage. On the other hand, if he *can* compete, the non-spellcasters may seem weak and ineffectual.

What often sets a spellcaster apart is his ability to cast attack spells that have *different* effects than weapons — Drains, Entangles, Flashes, Mental Powers, Transforms, Area-affecting attacks, AVADs, and so on — or that have Advantages most weapons lack (like Armor Piercing, Penetrating, and Increased STUN Multiplier). While it's possible for attack spells to have as many (or more) DCs than even the most powerful weapon wielded by the strongest warrior, that may not be the best approach. A wizard who wants to have a significant effect on combat is often better served by looking at *unusual* ways to affect or hinder his opponents rather than raw damage.

To balance attack spells, the GM should ensure that correspondingly greater power comes with correspondingly more restrictions. The easiest way to do this is to compare direct-damage spells to weapons. It may not cause any problems in the game if a wizard has a more or less un-Limited spell that does no more damage than a Heavy Longbow (something just about any character can use), though in the long run this may be unfair to weapon-using characters who can't cast spells. But if a wizard has spells that make a Heavy Longbow look weak, those spells should have restrictions weapons usually do not: they should take Extra Time, Concentration, a Focus, and/or a Required Skill Roll to cast, for example. Otherwise, the spellcaster ends up not only doing his own job, but displacing the warriors and rogues from their jobs — and only the spellcaster's player is likely to enjoy that.

PROTECTIVE SPELLS

Defensive magics may cause even more game problems than attack spells. In most Fantasy Hero campaigns, characters have an average of about 4-6 points of Resistant Defense from armor, which they can obtain with money in the game; a few have as much as 8-10 points of Resistant PD/ED. And they may suffer Encumbrance or other penalties because of armor's weight. In such campaigns, the average attack does about 4-7 DCs of damage, with the strongest, heaviest fighters rising to the 9-10 DC range on at least some occasions (perhaps frequently).

By contrast, most spellcasters can easily afford defensive spells that provide 8-15 points of Resistant Defense — PD/ED that doesn't weigh anything or come with any restrictions. In a game where most characters do about 4-7 DCs damage, 10 Resistant Protection (PD/ 10 ED) offers significant protection from most attacks, and 15 PD/15 ED or more may approach virtual invulnerability (at least as to BODY damage). A spellcaster has to buy his protection with Character Points, is subject to various Limitations when casting the spell, and may have to pay END to keep it active. But even with that, the cost of protective spells often remains low, and the Limitations may not have any significant effect beyond the actual casting.

The GM can take several approaches when dealing with this issue. First, he can impose special restrictions on the amount of PD/ED spells can provide, or the number of Active Points spellcasters can have in defensive magics. Compare and contrast armor PD/ED to spell PD/ED, taking into account Limitations and other differences between the two, and set spell PD/ED at an appropriate level — one that helps the spellcaster but doesn't make him into a walking Abrams tank.

Second, the GM can require significant Limitations on defensive magics, such as Concentration, Gestures, and Incantations, that apply throughout the duration of the spell. Since most defensive spells are Constant or Persistent, this really inhibits a character's ability to "armor up" and then do lots of other things.

Third, the GM can restrict magic's ability to protect against mundane attacks as a campaign ground rule (or perhaps a mandatory Limitation for defense spells). For example, perhaps any Defense Power provided by a spell has only half effect against normal weapons, fists, and the like, but has full effect against magic (including enchanted weapons and warriors enhanced by spells).

SPELLS AND ARMOR

The potential problems posed by protective spells can become worse if spellcasters can also wear heavy armor. A free 3-6 points of Resistant PD/ED from armor combined with a defensive spell can lead to the same level of near-invulnerability described above. This is one reason why magic systems often have large amounts of metal interfere with magic (see page 261), but the GM doesn't necessarily have to take that route if he doesn't want to. He can appeal to players' maturity and better natures to prevent them from heavily armoring their spellcasters, or if that doesn't work establish a "defense ceiling" that can't be exceeded regardless of where the points of PD/ED (or other defensive abilities) come from. He could even vary the defense ceiling by character type so that warriors can have more defense than rogues, who in turn can have more defense than wizards.

In the forest [Elric] had found a particular leaf which, when used with certain invocations (which were harmless in that the invoker was in little danger of being harmed by the spirits he marshalled) would invest that person, and anyone else to whom he gave the drug distilled from the leaf, with temporary invulnerability. The spell somehow reknitted the skin and flesh structure so that it could withstand any edge and almost any blow.

—Elric contemplates a spell of protection in *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, by Michael Moorcock

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SPELL CREATION AND USE



Once you have your magic system in place, it's time to begin creating spells for it (or allowing players to create their characters' spells), and then letting characters cast spells during game play. Much of the advice in this section relates primarily to the casting/use of spells during the game, but since a spell's elements — Powers, Advantages, Limitations, and the like — often govern how a character can use it, this information may also apply to spell creation.

In dramatic terms, what matters for a spell isn't so much what Powers you use to build it, or how many Active Points it has, but the way a spellcaster uses it in the game: how he casts it; how long it takes to cast; how long its effects linger; and so on. Therefore, this section of Chapter Four guides you through the spell creation process by examining those subjects and showing how to represent the various options in *HERO System* terms. These are in addition to Active Point ceilings, use of Power Frameworks, and the other general, system-related, guidelines for spell creation discussed in the first section of this chapter, which players should discuss with their GMs before they try to create spells.

MAKING SPELLS DISTINCTIVE

Magic is supposed to be amazing, wondrous, fantastic — and, well, magical! You want to try to get that feeling of “this is magic” across with the spells you create. Part of that depends the campaign's magic system and how the GM expects you to simulate it during the spell creation process (by applying required Limitations, for example). But a large part of it is up to the spell designer.

First, he should try to distinguish spells from ordinary weapons, Martial Maneuvers, and other abilities Fantasy Hero characters have. A spell that just does RKA 1d6+1 damage is no different from many missile weapons characters can learn to use for far fewer Character Points than the cost of the spell, and without the risks of failed Skill Rolls and the like. To make it a valid tactical option, and an enjoyable part of the overall framework the group uses to weave its Fantasy adventure stories, a spell should differ from mundane abilities. Either it should be more powerful (if the GM permits this; see *Attack Spells*, above), or it should have other benefits weapons lack (such as a generous helping of Advantages).

“The practice of sorcery,” he went on, “employs spoken spells, mantra and cantrips. A master sorcerer, such as the distinguished Paroul, bends his efforts to composing new, more complex and powerful cantrips.”

—Doctor Pellsipher explains the discipline of sorcery to “The Twelve Wizards of Ong,” by Lin Carter

Second, he should inject as much flavor into its creation and use as possible. In addition to giving it an appropriate name (see page 262), there are lots of ways to make a spell flavorful. For one, when you design a spell, create a history for it. Unless the history is “my character just invented this spell,” a spell should have a background of some sort. Who created it? When, how, and under what circumstances was it created? Has it ever been used in a famous (or infamous!) incident? Do any variant versions exist? Does anyone else claim credit for creating the spell? You might also want to consider the character's personal history with the spell. Did he learn it from his master, buy it from a spell merchant, steal it from a rival, find it in a crumbling grimoire he recovered from a ruined tower in an adventure that took place prior to the beginning of the campaign?

Another great way to “flavor” a spell is to describe it in detail, particularly when your character casts it during the game. “I cast my Fire Bolt spell at the orcs” has a lot less of a Fantasy sound than, “I raise my hands, incant the arcane words of Kalimard's Deadly Sparks, and hurl deadly fragments of flame at the orcs!”

“So now, be off! Or I inflict upon you the Spell of the Macroid Toe, whereupon the signalized member swells to the proportions of a house.”

—Cugel threatens Fianosther with a particularly disgusting spell in *The Eyes Of The Overworld*, by Jack Vance

THE SPELL EFFECT

A spell's "effect" is what it does in the game — it kills or injures people, it transports the mage 100 leagues, it confers the blessings of Rogar the rat-god on the assembled multitude, it defends the caster from attacks. The effect depends on the Powers and other game elements used to build the spell. If you want to hurt people, use an Attack Power; a Spell Of Protection almost certainly involves a Defense Power; and so forth. The spell's effect should remain uppermost in your mind as you create it.

Of course, not all Powers and other *HERO System* elements may be available for spell creation. The GM may choose to disallow some Powers as being inappropriate for spells. For example, in a magic system designed to simulate Viking wizardry, the rules wouldn't allow truly fantastic effects like Flight and Teleportation.

Due to the flexibility, adaptability, and customizability of the *HERO System*, it's impossible to summarize all the possibilities it has for creating spell effects. The Power descriptions in Chapter Two offer a few words of advice, and you can also look at the examples in the *Example Magic Systems* section of this chapter for ideas.

CURSES

Curses — spells that inflict various long-lasting torments, afflictions, or difficulties on a character — occur commonly in Fantasy fiction. There are several ways you can create them in *HERO System* terms.

First, you can simulate a lengthy, but not necessarily permanent, curse with a Drain that has a long Delayed Recovery Rate.

Second, you can use Transform. This works well for curses whose effects can be instantly alleviated or dispelled by some act (such as the classic "only ends when the character is kissed by royalty").

Third, you can use Time Limit (see page 161) to create a spell effect with a long duration. Like Transform, this is a good way to create a curse that's easily lifted if the victim performs the right action (defined as the ending condition for the spell).

Unlike most attack spells, curses are often used out of combat, against an unsuspecting target far away. To make this possible in *HERO System* terms, the simplest method is to buy Area Of Effect (1m Radius Accurate; +½) and MegaScale for the spell, where the MegaScale is large enough for the Area to encompass the entire world. That allows the curse to afflict the target wherever he is.

VARIABLE EFFECT SPELLS

In magic systems that use a power rating system for spellcasters or spells, the effect caused by a spell — the damage it inflicts or amount of PD/ED it provides, for example — may depend on the spell's or caster's power. For example, a Lightning Bolt spell might do 1 DC of Killing Damage per the character's "power level" — that way, a mage of power level 12 creates a deadlier lightning bolt than one who's only power level 7. To create an effect like this, buy the spell with the greatest effect (the largest number of dice or Active Points) you expect it to have (based on the highest power level a spellcaster can attain in the campaign, or some other power level chosen by the GM), then apply a -0 Limitation, *Damage/Effect Varies Based On Caster's Power Level*. The effect of a spell with this Limitation depends on the character's power level, even if that means it exceeds the amount of effect purchased. If appropriate, the GM may allow characters to buy heavily-Limited forms of these spells to reduce the initial cost, then gradually buy off any non-mandatory Limitations they don't want as they increase in power.

If a character has a variable effect spell, he only pays the END for the portion of the effect he actually uses, not the END for the full power of the spell, and the penalty to any Required Skill Roll (or the like) depends only on the portion used.

ABSOLUTE EFFECTS

The Absolute Effect Rule (6E1 133) is highly appropriate for many magic systems and spells. Magic often *requires* absolute effects. (Or seems to; on inspection, many such "absolutes" prove to be not quite so absolute after all.) In Fantasy stories, curses don't miss their targets; they always affect whoever they're supposed to — and they affect him in full, not for "half damage" or the like. A spell that protects the recipient against dragon's breath provides 100% protection against that phenomenon. A Disintegration Spell does what it says — disintegrates the target — it doesn't stun him or leave him half-dead. You can simulate these sorts of abilities and spells with the Absolute Effect Rule.

CASTING METHOD

The first aspect of spell use you should consider when designing a spell is the method of casting it. Does the spellcaster have to concentrate and call upon learned knowledge? Does he have to wave his hands and mumble arcane words? Or can he simply think of what he wants to do and make magic respond to his will?

REQUIRED SKILL ROLLS

“What you were attempting was not magic, but a ritual nonetheless,” he continued. “And it is by ritual that all magical objects are made. ... These rituals must be performed with the utmost precision. Utmost precision or else they will fail. One hasty step or sloppy motion and all the labor that went before is instantly undone.”

—Lectonil tells Alodar of the skill needed to become a magician in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Most Fantasy Hero magic systems require spellcasters to make a Skill Roll to cast spells, typically using the *Magic* and *Faith* forms of the *Power Skill* (or some magic system-specific variant of *Magic*). Spells that require a Skill Roll to cast take the *Limitation Requires A Roll* in some form, based on the specifics of the spell and the nature of the magic system.

The presence (or absence) and commonality of Required Skill Rolls for spells has several implications. A magic system that mandates a Required Skill Roll for spells typically views spellcasting as a learned thing — something characters can study, practice at, and improve their abilities with. In short, it looks on spellcasting as something of a Skill itself. This implies the possibility that spellcasting can fail, and perhaps that both success and failure can come in degrees (see below). That in turn means characters can't always rely on magic; they have to take into account the possibility of a failed Skill roll.

On the other hand, a magic system that disallows Required Skill Rolls for spells, or at least discourages them, treats magic more like a superpower or ability than a thing characters can learn and improve. Spells work every time, allowing characters to depend on them without hesitation (though that doesn't mean they can count on making associated Attack Rolls every time!). This makes more sense for “innate magic” systems that state only certain naturally-talented people can cast spells, or High Fantasy magic systems in which study confers absolute mastery of the casting process because magic is so easy to wield.

See also *Using The Magic Skill*, page 276, for other ideas about the *Magic Skill*.

BASIS OF THE ROLL

In most campaigns, the Skill used to cast spells depends either on INT (for arcane, studied magics) or EGO (for divine, granted magics). The former implies a reliance on intellect, memorization, command of/understanding of lore, and/or logic as the basis for spellcasting; the latter emphasizes personal willpower and related qualities.

But INT and EGO aren't the only options. Some magic systems may prefer to characterize spellcasting in other ways. For example:

DEX: A system with DEX-based Magic rolls focuses on the manual deftness needed for spellcasting. The arcane gestures involved are so precise and complex that the least slip causes the spell to fail. Such a system would either require the *Gestures Limitation* for all spells, or rule that the *Requires A Roll Limitation* inherently means gesturing is involved, and so forbid Gestures as “double-dipping.”

CON: A system with CON-based Magic rolls features spellcasting that can easily weary a character. The system usually requires all spells to cost END, or even to have the *Increased Endurance Cost Limitation*. A failed roll indicates the character simply couldn't muster the energy to cast the spell.

As an unusual alternative, you could base the roll not on CON, but on END. Since END has one-fifth the cost of CON, spellcasters typically start the game with higher Magic rolls than they would with a CON-based roll. However, as they use END during the game, their Skill Roll will fluctuate — the more tired they become, the harder it is to cast spells!

PRE: A PRE-based Magic system usually represents a sort of variation on EGO-based Magic rolls: the character's eldritch powers depend on his personal impressiveness and force of personality. This might work well for a magic system in which all spells are variations on conjuration: the mage doesn't actually create magical effects, he summons spirits or demons and orders them to do what he wants (the magic system in some of Jack Vance's Fantasy novels does this in some respects). In that sort of system, a successful roll indicates the character has “Presence Attacked” the “summoned” being into doing what he wants.

One of the downsides to choosing any of these alternatives is they encourage a spellcaster to spend more points on certain Characteristics than he otherwise would. Spellcasters typically have high INTs and EGOs; they're supposed to be wise, learned, and even willful. But they're not necessarily agile, brawny, or personally impressive. For example, with a CON-based Magic system, you could easily end up with spellcasters who rival warriors and dwarves in their CON scores! To prevent this, the GM can allow spellcasters to buy extra points of the appropriate Characteristic with the *Limitation Only To Improve Magic Roll* (typically a -1, but maybe -½ in some systems).





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MODIFIERS TO THE ROLL

As noted on 6E1 389, Required Skill Rolls (but not Activation Rolls) are subject to Skill Roll modifiers (and possibly even to Skill Versus Skill Contests). The GM may want to include some modifiers in his magic system for flavor or game balance.

BONUSES

The bonus most often applied to Magic rolls is taking extra time. Spells have a minimum casting time as defined by the Powers used to build them or the Limitations they take (see below). A spellcaster who takes even more time to “get it right” gains bonuses to his roll.

In magic systems that require or allow characters to use Foci (particularly Expendable Foci — “material components”) for spells, the GM might grant a “good equipment” bonus of +1 (or perhaps more) in the right circumstances. For example, if the Expendable Focus for a spell is a small silver medallion in the shape of a harp, using a medallion made with exquisite skill by a master silversmith might earn the caster a +1 bonus (though it would also cost him much more to buy). A medallion made of elven-silver might also deserve a +1 bonus (and cost more).

If the GM wants to have ambient magical energy (“mana,” pages 243-44) as part of his magic system, but doesn’t want it to provide END for spells (or the like), he could still use it to reflect the “conditions” for casting a spell. High-mana areas qualify as “excellent” or “good” conditions (meriting a bonus to the roll); mana-poor areas impose a penalty.

PENALTIES

Most Required Skill Rolls suffer at least one penalty, based on the Active Points in the spell being cast. The default is -1 per 10 Active Points, but by increasing or decreasing that penalty, the character can increase or decrease the value of the Limitation (see 6E1 391). (At the GM’s option, characters can change the -1 per 20 Active Points option to any other point total, such as -1 per 30 points, or 50 points.) For powerful (high Active Point) spells, reducing the Skill Roll penalty may be a practical necessity!

Some GMs choose to impose other penalties. One popular one is a -1 “combat casting” penalty — if a character tries to cast a spell in combat (or similar crisis conditions), he suffers a -1 penalty.

If characters with high-quality Expendable Foci can earn a bonus (as described above), ones with poor-quality or incomplete Foci may suffer a -1 (or greater) penalty. Alternately, the GM could allow a character to substitute a similar Focus for one he lacks at a -2 or greater penalty. (“OK, that spell requires a piece of amber wrapped in black velvet. If you’ve only got the amber, you can still try to cast it, but at a -2 to your Magic roll. If you’ve got black silk instead of velvet, you can try to cast at -1.”)

See also the optional rule on page 277 about taking a Skill Roll penalty to overcome or avoid a spell’s Limitations.

SKILL VERSUS SKILL CONTESTS

The GM can also let spellcasters use their Magic rolls in magic-related Skill Versus Skill Contests. A contest of Magic rolls could provide a quick and easy way to resolve a magical duel. Or a character who knows a spell can initiate a Magic Versus Magic Roll to “countermagic” (and thus “Dispel”) the same (or similar) spell being cast by another spellcaster (this should cost the character casting the countermagic the same END as the spell he’s trying to “block”).

RESULTS OF SUCCESS

If a Required Magic Roll succeeds, the character casts the spell without any difficulty. For attack spells, Aids, and the like, he must still succeed with any Attack Roll or other rolls required; the Magic roll simply indicates the character performed the casting process successfully.

In some magic systems, the better the character’s Magic roll result, the better the effect of his spell. For every X points by which the character makes the roll, he gains some benefit: +1 OCV; +1 DC (or point of damage); +10% Active Points’ worth of effect; a small bonus to his next Magic roll; or the like. The GM defines “X” and the exact effects of high degrees of success.

RESULTS OF FAILURE

If a character fails his Magic roll, typically this just means the spell fails to work. The character has wasted the casting time (usually a Half Phase or Full Phase), but that’s all that occurs. Better luck next time.

But two other possibilities exist. One is that a GM who institutes a “degree of success” rule for his magic system (described above) also has a “degree of failure” rule: the more the character fails a roll by, the worse the consequences to him. For every X points by which the character fails the roll, he might suffer penalties on his next Magic roll, penalties to Presence Attacks made within the next Turn, or the like. The GM defines “X” and the exact effects of high degrees of failure.

SIDE EFFECTS

A more common consequence of failure is *Side Effects*. Spells with Required Magic Rolls often take Side Effects as a Limitation as well; in fact, the magic system rules for the campaign may require them to do so.

Gamemasters should consider carefully before requiring spells to have Side Effects, or placing Side Effects on spells pre-designed for the campaign. Players often loathe Side Effects; they simply don’t feel “heroic” or “magical.” After all, it’s not very dramatic to go up against a major enemy and knock one’s self out of the fight with a lousy Magic roll! It may be heroic to face adversaries with a flawed weapon, but that’s a little more “heroism” than most players want for their Fantasy Hero games. Similarly, it doesn’t do the GM much good if the campaign’s major bad guy weakens himself through a Side Effect.

You can diminish some of the negative feelings about Side Effects by carefully choosing the nature of the Effect. A typical Side Effect inflicts dice of damage on the character, but that’s neither fun for the character nor “flavorful” for the game in all instances. Some other possibilities include:

- The character loses END, making it difficult to cast further spells (in a system that requires END for all spells, anyway).
- The REC on the character’s Endurance Reserve decreases for an hour, or a day.
- The character suffers a Magic roll penalty for a defined number of Phases or Turns.
- The character’s END and Magic roll remain unaffected, but every 3 END spent on spells, or every Magic roll attempted, inflicts 1d6 STUN damage on the character (and he cannot Recover the lost STUN for a long time — a Minute, or more).
- The character has to Concentrate (½ DCV) on all spells cast for the next Hour (or day). If a spell already has Concentration, the severity of the Limitation increases.
- The character has to take a Full Phase to cast all spells for the next Hour (or day). If a spell already has Extra Time, increase the Limitation by ¼ or one step down the Extra Time chart (GM’s choice).
- The being the caster tried to Summon appears, but attacks the caster (even if Amicable).
- The caster suffers penalty to PER Rolls or some other Characteristic and/or Skill Roll (this is most appropriate for spells related to such things, for example a Perceive Hidden Doors spell).
- The Side Effect affects the environment, not the caster.

In short, sometimes it’s best to make the Side Effect a *hindrance*, not something that removes the character from game play. Overcoming hindrances is both heroic and dramatic. Most such hindrances constitute Minor or Major Side Effects, worth -¼ or -½.

Even if the GM doesn’t have a “degree of failure” system as a campaign ground rule, he may apply a similar rule to any Side Effects: the worse the failure, the stronger the Side Effect. If so, he may consider granting an additional ¼ Limitation value, since the character can’t predict the exact outcome and could end up *significantly* hindering himself.



PROCEDURES

Procedures are special preparations or actions characters have to take to cast spells. Not all magic systems require them; many “innate power” systems don’t make mages bother with things like hand-gestures or the like. But most magic systems, even in High Fantasy world, have one or more procedure requirements — or at least make procedures an option spell designers can choose (and often do). Procedures typically come in three types: necessary object(s) (Focus); hand motions (Gestures); and spoken invocations (Incantations).

FOCUS

Many, if not most, magic systems require spellcasters to use some type of object to work magic. Required Foci come in two types.

SINGLE FOCUS

The first is the single Focus through which all the character’s spells work. Examples include a Wizard’s Staff or a priest’s holy medallion, but others are possible. For example, perhaps a female wizard places all of her magic into a finger-ring, so that she can hide it in plain sight among the jewelry she wears.

Such Foci may be Accessible or Inaccessible. They’re usually Obvious, but may not be — if the spellcaster doesn’t obviously use them when casting, and they don’t glow or otherwise indicate the power within them, they could be inobvious. For Player Characters, they’re almost always Mobile, but an enemy spellcaster who doesn’t have to leave his established place of power might have a Bulky or Immobile Focus for his powers (such as a pentagram inlaid into the floor of a summoning-chamber). They’re often Unbreakable (the magic within them protects them), but some can be broken, at least in specified circumstances; they’re usually Personal as well.

MULTIPLE FOCI

The other type of magic Focus system involves multiple Foci — typically, though not always, one Focus for each spell the character can cast. While this could mean one reusable Focus per spell, usually one-Focus-per-spell systems involve Expendable Foci. With Expendable Foci, a spellcaster has to “stock up on supplies” when he can, and if he runs out in mid-adventure, he may be in serious trouble. See *Expendability*, page 163, for more information on how to buy Expendable Focus as a Limitation, and page 282 for rules about substituting one Expendable Focus for another.

Expendable Foci are almost by definition Universal, thus allowing one mage to obtain a supply of “material components” from another through trade, purchase, or theft.

EFFECTS OF FOCUS

However defined, Focus as a procedure has one simple effect: take away a spellcaster’s Focus, and he cannot cast spells (or the specific spell to which a Focus applies). In a single-Focus system, the loss of the spellcaster’s staff, holy symbol, or the like has dire consequences; without it, he’s stripped of magical power altogether. A multiple-Focus system makes it harder to deprive a spellcaster of *all* of his magic (particularly if some of the Expendable Foci are easily obtained), but does keep the wizard dependent on a constant supply of “material components.” Both systems contribute to the flavor of a magic system: in the first, the symbolism of the Wizard’s Staff (or the like) assumes great importance; while in the second, matching up the right component with the right spell can be a lot of fun (“What do you mean, I have to handle *bat guano* to cast that spell?!”).

GESTURES

Three of Elezar’s long fingers undulated in a complex gesture. Suddenly Alodar felt an itching rash break out on his back and spread over his limbs.

—the demon prince Elezar uses Gestures to cast a spell on Alodar in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

Another common procedure in many magic systems is the need to make arcane (or holy) hand motions. In the *HERO System*, the Limitation *Gestures* represents this method of spellcasting. Here are some ways you can tailor Gestures to suit your magic system.

VISIBILITY

The standard rules for Gestures require the gestures to be obvious (clearly visible from a distance) and not mistakable for any other type of arm/hand motion. At the GM’s option, characters may reduce the Limitation’s value to -0 (total, even if a spell requires two-handed Gestures throughout) to represent the fact that the spell requires hand motions, but those hand motions are slight, subtle, or can be disguised as something else. See *Sleight Of Hand*, page 125.

Alternately, if the GM’s willing to increase the value of Gestures as a Limitation, he can increase the granularity of the effect. For a -¼ Limitation, a character has to make Gestures that are so minor they’re easy to hide (though if seen they’re unmistakably magical gesturing). For a -½ Limitation, the Gestures are broad or unusual enough that a character can only hide them if he succeeds with a Sleight Of Hand roll at -1 per 10 Active Points in the spell, or a DEX Roll at double that penalty (though even then he cannot disguise them as some other sort of gesture or hand-motion, such as punching, swinging a sword, or sweeping the floor). For a -¾ Limitation, the Gestures are so broad and unusual that they cannot be hidden at all.

[S]he found a stall where magical herbs were for sale, and bartered briefly for them; briefly, because the law of magic states that whatever is wanted for the making of magic must be bought without haggling, gold being no more than dross in the service of magical arts. Yet, Lythande mused darkly, that knowledge had evidently become common among herb-sellers and spell-candlers of the Gandrin market, and as a result their prices had gone from the merely outrageous to the unthinkable.

—Lythande of the Blue Star restocks her supply of spell components in “Somebody Else’s Magic,” by Marion Zimmer Bradley

COMPLEXITY

At the GM's option, for an additional $-\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation, characters can define their Gestures as *complex*. This means they're particularly difficult to get right. If the spell involves a Required Skill Roll (or the like), that roll suffers a penalty of -3 because of the complex Gestures. If it has no Required Skill Roll, the character must succeed with a DEX Roll at -3 to cast the spell properly.

Even if the GM does not use the complex Gestures rule, he can impose penalties on Required Skill Rolls (or require DEX Rolls) if something might interfere with a character's ability to Gesture. Examples include being in a cramped or cluttered area (-2 penalty), or perhaps wearing armor (penalty equals the armor's DCV penalty or -2 , whichever is worse — a good way to discourage wizards from armor use).

MULTIPLE GESTURES

As noted on 6E1 381, a character who has to Gesture to maintain a Constant spell cannot cast other spells requiring Gestures during that time. However, multiple spells that only require Gestures to activate (such as most attack spells) can both be cast in the same Phase.

At the GM's option, if casting a "Gestures only to activate" spell prevents the character from casting any other spell with Gestures that Phase, Gestures is worth an additional $-\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation. Since casting an attack spell qualifies as an Attack Action and ends the character's Phase anyway, normally characters can't take this extra Limitation for such spells — they can only take it for non-attack spells they'd be likely to cast right before making an attack. (On the other hand, if the GM allows characters to make Multiple Attacks with spells, the extra Limitation would be valid for attack spells.)

REQUIRED HANDS

The rules note that "Gestures require a minimum of one hand to perform. If a character must use both hands to perform Gestures, the Limitation is worth an additional $-\frac{1}{4}$." In the case of Fantasy races with more than two usable hands/arms, "two-handed" Gestures require all of the manipulatory limbs.

INCANTATIONS

The third type of procedure commonly used for Fantasy Hero spellcasting is the need to utter arcane (or holy) words, mystically chant, speak a Word Of Power, or the like. In the *HERO System*, the Limitation *Incantations* represents this method of spellcasting. Here are some ways you can tailor Incantations to suit your magic system.

And once [the secret door was] found, it was no great matter to gain entry. The utterance of a Word sufficed, albeit a Word that human throat and mouth were never shaped to speak.

—Kellory casts an opening-spell in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

AUDIBILITY

Per the rules, Incantations must be obvious (clearly audible from a distance) and not mistakable for anything other type of speech. At the GM's option, characters may reduce the Limitation's value to -0 (total, even if a spell requires Incantations throughout) to represent the fact that the spell requires spoken words, but the character can whisper those words or disguise them as some other form of speech.

Alternately, if the GM's willing to increase the value of Incantations as a Limitation, he can increase the granularity of the effect. For a $-\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation, a character has to Incant, but he can whisper the Incantations so that they're easily "hidden" (though if heard they're unmistakably magical words). For a $-\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation, the Incantations are loud, distinctive, or complex enough that a character can only hide them if he succeeds with a Stealth roll at -1 per 10 Active Points in the spell, or a DEX Roll at double that penalty (though even then he cannot disguise them as some other sort of speech). For a $-\frac{3}{4}$ Limitation, the Incantations are so distinctive and/or loud that they cannot be hidden at all.

COMPLEXITY

At the GM's option, for an additional $-\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation, characters can define their Incantations as *complex*. This means they're particularly difficult to get right. If the spell involves a Required Skill Roll (or the like), that roll suffers a penalty of -3 because of the complex Incantations; if it has no Required Skill Roll, the character must make an INT Roll at -3 to cast the spell properly.

MULTIPLE INCANTATIONS

Normally a character can only cast one spell at a time when using Incantations. The GM may allow him to "combine" the Incantations for two spells and cast them both at once, but this entails a -2 penalty per spell (thus, a minimum of -4) to the Required Skill Rolls for both spells (or one INT Roll at that penalty for each spell cast).

As noted on 6E1 381-82, a character who has to Incant to maintain a Constant spell cannot cast other spells requiring Gestures during that time. However, multiple spells that only require Incantations to activate (such as most attack spells) can both be cast in the same Phase.

At the GM's option, if casting an "Incantations only to activate" spell prevents the character from casting any other spell with Incantations that Phase, Incantations is worth an additional $-\frac{1}{4}$ Limitation. Since casting an attack spell qualifies as an Attack Action and ends the character's Phase anyway, normally characters can't take this extra Limitation for such spells — they can only take it for non-attack spells they'd be likely to cast right before making an attack. (On the other hand, if the GM allows characters to make Multiple Attacks with spells, the extra Limitation would be valid for attack spells.)

He spoke with skill; the words came quickly but with the sharpness necessary for success. His tone was even and the rhythm smooth. The two words of power sounded with a lack of distinction. They fitted unnoticed into the stream of improvised nonsense which surrounded them. In a moment he was done.

—Alodar incants a Thaumaturgy spell in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy



OTHER CASTING METHODS

Besides Requires A Roll (and Side Effects), Focus, Gestures, and Incantations, several other *HERO System* Limitations represent various casting methods (or restrictions on methods).

CONCENTRATION

In Low Magic, Swords And Sorcery, and other types of campaigns that tend to restrict magic, Concentration is a common Limitation for spells — particularly spells characters can cast in combat. It presents a dramatic and heroic dilemma for the spellcaster: does he dare to cast the spell and strike at his foes (or aid his friends), knowing that doing so exposes him to danger?

As noted in the rules, the penalty(ies) for Concentration apply until the character's next Phase. This doesn't delay the activation of the spell — the character still casts it on his Phase. It just means he remains focused on the results of his spell (or needs to "maintain" it) until he can next act.

A character can Hold his Action until the Segment right before his next Phase and cast a spell then to minimize the effects of Concentration. However, since this could largely negate the Limitation, the GM may penalize this sort of conduct (by maintaining the DCV penalty for the character's next *two* Phases, for example) if a character uses this tactic too often.

At the GM's option, if something breaks the character's Concentration, he may still be able to "hold onto" and cast his spell. To do this he must succeed with a Magic roll at an appropriate penalty based on the strength and severity of the interruption. (Gamemasters who use this rule should consider reducing the value of Concentration, since the rule makes it less Limiting.)

Gamemasters should also be wary of Concentration when it's taken as a Limitation for Persistent spells a character can activate out of combat and maintain for a long time (see page 288). The standard rule on Limitations — a Limitation which doesn't actually restrict a character isn't a Limitation and has no value — applies, as always.

INACCURATE

In some Fantasy settings, magic is inherently difficult to control, even when the practitioner's highly experienced. One way to represent this is with the *Inaccurate* Limitation on attack spells.

INCREASED ENDURANCE COST

Many magic systems, particularly in Low Fantasy-, Epic Fantasy-, and Swords And Sorcery-style games, encourage or require spell designers to apply Increased Endurance Cost to spells (and Costs Endurance too, if necessary). This helps to restrict the use of magic by making it tiring (often *very* tiring) to cast spells. If the campaign requires or allows the use of Endurance Reserves for magic, the usual rule about this Limitation applies; the

GM has to decide whether it's enough of a restriction to allow it as a Limitation at full value, partial value, or no value.

The "END cost increases only in certain circumstances" modifier for Increased Endurance Cost (6E1 374) is often used for spells. For example, a wizard's Dispel Magic spell might be easy to cast when used against Wizardry spells, but take extra energy if used to Dispel other forms of magic. If so, the minimum value for the Limitation is -0; the modifier cannot convert it into an Advantage.

LIMITED POWER

Many different types of *Limited Power* Limitation represent restrictions on the method of casting a spell, rather than on the type of target it works against or the like. Examples include Can Only Be Cast At Night, Can Only Be Cast During A Full Moon, and Can Only Be Cast Underwater.

AVOIDING RESTRICTIONS

See page 276 for optional rules for avoiding or overcoming the effects of various procedures and like requirements by spending extra END, and page 277 for doing the same thing by taking penalties to a Required Skill Roll. Another possibility is for the GM to impose a mandatory Side Effect worth -½ for each ½ worth of Limitations (or fraction thereof) a character wishes to avoid.

CASTING TIME

The next thing to consider about a spell is how long it takes a character to cast.

In Fantasy Hero, the default casting time for any spell is a Half Phase or the time it takes to activate the Power the spell is built with, whichever is longer; if the spell is built with a Power that takes less than a Half Phase to activate, the spell doesn't get a Limitation for this (though the GM may alter this rule if preferred). Some spells qualify as Attack Actions as well; others do not.

QUICKER CASTING

To create a spell characters can cast as a Zero Phase Action, apply the *Trigger* Advantage in an appropriate configuration. This works well for any spell a character has to cast quickly to obtain any significant advantage from, such as spells to keep a character from falling or "instant escape" Teleportation spells.

Alternately, if the GM allows characters to overcome restrictions on spells by spending extra END (page 276) or suffering a Magic roll penalty (page 277), characters can cast a spell as a Zero Phase Action using those rules. This typically means a -3 Magic roll penalty or a penalty of one step down the Increased Endurance Cost table.

He shut his eyes, struggled for calm. And failed. A false start! He tried again...

...and reached "around the corner!"

The two halves of the sphere and the silvery rod flickered from sight.

—Harsan focuses his concentration and hides some valuable items in a mysterious extradimensional space in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

4

"I have slept for nine moons — what I did for you wasn't easy!"

—Merlin tells Uther of the price of great magic in the movie *Excalibur*



LENGHTIER CASTING: EXTRA TIME

For spells that only take a Half Phase to cast, a character may, at the GM's option, obtain a bonus to his Magic roll for taking more time (see page 282). However, many spells take longer than a Half Phase to cast. If the Power the spell is built with automatically takes longer than a Half Phase to activate, the spell gets no Limitation for this. If it does not, you can represent the longer casting time by applying the *Extra Time* Limitation. Don't forget to halve the Limitation's value if the Extra Time only applies to the activation of a Constant or Persistent Power.

If a spell with Extra Time also Requires A Magic Roll (or other Skill Roll), the character makes the Skill Roll at the end of the Extra Time. The casting process begins when the character says he's starting to use the spell, and ends after the full Extra Time runs and he makes his Magic roll.

By definition, all spells with Extra Time are interruptible. Possible forms of interruption would include doing BODY (or STUN) damage to the spellcaster, hitting the spellcaster with an attack (even if it does no damage), attacking the spellcaster (even if the attack misses), drowning out Incantations with a loud and distracting noise, touching the spellcaster, and strong visual distractions. The GM decides what constitutes a potential "interruption." He must also decide whether an interruption suffices to make the spell stop activating (which means the character must start casting the spell all over again). Some interruptions may simply impose a penalty on the Magic roll the character makes at the end of the Extra

Time, or extend the Extra Time slightly. The GM can, if necessary, reduce the Limitation's value to reflect this, or increase it by $\frac{1}{4}$ if *any* interruption automatically stops the spell.

If a character wants to have a Constant spell that requires a Half Phase Action each Phase to maintain, he may apply a $-\frac{1}{2}$ *Extra Time* Limitation to the spell (or increase its existing Extra Time value by $\frac{1}{2}$).

A spell that requires a Full Phase plus one extra Segment to cast gets only the $-\frac{1}{2}$ value for Full Phase.

Applying Extra Time to a spell does not prevent a character from Holding his Action before he begins casting the spell. That just delays the point at which the Extra Time starts running.

DURATION

Another important variable in spell design is a spell's *duration*. In other words, how long do the effects of the spell last?

The standard *HERO System* durations are Instant, Constant, Persistent, and Inherent; explained on 6E 127-28; the Power Modifiers *Charges*, *Time Limit*, and *Uncontrolled* can also affect a power's duration. Unless altered by some Power Modifier or campaign ground rule, the normal rules for a Power's duration apply to spells built with that power (including the fact that most spells stop working if the caster is Stunned, Knocked Out, goes to sleep, or dies). However, any permanent or lasting effects of those spells (such as the damage caused by a Mystic Dart or the Transform effect of a man-into-frog spell) remain.

The fisherman was a dour old man. His boat, twelve foot long and clinker-built, was so warped and sprung as to be scarce seaworthy, yet he asked a high price for her: the spell of sea-safety for a year laid on his own boat, himself, and his son.

—Ged casts a spell that will last a year in *A Wizard Of Earthsea*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

INSTANT SPELLS

Most spells, including all spells built with Attack Powers that don't have a duration-extending Advantage applied to them, are Instant. As noted in the rulebook, an Instant power can have a long-lasting effect (such as the injuries it causes); it's called "Instant" because activation of the power (casting the spell, in Fantasy Hero) only causes the Power to manifest for an instant.

DAMAGE OVER TIME SPELLS

Some attack spells, although they're Instant powers, take effect over a period of time. You can simulate this with the *Damage Over Time* Power Modifier (6E1 328). It's perfect for creating many sorts of curses, black magic spells, spells involving poison or corrosive energy, and the like.

LINGERING INSTANT SPELLS

Sometimes a character wants the ability to cast an Instant spell — typically some sort of Attack Power-based spell — and have the power remain available for use even when he doesn't use it every Phase. A common example is a spell that grants the caster claws (an HKA). HKA is an Instant Power, so what normally happens is the character casts the spell and uses the claws in the same Phase, and then the claws fade away. To use the claws again, the character must cast the spell again. To have the spell "linger" and remain available for use any time during a specified period, buy the *Time Limit* Advantage (see 6E1 346).

CONSTANT SPELLS

Many Powers used for spells, such as Darkness and Flight, have a duration of Constant; you can make others Constant by applying the *Constant* (+½) Advantage. This has several implications for spell use.

ACTIVATING A CONSTANT SPELL

A character cannot cast a Constant spell on himself and then activate the power whenever he wants. To activate the power, he has to cast the spell in the standard manner. If a character casts a spell built with a Constant Power and does not begin to use the power in the same Segment in which he completes the casting, the spell fades and the character has to cast it again if he wants to use the power it later.

For example, Kasdrevan cannot wake up in the morning, cast a Mystic Wings spell (built with the Constant Power *Flight*), and then instantly activate his Flight whenever he wants to. To activate his ability to use Flight, he has to cast his Mystic Wings spell, and he then gains the ability to fly. If he doesn't use the ability to fly in the same Segment when he finishes casting it, the spell fades away — he'll have to cast it again if he wants to fly. At the GM's option, a character can extend the "activation window" for a spell by applying *Time Limit* (6E1 346).

MAINTAINING A CONSTANT SPELL

In some magic systems, keeping a spell working may require some thought or concentration on the spellcaster's part. This doesn't qualify for a Limitation (unless it prevents the character from casting other spells or the like; see *Lockout*, 6E1 386). However, at the GM's option a character who takes BODY damage while maintaining a Constant spell must make a Magic roll to keep the spell functioning. The roll takes no time, but suffers a penalty of -1 per 2 BODY damage sustained. If the roll succeeds, the spellcaster maintains the spell without difficulty; if it fails, the spell stops working at the end of that Segment. (If the spell requires Concentration to maintain, the rules for that Limitation apply.)

The GM can apply a similar penalty for other "interruptions," such as the ones described above for Extra Time.

REPEATED-USE "INSTANT" SPELLS

Some attack spells built with Instant Powers last for more than one Phase, but require some further action on the part of the caster — such as making another Attack Roll or Magic roll. An example would include a Mystic Dart spell (RKA) that allows a caster to throw one "dart" of eldritch energy at a target every Phase.

To create an effect like this, apply the *Constant* (+½) Advantage to the spell, but in a modified "variable targets" form. If the character has to perform some action every Phase the spell remains in effect (such as making another Attack Roll or another Magic roll), reduce the value of Constant by ¼, to +¼. However, this assumes the character must keep using the spell against the same target. If the character can vary the target of his spell — for example, throw a Mystic Dart at an attacking orc one Phase, and at the orc's ogre companion the next Phase — then *increase* the value of Constant by ¼, to +¾. (For spells built with Constant Attack Powers, you can, with the GM's permission, apply this effect as a straight +¼ Advantage, *Variable Targets*.)

PERSISTENT SPELLS

Relatively few spells are built with Persistent Powers, and even then, the spell designer usually applies the Limitations *Nonpersistent* (-¼) or *Costs Endurance* (-½) so they don't remain in effect for lengthy periods of time. That's highly appropriate for spells that provide Enhanced Senses or Persistent Defense Powers, for example, but not as appropriate for Multiform-based spells.

The same rule stated above for Constant Powers applies to Persistent Powers: if a character casts a spell built with a Persistent Power and doesn't begin to use the power in the same Segment in which he completes the casting, the spell fades and the character has to cast it again if he wants to use the power it later. The *Time Limit* Power Modifier may be appropriate; it's a Limitation for Persistent Powers.

However, Persistent Powers (and 0 END Constant Powers) create another potential game balance problem. Technically, unless a spell designer applies Nonpersistent and/or Costs Endurance to his Persistent Power-based spell, spellcasters could cast that spell and maintain the Persistent effect for long periods of time — possibly forever. One casting of the *Grant Damage Negation* spell, and the character technically has Damage Negation in perpetuity. Obviously, that violates the precepts of both common sense and dramatic sense. There are three possible solutions:

- The magic system rules can *require* all Persistent Power-based spells to take the *Nonpersistent* and/or *Costs Endurance* Limitations, or the *Time Limit* Limitation, or some other Power Modifier that limits or restricts the spell's duration.
- The magic system can establish as a campaign ground rule that Persistent Power-based spells automatically expire or dissipate after a set time period even without Uncontrolled. One hour makes a good duration; so do systems that define the spell's duration based on the character's or spell's power rating.

INHERENT SPELLS

No Power is naturally Inherent, and it's almost never appropriate to make a spell Inherent via the $+1/4$ Advantage of the same name. An Inherent "spell" is really more of a mystical ability than a spell as that term is commonly used.

TIME LIMITED SPELLS

Spell designers use the *Time Limit* Power Modifier to create spells with lengthy or specifically-defined durations. See 6E1 346 for rules and further information.

TRIGGERED SPELLS

Spell designers can also use the *Trigger* Advantage to create quasi-"Uncontrolled" spells. The spell remains ready to activate until the Trigger conditions occur, which activates the spell. The difference is that once Triggered, a spell with Trigger typically dissipates and won't work again until a spellcaster re-casts it (though the GM may allow repeated Triggerings). A spell with Uncontrolled or Time Limit remains in effect until it uses up its END or the specified amount of time passes.

DURATION AND SPELL FRAMEWORKS

If the magic system allows characters to buy spells in Power Frameworks, the GM may want to give some thought to how a spell's duration interacts with the rules on switching powers or slots within a Framework. Normally if a character switches from one slot to another, the power in the first slot deactivates, even if it's Constant or Persistent. Powers with Time Limit, Uncontrolled, or Continuing Charges don't suffer from this problem, but those Advantages aren't appropriate for every spell.

In the interest of genre simulation, the GM may want to allow characters to maintain spells' effects even if they switch to another Framework power or slot. The GM may allow this for free as a campaign ground rule, or he may require the spell to have a *Remains In Effect* Advantage (typically $+1/4$, perhaps $+1/2$ in some situations).

DEACTIVATING SPELLS

Typically a character maintains full control over the spells he casts and can voluntarily deactivate them at any time as a Zero Phase Action. The GM may even allow this for Uncontrolled spells, though he may rule that some Uncontrolled spells are "programmed" and thus out of the character's control. The GM may also require the character to have Line Of Sight to the spell's effect or target to deactivate it.

TARGET: AREA AFFECTED

In most cases, the target of a spell, or the area/subject it affects, will be obvious based on the nature of the spell or the Power(s) and/or Advantage(s) used: a Spell Of Thunderbolts (RKA) is used to attack one target; a Fireball (Blast, Area Of Effect [Explosion]) affects everyone in an area defined by the Explosion rules. However, several special situations exist.

ACCURATE SPELLS

In Fantasy literature, spells often seem highly "accurate" — they always, or nearly always, affect the person they're supposed to affect. If the GM doesn't use the Absolute Effect Rule, you can build a spell with this effect using the Advantage *Area Of Effect* (1m Radius Accurate) — and, perhaps, a large number of Combat Skill Levels to make it easy to hit the target regardless of negative modifiers. To prevent targets from Diving For Cover outside the affected Area, characters can, with the GM's permission, buy larger Areas Of Effect and apply the *Accurate* modifier and rules to them.

SPELLS CASTABLE ON MULTIPLE TARGETS

Characters can cast many types of Fantasy spells either on themselves or on another character. For example, you might define an Armor-skin Spell as "can be cast on self or one other person by touch." In *HERO System* terms, you can build spells like this with the Advantage *Usable By Other* (including *Range* if you want characters to be able to cast the spell on someone else at a distance). In campaigns featuring a lot of spells that function this way, the GM may even reduce the value of the base Usable By Other to +0.

To cast a spell on more than one person at a time, you could apply any one of several Advantages depending on the effect you want to create. For attack spells, Area Of Effect works well; for protective or utility spells that affect anyone near the caster, use Usable By Nearby.





VARIABLE AREA SPELLS

In magic systems that use a power rating system for spellcasters or spells, the area affected by the spell may depend on the spell's or caster's power. For example, a Fireball spell might have an Area Of Effect with a Radius equal to 2m per the character's "power level" — that way, a mage of power level 10 creates a larger, more powerful fireball than one who's only power level 4. To create an effect like this, buy the spell with the largest area you expect it to have (based on the highest power level a spellcaster can attain in the campaign, or some other power level chosen by the GM), then apply a -0 modifier, *Area Varies Based On Caster's Power Level*, to the *Area Of Effect* Advantage. The spell's Area then depends on the character's power level, even if that means it exceeds the amount of Area purchased. If appropriate, the GM may allow characters to buy heavily-Limited forms of these spells to reduce the initial cost, then gradually buy off any non-mandatory Limitations they don't want as they increase in power.

If a character has a variable Area spell, he only pays the END for the portion of the Area he actually uses, not the END for the full power of the spell, and the penalty to any Required Skill Roll (or the like) depends only on the portion used.

RANGE

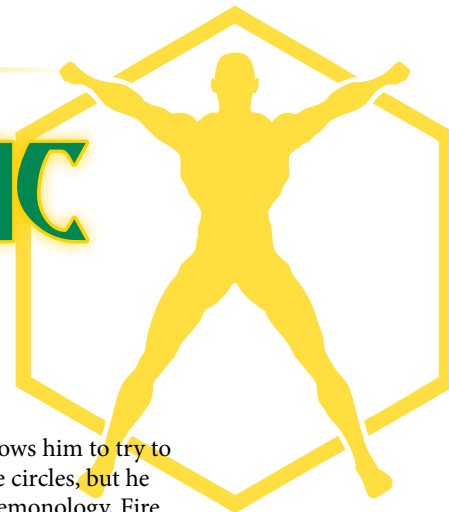
Spells built with Ranged powers typically have the Range defined by the rules — 10m times Base Points (or Line Of Sight for Mental Powers). If a spell doesn't fit into those parameters quite so well, you can vary its Range with Power Modifiers (such as Increased Maximum Range, MegaScale, Limited Range, or Line Of Sight). No Range Modifier may also be appropriate, since many spells should strike a target without regard for distance.

VARIABLE RANGE SPELLS

In magic systems that use a power rating system for spellcasters or spells, a spell's Range may depend on the spell's or caster's power. For example, an Icy Doom spell might have a Range equal to 20m plus 10m per the character's "power level" — that way, a mage of power level 6 creates an ice-blast with a longer range than one who's only power level 3. To create an effect like this, buy the spell with the longest Range you expect it to have (based on the highest power level a spellcaster can attain in the campaign, or some other power level chosen by the GM), then apply a -0 Limitation, *Range Varies Based On Caster's Power Level*. The spell's Range then depends on the character's power level, even if that means it exceeds the amount of Range purchased. If appropriate, the GM may allow characters to buy heavily-Limited forms of these spells to reduce the initial cost, then gradually buy off any non-mandatory Limitations they don't want as they increase in power.

If a character has a variable Range spell, he only pays the END for the portion of the Range he actually uses, not the END for the full power of the spell, and the penalty to any Required Skill Roll (or the like) depends only on the portion used.

EXAMPLE MAGIC SYSTEMS



To offer some examples of magic system and spell creation, and perhaps provide a springboard to help you create your own magic system, here are over a dozen sample systems briefly described. Each includes several spells; each of the systems has a “lightning bolt” spell to illustrate different approaches to the same concept.

THE ARTS ARCANE

In the realm of Thargandia, the practice of magic is an ancient and time-honored art. Would-be wizards apprentice themselves to master mages, exchanging labor for learning. Beginning with the great books of magery written by the sorcerer Delvarius two thousand years ago, the apprentice progresses through basic arcane lore to the more advanced mysteries, eventually qualifying for the black robes of a Master Wizard if he has sufficient talent and dedication.

Thargandian magicians organize all magic into six *circles*, collectively known as the *hexarion*: Demonology (the art of conjuring and forcing the obedience of creatures from the Infernal Realms); Fire Magic; Nature Magic (including spells that involve plants, animals, earth, air, or water); Necromancy; Sorcery (magic pertaining to the mind, trickery, illusion, and the like); and Thaumaturgy (any spell not belonging to another circle). Some wizards study all circles, dabbling here and there as their interest takes them; others focus on one or two, becoming masters of them while neglecting other fields of arcane lore.

RULES

The Arts Arcane is a “spell skill” system with one prerequisite: a *Wizard Perk* that costs 10 Character Points. A character who buys the Perk is then entitled to buy versions of the *Power Skill*, one for each circle of spells he wants to gain access to. Spells come from lists pre-generated by the GM, though characters can use *Spell Research* to make minor changes or even develop their own spells once they qualify as “Master Wizards” (which means they have spent at least 30 Character Points on spell Skills). For example, a character might have Necromancy 15-, Sorcery 14-,

and Thaumaturgy 18-; this allows him to try to cast any spell from those three circles, but he cannot cast any spells from Demonology, Fire Magic, and Nature Magic.

All spells for the Arts Arcane must have the Limitations *Requires A (Magic) Roll*, *Gestures*, and *Incantations*. Most spells have a standard -1 per 10 Active Points penalty to the Skill Roll; others vary. No spell may have the *Focus* Limitation, and *Side Effects* are rare but not unknown.

Characters may, with the GM’s permission, buy spells in Multipowers. If so, a spell may, with the GM’s permission, have Active Points in excess of the Multipower reserve, and any spells cast have their standard durations even if the caster switches his Multipower to another slot.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Most spells of the Arts Arcane come in three versions — Apprentice; Journeyman, Master — in ascending levels of power and difficulty. A character can try to cast a spell of greater power than his current station, but may find it hard to succeed. Extremely powerful spells may come only in “master” versions; extremely weak or commonplace ones only in “apprentice” versions.

Arcane Eye: The character can see magic as a faint glow around an enchanted item, magical creature, or person subject to a spell. An apprentice can only perceive the existence of magic and its intensity; a journeyman knows what type of magic is involved; a master knows the exact types of magic, how many Charges an enchanted item retains, and so forth.

- **Apprentice:** Detect Magic (INT Roll) (Sight Group) (5 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Thaumaturgy Roll (-½). **Total cost: 2 points.**
- **Journeyman:** Detect Magic (INT Roll +2) (Sight Group), Discriminatory (12 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Thaumaturgy Roll (-½). **Total cost: 6 points.**
- **Master:** Detect Magic (INT Roll +5) (Sight Group), Discriminatory, Analyze (20 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Thaumaturgy Roll (-½). **Total cost: 10 points.**



Immortality Jar: One of the most carefully-guarded secrets of Necromancy, this Master-level spell allows a character to place his life-force into a jar (or some other mundane object), making him effectively immortal and unkillable as long as the object remains intact. (The object radiates a faint magic.) Because the end result of the spell is perpetual, it's bought as a magical ability rather than a true spell (though casting it requires the same sort of actions as a spell); characters have to pay Character Points for it. Once performed, this spell cannot be reversed.

Cost Power

- 5 **Immortality Jar:** Life Support (Longevity: Immortality)
- 51 **Immortality Jar:** Regeneration (1 BODY per Turn), Can Heal Limbs, Resurrection (stopped by destroying the "jar," complete destruction of the body, or keeping any two significant parts of the body separate) (total cost: 41 points) and +30 BODY (30 Active Points); Only To Prevent Death (-2) (total cost: 10 points)

Total cost: 56 points.

Lightning Bolt: The character can project a bolt of deadly lightning.

- **Apprentice:** RKA 1d6, Armor Piercing (+¼) (19 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Nature Magic Roll (-½), Reduced By Range (-¼). **Total cost: 8 points.**
- **Journeyman:** RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+¼) (37 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Nature Magic Roll (-½). **Total cost: 18 points.**
- **Master:** RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+¼), No Range Modifier (+½) (79 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Nature Magic Roll (-½). **Total cost: 39 points.**

Wizard's Sigil: This Apprentice-level spell allows a wizard to place his personal mark, rune, or signature upon any non-living item (the harder/tougher the item, the longer it takes to magically "etch" the Sigil onto it). The Sigil is invisible to normal perception; only those who use Arcane Eye or have similar "magical perception" spells can see it. The Sigil remains until the caster chooses to remove it or another wizard uses countermagic against it.

- **Wizard's Sigil:** Cosmetic Transform 4d6 (non-living object into object with Wizard's Sigil on it, heals back through Dispel Magic or another application of this spell) (12 Active Points); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Thaumaturgy Roll (-½), Limited Target (nonliving objects; -¼). **Total cost: 3 points.**

AZGANDIAN MAGIC

In the land of Azgandia, magic is a potent force that underlies all of creation. Those who can manipulate it, known typically as *Wizards* or *Mages*, are among the most powerful men in the world.

Azgandian wizards organize magic into eleven categories known as *Arcana*, or “Arts.” They are:

- *Druidry*, spells relating to, using, or affecting animals, plants, and other natural phenomena;
- *Enchantment*, the Art of wielding potent magics through specially-prepared amulets, talismans, wands, rings, and other items;
- *Fire Magic*, spells pertaining to all aspects of the Element of Fire;
- *Karcism*, the Art of summoning and controlling demons, devils, and similar beings;
- *Necromancy*, a black and evil Art dealing with life, death, undead, and related subjects;
- *Sorcery*, magics of the mind, thought, illusion, and deception;
- *Stone Magic*, spells pertaining to all aspects of the Element of Earth;
- *Thaumaturgy*, the Art of transforming, altering, and redirecting energies and matter;
- *Water Magic*, spells pertaining to all aspects of the Element of Water (including Ice);
- *Wind Magic*, spells pertaining to all aspects of the Element of Air (including storms and lightning); and
- *Wizardry*, a general term for any spells or other aspects of the Art not covered by the other Arcana.

RULES

All Azgandian magic requires a Skill Roll (using a single Skill, *Power: Magic*) to cast successfully (in the case of enchanters, this represents properly activating the powers of an item previously created, and isn't necessary in the case of items designed to function permanently or for long periods of time). Most spells require Gestures and Incantations, and some require material components (Foci, typically Expendable) as well. A Wizard can cast any of the spells he knows with his *Magic* Skill; he doesn't have to learn a separate Skill for each Arcana.

However, to be able to cast the spells of an Arcana, a Wizard must buy a *Spell Familiarity* (SF) Skill. A SF costs 2 Character Points for all the spells in an Arcana; or a character can buy access to a subcategory of an Arcana (such as Offensive Fire Magic or Defensive Sorcery) or a single spell for 1 Character Point.

Buying a SF with an Arcana allows a character to cast the spells in that Arcana, but it does *not* actually teach him any spells. To learn spells, a character must “acquire” them during game play. A beginning Wizard usually has a decent selection of spells (a couple dozen at least) obtained from the master or school that taught him, and acquires others throughout the course of his career. For many Wizards, assembling a complete grimoire of all the spells of an Arcana becomes an obsession of sorts.

(By way of analogy, compare Spell Familiarity and spells to Weapon Familiarity and weapons. A warrior can buy WF: Common Melee Weapons for 2 Character Points, but that doesn't mean he has any of those weapons — he has to buy them, make them, take them from a defeated enemy, or the like. The difference is, a Wizard can't simply go into a store and buy spells. He may be able to create them himself using Spell Research (Inventor) and a *lot* of time, effort, and money, but it's more likely he acquires them by trading with other Wizards, buying them from other Wizards somehow, finding them, or stealing them.)

There's one other restriction on a Wizard's ability to cast spells: each spell has an *Intelligence Minimum* (INT Minimum). This means that a spellcaster must have an INT at least that high to learn the spell, and to cast it once he learns it. (Thus, Draining a caster's INT can cripple his ability to use magic.) Having a higher INT doesn't improve the spell in any way.

Additionally, Wizards can pay Character Points to improve the effectiveness of spells they already know. For 1 Character Point, a Wizard can buy off a single spell's need to use Gestures, Incantations, or a Focus. (For 2 Character Points he could buy off two of these procedures, if a spell has all three.) However, all spells must have at least *one* of these restrictions; a Wizard can't buy them all off.

The accompanying table presents a selection of Azgandian spells from the various Arcana. The list is far from exhaustive, but covers many of the more commonly-used spells.



AZGANDIAN SPELLS

Name	Target	Casting Time	Casting Proc	INT Min	Duration	Range	MR	END	Notes
DRUIDRY									
Offensive Druidry									
Call Lightning	1C	1	GI	16	I	100m	-6	6	RKA 3d6, Indirect (from stormy sky)
Claws	Self	½	FGI	11	TL	Self	-3	3	HKA 1d6, lasts 1 Minute
Control Animal	1C	½	GI	13	I	LOS	-4	4	Mind Control 8d6 (Animal class of minds)
Tangling Vines	1C	½	FGI	14	I	50m	-5	5	Entangle 5d6, 5 PD/5 ED, requires vegetation
Defensive Druidry									
Barkskin	Self	½	FGI	10	C	Self	-1	1	Resistant Protection (5 PD/5 ED)
Wall Of Thorns	A	1	FGI	16	C	50m	-5	5	Barrier 8 PD/6 ED (10m x 3m x 1m)
Movement Druidry									
Faster Mount	1C	½	GI	15	I	NR	-3	3	Aid Running 3d6, animals only
Sensory Druidry									
Animal Eyes	Self	1	GI	10	C	Self	-3	3	Clairsentience (Sight, Hearing) through animals
Miscellaneous Druidry									
Awaken Plants	Spec	1T	FGI	18	I	NR	-10	10	Summon 300-point monstrous plant
Summon Animals	Spec	1T	FGI	13	I	NR	-10	10	Summon 4 300-point animals
Weather Control	A (4km Rad)	1M	FGI	16	C	NR	-10	10	CE, +/-6 Temperature Levels, VCE
ENCHANTMENT									
Offensive Enchantment									
Belt Of Strength	Self	—	—	14	P	Self	-1	1	+10 STR
Blasting-Wand	1C	½	I	20	I	200m	-4	6Ch	RKA 4d6, +2 STUN
Ring Of Fire	A (8m Rad)	½	I	15	I	50m	-4	4	RKA 2d6
Defensive Enchantment									
Amulet Of Protection	Self	—	—	17	C	Self	-3	3	Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED), Hardened
Cloak Of Invisibility	Self	—	I	16	C	Self	-2	2	Invisibility to Sight Group
Wizard's Robes	Self	—	—	17	P	Self	—	—	Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED)
Movement Enchantment									
Boots Of Swiftnes	Self	½	I	13	C	Self	-1	1	Running +13m
Cloak Of Flying	Self	½	I	16	C	Self	-1	1	Flight 15m
Ring Of Teleportation	Self	0	I	15	I	Self	-4	4	Teleportation 40m, 1m = up to 1 km
Sensory Enchantment									
Amulet Of Far Sight	Self	½	I	11	C	Self	-2	2	Telescopic (+16 versus Range Modifier) for Sight Group)
Lens Of Truth	Self	½	GI	15	C	Self	-1	1	Detect Visual Falsehoods (INT Roll +3) (Sight Group)
Miscellaneous Enchantment									
Pavilion Of Comfort	Spec	1T	GI	20	Spec	NR	-8	8	Summon Base built on 200 Total Points
Phantom Cloak	Self	½	I	15	C	Self	-4	4	Desolidification (affected by magic)
Ring Of Illumination	A (2m Rad)	½	I	10	C	NR	-2	2	Sight Group Images (create light), +4 to PER Rolls

Name	Target	Casting Time	Casting Proc	INT Min	Duration	Range	MR	END	Notes
FIRE MAGIC									
Offensive Fire Magic									
Fiery Aura	Self	½	FGI	13	C	NR	-3	3	RKA 1d6, Damage Shield, Armor Piercing
Fire-Dart	1C	½	FGI	15	I	100m	-4	4	RKA 2d6, Penetrating
Fireball	A (8m Rad)	½	FGI	17	I	100m	-6	6	RKA 2d6, Penetrating
Immolate	1C	1	FGI	19	I	20m	-3	3	RKA 1 point, NND, Does BODY, DoT (10 increments, 1 per 3 Segments)
Defensive Fire Magic									
Protection From Fire	Self	½	FGI	10	C	Self	-2	1	Resistant Protection (16 ED), Only Works Against Fire
Movement Fire Magic									
Pathway Of Fire	Self	1	FGI	13	I	Self	-2	4	Teleportation 10m, 1m = up to 1 km, Only Through Fire
Sensory Fire Magic									
Eyes Of Fire	Self	1T	FGI	13	C	Self	-2	2	Clairsentience (Sight Group), Only Through Fire
KARCISM									
Offensive Karcism									
Banish Demon	1C	½	FGI	17	I	30m	-6	6	Dispel Summon Demon 20d6
Control Demon	1C	½	FGI	15	I	LOS	-6	6	Mind Control 12d6, Only Versus Demons
Summon Demon	Spec	1M	FGI	13	I	Spec	-8	12	Summon one demon built on up to 1,200 Total Points
Defensive Karcism									
Summoning Circle	A (2m Rad)	1M	FGI	12	C	NR	-1	1	Change Environment (create demon-warded area)
NECROMANCY									
Offensive Necromancy									
Death Touch	1C	1	FGI	18	I	NR	-9	9	RKA 6d6, NND (Power Defense), Does BODY
Fear	1C	½	FGI	13	I	20m	-6	6	Drain PRE 6d6
Soulripping	1C	1	FGI	18	I	20m	-7	15	RKA 4d6, NND (Power Defense), Does BODY
Defensive Necromancy									
Bone Armor	Self	½	FGI	15	C	Self	-3	3	Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED), Hardened
Sensory Necromancy									
Necromantic Foretelling	Self	1M	FGI	16	C	Self	-4	4	Clairsentience (Sight Group), Precognition Only
Miscellaneous Necromancy									
Create Undead	Spec	1H	FGI	13	I	NR	-10	11	Summon Undead built on up to 550 Total Points, Slavishly Loyal
Call Up Skeleton/Zombie	Spec	1T	FGI	13	I	NR	-3	7	Summon Skeleton/Zombie built on 185 Total Points, Slavishly Loyal
Call Up Skeleton Army	Spec	1M	FGI	15	I	NR	-6	12	Summon up to 32 Skeletons or Zombies

Target: 1C (one character); Self; A (Area, type indicated in parentheses).

Casting Time: 0 (Zero Phase Action, possibly via Trigger), ½ (Half Phase); 1 (Full Phase); 1T (one Turn); 1M (one Minute); 1H (1 Hour).

Casting Procedures: F (Focus); G (Gestures); I (Incantations).

Duration: I (Instant); C (Constant); P (Persistent); TL (Time Limit).

Range: Self; NR (No Range, which may mean Touch); LOS (Line Of Sight); or the spell's Range in meters.

MR: The spell's Magic Roll penalty (based on Active Points); -0 means no penalty.

END: The spell's END cost. "Ch" indicates a number of Charges.

Notes: A brief description of the spell.



Name	Target	Casting Time	Casting Proc	INT Min	Duration	Range	MR	END	Notes
SORCERY									
Offensive Sorcery									
Domination	1C	½	FGI	15	I	LOS	-6	6	Mind Control 12d6, Telepathic
Illusion-Weaving	1C	½	FGI	15	I	LOS	-6	6	Mental Illusions 12d6
Torment	1C	½	FGI	15	I	LOS	-6	6	Mental Blast 6d6
Wizard's Hand	1C	½	FGI	13	C	150m	-1	1	Telekinesis (10 STR)
Defensive Sorcery									
Mind-Shield	Self	½	I	13	C	Self	-2	2	Mental Defense (20 points)
Sensory Sorcery									
Mindreading	1C	½	FGI	15	I	LOS	-6	6	Telepathy 12d6
Mindseeking	1C	½	FGI	15	I	Spec	-6	6	Mind Scan 12d6
Miscellaneous Sorcery									
Invisibility Spell	Self	½	FGI	16	C	Self	-2	4	Invisibility to Sight Group
STONE MAGIC									
Offensive Stone Magic									
Hands Of Stone	1C	½	FGI	16	I	50m	-6	6	Entangle 6d6, 6 PD/6ED, Only Versus Targets On The Ground
Hurl Boulder	1C	½	FGI	14	I	100m	-4	4	Blast 8d6, OIF (boulders of opportunity)
Defensive Stone Magic									
Stonyskin	Self	½	FGI	15	C	Self	-3	3	Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED), Impenetrable
Wall Of Stone	A	1	FGI	17	I	10m	-6	6	Barrier, 6 PD/10 ED, 12 BODY (up to 10m x 4m x 1m), Opaque
Movement Stone Magic									
Burrowing	Self	½	FGI	13	C	Self	-3	3	Tunneling 6m through 8 PD materials, Fill In
THAUMATURGY									
Offensive Thaumaturgy									
Alter Self	Self	1T	FGI	16	C	Self	-3	3	Shape Shift (Sight, Hearing, Touch Groups), Imitation
Beast Form	Self	1T	FGI	14	C	Self	-6	6	Multiform (any 32 animals built on up to 200 points), Personality Loss
Man Into Animal	1C	1	FGI	17	I	30m	-6	6	Severe Transform 4d6 (human(oid) into any animal)
Monster Form	Self	1T	FGI	15	C	Self	-9	9	Multiform (any 8 monsters built on up to 400 points), Personality Loss
Petrification	1C	1	FGI	18	I	50m	-9	9	Severe Transform 6d6 (living being into stone statue)
WATER MAGIC									
Offensive Water Magic									
Dehydrate	1C	½	FGI	17	I	30m	-6	6	Blast 6d6, NND (defense is LS: Diminished Eating)
Fist Of The Waters	1C	½	FGI	13	I	200m	-6	6	Blast 6d6, Indirect (+1), Target Must Be Within 20m of water
Movement Water Magic									
Speed Of The Fish	Self	1	FGI	12	C	Self	-1	1	Swimming +16m
Water-Walking	Self	1	FGI	13	C	Self	-1	1	Flight 12m, Only In Contact With Surface Of Calm Waters
Miscellaneous Water Magic									
Breathe Underwater	Spec	1	FGI	10	C	NR	-1	1	Life Support (Breathe Underwater), Usable Simultaneously (8)

Name	Target	Casting Time	Casting Proc	INT Min	Duration	Range	MR	END	Notes
WIND MAGIC									
Offensive Wind Magic									
Fog	A (32m Rad)	1	FGI	12	C	100m	-2	2	CE (-3 to Sight Group PER Rolls)
Lightning Bolt	1C	½	FGI	16	I	60m	-6	6	RKA 3d6, +1 Increased STUN Multiplier
Wind Gust	1C	½	GI	15	I	100m	-5	5	Blast 6d6, Does Knockback, Double Knockback
Defensive Wind Magic									
Shield Of The Winds	Self	½	GI	14	TL	100m	-2	2	Deflection, lasts 1 Turn, Physical Missiles Only
Movement Wind Magic									
Wings Of The Wind	Self	½	GI	17	C	Self	-2	2	Flight 20m
Miscellaneous Wind Magic									
Air Bubble	Spec	1	FGI	12	C	NR	-1	1	Life Support (Breathe Underwater), Usable By Nearby
WIZARDRY									
Offensive Wizardry									
Dispel Magic	1C	½	FGI	13	I	40m	-3	3	Dispel Magic 16d6, any one spell/power at a time
Mystic Bolt	1C	½	FGI	15	I	200m	-4	4	Blast 8d6, AVAD (Power Defense)
Mystic Dart	1C	½	FGI	16	I	LOS	-6	6	RKA 2d6, Autofire (3), Indirect (any Path from caster)
Paralysis Spell	1C	½	FGI	17	I	50m	-8	8	Entangle 4d6, 4 PD/4 ED, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+1)
Sleep Spell	1C	½	FGI	15	I	LOS	-8	8	Mental Blast 8d6
Weakening	1C	½	FGI	16	I	50m	-6	6	Drain 4d6, any one Characteristic at a time
Defensive Wizardry									
Mystic Shield	Spec	½	GI	14	C	NR	-1	1	Power Defense (15 points), Usable Simultaneously (8)
Wizard's Armor	Self	½	FGI	18	C	Self	-2	2	Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED), Hardened
Movement Wizardry									
Levitation	Self	½	FGI	13	C	Self	-1	1	Flight 12m, Levitation
Mage's Pathway	Self	1	FGI	14	I	Self	-4	4	Teleportation 20m, 1m = up to 1 km
Sensory Wizardry									
Mage's Eye	Self	½	GI	10	C	Self	-1	1	Detect Magic (INT Roll) (Sight Group)

Target: 1C (one character); Self; A (Area, type indicated in parentheses).

Casting Time: 0 (Zero Phase Action, possibly via Trigger), ½ (Half Phase); 1 (Full Phase); 1T (one Turn); 1M (one Minute); 1H (1 Hour).

Casting Procedures: F (Focus); G (Gestures); I (Incantations).

Duration: I (Instant); C (Constant); P (Persistent); TL (Time Limit).

Range: Self; NR (No Range, which may mean Touch); LOS (Line Of Sight); or the spell's Range in meters.

MR: The spell's Magic Roll penalty (based on Active Points); -0 means no penalty.

END: The spell's END cost. "Ch" indicates a number of Charges.

Notes: A brief description of the spell.



CHAOS BLADES

In the war-torn lands of the world of Maldregon, only a few powerful individuals wield the might of magic. Known in every realm as “Chaos Blades,” they come from all races, genders, and places, but have never been common in any land or time. At most, only one or two hundred exist at any one time, according to scholars. They’re called Chaos Blades because they frequently fight for one liege or another, and because their personal conflicts often erupt unexpectedly, laying waste to entire villages or towns in the process.

RULES

In the Chaos Blades campaign, magic is an innate talent possessed by only a few people — no one else can cast spells. A character doesn’t have to study to learn spells, but he does need training in his abilities. Typically Chaos Blade powers start to emerge at puberty. Any other Chaos Blade can sense if another person is a Chaos Blade (this is an Enhanced Sense bought as part of a mandatory *Chaos Blade* Template), and can offer the training necessary to turn a raw Chaos Blade into a finely-honed weapon. Most Chaos Blades jump at the chance to train a young Blade, since a trainee usually becomes an ally and friend for life.

To be a Chaos Blade, a character must buy an expensive *Chaos Blade* Template that includes a 10-point Perk, *Chaos Blade*. They buy their spells (really more like mystical superhuman powers) individually with Character Points; the cost is the spell’s Real Point cost divided by 5. Spells typically have the Limitations *Gestures* and *Incantations*; Concentration, Extra Time, and Increased Endurance Cost are not uncommon, but Focus and Requires A Roll are both forbidden (except that a Chaos Blade may take an Activation Roll [or No Conscious Control] for a newly-learned spell, but he should buy it off quickly).

CHAOS BLADE TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 50 50 Character Points’ worth of spells
- 10 **Perk:** Chaos Blade
- 12 **Perceive Chaos Blades:** Detect Chaos Blade (INT Roll) (no Sense Group), Range, Sense (character can buy other Sense Modifiers for this power if desired)
- 16 **Bladetheft:** Aid 3d6, Variable Effect (any Characteristic or Chaos Blade spell, one at a time; +½), Delayed Return Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Year; +3¼) (85 Active Points); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Only Aid Self (-1), Only Works Within 1 Minute After Killing Another Chaos Blade In The Presence Of That Blade’s Body (-2), Points Gained Immediately Fade If Resurrected Victim Kills Character (-0)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 88

Value Complications

- 10 **Social Complication:** Chaos Blade (Frequently, Minor)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 10

Characters buy spells individually, not through Power Frameworks (though as noted above, a spell’s cost is its Real Points divided by 5), and may not define individual spells as Frameworks. Characters may create their own spells with the GM’s permission, but typically choose from a long list of pre-generated abilities. Most spells have varying effects based on the character’s *ilthraca*, or power ranking. To calculate a character’s *ilthraca*, add up the Character Points he spends on spells and divide by 3. As a result, Chaos Blade effects tend to be devastatingly powerful, so the Blades themselves are regarded as incredibly dangerous. They’re effectively cut off from normal society, only able to fraternize among themselves but constantly competing with each other for power and prestige.

The Chaos Blade Template contains a power called Bladetheft. It’s an Aid that can apply to any Characteristic or spell. It has a long fade rate (measured in years), but only works when a Chaos Blade kills another Chaos Blade and spends 1 Turn “absorbing” his power as it leaves his dead body. If another Chaos Blade uses a resurrection power to bring the dead Blade back to life, the formerly deceased no longer has his magic powers, since his killer “stole” them... but he can kill the “thief” and get them all back, and more.

SAMPLE SPELLS

All-Seeing Eye: Chaos Blades who know this spell are impossible to “blind” except with countermagics.

Spatial Awareness (no Sense Group), Range (37 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼). 18 Real Points; cost to character 4 points.

Chaos Path: The character can travel up to 25 miles in the blink of an eye. More powerful versions of this spell, sometimes featuring MegaMovement, are known.

Teleportation 40m, x1000 Noncombat (85 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Distance Varies Based On Caster’s *Ilthraca* (base of standard x2 Noncombat through rank 3, +1 Improved Noncombat Multiplier per rank above 3; -0). **57 Real Points; cost to character 11 points.**

Lightning Blast: The character can project a bolt of deadly lightning.

RKA 6d6, Area Of Effect (1m Radius Accurate; +½) (135 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Damage Varies Based On Caster’s *Ilthraca* (2 DCs per rank; -0), Range Varies Based On Caster’s *Ilthraca* (24m per rank; -0). **67 Real Points; cost to character 13 points.**

Torment-Spell: The character can inflict intense agony on another person. This works well not only as a weapon, but as an interrogation tool.

Drain STUN 8d6, Line Of Sight (+½) (120 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Damage Varies Based On Caster’s *Ilthraca* (2 DCs per rank; -0), Range Varies Based On Caster’s *Ilthraca* (24m per rank; -0). **80 Real Points; cost to character 16 points.**

DIVINE MAGIC

This is a fairly typical divine magic system suitable for use in High Fantasy games (or, with some reductions in power, other types of campaigns featuring deities powerful enough to grant powers to priests). All spells require the Limitations *OAF* (priest's holy symbol, religious medallion, or the like, as appropriate for a specific religion or god), *Requires A Faith Roll*, and *Only When Serving The God's Purposes*. Many of them also have *Gestures* and *Incantations* (prayers and orations required to invoke the power), *Extra Time*, and/or *Concentration* (representing the intense “focusing of faith” needed).

Blessing: The character has the power to confer the blessing of his god on up to eight people by touching them on the forehead and uttering a short prayer. The *Appropriate Uses Only* Limitation is a generic way of saying “a recipient can only use the Overall Level for actions appropriate to the god who granted the power” — such as only for combat for a war-god, only for Professional Skills and the like for a god of craftsmen, and so forth.

+1 Overall, Usable Simultaneously (up to eight people at once; +1), Time Limit (5 Minutes' duration; +¾) (33 Active Points); *OAF* (holy symbol; -1), *Gestures* (-¼), *Incantations* (-¼), *Requires A Faith Roll* (-½), *Only When Serving The God's Purposes* (-½), *Appropriate Uses Only* (-½). **Total cost: 8 points.**

Cure Illness: The character can cure diseases, plagues, fevers, and other illnesses by laying his hands on a sick person and praying to his god. The more intense the effects of the disease, the longer it may take to cure.

In game terms, this is a Major Transform, “sick person to well person,” that stops the course of a disease — once the character applies the spell, the disease inflicts no further damage (loss of CON, for example) on the victim. However, the spell will only restore any STUN, BODY, CON, or other Characteristics lost to the disease prior to the spell's use if the priest uses the rules on 6E1 306-07 regarding “adding abilities” (add up the cost of the abilities lost to the disease and treat them as “powers” being granted to the target by the Transform).

Major Transform 3d6 (sick person into well person) (30 Active Points); *OAF* (holy symbol; -1), *Concentration* (0 DCV throughout; -1), *Extra Time* (5 Minutes; -2), *Gestures* (throughout; -½), *Incantations* (throughout; -½), *No Range* (-½), *Requires A Faith Roll* (-½), *Only When Serving The God's Purposes* (-½), *Limited Target* (sentient beings; -¼). **Total cost: 4 points.**

Healing-Spell: Perhaps the most important spell in an adventuring priest's repertoire, the Healing-Spell allows the caster to heal severe injuries in but a few seconds. After applying the spell to a wound, the character must wait an entire day before he can use it again on that same wound.

Simplified Healing 4d6, Can Heal Limbs (45 Active Points); *OAF* (holy symbol; -1), *Concentration* (½ DCV throughout; -½), *Extra Time* (1 Turn; -1¼), *Gestures* (throughout; -½), *Incantations* (throughout; -½), *Requires A Faith Roll* (-½), *Only When Serving The God's Purposes* (-½). **Total cost: 8 points.**



Sky God's Spear: The character can call upon the gods to blast his foes with a bolt of lightning — even on a sunny, cloudless day. If the target is inside, the bolt must first blast through the roof or other obstacles, diminishing its effect considerably.

RKA 3d6, Indirect (Source Point is always in the sky above the target; +¼) (56 Active Points); OAF (holy symbol; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Faith Roll (-½), Only When Serving The God's Purposes (-½). **Total cost: 16 points.**

ELDRITCH LORE

In the enchanted land of Hellgard, formed ages ago by the gods to serve as a bulwark against the Demons of the Infinite Abyss, magic infuses all of creation. Everything, from the earth and stones beneath men's feet to the clouds above their heads, contains a powerful mystic essence wizards call "the Eldritch." Some areas contain vast amounts of Eldritch, while others are as poor in it as scrub-desert is of water — but everywhere there is some Eldritch. It is Eldritch that wizards use to cast their spells, and the more Eldritch they have available, the more powerful those spells become.

RULES

Hellgard has an "ambient magical energy" magic system. The local level of Eldritch dictates how much energy a spellcaster can call upon to power his spells — and if there's not enough, he cannot cast any at all. In game terms, every spellcaster buys an Endurance Reserve — as much or as little END and REC as he wants, with any Limitations he wants. He must apply a mandatory -0 Limitation, *END And REC Restricted To Local Eldritch Level*. All spells draw solely off a caster's Endurance Reserve, never off his personal END (except in emergencies, see below).

The GM rates the Eldritch level of a given area as an Endurance Reserve as well, with both END and REC. A spellcaster is limited to the END and REC of his Endurance Reserve or the END and REC of the Eldritch level, whichever is *less*. However, if the Eldritch Endurance Reserve has a higher END than the character's Reserve's END, any END the character spends to Push a spell comes from the Eldritch, not from his Reserve. If the Eldritch doesn't have enough END to pay for the full END cost of Pushing, it pays for as much as it can, and the character pays for the rest. If the character's Reserve's END cannot make up the difference, the character loses 1 BODY for every unpaid-for point of spent END due to magical strain and backlash. Characters may Push spells whenever they want, but must succeed with an unmodified Magic roll to do so (this requires a Half Phase Action separate from the actual casting of a spell).

If a character needs to cast a spell and doesn't have the END available, he may use his own life-force to power the spell. In game terms, for every 1 BODY damage the character chooses to use in this fashion, he gains 3 END to spend on spells for 1 Turn (12 Segments) from the Segment in which he

sacrifices the BODY. The BODY damage must heal back normally; healing spells cannot affect it.

Characters must purchase their spells individually; they may not buy them in Power Frameworks (though they may, with the GM's permission, build a specific spell as a Framework). All spells must have Requires A Magic Roll and at least -½ worth of Limitations; many wizards rely on a single Focus (a staff, bracelet, ring, or the like) for this, though Gestures and Incantations are also common. Spells may take the *Increased Endurance Cost* Limitation.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Eldritch Shield: This spell protects the wizard from most types of harm. It withstands blows as stoutly as the strongest plate armor, and can even resist some magical effects.

Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED/6 Power Defense) (39 Active Points); OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). **Total cost: 10 points.**

Eldritch Wings: With this spell, a wizard can soar through the air like a bird. However, it's Eldritch-intensive; a wizard who flies from a high-Eldritch to a low-Eldritch area may suddenly find himself plummeting to his death!

Flight 28m, x8 Noncombat (38 Active Points); OIF (Wizard's Ring; -½), Increased Endurance Cost (x6 END; -2½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). **Total cost: 8 points.**

Lightning Bolt: This spell allows a wizard to project various types of bolts of lightning.

Cost Power

- | | |
|----|---|
| 17 | Lightning Bolt Spell: Multipower, 50-point reserve; all OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½) |
| 2f | 1) Standard Lightning Bolt: RKA 3d6+1; OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½) |
| 2f | 2) Forked Lightning Bolt: RKA 2½d6, Autofire (2 shots; +¼); OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Cannot Use Both Shots Against Same Target (-0) |
| 1f | 3) Lightning Cone: RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (16m Cone; +½); OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), No Range (-½) |

Total cost: 22 points.

Mystic Interference: One of the most feared (and hated) spells available in Hellgard, Mystic Interference blocks a wizard's access to the Eldritch.

Suppress Endurance Reserve END 5d6 (50 Active Points); OIF (Wizard's Ring; -½), Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Applies Only To Personal/Item Endurance Reserves, Not The Eldritch (-0). **Total cost: 14 points.**

ELEMENTAL DWEOMERCRAFT

The spellcasters of the world of Vanseron call on the Four Primal Elements — Air, Earth, Fire, and Water — for the power to summon up and shape magical energies. They refer to this practice as *Elemental Dweomercraft*.

There are five types of spellcasters in Vanseron: Druids, Necromancers, Sorcerers, Witches, and Wizards. A character must choose which type of caster he wants to be by buying the appropriate Template; there are no “mixed” casters or characters who study two magical traditions. All types of casters buy spells from the same lengthy list, though some types of casters find it easier to buy some types of spells (see below).

RULES

To buy Elemental Dweomercraft spells, a character must do two things. First, he has to pay for a *Dweomercraft* Perk, one Perk for each category (Air Magic, Earth Magic, Fire Magic, and Water Magic). The minimum cost for each Perk is 1 Character Point; the maximum cost has no upper limit.

Second, he must buy the spells themselves. The spells are organized into one list of four categories (Air, Earth, Fire, and Water, of course). Each spell has five *spell ranks* ranging from 1 to 20 — one rank for each type of caster. (For example, the *Fear* spell below has the following ranks: Druid 15, Necromancer 5, Sorcerer 8, Witch 8, Wizard 12.) A spell’s rank indicates two things: first, its general power and effectiveness compared to other spells; second, how easy it is for a given type of spellcaster to learn it.

Each spell costs 1 Character Point, regardless of how it’s built, its Active/Real Point cost, the type of caster buying it, or other factors. *However*, a character can only buy spells whose spell rank for his caster type is *equal to or less than* the value of his *Dweomercraft* Perk for the category that spell belongs to. For example, a wizard with 5 points in Perk: Fire Magic could pay 1 Character Point to buy any Fire Magic spell with a wizard spell rank of 1-5; he cannot buy Fire Magic spells with a wizard spell rank of 6 or more.

To cast any spell that he knows, a character uses his Power: *Dweomercrafting* Skill. All spells must have the Limitation *Requires A Dweomercrafting Roll*. Most also take Gestures, Incantations, and OAF, but these are not required. The OAF may be a single Focus, or multiple Expendable Foci; it varies from spell to spell and caster type to caster type. Other Limitations often used for spells include Concentration, Extra Time, Increased Endurance Cost, and Side Effects.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Calling The Thunderbolt (Druid 11, Necromancer 16, Sorcerer 15, Witch 11, Wizard 12): This spell calls down from the sky a tremendous bolt of lightning to strike the caster’s foes. If the target is inside, the bolt must first blast through the roof or other obstacles, diminishing its effect considerably.

RKA 3d6, +1 Increased STUN Multiplier (+¼), Indirect (Source Point is always in the sky above the target; +¼) (67 Active Points); OAF (staff for druid, sorcerer, wizard, amulet for necromancer, witch; -1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Dweomercrafting Roll (-½), Only Works During Storms (-1).

Total cost: 16 points.

Fear (Druid 15, Necromancer 5, Sorcerer 8, Witch 8, Wizard 12): This spell causes the victim to feel intense fear. How the victim reacts to that fear isn’t under the caster’s control, but he can usually accompany the spell with some action sufficient to make the target flee.

Drain PRE 6d6 (60 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Limited Range (40m; -¼), Requires A Dweomercrafting Roll (-½). **Total cost: 20 points.**

Graveyard Call (Druid 20, Necromancer 10, Sorcerer 16, Witch 15, Wizard 16): With this spell a necromancer (or, rarely, some other type of spellcaster) brings a skeleton or corpse back to a hideous semblance of life to serve him.

Summon up to 32 Skeletons or Zombies built on up to 185 Character Points, Expanded Class (skeletons or zombies; +¼), Slavishly Loyal (+1) (139 Active Points); OAF (length of human bone carved with necromantic runes; -1), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Extra Time (5 Minutes; -2), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Incantations (throughout casting; -½), Must Have Body Or Bones (-1), Requires A Dweomercrafting Roll (-½).

Total cost: 18 points.

Wind-Whisper (Druid 2, Necromancer 6, Sorcerer 4, Witch 2, Wizard 1): Spellcasters use this spell to communicate with a designated person without having anyone overhear them. The wizard whispers his message into the breeze, which carries it directly to the ears of the person chosen by the wizard (who must be within his Line of Sight). The “target” cannot speak back, though.

Mind Link (any one mind) (15 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½) Only For Caster To Communicate A Short, Simple Message To Target (-1), Requires A Dweomercrafting Roll (-½). **Total cost: 5 points.**





THE GIFT

In the lands of Balthedar, all magic is organized into 9 *arcana*: Conjunction; Divination; Elementalism; Naming; Necromancy; Sorcery; Thaumaturgy; Witchcraft; and Wizardry. (See page 254 for possible descriptions for each of these categories.) Spellcasters have *the Gift*, an innate talent for magic-working, and so are collectively known as “the Gifted.” Although not rare, they aren’t common either; most people meet a Gifted just a few times in their lives.

RULES

This magic system uses a large list of pre-generated spells, all of which have the *Requires A Magic Roll* Limitation. Other common Limitations include Focus, Gestures, Incantations, Side Effects, and Increased Endurance Cost.

To work magic, a character needs two things. First, he must have the *Magic Skill* (just one Skill is used for all spells, regardless of *arcana*). Second, for each *arcana* he wants to cast spells from, he must buy a Talent called *The Gift (arcana)*. Each of these nine Talents (*The Gift (Conjunction)*, *The Gift (Wizardry)*, and so on) costs 5 Character Points initially. For that 5 points, the character gets the equivalent of a Variable Power Pool (25 Pool + 50 Control Cost) that he uses to cast the spells of that *arcana*. For each +1 point spent on a *The Gift* Talent, the VPP increases by (Pool +5, Control Cost +10) points. Thus, a character who’s spent 12 points on *The Gift (Necromancy)* has, in game

terms, a VPP with 60 Pool, 120 Control Cost that he can only use to cast Necromancy spells.

Characters don’t spend Character Points to buy spells. Instead, the player (or GM) must keep a list of the spells each character knows (spellcasters write their spells down in large grimoires). Any spell a character knows, he may cast using the Gift for that *arcana*. If he lacks the appropriate Gift, he can’t cast that spell. For example, if a character has *The Gift* for Divination, Necromancy, and Sorcery, he can’t cast Witchcraft or Thaumaturgy spells, no matter how large his three VPPs are or how few Character Points those spells are built with.

At the GM’s option, a character can spend a Full Phase and make an unmodified Magic roll to increase or decrease the power of a spell on his lists. The former can make the spell more effective, the latter can make it small enough to fit in the character’s VPP if it can’t already.

Also at the GM’s option, a character may take a Full Phase and make a Magic roll at -4 to spontaneously work magic — that is, to create a new spell on the spot, or cast a spell he doesn’t have on his list but knows exists — from any *arcana* he has the Gift for. If he succeeds, he may cast the spell, but using no more than half of the appropriate VPP’s Pool and Control Cost. He may then add the spell to his lists, adding 5 Active Points to its power per week until he can use his full “Pool” to cast it. This could quickly become unbalancing, though, so the GM should monitor the process carefully if he allows it at all.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Lightning Bolt: The character can project a bolt of deadly lightning when he casts this Elementalism spell.

RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +¼), Armor Piercing (+¼) (45 Active Points); OAF Expendable (piece of charred wood from a lightning-struck oak, Difficult to obtain; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). **Total cost: 14 points.**

Osseous Armor: This spell of Necromancy causes a small, rune-carved medallion of bone to expand into a suit of bony plate armor that protects the spellcaster without inhibiting him in any way.

Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED), Hardened (+¼) (30 Active Points); OAF (-1), Costs Endurance (-½), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). **Total cost: 9 points.**

Summon Animals: This spell, belonging to the Conjunction, Elementalism, and Naming arcanæ, allows a caster to call to animals in the Language Arcane and summon them to his side to do his bidding.

Summon four animals built on up to 100 Total Points each, Expanded Class (animals; +¼), Loyal (+½) (52 Active Points); OAF Expendable (bit of food the creature likes, Easy to obtain; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Arrives Under Own Power (-½), Summoned Being Must Inhabit Locale (-½). **Total cost: 13 points.**

Walk Through Walls: This Wizardry spell grants the character, or any one character whom he touches, the ability to walk through walls and other solid objects. If the spell fails, the caster suffers extreme fatigue.

Desolidification (affected by magic), Usable By Other (+¼) (50 Active Points); OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Side Effects (Drain END 5d6, points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; -1). **Total cost: 12 points.**

LEX MAGISTERIUM

This is a magic system appropriate to High Fantasy campaigns featuring lots of powerful magic. It makes spells cheap, so characters can buy lots of them, and uses caster power and spell power ranking systems to govern not only the power of spells, but how many spells a character can cast per day.

RULES

Characters buy *Lex Magisterium* spells individually; they may not buy them through Power Frameworks, though a few specific spells are defined as Multipowers. The cost of the spell is its Real Points divided by 5 (standard rounding rules apply); in the case of a Multipower-based spell, the cost is ((Real Point cost of reserve/5) + (Real Point cost of slots)). Characters may buy spells from the GM's pre-generated list, or create their own with his permission.

All *Lex Magisterium* spells must have the Limitation *Requires A Magic Roll*. Most also take Gestures, Incantations, and OAF, but these are not required. The OAF may be a single Focus, or multiple Expendable Foci (depending on the magical tradition the character studied), but he must choose one or the other for *all* of his spells. Other Limitations often used for spells include Concentration, Extra Time, Increased Endurance Cost, and Side Effects.

Under the *Lex Magisterium*, spellcasters have a *Rank* from 1 to 20. A spellcaster who begins the game at 175 Total Points (or less) is at Rank 1. For the next three Ranks (2-4), he gains one Rank for every 3 Experience Points he earns. For the next six Ranks (5-10), he gains one Rank for every 5 Experience Points he earns. The last ten Ranks take 10 Experience Points each to earn.

Similarly, the *Lex Magisterium* categorizes spells by *Circles* ranging from 1 to 10. A spell's Circle typically equals its Active Points divided by 20, but the GM sometimes adjusts a spell's Circle up or down to compensate for powerful effects not reflected in Active Point totals or unusual combinations that cost a lot of Active Points but aren't correspondingly effective. Many spells increase in effectiveness as the caster's Rank increases, and the GM is particularly likely to decrease their Circle (often right down to First) for that reason.

Any spellcaster, no matter what his level, can cast First Circle spells. To buy or cast any other spells, a character's Rank must be equal to or greater than two times the spell's Circle. Thus, to cast Second Circle spells, a character must be Rank 4 or higher.

The number of spells a spellcaster can cast per day (from one sunrise to the next, defined as 6:00 AM for game purposes) depends on his Rank and the spells' Circle. For each Circle, he can only cast a number of spells per day equal to his Rank divided by the Circle (standard rounding rules apply). The limit applies regardless of how many spells he has bought or which he chooses to cast. For example, a Rank 6 wizard could cast six First Circle spells, three Second Circle spells, and two Third Circle spells. Even if he's bought ten First Circle spells, he can only cast six per day. He might choose to cast the same spell six times, or six spells one time each, or any other combination that adds up to six.

At the GM's option, on any day the character can choose to "trade" a higher-Circle spell for multiple lower-Circle ones. For example, instead of casting one of his Third Circle spells, he could cast three more First Circle spells than usual. Some magical items also grant the character the power to cast more spells per day, or artificially inflate his Rank so he can cast more powerful spells.



SAMPLE SPELLS

Grant Wish: This Tenth Circle spell, the most powerful dweomer known, allows a spellcaster to grant a person's wish — anything he can think of, the spell gives him (and what's more, the spell responds to intent, not the literal wording of a wish). The spell can also automatically duplicate the effects of any other known spell at maximum power. However, this power comes at a price: the spellcaster must *permanently* sacrifice 1 Character Experience Point (this cannot, however, reduce a spellcaster's Rank). Thus, wizards are extremely reluctant to cast it. The GM may impose whatever other restrictions he considers necessary on this spell in the interest of common sense, dramatic sense, and game balance.

Extra-Dimensional Movement (subject "travels" to the "dimension" where things are as he wishes for them to be), Usable By Other (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+¼) (64 Active Points); OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Extra Time (1 Minute; -1½), Gestures (throughout; -½), Incantations (throughout; -½), Requires A Magic Roll (-1 per 5 Active Points; -1), Side Effect (character must permanently sacrifice 1 Character Point, see text; -2).

7 Real Points; cost to character 1 point.

Khelebrian's Helpful Porter: This Second Circle spell creates a disc- or rectangular-shaped plane of mystic force (known among wizards as a "palanquin") the caster uses to carry things. The palanquin has a diameter of half a foot per caster Rank (or a length of half a foot per Rank and half that width, if rectangular). The amount it can carry depends not only on its size, but its strength, which increases as the caster's Rank increases. The only thing it cannot carry is the caster himself.

Telekinesis (40 STR), Time Limit (duration of 20 Minutes per Rank; +1) (120 Active Points); OAF Expendable (a piece of ivory shaped like the Porter, Difficult to obtain; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -¼), Effect Varies Based On Caster's Rank (2 STR per Rank; -0), No Range (must remain with 2m of caster; -½), Affects Whole Object (-¼), Only To Carry Things (cannot Grab; -¼).

30 Real Points; cost to character 6 points.

Lightning Bolt: This First Circle spell allows a character to project a bolt of deadly lightning — the more powerful the wizard, the stronger the bolt.

RKA 6½d6 (100 Active Points); OAF Expendable (rune-carved, shaped piece of meteoric iron, Very Difficult to obtain; -1½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Damage Varies Based On Caster's Rank (1 DC per Rank; -0), Range Varies Based On Caster's Rank (50m per Rank; -0). **28 Real Points; cost to character 6 points.**

Spell Of Locking And Opening: This First Circle spell gives a character the power to open or lock doors, gates, and similar structures.

Cost Power

- 25 **Spell Of Locking And Opening:** Multipower, 76-point reserve; all slots OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½)
- 2f **1) Locking:** Change Environment (-20 to Lockpicking rolls), Long-Lasting (permanent until door is opened or destroyed, or magic is dispelled); common Limitations, plus Effect Varies Based On Caster's Rank (-1 to Lockpicking per Rank; -0)
- 1f **2) Opening:** Lockpicking 20-; common Limitations plus Costs Endurance (-½), Effect Varies Based On Caster's Rank (starts at Lockpicking 10- at Rank 1, increases to 11- at Rank 2, +1 to roll for each 2 Ranks thereafter; -0)

Total cost: 28 points; cost to character 8 points.

NAMING MAGIC AND WORDS OF POWER

This magic system revolves around the principle of "words of power" — by uttering the right words, the character can cause potent magical effects. To enhance a spell's power further, the character uses a *talisman* — an object personal to him that magnifies arcane energies. Most wizards choose a Staff as their talisman, but some prefer other objects; the only requirement is that the talisman be recognizable as such on sight. A wizard can still cast spells without his talisman, but they have roughly half the effect they would otherwise. (A few low-power spells don't require a talisman, however.)

Words of power magic also relies on the mystic doctrine of True Names. Every sentient being has two Names: a generic Name that identifies it by race or some other relevant attribute ("orc," "human," "Hellgardite"); and a True Name unique to himself, and known only to him, whoever gave it to him, and anyone he chooses to tell it to. Most spells used against individuals involve only the generic Name. This is the power level represented by the spell's *HERO System* writeup. As a campaign ground rule (which costs spellcasters nothing), if the spellcaster knows a person's True Name, any attack spell he casts directly against that person, and that person alone, has *double effect* — it does twice as many DCs of damage, allows him to roll twice as many dice for an Effect Roll, or the like. The GM determines which spells count as "direct attacks," and also decides on the exact effects of the doubling. Players are responsible for keeping track of what True Names, if any, their characters know.

Spellcasters may buy spells individually, or in Multipowers. If a spellcaster creates a spell Multipower, he must restrict it to one of three types of spells: attack spells; defensive spells; or miscellaneous (everything other than attacks and defenses). Attack spell Multipowers tend to be common; defensive and miscellaneous spells more often get bought individually. Defensive and personal movement spells are relatively rare in this system; attack spells and any spell that could be defined as “calling” or “summoning” something (calling a wild animal to one’s hand, calling the wind to move a ship more quickly) are common.

All spells in this system must take the Limitations *Incantations* and *Requires A Magic Roll*. All other Limitations are optional. To represent the effect of the wizard’s talisman, spells are bought in two parts: the part the character can use unaided; and the extra part he can also use when he has his talisman.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Name Of The Thunderbolt: The character can call down a bolt of lightning from the sky. This only works when the conditions are right for lightning — during storms, or at least very cloudy weather. If the target is inside, the bolt must first blast through the roof or other obstacles, diminishing its effect considerably. This spell does not benefit from the True Name doubling rule.

RKA 2d6, Indirect (Source Point is always in the sky above the target; +¼) (37 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only Works During Storms (-1) (total cost: 11 points) **plus** RKA +2d6, Indirect (Source Point is always in the sky above the target; +¼) (37 Active Points); OAF (talisman; -1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only Works During Storms (-1) (total cost: 9 points). **Total cost: 20 points.**

Windcalling: By speaking the Name of the wind, the spellcaster can bend it to his will and make it move a sailing vessel over the water much faster than it could otherwise move. To maintain the effect, the character must remain in the vessel and keep speaking the wind’s Name (*i.e.*, when the spell starts to fade, the caster casts it again to keep the effect at a high level).

Aid Swimming 1d6 (6 Active Points); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only On Sailing Vessels (-1) (total cost: 2 points) **plus** Aid Swimming +1d6 (6 Active Points); OAF (talisman; -1), Concentration (½ DCV; -¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only On Sailing Vessels (-1) (total cost: 1 point). **Total cost: 3 points.**

Word Of Command: By speaking this Word of Power, the character can take control of the will of another. Once he speaks the Word, he can deliver commands to the victim by thought alone; further speech is unnecessary. This spell benefits from True Name doubling.

Mind Control 8d6, Telepathic (+¼) (50 Active Points); Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½) (total cost: 28 points) **plus** Mind Control +8d6, Telepathic (+¼) (50 Active Points); OAF (talisman; -1), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½) (total cost: 18 points). **Total cost: 46 points.**

Word Of Devastation: One of the most powerful spells in a wizard’s arsenal, this Word creates a destructive force powerful enough to level buildings. It only works on inanimate objects (though the collapse of a building may injure the people within or near it).

RKA 3d6, Area Of Effect (20m Radius Explosion; +½) (67 Active Points); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only Works On Inanimate Objects (-½) (total cost: 19 points) **plus** RKA +3d6, Area Of Effect (20m Radius Explosion; +½) (67 Active Points); OAF (talisman; -1), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only Works On Inanimate Objects (-½) (total cost: 15 points). **Total cost: 34 points.**

NA’SENRA

Among the wizards of Tarr’el Vellâsh, magic is known as *na’senra*, a contraction of a term in the language of dragons for “the mysterious force.” As the name indicates, no one, not even the dragons, knows where magic comes from — but they do know that certain mental formulae, focused through the use of specially-prepared objects, allows people with the proper training to manipulate it. (Dragons, elves, and dwarves can manipulate it naturally, without the need for such objects.) Since working magic is an exercise of personal will, each wizard’s spells “feel” a little different, and experienced wizards can recognize a spellcaster’s work by the arcane residue of his spells. But even an experienced wizard must take care; with every spell being personal to its caster, it’s impossible to predict what one might encounter when facing another wizard; even a beginner could create a spell with powerful and unusual effects.

In Tarr’el Vellâsh, magic is so common that *anyone* can learn it, given the opportunity to study and the intelligence to understand the process of spellcasting. It requires no Perk or Talent, and in some cases not even a *Magic Skill* (though most characters do build their spells with the *Requires A Magic Roll* Limitation). Most educated or sophisticated people know at least a minor spell or two to make their lives easier.

RULES

Na'senra is a very simple magic system that gives players great flexibility for designing spellcasters. Instead of buying spells from a pre-generated list, spellcasters create all their own spells. They can create virtually anything they want, though characters must buy each spell individually, and the GM must review and approve all spells.

The only restrictions on Na'senra spells are these: first, every spell must have an Expendable Focus (dragons, dwarves, and elves do not suffer from this restriction); second, every spell must have the Limitation *Noisy* (page 167). The latter Limitation represents the fact that any wizard can sense the spellcasting of another wizard, and can even recognize it as distinct to a specific wizard if he's experienced that wizard's spells before.

Na'senra also has rules for spontaneous casting. If a character wants to create a magical effect he hasn't paid Character Points for, he may do so *once* provided he makes a Magic roll at double the normal penalty (*i.e.*, -1 per 5 Active Points). If he wants to use that spell again, he must pay Character Points for it. The GM must approve all uses of spontaneous magic, to ensure players don't abuse the privilege.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Animate Dead: With this spell, a character can bring up to four dead persons or animals back from the Realms Beyond to a state of Unlife on this plane. Of course, this only works if he has the corpses to cast the spell on.

Summon up to four Undead creatures built on up to 200 Total Points, Expanded Class (lesser-powered undead; +¼), Slavishly Devoted (+1) (112 Active Points); OAF Expendable (silver hook soaked in human blood, Very Difficult to obtain; -1½), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Extra Time (1 Minute; -1½), Gestures (throughout; -½), Incantations (throughout; -½), Must Have Body Or Bones (-1), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Noisy (-¼). **Total cost: 14 points.**

Fireball: A popular attack spell, Fireball allows a spellcaster to blast a large area with enchanted flame.

RKA 3d6, Area Of Effect (36m Radius Explosion; +¾) (79 Active Points); OAF Expendable (ball of sulphur molded around a chip of flint and a chip of steel, Difficult to obtain; -1¼), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Noisy (-¼). **Total cost: 20 points.**

Lightning Bolt: The character can project a bolt of deadly lightning.

RKA 2½d6, Armor Piercing (+¼) (50 Active Points); OAF Expendable (small copper wand, Difficult to obtain; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Noisy (-¼). **Total cost: 14 points.**

Spider-Walking: When cast on the spellcaster or one of his comrades, this spell allows the recipient to walk on walls and ceilings like a spider. However, it only lasts for five minutes, so the recipient can't climb too high, lest he risk a deadly fall.

Clinging (normal STR), Time Limit (5 Minutes; +¾), Usable By Other (+¼) (20 Active Points); OAF Expendable (dead spider, Easy to obtain; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Noisy (-¼).

Total cost: 6 points.

RUNE MAGIC

This magic system involves the use of spoken or painted runes, sigils, glyphs, and like symbols. To create a spell effect, the spellcaster must place the rune on the appropriate object, and perhaps concentrate on it to activate the effect.

RULES

In *HERO System* terms, Rune Magic spells are designed one of two ways. Most are Uncontrolled spells that cost no END; they last until someone obliterates, removes, mars, or covers up the rune. (For non-Uncontrolled spells, this may constitute a -½ Limitation.) This can lead to some extremely long-lasting effects, so GMs may want to restrict the use of such spells.

The other type of rune-spell either creates a Constant effect that lasts as long as the user expends personal energy to power it, or uses the *Time Limit* Power Modifier to represent how long the rune remains in effect before fading or becoming powerless.

Both types of spells have the Limitations *Focus* (the materials used to carve or paint the rune) and *Requires A Magic Roll*. If the rune must be carved, this takes Extra Time (even painting one may require a Full Phase); creating or activating many runes also requires Concentration.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Brelga, The Rune Of Safety From Fire: When carved on a building (a Base, in other words), this rune makes it very difficult to set any part of the building — even a thatched roof — on fire. The contents of the building can still burn normally, and the protection ends if anything ever defaces or covers the rune.

Resistant Protection (16 ED), Usable By Other (+¼) (30 Active Points); OAF (rune-carving knife; -1), Concentration (0 DCV throughout casting; -1), Extra Time (1 Minute; -1½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only Works Against Fire (-½), Only Works On Buildings (Bases) (-1), Power Stops Working If Rune Is Marred, Destroyed, Covered Up, Or Unpowered (-½). **Total cost: 4 points.**



Kalthir, The Rune Of Protection: A spellcaster paints this rune on himself or another person. As long as the recipient keeps the rune powered (*i.e.*, pays END for it), it protects him from harm. If he ever stops paying END, the power of the rune fades, and the recipient becomes unprotected by the spell unless the spellcaster casts it again.

Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED), Usable By Other (+¼) (37 Active Points); OAF Expendable (rune-paints, Easy to obtain; -1), Costs Endurance (-½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Power Stops Working If Rune Is Marred, Destroyed, Covered Up, Or Unpowered (-½). **Total cost: 9 points.**

Skelvaldi, The Rune Of Lightning-Calling: If the character wants to damage a structure, or perhaps inflict a gruesome death on a prisoner, he carves this rune on the target and then backs away and concentrates on it. A few seconds later, a bolt of lightning lances down out of the sky and strikes the rune... and whatever it's carved upon.

RKA 3d6, Indirect (Source Point is always in the sky above the target; +¼) (56 Active Points); OAF (rune-carving knife; -1), Concentration (½ DCV throughout casting; -½), Extra Time (2 Turns; -1¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only Stationary Targets (-1). **Total cost: 11 points.**

Veldr, The Rune Of Weapon Enhancement: When painted on a weapon, the rune Veldr makes that weapon sharper and harder-hitting for a time, increasing the damage it does. The effect lasts for approximately ten minutes, or until something removes or obstructs the rune (if the rune is poorly-placed upon the weapon, this often happens when blood runs over it).

Aid HKA 3d6, Delayed Return Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Minute; +1) (36 Active Points); OAF Expendable (rune-paints, Easy to obtain; -1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Power Stops Working If Rune Is Marred, Destroyed, Or Covered Up (-½). **Total cost: 10 points.**

THE SECRET SCIENCES

In the Swords And Sorcery world of the Auld Kingdoms, magic is a potent and mysterious force wielded by dark-robed wizards and priests who carefully conceal their occult lore behind curtains of cant and deception. But as powerful as magic can be, casting spells is a slow and laborious process, one ill-suited to combat or adventuring. Most spells require not only time, but materials, other preparations, and intense concentration on the part of the spellcaster. Few wizards dare to confront sword-wielding enemies; they prefer to flee and strike from a position of safety when attacked.

RULES

The powers of the Secret Sciences suffer from many restrictions. All spells must take the following Limitations: Concentration, Extra Time, Gestures, Incantations, and Requires A Magic Roll. Many have OAF (often Expendable as well), Increased Endurance Cost, Requires Multiple Users, and/or Side Effects as well. The GM prefers that spells have no more than 60 Active Points, but he may grant exceptions in appropriate circumstances.

Characters must buy each spell individually, and cannot define them as Power Frameworks. No form of spontaneous casting exists; characters typically buy spells from the GM's pre-generated list, though they can devise their own during game play with Spell Research (and, of course, the GM's approval).

SAMPLE SPELLS

Claws Of The Beast-Lord: One of the few combat-effective spells in the Secret Sciences, this invocation is used by the Beast-Cult of Yarthem to emulate the animals its followers worship. It allows the caster to grow vicious claws.

HKA 1d6 (plus STR), Time Limit (1 Minute; + $\frac{3}{4}$) (26 Active Points); OAF Expendable (bear's claw, Difficult to obtain; - $\frac{1}{4}$), Concentration ($\frac{1}{2}$ DCV while casting; - $\frac{1}{4}$), Extra Time (Full Phase; - $\frac{1}{2}$), Gestures (- $\frac{1}{4}$), Incantations (- $\frac{1}{4}$), Requires A Magic Roll (- $\frac{1}{2}$). **Total cost: 6 points.**

Curse Of Clumsiness: This spell hinders the target's reflexes, making it difficult for him to wield a blade or walk without tripping.

Drain DEX 4d6 (40 Active Points); OAF Expendable (two dog's paws tied tightly together with scarlet twine, Difficult to obtain; - $\frac{1}{4}$), Concentration (0 DCV while casting; - $\frac{1}{2}$), Extra Time (Extra Phase; - $\frac{3}{4}$), Gestures (- $\frac{1}{4}$), Incantations (- $\frac{1}{4}$), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; - $\frac{1}{2}$), Requires A Magic Roll (- $\frac{1}{2}$), Side Effects (caster suffers the spell's effects instead; -1). **Total cost: 7 points.**

Lightning Bolt: Perhaps the most powerful combat spell in the arsenal of the Secret Sciences, Lightning Bolt can inflict grievous wounds on an attacker... assuming the character finishes casting it before his target attacks him.

RKA 4d6 (60 Active Points); OAF (rune-engraved copper wand; -1), Concentration ($\frac{1}{2}$ DCV while casting; - $\frac{1}{4}$), Extra Time (Extra Phase; - $\frac{3}{4}$), Gestures (- $\frac{1}{4}$), Incantations (- $\frac{1}{4}$), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; - $\frac{1}{2}$), Limited Range (40m; - $\frac{1}{4}$), Requires A Magic Roll (- $\frac{1}{2}$), Side Effects (caster suffers Drain END 3d6; - $\frac{1}{2}$). **Total cost: 11 points.**

Ulgar's Sixth Ritual Of Demon-Summoning: A group of six spellcasters can use this long and difficult ritual to summon a powerful demon. The demon, though not actively antagonistic to the casters, still requires a little coercion, persuasion, flattery, or bribery before it will perform any tasks. Due to the extensive Limitations on this spell, the GM lets it violate the standard 60 Active Point cap for spells.

Summon one Lesser Demon built on 600 Total Points (see HSB 75) (120 Active Points); OAF Expendable Fragile Immobile (elaborate, easily-disturbed pentagram drawn on a stone floor with special paints, plus other ritual paraphernalia, Difficult to obtain; - $\frac{2}{2}$), Requires Multiple Users (6 casters; - $\frac{3}{4}$), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Extra Time (1 Hour; -3), Gestures (throughout; - $\frac{1}{2}$), Incantations (throughout; - $\frac{1}{2}$), Requires A Magic Roll (- $\frac{1}{2}$), Side Effects (demon gets free and attacks casters; -1). **Total cost: 11 points.**

THE SPELLS OF SARILLON

In the Low Fantasy/Swords And Sorcery world of Sarillon, life is nasty, brutish, often short... and occasionally magical. Sorcerers (as spellcasters are generally known) are rare, and compared to many other settings low-powered, but often inspire great fear of their lore, skills, and eerie powers.

RULES

The spells of Sarillon are treated as if they were Intellect Skills: each spell costs 3 Character Points for an INT Roll, with each +1 to the roll costing +2 Character Points. (If the GM permits characters to buy Skill Levels with spells, Skill Levels with a Small Group of spells [no more than three] cost 3 Character Points each; Skill Levels with a Large Group of spells [four to eight] cost 5 Character Points each; and Skill Levels with All Spells [*i.e.*, nine or more] cost 10 Character Points each.)

Naturally, all spells have the Limitation *Requires A [Magic] Roll* (- $\frac{1}{2}$), where [Magic] is the Skill the character bought to learn the spell. However, as a campaign ground rule, no spell suffers an Active Point penalty to its Skill Roll. Other modifiers (such as taking extra time, or rushing to complete a spell more quickly) can apply.

All Sarillonian spells must cost END to cast, either naturally or via the *Costs Endurance* (- $\frac{1}{2}$) Limitation. Spells built with Constant Powers must cost END to maintain (this includes spells built with Persistent Power and Costs Endurance). See below regarding Sarillonian Endurance Reserves.

All Sarillonian spells must have some form of the Limitation *Concentration*, unless the GM rules otherwise. In some cases the GM may permit characters to substitute *Inaccurate* instead, for example.

Many spells of Sarillon have some or all of the Limitations *Focus*, *Gestures*, *Incantations*, *Increased Endurance Cost*, and *Side Effects*, but none of them are required. The type of Focus

varies based on the caster's training and preference; some casters favor a single Focus (such as a staff, amulet, or wand), or a single Focus per spell, but many spells require some type of Expendable Focus "material components."

As a campaign ground rule, all spells of Sarillon take a minimum of a *Full Phase* to cast (rather than the usual *Half Phase* for most Fantasy Hero games). Characters creating their own spells can apply the *Extra Time* Limitation to extend the casting time even further, if desired.

Sarillonian spells draw on the personal energy of the caster, what sorcerers call their "inner fire." A sorcerer is capable of exerting great power when necessary, but doing so depletes his inner fire, leaving him weakened for days. To represent this, Sarillonian spells all draw their END from an Endurance Reserve that each caster must buy, and the REC of the Reserve must be bought with the Limitation *Slow Recovery* (1 Day; -6). Once a Reserve hits 0 END, a character may use his personal END to fuel his spells, but with two important restrictions. First, the Skill Roll for casting any spell using personal END suffers a -1 penalty for every 3 END (or fraction thereof) used. Second, the END lost is treated as *Long-Term Endurance*, and Recovered as such (see 6E2 132-33). Thus, it's possible for a sorcerer to throw everything he's got into a major spell (perhaps as part of a Push), but that's going to tire him out, making it more difficult for him to cast spells in the near future.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Blood Sacrifice: Unscrupulous and amoral Sarillonian sorcerers (which is to say, most of them) long ago learned that certain rituals and practices could enhance the power of magic. The most potent of these practices is the *blood sacrifice* — the giving of a human life (preferable that of a virgin girl) to the dark gods of magic in exchange for power.

Aid Magic 5d6, Variable Effect (any one Magic spell at a time; +½), Delayed Return Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1¾) (97 Active Points); OAF Expendable (sacrifice itself, plus ritual knife and other tools, Extremely Difficult to obtain; -2), Aid Self Only (-1), Concentration (0 DCV throughout casting; -1), Extra Time (5 Minutes; -2), Gestures (throughout; -½), Incantations (throughout; -½), Only At Night Or In Darkness (-½), Requires A Blood Sacrifice Roll (-½). **Total cost: 11 points (cost to character: see text).**

Fascination: One of the most feared powers of the Sarillonian sorcerer is to take over the mind of another man, forcing him to do the caster's bidding. Fortunately for sorcerers' victims, maintaining the control is tiring for the caster.

Mind Control 12d6, Telepathic (+¼) (75 Active Points); OAF (runed silver wand; -1), Concentration (½ DCV throughout control; -½), Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½), Extra Time (Extra Phase; -¾), Eye Contact Required (-½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Fascination Roll (-½). **Total cost: 14 points (cost to character: see text).**

Scrying: Some Sarillonian sorcerers have the power to see things far away, and thus to spy on their enemies. Doing so requires a specially-made, specially-prepared divinatory mirror, crystal ball, bowl of clear water, or similar appurtenance.

Clairsentience (Sight Group), x4 Range, MegaScale (1m = 1 km, or up to 800 km; +1) (60 Active Points); OAF Fragile (specially-prepared mirror or the like, see text; -1¼), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½), Extra Time (1 Minute to cast; -¾), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Scrying Roll (-½). **Total cost: 11 points (cost to character: see text).**

Thunderbolt Ensorcelled: Perhaps the deadliest (and certainly the most spectacular) spell in the sorcerous arsenal, this spell causes a bolt of lightning to flash from the caster's hand and strike his target dead.

RKA 4d6 (60 Active Points); OAF (copper amulet; -1), Concentration (½ DCV throughout casting; -½), Extra Time (Extra Phase; -¾), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Inaccurate (½ OCV; -¼), Incantations (throughout casting; -½), Requires A Thunderbolt Ensorcelled Roll (-½). **Total cost: 12 points (cost to character: see text).**

TALRIADAN DRUIDRY

In Talriada, the Land of the Seven Giants, there live a group of spellcasters known as "Druids." Master of arcane powers, occult lore, and the wisdom of both man and demon, they command not only subtle spells, but the respect and fear of commoner and king alike.

RULES

Talriada is a Low Fantasy realm with a sort of quasi-Celtic feel to it; it's a land of standing stone circles, mischievous faerie-folk, spear-wielding warriors in chariots, and riddle-contests with wicked trolls. Its magic system is relatively low-powered. Spells can have, at most, 40 Active Points' worth of effect (the GM may grant exceptions, but rarely does so), and most spells have far less than that. Much of its magic relates to nature or natural effects.

Characters pay for spells individually; they cannot define a spell as a Power Framework. All spells must cost END, either inherently or because they have the *Costs Endurance* (-½) Limitation. All spells must take the Limitations *OAF* (Druid's Staff; -1), *Extra Time* (Full Phase or longer), and *Requires A Magic Roll*. Many other Limitations, including *Concentration* and *Increased Endurance Cost*, are also common.





4

SAMPLE SPELLS

Calling The Thunderbolt: The character can call down a bolt of lightning from the sky. This only works when the conditions are right for lightning — during storms, or at least very cloudy weather. If the target is inside, the bolt must first blast through the roof or other obstacles, diminishing its effect considerably.

RKA 2d6, Indirect (Source Point is always in the sky above the target; +¼) (37 Active Points); OAF (Druid's Staff; -1), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Only Works During Storms (-1). **Total cost: 6 points.**

Faerie Protection: One of a Druid's responsibilities is to speak to and negotiate with the capricious faerie-folk of Talriada... and if necessary, to protect himself or others from their magic. Since most faerie charms involve Drain, Transform, or other powers that work against Power Defense, this spell provides Power Defense to the recipient.

Power Defense (18 points), Usable By Other (+¼) (22 Active Points); OAF (Druid's Staff; -1), Costs Endurance (-½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). **Total cost: 5 points.**

Healing Circle: Druids can heal injuries and wounds, but only if the victim can make it to one of their sacred stone circles. Casting the spell requires five Druids, takes time, and tires all of them out.

Simplified Healing 4d6 (40 Active Points); OAF Immobile (Druid's Staff and stone circle; -2), Requires Multiple Users (5 casters; -¾), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Extra Time (1 Minute; -1½), Gestures (throughout; -½), Incantations (throughout; -½), Increased Endurance Cost (x5 END; -2), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). **Total cost: 4 points.**

Wind Messenger: A Druid can whisper a message on the wind, and have the wind carry it straight to the ears of the person for whom it is intended.

Mind Link (any one willing target), No LOS Needed (25 Active Points); OAF (Druid's Staff; -1), Costs Endurance (-½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Affected As Hearing Group Rather Than Mental Group (-¼), Allows Only A Single One-Way Communication (-1). **Total cost: 5 points.**

TORVANIAN MIND-MAGICS

Long and long ago, the Empire of Torvan ruled most of the northern lands. Its cities glittered, its citadels were strong, and its savants developed a strange sorcery that drew on the power of their thoughts, creating mighty *mind-magics* that were unequalled anywhere else in the world. But not all the sophistication and strength of Torvan was enough to save the Empire when ravaging hordes of barbarians came thundering out of the western plains to conquer and slay, casting down the great cities into ruin and establishing their own petty kingdoms in their place.

A thousand years have passed since the Time of Blood and Fire. Where once a single Empire stood now exists a patchwork of realms ruled by and for the descendants of the Westrun horse-warriors. Scattered throughout the northern lands are the pitiful remnants of the Torvanian people. Although they are an oppressed minority in lands they once ruled, they have kept alive the knowledge of the mind-magics their ancestors mastered, which they use when they can to make their lives easier... or strike a covert blow in revenge for centuries of mistreatment.

RULES

Despite the name, Torvanian mind-magics can actually be learned by anyone, not just those of Torvanian blood. However, it's easier for Torvanians to learn them than any other peoples — and in any event mind-magic lore is regarded as a sacred secret, something no worthy Torvanian would ever teach an outsider. Most of them won't even discuss the subject with non-Torvanians; some don't even think Torvanian half-breeds should know of such things due to their "tainted blood."

Although it encompasses many powers (witness the Lightning Blast spell), as the name implies Torvanian mind-magic focuses on Mental Powers (and related powers). Many mind-magic spells somehow enhance the caster's perceptions or other abilities, rather than affecting other persons... though if push comes to shove a master of mind-magics can call up some powerful attacks.

Mind-magic spells may not take the *Focus* Limitation, since this style of magic depends on personal mental power and strength, not the use of fetishes and talismans. (Though sometimes a Focus can increase the effectiveness of mind-magic; see below.) Nor does mind-magic involve a Required Skill Roll (either someone knows how to use these magical powers, or he does not), Gestures, or Incantations. However, all mind-magic spells must take the *Unified Power* (-¼) Limitation, since anything that affects a caster's ability to use one mind-magic spell affects his ability to use all of them. Other Limitations often used to create mind-magic spells include *Concentration*, *Extra Time*, and *Increased Endurance Cost*.

A character must buy each mind-magic spell individually; they cannot be bought in Power Frameworks (though individual spells may be built as Frameworks in some instances). However, the cost to the character is the Real Point cost divided by 5.

ENHANCING MIND-MAGICS

Practitioners of Torvanian mind-magic have found two ways to enhance their powers. The first is to make skin-to-skin contact with the victim of an attack spell, which increases the Active Points in the spell by 20%.

The second is a type of mystical mineral called *na'tarian stones*. These stones, which are rarely found in the lands that were once the heart of the Empire of Torvan, come in a variety of colors and levels of purity. The color indicates what type of spell the stone can enhance; the most common is ochre-yellow, which can be attuned to enhance a single spell by up to 50% of its Active Points (depending on the purity and size), the rarest is blue (which enhances all mind-magic spells by up to 100%, again depending on purity and size). Na'tarian stones are coveted by mind-magicians; many have been handed down through a given family from generations, often in the form of worn jewelry (since na'tarian stones can be cut and faceted like semi-precious gems).

SAMPLE SPELLS

Domination: This common mind-magic spell, justly feared by normal folk, allows the caster to take control of the mind of another person, provided the target's within 30 meters of him.

Mind Control 12d6, Telepathic (+¼) (75 Active Points); Limited Normal Range (30m; -¼), Unified Power (-¼). **Total cost: 50 points (cost to caster: 10 points).**

Enhance Self: The caster infuses his body with mental energies, improving all of his natural abilities for a brief period.

Aid Characteristics 2d6, Expanded Effect + Variable Effect (all Characteristics simultaneously; +4), Delayed Return Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1¾) (81 Active Points); Aid Self Only (-1), One Use At A Time (-1), Unified Power (-¼). **Total cost: 25 points (cost to caster: 5 points).**

Lightning Blast: An example of a rare mind-magic spell that involves projection of physical force, this spell allows the caster to destroy his foes with a blast of lightning!

RKA 3d6, ACV (uses OMCV against DCV; +0) (45 Active Points); Unified Power (-¼). **Total cost: 36 points (cost to caster: 7 points).**

Mind-Rack: One of the most basic attack spells of mind-magic allows the caster to inflict mental agony on a target within 50 meters.

Mental Blast 3d6, Constant (+½) (45 Active Points); Limited Normal Range (50m; -¼), Unified Power (-¼). **Total cost: 30 points (cost to caster: 6 points).**



VANSARJAK

In the land of Dyngereth, dozens of bizarre and quixotic wizards practice a style of magic known as *Vansarjak*. The spells of Vansarjak are as unusual as the sorcerers who cast them. They almost uniformly possess great power, but suffer from one great restriction: the spellcaster must prepare them in advance. The final step of the preparation process is called *infusion*; in it, the caster “infuses” his body with the spell. When he’s ready to activate the prepared spell, he speaks an incantation that releases the infused power. Thus, a wizard must choose which spells he intends to use in advance, which may cause him tactical difficulties from time to time.

RULES

In Vansarjak, all spells have several Power Modifiers. First, they must take Delayed Effect (+¼). A wizard can cast a number of spells per day equal to his INT divided by 5. He must prepare all the spells he wants to cast in advance; if he has not prepared his full allotment of spells, he can only use the spells he has prepared. Of course, the character can prepare other spells to fill vacant “slots” at any time...

...but spell preparation requires time and effort. All spells must take Extra Time of at least 20 Minutes, and 1 Hour or more is common. This represents the time it takes to study the spell, make any preparations, and then infuse it into the caster’s body. Concentration is another popular Limitation, representing the effort and attention it takes to prepare and infuse a spell.

All spells must take Incantations as a “Release” Limitation (see page 159). Spells may not take the Limitations *Focus*, *Gestures*, or *Requires A Roll*.

Characters must purchase all spells individually. They can define a single spell as a Power Framework with the GM’s permission.

SAMPLE SPELLS

The Deadly Quatrains Of Araphune Zaar: This spell, which takes Extra Time twice (once as a Storing Limitation, once as a Release Limitation), inflicts terrible, often deadly, wounds on a target who hears its malicious verse. The caster must direct it at a specific individual; it hurts the ears of anyone else who hears it, but inflicts no significant injury.

RKA 6d6, NND (defense is Hearing Group Flash Defense; +½), Does BODY (+1), Delayed Effect (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (292 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV throughout spell preparation; -1), Extra Time (spell takes 1 Hour to prepare; -3), Extra Time (spell takes an Extra Phase to cast; -¾), Incantations (-¼), Limited Power (target has to be able to hear caster to be affected by the spell; -½). **Total cost: 45 points.**

Hannister’s Spell Of Excellent Transport: With this spell, a wizard can cross a room — or the world — in the blink of an eye.

Teleportation 60m, MegaScale (1m = 1,000 km; +1¾), Delayed Effect (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (210 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV throughout spell preparation; -1), Extra Time (spell takes 1 Hour to prepare; -3), Incantations (-¼). **Total cost: 40 points.**

Seldrignon’s Electric Malefaction: This powerful bolt of lightning can destroy nearly anyone or anything with its blast.

RKA 6d6, Armor Piercing (+¼), Delayed Effect (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (180 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV throughout spell preparation; -1), Extra Time (spell takes 1 Hour to prepare; -3), Incantations (-¼). **Total cost: 34 points.**

Zularn’s Universal Bulwark: This spell creates an ephemeral-looking barrier around the caster — one which, despite its appearances, keeps the caster safe from most forms of attack for one minute.

Barrier 14 PD/14 ED, 14 BODY (up to 4m long, 3m high, and ½m thick), Non-Anchored, Dismissable, Delayed Effect (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (138 Active Points); Concentration (0 DCV throughout spell preparation; -1), Extra Time (spell takes 1 Hour to prepare; -3), Incantations (-¼), Restricted Shape (bubble around caster; -¼). **Total cost: 25 points.**

ENCHANTED ITEMS



BASIC ISSUES

Not all magical powers come directly from cast spells. In many Fantasy Hero campaigns, characters can also create (or find) *enchanted items* — weapons and other objects containing magical powers. Inspired by such well-known magical items from legend and literature as King Arthur’s sword Excalibur (and its scabbard), Elric’s sword Stormbringer, Aladdin’s lamp, Bilbo’s magic ring, and Thor’s hammer Mjöltnir, they can add a lot of color and flavor to a campaign. This section of Chapter Four describes how to create and use enchanted items, and how the GM should incorporate them into the campaign.

An “enchanted item” in the sense used in this section is an object or item with magic powers of its own that any person (or some large class of persons) can use. It’s not the same thing as a Focus for a spell; a copper wand used to cast a Lightning Bolt spell may be a “magical wand,” but it’s not an enchanted item because a character must know the Lightning Bolt spell before he can use the wand. A spell Focus enables the use of powers external to itself; an enchanted item possesses its own powers.

Around his shoulders he slung his famous Live Blade in its dragonhide scabbard and baldric; to his shoulder tabs he affixed a cunningly-designed Weather Cloak with cairngorm brooches; and he took up his Waystaff[.] ... The Archimage affected an elaborate undertoga of mauve gauze, pleated and gathered in many folds, over which he wore an expensive Armor Cloak that was the product of troglodytic enchanters. A quiver strapped to the magister’s back contained slim homotropic javelins of frail glass suffused with the venom of the horned Cerastes serpent[.] The old magister bore with him his mighty Blasting Rod which hummed and thrummed with power. His far-seeing helm of magical crystalloid he wore upon his brows[.]

—Chan and Dr. Pellsipher outfit themselves for a journey to Zatoum in “The Twelve Wizards of Ong,” by Lin Carter

Before the campaign begins, the GM needs to think about several issues pertaining to enchanted items. They’re part of his overall magic system, and their existence and nature may have implications for spellcasting or the nature of the campaign.

EXISTENCE AND COMMONALITY

“Look at my waist and what do you see? Yes, it is no less than a magic dagger, the same that is strutted about the royal court. The nobles are not the only ones with sufficient wealth to own such blades. I have no less than eleven more; an even dozen purchased from Lectonil, the master magician of the Cycloid Guild. He was anxious to sell and gave better terms the more I would take. The profit I will make from resale of the rest will more than pay for the one I wear here.”

—Basil brags about his enchanted dagger in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

First, do enchanted items even exist in the campaign world? While most Fantasy settings feature magical items of some sort, not all of them do. Low Fantasy worlds may not have any enchanted items, and even in some High Fantasy settings there might not be any. For example, some worlds define magic as an innate, personal force casters can’t embed in objects, so there are no enchanted items.

Assuming enchanted items exist, how common are they? In most Fantasy settings in literature, they’re rare and wondrous things — few of them exist, and someone who has one treasures it above all other possessions. But it’s possible, particularly in some High Fantasy worlds, for enchanted items to occur with much greater frequency. Adventurers may encounter them early in their careers and quickly assemble vast personal arsenals of magical weapons, armor, wands, and useful items. In a few games, magical appliances and tools may be everyday objects owned even by common folk.

Then [Brock] commanded the attending Dwarfs to lay before Thor the hammer Miölnir. Thor took the hammer and swung it around his head. As he did so he uttered a great cry. And the eyes of the Dwellers in Asgard lightened up when they saw Thor with the hammer Miölnir in his hands; their eyes lightened up and from their lips came the cry, “This is a wonder, a wonder indeed! With this hammer in his hand none can withstand Thor, our Champion. No greater thing has ever come into Asgard than the hammer Miölnir.”

—Loki loses a bet to Brock about which Dwarfs can craft the most wondrous magical items in *The Children Of Odin*, by Padraic Colum

THE ENCHANTED ITEM ARMS RACE

In a world with common enchanted items, particularly ones available for sale (see below), GMs should remain alert for “arms races” among characters. If one character gets a unique or powerful enchanted item, that gives him an edge over the other PCs (either practically, or psychologically) and may cause game balance problems. So, now the other PCs all want enchanted items of their own. Soon every character is competing to see who has the most, and most powerful, magic items, and the game becomes marred by acquisitiveness and competitiveness — not to mention the characters’ ability to easily overcome any challenge thanks to their magical arsenals.

The arms race may also tend to weaken spellcasters, who can no longer consider magic their exclusive province. If anyone can wield a Wand Of Fireballs, wizards no longer seem special, or especially powerful — they may even become, at best, little more than “technicians” whose role in the game is to create as many enchanted items for their friends as possible.

A clever GM can find several ways to minimize the problems caused by enchanted items. Some possibilities include:

- Don't let PCs make their own items, or impose significant restrictions on the process (extensive time requirements, high cost, permanent sacrifice of Character Points, and the like)
- Don't let PCs obtain items at will (by, for example, purchasing them on a routine basis with money). Control their access by only allowing them to find enchanted items during adventures.
- Keep the abilities of enchanted items relatively small and minor. Instead of sheer power, go for “flavor.” For instance, rather than adding +2d6 damage, perhaps a character's enchanted sword only confers some of the benefits described on pages 209-10, or similar abilities: it cannot break, it can float on water, it levitates if the character lets it go, it can talk. There are lots of ways to make an enchanted item seem special and fun without increasing a character's effective power.
- Give items to the characters strictly on a game balance basis. Evaluate the relative power of the PCs carefully, then provide items that make the weaker characters the equals of their comrades. If you give a character an item that makes him more powerful than the other PCs, don't give him any more enchanted items until they catch up to him.

POWER

Kandive did not know [Laccodel's Rune,] the engraved band Turjan wore on his wrist, a most powerful rune, maintaining a field solvent of all magic. ... Turjan stepped through the [Omnipotent] Sphere. Kandive's great blue eyes bulged.

—Turjan uses a powerful enchanted item in “Turjan of Miir,” by Jack Vance

If magical items exist, how powerful are they? Fantasy literature has a tradition of vastly powerful enchanted items, like the ones mentioned at the beginning of this section. However, that poses no problem when the author controls what the character does with his uber-weapon. In a Fantasy Hero game, a character given a powerful magic item is usually inclined to use it... a lot... and the GM can't necessarily stop him from doing so.

The GM should consider not just the raw power of enchanted items, but their power in comparison to the PCs. If characters can boost their abilities more quickly or easily by obtaining enchanted items than they can by spending Experience Points (representing study, training, and the School of Hard Knocks), then they'll all too often take the quick and easy route. While powers and abilities gained through enchanted items can be more easily lost or stolen than innate abilities, that doesn't make up for the difference unless the GM is willing to take the items away on a frequent basis.

This, too, can create a sort of “arms race” within the game, or enhance one that already exists. Some ways to limit or stop the problem include:

- Don't make enchanted items too powerful. Build Limitations into them, like Charges or Concentration, that make them less attractive to use. In particular, beware of “permanent bonus” items, such like boots that always add Running +10m, or a medallion that always gives a character +3 with Intellect Skills.
- Restrict items' commonality (see above). If enchanted items are rare, they have less of a negative impact on the overall campaign. At the very least, you should make items that cannot be duplicated through ordinary Experience Point expenditure much rarer than items that only enhance characters' natural abilities — at least that way, a character who doesn't have an enchanted item can buy the same ability for himself if he works hard enough.
- Require characters to spend Character Points for enchanted items, even ones they find. This helps to maintain game balance *vis-a-vis* characters who spend Character Points to increase their abilities naturally.



ACQUIRING ENCHANTED ITEMS

If enchanted items exist at all in the campaign, PCs will want them. In most games, they can acquire them in one or more of three ways. First, they can make them; see *Creating Enchanted Items*, below, for more information. Alternately, they can find them, or buy them.

FIND THEM

Perhaps the most common way for PCs to acquire enchanted items is to find them. While they may sometimes just happen to stumble across them (as Aladdin with his lamp, or Bilbo with the One Ring), usually they find them in the treasure-hoards of dragons and other monsters they kill. In the case of intelligent monsters, who may use enchanted items against the PCs, the characters may have to take their magical guerdon right off the enemy's corpse.

In standard *HERO System* terms, a character in a Heroic campaign who finds an enchanted item may keep it and use it for free, just as he could with a mundane item he found. He doesn't have to pay Character Points to keep or use it. This not only mimics the way Fantasy literature and movies tend to handle such matters, but it makes common sense to most gamers. It also lets the GM inject intriguing, flavorful items into the campaign without worrying about whether the PCs have the points to buy them.

However, this approach may cause game balance problems, or initiate the "arms races" described above. Giving characters something for free often causes trouble in a gaming campaign, so some GMs may be leery of the "keep the magical artifact for free" approach. They may instead prefer that the character spend Character Points to keep the item (as in Superheroic games), even if they artificially reduce the cost to keep characters

from having to use all their Experience Points to pay for the treasure they won. In this sort of system, if a character can't afford an item right away, the GM can let him use it "on credit" until he has enough Experience Points to pay for it, or he can rule that the character doesn't understand how to use the item yet and has to practice with it (i.e., earn the Experience Points to buy it).

BUY THEM

In some High Fantasy campaigns, characters buy and sell magic items for gold. In a game where everyone uses magic on an everyday basis, this is no different than buying a new frying pan or adze. But in more typical High Fantasy games, where the average person can't use magic, commerce in magic items normally confines itself to a limited group of powerful and wealthy people: spell-casters, adventurers, nobles, and the like.

The GM must decide whether the game world features the buying and selling of enchanted items. On the one hand, the practice strikes some gamers as contrary to the Fantasy feel and the precepts of the genre. While some literary precedent exists (as demonstrated by some of the quotes above), most Fantasy gamers can't imagine King Arthur selling Excalibur, or Turjan of Miir his Laccodel's Rune — no matter how much money the potential buyer offered. After all, enchanted items should be special, wondrous, even unique, not the stuff of common commerce.

On the other hand, human nature being what it is, it stands to reason that anything of value can become a commodity, with prices determined by the back-and-forth of the marketplace. In the real world, people buy and sell unique items (original paintings by Van Gogh, the Hope Diamond) and highly dangerous ones (ballistic missiles, dynamite), so it's possible that the owner of a unique, powerful enchanted item would sell it... if the price is right, or he has a pressing need for money.

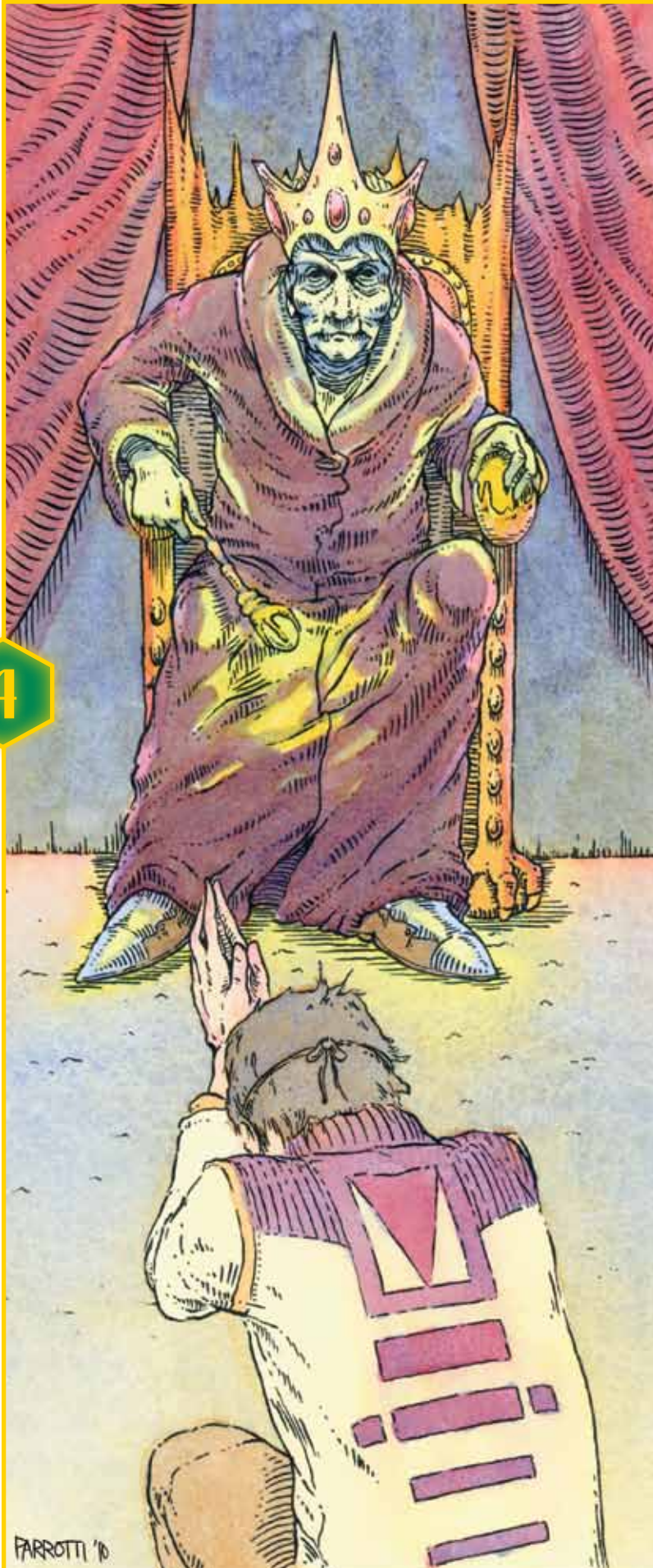
[S]uddenly his hand met what felt like a tiny ring of cold metal lying on the floor of the tunnel. It was a turning point in his career, but he did not know it.

—Bilbo finds the One Ring in *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Already, earlycomers were bustling about, examining the books and pentacles, scrolls, crumbling stone tablets, periapts and amulets and talismanic rings set forth for sale. Abandoning his pose, Tirion descended the slope. He had come to purchase, not to sell, and he desired a first chance at the various bargains of his anticipation.

—Tirion the Glad Magician goes to the wizards' fair to buy enchanted items and mystic appurtenances in "The Seal Of Zaon Sathla," by Lin Carter





Of course, not all transactions involving enchanted items necessarily revolve around buying and selling. Trade and barter are also possible — and in many settings, probably more likely and “realistic.” Wizards might not want to exchange the fruits of their arcane labors for mere gold, but they would trade with other wizards (“I’ll give you a Cap of Invisibility and this Wand of Opening for your copy of the *Analects Of Vash-tori*”). This could actually add some color (and adventure possibilities) to the campaign.

Considerations of genre and “realism” aside, the issue of whether to allow the sale of enchanted items often comes down as much to game balance as anything else. If characters can buy enchanted items, the only thing that will stop them from doing so is lack of funds or lack of item availability. Once the GM declares the marketplace open, they’ll take full advantage of that fact, so he should prepare for its impact on the campaign. If the GM wants enchanted items to become that commonplace, it won’t be a problem; otherwise, he needs to establish some roadblocks in advance.

PRICES FOR ENCHANTED ITEMS

Assuming the GM wants to allow characters to buy and sell enchanted items, he has to devise a reasonable method for establishing prices. If people rarely put enchanted items up for sale, then it’s probably a seller’s market — the seller asks whatever he thinks he can get for the item, with the price increasing as demand increases. Rather than establishing a system for such campaigns, the GM can treat sales on a case-by-case basis.

In games with regular enchanted item sales, or even established “magic item stores,” the GM needs a more logical system, since market forces affect sales. The simplest method is to base the price on the Active Points in the item: 1,000 times the average daily wage times Active Points, for example (or maybe 100 times, or 100,000 times — whatever best suits the campaign).

An Active Point pricing system has one flaw: it doesn’t account for Limitations or other problems with an enchanted item that would tend to lower the price. A Blast 8d6 wand with just the *OAF* Limitation costs the same as one that has -3 worth of Limitations... or even one with no Limitations at all! A possible solution is to factor the Real Point cost into the mix: instead of using the straight Active Points, use Active Points + Real Points, or half the Active Points plus two times the Real Points, or some similar system that seems balanced and fair for the campaign.

Alternately, the GM can establish a base pricing structure by item type: all enchanted weapons cost X, all magic armor costs Y, all wands cost Z, and so forth. Then he varies the base price up or down based on his judgment of the power and value of an item. This requires a lot of work on the GM’s part, but it “personalizes” item prices and keeps players from determining the value of enchanted items with ease.

CREATING ENCHANTED ITEMS

“It is the sword Randir, which I am forging for the Grand Bastard. When the spells that go into its tempering are complete, it will cut through ordinary armor like cheese.

“The trick, I may say, is to apply the spells during the tempering stage. Some apply them earlier, during the initial heating and forging. Most such spells, however, are wasted because the heating and pounding nullify them.”

—Rhithos the Smith explains to Jorian how he forges enchanted swords in *The Goblin Tower*, by L. Sprague de Camp

The following rules, guidelines, and considerations apply to the creation of enchanted items.

WHO CAN CREATE ENCHANTED ITEMS?

The magic system for the campaign must define who can create enchanted items. Some of the possibilities include:

Any Spellcaster: The default for most Fantasy Hero campaigns is that anyone who can cast spells can create enchanted items. In this sort of system, a character can usually only create magic items involving spells he knows (*i.e.*, has paid Character Points for or otherwise “learned” according to the rules of the magic system). For example, if the character knows the *Fireball* spell, he could create a Wand Of Fireballs; if he doesn’t know the *Spell Of Invisibility*, he cannot create a cloak that makes the wearer invisible.

Only Some Spellcasters: Some GMs regulate the creation of enchanted items by requiring characters to pay Character Points for the ability to make them. For example, a character might have to buy an Intellect Skill called *Itemsmithing*, or pay for a Perk that gives him the right to create enchanted items.

Only One Type Of Spellcaster: Some settings feature a specific class or type of spellcaster who can create enchanted items, and deny that power to all other types of casters as a campaign ground rule. Examples include alchemists or enchanters.

Only NPCs: To keep PCs spellcaster from loading all their comrades up with powerful enchanted items, some GMs restrict the creation of magical objects to NPCs. Typically this involves a “one type of spellcaster” system with restrictions on item creation so severe that they make it impossible for a character to both create items and become involved in adventures.

ITEM CREATION REQUIREMENTS

Most magic systems impose some restrictions — often severe ones — on the creation of enchanted items. These serve two purposes. First, they suit the flavor and feel of the genre and the setting; few Fantasy stories feature assembly lines of wizards cranking out enchanted items as if they were toasters. The creation of an enchanted item should be a precise, exacting process, not something amenable to mass production.

Second, they help to preserve game balance. To keep spellcasting PCs (and NPCs) from filling the world with talismans and magic swords, the setting rules require them to take unusual steps or devote extensive resources to the creation process.

CHARACTER POINT COST

One common requirement for magic items is that characters have to pay Character Points for them. To prevent characters from creating a lot of them, some GMs rule that the Real Point cost of the item must be paid *permanently* by the item’s creator (or perhaps the person the item’s created for; see below). In other words, if the item’s given away, lost, or destroyed, the character doesn’t get the Character Points he spent on it back — they’re gone permanently. This isn’t a Limitation; it’s a definitional aspect of the campaign.

Example: *Kasdrevan wants to make a Staff Of Many Defenses because he’s tired of getting injured by wayward orc arrows during battles. He builds the Staff as a Multipower of Defense Powers, with the Limitation OAF. The final Real Point cost of the Staff is 13 Character Points. Unfortunately, after he’s used it for only a few months, a thief steals it from him. Kasdrevan has now lost those 13 Character Points permanently. The only way to recover them would be to regain possession of the Staff — and even then, they remain locked in the Staff.*

WHOSE POINTS?

In most magic systems, the spellcaster who makes an enchanted item is the only person who can pay the Character Points necessary to create it. No one else can “donate” Experience Points to pay for the item; if they could, it would become much harder to keep wizards and priests from inundating the campaign with enchanted items.

However, sometimes a GM regards this rule as either unfair, or at odds with the other premises of his magic system. As long as one of the PCs pays Experience Points for the item, the GM doesn’t care who it is. That way, spellcasters can feel free to help out their friends without worrying about giving away all their own hard-earned Experience Points.



POINTS FROM RAW MATERIALS

In some magic systems, the GM allows a spellcaster to obtain at least some of the Character Point cost of an enchanted item from the raw materials the character uses to make the item. Innately magical substances — dragon parts, faerie mushrooms, blood from some monsters — provide Character Points that reduce an item's Real Point cost on a one-for-one basis.

Mildly magical substances, such as mandrake root, teeth or other parts from some fantastic beasts (manticores, griffins), metal mined from beneath a battlefield, meteoric iron, or faerie mushrooms typically provide 1-3 “Character Points” for creating enchanted items.

Strongly magical substances, such as dragon parts (teeth, talons, blood, scales, eyes, tail) or vampire dust, typically provide 3-6 “Character Points” for creating enchanted items.

Intensely magical substances, like demon ichor or the blood of a god, typically provide 6-9 “Character Points” for creating enchanted items.

The GM may change the point value provided by any item or substance to suit his campaign.

Of course, for a character to gain any benefit from using magical substances, those substances must be appropriate for the item in question. Meteoric iron could add its points to the creation of a magical sword, but not an enchanted cape. The GM determines whether a particular substance can add its points to a particular item.

INTELLIGENT AND SELF-WILLED ENCHANTED ITEMS

Some Fantasy settings feature magical items that have intelligence, are self-willed, and perhaps can even move themselves. In *HERO System* terms, you can build such items in several ways.

First, if you just want the item to have intelligence, buy a Computer as part of it; this represents its “magically-endowed intellect,” not an actual computer built into it, of course. If it's an “AI Computer,” it may have Psychological Complications that put it at odds with its wielder. However, since Computers have no Senses, a sentient enchanted item can't perceive anything unless its creator builds some Senses into it (see 6E1 209, 6E2 183).

If the enchanted item can move itself or otherwise act on its own, build it as an Automaton with appropriate abilities. If it's a weapon, it should have an Always On Damage Shield that does the appropriate amount of damage. When the character attacks with the “weapon,” he touches the target with it and the Damage Shield inflicts its damage.

The GM should think of intelligent magical items as an excellent opportunity for roleplaying. They may annoy (or even argue with) their owner, have their own agendas, enjoy making horrible puns, or the like. Of course, their abilities may also save their wielder's life or form the basis of a scenario, too.

REQUIRED LIMITATIONS

Unless the GM rules otherwise, all enchanted items must have at least one Limitation: *Focus*. Items are, after all, objects, and thus characters can lose them in various ways. (Items that automatically return to the wearer if taken, such as Dhrun's sword in Jack Vance's novel *Lyonese*, are an exception to this requirement.) An enchanted item Focus can be Breakable or Unbreakable, Personal or Universal, Accessible or Inaccessible, as appropriate. One common way of making an enchanted item a Personal Focus is to use a command word (see below).

BASE ITEM COST

If a character creates a magic item which is an enhanced, improved, or otherwise altered version of a mundane item which has a calculated Character Point cost (such as a weapon or a suit of armor), then the character must pay the cost of *both* the mundane item *and* the enchantment, even if he ordinarily could buy the mundane item with money alone. The character can't just pay for the “magical addition”; he has to pay for the whole thing.

Example: *Kasdrevan decides to make himself a magic longsword. He can buy an ordinary longsword for a few gold pieces, but since he wants an enchanted one, he's going to have to pay for it with Character Points.*

After consulting the Fantasy Hero Hand-To-Hand Weapons Table, Kasdrevan discovers that an ordinary longsword is built this way:

HKA 1d6+1, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (30 Active Points); OAF (-1), Real Weapon (-¼), STR Minimum (12; -½). **Total cost: 11 points.**

Now he recalculates that cost to make the sword he wants:

HKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (52 Active Points); OAF (-1), STR Minimum (12; -½). **Total cost: 21 points.**

Therefore, to buy this enchanted sword, Kasdrevan must spend 21 Character Points — a steep price!

CREATING THE BASE ITEM

The GM must decide whether a spellcaster has to create a magic item from scratch, or can have other craftsmen assist in the process. In some settings, a wizard who wants to make an enchanted item has to make that item himself from raw materials. If he wants an enchanted blade, he has to take raw iron or steel and forge it into a blade as part of the enchantment process. This restricts characters' ability to make enchanted items by forcing them to buy lots of related Professional Skills.

In most magic systems, a character who wants to enchant an item can start with an item made by someone else. Typically this has to be a “fine” or “masterwork” item, often costing many times what an ordinary version of the same item would cost.



OTHER ITEM CREATION ISSUES

Some other issues you may want to consider include:

POWER SOURCES

Enchanted items require arcane power to work. Typically this power comes from one of three sources.

First, the creator can infuse a perpetual source of power into the item itself. In *HERO System* terms, this means applying the Advantage *Reduced Endurance* (0 END), or buying an Endurance Reserve as part of the item.

Second, the item may use the wielder's own energy or life-force as a source of power. In *HERO System* terms, this means the character has to use his own END to operate the item. Some powerful, evil, or cursed items may also require the expenditure of STUN and/or BODY (a Limitation).

CHARGES FOR ENCHANTED ITEMS

Third, the item can have a limited source of power that only allows it to work for a certain number of uses, or a certain period of time, until it can build its power back up to usable levels. In *HERO System* terms, you can build this as Charges (sometimes Continuing Charges). Recharging the item involves waiting a day, or satisfying any other conditions imposed by the Limitation (see 6E1 372).

Some Charged items have a finite source of power — once the wielder uses all the Charges, the item becomes useless. To create an item like this, apply the *Never Recover* (-2) modifier to Charges. To “recharge” such an item, the character must pay the Character Points to buy it again.

RESTRICTED USAGE ITEMS

Some enchanted items only work for certain types of persons: only spellcasters, only wizards, only elves, only Beast Cultists, only warriors. This makes the item a *restricted Universal Focus*, as discussed on page 164.

Another way to restrict items is to use the *Requires A Roll* Limitation. If an item requires a Magic roll to use, then only spellcasters can use it, typically.

THE CREATION PROCESS

Some magic systems establish rules or requirements for the creation process itself. These aren't Limitations and don't reduce an item's cost; they're just part of the campaign ground rules for item creation.

First, sometimes the creation process itself involves an extensive amount of time. Few (if any) wizards can simply sit down for a few minutes and turn an ordinary item into a magical one. Instead, they must engage in complex rituals lasting for hours or days — and the more powerful the item, the longer and more exacting the process.

As an optional guideline, items of major power (including most weapons, armor, wands and staffs, and the like) take one day per 10 Active Points to create. Minor items take at least one hour per 10 Active Points to create, possibly more.

Second, the creation process is often detailed and taxing. The character has to focus all of his attention on what he's doing; he can't create a magical item while he also performs other tasks or reads a book. In some cases, he may not even be able to stop for sleep or meals! The GM may, at his option, treat this as equivalent to Concentration, and/or a Drain END with a long recovery

Placing copper rings on each of his fingers, he grasped a small incense coffer with his left hand and immersed it in the flame of his candle with his right. The perfume began to well upwards into the small confines of the room[...] Alodar stood immobile as the smell penetrated his nostrils and filled his lungs. Concentrating not to cough, he counted heartbeats to one hundred thirty-seven and then struck a small triangle hung from a tiny frame with the copper ring on his index finger. The chime sounded shrilly and, rather than dying away, rang in resonance with the structure of the ritual as it began to take shape.

—after months of study, Alodar commences a ritual to create an enchanted sphere in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

period (another good way to stop spellcasters from creating lots of enchanted items). The GM might also use the Long-Term Endurance rules to simulate the fatiguing effects.

Third, spellcasters need materials and a proper workspace to create enchanted items. Typically this means a well-stocked wizard's laboratory with all the glassware, furnaces, raw materials, candles, and tools associated with a particular item's creation. The GM determines what supplies creating an enchanted item requires, and how much they cost; in most cases, the price relates to the item's power (such as 10 gold pieces per Active Point, or the like).

ALTERNATE ENCHANTED ITEM CREATION RULES

Gamemasters who want to define magical item creation more precisely, or who would rather have characters pay for a "create item" spell than the item itself, can use these optional rules instead. They're similar to the *Differing Modifiers* rules on 6E1 359.

To determine the cost of the spell needed to create a particular item, the character builds the enchanted item using the *HERO System* rules and determines its Real Point cost. He then uses that Real Point cost as the Base Cost for the item creation spell; it is considered an Instant Power, has No Range, and costs END to use.

To the Base Cost, the spellcaster applies any Advantages or Limitations he deems appropriate. These Modifiers do *not* apply to the item itself, or the item's use; they only apply to the creation process.

The base time for creating any magic item is one day per 10 Active Points. To increase that time increment, apply the *Extra Time* Limitation with a value of $-\frac{1}{2}$ for each step below 1 Day on the table. Thus, making the time 1 Week per 10 Active Points is a $-\frac{1}{2}$ Limitation; making it 1 Month per 10 Active Points is a -1 Limitation, and so forth. Reducing the required time increment is a $+\frac{1}{4}$ Advantage per step up the Extra Time Table — for example, it costs $+\frac{1}{2}$ to reduce the creation time to 1 Hour per 10 Active Points.

The END cost for item creation is a little different from normal. The character only pays the END once, when the creation process concludes. However, the END cost is *Long-Term END*, not regular END, and the character only regains his REC worth of it back per Day. This simulates the long and tiring nature of item creation. At the GM's option, characters can pay for a $+\frac{1}{4}$ Advantage, *Regular Endurance Cost*, that makes an item creation spell cost ordinary END instead of LTE.

To represent a tiring or intensive creation process, apply Limitations like *Concentration*, *Increased Endurance Cost*, *Requires A Magic Roll*, and *Side Effects*. To make an item creation process simple and easy, use Reduced Endurance and don't have a Skill Roll.

If the creation process requires a laboratory, materials other than the item to be enchanted, and the like, apply the *Focus* Limitation.

Example: *Kasdrevan casts his Spell Of Transdimensional Mental Domination to make the GM use the alternate enchanted item creation rules for his magic sword (see above). The sword Kasdrevan wants to create costs 21 Real Points, so that becomes the Base Cost of his Forge Enchanted Sword spell.*

Kasdrevan thinks creating his magical sword should be a difficult, time-consuming process requiring lots of paraphernalia. He applies the following Limitations: OAF Expendable (item creation supplies, Difficult to obtain; $-1\frac{1}{4}$), Concentration ($\frac{1}{2}$ DCV throughout; $-\frac{1}{2}$), Increased Endurance Cost ($\times 5$ END; -2), Requires A Magic Roll ($-\frac{1}{2}$), Side Effects (Drain END 3d6, Delayed Return Rate [points return at the rate of 5 per Day]; -1). Thus, the total cost of the Forge Enchanted Sword spell is $(21/6.25 =) 3$ Character Points. Casting it costs him 25 points of Long-Term END; it will take him a few days to regain his wind after such a grueling job!

With this rule, a character can create an enchanted item possessing spells or powers he does not himself know. He could, for example, have a *Create Wand Of Fireballs* spell even though he doesn't have the *Fireball* spell itself. The GM may alter this rule to prevent game abuse if necessary.

USING ENCHANTED ITEMS

And lifting the Wand he demolished Tirion the Glad Magician with a blast of magic flame.

—Amphoth Mumivor uses a Blasting Wand to slay Tirion for trying to steal from him in "The Seal Of Zaon Sathla," by Lin Carter

Several rules, guidelines, and suggestions apply to how characters use enchanted items during the game.

RECOGNIZING MAGIC ITEMS

Enchanted items may or may not resemble ordinary items of their type. Some clearly have magical properties — they glow brightly, they move under their own power, they're made of substances only spellcasters can work with. Some reveal themselves when handled or used. Others don't necessarily offer any overt indication of what they are; a character might carry one around for years without realizing what it can do (or perhaps is doing).

In most cases, an enchanted item registers as magical when examined with *Detect Magic* or some similar Enhanced Sense. See page 149 for more information on what Detect Magic can perceive.

POTENTIAL USERS

In Fantasy Hero, as a default rule any character can use any enchanted item, provided he has the ability to do so. For example, a set of magical lockpicks might be useless to someone who didn't already have Lockpicking, and a weak character lacks the STR to pick up and effectively wield a giant's magical club. However, some items only function for particular types of characters; see *Restricted Usage Items*, above.

ITEMS OF VARYING SIZE

Many enchanted items are objects characters wear: armor, gloves, capes, robes, and so on. If so, the GM must decide whether those items remain the size they were originally made, or the magic in them shrinks or enlarges them to fit any wearer. The former approach, while more realistic, may restrict characters from using many of the items they find (a human can't wear dwarf-sized plate armor, for example); the latter approach is simpler, but doesn't fit the "feel" of many worlds.

The GM may also allow weapons to change size to fit the user's hand. That way the sprite rogue in the campaign can use a magic rapier the group finds.

COMMAND WORDS

Many enchanted items have a *command word* — a distinctive word required to trigger the item. In game terms, a command word makes an enchanted item a type of restricted Universal Focus. A command word item works for anyone who possesses the item and utters the command word when he activates the item. See page 164 for more information.

If an item's user actually has to speak the command word in a loud, clear voice, the item should take the *Incantations* Limitation as well. If he only has to whisper it, or can just think it, he gets no Limitation value for it.

In most Fantasy Hero settings, no spell or ability, short of reality-altering spells (like *Grant Wish*, page 304) or divine powers, can detect an enchanted item's command word. Some items have the command word written on them (perhaps in code), and it's possible to force someone who knows a command word to reveal it, but even Detect Magic with Analyze won't uncover an item's command word.

ATTUNEMENT

Related to command words, but not as severe, is a requirement for *attunement*. Some enchanted items only work for people whom they're "attuned" to. Attuning an item typically involves keeping it on one's person for a certain amount of time (usually at least a day, and often longer), but may require arcane ceremonies or the like. An item can be attuned to only one person at a time, and is a Personal Focus for that character.

DIVIDING MAGICAL SPOILS

In some Fantasy gaming groups, deciding how to divide up magical treasure among the characters is one of the most prominent bones of contention. Tempers flare and feelings get hurt as everyone competes to get a powerful item for his character.

To avoid these problems, the group should agree on a fair and equitable method of dividing magical treasure (and perhaps other types as well) before the campaign begins. Some possible methods include:

- The group votes for each item, with the character who receives the majority of votes getting the item. In the event of a tie, a random die roll resolves the situation.
- In campaigns where enchanted items are bought and sold, use the monetary value of the item and include it with the monetary treasure. A character who wants an item has to agree to count its monetary value as part of his share of the overall treasure.
- Characters keep track of the Active Point values of the enchanted items they have. The character with the lowest total points' worth of items has first call on the next item found, though he may agree to let a more deserving character have it, or to trade it with another character. (You could also use this method with the number of items each character has, the items' Real Point costs, or the like.)

Against the brightness, he could just barely see the black robes dancing to and fro among the benches to dodge and launch their magical blows. In one corner he saw [a magician wearing gloves of thunder] clap [his hands] together and a yellow bolt arch[ed] out to shatter soundlessly against some invisible barrier in the way. ... Elsewhere the black forms grappled arm to arm, ladders of energy streaking outward from the ring of one to strike the gemstone of another, filling the air with a sharp pungency from the discharge.

—the factions of the Cycloid Guild begin battling one another with their most powerful enchanted items in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

With a little shiver, the girl recalled the weird manner with which Kellory had made the fire. He had simply laid his left hand on the pile of wood — the left hand, which wore a small iron ring on the middle finger, a ring engraved with a glyph in no language she had ever seen — and he had spoken a Word. And fire blazed up!

—Kellory invokes the power of his magic ring in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

TYPES OF MAGIC ITEMS

The rest of this section reviews the major types of enchanted items, with notes on how to create them and several examples of each item. Don't forget that when building armor, weapons, and other items with Character Point costs, you must pay for the *entire* item, not just the magic applied to it.

ARMOR AND SHIELDS

As noted on page 216, armor is typically built with the Power *Resistant Protection* and the Limitations *OIF*, *Real Armor*, and *Mass*. You can build enchanted armors the same way, though they often lack *Real Armor* and *Mass*, since part of their enchantment is to make them easier to maintain and more comfortable to wear than normal armor. Common armor enchantments include more PD/ED, adding Advantages like *Hardened* or *Impenetrable*, adding extra PD/ED (or *Damage Negation* or *Damage Reduction*) that only applies against certain types of attacks, and powers that enhance the wearer's abilities (extra STR or *Running*, for example).

Page 226 has information on how to build shields in *HERO System* terms. Common shield enchantments include heightened DCV bonus (either in general, or against specific types of attacks) and attack spells that project from the shield (or affect anyone who gets to close to it).

Armor Of Steadfast Protection: This suit of chain-mail provides more protection than mundane mails — but is no more heavy or uncomfortable than normal clothing.

Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED), *Hardened* (+¼) (30 Active Points); *OIF* (-½). **Total cost: 20 points.**

Armor Of Healing: This suit of plate and chain comes with an unusual enchantment — once per day, it can heal wounds that the character has suffered in spite of wearing it! The wearer can activate the healing-spell at will.

Resistant Protection (7 PD/7 ED) (21 Active Points); *OIF* (-½), *Mass* (Half Mass; -½), (total cost: 10 points) **plus** Simplified Healing 4d6, *Trigger* (mental command, activating *Trigger* takes no time, *Trigger* immediately automatically resets; +1) (80 Active Points); *OIF* (-½), *Self Only* (-½), 1 *Charge* (-2) (total cost: 20 points). **Total cost: 30 points.**

Armor Of The Lion's Strength: With pauldrons and a helm all in the shape of lions' heads, this armor advertises the power it provides — the strength and courage of the legendary lion — for all to see.

Resistant Protection (7 PD/7 ED) (21 Active Points); *OIF* (-½), *Mass* (Half Mass; -½) (total cost: 10 points) **plus** +10 STR (10 Active Points); *OIF* (-½) (total cost: 7 points) **plus** +5 PRE (5 Active Points); *OIF* (-½) (total cost: 3 points). **Total cost: 20 points.**

"Know you not that my armor is unbreachable?"

"No," said Dilvish. ... [He] cut for the neck[,] hoping to burst the joint. It held,

however, and the metal bore not even a scratch to tell of the mighty blow that might have beheaded another.

"You must see now that my armor cannot be breached. It was forged by the Salamanders themselves and bathed in the blood of ten virgins..."

—Dilvish faces Lance of the Invincible Armor in *Dilvish, The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

Batwing Shield: The sinister batwing shape and ominous aura of this medium metal shield make it clear that it was crafted for an Evil hand — perhaps a demon warrior, or the paladin of some dark and wicked god. In addition to its protective powers, twice per day it can create a field of darkness around its wielder which only blinds the wielder's enemies; the field moves with the wielder if he moves.

Cost Power

- 18 **Batwing Shield:** Multipower, 37-point reserve; all OAF (-1)
- 1f **1) Defense:** +2 DCV; OAF (-1), *Mass* (Half Mass; -½), STR Minimum (10; -½)
- 1f **2) Shield Bash:** HA +2d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼), STR Minimum (10; -½), Side Effects (OCV penalty equal to DCV bonus, always occurs; -½)
- 1f **3) Dark Heart:** Darkness to Sight Group 6m radius, Personal Immunity (+¼); OAF (-1), No Range (-½), 2 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Turn each (-1)

Total cost: 21 points.

Sun God's Aegis: This large metal shield, forged by the priests of the sun god and engraved with the god's likeness and sacred symbols, can emit a bright pulse of light to blind its wielder's enemies. However, this power draws upon the wielder's own strength and may tire him out if used too often.

Cost Power

- 20 **Sun God's Aegis:** Multipower, 40-point reserve; all OAF (-1)
- 1f **1) Defense:** +3 DCV; OAF (-1), *Mass* (Half Mass; -½), STR Minimum (15; -¾)
- 1f **2) Shield Bash:** HA +3d6; OAF (-1), HA (-½), STR Minimum (15; -¾), Side Effects (OCV penalty equal to DCV bonus, always occurs; -½)
- 1f **3) Sun God's Hand:** Sight Group Flash 8d6; OAF (-1), No Range (-½)

Total cost: 23 points.

POTIONS

Potions (and related items such as enchanted elixirs, unguents, and salves) are among the most common enchanted items in many Fantasy Hero campaigns. They're the stock-in-trade of alchemists, and in some High Fantasy campaigns may even take the place of traditional medicine.

A potion, in Fantasy Hero parlance, is a liquid that, when drunk, provides certain powers or abilities to the person drinking it. They are OAFs, and *Fragile* to boot (because they're easily spilled, diluted, or otherwise ruined). They are *Universal Foci*, meaning any character can use a potion simply by drinking it. (In some campaigns, where characters create lots of potions and pass them around an adventuring group frequently, the GM may require the creator to apply the *Usable By Other Advantage* instead of relying on the *Universality of the Focus*.)



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A potion has a number of doses, defined as Charges. In the case of effects meant to linger for a long time (as with a potion that boosts the drinker's STR), the Charges should be Continuing. The creator may use Time Limit instead in appropriate circumstances.

Creating a potion involves a long, complex procedure requiring an alchemical laboratory and supplies, appropriate ingredients, and the like. To represent these difficulties — which don't affect the use of the potion at all, just its preparation — potions are built with Delayed Effect and various Storing Limitations (Concentration, Extra Time, Requires An Alchemy Roll, and the like; the GM should allow Requires A Roll as a Storing Limitation even though that's not normally possible with Delayed Effect). A character who brews potions (and like items) may have no more than INT/5 of his own potions available for use at any time ("available for use" includes giving them to another person friendly to him, but not selling them to a stranger). A character may have ready for use as many found or purchased potions as he likes. Characters who rely on potion-brewing for their powers and/or income (*i.e.*, alchemists) often pay extra for Delayed Effect so they can have more potions "active" at once.

Drinking a potion typically requires a Half Phase Action (or longer, if it's built with Powers that inherently require more time). If you want it to take longer than a Half Phase, you can apply

the *Extra Time* Limitation (in addition to, and separate from, any Extra Time for the brewing). Typically a character who drinks a potion experiences (or suffers!) the effects immediately (*i.e.*, in the same Phase), though he can't take any Actions with his potion-granted powers if consuming the potion used up the rest of his Phase. If a potion's effects don't manifest for a short period of time, the potion can take an *Extra Time* Limitation (in addition to, and separate from, any Extra Time for the brewing and the drinking).

In some Fantasy Hero settings, standard potions have distinctive, unique colors, allowing a character with an appropriate Skill (KS: Potions or PS: Alchemist) to identify them on sight. At the GM's option, a character can also taste a few drops of a potion without experiencing its effects in an attempt to get some idea of what the potion can do. For example, healing potions typically have a very pleasant taste, while a potion that grants protection from cold weather probably has a fiery, burning taste.

Many potions have Side Effects as a $-\frac{1}{2}$ Storing Limitation and defined as "GM's discretion." If the brewer fails his Alchemy roll (a different form of Power Skill than the usual Magic), something bad happens. Possible results include a laboratory explosion, brewing a "potion" that's poisonous, brewing a potion with an unintended effect, the imbiber's skin turning funny colors for 1d6 days, and the like.

"By the signatures," Saxton exclaimed. "Chance is with us today. No explosion to test you with. Instead, more than two whole gills of the finest nerve elixir north of the isthmus."

—Saxton the alchemist succeeds with one of his formulae in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

OPTIONAL POTION DESIGN

Another way to design potions is to think of them as the special effect for spells. Buy them as Usable By Other powers with OAF Fragile Expendable and Charges; each dose drunk consumes one Charge and expends part of the Focus. When all Charges are gone, the available supply of Expendable Foci has been exhausted and the character must obtain more before he can “cast” the “spell” again. This is a *Recovers Under Limited Circumstances* modifier for Charges that increases the Limitation's value by ½, since brewing more potion requires equipment, supplies, and time.

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He got up, put on a pair of gloves, and walked over to the tray that contained the rings.

“They only work,” he said, “if they’re actually touching your skin.

... The moment you touch a yellow ring, you vanish out of this world. When you are in the Other Place I expect... that the moment you touch a green ring you vanish out of that world and — I expect — reappear in this.”

—Uncle Andrew explains to Digory how the magic rings he’s created work in *The Magician’s Nephew*, by C.S. Lewis

If a character consumes one potion while another is still in effect (or consumes two at the same time), typically both function normally (assuming their effects aren’t opposites or otherwise contradictory). However, at the GM’s option, strange things can happen when potions mingle inside a living body. The character may gain strange new powers for a time, become violently ill, die from poisoning, or the like.

Common powers for potions include: healing; heightened senses; heightened movement (faster running, ability to crawl up walls); augmented physical abilities (STR, DEX); immunity to various forms of damage (heat, cold, acid...); the ability to breathe underwater; size changing; and enhanced mental or communications abilities. In other words, most potions grant abilities that alter or enhance the drinker’s body in some way.

POTION-LIKE ITEMS

Characters who brew potions and elixirs sometimes create other items. Examples include unguents and salves (to rub onto someone’s body to grant powers, or onto an object to enhance it), dusts (to throw or blow at an enemy), and magical paints and inks. For the most part, these work the same as potions in game terms, can be bought the same way, and count against the creator’s INT/5 “potion allowance.”

Elixir Of Giant Strength: A character who consumes this potion becomes immensely strong for the next five minutes.

+30 STR, Delayed Effect (+¼) (37 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Concentration (0 DCV throughout brewing; -1), Extra Time (6 Hours to brew; -3½), Requires An Alchemy Roll (to brew; -½), 4 Continuing Charges lasting 5 Minutes each (-0). **Total cost: 5 points.**

Healing Potion: A Fantasy gaming staple, this potion heals an injured character’s wounds so he can keep on fighting.

Simplified Healing 4d6, Delayed Effect (+¼) (50 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Concentration (0 DCV throughout brewing; -1), Extra Time (6 Hours to brew; -3½), Requires An Alchemy Roll (to brew; -½), 4 Charges (-1). **Total cost: 6 points.**

Potion Of Underwater Comfort: Quaffing this potion grants a character the ability to breathe underwater for a period of six hours.

Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater), Delayed Effect (+¼) (6 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Concentration (0 DCV throughout brewing; -1), Extra Time (6 Hours to brew; -3½), Requires An Alchemy Roll (to brew; -½), 4 Continuing Charges lasting 6 Hours each (-0). **Total cost: 1 point.**

Stonyskin Salve: When rubbed into a character’s skin (which takes 1 Minute), this salve makes the skin stony hard, allowing him to resist damage easily.

Resistant Protection (5 PD/5 ED), Delayed Effect (+½) (19 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Concentration (0 DCV throughout brewing; -1), Extra Time (6 Hours to brew; -3½), Extra Time (1 Minute to apply to character; -1½), Requires An Alchemy Roll (to brew; -½), 4 Continuing Charges lasting 5 Minutes each (-0). **Total cost: 2 points.**

RINGS

Magic rings are finger-rings containing various enchantments that aid the wearer, or which he can access. They are OIFs (occasionally IIFs), but have no other standard Limitations. Common magical powers for rings include: invisibility; defenses of various sorts; levitation; and short-range attack spells.

In most Fantasy Hero settings, the GM establishes as a campaign ground rule that a character can only wear one magical ring per hand at a time; if he wears two or more, only the one most recently put on functions. In other games, characters can wear as many enchanted rings as they have room on their fingers.

Ring Of Invisibility: A Fantasy favorite, this ring allows a character to move and fight unseen (it’s an *Inobvious* Focus since the Invisibility it provides covers it as well). Some versions even make the wearer move silently as well.

Invisibility to Sight Group, No Fringe, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (45 Active Points); IIF (-¼). **Total cost: 36 points.**

Silent Variant: Invisibility to Sight and Hearing Groups, No Fringe, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (52 Active Points); IIF (-¼). **Total cost: 42 points.**

Ring Of Levitation: Need to reach something on the top shelf? This ring helps you do just that by letting you levitate upward and then return to the ground. It only works a six times per day, for no more than a minute, so use it with care.

Flight 20m (20 Active Points); OIF (-½), Levitation (-½), 6 Continuing Charges lasting 1 Minute each (-0). **Total cost: 10 points.**

Ring Of Safety: A character wearing this ring need not fear most mundane and magical attacks... or at least suffers reduced effect from them.

Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED/9 Mental Defense/9 Power Defense) (45 Active Points); OIF (-½). **Total cost: 30 points.**

Star Sapphire Ring: Set with eight small, perfectly-formed star sapphires, this silver ring contains a potent attack spell: it fires bolts of deadly starfire. Each sapphire contains the magic of one bolt; after it fires its bolt, it darkens. After the wearer uses all eight bolts, the ring is just a piece of silver jewelry set with eight poor-color sapphires.

RKA 3d6, Penetrating (+½) (67 Active Points); OIF (-½), Limited Range (60m; -¼), 8 Charges which Never Recover (-2½). **Total cost: 16 points.**

SCROLLS

Scrolls are easily-transportable documents containing one (or more) written spells. By reading the spell (which requires a successful Magic roll), a character can activate it. Spellcasters often craft scrolls as a way of beefing up their magical arsenals. In magic systems that limit the number of spells a character can know, or the spells he can cast in one day, scrolls allow characters to prepare more spells than they could otherwise have.

A scroll is a Fragile OAF with the additional Complications *Requires Light To Use*, *Requires A Magic Roll*, *Incantations*, and *Charges which Never Recover* (the writing disappears as it's read). A scroll is a Universal Focus, though only characters with the *Magic Skill* can use them because of the required roll. Typically a scroll has just 1 Charge, but some contain multiple copies of the same spell. Some have more than one spell; you can build these as Multipowers or buy the spells individually.

Because scrolls take time and effort to prepare, they're usually built with the *Delayed Effect Advantage*, plus various *Storing Limitations* (Concentration, Extra Time). Casting a spell from a scroll requires a Half Phase Action (or longer, for spells built using Powers that inherently take more time). If it takes more time (perhaps because it takes a long time to read), it takes an *Extra Time Limitation* (separate from any Extra Time needed to scribe it).

A few scrolls have writing that does *not* disappear when read; they work once per day (the magic in the scroll needs a day to “recharge” itself). In this case, the creator of the scroll may have no more than INT/5 of his own scrolls available for use at any time (“available for use” includes giving them to another person friendly to him, but not selling them to a stranger). A character may have ready for use as many found or purchased scrolls as he likes. Characters who rely on scroll-scribing for their powers and/or income often pay extra for Delayed Effect so they can have more scrolls “active” at once.

Detect Magic Scroll: This spell contains four scribings of the highly useful advanced form of Detect Magic.

Detect Magic (INT Roll +5) (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range, Delayed Effect (+¼) (31 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires Light To Use (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Concentration (0 DCV throughout scribing; -1), Extra Time (6 Hours to scribe; -3½), 4 Charges which Never Recover (-3). **Total cost: 3 points.**

Dragon-Calling Scroll: The spell on this scroll summons a powerful dragon. It will only perform one task for the character... but a thousand-point dragon can probably take care of whatever's troubling the character in just one task anyway!

Summon one dragon built on 1,000 Total Points, Slavishly Loyal (+1), Delayed Effect (+¼) (450 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Dragon Only Performs One Task For Summoner (-2), Extra Time (1 Turn to read; -1¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires Light To Use (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (no Active Point penalty; -0), Concentration (0 DCV throughout scribing; -1), Extra Time (6 Hours to scribe; -3½), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4). **Total cost: 31 points.**

Mystic Bolt Scroll: This scroll contains a single use of a powerful version of the standard Mystic Bolt spell.

RKA 4d6, Delayed Effect (+¼), Line Of Sight (+½) (105 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires Light To Use (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Concentration (0 DCV throughout scribing; -1), Extra Time (1 Hour to scribe; -3), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4). **Total cost: 9 points.**

Scroll Of Several Spells: This scroll comes with one scribing each of several general utility spells.

Cost Power

- 14 **Scroll Of Several Spells:** Multipower, 100-point reserve; all OAF Fragile (-1¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires Light To Use (-¼), Requires A Magic Roll (-½), Concentration (0 DCV throughout scribing; -1), Extra Time (1 Hour to scribe; -3)
- 1f **1) Invisibility Spell:** Invisibility to Sight Group, No Fringe, Delayed Effect (+¼); common Limitations (-6¼), Only When Not Attacking (-½), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Hour which Never Recovers (-2¼)
- 1f **2) Wizard Walking:** Teleportation 30m, Delayed Effect (+¼); common Limitations (-6¼), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)
- 1f **3) Morphean Assault:** Mental Blast 8d6, Delayed Effect (+¼); common Limitations (-6¼), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)
- 1f **4) Spell Of The Tiny Form:** Shrinking (.032 m tall [about 1 inch], .0004 kg mass, -12 to PER Rolls to perceive character, +12 DCV, takes +36m KB), Delayed Effect (+¼); common Limitations (-6¼), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Hour which Never Recovers (-2¼)

Total cost: 18 points.

“Wizard locked,” said Zereth aloud.

Tarkan reached into the leather pouch he carried, produced the first scroll and handed it over to the elf. Zereth read off the spell. The door opened inward.

—Zereth and his companions use a scroll to open a magically-locked door in “The Sorcerer’s Jewel,” by J. Eric Holmes





WANDS AND STAFFS

“But they say that if you take his wooden staff away from a sorcerer, he has no power left. Probably there are evil runes written on the staff.”

—Kossil speculates on the power of wizards’ staffs in *The Tombs Of Atuan*, by Ursula K. LeGuin

A favorite of wizards everywhere, wands and staffs are OAFs containing potent enchantments. (A few wands are Fragile as well.) They often have Charges which Never Recover, representing the mystic energy built into them during the creation process. Some have multiple powers (bought either as a Multipower or a series of separate powers with the same Focus). They often require command words.

Staff Of Wizardly Might: Possessed by the most powerful spellcasters, this enchanted staff contains several different mystic abilities. Some have a limited number of uses, others always function (even after the Charges on other slots run out).

Cost Power

- | | |
|----|--|
| 45 | Staff Of Wizardly Might: Multipower, 90-point reserve; all OAF (-1) |
| 2f | 1) Project Fireball: RKA 3d6, Area Of Effect (38m Radius Explosion; +¾); OAF (-1), 20 Charges which Never Recover (-1¾) |
| 2f | 2) Lightning Blast: RKA 4d6, Armor Piercing (+¼); OAF (-1), 20 Charges which Never Recover (-1¾), Limited Range (60m; -¼) |
| 2f | 3) Paralysis Spell: Entangle 4d6, 4 PD/4 ED, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+1); OAF (-1), 20 Charges which Never Recover (-1¾), Limited Range (60m; -¼) |
| 2f | 4) Spell Of Enervation: Drain STUN 9d6; OAF (-1), 20 Charges which Never Recover (-1¾) |
| 2f | 5) Spell Of Protection: Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED/6 Mental Defense/6 Power Defense); OAF (-1), Costs Endurance (-½) |
| 2f | 6) Forcewall Spell: Barrier 8 PD/8 ED, 8 BODY (up to 8m long, 3m tall, ½m thick); OAF (-1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½) |
| 3f | 7) Flight Spell: Flight 40m, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1) |

Total cost: 60 points.

Wand Of Fascination: This wand allows the user to take control of another person's will, provided that person is within 60m and Line Of Sight.

Mind Control 16d6, ACV (uses OCV against DMCV; +¼) (100 Active Points); OAF (-1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Limited Normal Range (60m, Range Modifier applies; -½), 60 Charges which Never Recover (-1½).

Total cost: 22 points.

Wand Of Fireballs: Commonly found in the arsenals of High Fantasy wizards, this wand (usually made of wood or iron, and set with red or orange gems) projects powerful fireballs.

RKA 4d6, Area Of Effect (18m Radius Explosion; +½) (90 Active Points); OAF (-1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), 30 Charges which Never Recover (-1¾). **Total cost: 21 points.**

Winterwild Staff: Made of silver and ivory, this staff contains several powers relating to ice and cold. The stronger powers use up more of the staff's magical energy.

Cost Power

- 17 **Winterwild Staff:** Multipower, 60-point reserve, 50 Charges which Never Recover for entire Multipower (-1½); all OAF (-1)
- 3f **1) Ice Blast I:** Blast 12d6; OAF (-1)
- 2f **2) Ice Blast II:** Blast 6d6, Area Of Effect (16m Cone; +½); OAF (-1), No Range (-½), Requires 2 Charges Per Use (-¼)
- 1f **3) Blizzard:** Change Environment, -3 Temperature Levels and -3 Sight Group PER Rolls, Area Of Effect (32m Radius; +1); OAF (-1), Requires 2 Charges Per Use (-¼)
- 1f **4) Icy Sheet:** Change Environment (create ice sheet), -4 to DEX Rolls to move on the sheet, Area Of Effect (Surface 16m Radius; +1), Personal Immunity (+¼); OAF (-1), Can Only Be Applied To Horizontal Surfaces (-0), Requires 2 Charges Per Use (-¼)
- 2f **5) Hailstorm:** Blast 5d6 (physical), Area Of Effect (8m Radius; +½), Indirect (Source Point is always above targets; +¼) OAF (-1), Requires 3 Charges Per Use (-½)

Total cost: 26 points.

WEAPONS

In legend and literature, the most common enchanted items are weapons, particularly swords. Mystic powers common to weapons include the ability to do more damage (increased Killing Damage dice, decreased STR Minimum), the ability to penetrate armor with ease (Armor Piercing, Penetrating), striking more devastating blows (increased Killing Damage dice, Increased STUN Multiplier), greater accuracy (OCV or Range Modifier bonuses), the power to return to the thrower's hand after being thrown, and even the ability to fight by themselves!

Chapter Three has extensive information about how to build various types of weapons in *HERO System* terms. Applying more Active Points or adding effects to them usually is not difficult; see the examples below for some ideas.

LAUNCHED MISSILE WEAPONS

Enchanting Ranged weapons that have separate launchers and missiles — bows and arrows, crossbows and bolts, slings and sling bullets — is a little trickier. As noted on page 194, these weapons are built with the rules for multiple Foci; the character has to have both the launcher and the missile for the weapon to function. If you create an enchanted launcher/missile combination, you can just use the weapon's normal writeup.

But you may want to create enchanted missiles for use with an ordinary launcher, or an enchanted launcher for firing ordinary missiles. Since the *HERO System* writeups for these items don't separate out the effect of the launcher from the effect of the missile, it's difficult to determine how to build a magic arrow or a magic bow. Use the following rules:

Arrows, Bolts: Treat any arrow or bolt as an RKA 1½d6, OAF, Real Weapon (if appropriate), Beam (25 Active Points, 10 Real Points). Armor piercing arrows have Armor Piercing (+¼) (31 Active Points, 12 Real Points). Then apply whatever other powers and abilities you want, including the number of Charges desired (these may be Recoverable, but usually are not — an arrow's magic fades after one shot). Do not apply the *STR Minimum* Limitation.

Sling Bullets: Treat any bullet as an RKA 1d6+1, +1 Increased STUN Multiplier (+¼), OAF, Real Weapon (if appropriate), Beam (25 Active Points, 10 Real Points). Then apply whatever other powers and abilities you want, including the number of Charges desired (these may be Recoverable, but usually are not — a bullet's magic fades after one shot). Do not apply the *STR Minimum* Limitation.

Launchers: Treat any bow as an RKA 1½d6, OAF, STR Minimum (including STR Min Cannot Add Damage), Real Weapon (if appropriate), Two-Handed, Concentration (½ DCV), Beam (25 Active Points, Real Points vary based on STR Minimum). For a longbow, add the *Cannot Be Fired From Horseback* (-¼) Limitation.

Morrolan carried Blackwand, which slew a thousand at the Wall of Baritt's Tomb. Alieria carried Pathfinder, which they say served a power higher than the Empire. Sethra carried Iceflame, which embodied within it the power of Dzur Mountain. I carried myself rather well, thank you.

—Vlad Taltos marvels at his friends' powerful enchanted swords in *Jherog*, by Steven Brust



Treat any crossbow like a bow, but without Concentration and with the Extra Time for loading it.

Treat any sling like a bow, but with Increased STUN Multiplier (+¼) and Side Effects (OCV penalty; -½).

An enchanted missile works with any appropriate launcher (both mundane and enchanted). An enchanted launcher can fire any appropriate missile (both mundane and enchanted).

Arrows Of Accuracy: These arrows (which come in sheafs of ten) are unusually accurate, able to hit even the smallest targets with ease.

RKA 1½d6 (25 Active Points); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼), 10 Charges which Never Recover (-¼) (total cost: 5 points) **plus** +8 OCV (16 Active Points); OAF (-1), 10 Charges which Never Recover (-2¼) (total cost: 4 points). **Total cost: 9 points.**

COMBINING MISSILES AND LAUNCHERS

In some cases, a character may want to combine missiles and launchers that have separate enchantments — firing a magic arrow from an enchanted bow, for example. In this case, the GM has three options: combine the two effects; use only the greater of the two effects; or use the greater of the two effects, enhanced to some degree by the lesser effect.

In most cases, the easiest (and most game-balanced) thing to do is just to use the greater of the two effects. If that doesn't seem fair or common-sensical given the special effects involved and the situation, the second-best option is to use the greater effect as a base, then modify it — increase its DCs of damage (or other effect) by the amount of DCs the lesser effect has above its standard effect.

For example, suppose a character fires a magic arrow (RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing) from a magic bow (RKA 2d6). In the easy approach, the attack does RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing. The “lesser enhances the greater” effect involves adding +1 DC (the amount by which the launcher's magic effect exceeds the launcher's standard, unenchanted, effect) to the arrow, making it an RKA 2d6+1 Armor Piercing.

LEGENDARY WEAPONS

In Fantasy fiction and legend, many weapons are legendary items, with long lineages and a record of many noble accomplishments. Although they're clearly better than ordinary blades (maces, bows, spears...), they're not actually enchanted.

In game terms, you can simulate such weapons using the rules for “fine” weapons on page 209. You can even give them other abilities if you want, defining those abilities as a “legendary quality” the weapon possesses. As always, the special effects principle of the *HERO System* is paramount: what matters is how you represent the weapon's abilities and effects in game terms, not the special effect label “enchanted.”

Since legendary weapons aren't magical, characters cannot perceive any magic in them with Detect Magic.

Assassin's Dagger: This dark-bladed weapon is magically coated with a lethal poison that never runs out or dries up.

HKA 1d6, Range Based On STR (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (26 Active Points); OAF (-1), STR Minimum (6; -¼) (total cost: 11 points) **plus** RKA 3d6, NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (135 Active Points); OAF (-1), HKA Must Do BODY (-½), Linked (-¼), No Range (-½) (total cost: 41 points). **Total cost: 52 points.**

Irresistible Blade: This magically sharp broadsword can cut through nearly any armor, even magical armors — and it can strike at vulnerable points like the head or vitals with ease.

HKA 1½d6, Armor Piercing (x2; +½), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (62 Active Points); OAF (-1), STR Minimum (13; -½) (total cost: 25 points) **plus** +6 versus Hit Location penalties (12 Active Points); OAF (-1) (total cost: 6 points). **Total cost: 31 points.**

Longbow Of Far Shooting: This longbow can fire arrows over far greater distances than an ordinary longbow, and is far more accurate than normal against distant targets.

RKA 1½d6, Increased Maximum Range (x4 bow's listed range on page 195; +½), No Range Modifier (+½) (50 Active Points); OAF (-1), STR Minimum (12; -½), Two-Handed (-½), Concentration (½ DCV throughout loading process; -¼), Beam (-¼), Cannot Be Fired From Horseback (-¼). **Total cost: 13 points.**

Paladin's Sacred Sword: This greatsword is an example of a type of powerful enchanted blade crafted for a paladin, crusading priest, or other warrior in the cause of Good. Not only does it strike deadly blows against Evil with great accuracy, but it burns the hands of any Evil person or being who touches it (the being takes damage from the Damage Shield or its Susceptibility [if it has one], whichever is greater).

Cost Power

- 23 **Paladin's Sacred Sword:** HKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (52 Active Points); OAF (-1), STR Minimum (17; -¾), Two-Handed (-½) (total cost: 16 points) **plus** HKA +1d6, Armor Piercing (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (26 Active Points); OAF (-1), STR Minimum (17; -¾), Two-Handed (-½), Only Versus Evil Beings (-½) (total cost: 7 points)
- 20 **Burning The Hand Of Evil:** HKA 1½d6, Armor Piercing (+¼), Constant (+½), Area Of Effect (personal Surface — Damage Shield; +¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+¼) (69 Active Points); OAF (-1), Always On (-½), Only Versus Evil Beings Who Handle/Pick Up Sword (-1)

Total cost: 43 points.



4

Thunderbolt Hammer: This unusual-looking weapon resembles a short-hafted two-headed hammer that's balanced overall for throwing. When used in HTH Combat, it deals powerful blows — but when thrown, it strikes with a devastating thunderbolt that can injure not only the target, but anyone near him. Even better, after it's thrown, a Thunderbolt Hammer automatically returns to its thrower's hand, and nothing can stop it from doing so. If taken from the wielder's hand, though, it will not return to him; it then becomes the property of whoever took it.

Cost Power

- 34 **Thunderbolt Hammer:** Multipower, 60-point reserve; all STR Minimum (13; -½), One-And-A-Half-Handed (-¼)
- 2f **1) HTH Striking:** HKA 1½d6, +2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), STR Minimum (13; -½), One-And-A-Half-Handed (-¼)
- 3f **2) Thrown Thunderbolt Strike:** RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (14m Radius Explosion; +¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); STR Minimum (13; -½), One-And-A-Half-Handed (-¼), Range Based On STR (-¼)

Total cost: 39 points.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Any enchanted item that doesn't fit into the categories described above is a "miscellaneous" enchanted item. Other than being Foci, miscellaneous items don't have much in common. A character could enchant just about any object with just about any power, though usually the item has some relation to its powers: crystal balls and mirrors provide sensing powers instead of defenses; cloaks provide movement and defensive abilities instead of attacks or senses.

Bracers Of Troll-Strength: These metal or leather bracers increase the wearer's strength so that he's as muscular as a troll.

+25 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (37 Active Points); OIF (-½), Wearer Has A Maximum Of 35 STR (-0). **Total cost: 25 points.**

Cloak Of Flying: This wondrous cloak, shaped and embroidered to resemble feathered wings, allows the wearer to fly.

Flight 24m, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (36 Active Points); OAF (-1). **Total cost: 18 points.**

Crystal Ball Of Farseeing: A character can use this enchanted sphere of purest crystal to view distant events. He cannot hear what's going on at the places he views, and cannot view the future. The user must spend his own END to power it, so using it for too long may prove tiring.

Clairsentience (Sight Group), Mobile Perception Point, MegaScale (1m = 1 km; +1) (50 Active Points); OAF Fragile (-1¼), Concentration (0 DCV throughout; -1), Requires A Magic Roll (-½). **Total cost: 13 points.**

He had the magic halter, and a worn old rope it was; an old wayfaring woman had given it to him: it had the power to hold any animal whose race had never known captivity, such as the unicorn, the hippogriff, Pegasus, dragons, and wyverns[.]

—from "How One Came, As Was Foretold, To The City Of Never," by Lord Dunsany

Shield Belt: This broad leather belt creates a magical field around the wearer to protect him against attacks.

Resistant Protection (6 PD/6 ED) (18 Active Points); OIF (-½). **Total cost: 12 points.**

Wizard's Sack: Spellcasters who like to carry a lot of supplies use one of these items, which look like more or less ordinary leather sacks, backpacks, belt pouches, or the like. The "sack's" opening actually leads into a pocket dimension that's a sphere with a 10m (33 feet) radius. The character can place into the dimension anything that fits through the sack's mouth, and the magic of the sack automatically organizes the sack's contents for maximum storage efficiency. When the character wants something, he simply reaches in for it; the sack's magic perceives his thoughts and "hands" him the item he wants.

In game terms, a Wizard's Sack consists of two powers. The first is Extra-Dimensional Movement Usable As Attack, which creates the pocket dimension and lets the user put things in it other than himself. A Limitation on the power restricts the sack to holding only articles small enough to fit through the bag's mouth and weighing no more than 100 kg (the limit on Extra-Dimensional Movement). The second power is Transdimensional Stretching, which lets the user reach inside and grab whatever item he wants.

Cost Power

- 16 **Wizard's Sack:** Extra-Dimensional Movement (single pocket dimension), Usable As Attack (+1¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (55 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only On Nonresisting Objects (-¼), Only Works On Items Small Enough To Fit Through Sack's Mouth (-1), Unified Power (-¼)
- 7 **Wizard's Sack:** Stretching 10m, Transdimensional (only to reach into the Sack's pocket dimension; +½) (15 Active Points); OAF (-1), Unified Power (-¼)

Total cost: 23 points.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEYOND THE
FIELDS WE KNOW
FANTASY WORLDS AND RACES

MG



FANTASY WORLDS

“The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; and the pessimist fears this is true.”

—Coth philosophizes in *The Silver Stallion*, by James Branch Cabell

Fantasy typically involves an alternate world — a fantastic place where magic exists, monsters live, kings rule, and adventure always seems to wait right around the corner. While it’s possible to run a Fantasy game without giving much thought to the nature and shape of the campaign world, the best Fantasy Hero campaigns have richly-developed worlds based on a combination of the fantastic and the realistic (or at least the dramatically realistic).

Designing a Fantasy world is no easy task! In most cases you have to create the entire world from scratch — not just its geography, but its history, cultures, races, governments, technologies, and magic systems (see Chapter Four regarding the latter). You can rely on player knowledge to a slight extent, but you still have to explain a great deal... and the further your world diverges from the “normal” and the known, the more information you have to impart. For example, every player knows what a horse and a sword are, but if your world features the fast-running *rezbek* as the primary mount and the *thir’sal* as the most common weapon, you have to tell the players what those things are.

Every GM creates his Fantasy world differently; there’s no one “right” way to do it. This chapter begins with a discussion of geography and related topics, but you could just as easily start with the gods and cosmology, or the races, or the magic, or anything else that strikes your fancy. In the end, this section of *Fantasy Hero* just provides some information and guidelines to get you started — ultimately the work is up to you. Only you can conceive and develop just the world you want.

MAGIC CHANGES EVERYTHING

As mentioned in the discussion of historical realism in the Introduction, when you design your Fantasy world you need to keep one important fact in mind: *magic changes everything*.

Magic is the most important element in most Fantasy settings, and it changes the world in ways we can barely begin to predict. Even if you want to take a reasonably “realistic” and “scientific” approach to creating your world, you have to account for magic. This is particularly true for High Fantasy worlds, but even a Low Fantasy world may experience the geographical, political, and sociological impact of magic. Here are a few examples:

- You can use simulated (or just guesstimated) plate tectonics to shape the landmasses of your world... but if Kal-Turak the Ravager comes along and uses his spells to split one of the continents in two, that’s going to throw the orderly spread-and-shift of the plate system into a cocked hat.
- You can try to cluster cities and villages closely together, as they were in medieval Europe to reduce travel time and increase safety... but when wizards can establish teleportation gates from one place to another, and sorcerer-engineers can quickly create well-paved, stable roads, there may be nothing to prevent civilizations from spreading out.
- You can use a castle-and-siege model for warfare in your world... until wizards become powerful enough to bypass sturdy walls or establish mystical air forces, in which case the battle shifts to one of wizardry as much as (or more than) weaponry.
- You can try to ignore or downplay religion, as in several Earth societies... but only as long as the gods don’t actually exist and show up in your world from time to time. The more verifiably evident the gods’ power is, the more likely it becomes that religion (and, more importantly, priests) play a significant sociopolitical role in the world.

So, in short, as you design your world, keep magic in mind. Not only will it make the world seem more like a true Fantasy world and not just a crude copy of Earth, but it could easily lead to some intriguing scenario and story arc possibilities. After all, in a world where a truly Bottomless Pit can exist, some reckless adventurers just might want to find out where it goes....

Carthalla had heard of the Brotherhood of Darkness, the ancient and worldwide fellowship of sorcerers. Great was their power and their mastery over the Invisible World that lies beyond the world of the living, but she also had heard that the initiates of the Brotherhood of Darkness are sworn on terrible oaths never to employ their dreadful power to meddle in the flow of world history.

—wizards are supposed to stay out of secular affairs in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

GEOGRAPHY

The rough, undulating land flowed toward old, worn hills that seemed in their bald, smooth lines like old men sleeping. He said wonderingly, "I've never seen such a lonely land."

Deth... smiled. "Wait until you reach Isig Pass. This is gentle country."

"It's immense. If I had travelled this long in a straight line across Hed, I would have been walking on the ocean bottom a week ago."

—Morgon marvels at the size and scope of the realm in *The Riddle-master Of Hed*, by Patricia McKillip

For many GMs, the first thing to do when creating a Fantasy world is literally that: create the world itself. Your world's continents, islands, mountains, oceans, rivers, and plains shape just about everything else, from history, to governments, to races and demographics.

To begin with, consider the scope of your campaign. Do you plan to confine the adventures to a relatively small region, or do you envision a world-spanning Epic Fantasy saga involving the fate of the world? The latter requires you to detail a huge amount of land, and thus an equally large number of cultures (if not races), regions, and histories. However, you can probably put some of the work off until the PCs have to visit specific areas, or one of the players expresses an interest in having his character come from a particular tribe. The former means you don't have to paint in such broad strokes, but since you're focusing more closely on one region, you have to know that region *very* well and provide plenty of details about it to the players.

On Earth, the shape and positions of the continents, and the topography of the land, result from plate tectonics and other broad geological forces. You may want to take a similar approach for your Fantasy world, at least as a starting point. That way the world at least "looks right" in a vague sense when you examine the map. A little bit of research with atlases and encyclopedias can point you in the right direction. Once you've got the basics in mind, though, consider other possible influences, such as powerful spellcasters or the gods. If a divine war ten thousand years ago shattered the North, then perhaps what used to be a northern continent is now an archipelago of largish islands, regardless of plate tectonics.

WORLDBUILDING INSPIRATION

Having a hard time coming up with a starting point for creating your Fantasy world? Here are a few ideas to kick-start your thought process:

- Base your world on its magic system. Devise the magic system, then create the sort of world needed to support/explain it.
- Come up with the overall plot or major story arc you plan to use in your campaign, then create the world you need to run that story to best effect. For example, if you're planning an Epic Fantasy game pitting the PCs and their allies against the overwhelming might of Bloodgorm the Black, then you need to arrange the geography, cultures, and history so that Bloodgorm has control over a distant, well-defended land the PCs will have trouble attacking.
- Draw some inspiration from your favorite Fantasy novels and movies. If you want to run a game that tells stories like those in Michael Moorcock's Elric novels, you need to create a world with a similar geographic, social, and political situation.

CLIMATOLOGICAL ZONES

Assuming Earth provides a rough geographical model for your Fantasy world, you've got three broad climatological zones to work with.

Arctic regions exist on the extreme ends of the world — the "top" and "bottom" as maps traditionally depict things. Characterized by bitter cold, eternal ice, and precipitation only in the form of snow, they're extremely inhospitable to life. In a Fantasy setting, people might use magic to adapt to arctic conditions, or make tiny pockets of arctic land comfortable enough to live in. Some magical monsters, like ice dragons, also might be specially adapted for the extreme cold and omnipresent ice.

At the other extreme are *tropical* regions, found along and bordering the Earth's equator. They tend to be hot and humid, with copious amounts of life (including jungles and creatures that live in them) and lots of disease-bearing organisms. Islands, often volcanic, occur frequently in tropical regions.

Lying between these two extremes are *temperate* and *sub-tropical* regions. Featuring a range of comfortable temperatures, a distinctive pattern of seasons, and an enormous diversity of terrain and life, they're likely to be the home of the majority of civilizations in most Fantasy worlds. They also tend to be the climatological zone most familiar to gamers, and thus the easiest to describe during the game.

As they entered higher country the forest became more open, showing meadows full of wild-flowers and sunlight, gray lichenous boulders strewn between clumps of trees, now and then a view across hills rolling into purple distance. Here were many streams, leaping and flashing in their haste to reach the lower dales, rainbows above them where they fell over the bluffs. ... He found himself enjoying the trip.

—Holger and his friends journey into the alpine lands in *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, by Poul Anderson

5

COMMON TERRAIN FEATURES

Within the three climatological zones, your world probably has a variety of different types of terrain. Here's some general information about common terrain types from Earth. Sticking fairly close to what seems "realistic" is probably a good idea for most campaigns; it makes the world easier for the players to accept and understand. Don't let realism guide your hand *too* much, though. The real world features plenty of examples of odd geography — major rivers winding through otherwise parched deserts, jungles climbing the sides of mountains, glaciers on mountains in temperate regions — and in a world with magic, things could get even more bizarre.

DESERTS

So, after a short interval, Mmatmuor and Sosodma were driven forth ... and were compelled to flee toward Cincor, a desert of the south[.] ... The land into which they went lay drear and leprous and ashen below the huge, ember-colored sun. Its crumbling rocks and deathly solitudes of sand would have struck terror to the hearts of common men; and, since they had been thrust out in that barren place without food or sustenance, the plight of the sorcerers might well have seemed a desperate one.

—two wicked spellcasters must brave the desert in "Empire Of The Necromancers," by Clark Ashton Smith

Deserts are regions with little or no water. They tend to exist on one side of a mountain range (which blocks rainclouds from getting to them) or far inland in temperate, sub-tropical, and tropical zones. Typically vegetation is sparse at best, and may be entirely absent deep in some large desert regions. The extent and nature of animal life depends on the amount of vegetation available, which in turn depends on the availability of water.

In Fantasy settings, deserts tend to be home to camel-riding Arab-like tribes that cluster around oases, ancient ruins long buried beneath the shifting sands (and ripe for exploration!), and strange sand-dwelling monsters (including some types of dragons). Fantasy deserts may not be natural — they can result from wizards' experiments gone awry, or an ancient war between spellcasters featuring magics so potent they devastated the world.

FORESTS

It was the night that Dorgand Tul feared most, for then the monstrous predators were arowl — the slinking vandars, the great black lions of the Lemurian jungles, the savage Beastmen, and — most dread of all — the colossal jungle dragons whose enormous size and ferocity rendered them virtually unkillable.

—Dorgan Tul muses on some of the unpleasant aspects of the Kovian jungles in "Keeper Of The Emerald Flame," by Lin Carter

"You have left the Shire, and are now outside, and on the edge of the Old Forest. ... But the forest is queer. Everything in it is very much more alive, more aware of what is going on, so to speak, than things are in the Shire. And the trees do not like strangers. They watch you."

—Merry speaks of the dangers of the Old Forest in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Forests are areas with extensive tree cover; they require lots of moisture to grow. In tropical regions they become jungles; in near-arctic regions they become taiga (a coniferous forest that tends to be moist and boggy). Forests are full of life and can support heavy concentrations of large animals. In Fantasy worlds, forests are often the domain of particular races, tribes, or characters known for their woodcraft — elves or rangers, for example. Some forests become dark and dangerous, twisted by Evil sorceries into homes for wicked dragons and other monsters.

HILLS

"There is a cave up under the ledges of the cliff. I will make a fire. Night will be upon us soon, and these are the Ghoul-Haunted Hills."

—Kellory gives some thought to his and Carthalla's safety in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

Hills are elevated, rugged terrain not tall enough to qualify as mountains. They're often found bordering mountainous regions, and frequently contain caves, heavily forested valleys, and other places where, in Fantasy worlds, monsters dwell. Tribes of sturdy, isolationist hill-folk may reside in them as well, using their survival and fighting skills to protect themselves from fantastic beasts and evil, cave-dwelling humanoids.



5

LAKES

The lake presently lay before him, a great sheet of water whose further rim was but dimly visible. Mazirian came down to the sandy shore and stood seeking across the dark face of Sanra Water, the Lake of Dreams. ... A sense of quiet magic was there, and though he was not at enmity with the Lake Lord, other beings might resent a trespass.

—Mazirian ponders whether to pursue T'sain into the lake in “Mazirian The Magician,” by Jack Vance

Lakes are inland bodies of fresh water. They range from tiny ponds to vast inland seas. If large enough, they can support entire tribes or cities through fishing and commerce. Smaller lakes in pristine natural settings often have sacred significance; water-dwelling gods and spirits may live in them, or they may serve as gates to the underworld. Sometimes nearby peoples throw sacrifices of goods (or people!) into them.

MOUNTAINS

Mountains are extremely elevated, rugged formations of stone. On Earth, mountains result from the collision of tectonic plates and/or volcanic action; in some Fantasy settings, other forces (wizards, gods, groups of powerful giants) may also create mountain ranges in a much quicker and more violent process than geology. Older mountain ranges tend to be smaller and “smoother” due to the effects of erosion; younger ranges have tall, jagged peaks striking defiantly at the sky and just begging for adventurers to climb them. Some ranges contain active volcanoes that can become an important resource for wizards who want to forge magical swords or armies of fire elementals seeking a beachhead for an invasion of the world. Occasionally isolated mountains exist; in Fantasy settings they tend to attract all sorts of trouble (clans of renegade dwarves, Evil wizards who want to build isolated sanctums, invaders from the underground realms...).

OCEANS AND SEAS

These are large bodies of salt water. Both oceans and seas have tides and strong currents. They're important both for commerce and as a source of food. In Fantasy worlds, they're home to nations of mer-folk, all sorts of terrifyingly large and powerful monsters, and sunken Atlantis-like civilizations just waiting to be plundered by adventurers.

Now Covenant could see that the east end of the range dropped steeply to a plateau like a stair into the mountains — a plateau perhaps two or three thousand feet high that ended in a straight cliff to the foothills. From the plateau came a waterfall, and some effect of the light on the rock made the cascade gleam pale blue as it tumbled. ... [H]e felt a stirring in his heart, as if he were drawing near to something grand.

—Thomas Covenant sees the Westron Mountains in *Lord Foul's Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

“It is a great company on foot; but I cannot say more, nor see what kind of folk they may be. They are many leagues away: twelve, I guess; but the flatness of the plain is hard to measure.”

—the size of the grasslands of Rohan daunts Legolas’s vision in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

At that moment there came a roaring and a rushing: a noise of loud waters rolling many stones. Dimly Frodo saw the river below him rise, and down along its course there came a plumed cavalry of waves. White flames seemed to Frodo to flicker on their crests and he half fancied that he saw amid the water

white riders upon white horses with frothing manes.

5 —Elrond and Gandalf control the waters of the River Bruinen to save Frodo and his friends from the Nazgûl in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

PLAINS

Plains, also known as grasslands, are large, relatively dry, flat areas of land often covered with grasses and other low-lying plant life. In arctic areas they’re known as tundra; in tropical areas they may become savannah. They tend to support a lot of life, including enormous herds of grazing animals such as buffalo or wildebeest.

In Fantasy settings, plains usually serve in a “junior desert” role: they’re natural obstacles for the PCs to pass through (and perhaps encounter strange tribes or monsters in), but pose far less danger of starvation and dehydration than deserts. They may be the home of groups of horse-nomads or other peoples skilled at riding and herding.

RIVERS

Rivers are major bodies of moving fresh water — streams, brooks, and creeks writ large. They usually form in hills and mountains from melting snow and rain, and gradually wind their way down to the sea (or a larger river). They serve as “roadways” for travel and commerce, since it’s easier to move large amounts of goods by ship than by wagon or porter.

In a Fantasy setting, rivers, like lakes, are sometimes the homes of water-gods, who may guard them (and their own beautiful daughters!) jealously. Bridges over them can house trolls (or more fearsome things) that demand tribute before letting someone cross.

SWAMPS AND MARSHES

All day they rode, into lands where Niall had never been, following a narrow pathway through the Lurydian swamps. These were strange and deadly lands, Thallatta informed him. One misstep and man or beast would sink forever in these watery lands, drawn downwards by a terrible, irresistible suction.

—Niall and Thallatta traverse a dangerous swamp in “Out Of The Eons,” by Gardner F. Fox

Swamps and marshes are low-lying areas flooded to some degree. Marshes tend to be simply boggy, while characters must swim or have boats to get through swamps. Both areas tend to border rivers, seas, or other bodies of water. They’re most common in tropical, sub-tropical, and temperate regions, and usually support a lush variety of plant and animal life.

In Fantasy worlds, swamps and marshes are home to all sorts of interesting things: vicious alligator-like or draconic predators; tribes of lizard-folk; rare, secret herbs with mystical properties; voodoo queens who have isolated themselves from other people. Any trip that involves going into or through one is certain to be memorable.

UNDERGROUND AREAS

The passage twisted round a few turns, and then began to descend. It went steadily down for a long while before it became level once again. The air grew hot and stifling, but it was not foul, and at times they felt currents of cooler air upon their faces, issuing from half-guessed openings in the walls.

There were many of these. In the pale ray of the wizard’s staff, Frodo caught glimpses of stairs and arches, and of other passages and tunnels, sloping up, or running steeply down, or opening blankly dark on either side. It was bewildering beyond hope of remembering.

—the Company travels through Moria in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Many Fantasy settings feature extensive areas of caverns, tunnels, and cysts beneath the ground. Some worlds are positively honeycombed with these features, which may reach for miles beneath the surface. Typically they’re inhabited by all sorts of potential enemies — races of Deep folk, liches, dragons, goblins, and foul creatures or beings who have never seen the light of day. Many adventures involve a descent into the depths of the earth to attack such creatures in their lairs, usually to rescue kidnapped surface folk, thwart a planned invasion of the surface world, or acquire treasure. See page 418 for more information on underground environments.

FANTASTIC GEOGRAPHY

There he saw that he was on the tip of a slim splinter of stone — at least five hundred feet long — that pointed obliquely up from the base of the cliff like a rigid finger accusing the sky. Stairs had been cut into the upper surface of the shaft, but it was as steep as a ladder.

—Thomas Covenant finds himself on Kevin’s Watch in *Lord Foul’s Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

In some High Fantasy worlds, the geography can become *really* wondrous. Features such as forests made of crystal or silver, rivers of fire, mountains of gold, lands in the clouds, kingdoms carved into titanic glaciers, entire mountains carved into towers or castles, and trees the size of mountains may dot the landscape. Any such features tend to dominate the lands around them and may attract adventurers, armies, or explorers from all over the world.

ECOLOGY

Knowing the different climatological zones and terrain features of your world helps you make realistic decisions about what lives where — in short, what your world's *ecology* is like. Even in a land suffused by magic, most creatures fill specific niches in the overall tapestry of life. They feed on some types of beings (plants or other animals), and some other animals feed on them. In a Fantasy setting, creatures like manticores, giant carnivorous plants, griffins, and dragons all fit into this picture. For example, you can't have a pride of manticores living in a forest region unless there's enough big game — deer and the like — to support so many large, ravenous predators.

Similarly, not all creatures are appropriate for all areas of your world. Some creatures prefer the mountains, some the forests, some the plains. Thanks to the forces of evolution, animals adapt to suit the environments they live in; only intelligent, tool-using beings like humans, dwarves, and hobgoblins can reshape the environment to suit themselves (and even then, not to an extreme degree). For example, if you create a horse-like fictional creature called the *rezbek* for your Fantasy world, and the players encounter it in the mountains or the forests, they're likely to wonder what's going on. Horses and similar creatures aren't adapted to live in forested or mountainous regions; they need wide open, flat, grassy areas — plains, in other words — to survive and prosper.

Of course, magic can short-circuit the evolutionary process if necessary. A mad wizard could create all sorts of monstrous new lifeforms with giddy abandon, then release them wherever he felt like to thrive or die. Communities of monsters and fantastic beasts may have arisen in just such ways, without regard for what type of animal is ecologically and evolutionarily suited for what environment. But if you flout the laws of descent and adaptation too often, your world loses some of its verisimilitude, and that detracts from the fun of the game.

Ecological concerns may also control your placement of humanoid monsters such as orcs and goblins. Any given area can only support so many people, based on the amount of resources it provides. In environments with limited resources, such as some underground areas, scarce resources mean low populations and fierce competition for food, living space, and the like. If two different groups of humanoids live in the same area, they've either got to compete (which usually means fighting) or cooperate to survive. If one group is clearly stronger — it has more members, it has greater powers, or the like — then the odds are it will destroy or displace the other group.

In short, as you populate your world, try to arrange things so that they make at least a little ecological sense. You shouldn't worry about this too much — you're running a Fantasy game, not a Life Sciences class — but if you make sure there's a good reason why trolls live in the eastern part of the Blackroot Swamp while a dragon dominates the western part, and you give creatures and monsters some reason for existence other than “to guard treasure until the PCs show up to take it,” your campaign will seem more logical and fun for everyone involved.

GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

As you create your world, don't forget that geography can significantly influence the course of history and the development of civilizations and cultures. In the same way that England's isolation from Europe affected its history and culture, so to the geography of your Fantasy world may influence Fantasy civilizations. For example:

- If a large mountain range separates two prosperous, well-settled areas, the passes through the range (or perhaps the *only* pass) are likely to be the sites of cities... and of frequent wars throughout history, as one people or another tries to control the profitable trade through the pass. (The same applies to straits a maritime power can easily blockade.)
- Continents with a roughly east-west orientation may see the rise of civilizations, or of more powerful civilizations, more quickly than continents with a roughly north-south orientation, due to the ease with which food plants and animals can spread along lines of latitude (since climatic conditions remain relatively similar). As foodstuffs spread, so do people, ideas, technologies, and magical knowledge.
- A region split into sections by some type of prominent geographical feature (such as mountain ranges or broad, deep rivers) is more likely to develop into city-states or small kingdoms than one without such barriers, where larger nation-states may result. It's harder for conquering armies to easily traverse the land, and also harder for a central government to enforce its rule. The inhabitable areas tend to develop in comparative isolation, which may create unusual cultural patterns.
- A valuable, easily-reached resource likely causes wars for possession and control of it. For a civilization to develop with exclusive control for long periods over a valuable resource, either the resource must be geographically isolated, or the civilization powerful enough to fend off attackers and raiders.

It was the Year of the Behemoth, the Month of the Hedgehog, the Day of the Toad.

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser set out for adventure in “The Jewels In The Forest,” by Fritz Leiber

Lythande cast a glance into the sky — it was near to First-sunset; Keth, red and somber, glowed on the horizon, with Reth like a bloody burning eye, an hour or two behind. Curse it; it was one of those nights where there would be a long darkness.

—Lythande considers the timing of her mission in “The Incompetent Magician,” by Marion Zimmer Bradley

5 *The four hundred-odd Tsan from Tumissa to Katalal took them nearly twenty days. It was now the month of Langala, the first month of summer and the fourth of the Tsolyani year. Next would come Fesru, then Drenggar, and after that dread Firasul, “when the earth melts, and the air itself is aflame.”*

—the Tsolyani summer, as described in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

SUNS, MOONS, AND THE CALENDAR

In addition to knowing what the world itself is like, you should give some thought to celestial phenomena. For example, how many suns and moons does your world have? Most worlds can get by with a single sun, but it's not uncommon for a Fantasy setting to have two, three, or more moons. Typically some feature — size, color, or the like — distinguishes the moons and gives each of them its own cultural or mystical significance.

Similarly, does your world have any other celestial bodies (besides stars) in the sky? It doesn't matter whether you think of them as planets, or the chariots of the gods, or something else, but if they exist, you should keep their potential impact on religion and society in mind. In much the same way that the Aztecs and other Mesoamerican societies attached particular significance to the movements of Venus without knowing it to be a planet, the peoples of your Fantasy world may regard those moving objects in the sky with especial reverence or fear.

If your world has multiple suns and/or moons, they probably affect the pace and nature of life for most of your world's inhabitants. Two suns probably mean longer periods of daylight, and often higher average temperatures as well. That probably makes nocturnal creatures less common and desert areas more frequent. Multiple moons may make legitimate nighttime activities (travel, warfare, selling in the marketplace) easier, and illegitimate ones (thievery) more difficult or cause intense tides.

The number of suns and moons in your world probably also influences the calendar and the passage of seasons. Most Fantasy worlds try to maintain a roughly Earth-like calendar — years with about a dozen months of approximately 30 days, weeks around seven days long, days of about 24 hours' duration — because that's easiest for the GM and players to remember and determine the significance of. The more you deviate from that model, the harder it is for everyone to gauge the exact passage of time or calculate the value of a spell with a duration of “one day.” Too many suns or moons may change the arrangement of time-keeping — or at least offer competing civilizations different methods to argue about: “Only an infidel would count the passing of days based on the cycle of the green moon Chasay! All true believers know that the gods have ordained that the purple moon Vuunat determines the length of the year. You must die!”

Some GMs get the best of both worlds by creating an Earth-like calendar but using Fantasy names and terms for it. For example, the year may have 365 days divided into twelve months of 30 days, but no one calls those months January, February, March, April, and so on — instead, each

month takes its name from the zodiac constellation associated with it (the Month of the Dancing Goat, the Month of the Basilisk, the Month of the Scarlet Swan, and so forth). The final five days of the year don't belong to any one month; they're the “unlucky days” during which no one works and everyone does his best to avoid doing anything important for fear it will go horribly wrong. All of this in turn affects the magic system, religion, and other cultural phenomena.

See page 112 regarding changing the Time Chart to match your Fantasy world's calendar.

FANTASY DEMOGRAPHICS

You can think of demographics, the science of populations, as a sort of ecology for humans (and other sentient Fantasy races, such as dwarves, elves, bird-folk, and orcs). To heighten your setting's verisimilitude, you should give some thought to what sort of population patterns make sense for your world.

POPULATION PLACEMENT

In agrarian, pre-industrial societies, populations tend to live around the resources needed to support them: river confluences; lots of arable land; on coasts (particularly near river mouths and other good ports); and the like. The population tends to expand to the maximum number the area's resources can support — and sometimes beyond. Technology, commerce, conquest, or magic may allow even greater population densities. For example, a culture that figures out a way to obtain better crop yields, or switches to a more efficient way of raising food animals, can expand its population. So can one that brings in more resources through trade or warfare.

POPULATION DENSITY

In most medieval societies, the population density varied between about 30 and 120 people per square mile, depending on the amount of resources available (primarily arable land and the means to work it) and other factors. (By comparison, the United States in the year 2000 had a population density of 79.6 people per square mile — less than most European countries in the mid-to-late medieval period.) However, given that some areas (thick forests, mountain ranges, and the like) have no inhabited areas at all, the actual density in the areas that *were* inhabited could be much higher. (Similarly, the United States average becomes much higher if you exclude largely empty regions like Alaska and parts of the West.) Some cities became extremely overcrowded. While this led to some forms of economic and technological advancement, it also allowed disease to spread rapidly.

Population density depended primarily on how much food agriculture could produce from the arable land available. At the medieval level of agricultural technology, a square mile of inhabited land can support approximately 180 people. Using this number, you can determine how much land it takes to support the population in a given region, and thus what percentage of that region is inhabited arable land under cultivation. If it's more than about 50% of the land in the region, you've probably chosen too high a population figure and should scale down.

POPULATION PATTERNS

In the European model of medieval demographics, inhabited areas (villages, towns, cities) tend to cluster around each other. A village tends to be within no more than a few hours' walking distance from a castle, another village, or a city (*i.e.*, a distance that lets you travel to another village, do something, and then return home in one day). Easy methods of travel (such as rivers, or good roads regularly patrolled by the local authorities) may allow populations to spread out a little more. In essence, villages cluster together to form what modern humans would call "support networks," and the longer people have lived in a particular area, the further this network of small villages extends (and the more likely it is that villages have evolved into towns or cities). By late medieval times it was difficult to find any large areas of uninhabited land in Europe, except where geography (*e.g.*, the Alps) made habitation impossible — the population expanded to fill the space available to it.

The European population pattern arose not only because of the need to exploit valuable resources, but for security reasons and most peoples' inability to transport goods long distances. In between the clusters of villages were huge stretches of wilderness, uninhabited by people (or virtually so). In a Fantasy setting, the wilderness areas would be the home of monsters, groups of orcs and other humanoids, and characters powerful enough to cope with the dangers of isolation (such as some wizards).

On the other hand, some Fantasy worlds adopt a pattern of inhabited areas that bears more resemblance to the American West of the nineteenth century. Villages and towns become more isolated — usually there's a day's horseride between them. This population distribution makes the most sense in settings that allow for fairly rapid and easy travel, whether through magic, a system of secure roads, or some other means. Otherwise, a town that far away from its neighbors would need to be highly self-sufficient to survive in a world with medieval-level technology and production methods. Additionally, isolated towns tend to have heavy defenses — strong walls, large contingents of soldiers (or wizards!), and the like. Defenses become even more necessary when dragons and other monsters may threaten the town.



VILLAGES, TOWNS, AND CITIES

The strange stars of the World of Nehwon glinted thickly above the black-roofed city of Lankhmar, where swords clink almost as often as coins. For once there was no fog. In the Plaza of Dark Delights, which lies seven blocks south of the Marsh Gate and extends from the Fountain of Dark Abundance to the Shrine of the Black Virgin, the shoplights glinted upward no more brightly than the stars glinted down.

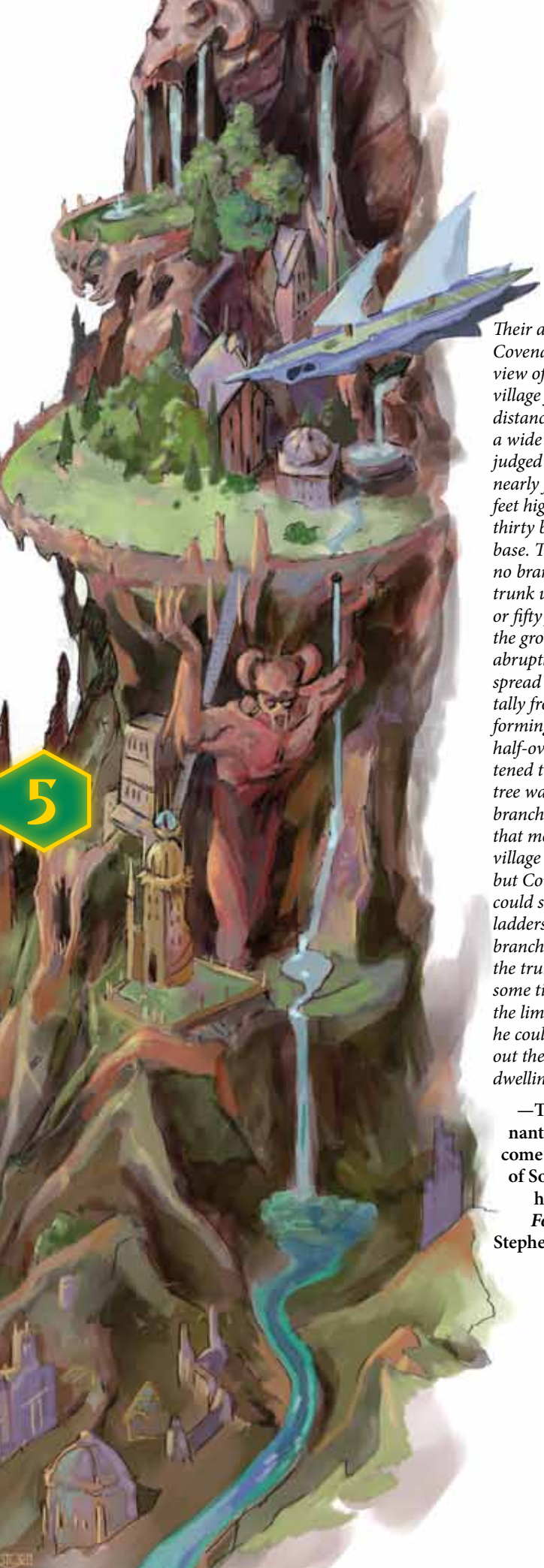
—a description of just one part of fabulous Lankhmar in “Bazaar Of The Bizarre,” by Fritz Leiber

Broadly speaking, you can group inhabited areas in a Fantasy campaign into three categories based on the overall population.

A *village* is an inhabited area with no more than about 1,000 people (and often far fewer). It usually features a lot of permanently-settled families engaged in farming and related occupations, perhaps with a few craftsmen such as a blacksmith. It cannot support a large number of “service” businesses (such as taverns), and many villages have none at all. In Fantasy settings, however, most villages have at least one tavern or inn where adventurers can mingle with the local population, since that helps to advance the story. In medieval Europe, the vast majority of the population lived in villages, and the same holds true for many Fantasy worlds.

A *town* is an inhabited area with about 1,000 to 6,000 people. They tended to be at least two days’ travel apart, since they require resources from the surrounding area to survive. They support a larger population of craftsmen, service businesses, and the like. Unlike a village, a town may have a defensive wall, but only if it’s subject to frequent attacks, raids, or other threats.

A *city* is an inhabited area with about 6,000 to 12,000 people. Most kingdoms have few cities (perhaps no more than one or two) because they require a lot of support resources from the surrounding countryside. However, they allow for some technological advancement and improved trade and commerce. In cities characters can find goods from distant lands, service businesses unavailable anywhere else (and plenty of taverns!), and perhaps other features of interest such as colleges or major temples. Cities are almost always located in places with great military or economic significance — river conjunctions, good ocean harbors, the meeting-place of several major roads, and the like — which also have lots of nearby arable land.



Their approach gave Covenant a good view of the tree village from some distance away across a wide glade. He judged the tree to be nearly four hundred feet high, and a good thirty broad at the base. There were no branches on the trunk until forty or fifty feet above the ground, then abruptly huge limbs spread out horizontally from the stem, forming in outline a half-oval with a flattened tip. The whole tree was so thickly branched and leaved that most of the village was hidden; but Covenant could see a few ladders between the branches and along the trunk; and in some tight knots on the limbs he thought he could make out the shapes of dwellings.

—Thomas Covenant and Atiarian come to the village of Soaring Woodhelven in *Lord Foul’s Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

A *large city* (or “metropolis”) has over 12,000 people. Historically, this would include such major population centers as London, Paris, Moscow, Genoa, Constantinople, Beijing, Florence, and Tenochtitlán. Most had 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, but some grew to as many as half a million people. They provide the same resources, services, and opportunities as cities, but to an even greater degree.

Typically no more than ten percent of a kingdom’s population live in large cities, cities, and towns. The rest live in villages.

Note the differences between medieval cities and modern ones. In the First World of the year 2010, an area with 25,000 to 40,000 people barely qualifies as a city in the eyes of many, and the world has numerous cities with multiple millions of people (including over two dozen urban areas with populations exceeding 10 million). The medieval population scale was much, much smaller than that.

MANORS AND CASTLES

The Fastness was a great, forbidding pile of stone, deep in the mountains that divided the Plain from Long Wood. High, concentric walls ringed a cluster of massive towers and rugged buildings, all raised ages ago, by unknown hands, to protect against some long-forgotten enemy. It now served as the westernmost outpost of the High City, a garrison for the guards who patrolled the mountain routes, and a resting place for the caravans.

—a description of the Fastness from *Greymantle*, by John Morressy

The need for economic organization and/or defense leads many societies to build structures besides simple village hovels or town houses. In feudal systems such as the ones in medieval Europe, a lord controlling an estate (a grant of land from a higher authority) might have as part of that estate one or more villages. Some villages belonged entirely to one estate, while others were split between two estates or were independent. To better administrate the estate and work his demesne (the part of the estate he directly cultivated), a lord might build a manor house. A more powerful lord, one with more territory and resources under his control and/or greater military obligations, might even build a castle (with the permission of his liege, typically).

The number of manors in an area depends largely on its level of economic development and prosperity (and of course on how many lords there are with enough wealth to build one). The number of castles in an area depends partly on resources and partly on military need; disputed borders and other areas tend to feature far more castles than peaceful, long-settled regions. Most castles are in settled regions (if for no other reason than they often attract people to supply the needs of the castle), but a few exist in isolated regions.

THE EFFECT OF MAGIC

Of course, the existence of magic may have significant effects on population issues. Healing magics may keep people alive longer, stem epidemics, and reduce deaths due to injury. This would allow the population to reach its maximum size more quickly. But druidic spells may improve that maximum by increasing the yield per acre of land, changing the expected harvest ratio (four to five times as many bushels harvested as bushels of seed sewn) to eight, ten, or even twenty times the bushels sewn. (Magic, like industrialization, may increase population and overcrowding, at least initially.) Teleportation gates, enchanted roadways (or normal roads built at great speed with the help of magic), or even flying ships may make long-distance travel so cheap and easy that villages can spread out as much as they like.

While it’s important not to use the idea that “it’s magic” as an excuse for poor world design, the consistent application of a well-developed magic system to the day-to-day realities of your world can create an extremely interesting setting with lots of possibilities for adventure. Determine the effects of magic in a logical and orderly fashion, paying attention to the consequences of the changes you make, and no one will have legitimate cause to complain about those changes.

SUITING THE NEEDS OF THE STORY

Regardless of how much attention you want to pay to historical realism or the effects of magic, ultimately the most important thing to consider regarding Fantasy demographics is the needs of the story you’re telling — either the story of a particular adventure, or the overall story arc of the campaign. Ignore what demographics tells you if doing so suits the events of the game. If the heroes arrive in a village, and you need that village to have two or three taverns so you can run the murder mystery scenario you have in mind, then let the village have that many taverns despite how “unrealistic” that might be. If you want to create a kingdom with a lot of large cities because that fits into your campaign, do it. As long as the game is fun, it doesn’t matter if it’s not “realistic.”





FANTASY RACES

After you've given some thought to the basic nature, structure, and ecology of your world, you can think about its dominant sentient race or races.

The main issue you need to address is: which races are available for use as a PC race? A race that players can choose for their characters needs a Racial Template and a good bit of thought regarding its presence and role in the setting. If not, you mainly need to think about the role the race plays in the game, and how best you can create it to fulfill that role.

If race creation has a Golden Rule it's this: make sure the races serve a purpose. If a human can play the same role in the story, why go to the trouble of creating an entire race and civilization? The potential roles described below provide some guidance when you create a race, but many other possibilities exist.

RACIAL ARCHETYPES

Some kinds of races turn up again and again in Fantasy stories. This isn't necessarily due to lazy writing or the like — some racial types have become archetypes, recognizable symbols with a suite of accompanying concepts and ideas.

UNUSUAL HUMANS

Many "races" are actually just unusual humans. They have strange customs, languages, types of dress, or weapons — so strange that they may have nothing, or almost nothing, in common with "mainstream" humans — but they're still human. Some common Fantasy examples include horse nomad clans, isolated tropical tribes, archipelagic societies, and peoples who spend almost their entire lives aboard ships.

RACES WITHIN RACES

You can extend the "unusual humans" concept to other races. Even within a single, seemingly homogenous race, there may exist "sub-races" sufficiently different from each other as to almost qualify as separate "race" for game purposes. The Environment/Ancestry Templates on pages 69-75 may represent sub-races, but the difference can be racial or cultural instead of environmental. Additionally, if a race has factions, each with its own history, secrets, and physical types, they may function like subraces. In a Fantasy Hero campaign, this is a great way to provide some easy variety, especially if the players are still learning all the background. An hour's work gives the GM a selection of Templates to offer the players, so everyone can get on with the important business of actual gaming.

ANIMAL-MEN

With roots going back to Aesop's fables, the Animal-Man is among the oldest and most resonant racial archetype. An Animal-Man is a Fantasy race based closely on some kind of real-world animal. Appearance, diet, and personality traits closely follow those of the original animal. The most common Animal-Man races in Fantasy are probably Cat-Folk, Lizard-Folk, Serpent-Folk, and Wolf-Folk, but many others exist. Some may have evolved naturally; others are the products of arcane experiments in millennia past.



 *and for the*

Animal-Men are relatively easy to create because the model animal provides a whole suite of behaviors and traits which naturally fit together. It makes sense for a Cat-Man to be solitary, proud, carnivorous, selfish, and territorial because real cats act that way. Since humans are animals too, with our own set of biological traits, gamers can use Animal-Man races to reveal and comment on different aspects of human behavior.

FLYING RACES

Many Animal-Man races — vulture-men, pterano-men, raptor-men, and so forth — can fly (so can races like gargoyles or half-demons who don't necessarily have animal antecedents). Typically this means they have wings, and thus buy Flight with the *Restrained* Limitation. Because they must be light enough to fly, they may have reduced BODY and possibly a Vulnerability to ordinary physical damage.

AQUATICS AND AMPHIBIANS

He turned. A woman poised lazily before him. She was nude and paper white, with delicate green traces of veins under the skin. Long hair floated about her shoulders, fine and green as the algal weeds. Her face was broad and flat-nosed, with yellow eyes and a heavy sensuous mouth. Neck, torso, limbs, and hands were by contrast not quite human in their slenderness. Holger had never seen such grace as was hers, save in eels.

—Holger Carlsen meets a mermaid in *Three Hearts And Three Lions*, by Poul Anderson

Many Fantasy settings, particularly High Fantasy ones, have intelligent aquatic races. The most common include mer-people of various sorts (a concept often connected to Atlantis-like sunken cities), fish-folk, and intelligent versions of fish or other aquatic species. Some can only breathe water, others have Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Air) and thus are equally at home on the land... assuming they have legs and can walk.

Amphibian races — intelligent beings at home in both water and air — may have Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Water), or they could just have Extended Breathing so they can stay underwater longer than humans or dwarves. Fantasy examples include frog-men, and even some types of lizard-folk and serpent-folk. As amphibians, they may be uncomfortable in dry environments. If so, you could give them a Dependence on water, causing Incompetence after 6 hours or more. This is a 0-point Complication in a setting with lots of water, but in a setting with lots of deserts or grasslands it might be worth 5 or 10 points.

INTERRACIAL SOCIETY

Fantasy races in a human society may or may not seem strange — it all depends on how common non-human sentient races are in the campaign setting (or various parts of the campaign setting). If the campaign takes place in a multiracial setting, then humans and non-humans can often meet on equal terms, and generally neither may take Distinctive Features (see page 169). But if the members of a race are seen as unusual, hostile conquerors, slaves, monsters, or food, they may have problems getting along with humans (or vice-versa). Social matters of this kind are best represented with Complications such as *Distinctive Features*, *Psychological Complication*, *Negative Reputation*, and *Social Complication*. Some examples:

Distinctive Features: Serpent-Man (Concealable With Effort; Noticed And Recognizable; Not Distinctive In Some Cultures Or Societies): 5 points.

Distinctive Features: Serpent-Man Conqueror (Concealable With Effort; Always Recognized, Causes Major Reaction [fear]; Not Distinctive In Some Cultures Or Societies): 10 points.

Negative Reputation: member of a murderous race, 11- (Extreme): 15 points.

Social Complication: Slave Race (Very Frequently, Major): 20 points.

GIANT FOLK

Some Fantasy races in fiction are very big. Giants are one obvious example; others include titans (and related demi-deities), some types of dragons or dragon-men, and tree-men. They're typically built using a Size/Weight Template (6E1 442-45) and related abilities.

HIDEOUS BEINGS

In a setting with lots of races, the average race's appearance probably won't cause any problems (*i.e.*, characters shouldn't take the *Distinctive Features* Complication). But races in a setting where strange beings are uncommon may cause shock, fear, or revulsion in humans they encounter. The simplest way to handle this is to give them Distinctive Features; a negative Comeliness may also be appropriate.

Some races may be so bizarre and unearthly in appearance that their looks actually damage the minds of those who behold them. H.P. Lovecraft's Great Old Ones are an example of sanity-blasting ugliness. You can model this as an Mental Blast (or similar form of attack) with Area Of Effect (Sight Range), Inherent, Always On.

MAGIC RACES

Some Fantasy races possess inherent magic powers, or have an innate gift for practicing magic that other species lack. For example, the Noldor Elves in J.R.R. Tolkien's novels have various "powers" that other races lack (or possess in a much lesser degree). There are many ways to represent this in game terms. For example, you could devise specific mystic powers (the ability to sense magical energy, a *Deadly Blow* Talent that only works against magical creatures) for inclusion in that race's Template. You could also arrange the magic system to give that race a special benefit — a bonus to Magic rolls, or the ability to cast more spells per day than other races can.

MULTIPLE LIMBS

He even met a party of Pachi Lei. This was another of the eight friendly nonhuman species which shared Tekumel with human-kind. Harsan had not been this close to one of these creatures before. They were pear-shaped, soft-skinned beings, greyish-green in hue, a hand taller than a man, with four curiously articulated lower limbs for locomotion and four more, longer upper limbs for swinging in the trees of the forests of the Pan Chakan Protectorate that lay to the south of Harsan's own Do Chakan hills.

—Harsan encounters some Pachi Lei during his journey in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

It's only a historical accident that land-dwelling vertebrates on Earth descend from a fish with four fins — humans could easily have six, eight, or even more limbs, or a tail. Many Fantasy races do, in fact, have more than four limbs; for example, some of the bizarre races of M.A.R. Barker's *Tekumel* have trilateral symmetry, multiple sets of limbs, and/or tails.

The *Extra Limbs* Power, naturally, is the best way to model a race like this. Use the *Inherent Advantage* to reflect the fact that a limb can't easily be "turned off." Of course, *Extra Limbs* primarily applies to manipulatory limbs like arms — if a being has a lot of extra legs or other nonmanipulatory limbs, he might instead buy this as some other power (such as *Increased Running*), or apply the *Limited Manipulation* Limitation to his *Extra Limbs*.

SMALL FOLK

A village of Minikins lay at their feet[— a] cluster of tiny huts, cleverly woven of dried grasses and roofed with thick rubbery leaves. The village warriors had noted the approach of the full-sized humans and had given the alarm. As the travelers bent in fascination over the scene, diminutive mothers, scarce a finger-length in height, scurried for shelters dug under the roots of the bush ... while the males, armed with slender, sharp black thorns, formed a protective ring about the outskirts of the tiny town. They brandished boldly their minuscule weapons, shrilling faint war cries.

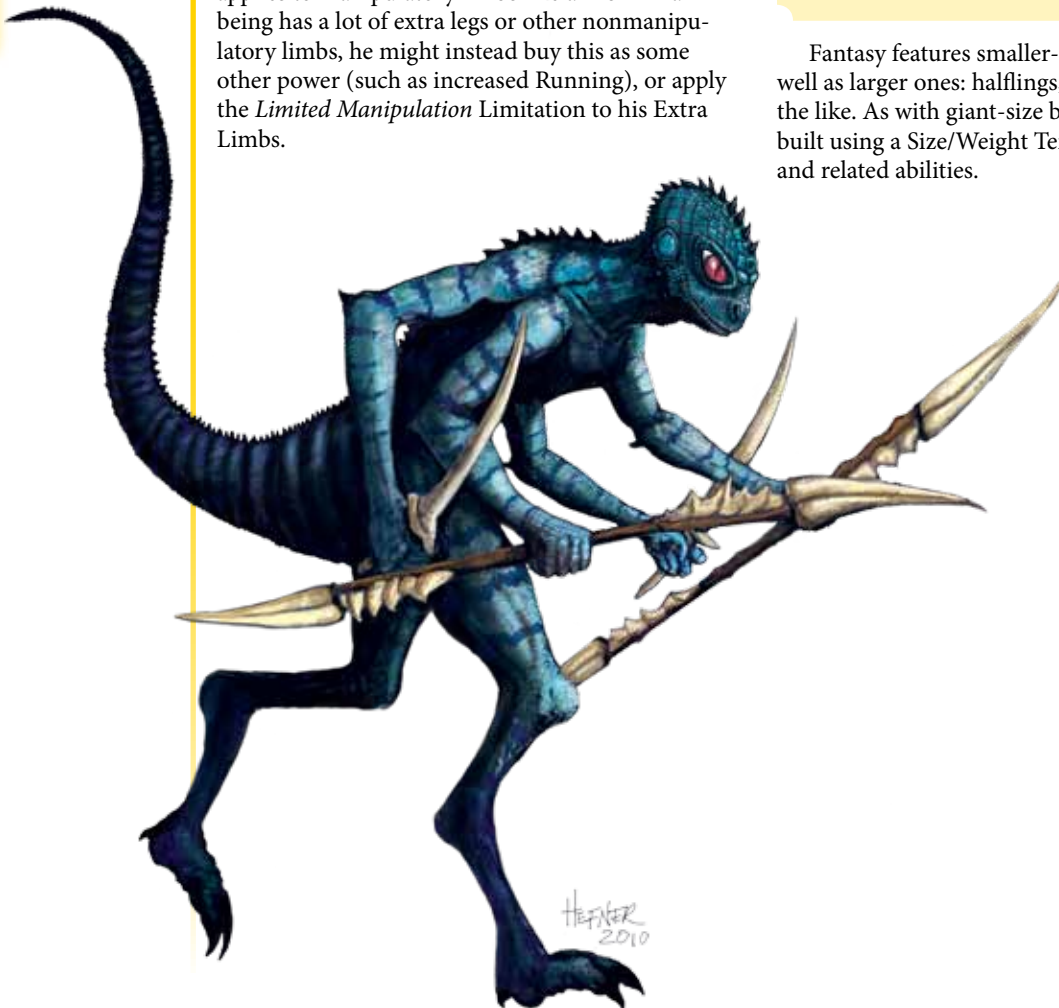
—Chan, Azra, and Dr. Pellsipher meet some diminutive allies in "The Twelve Wizards Of Ong," by Lin Carter

He saw a blue-white, green-white flicker against the foliage. It was a Twk-man, mounted on a dragon-fly, and light glinted from the dragon-fly's wings. ... The Twk-man perched his mount on a twig. "Well, Liane, what do you wish?"

—Liane encounters an insect-riding Twk-man and buys some information from him in "Liane The Wayfarer," by Jack Vance

Fantasy features smaller-than-human races as well as larger ones: halflings, gnomes, sprites, and the like. As with giant-size beings, they're usually built using a *Size/Weight Template* (6E1 442-45) and related abilities.

5



CREATING PLAYER CHARACTER RACES

When creating a race for use as a Player Character race, the GM (or player) must consider the following three questions. If you can't answer all of them "Yes," the race probably isn't suitable for PCs.

Can the character work with others? A water-breathing race in a group of air-breathers is going to have problems, as will a giant adventuring in a world built for humans. Magic can overcome a lot of restrictions, but not necessarily all of them. This is where the GM's input is crucial, since he is likely to know more about how the game world works and what is and isn't practical.

Can the character function in society? A member of a primitive tribe won't do well in a campaign set in a city; neither will a highly superstitious character in a game featuring a lot of magic and monsters. Created beings like golems probably don't even qualify as "people" and may lack free will. If a non-human character is going to cause a brawl wherever the PCs go, the GM should forbid it, or perhaps suggest changes to make the character more playable: the primitive tribesman learned about city life from visiting traders, for example, or the golem has broken free of its master's control and uses an illusion-spell to disguise itself.

Can the character have interesting adventures? While GMs should ask this question about *any* character, they should remain alert for race designs which are either too powerful or too limited. Super-powerful races may unbalance the game, short-circuiting adventures and leaving the other characters with little to do. Overly-limited race may not contribute much to the campaign, leaving both the GM and the player frustrated.

Besides those points, generally speaking a race suitable for use as a player character race needs to be two things: first, interesting and distinctive; second, reasonably balanced in game terms.

DISTINCTIVE

It's easy to create a group of more or less "typical" races as seen in Fantasy; that's part of what Chapter Two of this book does. The race described there are "generic," easily adapted to many different settings, and should save you the work of creating similar races for your own games — just adapt the Templates as necessary, and provide some setting-specific description and context, and you're ready to go.

Creating an all-new race, solely for your own campaign, requires a little more effort. Since the "standard" races are already well-known, you usually need to find a way to make yours distinctive, intriguing, and in some way "new." There are two main ways to do this.

First, you can distinguish your race through its appearance and/or mannerisms. Maybe *your* lizard-folk race has special scale coloration patterns that say certain things about the individual and have significantly influenced the race's culture. Perhaps your dwarves are a clean-shaven forest-dwelling folk renowned for their woodcraft and hunting skills. Maybe your halflings only live in cities and are often skilled warriors and assassins renowned for their violent tempers.

Second, you can distinguish your race through attitude and behavior. Many Fantasy races have their own "codes of honor," ones humans sometimes have trouble comprehending, that makes them distinctive. Others have various personality traits — pacifism, aggressiveness, piety — that are so ingrained, for biological or cultural reasons, that the vast majority of race members display them. A unique behavioral pattern often goes a long way toward setting a race apart. Just be careful it doesn't become a caricature.

BALANCED

In *HERO System* game terms, it's also important that a race be "balanced" — that is, provide enough game-based benefits and abilities to make it attractive as a Player Character choice, but not so many that every player wants his character to belong to it. No race is perfect; each should provide a proper mix of advantages and drawbacks, making it three-dimensional and beneficial to the game.

Fortunately, the *HERO System* rules make this fairly easy, since characters have to pay for all prominent abilities with Character Points. If a race has so many abilities that its Template costs 50 points, then the character only has another 125 points to spend on Characteristics, Skills, and the like. A character of a "lesser" race might only have a 4-point Template, but that leaves him with 171 points to spend on other things. In the end, both characters are built on 175 Character Points, which means that, over the course of the campaign, each one should be equally effective. One may be better at combat, the other at diplomacy, but in the end they contribute to the group's accomplishments (and the players' fun) in equal measure.

HOW MANY POINTS IN A TEMPLATE?

There's no specific cost requirement for Racial Templates, since the cost depends on how many innate abilities and traits a race has. Some race have many positive attributes, leading to expensive Templates (like the Gargoyle Template on page 59, which costs 107 points). Others have more drawbacks than benefits.

However, in most Fantasy Hero campaigns, Racial Templates work best if they cost about 3-25 Character Points. That way the investment of Character Points is significant, but not so overwhelming that players can't personalize their characters with other purchases.



COMMON RACE TRAITS

Individuals living in a civilization cannot help but be affected by it. In particular, they often acquire the same Complications reflecting common attitudes and assumptions — as noted in the main text, it's all too common in Fantasy for every single member of a given race to have certain personality traits or beliefs. Here are some suggestions on how *HERO System* Complications link to various aspects of a civilization.

Dependent NPC: In many traditional societies, ties of kinship and personal loyalty are strong. They're also one of the bases of hereditary government. Characters from Farming or Nomadic economies, or from states where rulership is hereditary, could have numerous DNPCs in the form of distant relations, loyal retainers, liegemen, and the like. (Similarly, this can lead to characters having a plethora of Contacts and/or Followers; GMs might even mandate this by allotting points to those Perks in the Racial Template.)

Enraged/Berserk: Warrior cultures, like Nomadic economies or carnivorous race, may have this Complication. Triggers often include “sense of honor offended” or “insulted.”

Hunted: In civilizations with intrusive governments or repressive legal systems, the rulers may watch just about everyone at one time or another. Those who oppose the government are Hunted. If one race is at war with another, each race may be Hunting its enemy.

Psychological Complication: Codes of conduct are the most common culture-specific Psychological Complications. Honor-bound societies have Codes Of Honor, Honorable, or Vengeful; the GM and players should be certain to define the boundaries of such codes, to minimize disputes about how a character should act in a given situation. Pacifist cultures have Code Versus Killing. Religious societies encourage Piety (Common, Moderate) if not outright Religious Fanaticism (Common, Total). Vital, expansive cultures may also encourage Overconfidence.

But a society can also have built-in fears and hatreds. A totalitarian society induces Paranoia in most citizens. Citizens of a state with a long history of warfare with a neighbor may develop an ingrained Hatred of those people.

Social Complication: Societies which include racial or linguistic minorities may have widespread prejudice against them among the majority population; this could create a common Minor Social Complication. Other minorities could be actively persecuted — subject to constant harassment and the threat of mob violence. That's a Major or Severe Social Complication.

TEMPLATE COMPONENTS

A Racial Template, such as the ones in Chapter Two, consists of two parts: abilities and Complications.

ABILITIES

“Abilities” are the Skills and other attributes native to the race. They consist primarily of three things:

- Characteristic bonuses
- Skills, Perks, and Talents possessed by every member of the race
- Powers

CHARACTERISTICS

The most common element of Racial Templates are Characteristic bonuses. Using human (*i.e.*, no additions or subtractions to the base Characteristic values established in the rules) as a baseline, decide what your race is like. Is it stronger, tougher, smarter, more insightful, or stronger-willed than humans, on the average? If so, a starting bonus to the appropriate Characteristic(s) may be in order. Typically these bonuses range from +1 point to +5 points' worth of the Characteristic, paid for at the normal cost. Bonuses above +5 points are possible, but should be relatively rare.

On the other hand, some races suffer from reduced Characteristics and movement — they're weaker, more frail, stupider, or less insightful than average (*i.e.*, than humans), and a reduction in their starting Characteristics reflects this. In most cases, the reduction should be -1 to -3 points; more than that may cause problems for a starting character. Unlike Complications, reduced Characteristics or movement directly reduce the cost of a Racial Template.

SKILLS, PERKS, AND TALENTS

Skills, Perks, and Talents are much less common in Racial Templates than Characteristic bonuses. As noted on 6E1 37, it's unusual for every member of a race to have the same Skills (other, of course, than Everyman Skills). Given the many different ways characters in any setting can grow up and learn, it's highly unlikely that *every member* of a race would learn the same Skills. Typically, Skills in a Template represent some innate ability native to the race which is best represented as a Skill. For example, all members of a Wolf-Folk race might have Animal Handler (Canines) to represent their natural ability to relate to dogs, wolves, and the like. (However, Skills may be appropriate for Cultural Templates; see page 67.)

Perks should rarely occur in Racial Templates. They're often appropriate for Professional Templates, but it's uncommon for every member of an entire race to have a particular Perk.

Talents are the same as Skills — a good way to simulate innate abilities possessed by a race. Most Talents are useful only for individuals, but a few make good race abilities. For example, a winged race might have natural Bump Of Direction, derived from an ancient need to migrate south during cold weather. On the other hand, it's relatively unlikely that every given member of a race would have Lightning Reflexes or Speed Reading.

POWERS

Some race have Powers in their Templates, to reflect natural abilities that can't be accurately created using other game elements. Typically, these include:

- natural weaponry (HAs, HKAs)
- natural defenses (Resistant Protection, Resistant (+½) defenses)
- unusual senses (Nightvision, Increased Arc Of Perception)
- enhanced or expanded forms of movement (Flight, increased Swimming)

In most cases, the Powers bought for a Racial Template have relatively few Active Points, and/or are heavily Limited. There are a few exceptions, but keeping the costs and effectiveness of innate Power-based abilities low is usually best for game balance.

COMPLICATIONS

For racial Complications, it's usually best to stick to physical handicaps that would obviously affect every member of a race. For example, all of the bat-folk may have weak eyesight. Mental and social restrictions should rarely be a part of Racial Templates. Characters are individuals, and shouldn't be required to act alike because of a common Psychological Complication or the like. Even among a relatively homogenous race, individuals don't think exactly alike, or approach problems the same way. However, in a specific campaign setting, races which are widely discriminated against may qualify for a Hunted (Watched) or Social Complication.

DIVERSITY

Members of Fantasy races are often all depicted as alike in Fantasy stories and movies. Every elf speaks the same language (Elvish), practices the same religion, looks similar to other elves, likes the same things, and follows the same traditions. While this may be appropriate in some instances, realistically few (if any) civilizations are totally uniform. Even a nation as small as the United Kingdom has pronounced and recognizable regional differences — a Scotsman, a Midlander, and a Welshman are all different from one another and from Londoners. As a rule, assume any society or race containing more than 100,000 people contains at least a few minority groups. They may speak a different language (or have a markedly different accent or regional dialect), follow a different religion, or be from a different racial background. In a Fantasy setting, a minority might practice a different religion (such as the Jews in predominantly Catholic medieval Europe), react to or use magic differently, speak a different language (or at least a dialect of their group's standard language), and/or have a different hair or skin color. Consult the Diversity Table if you prefer to determine minority percentages randomly.

Gamemasters should note that it is a Bad Idea to directly map current social problems into a Fantasy setting. Players often have strong opinions which don't match your own, and it's extremely easy to look ham-handed or silly. If you want to explore themes of prejudice, assimilation versus ethnic identity, or cultural diversity, it's probably more effective to use issues which exist in the game world as part of the setting, rather than pasting in something from today's headlines.

LANGUAGE

*"Be careful, friends!" cried Gildor laughing.
"Speak no secrets! Here is a scholar in the
Ancient Tongue."*

—Gildor remarks on Frodo's knowledge
of Elvish speech in *The Fellowship
Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Fantasy and language often have a close relationship. Some of the greatest fantasists, such as J.R.R. Tolkien and M.A.R. Barker, created their Fantasy worlds and stories at least partly to provide a basis for entire fictional languages they created. The power of words is a feature of many settings (see page 22), and the wondrous names so characteristic of the genre often do more to get gamers in the "Fantasy mood" than any other element of the game. (On the other hand, foolish-sounding names and words can kill that mood more quickly than just about anything.)

Language often helps to define a Fantasy race, nation, or civilization. It's not uncommon for each of the major races in a Fantasy setting to have its own language, possibly with multiple dialects. And of course, the individuals and subgroups that make up a civilization, whatever their race, must have a way to communicate with each other. Most civilizations have a single language, or at least a common secondary language known to most educated people. In Classical civilization, Latin and Greek were the unifying languages; in Medieval and Renaissance Europe, Latin and French did the job.

DIVERSITY TABLE

Roll (2d6)	Diversity Of Civilization
0-3	Completely uniform: no minority groups
4-5	Mostly uniform: 1d6% minorities, no more than 1% each
6-7	Slight diversity: 2d6% minorities, 1d6% each
8-9	Some diversity: 3d6% minorities, 1d6% each
10	Diverse: 1d6 x 5% minorities, 2d6% each
11	Pluralistic: 2d6 x 5% minorities, 3d6% each
12	Polyglot: No group more than 3d6% of population

Modifiers: -1 for population 100,000 or less; -4 for 10,000 or less; -6 for less than 1,000

Fantasy languages depend heavily on how the organisms communicate and sense their environment. Humans use sound and visual signals, and have developed spoken and written language. Others are possible: a tactile language (like Braille), a language based on scents or tastes (an important part of the way many animals on Earth communicate), or a language using color changes or light flashes (like the signals of squid or fireflies). Psionic races might have a partially or wholly telepathic or empathic language, while beings with electric field sense might use that to communicate in a kind of living radio.

Of course, most GMs aren't dedicated and obsessive enough to create one or more Fantasy languages for a campaign; nor are most players willing to learn one. So a Fantasy language usually comes down to names for things and places. There are three main factors to keep in mind when inventing race words and names. The first is sound. This is fiction, so you can choose words and names for the way they sound. Look at some of J.R.R. Tolkien's creations: Rivendell sounds like a pleasant place, while Mordor sounds ominous. Second, consider animal sounds. In the case of races based on Earth animals, use the noises the animals make as a basis for the race speech — hisses and rasps for lizard-folk, and vowels for cat-folk. Lastly, if you can't be evocative, at least try not to sound goofy. Many professionals have failed at this. Don't use thinly-disguised names of real people, or jumbles of nonsense.

Æs AND APOSTROPHES

Three tricks used by many Fantasy authors to create words that don't look or sound very much like English are to include apostrophes in them (example: *na'senna*), to insert diphthongs (vowel combinations pronounced as one sound; the combination *ae* is a frequently-used example), and to add diacritics (accent signs placed above, below, or through letters to indicate a phonetic value, such as acute accent marks, tildes, and circumflexes).

In moderation, there's nothing wrong with any of these practices. They clearly signal that the word isn't one from a real language familiar to the reader, giving the word a Fantasy veneer without the need for extensive linguistic research or tinkering. However, used to excess this sort of thing can quickly become annoying — repetitive and difficult to pronounce.

To mix things up a bit, consider trying other ways of splitting up or distinguishing words. Substitute commas and dashes for apostrophes, or macrons and cedillas for acute and grave accent marks. Or just leave out the fancy punctuation and rely on the sounds and usage of the word to get its Fantasy feel across.

In a pinch, real languages are a good resource. They have an internal logic and structure of their own. Using an existing tongue for races only creates problems if any of the players recognizes the words, but GMs can get around that by appropriating the sound and feel of a real language without using specific vocabulary. An atlas is a very good source for the sounds of a given language. For example, you could base a language on Malay — appropriate for a race inhabiting a world with lots of islands. A map of Malaysia provides place names like Penang, Kelantan, Trengganu, Berhala, and Batang. Instead of using them directly, you can recombine them, getting *Pengguna*, *Kelang*, *Trengala*, *Berantan*, and *Batanu*.

THE COMMON TONGUE

As noted above, historically it wasn't unusual for regions or large political entities to have a *lingua franca* so that everyone could communicate at some level even if the "universal speech" wasn't their first language. Fantasy worlds, particularly ones created for gaming, often take this one step further and establish a *common tongue* for the entire world (or at least the parts the PCs adventure in). This is done for simple expediency: it's not much fun to constantly have to play out the communications difficulties that arise because the PCs only speak High Vestrian, Dwarvish, and Elfin, while the merchant they want to buy goods from or the city guard they need to persuade only speaks Velunese. A Common Tongue of this sort isn't entirely "realistic," but it tends to make game play more fun, so don't worry about using one in your campaign if you're so inclined.

WRITING

At the portal hung a sign he had not seen before. Black symbols conveyed a daunting admonition:

**WARNING!
TRESPASSERS! WAYFARERS! ALL
OTHERS!
ADVANCE AT RISK!**

If you cannot read these words, cry out "KLARO!" and the sign will declare the message aloud.

—Shimrod reads the warning sign at Swer Smoud in *Madouc*, by Jack Vance

Any kind of complex civilization needs some form of permanent language. Humans write things, so they and others can read them later. Magic spells might also allow people in a Fantasy setting to "record" images or sounds to "play" later. Other possible forms of writing include tying patterns of knots in cords (like the Incas did), notching bones or sticks in a pattern representing words, punching holes in hides, and so forth. Whatever the method, it should be relatively easy (nobody takes notes by chiseling words in stone), relatively permanent, and relatively portable.

FANTASY CIVILIZATIONS



Once you have your geography and races established, you can decide how they all interact to form civilizations on your world. (Or you could create the civilizations first and then build a world to explain them, of course!) This includes a wide array of subjects for you to consider — history, economics, religion, and more.

HISTORY

After Elendil and Isildur there were eight High Kings of Arnor. After Eärendur, owing to dissensions among his sons their realm was divided into three: Arthedain, Rhudaur, and Cardolan.

—part of the history of the North-kingdom from the appendices to *The Return Of The King*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

When I began writing the Conan stories a few years ago, I prepared this “history” of his age and the peoples of that age, in order to lend him and his sagas a greater aspect of realism. And I found that by adhering to the “facts” and spirit of that history, in writing the stories, it was easier to visualize (and therefore to present) him as a real flesh-and-blood character rather than a ready-made product.

—by explaining why he wrote a brief history of the Hyborian Age, Robert E. Howard offers some insight to GMs and players

Mix a world, people, and time, and the inevitable result is history. Recorded or unrecorded, your Fantasy world's history shapes and influences the setting to create the world in which the PCs adventure. If you want to get the maximum value out of the world you create, you should detail and understand its history, not just the current state of affairs.

In the same way that paying attention to “realistic” ecology makes the geography of your campaign, and thus the campaign itself, better, a well-developed history helps your world to “make sense” both to you and the players. Civilizations and people don't exist in a vacuum; they have a past that's brought them to the present. For most gamers, it's not enough to say “elves and dwarves hate each other” — there needs to be a *reason* for that hatred, a historical basis. Two races don't just wake up one day and start hating one another; something caused that hatred. If you know what that “something” is, you understand your world better... and you might even get a few scenario or character ideas to boot.

As with geography, design your history to suit your campaign's scope. If the game takes place across the entire world, a broad outline of the world's history may suit your needs until the PCs spend a lot of time in one area or you want to create a scenario with some basis in past events. If your campaign focuses on a small part of the world, you probably need to know that region's history in detail, the history of surrounding regions in somewhat less detail, and the history of the rest of the world only to the extent it affects the campaign zone.

Some of the historical events and issues you may want to consider include:

COSMOLOGY

Cosmology refers to the origin and creation of the world. How was your Fantasy setting created? Did it arise as the result of more or less normal planetary creation and geological processes, or perhaps magical versions of those processes? Or did the gods create it — and if so, which gods, and what role did each of them play?

Perhaps more importantly, how do the various major civilizations and religions in your world think it was created? Fantasy peoples don't have the understanding of astronomy and geology that modern Earth-folk do; instead, they'll come up with an explanation that suits what they *can* observe and understand, their religion, or the like. Developing some clever and interesting creation myths for your world may help to differentiate the various peoples and offer some insight into their cultures and beliefs.

“Alas, [the Creator] did not undersand Despite, or had forgotten it. He undertook his task thinking that perfect labor was all that he required to create perfection. But when he was done, and his pride had tasted its first satisfaction, he looked closely at the Earth, thinking to gratify himself with the sight — and he was dismayed. For behold! Buried deep in the Earth through no will or forming of his were banes of destruction, powers virile enough to rip his masterwork into dust. ... In fury he wrestled with Despite, ... and in his fury he cast the Despiser down, out of the infinity of the cosmos onto the Earth.”

—Lord Tamarantha explains the cosmology of the Land to Thomas Covenant in *Lord Foul's Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

Known history begins with the waning of the Pre-Cataclysmic civilization, dominated by the kingdoms of Kamelia, Valusia, Verulia, Grondar, Thule and Commoria. These peoples spoke a similar language, arguing a common origin. There were other kingdoms, equally civilized, but inhabited by different, and apparently older races.

—from “The Hyborian Age,” an introduction to the Conan stories written by Robert E. Howard

King Audry I of Dahaut at last took a fateful step. He declared that since he sat on the throne Evandig, the must be acknowledged King of the Elder Isles.

King Phristan of Lyonesse at once challenged him. Audry assembled a great army and marched down Icnield Way through Pomperol and into Lyonesse. King Phristan led his army north. At the Battle of Orm Hill the armies fought for two days and finally separated in mutual exhaustion. Both Phristan and Audry died in combat and both armies retired. Audry II failed to press his father's claim; effectively Phristan had won the battle.

—a battle affects the course of world events and leads to a grand epic story as told in the “Lyonesse Trilogy,” by Jack Vance

RACES AND NATIONS

The founding, rise, and perhaps fall of various racial and/or national groups, while not as stark or easily chronicled as wars, catastrophes, or the actions of great men, form a strong and important undercurrent in history, Fantasy or otherwise. Authors such as Tolkien, Howard, and Eddings have placed great emphasis on the movements and natures of various races within their worlds, giving those settings a verisimilitude and depth many lesser creations lack. If one race conquers (or is conquered by) another, accidentally causes some magical catastrophe, travels a great distance to escape some threat (or take advantage of some opportunity), or develops a new, powerful form of sorcery, that's something for your world's history to note.

For example, consider the issue of demographic diversity, discussed on page 347. If a population is relatively homogenous, ask yourself why. Is it geographically isolated? Does its religion or culture label all other people “beast-folk” or “barbarians” unfit to mingle with “true” humans? Similarly, if a population is mixed, think about how it got that way. Does it exist on a great crossroads of trade? Is it an area where numerous conquering armies have passed through over the centuries, each leaving the imprint of its people and culture?

Of course, in many Fantasy settings (particularly High Fantasy), you've got more than races within one species to think about. You have the other Fantasy “races” to consider — winged folk, elves, gnomes, whatever you've chosen for your setting. That may complicate the racial/national picture considerably... or simplify it.

WARS AND CONFLICTS

Much of Earth's history is a record of one war, rebellion, struggle, or conquest after another, and it's entirely likely your Fantasy world contains a similar level of conflict. Wars work well for Fantasy history; they're easily chronicled, often dramatic, and can have major impacts on societies.

When inserting a war (or similar conflict) into your Fantasy history, consider several issues. First, who was involved? Was it a war pitting two sides against each other, or a multi-pronged conflict featuring three, four, or more participants?

Second, what caused the conflict? Wars don't just spring up out of nowhere; even when the spark setting them off seems relatively trivial (as with World War I), the powderkeg behind the scenes has been building up for a long time. The source/cause of the war may tell you as many useful things as its outcome.

Third, who won, and what was the degree of victory? Some triumphs cost more than they're worth in the long run (or the short run), while others unquestionably benefit the winner.

Fourth, what notable events occurred during the war? Did a key territory change hands, or an important king or warrior die in battle?

Fifth, what short-term and long-term effects did the war have? Was the loser obliterated, or at least decimated (in the classical sense of the term)? Was the loser's entire nation destroyed? Was one religion cast down, and another set in its place? Did the winner obtain trading advantages that made it a world power for centuries to come? Did survivors on the losing side flee, start a rebellion, and eventually come back to destroy their enemies? The repercussions of the war probably mean more to your history than the war itself.

Of course, not all wars are military ones. You could also have a trade war pitting two economic powerhouses against each other, or a cold war of espionage and assassination. In a Fantasy setting, wars of magic (arcane or divine) may arise as well, or the gods may become involved in a war (directly or indirectly). All of these types of conflict affect the world around them as much as they do the combatants.

NOTABLE FIGURES

Another historical factor to consider is the role of the notable figure — an individual who, due to luck, personal power, or other circumstances, places his distinctive stamp on a nation or era. For a Fantasy campaign, the major possibilities include kings, generals, mighty warriors, wizards, and powerful priests, but many other types of people might change the course of history. For example, a charismatic slave with a gift for tactics might inspire his fellow slaves to start a revolt that topples a mighty empire.

Notable figures don't usually appear out of nowhere (though that is possible, in a Fantasy game). When you include one in your setting, think about where he came from, how he got there, and what led him to change the world. The answers may lead you to scenario ideas, character ideas, or just the next logical step in your fictitious history.

CATASTROPHES AND DISASTERS

In the Atlantic, the island creaed by the appearance of Joald's black pate sank beneath the surface. The arm fell with an enormous splash, creating a wave four hundred feet high which rolled toward the coast of South Ulfland. It struck full into the estuary of the Evander and sent a monstrous wall of water rushing up the valley, and the fabulous city Ys was lost. ... When the waters became calm, Ys of the Ages, Ys the Beautiful, Ys of the Many Palaces, was sunk beneath the sea.

—the city Ys is destroyed in *Madouc*, by Jack Vance

People tend to remember calamitous events longer and more vividly than “the good times,” so catastrophes and disasters may crop up disproportionately in your Fantasy history than times of peace and cultural advancement.

Catastrophes and disasters generally fall into two categories. The first is *natural disasters*. Examples include earthquakes, droughts, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, famine, blizzards, tidal waves, natural fires, and plagues. Absent strong protective magics, there's little a Fantasy society can do to prevent these disasters; it can only weather them as best it can and pick up the pieces in the aftermath. The second is *man-made disasters*.

An invasion is the best example of this category; others include man-started fires, mass poisonings, magically-caused catastrophes, and the like.

When you insert a disaster into your Fantasy history, consider its cause and effect. Natural disasters rarely have any cause with a bearing on history, but man-made disasters usually have a story behind them. Both types of catastrophes can have significant effects. For example, a massive flood may wreck an entire civilization, a plague could weaken a nation so badly that it succumbs to enemy attack, or a minor earthquake may kill the royal family and touch off a bloody war of succession.

EXPLAINING PREVAILING ATTITUDES

If people in your campaign world have specific attitudes or beliefs, you may want to lay the groundwork for those beliefs in your history. The aforementioned hatred between elves and dwarves, a common feature of many High Fantasy worlds, is one example. Some others:

- Suppose the peoples of the Southern Realms are highly superstitious of the Northmen, or anything that comes from the North. Why? Did a powerful Northron wizard once place a

curse on the southern lands? Were Northern raids and attacks so common long ago that “the Northmen will get you!” became a common way for mothers to scare children into obedience?

- If your magic system description indicates people generally fear spellcasters, you may want to decide why. It could just be because people who wield strange powers can be dangerous, and are therefore worth avoiding. But is it possible a specific event caused peoples' attitudes to arise, or to become stronger?
- Why are the followers of the god Salbrath so universally despised that they must wander from place to place, or live in ghettos in large cities? Do all the other gods dislike Salbrath and pass their feeling on to their worshippers? Did the Salbrathians once commit a heinous crime? Do other people just want someone to blame their troubles on?

RECENT AND CURRENT EVENTS

Lastly, don't ignore recent and current events when planning your history. What's been going on in the past few years, during the PCs' lifetimes to date in general? Knowing that a drought occurred last year, that goblin raiding has increased over the past decade, or that necromancers have become generally more powerful since the massive earthquake in Keldravia five years ago helps the players to understand that their characters exist in a living, vibrant world. It also gives the GM plenty of fodder for creating scenarios based on recent occurrences.

“Those were happier days, when there was still close friendship at times between folk of different race, even between Dwarves and Elves.”

“It was not the fault of the Dwarves that the friendship waned,” said Gimli.

“I have not heard that it was the fault of the Elves,” said Legolas.

“I have heard both,” said Gandalf; “and I will not give judgement now.”

—Gandalf, Gimli, and Legolas discuss race relations in Middle-earth in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien



CULTURE

Broadly speaking, *culture* is the way people act and the things they do apart from the business of making a living and running society. It includes art, literature, food, and games. These things can be very important to the identity of a nation or civilization — two groups with the same kinds of government and economy may become bitter enemies because of cultural differences.

In addition to elements described more extensively elsewhere in this chapter (such as religion), cultural considerations you should keep in mind when creating Fantasy civilizations include:

ARTS, ARCHITECTURE, AND ENTERTAINMENT

The diversions of the noble households, on the other hand, were very much to Harsan's taste. There were mimes and dances, presented by slave performers or by various lower clans specializing in these things, and there were also recitals of poetry and music. He became almost a connoisseur of the Tenturen, the huge twelve-stringed instrument favoured in central Tsolyanu.

—Harsan gets to experience many of Tsolyanu's artistic offerings in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

Perhaps the most obvious, and easily described for game purposes, aspects of culture are those relating to art and entertainment. By defining the art forms a civilization produces, you say a lot about that civilization, and also help to set it apart from similar societies.

ARTWORK

The types of art Fantasy societies produce fall into three general categories: graphic; literary; and performing.

GRAPHIC ARTS

The first category is *graphic arts* — art created mainly because it's pleasing to the eye. Examples include painting and sculpture. To define a civilization's graphic arts, ask what types they create, how they create them, and the materials they use. Both Cro-Magnon men and Leonardo da Vinci created paintings, but they did so in different ways for different reasons, each with cultural significance.

In a Fantasy setting, the possibilities for graphic arts multiply due to the potential for unusual races and materials. Perhaps dwarves create the best stone sculptures in the world, doing so to demonstrate their mastery over nature, while the elves "sculpt" trees over decades and centuries by gently guiding their growth as a way of demonstrating elven harmony with (or at least respect for) nature. Similarly, magic could lead to the creation of some truly bizarre graphic art forms, such as mystic light-shows.

LITERARY ARTS

Literary art includes written or spoken art forms: poetry (epic or otherwise); short stories; novels; and the like. Medieval-era societies generally only knew the first of those forms; both short stories and novels came later. However, there's no reason to limit yourself if you want to create a Fantasy equivalent of the Lost Generation or the Algonquin Round Table. Some Fantasy settings, particularly High Fantasy ones, have far more paper and books than medieval Europe or Asia did, making it more likely that people write things for others to read. Similarly, a late medieval- or Renaissance-style Fantasy setting may already have the printing press.

Oral traditions of tale-telling, reciting lays, and the like may be the primary art form of many Fantasy peoples, such as nomads who can't afford to carry books or durable works of art on their journeys. The bard (page 86) often spends a lot of his time engaged in these activities, or in creating new sagas to recount to enraptured audiences. In periods and places without newspapers and television, people like bards were often the only way to learn the news.

PERFORMING ARTS

The *performing arts* are those art forms created to be performed: drama; music; dance; and the like. Again, the bard has an important role to play here as a professional musician, composer, and keeper of lore. It's not uncommon in Fantasy campaigns for a bard character to support himself by traveling from one town to the next, earning a few coins by singing and playing in taverns, for wealthy local lords, and so on.

The types of music performed, and musical instruments used, may say a lot about a civilization. The more sophisticated the culture, the more sophisticated its instruments tend to be, though the availability of materials may limit creativity in this regard. For example, most cultures can create simple drums and pipes without much difficulty at early stages; elaborate stringed instruments like harps, lyres, and guitars require greater societal advancement.

Drama, opera, and similar art forms also require a fairly sophisticated civilization — one at least advanced enough to create a place to perform plays and have the resources to stage them. That usually means large cities (and thus stable populations).

THE ARTIST IN SOCIETY

In addition to the types of art, you should consider how a civilization regards artists. Are they valued members of society, supported by wealthy patrons eager for the prestige that comes from subsidizing the creation of works of beauty? Or are they considered ne'er-do-wells, little better than thieves — people for mobs to drive out of town the first time any little thing goes wrong? Attitudes may vary from one type of artist to another; perhaps people like painters, sculptors, and musicians, but look down on performers and dancers.



RELIGION AND ART

When developing a civilization's art, consider the interaction between art and religion. In some societies, religions attempt to control art, dictating what it can show or even forbidding some forms of art altogether. For example, Islam imposes some significant restrictions on the visual arts. On the other hand, religious organizations might become the chief patrons of some types of artists, hiring painters and goldsmiths to decorate the insides of churches, glassmakers to create stained glass windows, and composers to write hymns. Even if pure visual arts are forbidden or too expensive, those of artistic bent might find a way around the restrictions by, for example, becoming expert calligraphers and illuminators and using their skills to produce religious texts.

SPORTS AND GAMES

You can often tell a lot about a society by finding out what its chief forms of recreation are. For example, a society that values bravery, martial skill, and the like may encourage rough, violent sports as a way of increasing the strength and agility of its youth. A sophisticated, dissolute Fantasy city (the type overthrown by invading barbarian armies in *Swords And Sorcery* stories) might have a class of wealthy gamblers willing to place bets on almost any game or competition. Some sports and games may even have religious significance, as with the Aztec ball-game *tlachtli*.

Generally speaking, the more advanced a civilization, the more elaborate its sports and games. Hunter-gatherer tribes and barbarian clans generally don't create board or card games with lots of rules, for example. However, one type of entertainment found among many sorts of Fantasy

societies are gladiatorial competitions. Warriors from less advanced societies participate in these sports to keep fighting skills honed and feel the excitement of battle; more advanced societies may stage bloodsports so jaded nobles can feel the thrill of combat and death, or to entertain the mob so it doesn't rebel.

CLOTHES AND PERSONAL DECORATION

For the occasion Ildefonse chose to appear as a stalwart young bravo with golden curls falling past his ears, a fine golden mustache, and manner both hearty and large. To complement the thrust of the image, he wore a suit of green velvet, a dark green and gold sash, and a dashing wide-brimmed hat with a white plume.

—Ildefonse dresses for Duke Tambasco's ball in *Rhialto The Marvellous*, by Jack Vance

The types of clothes a race or civilization wears depends on two factors: technology and climate. Technology defines what types of clothes a society can make. Primitive cultures have to rely on furs, animal skins, and other natural "clothes," but once a society develops weaving and the loom, many types of clothing become possible. In some societies, clothing evolves into such elaborate forms that it indicates status and wealth, with sumptuary laws governing who can wear what types of clothing. For example, many societies restricted certain types or colors of clothing to only the royalty and/or nobility.

The pageantry and colour of the Hirilakte Arena were exciting, but Harsan disliked the noise, the heat, and the stink of the crowd. He took no pleasure, moreover, in watching the endless spilling of blood[.]

—on the other hand, gladiatorial games are not to Harsan's taste in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

Climate dictates the type and thickness of clothing worn. In northern regions, people favor thick clothes, fur-lined garments, long-sleeved shirts, and multiple layers of clothing to keep themselves warm and dry. In tropical regions, deserts, and other warm climates, people wear much less clothing — perhaps just a simple one-piece garment like a loincloth — because anything more would be uncomfortable. Some tropical Fantasy societies may even dispense with taboos against nudity, at least in some circumstances or for some classes.

Clothes aren't the only form of personal decoration available in Fantasy worlds. For people who can afford it, jewelry is a popular choice. Rings, necklaces, bracelets, brooches, cloak-pins, pectorals, earrings, noserings, and many other types of jewelry could exist, usually made with precious metals and/or gemstones. (Less wealthy societies may use bone, horn, or semiprecious stone ornamentation.) Another possibility is “body art” — decorative tattooing or scarification — which is quite popular in some societies, and could even be used to distinguish one class or caste from another.

FOOD AND COOKING

While people require food to sustain life, the types of foods eaten and how people prepare them often have as much social significance as biological.

First, consider what a race or civilization eats. Some Fantasy races may be carnivorous (like lizard-folk), and others herbivorous, but most are probably omnivores. Their preferred foods likely depend on what they can raise and what's locally available for hunting or gathering. Given the existence of dangerous fantastic beasts like dragons and manticores, their meat may become a delicacy all the more valued for the difficulty in obtaining it. Religious or social customs may restrict what people can eat, similar to Jewish laws about kosher food on Earth.

Second, consider how a race or civilization prepares its food. Does it cook food in the same buildings where people live, or have separate kitchen buildings to diminish the risk of fire? Are all foods cooked, or do people prefer some raw? Do cooks use spices, and if so how do they obtain them?

Lastly, think about the act of eating. For most people, eating is a social activity, but it doesn't necessarily have to be — some Fantasy societies might prefer solitary eating. If people eat together, do they gather in family units, or work groups, or social groups to do so?

ARCHITECTURE

Technology underlies most architectural styles: a society can't build stone towers until it has the ability to work blocks of stone and move them into place; it can't construct wooden buildings if it has no trees. Large building projects — such as the pyramids of Egypt, the Great Wall of China, or the elaborate stone castles of the late Middle Ages — require a society with enough mathematical skill, manpower, and administrative sophistication to initiate them and keep them going until completion.

Environment also affects design. Buildings in wet or snowy climates have peaked roofs to shed rain, while desert settings feature flat roofs and thick walls for insulation. Fantasy architecture also must fit the size and shape of the builders: winged folk need wide doors so they can walk through them comfortably, but they may not necessarily need those doors at ground level; giants can't live in human-sized houses.

FAMILY, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN

Although most Fantasy Hero adventures have little, if anything, to do with hearth, home, and family, the family structure and customs of a civilization often do more to define it than just about anything else. Two societies that seem otherwise very similar may have wildly different ideas about marriage, the role of women, and funerary practices. If you spend a little time thinking about these issues, not only can you add some depth to your Fantasy civilizations, but you might even come up with a few scenario or character ideas.

SIZE AND FORM

First, consider the size and nature of the typical family unit. Does your Fantasy society have small, “nuclear” families (just father, mother, children), or does it have larger, extended or multigenerational families? While relatively rare in many modern Earth societies, historically the extended/multigenerational family was quite common; it allowed for a pooling of resources and abilities, economies of scale, and security. Growing up in such a family, a child might find himself looked after not just by his parents, but his grandparents, aunts and uncles, adult cousins, and the like.

Second, think about how the family unit fits into the overall society. It might stand by itself, forming social alliances (if any) solely on the basis of proximity, commercial ties, religion, or the like. On the other hand, a family could be part of a larger social unit — a tribe or clan. Many Fantasy settings feature a tribe or clan structure for at least some civilizations, since they can lead to all sorts of interesting adventures: clan warfare; tribal espionage; efforts to displace more prominent clans in the king's favor; and so on.

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND CHILDREN

Related to the issue of family size and form is the nature of marriage and divorce within society. What forms of marriage does your Fantasy society allow? In some civilizations, marriage is monogamous (one man and one woman); since this is similar to most modern Earth societies, it's an easy concept for gamers to grasp. On the other hand, polygamous marriages — either polygynous (one man, multiple women) or polyandrous (one woman, many men) — could also exist in some Fantasy societies as they have in some Earth societies. This can definitely give a Fantasy society an “otherworldly” feel.

Regardless of the form of marriage, how easy is it for someone to get married? Do parents arrange marriages without the couple having any say in the matter, or can people marry for love? Does getting married involve an elaborate religious ceremony, or does two people living together for a long period and/or having children constitute a marriage in the eyes of society?

Of course, sometimes married people decide they no longer wish to remain married. Does society sanction divorce — and if so, how easily can someone obtain one? Can only the husband divorce his wife, or can either partner initiate a divorce? Can a couple obtain a divorce only for specified reasons (barrenness, adultery, failure to produce a male heir), or does any reason suffice? If a couple divorces, what happens to their property and children — does one of them keep everything, or do they divide their possessions equally?

Another issue to consider is the “sacredness” (so to speak) of marriage. Does your Fantasy society regard marriage as a solemn and binding union to which one must remain faithful, or is it simply a social arrangement of convenience without much meaning? The answer may depend on social class, one's religion, or other factors. For example, perhaps the lower classes have no restrictions and can marry for love; the upper and wealthy classes use arranged marriages to obtain political and commercial power and don't care if the couple loves each other. If a society doesn't consider marriage a love-bond, it may have no taboo against adultery, or consider concubinage acceptable (it might even encourage those institutions).

CHILDREN AND THEIR EDUCATION

In most Fantasy-era civilizations, one of the main purposes of marriage, if not *the* main purpose, was to have children. Not only did this increase the population, it gave the parents some guarantee of security in their old age (their children could look after them) and might allow a family to cultivate more farmland or expand a business.

Of course, if children exist, someone has to educate them. Methods of education vary, often with the economic system — in farming cultures children learn at home or in a small village school, while more advanced civilizations may establish

a modernistic school system. Other societies might rely on tutors, thus limiting education only to those able to afford it. In a Fantasy world with learned magic, where studying can lead to actual power, education may become more popular than it was in the real world.

WOMEN IN SOCIETY

How does your Fantasy civilization treat women? Historically, most societies treated women as second-class citizens, sometimes no better (or even worse than) slaves or property. Others gave them a more equal role, or at least granted them some rights and allowed for the possibility they could achieve positions of prominence within society. There are enough examples of notable women in myth and history — the warrior-queen Boudicca, Atalanta, Joan of Arc, Skadi, Hatshepsut — to let you set up a world that has opportunities for female characters without straining the verisimilitude.

If for no other reason than allowing female players to participate in the game equally, most Fantasy Hero campaigns feature at least some societies that treat women the same as men, or provide other outlets by which women can interact on an even footing with men. (One good example of this is the society depicted in the *Deed Of Paksenarrion* trilogy by Elizabeth Moon, but there are plenty of others.) For example, perhaps only women can use some powerful forms of magic, or some prominent gods only have priestesses. Taking a cue from a lot of modern Fantasy novels written by women, Fantasy Hero worlds often feature some sort of foolproof contraceptive herb, thus freeing women to explore roles other than “wife and mother.”

FUNERARY CUSTOMS

Even in a High Fantasy world with resurrection spells, most people have to die and remain dead at some point. That raises the question of how society treats its dead. Are the deceased buried or cremated? Are they exorcised (flesh removed from the bones) by exposure to the elements or by priests prior to this treatment? Does your Fantasy society practice some form of mummification or the like? In some Fantasy-era civilizations, like ancient Egypt, funerary customs became incredibly elaborate and expensive, leading to the formation of entire industries of body-handlers, grave-diggers and -decorators, mummifiers... and tomb-robbers.

If a society buries its dead, does it bury grave goods along with them? If so, that could make tomb-robbing a potentially lucrative profession. That in turn leads to tomb designs filled with traps (both mundane and magical) to protect the body and its possessions.

In some worlds, the existence of necromantic magic may affect funerary practices. Rather than have their loved ones return as the skeleton or zombie servants of some necromancer, families may arrange to have bodies completely destroyed, or at least broken into pieces. If Evil necromancers become a problem for society, the rulers may *order* the destruction of all corpses, regardless of what the families want.

“I am trothed to the Prince of Aijan,” she said coolly[.] “Since I am now of age, my father, the Prince Valemyr, dispatched me to the court of my future husband, Prince Shio.”

—Carthalla explains her current situation to Kellory in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter



For men in Yarnith are buried with their feet and faces turned towards Yarni Zai, lest he might beckon to them in their night and call them to him.

—the funerary practices of Yarnith are described in “The Men Of Yarnith,” by Lord Dunsany

The lowest roadway was used by anyone: merchants, peasants, work-gangs, caravans of slaves bearing the goods of the Empire, the great trundling Chlen-carts which creaked their leisurely way from city to city laden with heavier items, and common travellers such as Harsan. The middle level was reserved by custom — and by harsh Tsolyani law — for members of the aristocracy, troops, officials, and priests of the higher Circles. The uppermost level belonged to the great nobles, the highest clergy, and couriers upon the Emperor's business.

—Harsan muses on the three-tiered Sakbe roads that help to enforce the rigid class distinctions of the Tsolyani Empire in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

SOCIAL CLASSES

"He is Deryni. He has no rights to be wronged!"

—Richard Murdoch expresses the societal contempt for Deryni in *King Javan's Year*, by Katherine Kurtz

Most societies, Fantasy or otherwise, establish some forms of social organization based on class, caste, standing within society, or the like. This raises several issues for you to consider.

First, how many divisions exist within society? Many Fantasy Hero games can get by with a simple three-tier system: lower class; middle class; upper class. The upper class contains the rulers, nobles, and wealthiest/most powerful citizens; the middle class typically contains tradesmen, merchants, skilled craftsmen, and others with valuable skills or property; everyone else falls into the lower class (by far the largest). However, you can establish a much more complex system than that. The classical civilization of India had dozens or hundreds of castes, for example.

Second, how did the classes form? Did they evolve naturally as the result of some people obtaining more power and wealth for themselves? Did a king or a religion impose the class system on society? When they created the world, did the gods decree that all people fell into a particular caste?

Third, regardless of how the classes formed, what role does the class system play within your Fantasy civilization? A person's class might govern the jobs he could have as an adult, the level of education he receives as a child, his opportunity to learn magic, his right to carry and use weapons, or the like.

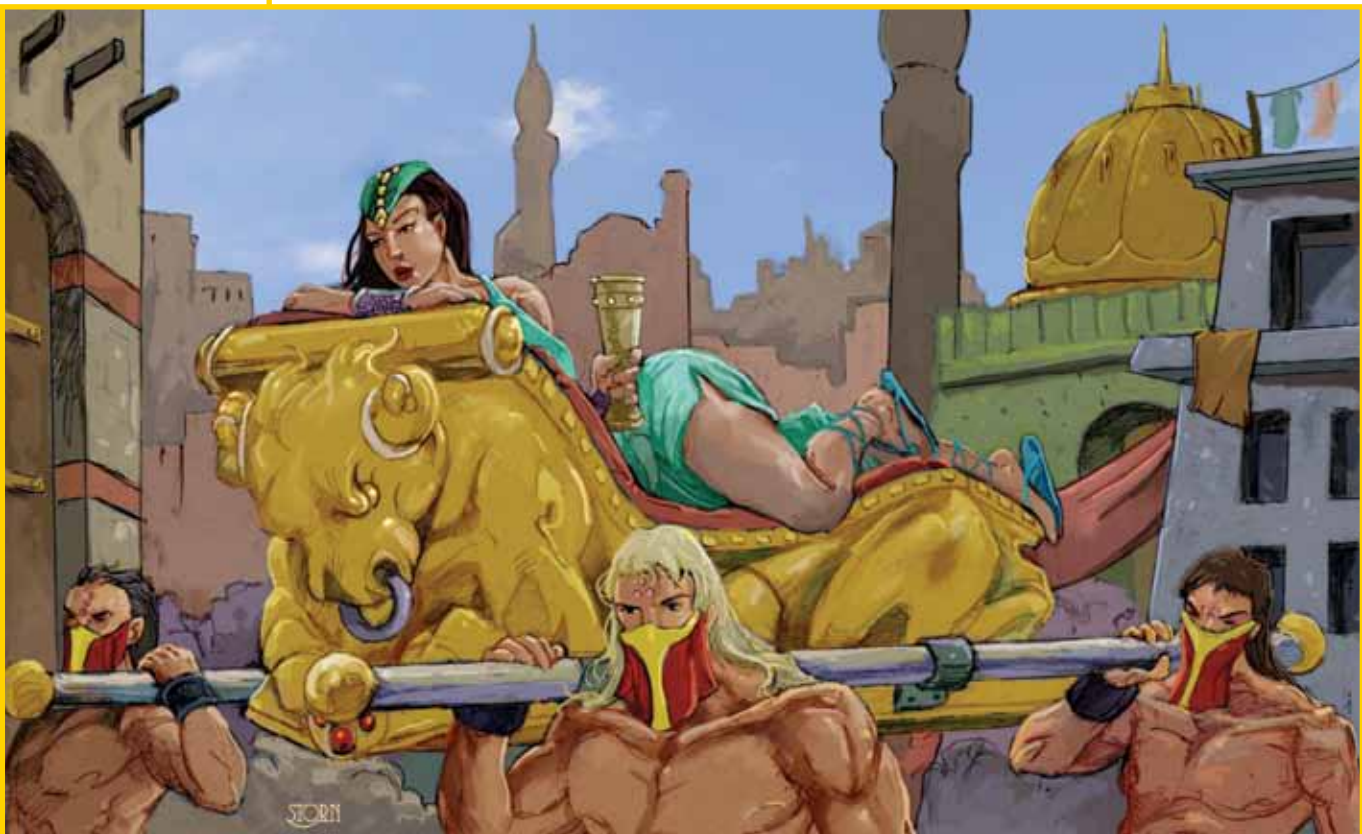
Fourth, how rigid is the class system? Can characters move from one level to another based on accomplishments and wealth (or lack thereof), or is a person stuck in the class he was born into? Can a person marry someone from another class?

Lastly, what legal rights and privileges relate to a character's class? It's not uncommon for the upper classes to use their power and wealth to arrange the laws to suit themselves. Sumptuary laws may forbid anyone not of the upper classes to buy luxury goods or wear elaborate clothing, and the laws of succession might prevent anyone other than a noble from ascending to the throne or serving as a commander in the army. The tax burden might fall disproportionately on one or more classes. Members of some classes might have the right to travel freely, while others must seek permission.

SLAVERY

Related to the issue of class is the question of slavery. Does your Fantasy society permit it? Slavery and thralldom have been a feature of many societies and cultures throughout history, and they appear in many Fantasy stories as well. In a Fantasy Hero game, slavery almost certainly exists in some societies (*i.e.*, Evil ones), but could be absolutely forbidden in others.

5



If a civilization allows slavery, does it do so grudgingly, encourage it, or simply accept it as a fact of life? For some civilizations, slavery became an absolute necessity as their size and scope outran their ability to expand the population to do all the necessary work. For others, slaves were simply a luxury.

How does a person become a slave? Historically, slaves were usually captured during war, or were sold into slavery to pay a debt (or to earn money for unscrupulous slavers). Some people voluntarily chose slavery for the relative security it provided.

You should also decide what legal status slaves have. Even if the law regards them as property (which is often the case), it may still grant them certain rights, or forbid their masters to treat them in certain ways. The law may decree that any slave can buy his freedom for a set price, or that the children of slaves are automatically free (or automatically become slaves themselves). If a slaveowner brings slaves into a kingdom that outlaws slavery, do the slaves become free people?

SOCIAL CODES AND CUSTOMS

Given the various classes, races, clans, guilds, noble families, *ad infinitum* within a setting or civilization, customs and rules of social conduct arise to govern how they interact. Some societies develop fairly loose sets of social customs; others become extraordinarily elaborate, right down to having dozens of forms of the same pronoun for use with people of varying social stations.

The degree to which you want to create elaborate codes of social conduct for your Fantasy Hero world depends largely on how much social situation roleplaying you want the game to feature. There's no point doing the work to create and describe societal rules of etiquette unless you (and your players) intend to learn and use them; otherwise, you can get by with a short description just for "color."

Assuming you bring social codes into play, you need to know how society enforces them. In most cases, society enforces its codes through tradition, ostracism of violators, and the like. But in some cases, the government may enact social customs into law, so that, for example, eating before one's betters at a feast merits a whipping.

They still thrive on the trade that came up the great river from the South and was carted past the falls to their town; but in the great days of old, when Dale in the North was rich and prosperous, they had been wealthy and powerful, and there had been fleets of boats on the waters, and some were filled with gold[.]

—a description of trade in Dale in *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

CULTURE AND CHARACTER CREATION

After you establish the various cultures and civilizations for your campaign, you should decide what effect (if any) they have on the character creation process. The Cultural Templates on pages 67-68 offer one example of how the two might interact: each culture or society has a Template reflecting the Skills and abilities it confers on those who grow up in it (or live in it for a long time). The Cultural Templates in this book are fairly "generic," since they're not tied to any specific setting or group. For your own campaign, you could make them much more detailed. For example, if the city of Zhor Cacimar has an elaborate set of classes and social codes, everyone who grows up there learns High Society — since a *faux pas* might lead to punishment up to and including beheading.

Additionally, some professions might relate to specific cultures. In some Fantasy worlds, only characters from certain nations or cities may be allowed to buy the *Assassin* Template (page 84), while the *Barbarian* Template (page 92) is available only to characters from the Northern Waste and the Desert of the Rising Moon.

ECONOMICS

Although accurately described as "the dismal science," economics is an important part of a civilization. Basic economic issues can have a serious effect on a Fantasy Hero setting, and a clever GM can use them in adventures in fun and intriguing ways without having to know too much about the real nuts-and-bolts of the subject.

CREATING AN ECONOMY

The first things to consider when creating a Fantasy economy are (a) the components of that economy, and (b) how you determine the prices of goods in the setting.

COMPONENTS OF A FANTASY ECONOMY

How the people of a given society make money relates closely to that society's level of technology and sophistication. The ways folk live and work says a lot about what's important to them and how they react to new situations. For game purposes, a Fantasy world's economy can derive from one or more of five components: Gathering, Nomadic, Farming, Manufacturing, or Trading. Of course, different parts of the same setting may have different economies — the Free City of Aarn relies on manufacturing and trade, while the folk of Besruhan mainly farm and fish.

[T]he jumbled wharves on the western bank of the river extended out through the yellow mudflats like the fingers of a drowning man through quicksand. Legions of slaves toiled there upon their dredges, endlessly clearing the channels for the galleys and the many-sailed ships that brought trade — and life itself — down from Avanthar in the north and up from Jakalla and the great ocean far to the south.

—slavery is a crucial part of the economy of Tékumel in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

Travel increased and trade flourished among the regions of the north, and especially between each region and the High City.

Crude lumber and rare woods, metals both precious and base, foodstuffs and hides, blocks of dressed stone, all the bounty of forest and sea and mountain, flowed to the heart of the kingdom. From it, in return, came the work of the city's artists and artisans: carvings of a magical delicacy, tools and weapons and simple household implements of great durability and beauty, intricate works in metal and stone, fine garments and adornments of dazzling beauty. Life was good even among the humblest, and it showed promise of becoming even better.

—the northlands flourish under King Ambescand's wise rule in *Grey mantle*, by John Morressy

GATHERING

Gathering societies live on available resources produced by the environment. Hunting, fishing, and logging are all examples; prospectors, who gather up easily-accessible ore they can trade, are also gatherers.. Gathering is the only form of economic system possible at early Stone Age technology. At more advanced technology levels, gathering becomes less important but never completely disappears. Because few environments produce lots of food or resources for the taking, gathering populations have to remain small and spread-out. This often makes it hard to create and maintain large political organizations, and inhibits technological progress because it's hard to share ideas and fewer minds exist to think of them.

NOMADIC

Nomadic populations move with the seasons, either following herds of animals or perhaps moving between two areas of crop-growing (on worlds with a long year or extreme seasons). They require at least late Stone Age technology, and usually become obsolete when improved transport appears later on. Nomads tend to be quick to fight — they have to be, because their wealth is mobile and thus easy to steal. The best way to protect your herd is to develop a reputation for winning fights and avenging any insult. This hypersensitivity tends to encourage honesty and honorable behavior. Because they are both warlike and mobile, nomads often conquer other groups, so an otherwise placid farming society might be ruled by aggressive nomads. The development of advanced weaponry (bows, siege engines, firearms) enables sedentary societies to fight back against nomadic warriors.

FARMING

Farming economies produce food and resources by manipulating the environment via farming, herding animals, or digging mines. Production is in the hands of individuals or families, and so villages or even single households become largely self-sufficient. Farming requires at least late Stone Age technology, but usually persists in specialized forms at any technology level. Farming makes large states possible, and allows people to live together in towns, often leading to the development of writing and record-keeping. (Conversely, farming leads to the rise of new diseases and the possibility of epidemics, because it brings so many people into close contact with others and domesticated animals.) Since farming depends strongly on the cycle of the seasons, farming societies usually develop astronomy and other sciences before other societies.

Farmers are less warlike because it's almost as hard to steal a field of grain as it is to grow it. On the other hand, farming is unforgiving. If you don't do everything right, the crop fails, and you can't try again for a year, so you starve to death. As a result, farming cultures tend not to value innovation highly; trying something new can be dangerous.

MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing systems create goods in specialized facilities; examples include blacksmiths producing ironwork, potters creating porcelain, and cabinetmakers crafting furniture. This specialization only works if one of two situations applies: the local population is large enough to support skilled workers; or efficient long-distance transportation exists. Manufacturing spurs the growth of large cities, which become hotbeds of political change and scientific research.

Urban societies have a different set of priorities than farmers or herders, and in a Manufacturing economy the city-dwellers become paramount. Townsmen have to be able to get along with each other, so they can't be too violent, but they aren't as tied to the cycles of nature, either. They value skill and initiative, but usually aren't interested in codes of honor.

TRADING

Lastly, some economies, or at least segments of them, may not depend on producing anything. Instead, they just *exchange* goods: a merchant buys low from a seller, takes the goods to a place where they're in demand, and sells at as high a price as he can. Some societies, such as ancient China, looked down on merchants because of this "parasitism." Nevertheless, a successful trader might earn enough to become as wealthy as nobles or emperors, and perhaps even buy his way into the hereditary upper class or prop up a failing kingdom by loaning the king money.

A trading economy requires a relatively sophisticated and advanced society. Merchants need the wealth to outfit expeditions to distant lands to acquire desired goods (particularly the luxury items the wealthy upper classes desire), buy those goods, protect the goods on the return journey, and then distribute the goods to buyers. This usually leads to other cultural advances, such as improved roads, bridges, and ships... but perhaps also to increases in piracy and brigandage.

ESTABLISHING PRICES

The primary way the characters in your Fantasy Hero game interact with the economy is as consumers of goods. An adventuring career requires a lot of things that cost money — weapons, equipment, room and board at inns, perhaps even enchanted items in some games — but of course can lead to great wealth and power. In short, the PCs have to spend money to make money.

Given these facts, you should establish price lists for your campaign for the goods PCs are most likely to want (there's an example on page 174). To do that, you need to know how to set prices. Obviously, the price of an item depends on such factors as:

- the cost to make/raise the item
- the materials the item is made from
- the rarity of the item (i.e., supply and demand)
- the legal restrictions on the item (if any)
- the condition of the item

There are no rules for determining these things; you have to judge them for yourself and make an educated guess. But you still have to start from a fair basis. Just writing down in your list that a sword costs “10 gold pieces” is largely meaningless. How did you arrive at that figure, and how does it compare to other things a character might buy with his hard-earned money?

In most cases, the best way to create a pricing structure in your campaign is to establish a baseline amount from which you can derive other prices. Typically the best way to do that is to establish the monetary value of *one day's unskilled manual labor*. That in turn tells you what skilled labor is worth, and by knowing those two things you can judge what prices should be by estimating how long a person should have to work to buy them. For example, if the average unskilled wage is one gold farthing per day, and you think longswords should have a high price so that few people can afford them, you might set the price at 30 gold farthings — an entire month's wages for a typical laborer! A skilled worker or craftsman could afford a sword more quickly, perhaps in only a week or two.

If you don't like the idea of basing prices on unskilled labor, or on that one factor alone, you can use other or additional factors. Some possibilities include: how much money it takes to support a family of four for a year; the cost of some basic good (an average meal at an inn, a bushel of wheat, a mug of ale); or average annual taxes.

If you prefer to use game considerations when establishing your economy, you could instead base prices on the amount of Damage Classes, Active Points, or the like in an item that can be written up in *HERO System* terms. Examples include “1 gold piece per DC” for weapons, or “1 silver penny per Active Point” for other items. From that, you can derive the prices of other goods by comparison.

Example: *Fred decides to run a Fantasy Hero campaign in the land of Azgandia, a realm similar to medieval Europe. He decides that the Azgandian economy uses copper, silver, and gold coins, with 1 gold coin equaling 10 silver coins, and 1 silver coin equaling 50 copper coins. He further decides the following:*

- *the average daily wage for unskilled labor = 10 copper coins*
- *to support a family of four for a 365-day year = 5 gold coins*
- *price of a loaf of bread = 2 copper coins*

With these facts established, he can easily set the prices for other goods by deciding how many days of labor it should take to buy something, or the value of an object in comparison to bread, or what percentage of a family's annual income something should cost. For instance, maybe he wants an ox to be a major purchase for a family of four. So, he sets the price at four gold coins — considerably more than an unskilled laborer earns in a year after deducting the cost of supporting his wife and two children.

VARYING PRICES

Prices probably don't stay the same in every place throughout your Fantasy world, or in one place year after year. Many factors affect prices: a drought or flood might drive up the price of food; a depression may lower prices across the board; an increase in the deer population reduces the cost of venison. Similarly, the fact that a good is rare and valuable in one place doesn't mean it's not common and cheap far away; traders make their money exploiting such differences. For example, in the city of Sarreshar, capital of Neldacar, blacksmiths churn out weapons and armor every day, making those items comparatively cheap. But out on the frontier, where a few walled villages eke out a meager existence, adventurers who need to equip themselves may find that swords and chainmail cost ten times what they do in Sarreshar (assuming they're available at all). Supply and demand are powerful forces in the marketplace.

During the course of your campaign, you may also have to take into account the effect of PCs' actions on local economies. If the characters return from a raid on the caves of the frost giants with chests full of gold and gems, the local economy may not be able to stand the strain. The ready availability of so much money means more people have money to spend, increasing the demand for goods, which causes prices to rise (thus inflicting significant hardship on everyone who hasn't found chests of gold and gems lately). In most cases in most games, you can probably get by without worrying about such matters; this is Fantasy Hero, not Econ 101. But you should keep them in mind in case they add something to the story or make the PCs think twice about the consequences of their actions.

When you establish a price list, you should usually include the *average* price for an item throughout the region the list applies to. If necessary, you can apply a multiplier from the accompanying Price Modifiers Table. As always, the GM may ignore the table or change it to suit his campaign.

PRICE MODIFIERS TABLE

Item Is...	Price Modifier
Very common/supply greatly exceeds demand	x.5 (or less)
Common/supply equals or exceeds demand	x1
Rare/demand exceeds supply	x2
Very rare/demand greatly exceeds supply	x4 (or more)
High quality	x2 (or more)
Highly decorated	x3 (or more)

All price modifiers are cumulative. A rare item that's of high quality costs x4 the standard price.



NAMES OF COINS

Here's a list of some terms and names used for various coins in Fantasy-era times that you can adapt for your Fantasy Hero campaign.

Artiluc
Ashrafi
Augustale
Bezant
Darc
Denarius
Denier
Dirham
Ducat
Ecu
Fal
Farthing
Florin
Frizatik
Genovino
Gigliato
Groat
Gros
Gros Tournois
Guilder
Gulden
Halfpenny
Hyperperon
Livre
Mancus
Maravedi
Mark
Noble
Nomisma
Obol
Penny (Pence)
Pound
Shilling
Sol
Solidi
Sou
Thrymsas
Tremissis

You could also name or refer to coins by what they depict — royals, nobles, falcons, towers, and so forth — or their shapes (gold circle, silver octagon, copper square...).

CURRENCY

Prices don't mean much if characters don't have some means to pay them. In most Fantasy Hero settings, that means currency.

COINS AND COINING

Bill Ferny's price was twelve silver pennies; and that was indeed at least three times the pony's value in those parts. ... Mr. Butterbur paid for it himself, and offered Merry another eighteen pence as some compensation for the lost animals. He was an honest man, and well-off as things were reckoned in Bree; but thirty silver pennies was a sore blow to him.

—the price of ponies in Bree in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Not one iron tik (the smallest coin of Lankhmar) would he pay to extortioners — such was Bwadres' boast. ... Instead he averred that every tik collected, every bronze agol, every silver smerduk, every gold rilk, yes every diamond-in-amber glulditch! — would be saved to buy for Issek the finest temple at the Citadel end [of the Street of the Gods.]

—the coinage of the city's described in "Lean Times In Lankhmar," by Fritz Leiber

Most Fantasy-era societies had coins of some sort, though the extent of their use varied from time to time and place to place. Often any group with sufficient political, social, or commercial standing could mint its own coins; this could include not just kings but nobles, bishops, abbots, communes, free cities, trading guilds, and the like. In a Fantasy setting, perhaps a powerful wizard, a renowned group of adventurers, or a wise dragon could earn the right to coin their own money!

Minting medieval coins was a relatively simple process. After rendering the metal into a sheet of relatively uniform thickness, the coiner cut out coin-sized disks. He placed the disks in a die and stamped them with the approved image, then shaved off any excess metal for use in making more coins. The value of coins depended largely on the amount of precious metal in them, though confidence in the issuing power played some part. Most coins were made of silver or gold (depending on the desired value and availability of the metal); in some places, the authorities minted copper coins for lesser transactions.

MONEYCHANGING

If people use a lot of different types of currency in the campaign setting, not everyone may accept every form of coin. In particular, a given kingdom or city may insist that people only use its own coinage within its borders. Persons who arrive with foreign currency — including the PCs, in many cases — must convert it into the local

coin. This involves a visit to the *moneychanger*, a person who makes money converting one type of currency into another. The ruler may license him to do this, or could just be a wealthy person looking to make more money with the money he already has.

Moneychangers charge a fee for their services, usually a percentage of the value of the coins they change. Ten percent is common, but it could be higher or lower depending on competition among moneychangers or the "customer's" perceived desperation.

Example: *The PCs show up in Sarreshar with their pockets full of gold nobles from Ralashan. Unfortunately, by Sarresharan law, only the Sarreshar penny counts as "legal tender" within the city walls. Eager to buy food, drink, and accommodations for the night, the PCs visit a moneychanger to turn 100 gold nobles into Sarreshar pennies. The penny is worth half the noble, so they'd get back 200 pennies — but the moneychanger charges a ten percent fee. With only 180 Sarreshar gold pennies in their pockets, they hurry off to the Goblet & Harp Inn where frosty beverages await.*

MONEYLENDING AND BANKS

Sometimes characters overspend, or a business venture goes awry. To stave off debt (and its possible consequences, such as slavery or debtor's prison), they can turn to a *moneylender* to obtain the funds they need. More sophisticated societies may have actual banks as well. Both make their money the same way: they require interest payments by the borrower.

You should set an interest rate that seems reasonable but keeps the PCs from borrowing frequently. Italian banks of the thirteenth century charged as much as 20-22%, but within a hundred years this had generally decreased to around 5-12% as more lending institutions arose. Large businesses and nobles often got better rates than smaller businesses or individuals; a scruffy band of adventurers with no fixed home or income might have to pay a very high rate.

You should also consider society's perspective on borrowing and interest. In medieval Europe, the Roman Catholic Church regarded usury as sinful, which led to non-Catholics (e.g., Jews) being the only ones who could lend money (and who often became quite rich because of it). As medieval Europe became more economically sophisticated, the Church softened its stance. In your Fantasy world, different religions could take different approaches; the god of merchants might find nothing wrong with interest, while the churches devoted to the gods of farming and craftsmen condemn it strongly. Some rulers might outlaw lending by anyone but themselves.



OTHER FORMS OF EXCHANGE

Liane said, "A chamber, well-aired, and a supper of mushrooms, wine, and oysters."

The innkeeper bowed humbly. "Indeed, sir — and how will you pay?"

Liane flung down a leather sack, taken this very morning. The innkeeper raised his eyebrows in pleasure at the fragrance. "The ground buds of the spase-bush, brought from a far land," [he said].

"Excellent, excellent... Your chamber, sir, and your supper at once."

—Liane gets a room at the Magician's Inn in "Liane The Wayfarer," by Jack Vance

Even in economically sophisticated Fantasy-era civilizations, coins were not the only medium of exchange.

First, characters could use barter. Barter was a common way to obtain goods in virtually every Fantasy-era society. It could take time and effort for a character to find someone willing to trade what he wants for what he has at a reasonable rate of exchange, a situation filled with scenario potential. To judge the value of a proposed trade, you should compare the prices of the goods in question using your campaign's price list, then have both parties make Trading rolls. The winner of the Trading Versus Trading Contest gets a better deal — perhaps +5-10% more of what he's bartering for, if appropriate — or at the very least

closes the deal. (For more complex Trading rules, see HSS 339.) As always, a character (PC or NPC) can turn down a deal if it's manifestly unfair or would obviously impose hardships on him that he's unwilling to accept.

Second, characters can use commercial paper: checks, bills of exchange, letters of credit, bank drafts, and so on. The earliest surviving European check was written in 1365 in Florence, and bills of exchange seem to have evolved in the late 1200s in response to the rise of international trade. The purpose of all of these "notes" was to save established merchants, traders, and businesses the need to carry large amounts of coinage or precious metal with them. Someone who accepted the paper in payment could then receive the actual money from the writer of the note in due course... or simply trade it to someone else who could "cash it in" himself. If your Fantasy setting features a lot of long-distance trade between merchants in different kingdoms and cities, it's likely to develop these notes as well — especially in a High Fantasy campaign with more books and writing than Earth had during its medieval periods. Magic might even be used to keep people from stealing or forging notes.

Third, some Fantasy economies may replace coins, in whole or in part, with the exchange of other valued objects or substances. Examples include gemstones, salt, cowrie shells, axeheads, or horses. The king, the marketplace, or some other mechanism establishes a common value for the medium of exchange, and then it functions more or less like coins in different form.

FANTASY SETTING JOBS

Job	Description	Skill Level
Ale Conner	Approves ales and ciders	Unskilled
Artisan	Creates art (by type: Painter, Sculptor, and the like)	Highly Skilled
Architect	Designs buildings	Highly Skilled
Avener	Head of a stable	Skilled
Bailiff	Oversees a manor	Skilled
Baker	Makes baked goods	Skilled
Beggar	Begs for money	Unskilled
Blacksmith	Crafts iron	Highly Skilled
Bookbinder	Makes books	Skilled
Bowyer/Fletcher	Makes bows and arrows	Skilled
Brewer	Brews beer and/or distills liquor	Skilled
Bureaucrat	Manages part of a large organization	Skilled
Carpenter	Builds with wood	Skilled
Champion	A fighter-for-hire	Skilled
Chandler	A candle-maker	Skilled
Clockmaker	Makes clocks	Highly Skilled
Confectioner	Makes candy	Skilled
Cooper	Makes barrels	Skilled
Coppersmith	Crafts copper	Highly Skilled
Cordwainer	A shoemaker	Skilled
Courier	Carries messages	Unskilled
Cutler	A knife-maker and -sharpener	Skilled
Farmer	Grows crops	Skilled
Farmworker	Labors on a farm	Unskilled
Furnituremaker	Makes furniture	Skilled
Goldsmith	Crafts gold	Highly Skilled
Innkeeper	Owens and operates an inn	Skilled
Jewelrymaker/Lapidary	Makes jewelry or gemwork	Highly Skilled
Laborer	Manual labor of various sorts	Unskilled
Lawyer	Works on legal matters	Highly Skilled
Leatherworker	Creates leather goods	Skilled
Lutanist	Makes stringed musical instruments	Highly Skilled
Mason	Creates brick and stone structures	Skilled
Mercenary	A soldier-for-hire	Skilled
Moneychanger	Exchanges currency	Unskilled
Moneylender	Lends money	Unskilled
Peddler	A wandering low merchant	Unskilled
Poacher	Illegally hunts game	Skilled
Porter	Carries things	Unskilled
Potter	Creates pottery and porcelain	Skilled
Scribe	A professional writer/reader	Highly Skilled
Seneschal	Oversees a castle	Skilled
Shepherd	Herds and looks after animals (by type)	Unskilled
Sheriff	Local official	Skilled
Shipwright	Makes ships	Highly Skilled
Siege Engineer	Helps conduct sieges	Highly Skilled
Silversmith	Crafts silver	Highly Skilled
Soldier	Trained warrior	Skilled
Stew-holder	Owens and operates a brothel	Unskilled
Steward	Oversees a castle	Skilled
Tailor	Makes clothes	Skilled
Tavernkeeper	Owens and operates a tavern	Skilled
Tinker	Repairs/makes small metal items	Skilled
Tronager	Supervises scales	Unskilled
Wainwright	Makes carts and wagons	Skilled
Wireworker	Makes wire and wire goods	Skilled

INCOME

“We are agreed then,” he purred. “For twenty piece of gold you will rob the house of Athmar Phong the magician and fetch back to me the mirror of black glass you will find in his workshop.”

—Thongor takes a job from Kaman Thuu in “Thieves Of Zangabal,” by Lin Carter

“Now, why aren’t we warmly cushioned somewhere inside tonight, well drunk and sweetly embraced?”

For answer the Gray Mouser drew from his belt a ratskin pouch and slapped it by its drawstrings against his palm. It flattened as it hit and nothing chinked. For good measure he writhed the backs of his ten fingers at Fafhrd, all ringless.

Fafhrd grinned[.] “Now that’s a strange thing. We’ve won I know not how many jewels and oddments of gold and electrum in our adventures — and even letters of credit on the Guild of the Grain Merchants. Where have they all flown to?”

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser take a distasteful job to replenish their purses in “The Cloud Of Hate,” by Fritz Leiber

While adventurers usually make their money by acquiring treasure, hiring their special services out to rich patrons, and looting the bodies of their fallen foes, normal folk have to rely on everyday jobs. The accompanying Fantasy Setting Jobs table lists some common Fantasy-era occupations, with brief descriptions of each (page 123 has more information on some of them). Each job description includes whether practitioners tend to be Unskilled, Skilled, or Highly Skilled, which you can use to establish their earnings if necessary. However, note that not all forms of unskilled work mean poor wages. While unskilled manual labor doesn’t earn much, it takes little skill to lend money, carry messages, or supervise the use of a port’s scales, but the person doing those jobs may make good wages. On the other hand, some jobs didn’t receive appropriate compensation for the work involved; for example, in some places and times potters were notoriously underpaid.

OUTGO

After a PC or NPC earns money, he needs to cover his expenses and bills before he knows how much he has left to spend on other things. There are three primary ways you can drain off the coins characters earn.

DAILY EXPENSES

On a day-to-day basis, characters incur all sorts of expenses. If their adventures take them away from home (assuming they have a home), then they've got to pay for room and board. This may involve renting a room at an inn, a boarding house, or the like, but it might just mean tossing some farmer a few coppers in exchange for sleeping in his hayloft one night. Depending on how luxuriously the characters want to live, and how well they want to eat, room and board could cost them very little, or it could amount to a small fortune every day.

Additionally, adventurers need to stay well-equipped. They often have to replace arrows and other gear used during scenarios, and must keep their armor, weapons, and other equipment in good repair. They may need to stable horses (or buy new ones), restock their supply of food and water, and pay for information regarding their next adventure.

If a character maintains a home somewhere in the campaign setting, that creates further daily expenses (particularly if he's got a family to go along with the home). He has to keep the home in good repair, buy tools and household goods, and so forth. If appropriate, he may also have to pay for servants, guards, and other employees.

TAXES, FEES, AND TOLLS

As inescapable as death (perhaps even moreso in High Fantasy worlds with resurrection spells!), taxes and similar fees affect adventurers just as they do everyday folk. Rulers, nobles, bureaucrats, and other officials could impose a tax, fee, or toll on just about anything: weapons, armor, property, treasure, movable goods (everything but lands and buildings), beards, books, rents received, the right to enter a city, dying (mortuary tax), spellcasting, the right to use a road, the right to operate a business or a marketplace stall, making a request of an official or ruler, and on and on and on. A ruler might institute a special tax to pay a particular expense, such as a crusade or the ransoming of a captured noble. In a setting that recognizes "adventuring" as an occupation, rulers may even impose a tax on "adventuring charters" that recognize a group of characters as legitimate adventurers.

Some taxes included exemptions for specific groups of people, such as women or the clergy. Nobles, or those who provided goods to nobles, avoided some taxes. Groups of PCs might avoid taxes not because of a specific exemption, but simply because they don't stay put in any one location long enough for the tax collector to catch up to them.

The amount of a character's income that goes to taxes usually varies from place to place, since different rulers and officials tax different things. A reasonable average is about one-fifth to one-third of a character's income, depending on the oppressiveness of a regime and the number of things it taxes. However, it's important not to make any one tax too burdensome, or else it's likely to strain the players' suspension of disbelief. For example, if the average farmer makes three silver ducats a day, charging him a tax of 10 gold ducats just to enter the city gates to sell his produce is unreasonable, and the players know it.

Not all taxes (or tithes) were paid in money. While most rulers preferred coin (which was easier to transport), some accepted goods, food-stuffs, or livestock as payment of a tax. Other taxes required people to pay in labor.

TITHES

A *tithe* is a percentage of one's income paid to a church or temple (though in some places and times the term was also used to describe various types of taxes). The medieval Roman Catholic Church expected a tithe of ten percent from everyone (even priests and slaves!), but payment of the tithe was technically voluntary. The Church's leaders decided which lands and persons tithed to which churches or abbeys. People often went to considerable lengths to define what types of income were and were not subject to tithing, just like modern Americans scramble to find as many income tax deductions as they can.

You should decide what religions, if any, in your world ask for tithes, how much they want, and whether the tithe is voluntary. Some types of characters (such as priests or paladins) may have mandatory tithes to pay because of their positions in religious organizations... and efforts to avoid those tithes may cost them their powers, if their gods have approved the tithes.

TRADE

Since no place produces everything one might want or need, people trade with one another. Of course, trade depends on transportation — a producer can't sell his goods if he can't get them to his customers. Because travel in Fantasy settings is often difficult (see *Travel*, page 386), people can only trade what they or their pack animals can carry. Thus, trade consists of fairly compact, high-value items — jewels, gold, furs, spices, and so forth. Boats and ships make bulk trade possible, but only on short, relatively safe voyages. The risks of long sea voyages mean merchants still concentrate on carrying luxuries. Thus, river barges and coastal schooners carry salt fish and flour, but clippers and galleons carry tea and treasure. But in a High Fantasy setting with easier forms of travel (up to and including teleportation portals), a Fantasy setting might develop national or international brands or franchises, similar to those in the modern world ("Have a frosty mug of Troll Spit Beer — brewed with pride in the foothills of the Snowthorn Mountains!").

"Despite the fact that my weapons and armor are in desperate need of repair, I blow the entire reward on ale and whores!"

—Skull the troll grasps the essentials of earning and spending by adventurers during a *Dungeons & Dragons* session in "PvP Online," a webcomic by Scott Kurtz



When the caravans, saying farewell to Zandara, set out across the waste northwards towards Einandhu, they follow the desert track for seven days before they come to water where Shubah Onath rises black out of the waste, with a well at its foot and herbage on its summit.

—a caravan route described in "The Journey Of The King," by Lord Dunsany

TRADE ORGANIZATIONS

While some merchants are free venturers, buying and selling for themselves, many become involved in trade organizations such as trading houses, guilds, or leagues.

A *guild* is an organization of employers, artisans, and/or craftsmen who join together to improve their economic interests. They establish professional standards, set minimum prices for their work (and perhaps even collude to raise those prices across the board), regulate apprenticeship and journeymanhood, provide services to members, and so forth. For example, the Stonemasons' Guild might establish a minimum cost of five silver groats for a day's labor by a stonemason, and the Painters' Guild might arrange to buy paints and other supplies in bulk so that its members can purchase them directly from the Guild at a discount. Many guilds also worked to create trade networks that let them sell their members' goods not just locally, but in distant lands, thus increasing profits.

A *trading house* is a group or association of traders dealing in a variety of commodities, often from many different places. Some trading houses were family businesses that grew out of free venturing, others (also known as merchants' guilds) were partnerships between multiple merchants. Trading houses often worked to reduce or bypass tolls, taxes, and other expenses on trade, establish standard weights and measures, make the roads safer, and the like. Since long-distance traders were often quite wealthy, they (and their guilds) had political and social clout.

A *league* is a group of cities, trading houses, and/or merchants' guilds established to ensure favorable prices and trading terms, and to provide other services (like waystations for members to stay in while traveling). The best known historical example is the Hanseatic League that existed in Europe from about 1160 to about 1660. In a Fantasy campaign, the use of magic for communication and travel might make it easier to establish and maintain a league.

One benefit these organizations could sometimes obtain, either through shrewd business maneuvering or a grant from a powerful ruler, was a monopoly over a particular form of trade. For example, perhaps the Vintners' Guild of Sarreshar has received from the Krator (the king) the right to control all sales of wine and liquor within the city walls. Alternately, maybe the Guild members use the Guild's money to hire thugs to drive non-members out of business. In either case, the result is the same: the Vintners' control over the wine trade lets them control prices and increase their profits.

TRADE RULES

You can handle trade in either of two ways: by "gaming it out" as a part of the adventure; or by abstracting it to a series of die rolls.

ROLEPLAYING TRADE

Trade during an adventure means the merchant characters meet with sellers, see their wares, negotiate prices and other terms, try to avoid being cheated, and have to guess what items are likely to sell for a good price in the marketplace of a distant

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city or kingdom. In addition to Trading, important skills include Area Knowledge and Bureaucratics.

In many cases, the characters' cargo is the hook for an adventure: someone steals the good, forcing the PCs to chase the thieves and recover their stolen property; the characters find something odd or mysterious in the midst of the goods they bargained for; bandits or pirates attack the characters' caravan or ship. However, you can't use every trade journey as an excuse for adventure; the players may wonder if they can ever just move goods from Point A to Point B without getting involved in some nefarious scheme, and the scenes of dickering with shippers and merchants can all start to sound the same.

ABSTRACT TRADE: PERSONAL TRANSACTIONS

The type of trading that players are most likely to be interested in features their characters dickering for prices and bargains with NPCs in one-on-one negotiations. You can use the advanced rules for the *Trading* Skill on HSS 339 to determine the outcome of these deals.

ABSTRACT TRADE: LARGE-SCALE TRANSACTIONS

Once you get beyond the level of one PC haggling with one NPC to buy something relatively discrete and easily carried, it's often simpler to resolve the situation through some special rules.

Abstract large-scale trading groups items into nine resource categories: Beer And Ale; Bulk Raw Materials (timber, stone, and the like); Cloth (including clothing); Crafts (items produced by artisans and craftsmen); Foodstuffs; Liquors; Livestock; Luxury Items (gold, gems, jewelry, fine art, and so on); Military Goods (weapons and armor); Spices; and Wine. The size of a single "lot" of each good varies; it may take an entire wagon (or train of wagons) to move a lot of stone or timber, but only a single crate to carry a lot of spices. (The GM decides what constitutes a "lot" of any good, given the circumstances and prevailing economic conditions.)

The accompanying Cargo Price Table lists suggested base prices for a single "lot" of each good, based on the assumption that an average unskilled worker earns one silver coin a day (you can easily adjust the prices to suit your world's monetary system, if necessary). To determine the purchase price at a good's point of origin, apply all modifiers, then roll the trader's *Trading* or *PS: Merchant* Skill. On a successful result, the trader gets the desired cargo at base price, -1d6% for every 2 points by which the roll succeeded. On a failure, increase the price by +1-3% per point by which the roll failed (sometimes more). Sale price uses the same modifiers, but the result is reversed — subtract the amount by which a roll failed from the final price, and increase the price when the roll succeeds. (Gamemasters may adjust these numbers to create higher or lower profit margins if desired, or to take other considerations into account.)

Example: *Lothar and Cicerius, two competing traders, are both trying to buy wine in Sarreshar. Sarreshar has a powerful Vintner's Guild and plenty of wine, so the price is 30 gold bezants +2d6%; the GM rolls 8, leading to a final price of a little over 32 bezants. Cicerius makes his roll exactly, so he gets a load of ten barrels of wine for 324 gold bezants. Lothar fails his Trading roll by 3, so he pays 1-3% (the GM rolls a 2) times three, or 6%, above the cost of the wine, or 343 gold bezants for ten barrels. The traders go their separate ways.*

Cicerius loads up his caravan and travels to the Drakine Kingdoms in the north. Since the drakine don't make their own wine but enjoy the taste of it, it's in demand there. The GM rolls +3d6% for the region lacking the resource, and another +2d6% for the high demand, getting an 11 and an 8. Cicerius makes his Trading roll exactly and sells his wine for 30 +19%, or 35.7 gold bezants per barrel. That's a profit of 3.3 bezants per barrel (before expenses).

Lothar, who's not quite as skilled a merchant as Cicerius, decides to go west to the nearby city of Tatha Gorel. Tatha Gorel already does plenty of business with the Sarreshar Vintners' Guild on good terms, so even though he makes his Trading roll by 2, the GM rules that the best price he can get is the standard 30 bezants per lot. Having lost 43 gold bezants, Lothar begins to wonder if he should give up the trader's life and join the priesthood like his mother wanted him to.

Note that all these profits are before expenses. Traders will soon discover that moving low-value items like foodstuffs over long distances is a quick way to go out of business.

CARGO PRICE TABLE

The Cargo Price Table presents suggested "average" prices for a "typical" Fantasy Hero campaign (using the pricing assumptions from the Price List on page 174). Specific settings may vary from this, sometimes extremely. Gamemasters should decide whether this table applies to their campaigns as-is, or if they need to create a setting-specific version.

Resource Type	Price Per Lot	Suggested Lot Size
Beer And Ale	3 gold coins	1 large barrel
Bulk Raw Materials	3 gold coins	1 ton
Cloth	8 gold coins	100 pounds
Crafts	20 gold coins	100 pounds
Foodstuffs	5 gold coins	200 pounds
Liquor	70 gold coins	1 large barrel
Livestock	10 gold coins	4 animals
Luxury Items	500 gold coins	10 pounds
Military Goods	150 gold coins	100 pounds
Spices	100 gold coins	20 pounds
Wine	30 gold coins	1 large barrel

Modifiers

Subtract 3d6% from the price if the region is rich in that resource.

Add 3d6% if the region is poor in the resource, and another 2d6% if the region has a demand for the resource.

Add 2d6% if a guild or similar organization controls the trade in that resource.



He cast his plump purse aside; with a heavy thud, it landed erect on the table.

—R’Kan has no immediate monetary worries in “The Wizards Are Dying,” by John L. Jenkins

RULES CONSIDERATIONS

The economy you establish for your Fantasy Hero campaign has a few rules implications.

STARTING FUNDS

Since Fantasy Hero is a Heroic-level game that allows characters to purchase equipment with money, players and GM alike need to know how much money a character begins the game with. If a character pays Character Points for the *Money Perk* (see below), that defines his starting funds, but other characters may need a little pocket money with which to launch their adventuring careers.

The amount of starting money a character has depends on the economic standards of the campaign. For example, if unskilled labor is worth one silver penny per day, giving characters 2d6 gold pieces to start the game may be just right (since adventuring gear tends to be expensive), but 2d6 x 10 gold pieces might be excessive. After all, one of the reasons to go adventuring is to make money; if characters don’t need money, they may not want to go adventuring.

Typically all characters who don’t buy the *Money Perk* start with the same amount of money (or at least the same random roll for funds). However, you may want to vary the amounts slightly based on the character’s starting expenses. Warriors, for example, have to invest in expensive arms and armor that other characters don’t need, so maybe you allow them to have more money (perhaps with the “special effect” of “the character has a weapon given to him by the person who trained him to fight”).

THE MONEY PERK

Once you establish an economy for your campaign and know the value of money, you can figure out the average personal income and create a *Money Perk* for the setting. Use the accompanying table to determine how much income each level of *Money* gives a character.

Of course, you may want to think carefully before allowing a character to buy the *Money Perk*, particularly at any level higher than *Well Off*. In a campaign where characters purchase goods and weapons with money, too much money can cause game balance problems. These problems become even worse in High Fantasy games where characters buy and sell enchanted items — in a game like that, a *Wealthy* or *Filthy Rich* character could become massively powerful with a single trip to Akbar’s Magical Bazaar!

MONEY PERK TABLE

Money Level	Calculation
Destitute	x.04 average campaign income
Poor	x.15 average campaign income
Middle Class	x1 average campaign income
Well Off	x7 average campaign income
Wealthy	x60 average campaign income
Filthy Rich	Unlimited income

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

In the autumn of the year King Quairt of Caduz and Prince Bellath went to hunt in the Long Hills. They were set upon by masked bandits and killed. Caduz was thereby plunged into confusion, foreboding and doubt.

In Lyonesse, King Casmir discovered a claim to the throne of Caduz, stemming from his grandfather Duke Cassander[.]

—King Casmir takes advantage of “banditry” to increase his own lands and power in *Lyonesse*, by Jack Vance

Any group of beings larger than a single family needs some form of government. No good correlation exists between a civilization’s advancement and its form of government. Some brutal tyrannies have existed in very sophisticated settings, while Stone Age tribes can develop highly enlightened forms of government. Technology limits the size of the area a given state can control — a single tribe or valley at Stone Age technology, a region up to a thousand kilometers across at Bronze Age (larger if water transport is available), and entire continents by the Iron Age and beyond. With the help of magic, a single ruler might control an entire world; that’s the goal of many Dark Lord villains in Epic Fantasy.

THE BASICS OF GOVERNMENT

You can describe government forms by three criteria: who makes the decisions; how those people are chosen; and what decisions they can make (*i.e.*, what the government can do).

WHO RULES

To decide how a society is governed, first consider who rules it. The rulers can be a single individual, a small group (1-10 members), a medium group (10-100), a large group (100-1000), a subclass (1000-10,000), or a ruling class (a significant proportion of the entire population).

INDIVIDUAL RULE

Rule by one person is an extremely common form of government; at times it appears that humans have an instinctive need for a “pack leader” to follow, and many races may have the same instinct. (For Fantasy Hero purposes, a single person who embodies “the government” is useful because it keeps the GM and players from getting bogged down remembering who’s who in the administration.)

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His meditations, as he walked homeward that evening, had been splendidly replete with the shining of costly metals, with coins and ingots and gold-work and argentry, and the flaming or sparkling of many-tinted gems in rills, rivers, and cascades[.]

—a merchant dreams of wealth in “The Weird Of Avoosl Wuthoqquan,” by Clark Ashton Smith

Individuals ruling by force are *dictators* or *emperors*. They seldom leave office alive, and when they die it's often by violence. In any society larger than a few thousand people, the dictator must have a band of warriors or an army to support his rule, and in advanced societies the dictator supplements his soldiery with guards, spies, and informers.

Single rulers who reign by virtue of heredity are called *monarchs*. Depending on the state they rule, monarchs can also be called chiefs, barons, princes, kings, or emperors. They often bolster their claim to power by appeals to religious authority. In large states monarchs have to rule through a bureaucracy of appointed officials, an elected parliament, or a feudal structure of hereditary nobles.

In Fantasy settings, single rulers chosen by merit, appointment, or election are rare, though a few Fantasy stories depict kingdoms in which the king's children must compete to prove who's best suited to succeed him. The title held by a ruler of this sort can vary wildly; "king" may be appropriate, or it may depend on the form of government (for example, the elected leader of a government run by guild leaders might be the "Chief Syndic"). In any event, the problem with this type of government is that the qualities which allow someone to gain the position are not necessarily the best ones for a ruler, particularly in states which restrict rulership based on age, gender, race, occupation, wealth, or religion.

SMALL GROUPS

A small group holding power by force is often called a *junta* in modern parlance, though the word lacks Fantasy feel ("triumvirate" or some other term based on the number of persons involved may be more appropriate). Usually one member of the junta dominates the group, but lacks the power to overcome the others if they combine against him. Each member of a junta has his own military forces, and may even fight wars with the others.

A small to medium group which inherits the right to rule is sometimes called an *oligarchy* or an *aristocracy*. One member of the ruling group may hold the title of "king" but cannot rule without the support of the others. A group of monarchs joined together in a confederation would function as an oligarchy, even if one holds the title "High King."

Small groups of elected rulers may be known as a *council* or *senate*, but could have various other titles. While elected rulers usually are considerate of the wishes of the majority of voters, they can still be harsh or oppressive to minorities or those without the vote. How long the elected officials serve also affects how they behave in office. Rulers elected for life don't have to be as responsive to the will of the people as those who have to get re-elected every few years. Of course, responsiveness isn't always a good thing — sometimes the will of the people is wrong.

CREATING AND PLAYING KINGDOMS

If you're interested in incorporating high-level political, diplomatic, and social events into your campaigns, you might want to consider using the Kingdom creation and combat rules in *The Ultimate Base*. They describe how to create a kingdom, city, organization, or similar entity as a character and play it as it interacts with others of its kind. You can even mesh Kingdom-level play with Character-level play, allowing the events of one aspect of the campaign to influence those of the other.

LARGE GROUPS

A medium to large group governing by force could be a conquering army or the officers of a military government. Such situations are rare because it's hard for a large group of conquerors to work together. Either a junta or dictator emerges, or the whole society collapses into anarchy. If a group of conquerors can hold on for a generation, the society becomes a feudal one.

When a large group or class holds power largely by heredity, the government is called a *feudal system*. While there may be a king at the top of the structure, the real power lies with the local barons. In their early stages, feudal governments may be little better than anarchies, but over time custom and tradition act as a check on what individual nobles can get away with. See page 370 for more on feudalism, which is popular in Fantasy Hero worlds because it was the dominant form of government in medieval Europe.

An extremely large hereditary group of rulers may be called a *ruling caste*. Often they must choose the actual decision-makers by voting or other means, since the group itself is too large to perform the day-to-day business of governing.

Large elected governments may be called *legislatures*, *congresses*, or *assemblies*. Often a large legislature cannot decide on every specific issue and delegates power to subcommittees. Elected legislatures almost always involve some form of political parties or factions, as members with common opinions band together. In corrupt systems, the ruling party may rig elections or bribe voters to remain in power.

*“A curious custom,”
said the barbarian,
“to cut off your king’s
head every five years.
I wonder your throne
finds any takers!”*

—Prince Vilimir
inquires into
Xylar’s custom of
beheading the king
after five years and
giving the throne to
whoever catches his
hurled head in *The
Goblin Tower*, by L.
Sprague de Camp

*“[Y]ou cannot alone
win the Petal Throne
for yourself, Prince
Dhich’une! When your
father dies, you will
face the Kolumejalim,
“the Rite of Choosing
of Emperors,” as is the
custom in your land.
You would certainly
best your eldest*

5 *brother, Rereshqala,
in those trials,
for he dallies
in pleasant
lethargy in his
villa in Jakalla
with his whores
and cronies, drunk or
drugged, perhaps even
by your doing! Your
second brother, Eselne,
could cleave you in
twain with no more
than a table-knife. And
even your sister, Ma’in
Krüthai, has more
swordsmanship than
you.”*

—Baron Ald of Yan
Kor reviews some of
the procedures for
selecting the next
Tsolanyi Emperor in
The Man Of Gold,
by M.A.R. Barker

HOW THE RULER IS CHOSEN

The way the rulers are selected can vary tremendously. The most common methods on Earth have been force, heredity, appointment, merit, or election. Other possibilities include no government (anarchy), total participation, random selection, omens or oracles, and purchase.

APPOINTMENT

In any government which rules by appointment, the big question is: who does the appointing? A state which has been conquered by another state, or which is a colony, may have an appointed government. But a state might simply permit officials to choose their own replacements, or have one branch of government appoint the members of another branch (as the President appoints the members of the United States Supreme Court). In a one-party state, candidates might be hand-picked to run in sham elections by the party leaders. The chief problem with any appointed government is that the interests of those appointing the rulers may not coincide with what is best for the people.

MERIT

Merit-based governments vary depending on how the society defines merit. It may be competence at one’s job (bureaucracy), religious faith (theocracy), mystic power (magocracy), wealth (plutocracy), or the like (see *Forms Of Government* on page 369). There could be rituals, physical ordeals, riddling contests, or gladiatorial battles to select the rulers — the possibilities are practically endless (and rife with scenario potential!). Rulers chosen by merit may be highly effective, as long as the system for determining merit is sufficiently accurate and honest. All large organizations have some aspects of merit-based selection.

Merit-based systems often suffer from two major flaws. First, the definition of merit may not have much to do with ability to rule. A theocratic government could be staffed by the most pious and devout members of the priesthood, but that doesn’t mean they’re any good at making economic or military decisions. Second, because the rulers belong to an elite (however defined), it’s hard for them to consider the rights and wishes of the rest of the people when making decisions.

OTHER SYSTEMS

Besides the methods described, there are a variety of “Other” government types possible. Some states have literally no government at all — this can be either a bloody war of all against all, or an enlightened civilization determined to live and let live. The people might rely on oracles or omens to choose those who should rule, or perhaps the gods themselves “appoint” a ruler directly. In L. Sprague deCamp’s “Unbeheaded King” trilogy, the people behead the king every five years and toss the head into the assembled crowd; whoever catches it becomes king for the next five years... and is then beheaded in turn.

WHAT THE RULER CAN DO

*“It’s not for you, Uther — hearth and home,
wife and child.”*

“To kill and be king — is that all?”

“Perhaps not even that.”

—Merlin and Uther discuss Uther’s
fate in the movie *Excalibur*

The general culture determines what the government can do. A very open, freedom-loving culture is unlikely to put up with tyranny, but a highly disciplined society may submit to a regime which promises order. It’s possible to have a repressive government in a freedom-loving society, but there are likely to be rebels working to overthrow the tyranny.

Usually the limits on state power relate to how the rulers are chosen — a government that has to worry about re-election is more likely to respect the rights of voters — but there’s considerable room for variation. Often a government’s power is checked by the existence of powerful groups or institutions outside of government, like temples, guilds, or the unwashed masses of the street mobs. Repressive states must concentrate all power in the hands of the rulers to eliminate possible rivals.

Governments exist in layers. While there may be one overall ruler, he needs local, provincial, city, and/or tribal leaders to keep things running smoothly throughout the land. Each layer has different responsibilities, and may have an entirely different structure. A kingdom with an absolute monarch chosen by the gods could have hereditary barons controlling his provinces, and elected councils governing the kingdom’s cities.

Of course, there may be a tremendous difference between the official system of government a realm has and the regime actually in place. The king may be a figurehead for a powerful wizard, priest, or church, for example, or an oligarchy might just rubber-stamp the decisions of one of its members.

Last but not least, you should consider the often unusual nature of societies and cultures in Fantasy stories. Your world may have some bizarre human cultures with equally bizarre forms of government, and non-human races may establish governments based on principles or forms of power-sharing unheard of among humans. Just interacting with such a government could make for an interesting Fantasy Hero adventure.

INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Some Fantasy governments are members or possessions of large international states (though these can only arise when methods of communication, travel, and administration advance to the point where administering an enormous realm becomes possible). There are a number of ways for Fantasy governments to organize into international states.

EMPIRE

An *empire* is a large state consisting of multiple realms or peoples, typically all ruled by a single person (an emperor or empress). Empires usually arise through conquest (as with the Roman Empire), but they could result from an alliance that evolves into empire or the like. Empires vary in how tightly they control their subjects. Some run everything from the capital city; this has the same advantages and problems as a voluntary union. Other empires are more decentralized or feudalistic, with powerful lords, satraps, or governors setting policies for their own districts. (This often occurs in far-flung Fantasy empires due to travel and communications difficulties, though magic may overcome these problems.) The trouble with those arrangements is that governors sometimes rebel, leading to civil war.

An empire doesn't have to have a tyrannical or monarchic government. Republics can conquer subject lands as easily as dictatorships can. In Earth history, extensive empires were conquered by the Republics of Rome, Venice, Athens, and France, to name a few. Often the imperial power is motivated by altruism as much as greed or aggression — “we're not conquering them, we're bringing civilization.”

HEGEMONY

A *hegemony* resembles an empire in many respects, but instead of directly ruling or controlling the component states or peoples, the leader (a hegemon) or leading realm exerts such great influence over them that he/it dominates and effectively rules them. The leading realm may receive tribute from its “satellite” realms, or they may defer to it in matters of international (or even domestic) policy. The Aztec “Empire” of the fifteenth century was really more of a hegemony, for example.

LEAGUES, ALLIANCES, AND FEDERATIONS

A *league* or *alliance* is a voluntary collection of realms, each of which remains entirely sovereign and is not subject to any interference by its partners. Nations in a league often have something in common — they may all come from the same racial stock, they may have economic ties, or they may simply have a common enemy. An economic league may result when a few realms are rich in a certain resource and want to prevent competition. Realms in a league may cooperate on military matters but be bitter economic rivals; alternately they may permit a little “gentlemanly” warfare among members but hold the line on keeping up cloth prices.

A *confederation* or *federation* is somewhat more unified than an alliance, and involves more control over the members by a central governing body. Federations are almost always voluntary, although they may have rules preventing members from breaking away just because they don't agree with certain policies.

FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

Here are some shorthand terms for various forms of government.

Androcracy: Government by men (also called a phallocracy). An androcratic gerontocracy is a *patriarchy*.

Bureaucracy: Government by civil servants and officials with specialized functions, usually hierarchical and requiring adherence to rigid rules.

Capelocracy: Government by shopkeepers.

Chirocracy: Government by physical force.

Cryptocracy: Government by secret or unknown rulers.

Democracy: Government by “the people.”

Doulocracy: Government by slaves.

Ergatocracy: Government by workers or laborers.

Ethnocracy: Government by a particular ethnic or racial group.

Gerontocracy: Government by the elderly.

Gynocracy: Government by women. A gynocratic gerontocracy is a *matriarchy*.

Hagiocracy: Government by holy men or saints.

Hetaerocracy: Government by a paramour or concubine of the supposed ruler.

Hoplocracy: Government by the military, generals, or soldiers. (Also called a militocracy or statocracy.)

Iatrarchy: Government by physicians.

Kakistocracy: Government by the worst or least-qualified.

Kleptocracy: Government by thieves (*i.e.*, “organized” crime).

Kritocracy: Government by judges.

Magocracy: Government by wizards and/or other spellcasters.

Mesocracy: Government by the middle class.

Ochlocracy: Government by the mob (mob rule).

Pedocracy: Government by the learned.

Phylocracy: Government by a specific tribe or class.

Plutocracy: Government by the wealthy. (Also called a chrysocracy.)

Syndicracy: Government by syndics, each representing some business interest.

Theocracy: Government by churches, priests, a religion, or the devout. Many theocracies are single-ruler states in which the ruler is considered divine, or the “chief priest” of the faith.

Timocracy: Government by property owners or the landed class.

By the law of South Ulfland, by might and by right, I have become King of South Ulfland, and I hereby require of you the fealty due the sovereign-ruler.

—Aillas communicates news of his new title to Faude Carfilhiot in *Lyon-esse*, by Jack Vance

BORDERS

When you create kingdoms, empires, and other realms for your Fantasy world, pay a little attention to where you place the borders between them. Typically, early states defined their borders with natural boundaries — mountain ranges, rivers, and so on. That made it easy for everyone to know where one kingdom ended and another began. If a border runs through an area unmarked by such features, either the adjoining kingdoms must establish a marker or other way of determining the border's exact location, or the border becomes one that's constantly in dispute. Similarly, a border that involves a natural resource, such as a forest or a river, may lead to quarrels over who gets to exploit that resource, and to what extent. But at least this ensures that diplomats and ambassadors (not to mention adventurers!) have something to do....

FEUDALISM

One of the most common forms of government encountered in Fantasy Hero campaigns, especially if they have medieval Europe as a major inspiration, is *feudalism*, the type of government prevailing in that place and time. Although simple in principle, feudalism could (and did) become complex and convoluted as time went on. It also differed in its particulars from region to region. What follows is a brief, general summary of feudalism; readers interested in knowing more can easily conduct their own research.

In its purest, simplest form, feudalism is a hierarchical form of government depending upon contractual relationships. With the exception of the single overall ruler (the king, in most cases), each person in the hierarchy, from the lowest knight to the most powerful duke, owed loyalty and feudal obligations to the person(s) above him. In exchange for those obligations, he received several things: control of a *fief* (an area of land), including its serfs (inhabitants) and other resources; protection; and perhaps other privileges. The person granting the fief was a *liege* or *lord*; the person receiving it and who owed the obligations was the liege's *vassal*.

The nature of feudal obligations varied, though of course the amount and extent of a vassal's obligations generally depended on the extent of the property and privileges granted to him by his liege. Typically they involved money (in the form of rents and the like) and the promise of military service: a vassal had to agree to fight on the king's behalf, and to provide a defined number of fighting men of a defined type as well. (Sometimes the vassal could escape military service by paying a *scutage*, or fee.) However, part of the contract was that the liege promised to protect his vassal, so if someone attacked the vassal, he could (in theory) count on his liege coming to his aid.

Many factors complicated the basic feudal arrangement. A vassal could owe obligations to two different lords, putting him in an uncomfortable position if his two lieges went to war against each other. A vassal could also subinfeudate (make subordinate grant of part of his lands to another person), creating a relationship in which the subinfeudator owed obligations and loyalty to the vassal but not the vassal's liege. A wealthy or mighty noble might become more powerful than his liege the king, possibly leading to civil war. A vassal might find a way for his sons to inherit his lands directly, rather than having to receive them from the king in exchange for oaths of loyalty. A strong king, or changes in the nature of warfare, might call into question the entire basis of the feudal system.

See page 130 for a listing of the titles commonly used in medieval European feudal systems.

THE MANOR SYSTEM

Closely related to the feudal system was the *manor system* of local economic and social administration. Feudalism for the most part only affected political and military leaders, but the manor system touched virtually everyone.

In some ways, the manor system was the feudal system writ small. A local lord — a knight or baron, typically — controlled land granted to him by the king, or which he inherited. He then rented portions of it to peasants (serfs, villeins), who worked their allotted land. In exchange, they had to pay rents to the lord, and work his *demesne* (the portion of his land he kept for his own personal use). The peasants also received the lord's protection; the desire for physical and economic security was the main reason the system arose in the first place.

In the manorial system, peasants have few (if any) rights. They cannot leave their lord's lands, and may have to ask permission for any travel away from their home village. They may be subject to the often harsh laws of manorial courts. Their lord could oppress, repress, and outright abuse them at will, if so inclined. Only when agricultural techniques improved and cities (and the middle classes) developed to offer another way of living did peasant life improve.

FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

Regardless of what a given ruler can and cannot do, most governments have certain broad powers — they enforce the law, protect the citizens from threats within and without, regulate the economy, and so forth. To accomplish this, they typically have “sub-organizations,” each with power over a specific subject or sphere of authority. In some societies, such as ancient China, the government could evolve into a thing of Byzantine complexity, with dozens of bureaux, offices, departments, and other “agencies.” These organizations may or may not work together well; in some realms, each organization is a virtual power unto itself, pursuing its own agenda at the expense of the others.

MILITARY

The one thing which just about any government needs is an army. If a state can't defend its sovereignty against invaders, it isn't a state at all. Peace-loving societies with no enemies might get by without military forces, but such idyllic situations rarely exist (especially in Fantasy settings), and often come to grief when an enemy finally does appear. You can broadly define military forces in Fantasy stories into three groups: land; sea; and air.



LAND FORCES

Land forces fight on the ground. They typically consist of light troops (unarmored or lightly-armored peasant levies, archers), heavy troops (armored fighters, such as knights), and mounted troops (troops on horses, chariots, or the like). Some Fantasy-era militaries were highly organized, disciplined, and complex organizations; others were little better than armed mobs. The exact nature of the forces depends on a state's or civilization's level of technology and development; earlier, more primitive forces might have no cavalry or siege engines, while later, more advanced land forces come equipped with specialized units of many sorts.

SEA FORCES

A state bordering an ocean, sea, major river, or other large body of water probably has a navy of some sort, or at least a small fleet of raiding ships. In many cases the main purpose of the "navy" is to ferry troops from one place to the next, but some of the major battles of the past (such as the Greek defeat of the Persians at Salamis in 480 B.C.) were naval encounters. The importance and size of a nation's sea forces typically relate to the importance it places on maritime travel and trade. A kingdom that trades extensively by sea needs a navy large enough to protect its trading fleet, scare off or fight off pirates and rivals, and so forth.

AERIAL FORCES

In some High Fantasy games, kings and other rulers may have access to aerial fighting resources: wizards with flight spells; air-galleons; knights riding griffins and giant hawks. These tend to constitute a tiny percentage of the overall military, since they're difficult and expensive to maintain, but they may prove to be the decisive factor in many battles (particularly against enemies who don't have their own flying soldiery).

THE MILITARY'S SIZE

You can calculate the size of military forces from a realm's population with some precision. Most societies on Earth have supported about 1 soldier per 100 people. The ratio is sometimes lower, either in states with no need for defense or states with inefficient governments, and can be as high as 5 soldiers per 100 people in states on a full war footing. However, anything above 1 percent is hard to sustain over the long term. Some aggressive states get around this by pillaging conquered territories — essentially making their enemies support their armies. This allows them to field very large armed forces as long as they have enemies to prey upon. Once the pace of expansion slows, the financial strain catches up.

In Fantasy Hero adventures, even a small military force is probably more than any group of PCs can handle. The armed forces are the GM's big stick — when they show up, the heroes should know the situation is beyond them. If the PCs are in the military, they probably should be some sort of highly-trained elite force accustomed to operating alone and without supervision — commandos, so to speak.

"It is as she feared," Cedric answered.

"The kingdoms to the south have ceased their bickering long enough to coalesce their armies into one. This morning they have crossed the border, so the sorcerers say; nothing stands between them and Ambrosia."

—Procolon's strategic situation deteriorates in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

5

King Casmir spent large sums upon espionage and intrigue. His spies were everywhere, and especially in Dahaut, where they monitored King Audry's every sneeze.

Casmir found information from Troicinet more difficult to secure. He had managed to suborn certain high officials, who transmitted their reports by carrier pigeon, but he relied most heavily upon the master spy "Valdez," whose information was uncannily accurate.

—King Casmir works at espionage in *The Green Pearl*, by Jack Vance

5

It was quite dark when he went by the towers of Tor, where archers shoot ivory arrows at strangers lest any foreigner should alter their laws, which are bad, but not to be altered by mere aliens.

—Thangobrind passes Tor in "The Distressing Tale Of Thangobrind The Jeweller," by Lord Dunsany

ESPIONAGE

"We must go as quietly as we can," said Mr. Tumnus. "The whole wood is full of her spies. Even some of the trees are on her side."

—Mr. Tumnus tells Lucy about the White Witch's spies in *The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis

Although modern humans tend to associate espionage with the Cold War and James Bond, just about every state in history has had some form of intelligence-gathering agency. In early Earth societies, this usually consisted of some scouts traveling ahead of the army to locate enemy positions. Rulers and commanders had small personal staffs of spies to gather information on enemy troop movements or the plots of political opponents. Many Fantasy novels, such as Jack Vance's *Lyonesse* trilogy, incorporate the activities of spies into the plot.

Some Fantasy Hero campaigns can rely on one type of espionage unavailable in the real world: magical spying. Crystal balls, scrying spells, shapechanging magics, and similar mystic means could take the place of the concealed gadgetry of the Cold War era. Imagine how effective a spy equipped with a Ring Of Invisibility, a Teleportation Wand, and a Gem Of Seeing Through Walls could be!

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

If military and espionage forces are a civilization's protection against outside threats, the legal system preserves internal order. Systems of law tend to be extremely conservative and tradition-based, since continuity and consistency are a primary goal of any legal system. Rulers create laws to prevent things the society doesn't like, protect things it does, and resolve disputes between individuals.

Exactly what things a society bans and what it permits vary tremendously. A culture that considers duels an acceptable way to resolve disputes might not regard some forms of murder as a crime, for example. Gamemasters can create some odd laws — all spoken communication be sung, nudity is mandatory at public functions, no drinking or eating allowed between the fifth and sixth hours — as a way of adding color to an adventure. As a rule, however, societies make laws to protect their members from violence, preserve property, and protect the operations of government from interference — not just to be "weird."

Laws don't work without some way to enforce them. The methods of enforcement typically relate to the type and nature of government. A king or duke may have a staff of soldiers or City Guards to patrol the capital and stop wrongdoing, whereas a tribal society enforces its regulations more through social pressures and denial of privileges to the offender.

FANTASY-ERA LEGAL SYSTEMS

"My laws must bind everyone, high and low, or they're not laws at all."

—King Arthur explains to Queen Guinevere why he cannot champion her against Sir Gawain's accusations in the movie *Excalibur*

The legal systems in Fantasy-era societies varied wildly. Within medieval Europe alone there was a confusing welter of jurisdictions, bodies of law, and legal rights. For example, in any given kingdom people had to cope with secular law (the laws set forth by the king, his nobles, and the like) and canon law (the law of the Church). King and Church often struggled for authority over particular types of cases, since the power to dispense justice could be quite lucrative.

Even within secular law, tremendous differences often existed from place to place. For example, medieval English law derived its authority from the king, with kingdom-wide laws taking precedence over local laws. Legal procedures were exacting (a single mis-spelled word or improper phrase could get a case thrown out of court), leading to the creation of a class of lawyers. The only remedy available in the standard court system was monetary damages, leading to the creation of a second justice system, the courts of equity, where one could obtain other remedies. If that doesn't sound complex enough, consider German law. Given the lack of true central authority in Germany, and the absence of any Rome-inspired legal procedures or principles, German law gave precedence to local law over "national" law. As a result, merely traveling from region to another could place a person under a completely different set of laws!

TRIAL BY ORDEAL OR COMBAT

"Hrorik of Eastmarch and Murdoch of Carthane," he said, "you have come upon this field of trial by combat, accuser and accused, and agree to do battle to prove the right of your claims."

—King Javan allows two of his nobles to settle an accusation of murder through trial by combat in *King Javan's Year*, by Katherine Kurtz

While some early legal systems relied on oaths (the accuser swore oaths out against the supposed perpetrator, who had to swear more oaths that he was innocent and/or enlist others to swear oaths on his behalf), this soon proved an unsatisfactory method of getting at the truth of a matter. A more "advanced" method was *trial by ordeal*, in which the people involved put the matter in God's hands. The accused was subject to some ordeal — boiling water, fire, or the like — and if he could withstand it and the injury healed within three days, he was



not guilty. The ordeal found few people innocent, and this method of “justice” passed out of favor in most places in Europe no later than the early 1200s.

Related to the trial by ordeal was *trial by combat*, also known as the judicial duel. Many “primitive” peoples used this method, and it carried over into the Middle Ages as well. In this case, the judgment was again placed in God’s hands; surely God (or the gods) would not allow an innocent man to lose a duel with his accuser! The nature and type of the duel varied, depending on the court’s preferences. In some places and times, a participant in a judicial duel could hire a champion to fight on his behalf, thereby sparing himself possible injury (in some cases this was necessary because many people — clergymen, women, the disabled — weren’t allowed to fight trials by combat). Although it lingered on in many places a little longer than trial by ordeal, trial by combat eventually faded away, too.

In game terms, a trial by ordeal could amount to little more than a plot device — if the GM wants the character to be innocent, the character heals in time. For greater “realism,” the GM can assign a damage rating to the ordeal, then use the character’s REC to determine if he heals within three days. Characters can resolve trials by combat using the normal rules for fighting.

CRIMES

Crime was as rampant in Fantasy-era times as it is today. Driven by poverty or greed, thieves stole anything valuable they could get their hands on, often using specialized tools to reach through open windows or enhance their ability to pick locks and pockets. Bandits, outlaws, and wolf’s-heads stalked the countryside, preying on unwary merchants and travelers; many were knights and

fighting men who turned to crime out of greed or boredom. In addition to the usual crimes of theft, murder, burglary, rape, prostitution, fraud, and the like, medieval societies often punished many other acts as crimes, such as:

Coin-Clipping And -Shaving: The lack of standardized coinage made it possible for criminals to shave or clip small amounts of metal off coins, then combine enough shavings to make a new coin with a fake die. This was often considered a treasonous crime, since it struck at the heart of the state’s ability to support itself.

Heresy: Failure to follow religious orthodoxy sometimes constitutes a secular crime, usually punishable by death. In a Fantasy Hero campaign, heresy as a crime only makes sense if, as in medieval Europe, one religion or religious organization dominates society and has enough political and social clout to make heretics outlaws.

Poaching: Many kings, nobles, and other important persons reserved some part of the lands and/or forests for their own personal use. Hunting on those lands without the owner’s permission was a crime.

Sumptuary Laws: Kings and nobles sometimes passed laws making it illegal for persons not belonging to their class to buy certain luxury items or wear certain types of clothes.

Witchcraft: Similar to heresy, witchcraft is a “religious crime” made secular due to the power of a church. In a Fantasy Hero game featuring verifiable magic, practicing magic in general probably would not be a crime — but practicing some types of magic (e.g., necromancy) or using magic to harm others would be.

“If the Guild knew our looks or where we lodge, they’d have been nastily on our necks days, weeks, nay months ago. Or conceivably you don’t know that their penalty for free-lance or even unassigned thieving within the walls of Lankhmar and for three leagues outside them is nothing less than death, after torture if happily that can be achieved.”

—the Gray Mouser explains the Thieves’ Guild’s power to Fafhrd in “Ill Met In Lankhmar,” by Fritz Leiber

THIEVES’ GUILDS

Some Fantasy stories, such as Fritz Leiber’s tales of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, feature an unusual form of organized crime: the Thieves’ Guild. Established in mockery of legitimate guilds, the Thieves’ Guild controls (or attempts to control) all the thefts, burglaries, pickpocketing, forgery, coin-shaving, and similar crime within the city. Anyone who wants to commit a crime has to belong to the guild (which entails hefty “dues” and paying the Guildmaster a percentage of the take from each job) or risk death at the hands of guildmembers. Some cities may have two or more guilds, each competing for control of the night, leading to “mob wars” fought with knives and swords in darkened alleys.

Similarly, some Fantasy settings feature Assassins’ Guilds as well. Assassins’ guilds act as a sort of “brokerage,” matching a customer with just the right hired killer for his job. They also guarantee the reliability and skill of their members, and provide services and resources for members (such as training and poisons) that individual assassins would otherwise lack.

Characters may find themselves opposing a Thieves’ or Assassins’ Guild accidentally or deliberately. Adventuring often involves at least some larcenous activities, and the Thieves’ Guild may take it amiss if the PCs encroach on its “turf” without paying for the privilege. Alternately, if the PCs are thieves themselves, they may get involved in the Guild’s internal politics... and perhaps even end up running it!

PUNISHMENTS

Given the kinds of trouble PCs tend to get into, the types of punishment meted out for crimes may become extremely important to them. Most punishments fell into one of five categories.

First, a criminal might have to pay a fine. This was generally the most lenient punishment available in Fantasy-era societies, and one increasingly utilized by monarchs and governors eager for more sources of revenue.

Second, the authorities could restrain a criminal. Castles often had dungeons for just such purposes. To combine restraint with public humiliation, a judge could sentence a criminal to the stocks or the pillory. Similar to restraint was banishment, a penalty sometimes imposed on nobles too powerful or politically connected to execute or imprison.

Third, a criminal could receive corporal punishment — a whipping, for example. This was a good choice for minor crimes. For more severe crimes, the state might choose the fourth type of punishment: mutilation. An outlaw could have his ears lopped, or his nose lopped or slit; a thief might lose the eyes with which he coveted someone else’s goods, or the hands with which he stole them; a poacher might lose his feet so he could no longer chase after the King’s deer.

Some crimes merited the most terrible punishment of all — execution. Depending on the time and place, beheading, hanging, or even burning at the stake might be the punishment for crimes as minor as theft or adultery.

RELIGION

He had entered the part of the city reserved for the temples. On all sides of him they glittered white in the starlight — snowy marble pillars and golden domes and silver arches, shrines of Zamora’s myriad strange gods. He did not trouble his head about them; he knew that Zamora’s religion, like all things of a civilized, long-settled people, was intricate and complex, and had lost most of the pristine essence in a maze of formulas and rituals. He had squatted for hours in the courtyard of the philosophers, listening to the arguments of theologians and teachers, and come away in a haze of bewilderment, sure of only one thing, and that, that they were all touched in the head.

—Conan has a poor opinion of priests and religion in “The Tower Of The Elephant,” by Robert E. Howard

Throughout human history, one of the most important forces, for good or for ill, has been religion. Even in the twenty-first century, when science and technology supposedly reign supreme, the vast majority of humans profess religious beliefs, often strong ones. Religion was even more important in Fantasy-era times, when the lack of scientific knowledge made people more reliant on religious explanations for phenomena, giving churches and priests great influence within society.

While it’s entirely possible to create a compelling Fantasy setting without any significant mention of religion (witness J.R.R. Tolkien’s Middle-earth), most Fantasy Hero campaigns feature gods and their followers. With a little bit of thought and work, you can create entire pantheons and religions for your game, which helps to make your world distinctive and give it flavor. It may also provide you with scenario ideas relating to church politics, divine politics, and the role of religion in society.

CREATING THE GODS

Also the King said: “Tell me this thing, O prophet. Who are the true gods?”

The master prophet answered: “Let the King command.”

—from “The Sorrow Of Search,” by Lord Dunsany

Before you can devise religions and priest-hoods and decide how they fit into your world’s civilizations, you need to know who these religions worship in the first place. In short, you have to create the gods.

MONOTHEISM AND POLYTHEISM

[T]he gods in Lankhmar sometimes seem as if they must be as numberless as the grains of sand in the Great Eastern Desert.

—Lankhmar offers many gods for the religiously inclined in “Lean Times In Lankhmar,” by Fritz Leiber

Herger the Joyous: *We shall pray for your safe return!*

Ahmed ibn Fadlan: *Pray to whom?*

Herger: *In your land one God may be enough, but here we have need of many. I will pray to all of them for you. Do not be offended!*

Ahmed: *I’ll be in your debt!*

—two friends say farewell in the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior*

Before you create specific gods, you should decide how many gods you want to have. Broadly speaking, religions fall into two categories. *Monotheistic* religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, worship only one god. They deny all other gods, considering them false (or, worse, demons disguising themselves as gods). On the other hand, *polytheistic* religions, such as Hinduism or the ancient Greek and Norse faiths, worship multiple gods. Each god typically controls or has influence over a specific sphere of authority (such as darkness, crafts, storms, or fire). The number of deities in a polytheistic faith could range from just two or three to hundreds.

Most Fantasy Hero games feature polytheistic religions, for three reasons. First, because most gamers come from cultures with monotheistic faiths, it seems more “alien” to have a polytheistic religion (and is also less likely to run the risk of offending a pious gamer). Second, the interaction of different gods, priesthoods, and religions creates many interesting story and character possibilities. Third, most Fantasy fiction features polytheism. See below for more information on creating pantheons for your game.

Of course, having *one god* doesn’t necessarily mean having *one church*. Christians all worship one god, but they do so through many different churches or faiths: Catholicism, Presbyterianism, Lutheranism, Methodism, and hundreds more, often with wildly differing doctrines and creeds. Even if there’s only one deity in your campaign, you could easily have dozens of temples and priesthoods arguing over how to worship him.

MULTIPLE PANTHEONS

If your campaign features the existence of multiple gods, it may feature multiple pantheons — differing groups of gods worshipped by different cultures, civilizations, or churches. For example, the people of the Southern Islands might have their own pantheon, while the folk of the Sirrenic Empire have theirs, and the nomads of the Gorthundan Steppes follow their own animistic deities. This has important implications for how various pantheons get along with each other; see *Gods And Gods*, below.

DIFFERING VIEWS OF THE SAME GOD(S)

If you don’t want a polytheistic religion in your world, or more than one pantheon of gods, but you would like to feature religious politics and strife, you can achieve a similar effect by stressing the different ways various races, cultures, and kingdoms view the same god(s). A god may, for his own inscrutably divine reasons, choose to present himself to different peoples in different ways... or different peoples may decide to view and approach a god through their own cultural dispositions and attitudes.

For example, suppose you have only one god, Zogar. To the Gorthundan nomads, Zogar may appear as Zogar the Horse-lord, the greatest of warriors, who lends his worshippers strength and speed, but also wisdom. On the other hand, the syndics who rule the cities of the Tornathian League may view Zogar as a master merchant, the one who blesses and protects mercantile ventures and who ensures the overall prosperity of society. Although you have only created one god, you’ve essentially got two because of the different viewpoints — a Gorthundan and a Tornathian could get into a furious argument over the “true” nature of Zogar and his worship.

Similarly, what a race or culture considers important may color its beliefs about a deity. To the elves, who live in the woods, the forest-god Khelebrian may be a kind, loving, and protective god, one who guides their arrows and makes their home a wondrous place. To a tribe of men living outside the forest and often forced to fight its fearsome monsters, Khelebrian may be a harsh, punishing, or evil deity — or at best one who sometimes grudgingly gives the tribe food (deer successfully hunted by tribal warriors) in exchange for many sacrifices and prayers.

CREATING A PANTHEON

If you choose to create one or more polytheistic religions (as most Fantasy Hero GMs do), then you have to create at least one pantheon of deities. You can choose one of three standard approaches.

First, you can make the entire pantheon up on your own. Every god is original, with its own special motivations and agendas devised by you to fit into your campaign world perfectly. This method requires more work on your part (sometimes a *lot* more), but enhances your world’s distinctiveness and is likely to give you the best “fit” of the gods and the setting.

Second, you can borrow a pantheon from an old Earth religion, such as the gods of the Greeks, the Norse, or the Aztecs. This saves you a lot of time and effort, since you and your players presumably know at least a little about who Zeus and Thor are and how they act from reading myths and legends. However, Earth pantheons may not make much sense in your Fantasy world. The cultures of your Fantasy world aren't those of this world, even if they're based on them, and making them worship the same gods may defy logic... particularly if you don't take care to match the right pantheon with the right region or civilization.

Third, you can mix and match, borrowing some gods but creating others out of whole cloth. This has some of the good points of the above approaches, but may give your pantheon the feel of a patchwork quilt that's been thrown together without a pattern. If you change Earth gods to make them fit into the scheme better, you may confuse players.

"Conan, do you fear the gods?"

"I would not tread on their shadow," answered the barbarian conservatively. "Some gods are strong to harm, others, to aid; at least so say their priests. Mitra of the Hyborians must be a strong god, because his people have builded their cities over the world. But even the Hyborians fear Set. And Bel, god of thieves, is a good god. When I was a thief in Zamora I learned of him."

"What of your own gods? I have never heard you call on them."

"Their chief is Crom. He dwells on a great mountain. What use to call on him? Little he cares if men live or die."

—Conan discusses religion with Bêlit in "Queen Of The Black Coast," by Robert E. Howard

Lord Shoji: *The gods were divided, as they are today, into several pantheons. We know them now by the regions of the world that worship them: Odin, Thor, and the gods of the North; Dragon, Tiger, Rooster, and the rest of the Twelve Gods of the South; Marduk, Tiamat, and the gods of the West; and finally Zeus, Ares, and the gods of the East.*

Durkon: *Whoa, thar. Gods o' tha East? Never heard o' 'em.*

Roy: *Yeah, what kind of name is "Zeus" anyway?*

Lord Shoji: *Hey! Who's the wizened old man dispensing valuable plot points here? You? Didn't think so. Now pipe down!*

—Lord Shoji explains the cosmology of the world to the heroes of "The Order Of The Stick," a webcomic by Rich Burlew

HOW MANY GODS?

When creating a pantheon for your world, you have to decide how many gods that pantheon contains. A small pantheon (two to six deities) makes the creation process easier on you, and gives you many of the benefits of having multiple gods (such as the potential for divine bickering). However, it may leave your players feeling a little cheated when they can't find "just the right god for my character" among your limited roster. A large pantheon (seven or more gods) lets you offer the diversity of deities many players desire, but takes a lot of time and effort on your part. However, it provides the maximum amount of story and character potential you can get from a pantheon.

You may be able to have the best of both worlds by focusing your own creative efforts on the most important deities, leaving the minor ones as no more than names on a list. After all, most players don't really care who the god of blacksmiths is; they pay attention to the most significant deities — sky, earth, war, magic, fire, and so forth. A player who's interested in a lesser god can let you know so you can give him more information, or could even detail that god himself for your approval.

Regardless of how many gods you create, try to individualize and personalize them as much as you can — make them seem as real and complex as the NPCs you create for the PCs to interact with. While much of a god's personality tends to derive from his sphere of authority (war gods are temperamental and confrontational; death gods are gloomy and morbid), that's not necessarily the sum total of their being. In many well-developed mythologies (such as Greek and Norse), the gods have their own likes, dislikes, and peccadilloes that don't have anything to do with what they're worshipped for. For example, Thor enjoys good food and drink and has a prodigious appetite; Zeus and Apollo have a thing for mortal women. Giving your gods depth of character makes them seem more interesting and real — an important consideration in a genre where they often show up to interact with their mortal worshippers.

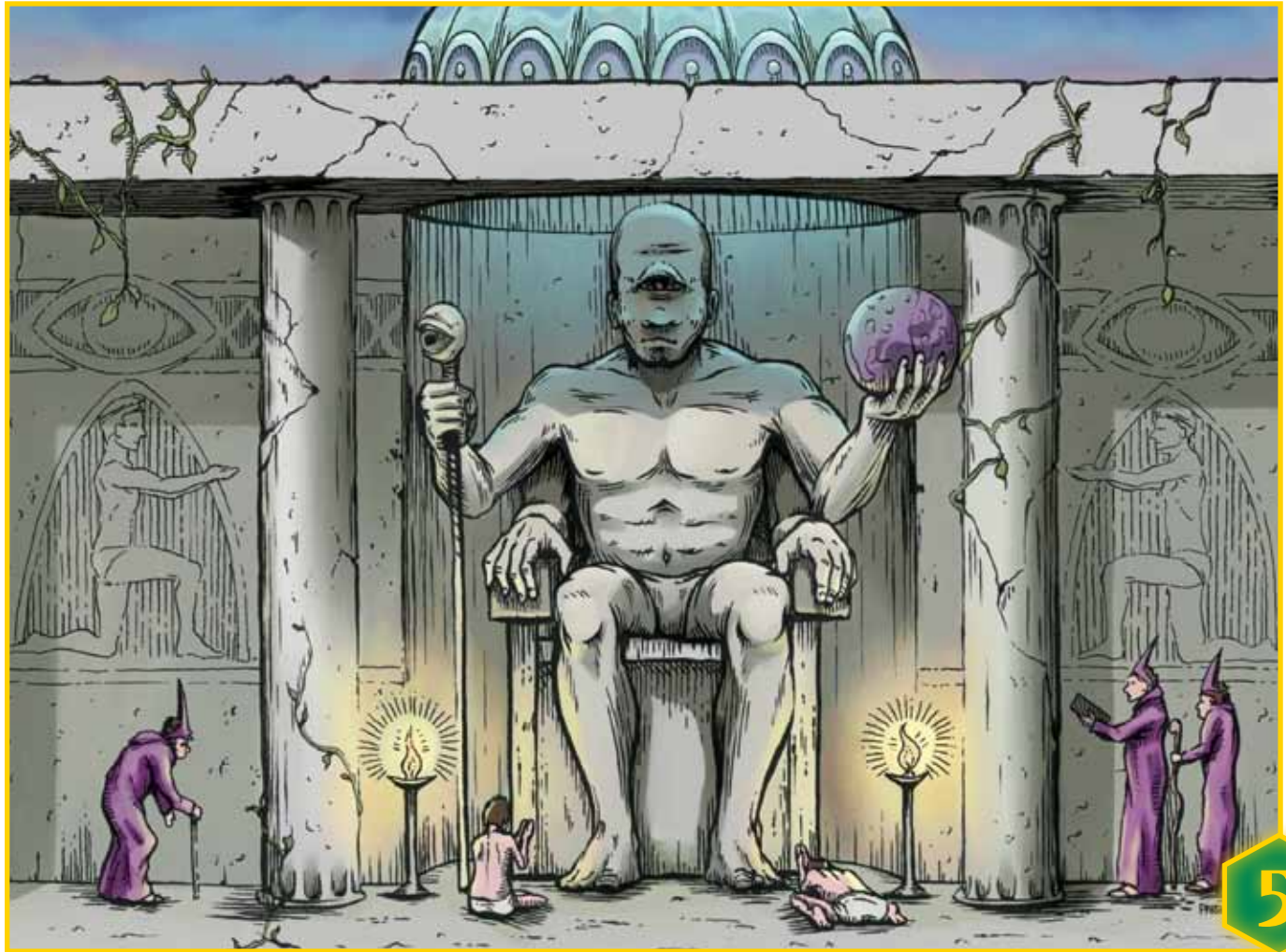
SPHERES OF AUTHORITY

Once you know how many gods you want, you need to decide what spheres of authority they control. Obviously, the more gods you have, the more precisely you can define their role(s) within the pantheon and the things people worship them for — in a pantheon with only a handful of gods, each one has to cover multiple subjects. The accompanying sidebar has a list of spheres of authority commonly found among real-world and Fantasy religions.

DEGREES OF POWER

You should also decide which gods in your pantheon are the most powerful. While even the puniest god should dwarf the most powerful mortal (at least in some respects), most pantheons definitely display a hierarchy of power.

At the top of the pantheon usually sits an Allfather- or Allmother-type god, such as Odin, Zeus, or Shang-Ti. Often a god of the sky (or sun) or a



DIVINE SPHERES OF AUTHORITY

- Activity (specific type, such as skiing or climbing)
- Animal (specific type, such as wolves or rats)
- Animals (generally)
- Arts
- Childbirth
- Crafts/Craftwork (or specific crafts, such as Pottery-making)
- Culture
- Dance
- Dawn
- Death
- Destiny/Fate
- Disease
- Earth/Agriculture
- Evil
- Fertility
- Fire
- Good
- Guardianship
- Healing
- Home/Hearth
- Humor
- Hunting
- Justice
- Lakes
- Learning/Knowledge
- Life
- Light
- Lightning
- Liquor/Drinking
- Location (specific site or region)
- Love
- Luck/Good Fortune
- Magic/Wizards
- Marriage
- Merchants/Trade
- Messengers
- Metal/Metalworking
- Moon
- Music
- Nature
- Night/Darkness/Shadow
- Oceans/Seas
- Peace
- Plants (generally, or specific type)
- Poetry/Literature
- Profession (specific type, such as baking or fishing)
- Prophecy
- Race (specific people or species)
- Rain
- Rivers
- Rulership/Leadership
- Seasons
- Sky
- Snow/Ice
- Strength
- Sun/Day
- Thunder
- Time
- Trickery/Mischief
- Vengeance
- War/Battle
- Wealth/Prosperity
- Weapon (specific type)
- Weather
- Wind/Air
- Wisdom
- Youth

goddess of the earth, this deity has the most power of any god in the pantheon, and may even be more powerful than all the other gods combined.

At the next level of power are deities responsible for major phenomena, such as the sun and moon, fire, war, thunder, an entire culture, hearth and home, luck, or magic. Their power is proportional to their importance, and may vary depending on their area of responsibility. For example, the god of magic may cast the most powerful spells of any deity in the pantheon — but the god of war, even if a lesser deity overall, could defeat him in a fist-fight.

The next step down the hierarchy contains the minor gods, often dozens or hundreds of them. These include gods with very narrow spheres of authority (youth, specific activities or crafts, and so on) and gods devoted to trivial subjects (skin diseases, flowers). Player Characters rarely worship these gods, though they may occasionally serve them for an adventure or two or encounter them in High Fantasy scenarios.

Last but not least are *demi-gods* — quasi-deities usually sprung from a union between god and mortal. Hercules is perhaps the best known example from Earth's religions, but many others exist. They're rarely worshipped directly by anyone, though a grateful person may offer up a quick word of thanks in appropriate circumstances. In some High Fantasy campaigns, characters may encounter and fight demi-gods regularly... or even be demi-gods themselves! (See the Demigod Template on page 66.)

GODS AND GODS

When you create two or more gods, you have to decide how they relate to each other. The question becomes even more complicated if you have multiple pantheons; then you have to think about not only intra-pantheon relations (how all the gods in one pantheon interact with each other), but inter-pantheon relations (how two pantheons interact).

While the members of a pantheon usually get along amicably, if not better, it's not uncommon for the gods within one pantheon to quarrel or fight with each other. For example, Thor and Loki had their differences; so did Hephaestus and Ares, and Osiris and Set. In some cases, the differences may depend on the gods' spheres of authority; the god of day and the god of night may hate each other bitterly. On the other hand, sometimes people conceive of two opposites together, and thus those two gods associate with each other. In some pantheons, the god of the sun and goddess of the moon (or vice-versa) are married, or are brother and sister; the god of youth may be the child of the god of love and the goddess of the hearth. Any other concepts people associate may affect divine relationships; for instance, the god of rain may be married to the goddess of agriculture, since rain causes crops to grow.

The concept of how two pantheons relate is primarily a Fantasy creation; historical cultures didn't usually compare and contrast their gods in

any direct way. Interpantheon relations depend largely on how they compete within the "ecology of heaven," so to speak. Two pantheons that both try to attract worshippers from the same civilization or region probably do not enjoy friendly relations; they might even be at war. Two pantheons that don't compete in any significant way may ally against other pantheons — or at least, their like-minded deities may get along well. The various gods of Good and Light may team up to thwart the designs of the gods of Evil and Shadow, for example.

Of course, gods' relations with each other may affect their worshippers and temples in the material world — as above, so below. If two pantheons fight, their priests may fight as well (at least through backbiting and espionage, if not actual warfare); the opposition of one god to another may spark an entire crusade. If two deities quarrel frequently, priests devoted to those deities may not work together well. Conversely, Aphrodite, Freya, Astarte, Hathor, and Xochiquetzal (all goddesses of love) might instruct their priestesses to conspire together to ensure that the king and his one true love meet and marry — truly a match made in heaven!

GODS AND DEMONS

You should also consider how the gods relate to other powerful beings, such as demons, spirits, angels, and faeries. Are those beings the most minor of minor deities themselves? Are they fallen gods? Are they a former pantheon the current gods displaced, now reduced in power because no one worships them anymore? Are they other creations of the great Creator God who created the pantheon — perhaps an early "trial run" before he created the gods, or an afterthought made with leftover divine essence? Or are they completely different, with no connections at all?

Regardless of their degree of relation, gods and these other beings usually interact to some degree. For example, perhaps demons serve the gods of Darkness and Death in their struggles against the gods of Good. Faerie-folk may be the most powerful followers of the goddess of Nature... or the Trickster god. Some devils may have such power that they're virtually deities themselves, and can deal with (or fight) the gods on equal footing.

HENOTHEISM

People in a society with a polytheistic religion may be *henotheistic*, meaning they devote their faith and worship to a single deity, but don't deny the existence of the other deities. For example, sailors may pray to the god of the sea, who has an impact on their daily lives. They don't pray or offer sacrifices to the gods of fire, earth, war, or the like, but they don't disbelieve in those deities.

In many Fantasy campaigns, henotheism is the prevailing form of worship. The GM establishes a single pantheon, often a large one, but individual priests and temples are devoted solely to one deity. This makes it easy to compartmentalize priest PCs and their powers, while still offering many of the benefits of a polytheistic religion.

GODS AND MEN

As mentioned above, divine politics and conflicts may spill over into the world of men, with various effects. But that's not all there is to the relationship between gods and their worshippers.

GODS WALK THE EARTH

"It is a scaled serpent coiled with its tail in its mouth. It is the sign of Set, the Old Serpent, the god of the Stygians! This Bowl is too old for a human world — it is a relic of the time when Set walked the earth in the form of a man!"

—Promero knows something of a strange artifact in "The God In The Bowl," by Robert E. Howard

In many Fantasy Hero campaigns, particularly High Fantasy games, the gods frequently manifest in the world of men. Not only do they grant direct, specific powers to their priests (spells, healing abilities, and the like), but sometimes they appear themselves to instruct worshippers, tell a group of adventurers to go on a quest, fight the minions of another deity, sire children, or inspire a crusade. This has numerous implications for your campaign world.

DIVINE INTERACTION

First, it means you have to decide how often the gods interact directly with mortals, how they do so, why they do so, and what restrictions or divine laws govern the phenomenon. For example, some deities only appear in symbolic form (like the burning bush that spoke to Moses) — perhaps because revealing their true and awesome Selves directly to mortals would kill those mortals, perhaps because they simply enjoy being inscrutable. Many Fantasy settings have a divine rule that gods cannot appear and fight each other on the earth, since that results in catastrophes, havoc, and millions of deaths; if they wish to war on the mortal plane, gods must use mortal proxies. Any form of direct interaction (other than communication, or granting divine magic to priests) might be forbidden... though that doesn't mean the gods aren't watching.

One important aspect of this question, particularly for High Fantasy games, is whether gods and mortals can oppose each other directly, or even fight one another. This occurred frequently in Greek mythology. To take three examples from the Trojan War, an angered Artemis delayed the Greek fleet's departure, other angry gods turned Odysseus's short journey home into a ten-year ordeal, and Diomedes actually wounded Aphrodite in battle on the plains of Troy. If you allow this in your Fantasy campaign, it implies either that the gods are relatively weak (at least when they appear in the mortal realms), or that heroes can become quite powerful. Of course, it may be impossible for a mortal to truly slay a god; the "death" might simply banish the god to his home realm for a time.

DIVINE COMMUNICATION

Second, you should consider how the gods communicate with their worshippers when they don't directly appear. In most Fantasy settings, they often talk through their priests, since they already grant them powers. This opens up the possibility that a priest might fabricate divine messages for his own purposes (but see below), or otherwise use his access to the divine to further a personal agenda. But perhaps the gods find other ways to communicate with their followers. They might grant visions or dreams to the devout, or speak through oracles. This would be particularly appropriate if the gods needed to bypass a corrupt priesthood.

A GOD FOR EVERYONE, AND EVERYONE FOR A GOD

Third, in a world where one can objectively prove that a god or gods exist, there will be no atheists. Some might deny the power of a particular god or pantheon, or question a god's intent and purposes, but only a fool would refuse to pick at least *one* god to worship when he knows the gods provide direct benefits for their worshippers and/or can squash him like a bug for his insolence.

The issue then becomes: what god does an individual worship? If a character has a plethora of choices (either henotheistically between gods in a single pantheon, or among different pantheons), he usually picks the one he perceives as offering him the most benefits, be they protection, wealth, success, good fortune, or something else. Different temples or priesthoods might compete strongly for worshippers, proselytizing with a will and offering as many services as they can to attract adherents ("All who worship Mithras may ask of his priests a healing-spell once per month"). If no choice exists (as in a theocratic society that cuts off all access to gods other than the official pantheon), a person has to do the best he can with the deity he's got.

HONEST PRIESTS

Fourth, the gods may keep their priests on the straight and narrow. In the real world, false prophets, sinful priests, greedy friars, and competing popes abound; Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, among many other works of literature, mocks religious officials for their areligious and impious conduct. In a Fantasy Hero campaign with real gods, it may be impossible for a priest to act in any way against the dictates of his religion and his deity. If a priest shirks his duties or attempts to profit from his position illicitly, a god might take away his mystic powers and spells, brand him as a sinner, or simply strike him dead. The same could apply to anyone, priest or not, who commits terrible sins or takes a god's name in vain. On the other hand, if divine law prevents direct god-mortal interaction, then the gods lose the ability to directly punish those who offend them.

Similarly, if two gods compete or fight with each other, then one may protect those who engage in acts that offend the other. A priest of Zogar who sins against Zogar may continue to

"Mordiggian is the god of Zul-Bha-Sair," said the innkeeper with unctuous solemnity. "He has been the god from years that are lost to man's memory in shadow deeper than the subterranean of his black temple. There is no other god in Zul-Bha-Sair. And all who die within the walls of the city are sacred to Mordiggian."

—Phariom learns of the unpleasant nature of religion in Zul-Bha-Sair in "The Charnel God," by Clark Ashton Smith

receive divine magics and aid — but from Zogar's enemy Kathros, not Zogar himself. Over time, as the priest relied more and more on Kathros (knowingly or unknowingly), the corruption would become complete, converting him wholly to the worship of Kathros. A god of Good may condemn a sinner to Hell... but as the sinner's spirit flits toward the fiery pit, a god of Evil rescues it and converts it into a fear-knight to serve in the god's retinue.

SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES

Fifth, the existence of the gods may affect the balance of power between secular and religious authorities. The medieval Roman Catholic Church, for example, exercised enormous influence in society and over kings, princes, and dukes — and that's *without* the benefit of divine magic or weapons blessed by a god's touch. In a Fantasy world with regular divine intervention, it's possible that a religion or priesthood could become even *more* powerful than the medieval Church. Theocracies or quasi-theocracies might appear with great frequency.

If you want a campaign setting in which the secular authorities have greater power or influence in society than priests do, you need to find a way to hobble the power of the temples. You could, for example, make the priesthood a small group, so that even with divine aid it lacks the power to administrate huge empires or oppose armies. Or perhaps the competition among the priests of opposing gods or pantheons prevents any one religion from having the political clout of the medieval Church. Maybe the gods themselves keep their priests from obtaining too much secular authority.

SAINTS AND HOLY MEN

In a Fantasy setting where the gods give powers to their priests, they may grant extra powers to the most devout and accomplished priests, or give priestly powers to pious and deserving laymen. If these persons become the object of worship themselves, they're *saints*; if not, they remain simple holy men (though holy men often accomplish great deeds or found special branches of the faith).

The existence of saints allows you to add new dimensions to your campaign religion, particularly if it's a monotheistic faith. The saints may in effect take the place of lesser deities. Farmers who want help with their crops would pray for the assistance of Ste. Gretha, patron saint of agriculture; warriors who wanted luck and skill in battle would offer up prayers to St. Rognard, patron saint of combat and warfare.

There's no Template or other set of requirements for being a saint or holy man; it's something the GM has to decide upon and the gaming group has to roleplay. Becoming a saint or holy man would definitely be a major accomplishment for any PC!

PRIESTS, PRIESTHOODS, AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

At the far end of the hall... stood towering idols hewn from seven kinds of stone: the Seven Gods they worshipped here in Zangabal on the Gulf. Thongor eyed them grimly, unimpressed. The winged colossi, bearing mystic attributes and symbols in their many arms, tridents, stylized thunderbolts, crowns, swords and less-recognizable accouterments, glared down at him, their stone faces shining in the dim gleam of coiling blue flames which glided heavenwards from a vast bronze bowl on the alabaster altar. The superstitions of the barbarian were bred deep in him, stamped deep in blood, brain and bone: but he knew them not, these alien godlings of the tropic, jungle-clad southlands: he swore only in the name of Father Gorm, the grim divinity of the dark northern wastes of ice and snow.

—Thongor walks through the temple of the Seven Gods in “Thieves Of Zangabal,” by Lin Carter

On a day to day basis, the nature and activities of the gods may matter less to PCs and NPCs than the nature and activities of those who worship the gods. Churches, priests, and the faithful can play just about any role you want in the campaign, from background “color” to major factor in society.

THE RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY

Muffled drums beat out a nerve-scratching rhythm and red lights flickered hypnotically in the underground Temple of Hates, where five thousand ragged worshipers knelt and abased themselves and ecstatically pressed foreheads against the cold and gritty cobbles as the trance took hold and the human venom rose in them. ... The masked Archpriest of the Hates lifted a skinny finger. Parchment-thin iron cymbals began to clash in unison with the drums and the furnace-red flickerings, wringing to an unendurable pitch the malices and envies of the blackly enraptured communicants.

—an archpriest of an evil cult leads his followers in worship in “The Cloud Of Hate,” by Fritz Leiber

Religious organizations — whether you call them churches, temples, sanctums, circles, brethren, or something else — need structure like any other group. Most of them have a hierarchical organization, such as pope-cardinal-archbishop-bishop-priest or archpriest-high priest-priest-acolyte. Page 131 has Perk values for various members of typical religious hierarchies, but you can easily create your own Perk if necessary.



If you prefer to create a religious organization with some other type of structure or governing body, take a look at the ideas in the *Government* section, above, and apply them to a religious organization. For example, a temple might have a governing triumvirate or council (an oligarchy) instead of a single overall leader. The structure might also depend on the nature and attributes of the god(s) the organization serves. A church devoted to a pantheon of nine deities might have nine different “tribunals,” each responsible for one church function. The temple of the war-god might organize its priests and paladins like an army.

THE ROLE OF LAYMEN

Consider whether the religious organization you’re creating has any place for laymen. Some allow non-ordained persons to serve in minor capacities, and perhaps even lead some worship ceremonies; others, particularly those devoted to Evil gods, keep all the power and authority for the priesthood. A character who’s not a priest could still express his devotion by becoming a deacon or lay preacher, adding depth to his background and creating roleplaying and story opportunities for you to use in the campaign.

Some religious organizations may exclude particular types of laymen, allowing others to participate to a greater degree. For example, in a society with an elaborate caste system, maybe the lowest third of the castes can only attend specific worship services. Another temple might forbid wizards and other “blasphemers who ape the powers of the gods” to join.

MEN AND WOMEN

How do your campaign’s religious organizations treat men and women? Some religions regard them as equals, allowing both genders to participate in all forms of worship and attain any position in the church. (This is a popular choice for Fantasy Hero games, since it opens up the possibility of female PCs becoming high-ranking priests.) Others restrict the priesthood, and perhaps even worship ceremonies, to a single gender. Some goddesses prefer only priestesses, for example, and some religions consider women “unclean” and don’t let them become priests.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

A religious organization doesn’t exist just to give PC priests something to do. It has functions important to the god whom it serves, to the priesthood, and to the faithful. First and foremost, a religious organization provides a place for adherents of the faith to gather and worship. If possible, that place is a temple, church, or other structure, but for some religions open-air services in sacred groves work better. In some Fantasy campaigns, a temple might even hold its services among the clouds, on another plane of reality, or deep underground.

WORSHIP CEREMONIES AND HOLY BOOKS

Second, a religious organization conducts worship ceremonies. The nature and frequency of the ceremonies depends on the god of the religion and other factors. For example, a priesthood devoted to the worship of a living god-emperor may hold a continuous ceremony for the god-emperor’s health and well-being, with a new set of priests coming into the temple every hour to keep the chants going. On the other hand, a god of the seasons may only require a single ceremony every solstice or equinox.

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“The folk [of Cuirnif] are... slack in their religious observances. For instance, they make obeisance to Divine Wiulio with the right hand, not on the buttock, but on the abdomen, which we here consider a slipshod practice. What are your own views?”

“The rite should be conducted as you describe,” said Cugel. “No other method carries weight.”

Erwig refilled Cugel’s glass. “I consider this an important endorsement of our views!”

—Cugel and Erwig discuss religious practices in *Cugel’s Saga*, by Jack Vance

Ships did not put unasked into this port, where dusky sorcerers wove awful spells in the murk of sacrificial smoke mounting eternally from blood-stained altars where naked women screamed, and where Set, the Old Serpent, arch-demon of the Hyborians but god of the Stygians, was said to writhe his shining coils among his worshippers.

—the foul religion of dark Stygia is described in “Queen Of The Black Coast,” by Robert E. Howard

Generally speaking, the larger and longer-lived a religious organization, the more elaborate its rites tend to become, and the more different types of ceremonies it may have. Complex ceremonies might involve candles, singing, spellcasting, readings from sacred texts, sacrifices, the laying of hands on worshippers, ritual food consumption, or the like. The church may limit some ceremonies to specific occasions, or only allow certain types of priests to conduct them.

If a religious organization has particular importance for your campaign — for example, maybe one or more PCs belong to it and attend or conduct services frequently — you may want to jot down a few details about the ceremony and liturgical forms. That adds depth and color to your world that the players will appreciate.

As you think about a church’s rites and doctrines, consider what sacred texts and holy books it uses, if any. Most Earth religions have at least one holy writ, and many have vast bodies of religious literature created over the centuries by priests and scholars. It stands to reason that many Fantasy religions also have sacred books and scrolls. In a High Fantasy game, copies of a holy book might even have special powers!

OTHER CHURCH ACTIVITIES

In some settings, religious organizations fulfill other functions than just gathering the faithful and leading them through ceremonies. A temple could provide social services (such as money for the poor, healing spells for the sick and injured, or sanctuary for hunted men), call for and lead crusades against the heathen, or the like. Or it could involve itself in more secular concerns, as the medieval Roman Catholic Church did. It might own vast estates and become a feudal lord, renting parcels of land to peasants in exchange for money and services. It could participate in the marketplace, selling the products of its lands, religious privileges (such as pardons or indulgences), or the services of its priests to any willing buyer.

CULTS AND MYSTERY RELIGIONS

Not all religions are openly practiced or widely accepted. Cults (minor, often unorthodox or bizarre faiths) and mystery religions (secret faiths) proliferate in some Fantasy settings. Some are old religions, driven underground by the ascendancy of the current religions but still practiced in hidden or out-of-the-way places. Some are heretical or blasphemous offshoots of existing religions, or secret “inner circles of the most holy” within existing religious organizations. In non-Evil societies, the churches of Evil deities, demons, and the like may have to function in secret, lest the authorities discover and slay their members.

Cults and mystery religions have plenty of story potential. Not only does a secret cabal of devil-worshippers make a great adversary for a group of PCs, it possesses enough power to present a significant challenge, and the GM can always have one or two members escape to start the cult again. Some priest characters may belong to a mystery religion which saddles them with the responsibility to (a) preserve the group’s secrecy, and (b) perform quests on the group’s behalf without revealing its role in the situation.

INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Religious organizations in the campaign probably interact with each other (and a single large organization’s “divisions” have to interact with each other). In some cases, this interaction mirrors the interactions of the religions’ respective gods; if Zogar hates Kathros, it’s unlikely their temples get along peacefully. In other settings, it may depend not on divine politics, but the respective temples’ roles in society and the ambitions and personalities of their leaders. A crusading priest of Kathros may want to drive the worshippers of Zogar into the sea, while a studious, philosophical Zogarian just wants everyone to live peacefully together.

Whatever the nature of the interaction, you can use it as fodder for scenarios and subplots. One temple could hire the PCs to desecrate another, or to interfere with an important ritual. If a full religious war breaks out, one side or the other may recruit the PCs to fight on its behalf. A god may instruct its priests to give a particular relic to the PCs and ask them to take it to another temple on the other side of the world. The possibilities are practically endless.

THE PRIESTHOOD

After considering the nature and purpose of a religious organization in general, focus on the specific: the priesthood.

BECOMING A PRIEST

First, ask yourself how a person joins the religion’s priesthood. Does it only accept people of a certain age, race, or gender? Does it require prospective priests to take any tests or undergo ordeals to prove their worthiness? How long do novices study before the church recognizes them as priests? If the setting features divine magic, at what point does that become available to a priest? Answering these questions may help you flesh out a Template for the religion’s priests with just the right Knowledge Skills, Perks, and other abilities.

For example, perhaps the novices of the god of thieves have to steal a particular object named by the Council of Priests before they become priests themselves. Their Template allows them to choose 6 points’ worth of Skills from the Rogue Template, reflecting the training they receive in the criminal arts.

POWERS AND PRIVILEGES

Priests usually enjoy certain privileges and benefits (in game terms, their *Membership: Religious Rank* Perk, page 131, represents this). First, as members of an organization, they have the benefits that come with belonging to a group: comrades in time of need; food and shelter (either in structures established by the organization, or from the faithful); and so forth. Second, in most societies people, including powerful people such as nobles, usually respect or fear priests, and treat them with at least a little deference.

In some societies, priests may enjoy special legal status. For example, they might not have to pay taxes, serve on juries, or obey some types of

laws. They might use a special canonical court that treats them more leniently than civil courts. In times of war, both sides might grant the other side's priests a sort of immunity, not attacking them when they go onto the battlefield to treat the injured. A powerful or highly respected priesthood might even stop a war by ordering the combatants to cease fighting!

Belonging to the priesthood also confers certain powers on a priest. In a Fantasy game, priests usually have divine magic powers or spells. In addition, they can perform the marriage ceremony, officiate at worship ceremonies and rites, and perform blessings.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Priests' powers bring with them special duties and responsibilities. First and foremost, they have to obey the dictates of their god(s), and usually of the church organization itself. This may include a rigorous daily cycle of prayers and devotions, having to pay an especially high tithe, perform certain types of good deeds, or the like. For some religions, this may require significant sacrifice or activity on the priest's part. For example, Aztec priests included as part of their religious devotions the practice of bloodletting — at best simply painful, at worst enough to leave the priest weakened. Priests may also have to take special vows, such as of poverty, chastity, humility, frugality, or sobriety. In game terms, these requirements usually constitute Physical, Psychological, or Social Complications.

Additionally, priests must keep the religious organization healthy. This includes ministering to the faithful in both mundane and magical ways (such as providing healing spells and protections from curses) and remaining alert for threats to the religion — the actions of enemy deities, corruption within the church, backsliding by the faithful, and so forth. It may also mean *proselytizing*, or recruiting nonbelievers to become believers and join the faith. An adventuring PC priest might, through his valorous deeds, persuade others of the power of his god, and thus increase the size of the flock, and perhaps even found new branches of the church himself.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Finally, as you create a religion for your campaign you should consider how it fits into the overall societal picture. Is the church widely accepted, widely condemned, or merely tolerated? Do people respect, belittle, or revile its priests and worshippers? Does it exercise great power in society (as did the medieval Roman Catholic Church), virtually none, or something in between?

The larger, wealthier, and more prominent a religious organization is, the more likely it is to play a significant part in the greater society. Wealth and power (especially magical power, in many Fantasy worlds) mean influence — particularly when “power” includes the ability to label someone a heretic, excommunicate him, and otherwise affect his ability to interact with his neighbors and earn a living. (In game terms, excommunication or the like would constitute a Major Transform to inflict an appropriate Social Complication on the target.) Particularly in a realm or culture where a single religion predominates, that church can become a social juggernaut, dwarfing even kings and nobles with its prominence. If appropriate, the GM may increase the cost of a priest's *Religious Rank* Fringe Benefit to reflect this.

TECHNOLOGY

Although most people associate the term “technology” with Science Fiction more than Fantasy, many Fantasy-era societies possessed a wide range of materials, devices, and machines. In some cases, a particular culture or region developed a technology and then exploited that technology for commercial or military gain, such as India selling steel to the Romans or the English using the longbow against the French in the Hundred Years' War. In other cases, a technology developed independently in multiple places, or spread out from its original place of invention without significant restraint.

In a Fantasy Hero campaign, technological developments may occur and spread even more quickly than they did on Earth thanks to the presence of magic. If magic makes travel and communications easier, people can more readily share ideas and find ways to use what they know to invent new devices. On the other hand, it's also possible that access to magic could *inhibit* the development of technology. For example, if spellcasters with battle magic are common, why bother developing the trebuchet, or perhaps even the catapult? If the priests of the fire-god can use their spells to heat iron to the melting point, perhaps strong, easily-made steel becomes available much earlier than it did on Earth.

The accompanying table on page 384 provides some examples of when humans developed various technologies (sometimes with notes about where they were invented). The dates indicate the date of earliest availability, not necessarily of common availability or earliest practical use. For example, the Chinese invented the compass and gunpowder long before the Europeans, but didn't use them for the same things.

The priest was fat and full-fed, and he was at once a fence for stolen articles and a spy for the police.

—a priest works all angles in “Rogues In The House,” by Robert E. Howard



TECHNOLOGY TABLE

The BC Era (prior to 0 AD)

Armor (all types except heavy chainmail and plate armor)
 Astrolabes
 Bone and horn tools
 Bow drill
 Bows and arrows
 Bronzsmithing
 Carrier pigeons
 Catapults
 Ceramic pottery
 Compass (in China)
 Coppersmithing
 Crank handles (in China)
 Crossbows (in China)
 Flint and stone tools
 Glassblowing and glassworking
 Goldsmithing
 HTH weapons
 Ironsmithing
 Keys
 Kilns
 Looms
 Paper (in China)
 Papyrus
 Pin tumbler locks
 Plows
 Sailed watercraft
 Silversmithing
 Sledges
 Steel (in India)
 Water clocks
 Water organs
 Weaving
 Wheels
 Writing and numbers

0 To 499 AD

Abacus (in China)
 Glass windowpanes
 Onagers
 Pipe organs
 Steel (in China, Europe)
 Waterwheels
 Whippetree (in China)
 Wine presses

500-999

Blast furnaces
 Crossbows (in Europe)
 Gunpowder (in China)
 Stirrups
 Windmills

1000-1099

Armor (heavy chainmails)
 Keeled ships
 Whippetree (in Europe)

1100-1199

Rockets (in China)
 Sternpost rudders
 Trebuchets

1200-1299

Armor (plate armors)
 Buttons and buttonholes
 Cannons (in China)
 Eyeglasses
 Gunpowder (in Europe)
 Gunpowder bombs (in China)
 Silk throwing (threadmaking)
 Spinning wheel

1300-1399

Arbalests
 Cannons (in Europe)
 Cast iron generally available (in Europe)
 Gunpowder small arms
 Hourglasses
 Longbows
 Mechanical clocks
 Wire drawing

1400-1499

Breechloading cannons
 Caravels
 Cast-iron cannonballs
 Coffee (in Ethiopia)
 Flintlock small arms
 Gold fillings
 Interchangeable parts and assembly lines (for ships in Venice)
 Lateen sails
 Matchlock small arms
 Passenger coaches
 Printing presses
 Rubber balls (discovered in Americas by Columbus)
 Suction pumps
 Tobacco (discovered in Americas by Columbus)
 Toothbrush (in China)

1500-1599

Cast-iron cannons
 Clockwork automatons
 Compound microscopes
 Corn (imported to Europe from the Americas)
 Flush toilet
 Glass diving bell
 Glass mirrors
 Ironclad warships (in Korea)
 Knitting machines
 Laudanum
 Newspapers
 Orange trees (imported to Europe from China)
 Potatoes (imported to Europe from the Americas)
 Rifling in gun barrels
 Sugar (refined)
 Turkeys (imported to Europe from the Americas)
 Watches (portable clocks)
 Water systems (gravity-powered)
 Wheellock small arms

“In China” refers to inventions in China that spread to the West much later, or which the West much later developed on its own. “In Europe” indicates dates of inventions or common usage in Europe.



MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY

Clarke's Third Law famously states, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." Larry Niven (and other Fantasy and Science Fiction authors) have advanced a corollary, "Any sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from technology." What this means for a Fantasy world is that if you want to, you can easily mix magic and technology — after all, to most people in most Fantasy settings, even most adventurers, devices like cigarette lighters, cell phones, televisions, robots, and laser pistols are going to seem like enchanted items!

Some Fantasy settings feature "advanced" technology recognized as such, but created and used in such a way that it's basically the same thing as magic with a different paint job. Often technological skills are limited to or associated with particular races (such as dwarves, gnomes, goblins, or orcs), and has a "steampunk" or "Rube Goldberg" sort of look involving massive gears and pistons, containers of colored, bubbling alchemical fuels, odd-shaped mystic crystals, and so on. Thus, a character might have a Gnomish Rocketpack instead of a Flight Spell; both are defined as Flight 20m, but the former is an OIF (possibly Bulky), while the latter requires an Expendable OAF, Gestures, Incantations, and a successful Magic roll to get started.

MAGIC-TECHNOLOGY INTERACTION

A related issue is how magic and technology interact — a particularly important concern for Urban Fantasy campaigns where high technology is a major fact of life. Since technology's so prevalent in the modern day, it won't take long before your campaign confronts issues like "does body armor stop a spell?", "can my Lockpicking Spell affect this electronic lock?", and "are the people in that car protected from my Lightning Bolt Spell?" But even in more traditional Fantasy settings, the question of how magic and technology react to one another may come up.

NORMAL INTERACTION

On one end of the spectrum are settings where magic and technology interact normally — each can affect the other. This tends to be the default in roleplaying game settings because it maintains character parity. If one force or another is more powerful, then Player Characters tend to gravitate toward using that force, to the eventual detriment of the campaign. Additionally, the universal mechanics of the *HERO System* make it easy to compare one type of force to the other to ensure equality (or inequality).

In this sort of setting, wands can be evaluated to determine their effectiveness in relation to pistols, defensive spells to body armor, sensory spells to binoculars and chemical sniffers, flying carpets to cars or hovercraft, and so on. However, you should keep two things in mind. First, just because magic and technology can easily be

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"I have heard that the devices of the ancients are similar in their powers to the magical spells employed by the higher Circles of the Sorcerer Priests within the temples."

"So it is. The ancients performed their wonders with instruments, but later our savants learned to produce similar effects with no more than the strength of their minds."

—Harsan and Chtik p'Qwe discuss the similarities between magic and ancient technology in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

compared and contrasted doesn't mean they can do the same things. A magic wand and a pistol can both kill you, but the wand shoots lightning bolts, and no technological weapon can do that. On the other hand, accelerating a physical missile to killing velocity the way a gun does might not be possible with a spell. But some settings might be totally interchangeable, with electricity guns and Gunfire Spells right alongside the magic wands and pistols.

Second, just because magic and technology are comparable doesn't mean they're *compatible*. In some settings a character can, for example, wear body armor and use a defense spell at the same time. In others, wearing a technological device like body armor would make it more difficult or impossible to use a defensive spell at the same time, or perhaps reduce the effectiveness of the spell (see page 278). Many GMs like to include this sort of element in their magic systems because it prevents a character from becoming extremely powerful by combining magic and technology.

IRREGULAR INTERACTION

At the opposite end of the spectrum are settings where magic and technology don't interact normally. This could mean several things.

First, it could mean that magic and high technology (meaning anything more advanced than, say, technology as of the year 1850) cannot affect one another. A Magic Shield Spell provides fine protection against magic, and even knives... but a modern bullet goes through it as if it weren't there. A Lockpicking Spell works fine on ordinary key locks, but is useless against electronic locks. On the other hand, body armor offers no protection at all against attack spells. Taken to an extreme, magic and technology might be *totally* incompatible, with spells unable to affect even knives and simple locks, and technology unable to resist the effects of magic. (Though that may raise some chicken-or-the-egg concerns about which force has primacy in which situation.)

A less dire situation is one in which magic and technology aren't incompatible, but simply "interfere" with one another to some degree. In this case a Magic Shield Spell works against modern bullets, but only at half effect; a Lockpicking Spell works against electronic locks provided the caster succeeds with his Magic roll at a -4 penalty. Devising some rules for how this works requires a little effort on your part, as well as careful consideration of how they might affect game balance, but the reward is a flavorful system that adds depth and excitement to the campaign.

The autumn rains began again, monotonous, persistent, and they rode silently through the wilderness between the lands, hunched into voluminous, hooded cloaks, their harps trussed in leather, tucked beneath them. They slept in what dry places they could find in shallow caves of rock, beneath thick groves of trees, their fires wavering reluctantly in wind and rain.

—Morgon and Deth journey across the realm in *The Riddlemaster Of Hed*, by Patricia McKillip

THE EFFECT OF POWER LEVELS

The question of how magic interacts with technology may depend in part on how powerful magic is. If spells are powerful and easy to cast they may largely replace firearms and other personal weapons. If magic is versatile, it could easily "trump" technology regardless of how they interact. A great security system may not be susceptible to spells of alteration, but it's useless if magic can make a character invisible and intangible. (Though of course a facility that's aware of the "mystic threat" may have counter-spells to stop spellcasters.) If ordinary weapons are limited to physical effects (like creating stab wounds and bullet holes), they might take a back seat to magic if there are spells that can cause similar injuries *and* make people fall asleep, turn them into toads, or trap them in shackles of mystic force.

TRAVEL

The channel grew narrower and the River swifter. Now they were speeding along with little hope of stopping or turning, whatever they might meet ahead.

—the Fellowship journeys down the River Anduin in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Many Fantasy Hero campaigns involve a significant amount of travel. Not content to remain in one place very long, characters journey hither and yon over the landscape on foot, on horseback, and by ship in search of their next adventure. In some cases, an adventure may require travel — for example, if a merchant hires the PCs to guard a caravan, or the king commands them to deliver a message to another king. An Epic Fantasy campaign may have travel as a primary factor, as the characters journey to the land of the Dark Lord to overthrow him or steal his Talisman of Power.

With so much traveling going on, you may need to know how long it takes for characters to get from Point A to Point B. If you don't plan for anything to happen to the PCs during the journey, and they have no deadline to meet, the duration of the journey doesn't really matter, so you can just narrate it: "After six weeks on the road, you see the gates of Carrenium in the distance..." But if the time the trip takes is important (perhaps because the PCs have to get somewhere by a specific day), then you can use either of two ways to determine how long it takes to travel.

First, you can determine the characters' rate of movement based on their meters of Running, riding, or Vehicle movement, then adjust for the travel conditions. This may not prove satisfactory, since the *HERO System* movement rules are designed for combat and crisis conditions, not long-distance travel. For example, in theory a character with Running 12m and SPD 3 moving at



Combat Movement speed on a road would cover 10,800 meters (10.8 km) per hour — a little under 7 miles per hour, or about 50 miles for an eight-hour day (allowing for some rest breaks). That's wildly unrealistic, though you can come closer to realistic results by using half of the character's Combat Movement meters instead, or decreasing his SPD to 1 or 2 for travel purposes.

Alternately, you can use the accompanying Travel Table. It provides speeds in kilometers per hour for various methods of travel by land and sea. It ignores characters' or vehicles' defined purchased meters of movement in favor of "dramatically realistic" results, and uses dramatic/narrative terms (such as "walk" and "run") instead of precise game terms. The GM determines how to apply the table (including how long characters can maintain a "run" or a horse can "gallop," what constitutes "heavy fog" or "rough" ground, and so forth), and any other penalties, rules, or modifiers that might apply (such as use of Long Term Endurance). As always, the GM may adjust the table as he sees fit; sometimes it's appropriate to let characters move a little faster than "realism" dictates, and sometimes you have to slow the PCs down to make the events of the story flow more smoothly.

When you use the Travel Table for mixed groups of characters, use the *slowest* rate for any of them or the *worst* possible penalty. Thus, a single halfling, gnome, or sprite in an adventuring party can slow the whole group down. A group riding a mix of different kinds of horses uses the largest penalty (*i.e.*, it can only travel as fast as the slowest horse).

In some High Fantasy campaigns, travel by air (flying ship, dragon-riding, or the like) or teleportation is possible. If so, the GM should calculate the movement from the characters' purchased meters, with some allowance for prevailing conditions (such as a strong headwind) and rest breaks. Those forms of movement tend to be much faster than normal methods.

Example: *The Bloodiron Blades, an adventuring party, has six members: one halfling, three humans, a half-elf, and a half-giant. They're traveling to and through the Snowthorn Mountains on their way to seek the dragon Kar'thak and slay him. For the first part of the trip, they're riding along the road; they all have light, medium, or heavy warhorses. The base speed for riding a horse on a road (easy ground) is 5.5 km per hour. However, the one heavy warhorse in the party imposes a -.5 modifier (note that you use the worst of all the modifiers). So, they travel at the rate of 5 km per hour, or 40 km in an eight-hour day (about 25 miles) — not bad, allowing for meals, rest breaks, and various distractions along the road.*

When the ground becomes rough, they leave their horses in a village and continue on foot. Soon they're in the worst part of the mountains. Here they can only travel at a top speed of 1.5 km per hour: a base of 2 km, with a -.5 penalty for the halfling (the humans could travel much faster on their own; the half-giant, who's Large, faster still). They stop for the night, during which two inches of snow fall. Now they're down to 1.3 km per hour.

His wyvern chariot was swifter than the wind and he traversed the several leagues of fields and farms and forest-mantled hills which lay between him and the Valley of the Covenant well before the flaming disk of Rhakotis, sun god of ancient Atlantis, had yet attained to zenith.

—Tirion the Glad Magician journeys to the wizards' fair in "The Seal Of Zaon Sathla," by Lin Carter



TRAVEL TABLE

Type of Travel	Speed (KPH)
Walking	
Easy ground (roads, plains, meadows)	5.5
Typical ground	5.0
Rough ground (hills, broken ground, forests)	3.0
Very rough ground (swamps, mountains, thick forests)	2.0 (or slower)
Riding horse (or other mount)	
Easy ground (roads, plains, meadows)	5.5
Typical ground	5.0
Rough ground (hills, broken ground, forests)	3.0
Very rough ground (swamps, mountains, thick forests)	Not possible
Riding in a wagon/carriage/chariot	
Easy ground (meadows, plains)	4.5
Typical ground	4.0
Rough ground (hills, broken ground, forests)	1.5 (or slower)
Very rough ground (swamps, mountains, thick forests)	Not possible
Water travel	
Calm/typical water	4.5
Rough water	3.5
Very rough water	Not possible
Modifiers	Speed (KPH)
Encumbrance	
0-10%	+0
11-24%	-2
25-49%	-4
50-74%	Half movement rate
75-89%	One-fourth movement rate
90-100%	Not possible
Foot speed	
Walk	+0
Slow Run	+1.5
Run	+5
Fast Run	+9.5
Injury	-.1 per 2 BODY
Mount type	
Pony	-2
Riding Horse	+0
Draft Horse	-2
Light Warhorse	-2
Medium Warhorse	-3
Heavy Warhorse	-5
Camel	-2
Donkey	-2
Mount pace	
Walk	+0
Trot	+1.5
Run	+5
Gallop	+9.5

Modifiers	Speed (KPH)
Size	
Insectile (down to 1/64 human size)	-8
Minute (down to 1/32 human size)	-4
Minuscule (down to 1/16 human size)	-2
Tiny (down to 1/8 human size)	-1
Diminutive (down to one-quarter human size)	-.8
Small (down to half human size)	-.5
Human size	+0
Large (up to twice human size)	+5
Enormous (up to four times human size)	+8
Huge (up to eight times human size)	+1
Gigantic (up to 16 times human size)	+2
Gargantuan (up to 32 times human size)	+4
Colossal (up to 64 times human size)	+8
Size of group	
1-16	+0
17-64	-.1
65-250	-.3
251-1,000	-.5
1,001-4,000	-.6
4,001 or more	-.8
Stealthy travel	Half movement rate
Time of day	
Daytime	+0
Nighttime	-.6
Water travel modifiers	
Drifting with the current	+0
Paddling with the current	+2
Paddling against the current	-1.5
Sailing with the current	
Strong current	+13
Average current	+8
Weak current	+5
Sailing against the current	
Strong current	-13
Average current	-8
Weak current	-5
Sailing with the wind	
Strong wind	+13
Average wind	+8
Weak wind	+5
Sailing against the wind	
Strong wind	-8
Average wind	-5
Weak wind	-2.5
Weather	
Fine/normal	+0
Heavy fog	-.3
Rainfall	-.1
Storm	-.5
Snow/ice	-.1 per inch of snow or quarter-inch of ice

Apply all pluses and minuses before any halving or quartering of movement rate.

CHAPTER SIX

WONDERS OF IMAGINATION
GAMEMASTERING FANTASY HERO





CREATING A CAMPAIGN

“Are you kidding? [It has] fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, miracles...”

—Grandpa previews a great story for his Grandson in the movie *The Princess Bride*

I explained that my fancy mostly dwelt in the desert of Cuppar-Nombo, about a beautiful blue city called

Golthoth the Damned, which was sentinelled all round by wolves and their shadows, and had

been utterly desolate for years and years, because of a curse which the gods once spoke in anger and could never since recall. And sometimes my dreams took me as far as Pungar Vees, the red-walled city where the fountains are, which trades with the Isles and Thul. When I said this they complimented me upon the abode of my fancy, saying that, though they had never seen these cities, such places might well be imagined.

—from “Idle Days On The Yann,” by Lord Dunsany

Chapter One reviewed the major Fantasy subgenres, discussing how to establish Fantasy Hero campaigns to emulate them, and how to introduce the elements and features of the genre into your games. This chapter delves into more detail on the subject of GMing Fantasy Hero — everything from how to set up and manage a campaign, to how to create enjoyable and memorable villains and NPCs, to the effects of environments Fantasy characters often adventure in. It supplements Chapter Nine of 6E2, which has general advice about GMing the *HERO System*.

Creating an RPG campaign is never easy — and in Fantasy Hero, when an entire magical world may form your backdrop, it can be particularly difficult! To keep the campaign on track, you need to decide on things like character guidelines, the campaign’s theme, the type of game you want to run, and the game’s primary setting.

CHARACTER GUIDELINES

The first thing to consider, usually even before you set pen to paper to create your Fantasy world, is the nature and power of the PCs. As the protagonists of the campaign, the characters who occupy center stage all the time, the PCs have a greater effect on the game than any other factor.

The Player Characters’ level of power, and thus the type of characters you can expect players to create, depends largely on how many Character Points the players build them on. A game where you allow players to build 250-point characters provides you with a wider range of PC types and abilities than one with 100- or 150-point characters — but it’s also likely to increase any problems you may have challenging the PCs and maintaining game balance. When deciding how many points PCs can start with, you should consider the following issues:

SUBGENRE

First, what subgenre(s) does your campaign emulate? Some of them (Low Fantasy, some Swords And Sorcery settings) work best with low-powered characters, while others (many High Fantasy games) need higher-powered PCs to get

the right “feel” for the game. But you should think of your campaign’s subgenre as a guideline, not a shackle — it’s possible to have low-powered characters in a High Fantasy world, or very powerful PCs in a Low Fantasy setting. It’s a significant guideline, but sometimes guidelines are meant to be bent or broken.

HEROES VERSUS THE WORLD

Second, how do you want the PCs to stack up against the world around them? Low-powered Fantasy heroes may have trouble dealing with guards, soldiers, and minor monsters and creatures such as orcs and wolves. On the opposite end of the spectrum, some High Fantasy characters regard kings and gods as weak adversaries at best. If the PCs can easily dispense with everyday opposition, that colors their perception of the world and influences their role within it.

Think about the types of adventures you want to run and what you expect the PCs to do over the course of the campaign. That tells you a lot about the type of PCs that best fit your game. For example; if you plan on having a lot of city-based adventures that require the PCs to contend with corrupt officers in the City Watch, the members of the Thieves’ and Assassins’ Guilds, and a mysterious cult of demon-worshippers, you probably want fairly low-powered PCs — if the heroes are significantly more powerful than members of the Watch or the Guilds, your scenarios won’t pose much of a challenge to them. While any one PC should be more powerful and skilled than any one typical guard or thief (they are the heroes of the story, after all!), two or three guards or thieves should probably be a match for a PC.

On the other hand, if you plan adventures of grand or epic scope, such as a war between the PCs and a council of evil dragons, or a quest to overthrow the Dark Lord and keep the peoples of the world free and happy, you should probably allow for powerful PCs. A handful of moderately-skilled warriors, rogues, and spellcasters usually can’t tackle tasks like that, not unless you give them a lot of help or a long time to earn Experience Points beforehand. While some Epic Fantasy stories do mix very powerful and very weak characters to good effect, that may not work well for a Fantasy Hero campaign — and in any event, the very powerful characters are still there to save the day if necessary.

POWER LEVELS AND EFFECTIVENESS CEILINGS

Third, decide whether you want to impose restrictions on the amount of power, CV, Skills, and the like that characters can have. Characters built on large numbers of points may not be nearly as powerful as those points imply if you limit what they can spend points on.

In a Fantasy Hero context, point ceilings — restrictions on how many Active Points a power or ability can have — mostly apply to spells and similar mystic abilities. To keep spellcasters from overwhelming the opposition and making the other PCs seem superfluous, some GMs limit the number of Active Points a spell can have; this is a particularly popular option for Low Fantasy, Swords And Sorcery, and some Epic Fantasy, since it helps to simulate the “feel” those subgenres should have. Ceilings of 30, 40, and 60 Active Points seem to be the most common, but you should set the ceiling for your game wherever you feel it should be to maintain game balance. However, keep in mind that a low Active Point ceiling may prevent spellcasters from creating spells with unusual effects, or effects that require several Powers stacked together; you may want to grant some exemptions to the point ceiling on occasion. (See Chapter Four for extensive discussion of other ways to create and restrict the power and use of magic.)

Effectiveness ceilings — restrictions on characters’ CVs, DEXs, Skill rolls, Combat Skill Levels, DCs, or the like — are more common in Fantasy Hero games than point ceilings, and affect all characters equally. An effectiveness ceiling helps you control the PCs’ overall power, making it easy for you to know what can challenge them and what can’t. It also encourages characters to broaden and diversify their abilities, since the ceiling stops them from spending all their Experience Points on the same things game after game. But effectiveness ceilings can lead to problems of their own; see 6E2 283.

CHARACTERISTIC MAXIMA

Intertwined with the concept of effectiveness ceilings are the Characteristic Maxima rules, which impose a sort of ceiling on how many points characters can spend on Characteristics. See page 108 for further discussion of the effect of Characteristic Maxima and how you can vary it to achieve the appropriate level of power for PCs in your campaign.

INNATE ABILITIES

Many Fantasy Hero races and professions possess certain innate abilities (such as a gargoyle’s wings, which allow it to fly). This may cause problems if you impose a point or effectiveness ceiling on your game. If a half-giant needs a 40-point power to properly represent the abilities that come from having giantish blood, you shouldn’t reduce that power to 30 Active Points to fit an Active Point ceiling — all that does is make it harder to simulate a half-giant properly and frustrate everyone in the game. If you can’t find a way to create a racial or professional ability that fits your campaign’s point ceiling, consider granting an exemption in the interest of verisimilitude.

SUPERHEROIC FANTASY

While the vast majority of Fantasy Hero games are run using Heroic campaign guidelines (regardless of the Total Points characters are built on), that’s not required. For truly high-flying, fantastic Fantasy fun, having Superheroic PCs and adversaries might be just the thing! Here are some suggestions, tips, and guidelines for running Superheroic-level Fantasy campaigns:

- If you use Characteristic Maxima at all, set the doubling point much higher than for Heroic campaigns — 30 or 40 for the main Characteristics, for example.
- Be wary of characters buying lots of enchanted items (Foci) as a way of maximizing the effectiveness of their Character Points; not only may that cause game balance problems, it tends to detract from the Fantasy “feel.” On the other hand, if you require characters to pay Character Points for *all* their gear, mundane or magical, having lots of enchanted items in the game may prove much less of a problem.
- Use the Knockback rules, not Knockdown. For really spectacular Fantasy combat action, have Killing Attacks and Martial Arts roll the standard 2d6 to calculate the Knockback they do, rather than 3d6 like usual.
- Use the standard Superheroic campaign rules for the END cost for STR (1 END per 10 points) and the Superheroic rules for Pushing
- For weapons, treat STR Minima and how STR adds damage to attacks the same as in Heroic campaigns, but use the Superheroic END cost (1 END per 10 STR) to wield them.



EXPERIENCE POINTS AND CHARACTER GROWTH

Fourth, consider how, and how fast, you want the characters to grow in competence and power. If you're planning a long-term campaign with frequent game sessions and generous Experience Point awards, building PCs with a relatively small amount of Character Points doesn't cause as many problems, since the players know their characters will become more powerful at a fairly steady pace. On the other hand, if you can't run game sessions on a regular basis, or you prefer to control character growth by minimizing the number of Experience Points you award, it may work better if the PCs start out fairly powerful. Otherwise they're likely to become aggravated when they constantly run up against situations their characters *should* be able to cope with, but can't because they don't yet have the points to buy all the Knowledge Skills, Talents, spells, and abilities they should have based on character conception.

Generally speaking, a Fantasy Hero character built on, say, 125 Character Points plus 125 Experience Points tends to be better developed than a starting character built on 250 Character Points. The latter probably has a larger attack, or more attacks, but the experienced character is more well-rounded as a person. The gradual acquisition of Experience Points leads to different spending patterns than giving a player a large lump of Character Points to spend all at once. Starting at relatively lower power levels, but building over the course of the campaign, may be the best approach for many Fantasy Hero games.

MAGIC AND ENCHANTED ITEMS

In many Fantasy Hero campaigns, one of the most important issues when it comes to evaluating the power of a group of PCs is how much magic, including enchanted items, characters have access to.

In games with plentiful magic, characters have the capacity to augment their abilities beyond the normal, and perhaps even beyond the campaign guidelines. This can cause significant game balance problems if you don't carefully control it. If the characters have lots of enchanted items, the problem often becomes even worse, since the PCs usually at least have to pay for their own spells and mystic abilities. Magical items, on the other hand, are things they find during the course of the game and which cost them nothing. More than one Fantasy Hero campaign has been destroyed when a Player Character got his hands on an enchanted item that was too powerful.

Conversely, too little magical power may cause problems of its own (at least in subgenres where characters expect to have some magical abilities or items). The PCs may frequently find themselves outmatched and outgunned, unable to offer a serious challenge to their enemies. Moreover, gaining new magical powers and finding enchanted items is a lot of fun; many gamers may not enjoy the campaign as much if they don't get new "toys" occasionally.

REINING IN THE MAGIC

There's no formula that tells you whether a specific enchanted item or new spell is or isn't balanced for your campaign. It depends on a lot of factors, ranging from the Active Points in the spell or item to the personality of the player whose character obtains it. Figuring out what does and doesn't work in your campaign is part of the art and science of Fantasy Hero GMing — something you have to learn on your own. But fortunately, you have plenty of tools at your fingertips to help you when it turns out an item or spell you introduced into the campaign causes problems. As the GM, you control the campaign reality, and that gives you broad powers to correct mistakes.

If the problem results because the spell or item is inherently too powerful, you can find in-game ways to reduce its power or take it away from the character. For example, maybe a powerful item turns out to also come with a mysterious curse that balances the benefits it provides, or perhaps it loses power over time if the wielder doesn't perform some abhorrent ritual every month. A powerful spell could gradually warp the user, making him uglier, more cruel, or weaker the more he casts it. A thief may take a liking to the item and devise a scheme to steal it; you could even have a "kleptomancer" use his own powerful magics to steal a character's spells!

If it's the player's behavior or overuse of the item or spell that's causing the problem, your first and best solution is to appeal to his better nature. Explain the situation and ask him to stop what he's doing or change his behavior. If that works, your campaign will be far the better for it; if it doesn't, you can resort to the methods described above.

MIXING CHARACTERS OF DIFFERENT POINT TOTALS

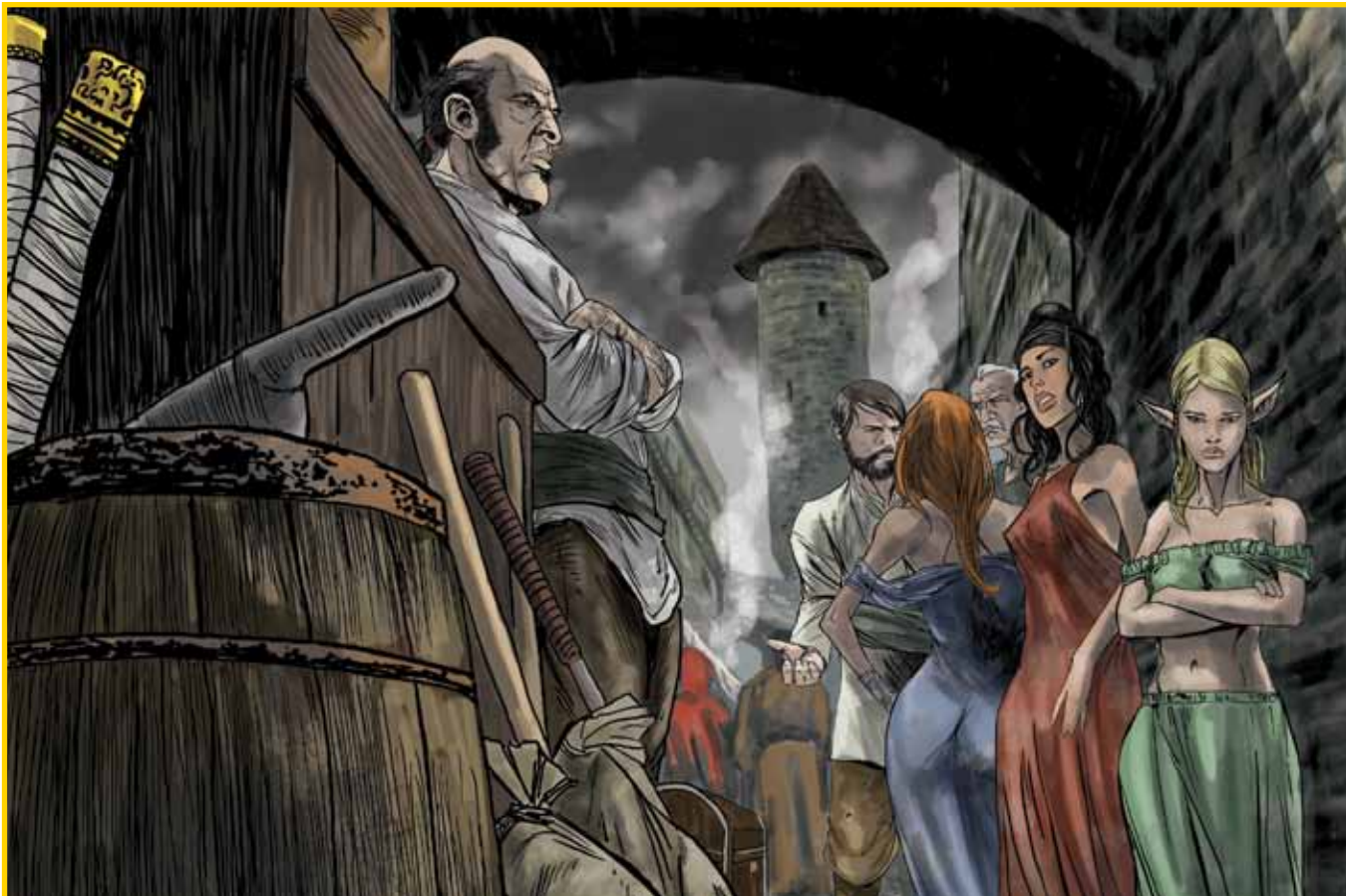
In Fantasy fiction, it's not uncommon for characters of very different levels of power to be a part of the same "team." For example, take the Fellowship of the Ring in *The Lord Of The Rings*, one of the archetypical Fantasy groups. It consists of nine members: Gandalf (a powerful wizard, one of only five of his kind in the world); Aragorn, Boromir, and Gimli (three mighty warriors); Legolas (a warrior, archer, *and* an Elf);... and four hobbits with no training as fighters and almost no experience as adventurers.

In a gaming context this sort of mixture doesn't usually work well. Typically all the players want the chance to be effective in the game, which means they all need to be of roughly the same level of power. Characters of wildly varying power levels can fight the Dark Lord and save the world together in Fantasy fiction because one person — the writer — controls everything that happens to them. He can make the characters act the way he wants to, weaken or strengthen them if he wants to, and arrange the events of the story so that every character has his moment to shine. In a Fantasy Hero session, the GM can't do that. He constructs the framework of the story, but he doesn't directly control the protagonists

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Finally, Tirion returned to his wyvern chariot and drew forth a small packet, which he tossed to the grass, uttering a certain name. A silken pavilion sprang into being, bearing his heraldic emblem and colors.

—Tirion the Glad Magician uses an enchanted item in "The Seal Of Zaon Sathla," by Lin Carter



— the PCs — so he can't guarantee that they'll take particular actions, that a specific attack (by or against them) will work in the most dramatically appropriate way, and so on. The game is at the mercy of the players' desires, the randomness of the dice, and the inflexibility imposed by the need to quantify everything with rules and numbers.

Nevertheless, it *is* possible to have a fun campaign where the PCs are built on different Total Points (and perhaps with different point and effectiveness ceilings). This is easiest when at least some of the players are primarily interested in roleplaying and character exploration and don't really care if they're as effective in combat as the other PCs. Such players often enjoy playing a "weaker" character because there's more scope for plumbing the depths of the character and finding out what makes him tick (including what he thinks about being the low man on the superpowered totem pole).

If your group of players doesn't fit that mold, there are other approaches you can take. The one that requires the most effort from you as GM is to be sure to arrange every adventure so that the weaker heroes have a chance to pull their weight and prove their value to the team. If you want to do this, you should work with those characters' players to make sure they've got *something* on their character sheet you can work with — a Skill no other PC has, a form of attack that's more effective than anyone else's in some limited circumstance, or the like. Then you just have to work that something into the game occasionally.

Another possibility is to use the Heroic Action Point rules (6E2 287). Once all the PCs are built and approved, look at the difference between the Total Points on the powerful characters and the weaker ones. Then give the weaker ones that amount of points to buy Heroic Action Points (in addition to any that all characters get "for free"). The weaker heroes can then spend HAPs like they were going out of style so that they succeed with rolls and do enough damage to keep up with their more powerful teammates... or at least to make sure they don't get killed.

CAMPAIGN TONE

A campaign's *tone* refers to its morality, realism, and outlook, and the importance of the Player Characters.

MORALITY

Because the power of magic (or the type of magic a character can use) may depend on a character's moral stance, morality is an important element of a Fantasy Hero campaign's tone. Fantasy is a genre where Good and Evil aren't necessarily just abstract concepts — they can be nigh-tangible things, phenomena characters can perceive and affect, and which create the central conflicts of the campaign.

In a Fantasy world with "black and white" morality, such as many High, Crossworlds, and Epic Fantasy settings, it's easy to tell where characters fall. While a few may try to tread a neutral

line between the two poles, in general Good is Good and Evil is Evil, and the twain cannot meet. Sometimes a Good character betrays the cause and joins the forces of darkness, or an Evil character reforms, but usually the two are starkly drawn and inviolate. Worlds following this moral scheme can have Dark Lords, liches, demons, and other foes who are Evil purely for the sake of being Evil; while they usually have goals (such as ruling the world), they might just enjoy inflicting harm and suffering for no particular reason — Evil alone may be their *raison d'être*.

The other type of morality — “shades of grey” — reflects a shifting moral compass where issues of Good and Evil aren't always easy to discern and the heroes can't determine peoples' motivations with a simple Detect Evil spell. This is an appropriate approach for many Swords And Sorcery, Low Fantasy, and Urban Fantasy games; it's one many gamers can understand, given the shades of grey nature of so much of real life. Fantasy Hero campaigns with this style of morality often feature characters getting involved in Byzantine political conspiracies, wars with no clear “right” or “wrong” side, or quests motivated as much by the desire for profit as the desire to “do good.”

Of course, you can shift between types of morality if you want to. An Epic Fantasy game that has an overall focus on the war between Good and Evil, and in which the PCs and their enemies have clearly chosen sides, may feature a short shades of grey story arc in which the PCs find themselves caught up in a situation of shifting loyalties where their devotion to the cause comes into question. A generally amoral Swords And Sorcery character may occasionally have an attack of conscience and “do the right thing” (since pure amorality often doesn't make for entertaining storytelling).

REALISM

Fantasy Hero campaigns, almost by definition, are “romantic” in the dramatic sense of the term: unrealistic, given to the outrageous and improbable in the name of storytelling, excitement, and fun. After all, Fantasy depends largely on magic, and there's almost nothing as unrealistic as magic. Some subgenres, such as Swords And Sorcery, Low Fantasy, and Urban Fantasy, hew a little more closely to the realistic; an historical Low Fantasy game may strive for as much realism as possible. Chapter Five discusses a few “realistic” concepts for Fantasy Hero worlds based on historical facts, and there are plenty of other sources of information out there if you want to do your own research.

OUTLOOK

What sort of overall perspective does your campaign have — optimistic or pessimistic? In the former, the PCs can generally expect things to turn out right, and they know there's always *some* hope for victory or success even when things seem darkest. In the latter, the PCs have to face up to the cold, hard realities of life: things don't always go their way, they can't always overcome the odds, and whether they succeed or fail is entirely up to them (and, perhaps, luck).

In Fantasy Hero, a campaign's outlook usually depends on its subgenre. The subgenre descriptions in Chapter One each contain a “The Perspective Is” section that tells you which outlook is appropriate for that subgenre.

IMPORTANCE OF THE HEROES

Last, but perhaps most crucially, how important are the PCs? Obviously in any campaign the characters are the focus of the story, but how important are they *within the campaign world*? Can they affect the outcome of major events, such as wars or the struggle for a throne? Does the fate of the world rest on their shoulders? In part, this may relate to their level of power or backgrounds; a mighty wizard has more capacity to change the world than a puny one, and someone who's the subject of prophecy tends to be more important than other characters of his type. Subgenre also has a strong influence: Epic Fantasy PCs are almost always extremely important (if they fail, the world becomes a much worse place to live); Swords And Sorcery PCs, on the other hand, may not have any significant capacity to affect their worlds — all they can do is look out for themselves.

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CAMPAIGN THEME

The *theme* of a campaign is the underlying subject or focus of all the adventures. It isn't strictly necessary to have one, but a campaign without a theme may seem disconnected and unfocused. In an Epic Fantasy campaign that pits the PCs against the Dark Lord, the theme is "preserving the good." The heroes encounter many people and situations during their quest to oppose the vast and ancient evil that is the Dark Lord. Some offer help and succor; others oppose them; some try to tempt them from the path for reasons of their own. But the underlying theme is always the same: the characters have to keep striving to

preserve that which is good and valuable in their world, lest the Dark Lord destroy all.

It's possible to have more than one theme in a campaign. Adventures can cycle among a couple of different underlying subjects — the adventures of a group of spellcasters could alternate between a theme of the nature of magic and one of the proper uses of power. You shouldn't get carried away with multiple themes, though, since having too many isn't much better than having none at all.

Be careful not to confuse theme with message. "The effects of magic on society" is a theme; "demonic possession is bad" is a message. You can return to a theme, look at it from various angles, and develop it in depth. But once you've stated a message, the only thing to do is state it again.

GETTING AND KEEPING THE PLAYER CHARACTERS TOGETHER

Since gaming is a social activity, you're going to have multiple players whose PCs need to join forces in the first game of the campaign, and stay together as the campaign progresses. Sometimes this requires little or no effort on your part, but that isn't always these case — particularly if you've got a group of players who like to create and play starkly-defined characters who may not get along with one another very well.

Some of the common methods used in Fantasy to get a group together, and hopefully keep it together for a long time, include the following. Note that they're not exclusive; many campaigns/adventures feature two or more of these methods at work simultaneously.

The Quest ("You must all work together to find the Staff of Power and destroy the Dark Lord"): The characters are all brought together (typically by a Chance Meeting or Patron/Employer) and given a task that (a) they *all* want to see completed (not necessarily for the same reasons, and (b) which requires *all* of their combined abilities and resources to complete.

The Patron/Employer ("The king wants you to brave the Caverns of Peril and rescue the kidnapped princess"): Someone — the king, a god, a crotchety old wizard, a wealthy merchant — hires or recruits the PCs to perform some task. The PCs may do it for the money, to preserve the good/stave off danger, or because of Coercion or a Prophecy, but they're doing it. As with a Quest, all the PCs should agree to do what the Patron/Employer wants, and the success of the adventure should depend on all members of the team contributing to the effort. This tends to be the default model for campaigns where the PCs are mercenaries of some sort, freelance adventurers in the *Dungeons & Dragons* vein, and the like.

The Chance Meeting ("You're all staying at the Two Rivers Inn when orcs attack"): The PCs all happen to be in the same place at the same time when something takes place that they all have to respond to. Typically this means the place is attacked and they all have to participate in the defense to keep from dying, but a clever GM can think of other approaches if that doesn't suit him. However, if you want to use this as the basis for a campaign, you have to give the PCs a reason to *stay* together after they've defeated the initial threat.

For example, perhaps the initial threat is just the tip of the iceberg and they then have to team up to defeat the whole threat (a sort of Quest model), or maybe it turns out they're all part of a Prophecy.

The Coerced Team ("The wizard places a geas upon all of you to travel to Odellia and recover the demon's skull"): This is similar to Patron/Employer... except that the PCs aren't given a choice. Usually that means they're magically forced to do what someone wants, but they could also be coerced by threats to their loved ones or other means. One benefit to this approach is that it instantly gives all the PCs a common goal: break free from the Coercion (or if they can't do that, to take revenge on their tormentor later).

The Prophecy ("The Foretelling of Andregon says that you four are destined to carry the fate of the world on your shoulders"): The Fantasy genre offers you one great method to get and keep the PCs together that most genres lack: the Prophecy. If all the PCs are the subject of a Prophecy, they're going to end up working together *somehow* regardless of how they feel about each other or the task at hand.

Last but not least, it helps if the players create characters who want to, or are at least inclined to, work together in the first place. There are two good ways to steer the players toward this. The first is to tell them, either directly or through hints, what you have planned for the general course of the campaign. For example, suppose you want to run a Quest-based campaign that requires travel across the world. Let the players know that so none of them design characters who are closely tied to a particular location or totally lacking in abilities suited for that sort of adventure (unless that's what the player wants).

Second, have the players design their characters *as a group*. In other words, the first game of the campaign isn't really a game at all, it's a character creation session. The players can bounce ideas off one another, make sure no two characters are too much alike, find ways to connect their characters' backgrounds, and so forth. Group character creation, combined with letting the players know what to expect and what their characters should be able to do, goes a long way to ensuring that the campaign's a lot of fun for everyone involved.



Common themes in Fantasy include:

MONEY

The Gibbelins eat, as is well known, nothing less good than man. ... Their hoard is beyond reason; avarice has no use for it; they have a separate cellar for emeralds and a separate cellar for sapphires; they have filled a hole with gold and dig it up when they need it. And the only use that is known for their ridiculous wealth is to attract to their larder a continual supply of food. In times of famine they have even been known to scatter rubies abroad, a little trail of them to some city of Man, and sure enough their larders would soon be full again.

—a description of vast wealth from “The Hoard Of The Gibbelins,” by Lord Dunsany

In some Fantasy Hero campaigns, it’s all about the bucks — or, more accurately, the gold pieces and gems. The characters’ role in life is to accumulate as much lucre as they can, however they can, and often without worrying about the morality or implications of their actions. This is a common theme in Swords And Sorcery stories (look at all the Conan and Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser stories that focus on heaps of coins and chests piled high with gems), but also occurs in some High Fantasy campaigns and other genres as well. And of course, even in a high-toned Epic or Crossworlds Fantasy games, characters may sometimes need to get their hands on a few bezants to finance their quests.

But just because characters find money doesn’t mean they get to *keep* it. A rich character doesn’t have much motivation to continue adventuring, so storytellers (and often GMs) find ways to deprive them of it. Sometimes they get a glimpse of it but aren’t able to take possession — an ancient curse or guardian makes it too dangerous to obtain, or they abandon the treasure to pursue an even more desirable goal (typically, rescuing a maiden). Or if they do bring the loot home, accidents, thieves, the tax collector, or their own wasteful spending habits soon take it away from them.

THE NATURE OF MAGIC

Besides being a central element of most Fantasy worlds, magic and how it functions may form the theme of a Fantasy story. For example, perhaps the overall story of the campaign is the characters’ ability to wield magic and their quest to understand why magic seems to have suddenly “gone wrong” in the world. Or perhaps they work for a university that has begun an extensive project to catalog the types of magic in the world and explain their interrelationships.

Of course, the existence of magic can also raise more profound issues for the PCs to deal with. Historically, magic was often thought to be a corrupting or evil influence, something even the best-intentioned people shouldn’t trifle with for fear of imperiling their mortal souls; could that be

true in the campaign? In a world with an “ambient magic” system (see page 243), if magic is a depletable resource, what implications does that have for the world... and how can the PCs address or correct the negative ones?

POWER

Often closely related to the theme of magic, the theme of power raises the issue of what types of power exist, and how people use them (or should use them). It might focus on magic, but it could just as easily examine secular power (perhaps the PCs are all kings and nobles engaged in political machinations) or divine power (is it right for the gods to manipulate people as if they were chessmen?). A campaign with the theme of power can ask all kinds of juicy questions. What are the proper uses of power? What should people do when someone uses power improperly? Does power corrupt? What forms of power exist? Caveat: Plato asked these same questions thousands of years ago in *The Republic*, and no one has yet come up with a definitive answer to any of them.

PRESERVE THE GOOD

In many Fantasy Hero campaigns, particularly of the Epic Fantasy subgenre, the dominant theme is: how can the characters preserve that which is good and worthy, and what sacrifices must they make to do so? Of course, this requires you to define for the players (or for them to decide for themselves) what is “good,” and thus worth preserving, but usually that’s not difficult. The threat to the good is usually obvious — a Dark Lord, a potential invasion by ruthless enemies, an usurper, racial prejudice — and that in turn tells you what’s “good.” Examples of this theme in literature include *The Lord Of The Rings* (preserve the world and its peoples from destruction, oppression, and enslavement by a Dark Lord), *The Belgariad* (ditto), and Kurtz’s Deryni novels (keep the Deryni safe and secure in the face of hatred and fear, preserve Gwynedd as a kingdom).

REDISCOVERING THE MAJESTIC PAST

Some Fantasy campaigns take place in worlds long fallen from heights of grandeur, majesty, and power. Although few (if any) people in the world realize it, their civilization was once vastly greater and better than it is today. In these settings, the characters often take on the roles of archaeologists, explorers, and scholars as they first uncover hints of the existence of “the Ancients,” then gather definitive proof (and perhaps samples of their awesome magic or technology for the characters’ own use), and finally confront the lingering Evil that destroyed the Ancients (or try to find a way to set civilization back on the path to greatness). Many deep mysteries confront the characters — what destroyed the Ancients? could we make the same mistake? must civilizations inevitably collapse? — and resolving them shapes the campaign.

CAMPAIGN TYPES

After, or at the same time as, choosing a theme, you need to decide on the type of campaign you want to run. Often one decision leads to another; a Swords And Sorcery game probably focuses on money and/or power themes, not on the nature of magic or preserving the good.

SUBGENRE

Chapter One describes various Fantasy subgenres and crossovers. Each subgenre has benefits and drawbacks from a gaming perspective; keeping these in mind as you create a campaign should let you maximize the former, and minimize the latter.

CROSSWORLDS FANTASY

Narnian time flows differently from ours. If you spent a hundred years in Narnia, you would still come back to our world at the very same hour of the very same day on which you left. And then, if you went back to Narnia after spending a week here, you might find that a thousand Narnian years had passed, or only a day, or no time at all. You never know till you get there.

—time runs differently in two worlds, as described in *The Voyage Of The Dawn Treader*, by C.S. Lewis

A Crossworlds Fantasy campaign can create a unique and intriguing gaming situation due to the mix of familiar and unfamiliar elements. The interaction between characters from the “real world,” and the beings and events of a magical Fantasy world, can lead to some tremendous role-playing opportunities. It can give your campaign unprecedented depth in the hands of the right group of players.

The primary drawback to this subgenre is that the mingling of elements may not seem quite “right.” Many players don’t want to play Marla, the cute girl from accounting; they want to play Marla the Sorceress or Marla the Warrior Queen. Just because the character can learn to become a sorceress or a warrior queen once she arrives in the Fantasy world doesn’t matter; it simply doesn’t seem like a “real Fantasy experience.”

Furthermore, introducing characters with modern knowledge and abilities into a Fantasy setting may be a recipe for disaster. A character with the right Science Skills or military training could, for example, start analyzing the genetics of dragons and elves, combine alchemy with his knowledge of quantum physics to devise bombs of truly earthshaking power (or even just introduce gunpowder to the Fantasy world), or discover the scientific principles underlying magic and make himself an archmage overnight. If that’s the sort of campaign you want to create, then there’s no problem; otherwise you may find yourself with a Frankenstein’s monster on your hands.

EPIC FANTASY

In many ways, Epic Fantasy is ideally suited to Fantasy Hero. It provides for a story that takes a long time to play out and has world-altering consequences — a superb framework for a campaign. The characters have a definite goal in mind that unifies them and requires them to work together, and if you stage things correctly you can present them with “sub-goals” along the way to keep the campaign’s conclusion from seeming unobtainably distant. You can easily remove characters or bring new ones into play during the course of the game. You can give characters as much or as little magical power as you want, since the threat they’re trying to overcome (the Dark Lord or the like) can have any sort of corresponding powers you need it to — no matter how powerful the PCs are, the enemy will always be more powerful.

On the other hand, creating and running an Epic Fantasy campaign can involve a considerable amount of work. Epic Fantasy needs an epic scope, so you’ve got to have a richly-developed world with lots of details, maps, and history. You also have to commit to a campaign that can take a long time to resolve, since it’s not much of an “epic” if you can finish it in a handful of game sessions. Not every GM has the stamina for that sort of campaign, and not every gaming group can meet on a regular basis or maintain its membership over a long period. Additionally, if you stretch things out too long, the players may decide they’re never going to finish the campaign and become bored. You need to plan for these problems and make sure you can cope with them when they arise if you want to keep the campaign going until its dramatic finale.

HIGH FANTASY

Many gamers prefer High Fantasy over the other subgenres. The powerful and common magic, fearsome monsters, plethora of races, wondrous settings, and over-the-top enemies say “Fantasy” to them, making them willing and enthusiastic participants in the campaign. High Fantasy can also be one of the easiest types of Fantasy Hero campaigns to run, since the wide variety of potential threats and enemies makes it easy to create fun adventures, and the presence of so much magic gives you an explanation for just about anything.

But sometimes having so many options causes problems. With access to vast amounts of magic, the PCs can overcome most enemies quickly and easily, making it harder for you to come up with challenging adventures unless you’re constantly escalating the power level. With so many races and powerful beings running around, you may find it difficult to keep track of who’s doing what and how the PCs’ actions affect the world around them. In most cases you can resolve these problems by spending a lot of preparation time on your scenarios, and carefully tracking the PCs’ Experience Points and possessions, but that level of work doesn’t appeal to every GM.

“...for I have seen deep meadows with purple flowers flaming tall and strange above the brilliant grass, and herds of pure white unicorns that gambol there for joy, and a river running by with a glittering galleon on it, all of gold, that goes from an unknown inland to an unknown isle of the sea to take a song from the King of Over-the-Hills to the Queen of Far-Away. I will sing that song to you, and you shall write it down.”

—from “The Unhappy Body,” by Lord Dunsany



LOW FANTASY

The Low Fantasy subgenre is perhaps the easiest to run a campaign in (unless you plan to do lots of historical research). You don't have to worry about magical power, a large number of potential character professions and abilities, or what the Deep Elves are up to this week. The variables and story types are fewer, though not necessarily any less intriguing: political machinations; warfare; spying; and the like.

However, many GMs and gamers feel a little "cheated" by Low Fantasy. They want magic and wonders and excitement, that's what they think of when they hear the word "Fantasy." Having to restrict themselves to more or less mundane abilities, and finding out that city guards and individual orcs pose a serious threat, takes the wind out of their sails. If you prepare them for the nature of the campaign in advance, you can probably keep this attitude from becoming too much of a problem, but complaints about the lack of power and "romance" may dog the game from time to time.

SWORDS AND SORCERY

If there's any subgenre that appeals to the average gamer more than High Fantasy, it's probably Swords And Sorcery. The emphasis on action, adventure, combat, and profit, coupled with not having to follow a particular moral code or kowtow to authority, means exciting Fantasy gaming in the minds of many. Since the level of magic (at least in the hands of the PCs) is relatively low, you don't have to worry about them teleporting around the world or disintegrating their foes.

But you may discover that this subgenre's general lack of focus makes it difficult for you to

devise intriguing new adventures. After a while, "break into the temple/castle/forbidden city, kill everyone, and take their treasure" gets old. Without a cause (other than naked self-interest) to motivate them, or a goal to strive for, the characters may become two-dimensional and dull. Many GMs remedy this by leavening the elements of Swords And Sorcery with those of High or Epic Fantasy, creating a campaign with an exciting blend of themes and adventure possibilities. Or you could involve the characters in a war or a plot to claim the throne of a major kingdom, giving them goals to strive for.

URBAN FANTASY

"Curious, isn't it? ... All the magic people want to be normal, and all the normal people want magic. Nobody ever wants what they've already got and that's the story of the world."

—from "Spirits In The Wires,"
by Charles de Lint

From the GM's perspective, Urban Fantasy offers the benefit of minimal campaign preparation time. All the players know (or should know) about the geography, politics, technology, and societies of Earth (or at least the modern nation all of you live in), so you don't have to create a world or explain their place in it. You just have to devise a magic system and tell them how it fits into the otherwise normal world.

But for some gamers, the mixture of modern and Fantasy elements doesn't feel right. Not only does it limit the character types they can play (there are no knights in shining armor or barbarian warriors wandering around these days, more's the pity), but in their minds "magic" and

"The time has come for sorcery and swords!"

—Gwaay plans to attack his brother Hasjarl with the Gray Mouser's help in "The Lords Of Quarmall,"
by Fritz Leiber

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“high tech” just don’t go together well. Even if they can handle having both in the same game, the thought of them working together — of mages using spells to make phone calls, for example — strikes them as ludicrous. Unless your players can get past these hurdles and enjoy the possibilities of having magic in the modern world, Urban Fantasy may not be the right genre for your campaign.

CAMPAIGN SUBJECT

A campaign can take place in any of the subgenres described above, but the characters still need something to *do* in the setting — are they explorers, thieves, mercenaries, traders, emissaries, troubleshooters for King Heydrik or the Mages’ Guild? This is referred to as the campaign’s *subject*, and it overlaps a lot with the campaign theme — for example, if the theme is power, the characters should be spellcasters, nobles, or other powerful people.

CARAVAN LIFE

Lythande had but recently returned — if the mysterious comings and goings of a magician can be called by so prosaic a name — from guarding a caravan across the Grey Wastes to Twand. ... [A] gaggle of desert rats — two-legged rats with poisoned steel teeth — had set upon the caravan, not knowing it was guarded by magic, and had found themselves fighting skeletons that howled and fought with eyes of flame[.]

—Lythande makes good money protecting a caravan in “The Secret Of The Blue Star,” by Marion Zimmer Bradley

Rather than devote themselves to more overtly “exciting” pursuits, the PCs could become traders, traveling from place to place as they try to earn a (mostly) honest living. Perhaps they own a trading house and accompany its caravans to ensure they arrive safely, or maybe they’re caravan leaders and guards working for a merchants’ guild. Naturally, visiting various lands carrying rich cargoes of goods leads to all sorts of adventures, whether the characters want them or not. The PCs might have the chance to “moonlight” as rebels, spies, bounty hunters, or even pirates!

Trader campaigns make heavy use of the trade rules in Chapter Five (or a similar set of rules devised by the GM), and require you to do a little homework to detail the trade routes they use, commodities they can deal in, currency they spend, and rivals they compete with. Problems can arise when the players are more interested in “wargaming” the trade rules to get rich rather than having adventures, so you should feel free to introduce elements of economic unpredictability (depressions and recessions, the rising and passing of fads, warfare, banditry, and so forth) if necessary.

CLOAK AND DAGGER

Espionage dates back as far as anyone can recall, and you could easily structure a Fantasy Hero campaign around the escapades of spies, assassins, saboteurs, and traitors in a Fantasy milieu. In Low Fantasy and Swords And Sorcery settings, the action probably centers on one large city or a small kingdom; in a High Fantasy game the characters could be the Fantasy equivalent of James Bond, using spells to “jet” from one fantastic location to the next and dealing with strange master villains who want to take over the world or wreck some kingdom’s economy.

Spy characters as a team work best if each player chooses a specialty — the Con Man, the Martial Artist, the Master of Disguise, and so forth. Fantasy settings add the Mystic Spy, who uses his spells and powers to expedite missions. Working some Fantasy races and enchanted items into the mix can add even more dimensions to the party’s composition.

The tone of an espionage campaign can vary greatly. If the emphasis is on spy-thriller chases and confrontations with master villains in their hidden headquarters, the tone is likely to be straightforward action-adventure. Grimmer stories emphasize the betrayal, paranoia, and moral compromises of the shadow war.

COURT POLITICS

Not all Fantasy adventures involve swinging swords, slaying monsters, and hurling spells. Sometimes a witty insult can cut as deep as any blade, and a pasty-faced courtier who happens to have the ear of the king may prove a deadlier adversary than any dragon.

In a campaign revolving around the escapades of a royal court, or life in the king’s castle, the PCs may not take on the usual adventuring roles, but plenty of interesting character types are available to them: staunch guardsmen (or even the Captain of the Guard); good-hearted nobles and courtiers; the Court Wizard or Alchemist; the prince, princess, or other junior member of the royal family; spies for enemy powers; suave con-men; and dozens more. To run this sort of game, you need a well-developed cast of NPCs, each with a distinctive personality, manner of speaking, or some other way for you to make him stand out.

By keeping the campaign in one location, you can run types of adventures that don’t work well with a traveling group of heroes. Examples include romantic intrigue, political maneuvering, murder mysteries, “a stranger rides into town” stories, and diplomacy. Stephen Donaldson’s *Mordant’s Need* duology and Mervyn Peake’s *Gormenghast* novels both portray this sort of setting.

At once he marshalled and sent out into Eriador all the spies, spy-birds, and agents that he could muster.

—Saruman uses espionage techniques to hunt for the One Ring in *Unfinished Tales*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

“Were you to ask, I could tell you how the Royalist Party fiddles and the priest-hoods dance; how the Military Party sings sweetly in our Emperor’s ear of conquests in Yan Kor and the re-establishment of the halcyon days of the Bednalljan kings; how the Imperialist party in Avanthar sulks and waits to pounce upon posts closer to the Petal Throne[.]”

—Kurrune the Messenger relates some gossip of the capital in *The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

“[Prince Kadakithis’s] idealism is my protection. He would no more lead a rebellion against the Emperor — against his brother — than I would order his assassination.”

“It is not the Prince we fear, Your Excellency, it’s those who would use him.”

—the Rankan Emperor and his chief adviser debate policy in *Thieves’ World*, edited by Robert Asprin



The war party from Faide Keep moved eastward across the downs; a column of a hundred armored knights, five hundred foot soldiers, a train of wagons. In the lead rode Lord Faide, a tall man in his early maturity, spare and catlike, with a sallow dyspeptic face. He sat in the ancestral car of the Faides, a boat-shaped vehicle floating two feet above the moss, and carried, in addition to his sword and dagger, his ancestral side weapons.

—Lord Faide sets out to conquer Ballant Keep in “The Miracle Workers,” by Jack Vance

“Then you will have read of Ditlana, the ritual of the “Renewal of the Land Before the Faces of the Gods.” Every five hundred years or so, the ancients razed their cities, tore them down to the foundations, filled in the lower rooms, and built anew upon the old. There are layers and layers beneath the older cities of the Five Empires. Some parts are open; others are lost and sealed.”

—the customs of the ancients lead to the creation of numerous “dungeons” beneath every major city in *Tékumel in The Man Of Gold*, by M.A.R. Barker

THE DOGS OF WAR

Military-oriented Fantasy campaigns, such as the adventures depicted in Steven Erikson’s “Malazan Book of the Fallen” series or Glen Cook’s “Black Company” novels (or, more humorously, in Mary Gentle’s *Grunts*), offer a lot of possibilities for adventure and excitement. They typically feature characters serving in the same unit — usually a squad or platoon — and of course emphasize combat. A favorite subtrope is the mercenary campaign, which offers the PCs a lot more flexibility, freedom, and action than most national armies face. Working as mercenaries also allows the heroes to face unexpectedly powerful foes with no support because their patron was too cheap to hire any. In many cases the PCs are a specialized “commando” unit, with missions that shade over into espionage and the like; this avoids the messiness of actual battles or the need to use the mass combat rules.

Military campaigns have several advantages for Fantasy Hero. The heroes go where they’re ordered, and can only have the equipment issued to them... but they know the adventure begins when they get to the mission zone. However, the players may start wishing for variety (which you can provide with “R&R” trips or temporary assignments), and the emphasis on combat means players who like wargaming have fun and those who don’t loathe this kind of campaign.

DUNGEON DELVING

Search for a cave or stairs descending into the ground. Light your torches, draw your swords, and head into the darkness. Avoid traps, find monsters, kill them, and take their treasure. This, at its heart, is the essence of a dungeon delving campaign, and it can be a lot of fun for everyone concerned. The players get the fun of thinking tactically (“Let’s not use up all our fireball spells — the man back in the village said there were some trolls here”), overcoming challenges, killing vicious monsters, and earning lots of loot. You don’t have to think hard to come up with another adventure, and the contained nature of the dungeon setting makes it easy to channel and control the PCs.

Much like a pure Swords And Sorcery campaign, dungeon delving can pale quickly if it has no meaning or context. If you put in a little long-term thought, you can provide some depth to your dungeons and create a campaign instead of a series of armed spelunking expeditions. For example, instead of just creating four random dungeons for the PCs to explore, design a series of four related dungeons, each leading to the next: in the first, the players defeat an Evil priest and gain a glimpse into a greater plot by his church. A clue found on his body leads them to locate and explore a ruined castle the church uses as a base... and so on. Although the PCs still spend most of their time in underground corridors and chambers, now there’s a greater purpose to their actions.

THE PIRATE LIFE

“Is very strange. I have been in the revenge business so long, now that it’s over, I don’t know what to do with the rest of my life.”

“Have you ever considered piracy? You’d make a wonderful Dread Pirate Roberts.”

—Inigo Montoya and Westley discuss Inigo’s career prospects in the movie *The Princess Bride*

Piracy as depicted in Fantasy and adventure novels is largely unrealistic and pulpish, but it’s also a lot of fun. If you want to emphasize “realism,” you can research the way ships worked and how pirates operated, then create rules for grappling, boarding, and kegs o’ rum. If you prefer your pirates in a more swashbuckling vein, you can ignore most of the realities of shipboard life in favor of a lot of chandelier-swinging, cutlass duels, squawking parrots, and ghost-guarded buried treasures. Yaaarrr!

Whichever style you use, key tropes of pirate adventures include: hidden treasures; pirates who are secretly something else; good pirates who only steal from the corrupt and evil (and who often distribute part of their treasure to the poor and downtrodden); privateering (working as a pirate for a king by attacking only his enemy’s ships); walking the plank; rivalries with other pirates; peg-legs, hook-hands, and eyepatches; and roistering times ashore in lawless free ports.

REBELS

Lady Marian: *Why, you speak treason!*

Robin: *Fluently*

—Robin makes plain his feelings about unjust rule in the movie *The Adventures Of Robin Hood*

While rebellions are not as common in Fantasy adventures as in Science Fiction or some other genres, they do exist. One of the best-known Fantasy characters of all time, Robin Hood, was definitely a rebel against a tyrannical government; the same could be said of William Wallace in the movie *Braveheart*, and perhaps of the Scarlet Pimpernel (who, though not in the Fantasy era, could easily serve as the model for a Fantasy Hero campaign).

Rebellions make for a great Fantasy campaigns, because the rebel captains can send the heroes on missions when you need an adventure hook, but a rag-tag rebel movement can’t always provide backup when the heroes get into trouble. Also, the ultimate triumph of Good over Evil proves most satisfying. The classic rebellion campaign draws on the American Revolution and the exploits of resistance fighters in occupied Europe — the heroes are good, the villains are bad, and moral ambiguity is kept to a minimum. If you want a more “shades of grey” campaign, you can create

dangerous elements among the rebel forces (such as bandits using the rebellion as an excuse for looting), or show that the tyranny has sincere supporters with valid reasons to prefer order over upheaval.

Rebel characters should all have the same Hunted unless they maintain a Secret Identity and/or Deep Cover. Most adventures mix military operations and espionage; they may occasionally cross over with a thieves' campaign, or the characters might go undercover as nobles, merchants, or the like.

STALKING THE NIGHT

Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves, the larcenous exploits of the Gray Mouser, and many of the stories in the "Thieves' World" anthologies all show how exciting a Fantasy underworld campaign can be. Instead of fighting wars or slaying monsters, the PCs are thieves, cutpurses, burglars, and assassins trying to earn a dishonest living. They may have hearts of gold and give their illicit earnings to the poor, but they're still thieves, and they wouldn't have it any other way.

Two problems arise with this sort of campaign. First, a diet of planning and executing elaborate Fantasy thefts may pale after a while. You should consider ways to change the pace a bit, such as having the king recruit the characters to serve as spies in a distant land. Second, if the characters commit crimes for money, what happens when they finally succeed with a major robbery and have enough money to live on for the rest of their lives? You have to either stop them from succeeding, find a way to take the money away after they get it (fences' fees, other thieves, bad luck at gambling), or make sure all the PCs have some reason beyond money for their career choice.

Looking around, he remarked, "We're getting a bit of company, despite the early hour. There's Dickon of the Thieves' Guild, that old pen-pusher and drawer of the floor plans of houses to be robbed — I don't believe he's actually worked on a job since the Year of the Snake. And there's fat Grom, their subtreasurer, another armchair thief. Who comes so dramatically a-slither — by the Black Bones, it's Snarve, our overlord Glipkerio's nephew! Who's that he speaks to? — oh, only Tork the Cutpurse."

"And there now appears," Fafhrd took up, "Vlek, said to be the Guild's star operative these days. ... And there's that gray-eyed, black-haired amateur, Alyx the picklock[.] ... I rather admire her courage in adventuring here, where the Guild's animosity toward freelance females is as ill a byword as that of the Pimps' Guild. And just now turning from the Street of the Gods, who have we but Countess Kronia of the Seventy-seven Secret Pockets, who steals by madness, not method."

—Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser discuss the Lankmar underworld in "The Two Best Thieves In Lankmar," by Fritz Leiber

SETTINGS

The alternate world is a key ingredient in Fantasy — that's why Chapter Five devotes so many pages to discussing how to create enjoyable and interesting settings. An intriguing setting has saved any number of mediocre novels, and can turn an otherwise average Fantasy Hero campaign into one players enjoy for years.

SCALE

Scale defines the size of the stage for the campaign. In a Low Fantasy campaign focusing on the escapades of King, court, and Thieves' Guild in a large city, the characters don't leave that urban environment. On the other hand, a group of High Fantasy characters with divine patrons or access to powerful magic could criss-cross worlds and planes on a regular basis. Every level of campaign scale has its own advantages and disadvantages.

Small-scale settings offer the advantage of intimacy. You can develop a small locale (a city, a duchy, a castle) in great detail. You may even have names and character notes, if not character sheets, for everyone who lives there (or at least every person of importance). The PCs are more likely to be "big fish" in a small-scale campaign, and their activities can have visible effects. On the other hand, the characters (or their players) may get bored with such limited surroundings. They may want to get away from the consequences of failure. They may seek more challenging foes.

Larger-scale settings — an entire world, for example — offer considerably more potential for adventure and travel. They may have exotic societies, multiple races, or strange forms of heretofore-unknown magic. Don't underestimate the gaming potential of a single world: remember, every single person in history has lived his life on Earth. Obviously, no GM can envision a whole Fantasy world in as much detail as a city or town, so if you want to create a world as the focus for your game, concentrate on developing the things that affect the PCs: important kingdoms and organizations, significant races and creatures, the environment, the actual places the heroes visit, and strange or unusual things that might form the basis for scenarios.

Multiworld campaigns — such as plane-hopping High Fantasy games — let characters adventure in radically different environments, ranging from forest worlds, to worlds with no gravity, to worlds where *everything* works by magic. They also allow for more exploration, greater interaction with bizarre races, and a wider range of societies. The heroes are likely to be less important in the grand scheme of things (about as important as individuals in the modern world). Initially, you need only describe the components of the setting in general terms (physical parameters and the rough outlines of society for each plane). As the heroes travel about, you can bring individual worlds and places into the spotlight and elaborate on them.

Thus Karnith, King of Alatta, spake to his eldest son: "I bequeath to thee my city of Zoon, with its golden eaves, whereunder hum the bees. And I bequeath to thee also the land of Alatta, and all such other lands as thou art worthy to possess, for my three strong armies which I leave thee may well take Zindara and overrun Istahn, and drive back Onin from his frontier, and leaguer the walls of Yan, and beyond that spread conquest over the lesser lands of Hebith, Ebnon, and Karida. Only lead not thine armies against Zeenar, nor ever cross the Eidis."

—Karnith instructs his son in "The Land Of Time," by Lord Dunsany

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"Listen boy, [Camelot's] more than twenty days from here."

"Twenty days? The world's not that big!"

—Lancelot tells Percival about the world in the movie *Excalibur*



Of course, all these scales may co-exist in the same campaign! The PCs could start out in a relatively small setting — a village and its environs, say — then explore their kingdom and become familiar with it, then venture throughout the world, and at last make their way across the planes. The expanding scale matches their increasing experience and power. Caveat: once the players get used to adventuring on a given scale, it's hard to shrink things down again. If the characters have been visiting Hell, the Thirteen Heavens, and the Elemental Plane Of Fire, an extended period back in their home realm may make the players bored and restless, even if once their characters were limited to a single town.

The campaign's level of technology and magic may determine its scale. Without magic or large ships, characters can't make long sea voyages. If they have no planar travel spells, their planned trip to Asgard isn't going to happen. On the other hand, if they have ready access to easy methods of travel, visiting another realm or plane of existence may become no more troublesome than flying cross-country is on modern Earth.

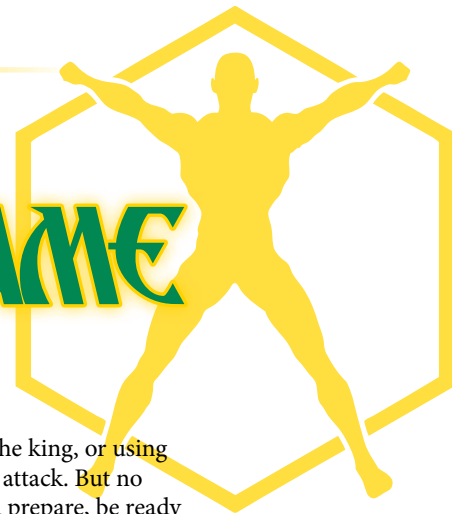
INTELLIGENT BEINGS

Once you determine the scale of the stage, you can start to people it with actors. In this case, the actors are the people the characters are likely to meet: the races, sentient monsters, and societies in the campaign. The range of available actors depends on the scale. A wide-ranging campaign probably has great diversity, while a narrowly-focused setting probably doesn't.

MAJOR POWERS

These are the states or organizations which define the campaign's political and social landscape. Their size depends on the overall scale: major powers in a single-city game are the city government, the local Thieves' Guild(s), the PCs' primary competitors and enemies, a few trading houses, the major temples and priesthoods, a powerful wizard or two, and maybe the national government. The emperor of a vast realm (or even an entire plane) might not even notice these things; at that scale, the major powers are things like empires, entire races, and dimension-ruling undead wizards. For each major power, you should at least have an idea of what its goals are, how it interacts with other powers, and what role it can play in the campaign.

RUNNING THE GAME



The GM's job doesn't end when he creates the campaign and develops the setting. Quite the reverse: now he has to actually run the games while his players enjoy what he has created... and help him flesh out the shared fictional universe.

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

There are two main approaches to adventure design: plotted and unplotted. In a plotted adventure, you have a specific story in mind, which the PCs follow to the climax. In an unplotted adventure, there is no plot, merely a situation; what happens depends entirely on the PCs' actions. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages.

PLOTTED ADVENTURES

Plotted adventures have the great advantage of a satisfying story structure. The action builds from the hook to the climax, encounters exist to provide tension or move the story along, and the heroes are at the center of events. You can use all the tricks developed by writers over the past three millennia: foreshadowing, suspense, conflict, jump cutting, catharsis. You can borrow plots and plot ideas from a vast array of sources, from Shakespeare to Ed Wood. You can tailor the opposition to the characters' power level and personalities.

On the downside, plotted adventures can become too rigid in structure — you know where you want the story to go, so you force the heroes to go there. Players may feel you're railroading them, or that their actions don't really have an effect. If they suspect you'll let them succeed regardless of what they do (because story progression requires it), the story loses all suspense and drama — the players start to use “metagame thinking” to deduce the plot and figure out what their characters should do, rather than acting as their characters would behave in that situation.

To avoid the problem of “railroading,” plan out several possible resolutions for the adventure (and for each major scene within the adventure) depending on what the characters do. If the story involves discovering a plot to assassinate the king, the climax might consist of a battle with

the assassins, impersonating the king, or using an obscure spell to thwart the attack. But no matter how many options you prepare, be ready to abandon all of them when the players think up something you didn't. The most profound truth in gaming is “the players never do what you expect.”

UNPLOTTED ADVENTURES

Unplotted adventures, by contrast, have no set storyline. You merely establish a situation and let the players determine the action. The situation can be dynamic or passive. In a dynamic situation, things happen and it's up to the players to cope with them — the trolls are attacking, the Empire is about to collapse, or the like. A passive situation is one in which things are stable (at least until the PCs show up) — bandits are attacking travelers on the King's Road, the evil sorcerer Karaxon has secretly taken control of the Duke and his retinue, a drifting ship holds a lost treasure and a terrifying mystery. If there are villains, they follow whatever motives you wish to give them, rather than filling the role of Antagonist in a story. The World is there, running along on its own, and the PCs must make their own decisions about what to do and how to do it.

Unplotted adventures have the advantage of feeling realistic — after all, the real world doesn't neatly follow classical dramatic structure, and every person is an NPC to other people. They give the players a great deal of influence over the course of the adventure, and let them choose to do what they enjoy. If you've prepared the setting well, unplotted adventures are a good way to show off the scope and depth of your Fantasy world.

But unplotted adventures have their own set of disadvantages. Often the action becomes just a series of petty crimes or treasure grabs. In a dynamic situation, the players may find it frustrating to be at the mercy of events. The need to either create new encounters on the fly or prepare a vast amount of background and NPCs which you may never use might overwhelm you. Finally, the structure of unplotted adventures can be unsatisfying — the heroes overcome the main opposition early and spend the rest of their time mopping up underlings, or they fail to acquire crucial information or spells and end up outclassed at the climax.

Plotted and unplotted adventures aren't completely incompatible. Characters may start out in a seemingly unplotted situation, but encounter various hooks for stories. Depending on which ones they decide to follow up, they can get involved in plotted stories. In the course of going through those story plots, they exist in an unplotted environment, so if they diverge from the story they don't wander off into "blank parts" of the map.

PLOTTING

The most dependable basis for an adventure plot is the tried and true three-act structure, familiar from classic plays, comic books, films, and almost every other type of story. The first act is the adventure hook, in which the heroes become involved in the story and encounter initial obstacles. The second act presents more obstacles for the heroes to overcome (often with an intriguing twist or turn of events), and the third act is the climax and resolution of the story.

THE FIRST ACT: ADVENTURE HOOK

Adventure hooks come in various forms. The simplest is to have an NPC hire or order the heroes to do something — "You're all sitting around in a tavern, when this strange wizard comes in and looks at you...." That's a standard hook for all sorts of Fantasy stories; it's quick and gets the story moving. Alternately, someone can come to beg the heroes for help — if they're properly heroic, how can they resist? And of course, the actions of an enemy can draw the heroes into an adventure. Many comic books begin this way — a supervillain shows up and starts blasting away at the heroes, and away the story goes. The risk of death concentrates one's attention very well.

Some adventure hooks are situational; almost any circumstance the PCs find themselves in can draw them into an adventure. Being out of money means the heroes need to find a way to earn some cash, so they respond to a mysterious rumor of "help wanted." The heroes are caught in the cross-fire when two rival bands of orcs battle for control of the province. Ready, set, go!

Finally, objects often serve as adventure hooks. A cryptic clue or message can draw the heroes into danger; Alfred Hitchcock loved that method in his films. Another useful Hitchcock hook is "The MacGuffin." A MacGuffin is an object of value or importance to someone. If the heroes have the MacGuffin (or if someone thinks they have it), then all sorts of trouble results from other people trying to buy, steal, or destroy it. The One Ring in *The Lord Of The Rings* serves as a sort of MacGuffin.

Sometimes the adventure hook is not the same as the ultimate goal of the adventure itself. Many times the heroes get involved because they think they understand what's going on, and then learn better and must change their goals as a result of events in the story. As an example, suppose a wealthy patron hires a party of mercenaries to raid the king's treasure-vault. The hook is their mercenary contract. But before they can escape with the loot, their employer betrays them to the King's Guard. Suddenly, the goal is no longer accomplishing the contract, but escaping from jail and getting revenge. After they catch up with their erstwhile employer, they learn he was working for a mysterious patron of his own, so now they have to find that person and discover what's really going on.

THE SECOND ACT: OBSTACLES

The second act of an adventure focuses on obstacles the heroes must overcome. Obstacles are many and various, but fall into three main categories.

FOES

The first are actual *foes* — people or things specifically trying to make the heroes fail, or do them harm. If the foe wants to kill the heroes or stop them from accomplishing their goal, then he's a villain. If he merely wants to beat them to the goal, or surpass their accomplishments, he's a rival. Finally, there are adversaries — people whose goals are opposed to the PCs' plans even if they aren't aware of them. (In this context, *HERO System* Hunteds can qualify as either adversaries or villains, but Rivals are usually rivals.) For example, suppose the heroes try to return a sacred relic to Glenroan Abbey. Villains include people who don't want the relic to reach its destination, rivals include people who want to beat the party to Glenroan with a fake relic to claim the reward, and adversaries include the bandits who don't know about any relic but want to steal the party's enchanted items.

At times friends can be foes, if they don't agree with the goal the heroes are pursuing, or have been duped into believing the heroes are a danger. A friend may even betray the PCs, like Saruman did in *The Lord Of The Rings*. Sometimes friends are correct, and it's the heroes who've been duped.

FEATURES OF THE SETTING

The second type of obstacles the heroes must face are *features of the setting* which would exist regardless of the heroes' actions. They include natural obstacles and mysteries.

Natural obstacles include hostile weather, sheer distance, dangerous terrain, hungry animals, deadly traps, and the like. Society's impediments — laws, regulations, restrictions, social customs, prejudices, and the like — also qualify as natural obstacles. Obviously, natural obstacles arise primarily in uncivilized areas, while social barriers come into play in populated settings.



A mystery is either something the heroes must solve to continue toward the goal, or the key to the goal itself. Sometimes mysteries (or puzzles) are features of the setting, and sometimes they're the work of the party's opponents, but they all have a common feature: the characters must solve them by thinking rather than force (although sometimes the solution involves a particular use of force). In situations with changing goals, solving a mystery may finally point the heroes at their ultimate objective. Regardless of the type of puzzle, you should make it fair and logical, since ultimately the players have to solve it. An unfair puzzle just makes them angry.

INTERNAL OBSTACLES

A final kind of obstacle lies within the heroes themselves — *internal obstacles*. Overcoming personal flaws, sacrificing something for the greater good, or learning a lesson are all obstacles, often more difficult to surmount than any horde of hobgoblins or demon-possessed wizard. In game terms, internal obstacles are often reflected by Complications such as Dependence, DNPC, Enraged/Berserk, Psychological Complication, and perhaps Rivalry. An honorable man who must break his word to achieve his goal faces an internal obstacle; so does a devious one who has to trust others to succeed. You should tailor the internal obstacles to the players: some players routinely sidestep their characters' Psychological Complications if they can manage an EGO Roll, while others want to remain true to the characters they create.

THE THIRD ACT: CLIMAX AND CONCLUSION

Once the characters have surpassed or neutralized all the obstacles, the story proceeds to its *climax*, in which the heroes confront the main villain or surmount the ultimate barrier to reach their goal and win the reward. The goal may not be the one they originally signed up to accomplish, but it's the one that concludes this particular adventure.

Climaxes should be, well, climactic. This is the time for you to “blow the budget” and strive to make everything as tense and impressive as possible. If the heroes must foil the villain's plans, put a time limit on them and create all kinds of distractions. If they fight the villain directly, set the battle in an exotic or impressive location — a castle's parapets, a cliffside, a crystal-filled cavern, an underwater city. Since this is a roleplaying game, an exciting setting is no more expensive or difficult to arrange than a boring one.

Even if it isn't full of physical action, try to make the climax tense and dramatic. If the heroes have to prevent a war or persuade someone, set the scene right on the edge of disaster — the Ogre King's army is only minutes away from attacking the heroes' village, and they have to convince him right now that the villagers have not been trapping and slaughtering his people. If the king is passing judgment on the PCs, the crucial evidence should arrive after the opposition has presented seemingly iron-clad arguments against the heroes... and just in time to save them from the headsman's axe.

RANDOM PLOT GENERATOR

Sometimes you need a plot in a hurry, or maybe just some way to generate ideas to kickstart your imagination. For those times, here's a Fantasy Hero Random Plot Generator. Start by rolling a Hook, then determine the Goal and the Obstacles standing in the way. For more complex plots, roll for multiple Goals: the first is what the PCs think they're doing, and then they discover their real goal later.

Example: *Jim, the GM, needs a plot idea for an epic High Fantasy adventure. He starts by rolling the Hook, and gets a 4: a MacGuffin. For the Goal he decides to roll twice, and gets 3, 5: Escape from a Place, and 4, 2: Rescue a Captive. He rolls for the number of Obstacles and gets 3; the specific ones are 6: Villain, 1: Adversary, and 3: Nature.*

Now Jim has to put these pieces together. The two goals work best in order — after the heroes escape from somewhere (with the Hook, the MacGuffin) they find out they have to rescue someone. Since the obstacles include both Villain and Adversary, Jim decides that the main villain of the scenario — the person who captured the PCs — also captured someone else important, but they don't learn about this until after they win free of his clutches. They learn about it from someone who's trying to rescue this other victim for a reward, and who doesn't want the PCs interfering.

All of this means the captive must be someone important. Jim decides it's a priestess of the Church of Light who was carrying an important sacred artifact back to her Church when the villain — Sargath the Dark, a powerful vampire — kidnapped her so he could destroy the artifact. The adversary is a bounty hunter hired by the Church to rescue the priestess.

So, here's how Jim decides to set things up. Sargath is an existing villain in the campaign, someone the PCs have tangled with before. He arranges a game in which they find one of the Vampire Lord's lairs and attack. During the attack Sargath employs powerful magics that put them to sleep.

The PCs wake up in Sargath's dungeons. Using their cleverness and skills, they escape. As they're leaving, one of them (a priest or wizard) senses the nearby power of the artifact, a chalice. They take the chalice as they flee from the overwhelming forces Sargath has summoned to recapture them.

The PCs have escaped, but now face the problem of crossing the wastelands without their gear or supplies (the Nature obstacle). They barely succeed, and as they stumble half-starved into the nearest town, they meet Brendon, a rawboned bounty hunter with something of an attitude. From him, they learn of the kidnapped priestess, and further that she is dying from Sargath's tortures; only a drink of wine from the chalice can save her. Brendon steals the chalice and heads toward Sargath's lair to earn his bounty. The PCs must re-equip, pursue him, deal with his interference, rescue the priestess, and defeat Sargath....

HOOK

(roll 1d6)

- 1 Client (NPC who asks or begs the party to do something)
- 2 Clue (message or information which inspires the party to act)
- 3 Enemy (NPC or other threat which menaces the party)
- 4 MacGuffin (PCs acquire an object of great importance to someone)
- 5 Patron (NPC who hires or orders the party to do something)
- 6 Situation (Some event happens which requires the party to react)

GOAL

(roll 2d6)

1st Die	2nd Die	Result	Suggestions
1-3	1	Acquire Something	Legendary sword, enchanted item, king's signet ring
1-3	2	Capture Someone	Enemy captain, renegade dragon, meddlesome bard
1-3	3	Defeat an Enemy	Horde of orcs, rampaging manticore, evil priest
1-3	4	Destroy Something	Enchanted item, evil relic, powerful golem
1-3	5	Escape from a Place	Jail, maze-tomb of the lich-king, behind enemy lines
1-3	6	Learn a Secret	Wizard's true name, councillor's treachery, Odin's recipe for dragon kebab
4-6	1	Prevent a Disaster	Earthquake, loss of the world's mana, deadly plague
4-6	2	Rescue a Captive	Kidnapped princess, imprisoned djinn, gladiatorial slave
4-6	3	Solve a Mystery	Source of magic, who's the traitor, who killed the King
4-6	4	Survive the Environment	Desert, mountains, underground labyrinth
4-6	5	Travel to a Place	Another plane, a distant kingdom, a mysterious island
4-6	6	Win a Battle	Versus an army, a legal battle, a Duel Arcane

OBSTACLES

(roll 1d6 for the number of obstacles, then 1d6 to determine the nature of each)

- 1 Adversary (someone whose goals bring him into conflict with the PCs)
- 2 Friend (a DNPC or someone normally friendly, opposed to the party for some reason)
- 3 Nature (hostile features of the setting, creatures, and so forth)
- 4 Rival (an existing rival or someone who wants to achieve the same goal ahead of the party)
- 5 Society (the authorities, the culture, laws, infrastructure, and so forth)
- 6 Villain (someone who specifically opposes the PCs)

DEALING WITH DISCONNECTS

Many ideas which work perfectly well in fiction are less successful in roleplaying games. A game is not a movie or a book, so different dramatic rules apply. Fantasy stories and settings come with a complete set of booby-traps and pitfalls waiting to snare unsuspecting GMs.

BATTLES

By the time he arrived on the scene, the battle had been decided. The Bohul battle-gangs, with their memrils and rumbling war-wagons, had done the unthinkable; on the Finneian Plain east of Vasques Tohor the Twenty Potences of the Last Kingdom had been destroyed; Vasques Tohor could no longer be denied to the Bohul Dukes.

—Rhialto witnesses the aftermath of a battle in *Rhialto The Marvellous*, by Jack Vance

Battles are always fun in movies and books, but often in roleplaying sessions they turn tedious, for several reasons. In books or movies the combat doesn't have to follow game rules. The author maximizes everything for dramatic effect and knows how everything turns out. In a game, the players usually like to have some control over the outcome, which means you have to resolve the battle as an extended combat, with lots of die rolling and table-checking.

Another problem is that in a game session, one or two players often wind up controlling the combat. The other players either just watch passively, or do nothing but roll dice when told to. They can't really contribute ideas — and if they do, the battle gets even slower because the group has to argue every action to death first. Similarly, one or two players (not characters, players) may have more “tactical smarts” than the others, making their characters the stars of the scene whether the characters themselves should know anything about war.

So, think carefully before including a battle in your campaign. This is not to say you shouldn't have battles in your Fantasy Hero adventures, but you set them up and run them so they don't hinder the overall game. Suit the style of battle to the preferences of the players. A bunch of gamers who love working out elaborate plans can come up with a “battle plan” which gets resolved as a contest of Tactics against the enemy commander, with bonuses for a clever plan. Gamers who like combat up close and personal should face lots of one-on-one duels and chances for individual glory. Groups interested in storytelling and character interaction can simply have the battle described to them, with plenty of bluffing and posturing with the enemy.

INFODUMPS

A problem faced both by writers of Fantasy stories and GMs in Fantasy roleplaying adventures is how to explain the strange and complicated background without bringing things to a screeching halt. In stories, long expository passages are known as “infodumps,” and working them into the narrative is a difficult task for writers.

One advantage you have over the author of fiction is that you can give the players handouts, but you shouldn't do this with gamers who aren't willing to spend the time to read them — many gamers don't really like having homework assignments. Another useful technique is to explain things as they come up, and not penalize players for being ignorant of the made-up game world: “You see a Sun Elf enter the tavern, and you know many Sun Elves are highly skilled spellcasters. What do you do?”

MAINTAINING THE FANTASY “FEEL”

When you read a Fantasy novel or watch a Fantasy movie, it's easy to get swept up in the “feel” and flavor of the setting, the characters, and the events. The descriptions and dialogue sound like “Fantasy” to you, which helps to preserve the “Fantasy mood” that lets you enjoy the story. But gamers sometimes have problems maintaining the Fantasy feel. Characters don't act or talk quite like Fantasy characters should, and non-Fantasy considerations — a ringing telephone, a side conversation about a movie or TV show, pizza delivery — make it even harder to sustain the mood. Constant references to game rules doesn't help matters.

If maintaining the “Fantasy feel” has been a problem in your game, you have several options for resolving the problem. First, try to break character as little as possible. If you talk and think like your character as much as you can, you'll keep the Fantasy frame of mind going. And when you talk, *talk like a Fantasy character*. Don't use words, phrases, or concepts a Fantasy character wouldn't — such as describing interesting events as “cool,” measuring with the metric system, or referring to genetics when talking about monsters. Try to speak a little more formally, using words befitting the genre and mood (including archaic or old-fashioned words). For example, don't say “the dragon's lair is five miles away,” describe it as “nearly two leagues distant”; your enemy the Sorcerer-Queen isn't “a really powerful spell-caster,” she “possesses great mystic might.” If at all possible, avoid using rules terms to describe your character or any person or thing he encounters. Nothing kills the Fantasy mood more quickly than saying something like, “Wow, I bet that sword does at least three dice Killing!”

Second, try to arrange the environment to create more “Fantasy ambience.” Put the rulebooks, and perhaps even your dice, off to the side so they're not constantly in your line of sight. Turn down the lights a little, or even try lighting the room with candles (safely, of course!). Play some

The Elder Isles and its peoples: a brief survey, which, while not altogether tedious, may be neglected by the reader impatient with facts.

—from the introduction to *Lyonesse*, by Jack Vance

Fantasy-oriented music, such as the soundtrack from your favorite Fantasy movie... but hide the CD player so the sight of it doesn't break the mood.

Third, if you're the GM, provide some visual aids to enhance the mood. Cut out pictures from magazines showing the scenery during part of the game. You can use illustrations from game books in the same way. You might even consider preparing a few props, such as a rolled-up piece of parchment to represent the scroll the PCs have to deliver to the Wizard of the Black Tower.

Above all, try to remain focused on the game and its events, not on the distractions surrounding you. Keep your eyes on the players (or make sure their eyes are on you), and try to keep the pace of events lively enough to focus everyone's attention. Make the game interesting enough, and no one will want to think about anything else.

POSSESSION AND MIND CONTROL

"You say the ring is dangerous, far more dangerous than I guess. In what way?"

"In many ways," answered the wizard.

"It is far more powerful than I ever dared to think at first, so powerful that in the end it would utterly overcome anyone of mortal race who possessed it. It would possess him."

—Frodo and Gandalf discuss the evil power of the One Ring in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Having characters fall victim to long-term mental domination (or be replaced by a doppelganger, succumb to a succubus's blandishments, or whatever) creates some practical problems for you and the players. If you keep it a secret from the player, you must continually dictate the character's actions or demand die rolls to determine what he can do. The players know something's up and react accordingly. ("Everyone in here for a planning session — except Bob's character!")

Bringing a possessed character's player into the secret requires you to venture into the tricky waters of group dynamics and individual personalities. Some players happily run their character as if under sinister mental control; others find subtle (or not-so-subtle) ways to alert the other players. But if the player goes along, playing his character straight, the other players may view him as a "traitor" for keeping the secret from them.

In most cases, the easiest way to eliminate this problem is to ask all the players, either at the beginning of the campaign or well in advance of the actual event, if they wouldn't mind a storyline like the ones described above. Of course, that means tipping your hand a little, but if everyone agrees, and if you do it far enough in advance of the actual storyline, it shouldn't cause a problem. If too many players object too strongly to this sort of story, don't run it.

PROPHECIES AND FORETELLING

"For my part, I believe the words are accurate, but I no more understand them than I do the gibbering of the southern nomads. Here's the prophecy:

*The child who died is the king who will be;
The king who died will slay the king who would be;*

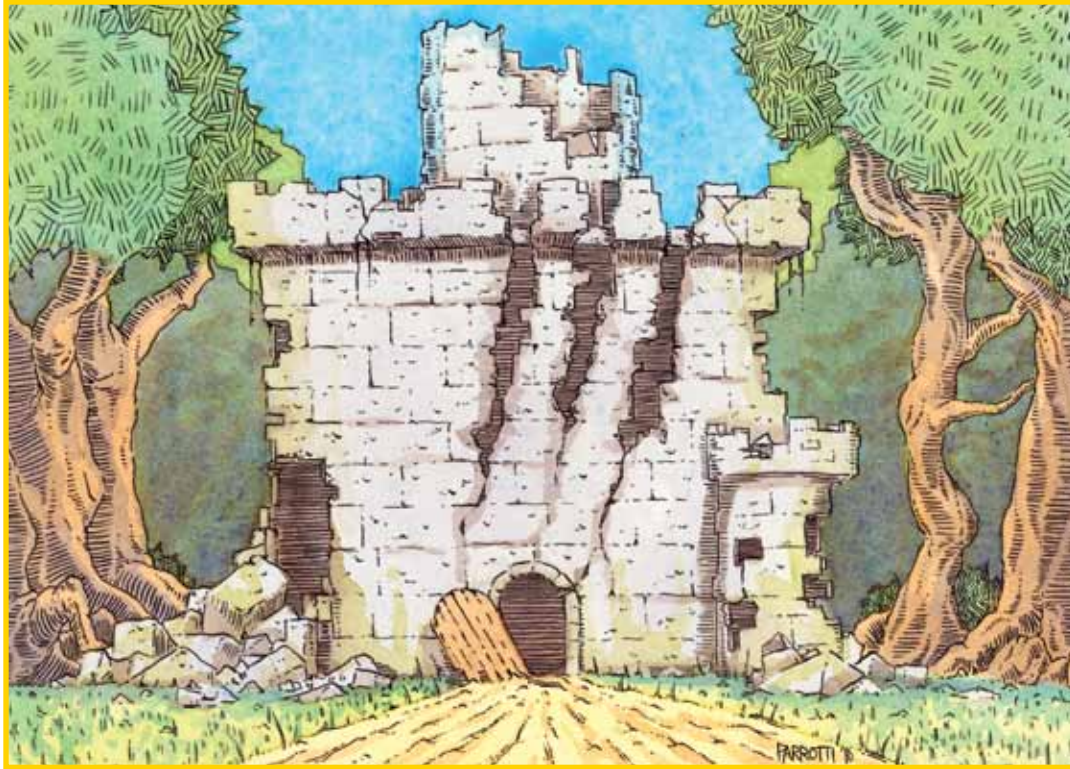
The son of three mothers will father three sons, and with their hands on his blood they will shake the world when they are dead and gone to dust."

—Genlon first hears the prophecy that will shape his life in *Grey-mantle*, by John Morressy

Prophecies, and the ability to foretell the future, are a fascinating aspect of many Fantasy stories. It's always intriguing to know that a voice from centuries past predicted some unusual fate for a character, and to find out how he fulfills that fate. But in a game, where the "author" (the GM) can't control the actions of the heroes, trying to work a prophecy into the campaign may be a recipe for disaster. Either the characters don't take the actions you expect them to, forcing you to abandon the prophecy or to try to twist events around to jerk the storyline back onto the path you intended... or they decide they can't lose ("we're destined to win!") and stop trying to succeed.

You can resolve this dilemma in two ways. First, consult with the player whose character is the subject of prophecy and enlist his cooperation. This requires you to reveal at least a few details of the campaign storyline to him, so make sure you only do this with a player whose discretion and ability to "play along" you can trust. If you manage this situation properly, the player reacts as you want him to at the appropriate time, and the prophecy enhances the campaign.

The second option is to make the prophecy so vague that it encompasses just about any general course of action the PCs take. If the prophecy merely foretells that "five lights shall shine forth to smite the Darkness," then the only thing you have to worry about is losing a player (which reduces the number of PCs below five). Furthermore, if you arrange things properly, the characters can learn more about the prophecy as the campaign moves forward and you have a better idea of how they react to certain situations. For example, once you realize that they plan to slay the Dark Lord by finding and destroying the mystic gem that contains his life-force, you can have a wise wizard NPC reveal a long-lost more complete version of the prophecy that refers to that plan. That also tells the PCs they're on the right track and keeps the game moving forward.



ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Heroes in fiction fall in love when the author tells them to. If it's important for Thorgald the Mighty to become infatuated with the elven-maiden Siretha, he falls for her like a ton of bricks. Player Characters don't do that. Using die rolls to control a relationship doesn't work for anything more than a brief flirtation. This is a case where the personalities of individual players are important: some gamers happily dive into a doomed romance, while others view it as mushy stuff getting in the way of combat.

Genre conventions often include “typical” romance situations. High Fantasy lends itself to grand passions, love that endures beyond death, and a thoroughly romantic approach to romance. (Many other Fantasy stories, even Low Magic ones, can also work in similar events without violating subgenre conventions.) A game featuring lots of knights and castle scenes may stress the theme of courtly love. On the other hand, a Swords And Sorcery character may be more inclined to wenching and carousing than romantic love.

Much depends on the personalities and maturity levels of the players. A mature or broad-minded group may have no trouble with a fairly explicit situation. Immature gamers may develop a terminal case of snickering when anything of the sort comes up in play. The simplest rule of thumb is to play to the lowest comfort level — if even one member of the group doesn't handle “adult” situations well, draw the curtain and leave all that “off-screen.”

SPLITTING THE PARTY

A situation common to all roleplaying is when the PC group has two things to do and the players decide to split up. In films and fiction it's easy to cut back and forth between two groups of characters, because fictional characters don't get bored waiting for their turn to do something. In roleplaying, the characters have players who get fidgety when they're “off camera.” This is especially problematic when you have to keep one group's actions secret from the rest of the party, so you and some players go off to another room or pass notes.

The best way to deal with a split party situation is not to let it happen. If that's not possible, keep the separation as brief as you can. If one group's activities don't involve any conflict or roleplaying, summarize it briefly and keep the focus on the more interesting events encountered by the others. You can put aside secret exchanges that only involve a few players for later — unless the events would have an immediate effect, you and the players involved can resolve it after the others go home, or by e-mail. If you can't avoid a prolonged separation, let the players of “off stage” characters control NPCs or villains.

TOO MUCH MAGIC

Unique to Fantasy campaigns is the problem of magic — too much of it, or types that are too powerful. The *characters*, not their spells and enchanted items, should be the most important thing in the campaign; they should solve problems themselves, rather than simply using a Word Of Destruction or a powerful Mind Domination spell to conveniently dispose of any difficulties they encounter. See Chapter Four for more information on magic and controlling its use.

DON'T SPLIT THE PARTY

—the title of the fourth compilation of the “Order Of The Stick” webcomic by Rich Burlew

“Is this a kissing book?”

—the Grandson expresses some doubts about the Fantasy story his Grandpa's reading him in the movie *The Princess Bride*

6

COMPLICATIONS AND HOW TO USE THEM

Stories are about characters, and roleplaying game adventures are no exception. Characters, of course, have personalities — flaws and quirks and personal goals. In the *HERO System*, you represent these with characters' Complications, particularly Psychological Complications, Rivalries, and Hunteds. You use the Complications of your PCs to enrich the game in a number of ways. They can serve as plot hooks, distractions, sources of conflict, and ways to link the party together. And of course, all the motivations below may apply to villains just as well as heroes.

See pages 168-71 for more information on Complications in Fantasy Hero.

ACCIDENTAL CHANGE

As a plot hook, Accidental Change can suddenly put the heroes on the run when it reveals their true nature to a society that doesn't tolerate them. If something in the environment keeps triggering a character's change, the party may have to find a way to cure or prevent it. As a distraction or complication, Accidental Change works wonderfully — in the middle of a delicate situation one of the character suddenly feels "the change" coming on, and everyone must scramble to cover for him.

If a character keeps his alternate form secret from the other PCs, Accidental Change can provide a source of conflict. The character's efforts to hide his true nature lead to suspicion or mistaken assumptions, and if the secret gets out the other characters may suddenly have to decide where their loyalties lie.

DEPENDENCE

Dependence doesn't occur too frequently in the Fantasy genre. It's most common in Swords And Sorcery, where characters sometimes become addicted to exotic drugs like the fumes of the black lotus.

If even one PC in the campaign has a Dependence, that makes an ideal hook by which you can drag him (and thus his friends) into adventures — characters struggle against few things harder than the possibility of losing their powers or Skills! Imagine the moral dilemma the characters face when they have to choose between maintaining their powers or performing a heroic deed, or if they have to do something repugnant to satisfy a captive's Dependence so he'll live long enough to lead them to Sargath's lair before the Vampire Lord enslaves all of humanity. Their enemies might even use Dependence as a weapon against them, perhaps by capturing them and addicting them all to the same drug or mystic ritual.

DEPENDENT NPC

DNPCs are always reliable plot hooks, either because they get into trouble or danger, or because someone asks them for help in a difficult situation. Continuing villains with a grudge against the heroes naturally try to strike at vulnerable DNPCs, or use them as the lure in a trap. Troublesome DNPCs like animals or small children can wander off at inopportune times.

DNPCs work especially well as motivators in more realistic, low-powered campaigns, such as Low Fantasy. They work less well in Swords And Sorcery, due to the amorality of many "heroes" of that genre, but if the PCs display occasional twinges of conscience (as even Conan does sometimes), you can use their DNPCs to motivate them. In High Fantasy, the characters' level of power may mean only an equally powerful villain can threaten their DNPCs; otherwise it's too easy to stage a rescue with aportation spells, summoned divine assistance, and irresistible magic blades.

If the PCs are a group of wandering adventurers, or a group on a world-spanning Epic Fantasy quest, you should be wary of letting them take DNPCs unless those DNPCs accompany them on their adventures at least half the time (a wizard's familiar might fit into this category). Otherwise, the PCs won't be around their DNPCs enough for the DNPC to constitute a significant Complication. Alternately, you might require them to apply the -5 "limited to a certain geographical area" modifier from Hunted to the value of the DNPC. You could even increase the value of the modifier to -10 (or more), if necessary.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Distinctive Features only qualifies as a valid Complication if it's truly distinctive. Being an elf in a campaign world with lots of elves usually isn't that restrictive; most people the PCs interact with will be used to members of other races. Make sure you examine and approve all Distinctive Features taken by PCs to ensure they're legitimate Complications.

During an adventure, Distinctive Features function as a distraction to the extent they make it hard for characters to adopt disguises, hide themselves, or interact with others. For example, heroes with particularly disturbing appearances (perhaps as the result of a curse) may have trouble when people react with fear or hostility — just getting a tavern to serve them some beer may prove difficult.

Distinctive Features can also come into play through mistaken identity — strange cultures in far-off lands may have prophecies or superstitions about someone with particular features. For example, Spanish explorer Hernan Cortez fit the description of the mythic Aztec figure Quetzalcoatl. The similarity caused confusion and uncertainty among the Aztec leaders, making it easier for Cortez to conquer them. Since Distinctive Features is a *Complication*, in a game context it's more likely a strange culture would mistake a character for an evil or loathed figure, but anything's possible.

ENRAGED/BERSERK

He felt a desire to strike, to bring forth blood, to hack until he could hack no more. And it felt right. He was Alodar and this was his purpose for being. ... [T]he lust for blood flamed higher, and the edges of the other desire shrank beside it. ... The feeling exploded within him and he drew his sword with a mighty flourish and a piercing scream.

—enchanted by Sorcery, Alodar goes Berserk and fights without feeling the pain of his injuries in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

In Fantasy settings, people most often associate Enraged/Berserk with berserker warriors and some types of monsters (ogres, demons, animals driven mad by pain and fear). Wise old wizards, calm priests, and wily rogues don't usually become so angry they lose control of themselves — though sometimes their Evil counterparts do, particularly an Evil sorcerer who discovers the PCs have upset his plans.

Another possibility is that a curse causes a character to become uncontrollably angry at inappropriate moments. If all the PCs suffer from the same curse, that might serve as a hook to bring them all together and start their adventuring careers: either they want to find out who did this to them and make it stop; or they know who did it and band together to get revenge.

HUNTED

The saga of a man (or woman, or race) on the run has a long history in fiction and makes a natural plot hook. It also works in the other direction: the heroes can track a wily foe who continually evades them. The best Fantasy Hero Hunter-Hunted situation allows for frequent flight and escape, which requires proper design of both the PC and the Hunter. Both parties need the ability to travel without restriction; if the campaign takes place entirely in one city or castle, the PCs can't just uproot their lives to pursue their old enemy Sargath. On the other hand, if the campaign involves a lot of traveling, don't let the PCs choose Hunters tied to a particular location, unless the events of the story bring the heroes back to that place frequently.

Even when the Hunters are not close on the heroes' trail, the simple fact of having to keep moving and keep hidden provides a continuing distraction and source of conflict. Non-Hunted PCs may resent having to live the life of fugitives to help a friend, and may even have genuine conflicts of loyalty between the desire to obey the law and the desire to help a comrade unjustly accused. If some characters in a game are bounty hunters or paladins and others are Hunted, the PCs may eventually find themselves Hunting each other!

As the old adage has it, “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” and being chased by the same people is a good way to link the characters in a campaign. They may not like each other, and they may disagree frequently... but they know they have to work together to stay ahead of their common foe.

NEGATIVE REPUTATION

Negative Reputations are a natural source of distractions during adventures. Just as the villains make their escape, a mob of peasants angry about a character's supposed demon-worship attacks the heroes, preventing them from pursuing.

Negative Reputation turns into a source of character conflict when the individual's Negative Reputation doesn't match his real personality. Do his comrades become disillusioned when he turns out to be not nearly as much of a “ruthless mercenary” as they'd heard? What if he has a Negative Reputation as a “skilled wizard” — even though he barely knows how to cast spells?

Negative Reputation often supplies the perfect link to bring characters together. It provides a pretext for completely unrelated individuals to get in touch with each other. (Not unlike the way people in the real world get together.) After all, if one of the heroes has a Negative Reputation as a ruthless mercenary, anyone who needs a ruthless mercenary might contact him. On the other hand, a person known for cowardice, or for inadvertently causing immense collateral damage, won't be high on the calling list when there's a job to do; it may take some effort to convince the other PCs to let him join the group.

PHYSICAL COMPLICATION

Physical Complications occur most frequently, and work best as character motivators, in lower-powered subgenres where the PCs lack powerful healing magic: Low Fantasy, Swords And Sorcery, and Urban Fantasy. Assuming you can avoid the cure-all of “healing magic,” just about any sort of Physical Complication works for Fantasy PCs; characters missing eyes, hands, legs, and sight appear frequently in the genre.

The search for some way to cure a hero's physical handicap can drive the plot of an adventure, as can the quest for revenge on whoever (or whatever) caused it (see *Moby Dick* for a non-Fantasy example). Within an adventure, the heroes' Physical Complications can cause interesting problems to overcome. On the other hand, while in fiction a character's Physical Complications provide a fertile source of dramatic conflict, this doesn't hold true in roleplaying games. Since the player who designed the character wants him to have that Physical Complication, the character lacks resentment or anger over his handicap (unless the player is very good at roleplaying).

Legends referring to Elric and his dreadful, doom-filled exploits were many and elaborately detailed. ... The merchants were already regretting their haste in contacting the albino.

—Elric's employers fear him in *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, by Michael Moorcock



“If you were not so young a warrior, Boy, you and I must have fought to the death on this quarrel. I can hear no words against my Lady’s honour.”

—the “Black Knight” (Prince Rilian) objects to Eustace’s comment about the Queen of Underland in *The Silver Chair*, by C.S. Lewis

“We fight in need, not in lust or rage. The Oath of Peace must not be compromised.”

—Lord Mhoram explains the guiding principle of the Lords of Revelstone in *Lord Foul’s Bane*, by Stephen Donaldson

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPLICATION

“Psychological Complication” really just means “motivation.” To turn a Psychological Complication into a plot hook, simply put the character into a situation in which achieving his goal comes into conflict with his personality traits. This is, by the way, the quick and easy formula for most fiction of the past thousand years. Hamlet’s goal is revenge. His Psychological Complication is *Needs To Be Sure He Is Doing The Right Thing*. The result is a pile of bodies on the stage at the end of the play.

Things become even more interesting when one character has two Psychological Complications that conflict. For example, suppose that a knight has *Code Of Chivalry*, but is also *Devoted To His Friends* or *Deeply In Love With The Queen*. What happens when his friends need help or he has a chance to be with the Queen, but doing so violates the tenets of chivalry? He has to decide what’s most important to him... or perhaps find a clever way out of the dilemma.

If a villain knows the heroes well enough, he can turn their Psychological Complications against them. If greed grips their hearts, he may simply bribe them to look the other way while his nefarious plot goes ahead. If one of the PCs fears rats, the Dark Lord can torture him by locking him in a rat-infested cell.

Even if overcoming the heroes’ Psychological Complications isn’t the main plot engine of the adventure, character traits can still distract PCs and create subplots. Again, simply create situations which set off the heroes’ Psychological Complications and enjoy the fun. Will the lecherous good guy interrupt the adventure to go wenching? Will the devoutly religious paladin continue to observe his dietary restrictions even when starvation threatens?

Heroes with conflicting Psychological Complications can create lots of juicy roleplaying opportunities, although at times this may go over the line into “constant intra-party bickering.” A scenario that challenges the heroes to find a solution all of them can accept is entertaining; a scenario in which someone’s character has to violate his beliefs leaves at least one player unhappy.

Naturally, people with similar desires or beliefs work together well. Dedicated agents of a king or temple may all share the *Patriotic* or *Devout* Psychological Limitations. A band of rebels would all have *Dedicated To Overthrowing The Usurper*. If the heroes are all in love with the same person, they work together when that person is in jeopardy, but at the same time try desperately to undercut and outshine each other.

RIVALRY

Gonfal, thus, remained at court through the length of a year, and lived uneventfully in the pagan Isles of Wonder. Gonfal sat unsplendidly snug while all his rivals rode at adventure in the meadows that are most fertile in magic and ascended the mountains that rise beyond plausibility in the climates most favorable to the unimaginable. But Gonfal’s sufficing consolation appeared to be that he sat, more and more often, with the Queen.

—Gonfal cleverly outdoes his rivals for the hand of the Queen by *not* going on quest in *The Silver Stallion*, by James Branch Cabell

Rivalries serve as a perennial source of distraction during adventures. A group of knights may all battle the King’s enemies together, but sometimes smiting the foe takes second place to outdoing the others to attract the attention of the lovely Lady Rhaine. This kind of distraction becomes a plot element if the heroes spend so much time sabotaging or one-upping each other that the bad guy gets away.

Building an adventure on a Rivalry usually means coming up with a plan the Rival has to embarrass or harm the heroes, and then letting them either counter it or get themselves out of trouble. More subtly, a Rival’s plot could involve the heroes in something bigger, something the Rival didn’t know about, so the two sides have to suspend their feud for a while until they defeat the greater menace. For an interesting change of pace, maybe two NPCs’ Rivalry creates a situation the PCs have to deal with — or get themselves out of the middle of.

Perhaps the best use of Rivalries is as a source of conflict and tension among the characters in a group. If the Rivals are both PCs, their dislike remains on display constantly. They may temper it with a grudging respect, or it may be a genuine dislike limited only by the fact that they’re on the same side. The Rivalry may draw the other characters into the conflict... or they may stand apart, amused or disgusted.

In some cases, you can use a Rivalry to get the characters together in the first place. Rivals keep tabs on each other, and if one goes off on a dangerous mission that offers the chance to win glory (or profit), the other has to tag along.

SOCIAL COMPLICATION

Social Complications can drive the plot, as a character from an oppressed background struggles for acceptance (or freedom), or someone with a secret tries to keep it. The heroes don’t necessarily even need to have the Complication themselves; they might, for example, fight to end slavery within the theocracy of Tarshem.



If the characters don't want to change the world, but simply have to live with a Social Complication, you can still use it as a story complication. How can a group of dwarves convince the human authorities a human committed a series of crimes? Obviously they need to get some ironclad evidence, and that's where Our Heroes come in. Sometimes a Social Complication can even help the PCs — getting downtrodden or outcast folk to talk becomes much easier when a character comes from the lower classes himself.

Within a party of heroes, Social Complications serve as a fertile source of interaction and conflict. For example, a non-human character may need to win the respect of his human comrades, and later convince them his people suffer real injustices that need correcting.

Social Complication, like Reputation or Hunted, is a natural way to draw the heroes together. Characters subject to the same persecution, or who have the same secret, come together for mutual protection. A duty to the same organization means superior officers can simply assign the characters to work together.

SUSCEPTIBILITY

The simplest way to use a Susceptibility as a plot hook is to put a character into an environment flooded with whatever he's Susceptible to, then create obstacles to make it hard for him to escape. Can he get away before he succumbs? The character in question could be a PC, or an NPC the heroes must rescue before time runs out. In the

course of a larger adventure, encounters involving a character's Susceptibility make good scenes or distraction.

UNLUCK

Using Unluck as a plot hook is difficult. Perhaps an NPC wants to find a way to "cure" his chronic bad fortune, and hires the party to accompany him on his quest (this can work even if no cure exists). Unluck works better as a distraction — accidents and misfortune plague the super-competent PCs despite their skills.

An Unlucky character in the party may well be a source of conflict (see the Biblical story of Jonah for an example). This may also hold true of the players as well as the characters — gamers may well start to resent it when all their cool plans fail because of one character's Complication.

VULNERABILITY

Vulnerabilities make poor plot hooks, since they don't lend themselves well to the kind of "burning fuse" situation mentioned under Susceptibility. Unless someone wants to find a cure for an artificial Vulnerability, they work better as an obstacle to overcome in play.

If a character's Vulnerability isn't well known, his comrades may interpret his reluctance when facing certain attacks as cowardice or treachery. On the other hand, the same situation holds the potential for real heroism — a fire elemental character braving the water to save his comrades, for instance.



THE FANTASY ENVIRONMENT

In many Fantasy stories, the environment plays as important a role as any NPC or enemy. The characters struggle to cross blazing deserts, hack their way through evilly overgrown jungles, wade through leech-infested swamps, and scale icy mountain peaks. Chapter Six of 6E2 already has extensive rules for environmental factors, including drowning, falling, dehydration, starvation, light, exposure, fires/lava, quicksand, and traps; this section has rules for other environmental threats and obstacles commonly encountered in Fantasy Hero games.

ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS

Besides the various environmental dangers discussed in Chapter Six of 6E2, some of the threats characters might encounter in Fantasy environments include:

CORRUPTION

In many Fantasy stories the power of magic, or at least of evil magic and those who wield it, is often shown to have a corrupting effect on the heroes or important NPCs. The most famous example, illustrated by the quote above, is how Tolkien's One Ring gradually overcomes the will of those near it, but many similar incidents occur throughout Fantasy literature.

In *HERO System* terms, corruption is easy to model as a Transform. All you have to do is decide on a "corruption rate" based on the strength of the corrupting item or spell (and possibly characters' proximity to it). Typically a Very Weak Corruption power does 1 point of Transform per Month (if not less); a Weak one, 1 point of Transform per Week; an Average one, 1 point of Transform per Day; a Strong one, 1 point of Transform per 6 Hours; and a Very Strong one 1 point of Transform per Hour — but of course the final decision is up to you as the GM.

A Corruption Transform is typically a Mental Transform (and possibly a Spirit Transform as well). The effect is to inflict upon the victim an appropriate Psychological Complication. Examples include "steal the corrupting item and never let anyone have it," "become evil," and "kill all your

friends," but the exact wording of the Complication depends on the item's nature. For example, a corruptive sword might inflict Psychological Complication: Loves To Fight, while a corruptive piece of jewelry makes the wearer Vain.

Sometimes a character already has a Psychological Complication that makes him prone to being corrupted. Typical examples include *Greedy*, *Casual Killer*, *Ambitious*, and *Ruthless*, but many others are possible. To represent this, the GM should reduce the character's BODY (or EGO) for purposes of being Transformed. This simulates the fact that he's already a few steps (or miles...) down the road to total corruption.

Once a character's been corrupted, the "heal back" condition for the Transform is typically to remain apart from the item or phenomenon. The healing occurs at the same rate as the corruption, thus effectively "Transforming back" the character to the way he was.

FEAR AND AWE

Terror overcame Pippin and Merry, and they threw themselves flat on the ground. Sam shrank to Frodo's side. Frodo was hardly less terrified than his companions ... but his terror was swallowed up in a sudden temptation to put on the Ring.

—the fear-power of the Nazgûl affect the hobbits in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

In Fantasy settings, some areas are so Evil or disturbing that they inflict fear on characters in them; similarly, many Evil creatures can inspire fear in people. On the other hand, some beings of power and might inspire awe instead. While awe is a standard Presence Attack in most situations, some special considerations apply to fear. In *HERO System* terms, there are three primary ways to create a fear effect.

The first, and by far the most common, is Drain PRE. Since PRE represents a character's bravery, confidence, bearing, and resistance to shock and intimidation, reducing it inspires fear in him and/or makes him more susceptible to feelings of fright. If appropriate, you should assume that

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"We cannot use the Ruling Ring.

That we now know too well. It belongs to Sauron and was made by him alone, and is altogether evil. Its strength, Boromir, is too great for anyone to wield at will, save only those who have already a great power of their own. But for them it holds an even deadlier peril. The very desire of it corrupts the heart. Consider Saruman."

—Elrond explains the corruptive power of the One Ring in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

the Drain PRE power automatically includes a Presence Attack saying “run away in fear!” or the like. The Presence Attack occurs after the Drain applies, and is resolved in the usual fashion against the character’s diminished PRE.

If a character or monster can inspire fear in anyone near him, you can buy this as a Drain PRE, Area Of Effect, Personal Immunity, No Range — anyone who enters the area suffers the effect, and the longer they remain within it, the more terrified they become. For a fear that virtually any character will feel, apply the *No Normal Defense Advantage* to the Drain PRE (the defense is the *Fearless Talent*, page 139).

Second, you could build a fear attack as Mind Control with the Limitation *Set Effect* (create fear; -1). Third, you could use Change Environment to create an effect that removes points of PRE, creating an effect similar to a small Drain PRE over a large area.

LIGHT

Fantasy characters frequently find themselves underground, in wilderness areas at night, inside ruined buildings, and in other places where they need light to move about safely — and perhaps to survive. There are five possible sources of artificial light in most Fantasy settings: candles; torches; lanterns; campfires (and similar large fires); and light-producing spells. See 6E2 152 for basic information about lighting sources; this section provides some additional details appropriate to Fantasy campaigns.

CANDLES

When lit, a candle burns for one hour; the user can snuff it and light it again if necessary, but it only burns for a total of one hour. Snuffing a candle takes a Half Phase Action; lighting one requires a Full Phase, unless it’s lit from an existing source of fire, in which case it takes a Zero Phase Action. If a character touches a candle flame to someone’s bare flesh, that person takes 0-1 (1d6-5) Killing Damage, but doing this this snuffs out the candle. A candle has 1 BODY, 0 PD/0 ED.

TORCHES

A torch is a large wooden stick, its end wrapped in cloth (pitch-soaked cloth, if possible) so that it burns brightly for a long time — typically one hour. The user can snuff it and light it again if necessary, but it only burns for a total of one hour. Snuffing a torch takes a Half Phase Action; lighting one requires a Full Phase, unless it’s lit from an existing source of fire, in which case it takes a Zero Phase Action.

A character can use a torch as an impromptu club doing HA +2d6 damage. If he touches the flame to someone’s bare flesh, that person takes ½d6 Killing Damage (but doing this snuffs out the torch). If the character deliberately hits a target with the burning end of the torch, it does both the HA and Killing Attack damage (this also extinguishes the torch). A torch has 2 BODY, 3 PD/ED.

LANTERNS

A lantern is a metal container with a reservoir of oil and a wick. It comes in two basic types. The standard, or *hooded*, lantern provides light for six hours (assuming a full supply of oil). The user can extinguish it (a Half Phase Action) and light it again (a Full Phase Action) if necessary, but it only burns for a total of six hours. Additionally, the user can “hood” it, keeping it lit but concealing the light (which eliminates the illumination but also keeps unfriendly eyes from seeing it).

Another type of lantern is the *bullseye* lantern. It’s similar to a hooded lantern, but it only opens on one side. The opposite side is highly polished on the inside so that as much of the light as possible reflects out of the opening. It functions identically to a hooded lantern otherwise.

Both types of lanterns have 2 BODY, 3 PD/3 ED. If someone breaks a lantern while it’s lit, it may ignite all the oil at once, doing 1d6 Killing Damage to everything in a 2m radius around itself. Any object that suffers BODY damage catches on fire and burns for another 1d6 Killing Damage; it takes the damage at the end of the next Segment unless someone douses the flames. Whether the oil ignites depends on how the lantern is broken and other factors; the GM decides, and may determine randomly if desired. (You can also use these rules if characters create impromptu “grenades” with their flasks of lantern oil.)

A character can use a lantern as an impromptu club or missile weapon; it does HA +1d6 damage if used HTH, and the thrower’s Normal Damage from STR if Thrown (to a total of 5d6). However, the lantern itself takes any damage it does.

CAMPFIRE OR HEARTH FIRE

An average-size campfire or hearth fire burns for three hours; the user can snuff it and light it again if necessary, but it only burns for a total of three hours. However, the user may add more fuel, thus increasing the burning time. For larger or smaller fires, the GM should alter the illumination and fuel requirements accordingly.

Characters can reduce the illumination radius of a campfire to one-quarter of normal by building it in a pit, or like methods. This makes it less likely other people (or monsters!) can see the campfire, but still allows the characters to cook dinner.

A burning piece of wood taken from a campfire functions as a torch, but only burns for about five minutes. Snuffing a campfire takes a Full Phase Action and involves dousing it with water or sand, kicking it apart, or the like. Lighting a campfire takes a Full Phase Action if the kindling and wood are already piled together, longer (1 Turn or more) if not.

A person thrown onto or into a campfire takes 1-2d6 Killing Damage per Phase (depending on how large and hot the fire is). He may or may not snuff the fire with his body, depending on the relative sizes of fire and person and similar factors. The GM decides, and may determine randomly if desired.





MAGICAL ILLUMINATION

The extent of magical illumination depends on how much Images effect the spellcaster buys to define it. Typically the illumination falls off at the same rate described above (it loses roughly half its effectiveness over its base radius in meters beyond the defined radius).

LIGHT AND STEALTH

If a character uses Stealth or Concealment to try to prevent someone else from seeing him while he's carrying a source of illumination through a darkened area, the person trying to perceive him receives a +5 "extremely high contrast" bonus to his Sight PER Rolls to see the character.

If a character tries to use Stealth to sneak through an illuminated area in an otherwise dark area, the people he's trying to sneak past receive a bonus to their Sight PER Rolls equal to the illumination bonus of the light source (+4 close-in, +3 the next step out, +2 the next step out, and +0 beyond that).

SEEING SOURCES OF LIGHT

People outside the effective radius of a source of light can still see that light; it just doesn't provide any effective illumination for them (it won't allow them to read, interfere with their Stealth rolls, or the like). The primary factor determining whether someone can see a source of light is whether they have an unobstructed Line Of Sight to it; tests have shown, for example, that in certain situations without other sources of light a human being can see a match struck up to fifty miles away! If necessary, the GM can allow a Sight PER Roll to determine if the observer has LOS to the light source or any part of its radius of illumination; don't forget the +5 "extremely high contrast" bonus.

LIGHT SUMMARY

Here's a summary of the illumination provided by light sources:

Candle: Full illumination for 1m; darkness penalty of -1 for 1m beyond that; darkness penalty of -2 for 2m beyond that; beyond 4m from the candle, no effect. Burns for one hour total.

Torch: Full illumination for 4m; darkness penalty of -1 for 4m beyond that; darkness penalty of -2 for 4m beyond that; beyond 12m from the torch, no effect. Burns for one hour total.

Lantern, Hooded: Full illumination for 2m; darkness penalty of -1 for 2m beyond that; darkness penalty of -2 for 2m beyond that; beyond 6m from the lantern, no effect. Burns for six hours total.

Lantern, Bullseye: Full illumination for 6m cone; darkness penalty of -1 for 6m cone beyond that; darkness penalty of -2 for 6m cone beyond that; beyond 18m cone from the lantern, no effect. Burns for six hours total.

Campfire: Full illumination for 8m; darkness penalty of -1 for 8m beyond that; darkness penalty of -2 for 8m beyond that; beyond 24m from the fire, no effect. Burns for three hours total.

TRAP DEGRADATION

The standard rules for traps in 6E2 and HSS don't factor in the passage of time, potential damage to the trap from environmental factors (rust, mold, rot, and the like), and similar factors. If that seems "unrealistic" to you, apply the following rules:

A trap has a default lifespan of 1 Year, plus one step down the Time Chart for every 2 points by which the trap's creator or installer made his Security Systems roll (after taking into account all penalties, of course). For every year (or larger time unit, for better traps) beyond the lifespan, reduce one of the following by one point: the trap's OCV; the trap's DCs of damage; the trap's penalty to Find; the trap's penalty to Disarm. (Reductions to Find and Disarm can lead to bonuses to Find or Disarm, after the reduction cancels out the penalty.) Alternately, in the place of one of the -1 penalties, the GM can impose an Activation Roll 15- on the Trigger, then reduce the Activation Roll by 1 as a -1 effect.

When a trap's OCV reaches 0, or it fails an Activation Roll, it no longer functions. When a trap loses all of its DCs, it may function, but it can't hurt victims (though it may still inconvenience them somehow).

Example: *The designers of the tomb of King Hapshar-Tef want to protect his remains and grave goods from robbers. They install a deadfall trap, using the best materials and most precise workmanship they can. They make their Security Systems roll by 6, so the trap has a lifespan of 1 Century (three steps below 1 Year on the Time Chart). Thus, for each century beyond one, the trap suffers one level of degradation.*

For example, after 500 years, the trap suffers four reductions in effectiveness. The trap uses the standard Deadfall writeup (OCV 11, damage 15d6 Normal, Find -3, Disarm -3). The GM decides it doesn't make sense for the damage to change. So, he reduces the OCV and Find by 1 each, and its Disarm by 2 (to 10, -2, and -1, respectively). The trap's now easier to avoid, locate, and disarm.

SECRET AND CONCEALED DOORS

Type Of Secrecy	Concealment Modifier
Poor quality	+1
Average quality	-0
Above Average quality	-3
High quality	-6
Very high quality	-9
Superb quality	-12

Alternately, if the GM prefers, he can require a Skill Versus Skill Contest to determine the outcome of an attempt to find a secret or concealed door. A Poor door has an 8- roll, and an Average one an 11- roll; every step down the table below Average adds +3 to the roll.

TRAPS

Fantasy characters, particularly those in dungeon-delving- or thief-oriented campaigns, frequently encounter all sorts of traps. Tomb designers include traps to protect the corpse and grave-goods of the deceased. Hunters dig concealed pits or set up nets to snare game (or unwary forest intruders). Greedy merchants install poisoned pins or darts in their chests of gold and gems to slay thieves. And a clever GM can certainly come up with traps far more fiendish than those....

6E2 155-56 has some basic information on traps in the *HERO System*. For more detailed rules, including numerous example Fantasy-era traps, see HSS 268-275.

In Fantasy Hero, characters may also have the ability to set up traps with magic. Either the spells themselves constitute magical traps (such as guardian glyphs that activate an effect when viewed or read), or the wizard casts the spell with the *Trigger Advantage* to turn it into a trap. A spellcaster could use virtually any effect for a trap, though as with mundane traps, Entangle and RKA are the most common candidates. See page 125 regarding Security Systems and magical traps.

SECRET AND CONCEALED DOORS

In addition to traps, many Fantasy settings, such as castles and underground dungeons, have secret or concealed doors and compartments. To find a secret or concealed door, a character must locate it by making a Concealment roll at a penalty defined by the skill with which the door was constructed and hidden (see accompanying sidebar).

If a character finds a secret or concealed door, he knows where it is, but that doesn't necessarily mean he knows how to open it. Many secret or concealed doors have special levers or other mechanisms governing how they work. The GM may allow a character to make a Security Systems roll at the same penalty for finding the door to find and activate the opening mechanism (the character would have to make further rolls to find and disarm any traps in the mechanism). (In some cases the GM may prefer for characters to use Lockpicking instead.) If a secret or concealed door or compartment has a trap located within or behind it, a character must first locate the door or compartment before he can try to detect and disarm the trap.

"One thing is certain: this house conceals — or did conceal — some deadly trap. Some guardian. Some giant beast, say. Or perhaps the very stones distill a poison. Perhaps hidden springs release sword blades which stab out through cracks in the walls and then return."

—the Gray Mouser discusses the possibility of traps in Urgaan of Angarngr's treasure-house in "The Jewels In The Forest," by Fritz Leiber



THE UNDERGROUND ENVIRONMENT

Many Fantasy adventures take place in underground areas, such as cavern complexes, delved dungeons, and sub-surface cities. Underground environments present many dangers and obstacles for characters to overcome.

LIGHT

Since there's no sun or moon underground, characters need artificial sources of light or the ability to see in pitch-black darkness if they want to move around freely. See above regarding light sources.

AIR

The air in underground environments can cause several problems.

THIN OR INSUFFICIENT AIR

First, there may not be enough of it. A human (or member of a similar sentient race) consumes air at the rate of 28 cubic meters per 24 hours when at rest, and at twice that rate when exerting himself (such as if fighting, walking, or climbing). If there's half or less of that amount of air available, the air is "thin," making it harder for characters to breathe (the same can apply at high elevations, such as mountaintops). This makes any activity, even just walking around slowly, cost END, as indicated by the accompanying table. Characters with Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Thin Air) don't suffer these penalties; until there's no air left to breathe at all, they can breathe normally and do not spend END per Turn or extra END for activities.

In most cases, you can assume that air flowing into the underground environment from ventilation shafts, other caverns, surface openings, and the like eliminates thin air problems. But in the case of a cave-in or other emergencies, characters may soon find themselves running out of air...

POISONOUS AIR

Second, some underground air may contain sulphurous fumes or other poisonous gases. You can treat this as an RKA NND or Drain STUN NND, with the appropriate Life Support (Immunity) as the defense. The damage can accumulate once per Hour, per Minute, per Turn, per Segment, or whatever other time period you want based on the desired lethality of the situation.

THIN AIR TABLE

Percent Of Air	END Cost
25-50%	1 END per Turn; END-using activities cost x2 END
10-24%	2 END per Turn; END-using activities cost x3 END
1-9%	3 END per Turn; END-using activities cost x4 END
0%	Characters cannot breathe and are "drowning" (see 6E2 130)

CAVE-INS

One of the most terrifying dangers characters encounter underground is the possibility of a cave-in or collapse. Not only could falling rock crush them, it could cut off their route back to the surface, leading to a slow death by suffocation or starvation.

Cave-ins occur rarely; most underground ceilings have enough strength to hold up the weight of the stone above them, or they'd have collapsed long ago. But an earthquake, volcanic activity, or damage to a ceiling (such as from an Area Of Effect attack spell) may cause a cave-in. Weak ceilings could collapse if exposed to any sort of stress (even the vibration of having people walk beneath them).

Characters with a light source can make a roll with an appropriate Skill — such as Survival (Underground), PS: Spelunking, PS: Miner, or PS: Mason — to examine a ceiling to determine if it poses a danger of collapse. The Range Modifier applies to the roll, since it's hard to examine stone ceilings without getting close to them. If the roll succeeds, the character can determine if a cave-in might occur (and if so, how likely a cave-in is, expressed as a roll — "There's about a 13- chance of a cave-in if the ceiling experiences any stress at all", "Just one person walking in this chamber will cause a cave-in on an 11-").

Even a firm ceiling may collapse if the characters damage it. Treat the ceiling as a wall with 5 PD/10 ED, 10 BODY (you can increase the PD/ED or BODY if appropriate to represent braces, beams, clay instead of stone, stronger stone, or the like). If 25% or more of the area of the ceiling take at least 1 BODY of damage, a cave-in may occur. The chance is 8- if the average BODY taken by the area is 1, with the roll increasing by 1 for each +1 average BODY. For each additional 25% of the area that suffer damage (50%, 75%, 100%), increase the roll by 2. Thus, if 75% of the area of a ceiling take 1 BODY damage on the average, a cave-in occurs on a 12-; if they take 3 BODY damage on the average, the chance rises to 14-.

The GM determines the size of an area that caves in. If he wants to do so randomly, roll 4½d6; the ceiling caves in over a radius of that many meters.

A character caught beneath a cave-in takes 3d6 of dice of Normal Damage (*i.e.*, 3-18d6). Additionally, he's pinned with a STR equal to the number of dice rolled times five (treat this the same as being Entangled; the Entangle has PD5/ED 10 and as many BODY as the GM deems appropriate given the size of the cave-in). Trapped characters may suffocate or starve to death before help can reach them.

NARROW PASSAGEWAYS

Characters negotiating underground passages may find some too narrow to fit through without using Contortionist. The accompanying Narrow Spaces Table lists the modifier to any attempt to fit into a small space, with example small spaces based on everyday objects. The table assumes the

character takes off all, or nearly all, of his equipment; if he keeps his armor and other equipment on, use the size of himself plus his equipment to determine the spaces he can fit through.

If a character with Contortionist is in a collapsing cavern or other structure (such as a building or mineshaft), he may use Contortionist to find and fit into a protected area between portions of collapsing debris (for example, a pocket of air created by two beams which collapse against each other and prop up some other debris). You decide whether the character takes any damage while getting into this “safe zone,” and what modifiers, if any, apply to his Contortionist roll.

Similarly, characters can use Contortionist to reach an area or object most persons cannot. A character could fit his arm through a tiny grating to reach something on the other side, for example. The GM determines what modifiers to apply; they usually range from +0 to -3.

NARROW SPACES TABLE

Size Of Area	Modifier	Example
91+% of character's size	+1	Small wardrobe
75-90% of character's size	+0	Steamer trunk, large
65-75% of character's size	-1	Steamer trunk, average/small
50-64% of character's size	-2	Kitchen cabinet, average
40-49% of character's size	-4	Kitchen cabinet, small
33-40% of character's size	-8	Jailbars
Smaller than 33% of character's size	Impossible	

UNDERGROUND WATER

Water is a common feature of some underground environments (though it's rare in others, leading to possible dehydration dangers). You should keep several things in mind when characters encounter underground waterways.

First, water underground is usually extremely cold. The sun can't reach it to warm it; it's only warm if it's near a volcanic vent or other such source of heat. Characters who fall into or try to swim an underground waterway may suffer Temperature effects (see 6E2 145-46), or even take NND damage (the defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: Intense Cold]) until they pass out and then die.

Second, underground water may or may not be navigable. It often flows through caverns too low-ceilinged for characters to fit through in a boat or raft, and may flow downward so precipitously that water travel becomes impossible. Characters who venture onto underground rivers and lakes should row warily.

WALLS AND DOORS

Fantasy characters often have to bash down doors and smash through walls. Here are some rules for doing so.

DOORS

The accompanying Door Table provides PD/ED and BODY figures for typical types of doors encountered in Fantasy adventures. Characters can get through doors in several ways: picking the lock (see page 120); bashing them open; cutting them down; or attacking the hinges.

Bashing a door open means smashing it hard enough to break the lock, the jamb, and/or the hinges. Usually the character kicks the door hard near the lock, runs into it and smashes it with his shoulder, or uses a small object as a sort of battering ram. In game terms, the character has to do enough BODY damage to cut through the door (see below) to bash it down, but the damage inflicted doesn't actually destroy the door — it remains basically intact, so the character can repair it with a little work.

Cutting through a door involves chopping it open or smashing it into pieces — in other words, inflicting all, or nearly all, of its BODY in damage. Usually characters do this with weapons. Chopping weapons (axes, picks) and bashing weapons (clubs, maces, hammers) do full damage against doors. Slashing weapons (swords, daggers) do half damage (at most). Piercing weapons (spears, arrows) do one-quarter damage (at most). You determine the exact effect of any particular attack on a door, taking both realistic and dramatic considerations into account.

In some cases, characters can attack a door's hinges — smash them off, cut them, or remove their pins. Compared to bashing and cutting, both of which make a lot of noise, attacking the hinges tends to be quiet, and it leaves the door itself completely intact. It takes time, though — usually at least 1 Minute per hinge, if not more. However, most castle and dungeon designers aren't foolish enough to leave the hinges where attackers can reach them (they either put them on the defended side of the door, or they cunningly conceal them within the wall the door connects to) Additionally, some forms of doors turn on pivots or open by sliding, and so have no hinges at all.

WALLS

You can use the Walls rules and Walls Table on UBA 54-56, and the gates rules on UBA 58-59, to determine the PD/ED and BODY of walls, portculli, and the like, though you may need to adjust the figures slightly (particularly BODY) for interior walls in aboveground structures. If appropriate, apply the rules about chopping, slashing, and piercing weapons to attacks on walls; many personal weapons may have no significant effect whatsoever on heavy walls.



FANTASY OBJECTS TABLE

See the *Fantasy Hero Price List*, page 174, for the PD/ED and BODY of many other objects.

Object	PD	ED	BODY	Notes
Altar	5	7	6	
Anvil	9	9	10	
Bench, Wooden				
Small	3	2	2	
Medium	3	2	3	
Large	3	2	4	
Candelabra	4	5	2	
Chain, iron (2m long)	5	5	4	
Chandelier				
Wooden	3	3	6	
Metal	5	5	5	
Iron Maiden	4	4	8	
Pedestal/Dais				
Small	5	10	6	
Medium	5	10	10	
Large	5	10	15	
Pillar/Column, Stone	5	10	12	Up to 6m tall; add +2 BODY/+2m of height
Rack	4	4	11	
Sconce	4	4	2	
Skull	2	2	1	Human-sized; add +/-1 BODY per +/-1 Size category (minimum of 1 BODY)
Statue				Human-sized; add +/-3 BODY per +/-1 Size category (minimum of 1 BODY)
Clay	2	2	6	
Wooden	4	3	7	
Stone	5	10	8	
Metal	8	12	9	
Table, Wooden				
Small	3	2	4	
Medium	3	2	5	
Large	3	2	6	
Tapestry				
Small	1	1	6	
Medium	1	1	9	
Large	1	1	12	
Throne				
Wooden	4	3	4	
Stone	5	10	8	

DOOR TABLE

Type Of Door	PD	ED	BODY
Bone/Ivory	4	5	2
Glass, Enchanted	5	5	2
Ice, Enchanted	5	4	2
Wood			
Light	3	3	3
Average	4	4	4
Strong	5	5	5
Metal-Banded	+1	+1	+1
Stone			
Rough	5	10	6
Worked	6	10	6
Metal-Banded	+1	+1	+1
Metal			
Bronze/Brass/Copper	10	15	10
Iron/Steel	13	20	12
Adamant/Enchanted	16	24	14

The BODY figures assume an average-sized door that's approximately 35mm (about two inches) thick, about 2m tall, and about 1m wide. For smaller or larger doors, alter the BODY as needed; see the Walls Table on UBA 55 for more information and guidelines.

VILLAINS AND NPCs



One of the most important aspects of any scenario is the villain(s) — the adversaries and enemies the characters encounter or pursue during the course of the game. Closely related to the villain are the NPCs: other characters the PCs encounter who may be helpful, hostile, or annoying. A good villain or NPC can make a lackluster scenario enjoyable, and a poor one can diminish the impact of an otherwise wonderful adventure.

VILLAINS

When you think of Fantasy, often you think of the villains as much as you do the heroes — characters like Sauron, Theleb Kàrna, the White Witch, Lord Foul, Edmund Loris, Yyrkoon, Saruman, the Lannister family, and the innumerable evil priests fought by Conan and his ilk. A good villain makes a good story. The reader may not care much about the heroes, but everybody loves to root against a good villain. This isn't limited to Fantasy: Lucifer in Milton's *Paradise Lost* is by far the most striking character in the whole epic poem.

In a Fantasy Hero game, the PCs' adversary often drives the plot, and consequently should be more than just some game stats on a sheet. What makes a good villain? What makes a good Fantasy villain?

This was Modavna Moor, a place of history, a tract which had borne the tread of many feet and absorbed much blood. At one famous slaughtering, Golickan Kodek the Conqueror had herded here the populations of two great cities, G'Vasan and Bautiku, constricted them in a circle three miles across, gradually pushed them tighter, tighter, tighter, panicked them toward the center with his flapping-armed sub-human cavalry, until at last he had achieved a gigantic squirming mound, half a thousand feet high, a pyramid of screaming flesh. Golickan Kodek mused ten minutes at his monument, then turned and rode his bounding mount back to the land of Laidenur from whence he had come.

—an act of villainy is described in “T’sais,” by Jack Vance

VILLAIN QUALITIES

“Our enemies do use the innocent, Rhysem. Don’t think they don’t,” Javan went on. “It doesn’t matter whether those enemies are human or Deryni. Evil men have no qualms about sacrificing anything and anyone who will serve their purpose, whether it’s good priests like Humphrey and Faelan or even more helpless victims — women and children, even infants.”

—bitter experience has made King Javan wise beyond his age in *King Javan’s Year*, by Katherine Kurtz

In Fantasy (and other genres, for that matter), good villains have certain qualities that set them apart.

COMPETENCE

The best villains in fiction are competent, often extraordinary in their abilities. They are powerful, clever, and subtle; overcoming them is a worthwhile challenge for the good guys. Some, such as Sauron, may effectively be gods, with more power than any single PC can ever hope to match.

A villain who isn't competent isn't very interesting. It hardly seems fair for the heroes to take on somebody weaker than themselves. Note, however, that “power” here doesn't necessarily mean sheer muscle or available firepower. A weak but clever opponent who can maneuver the heroes into a situation where they can't use their superior abilities is just as powerful as one who can bat them aside with casual ease.

Exactly how powerful the villain is depends on the campaign's scale and tone, the abilities of the PCs, and the role you intend for the villain. Role is perhaps most important. What part will the villain play in the campaign? Is he the Big Bad Guy behind all the heroes' problems? In that case he must be powerful indeed, with underlings and henchmen who can each serve as the main villain of adventures themselves. If he's one of those henchmen, then the villain should be only slightly more powerful than the heroes. If he's only a one-shot opponent in a casual encounter, he can be the same level or even weaker than the PCs.

“Where hides evil, then, in my kingdom?”

“Always where you never expect it.”

—Merlin's words dismay King Arthur in the movie *Excalibur*





MENACE

“[E]vil spreads like ink in water, staining everything it touches.”

—Master Oakhollow explains the nature of evil to Paksenarrion in *Oath Of Gold*, by Elizabeth Moon

Just being powerful doesn't make a good villain. Blue whales are immensely powerful animals, but nobody's afraid of them because they're shy and don't harm humans. A villain requires a credible menace: the heroes must believe the villain is not only able, but willing, to cause harm.

The best way to create this sense of menace is to give the villain the chance to demonstrate his power without directly harming the PCs. This may involve nothing more than a visible demonstration of the villain's power — such as giving the characters a glimpse of his massed hordes of ogre warriors — or you could have him take action against someone other than the PCs. For example, he could harm a character's DNPC, kill a favorite NPC, destroy a large chunk of a major city, or reveal information to the characters that makes it plain he could attack them at any time.

SYMPATHY

The best villains have a streak of humanity or at least some admirable traits. They may be people the heroes might have been friends with in other circumstances, or at least enemies they can maintain a grudging respect for. Otherwise, they're just two-dimensional cutouts; it's not hard to hate, or oppose, someone who's unlikeable and villainous in all aspects.

Examples of “admirable” villains abound in fiction. Saruman is a despicable traitor, but right up to the end he could reform and use his powers to help the Free Peoples of Middle-earth, if he so chose. Tyrion Lannister is an evil schemer, but he genuinely loves his mistress Shae and occasionally grants mercy to his enemies. King Casmir of Lyonesse is ruthless and ambitious, but offers a high degree of security and safety to most of his subjects.

MOTIVATION

Hardly anyone gets up in the morning and says “How can I be evil today?” Even the worst villains justify their own actions to themselves. The motives of villains are the same as those of most people: they want things (desire); they fear things (fear); and they believe things (conviction).

Wanting something is easy to understand. Everyone wants something. Villains may be motivated by a desire for wealth, lust for the opposite sex, a simple urge to survive, or even love for another person or being. Sometimes a villain's desires aren't quite normal — twisted sexual urges, mad plans to conquer the world, or the obsessive pursuit of some object. But other villains can have quite prosaic desires, such as revenge.

FANTASY HERO PLOT HOOKS

Here are a few Fantasy Hero plot hooks, organized by villain motivation.

DESIRE

- A wizard sends the PCs to the Great Dismal Swamp in search of the fabled black lotus so he can brew an immortality serum.
- A deposed king hires the PCs to help him regain his throne.
- A ruthless emperor plans his next conquest.
- A greedy dragon wants to enlarge the size of its hoard.
- A PC wizard, eager to learn the secrets contained within a strange, evil-looking book he and his comrades found, dares to open the book and read it.
- The queen of the Deep Elves sends spies to the surface world in anticipation of an invasion of the Sunlit Lands.
- A fanatic priest tries to suppress all religions but the worship of his god.
- An evil, intelligent, enchanted sword dupes people into wielding it so it can consume the lives and souls of humans.

FEAR

- Terrified of a barbarian invasion, the inhabitants of a land migrate into another realm.
- A wizard tries to cast a mighty spell to seal off the Infernal Realms so no one can ever summon demons again.
- Concerned that one of his brothers will try to overthrow him and steal his throne, a paranoid king begins hunting down and slaughtering all of his male relatives.

- A Mages' Guild tries to cover up the fact that one of its "experiments" got loose and is responsible for the current wave of bloody murders sweeping the city.
- Word reaches the city that plague has struck a nearby kingdom; soon mobs start killing any strangers who dare to show their faces on the streets.
- Fearful that wizards will use their magic to take over the realm, a general tries to persuade the king to have them all slain.
- Concerned about recent business losses and the possibility of bankruptcy, an unscrupulous merchant hires assassins to dispose of his competitors.
- Blaming the recent poor harvests on "blights" and "curses," villagers burn anyone who looks like a witch.

CONVICTION

- A bishop leads a crusade against "heretics."
- A conquered race rises up against the ruling empire.
- A slave escapes with some of his comrades and launches an anti-slavery revolt.
- The dwarves decide all other races are disorganized and foolish, and that they should be ruled by the strong hand of the dwarven king.
- Believing his kingdom must prepare for an inevitable war, a king imposes harsh taxes and work requirements on all citizens.
- A wizard believes he can use magic to make everyone happy and content.
- A king employs spies and assassins to destabilize another kingdom so he can conquer it, since he would treat that kingdom's subjects better than their current king does.
- A thief steals from the rich and gives to the poor.

Fear is another powerful motive. Most living things fear death, most humans fear poverty and hardship, a ruler might fear losing power, a bigot fears and hates members of another race, an official in a tyrannical regime might fear the consequences of failure. Even the most powerful villain can still have fears: Sauron fears someone might recover the One Ring and use it against him, and his one-time master Morgoth feared the other Valar would move against him. Often people (not just villains) take great risks to avoid or overcome the things they fear; as long as the consequences are not as bad (in their opinion) as the thing they fear, it's a rational choice.

Finally, most humans have beliefs about right and wrong. Even villains do, although their beliefs may not match everyone else's. People often endure great danger and make tremendous sacrifices in the name of what they believe in; villains may do the same. In Fantasy fiction, for example, many evil priests commit heinous acts out of sincere (albeit fanatical) religious belief.

These three motives can feed on and strengthen one another. A villain who's greedy for wealth may also fear losing his property and sources of income, and may believe he's doing the right thing by stimulating economic growth and providing employment.

The motives for villains are not necessarily different from those of heroes. A thief like the Gray Mouser or Moonglum may be greedy, and a rightful king like Kelson of Gwynedd may desire power (or more power than he already has). What separates heroes from villains is how they try to achieve their goals. Bringing unity and peace to the realm is a noble goal. Exterminating all other races is not a heroic way to accomplish it.

In some campaigns, the distinction between the heroes' motives and those of the villains is all but invisible. Some Swords And Sorcery warriors may use harsh, brutal methods to accomplish their goals, and many rogues are villains by the standards of their society.

“Always after a defeat and a respite, the Shadow takes another shape and grows again.”

“I wish it need not have happened in my time,” said Frodo.

“So do I,” said Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.”

—Gandalf explains that evil never entirely dies in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

VILLAIN ARCHETYPES

Over the years, Fantasy stories and films have developed a set of standard villainous archetypes that turn up again and again. Gamemasters looking for inspiration can employ them as is, or use them as the basis to create variations or combinations.

THE CORRUPTED HERO

“He was once a white wizard and he fell into dark ways, which makes him particularly malicious ... and he is now accounted to be one of the three most powerful, possibly the most powerful, of all the wizards in all the kingdoms of all the Earths.”

—Mildin warns Thelinde of the evil of the wizard Jelerak in *Dilvish, The Damned*, by Roger Zelazny

Maybe an Evil Wizard has taken control of his mind, or a shapeshifting monster has taken his place. Perhaps he thinks he deserves more power or wealth than he has, or maybe he just looks better in black. Being a hero is hard work, and even the best may give up and decide that if you can't beat the hordes of Evil, you may as well join 'em. Sometimes even PCs turn to the wrong side.

Useful Features: The Corrupted Hero has one significant advantage: he knows what the good guys are likely to try, and can anticipate and frustrate them. If they have some sort of unique spells or powers, he can counter them. A Corrupted Hero may well have a personal connection to the PCs, making for good roleplaying opportunities.

Potential Problems: An ex-PC turned villain could simply be too effective as an enemy — he knows the heroes, knows their weaknesses and secrets, and if played properly could do serious damage. This may turn the campaign into a vendetta.

Variations: Ex-heroes are often Honorable Enemies, or may have simply turned Mercenary. Whipping off the Tyrant's mask to reveal a familiar face can be a stunning climax to the campaign. Maybe the Corrupted Hero didn't go bad at all — either he's operating under deep cover, ready to switch sides again at the critical moment; or maybe he was bad to the bone all along and only pretended to support the heroes' cause in the first place.

“I kill where I wish and none dare resist. I laid low the warriors of old and their like is not in the world today. Then I was but young and tender. Now I am old and strong, strong, strong, Thief in the Shadows!” he gloated. “My armor is like tenfold shields, my teeth are swords, my claws spears, the shock of my tail a thunderbolt, my wings a hurricane, and my breath death!”

—Smaug brags to Bilbo in *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

THE DARK LORD

“I wonder if this is a contrivance of the Enemy,” said Boromir. “They say in my land that he can govern the storms in the Mountains of Shadow that stand upon the borders of Mordor. He has strange powers and many allies.”

“His arm has grown long indeed,” said Gimli, “if he can draw snow down from the North to trouble us here three hundred leagues away.”

“His arm has grown long,” said Gandalf.

—Sauron's power disturbs our heroes in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Popular in Epic Fantasy stories in particular, the Dark Lord is a supremely powerful force for evil who threatens the entire world. Often a fallen god (or an evil wizard so mighty that he approaches godhood), the Dark Lord is evil through and through, usually with no redeeming qualities.

Useful Features: The Dark Lord offers several advantages as a villain. First, he's enormously powerful, so much so that the PCs must team up and recruit allies if they want to defeat him. Second, he's a big, obvious target; this helps keep the PCs motivated to defeat him. Third, he can be Evil for Evil's sake; you don't have to worry too much about making him a “realistic” villain.

Potential Problems: If he's too overwhelmingly powerful, the PCs may conclude they have no chance of defeating him and give up. His “two-dimensional” nature could turn him into more of a caricature than a villain to be feared.

Variations: Some Dark Lords are also Undead Masters or demonic beings. Others may be far less powerful than they seem; they just put on a good show.

THE DRAGON

In the minds of many Fantasy gamers, nothing represents the “ultimate challenge” like a dragon. Enormous, strong, taloned, fanged, winged, and possessing fiery breath, a dragon can take on an entire party of adventurers and destroy it. Most dragons are clever enough to plan all sorts of surprises for people who dare to attack them.

Useful Features: Dragons can attack from land and air, and many are at home in the water as well, giving them a lot of tactical options and ways to escape if things go wrong. Their attacks have enough power to make even the most jaded PCs respect and fear them. The logistics of gathering up and carrying away a defeated dragon's hoard may constitute an adventure in itself!

Potential Problems: As a single foe, the dragon can be defeated by the multiple attacks of a group of adventurers more quickly than you'd like. Adventurers may already know about dragons' weak spots and try to exploit them from the beginning of the fight. The dragon's hoard may give the characters so much money and magic that they become nigh-unstoppable. The dragon's mighty attacks may slay too many PCs.

Variations: Some dragons are also mighty sorcerers, able to cast spells as well as any PC, and perhaps even use enchanted items. A few are kind-hearted and noble, and may walk among people in human form. Some breath acid, poison spittle, sulphurous gas, or other substances than fire.

THE ENEMY RACE

And Aragorn looked on the slain, and he said, "Here lie many that are not folk of Mordor. Some are from the North, from the Misty Mountains, if I know anything of Orcs and their kinds. And here are others strange to me. Their gear is not after the manner of Orcs at all!"

There were four goblin-soldiers of greater stature, swart, slant-eyed, with thick legs and large hands. They were armed with short broad-bladed swords, not with the curved scimitars usual with Orcs, and they had bows of yew, in length and shape like the bows of Men.

—Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas ponder the different types of Orcs in *The Two Towers*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

In any setting with a large ongoing conflict, or the potential for conflict, you can designate one race, family, or other group as the "bad guys." Fictional examples include the orcs of Middle-earth, the Lannisters of the *Song Of Ice And Fire* series, the ur-viles of the Land, and the jotuns of Norse myth; the Mongols might serve as an example from history. When these guys show up, the heroes know who to fight.

Useful Features: Enemy races or kingdoms have lots of resources and minions to throw at the heroes, making them versatile, powerful opponents. Once you introduce them, you can use them again and again, saving you the trouble of creating new enemies. Even if the heroes kill off or capture one leader, you've got an endless supply of replacements to put on the black hat. Moral issues become simple when the players know who the bad guys are.

Potential Problems: Mowing down an endless series of orcs becomes boring after a while, and the sheer scale and resilience of the bad guys may make the heroes wonder if they're really accomplishing anything. The idea of an "evil race" may have racist overtones, which could either offend players or bring out their less admirable qualities.

Variations: Two kingdoms might engage in a "cold war," with lots of spies, assassination, and other indirect forms of conflict; this requires the PCs to use subtle means to defeat the enemy so they don't start a real war. Giving the villains understandable motives goes a long way toward negating the problem of racism; so does the fact that in most Fantasy worlds, Evil is a definable, palpable quality people (or entire races) can choose to side with.

THE EVIL WIZARD (PRIEST)

At her right sat a tall man whose dark robes hung like a shroud on his wasted frame. His face was skull-like, his large, dark eyes rimmed in red. His bony hands poised like pale spiders on the arms of his chair, and the flesh of them was as gray and leprous as the flesh of his corpse's face.

This was Bellenzor, the Blightbringer, whose magic struck down men and animals and all things that grow, who left in his silent wake disease and famine and death. Next to him sat Hane, dark-browed and frowning. Hane's touch shriveled healthy limbs and bodies to dry husks. Beside Hane was Jashoone of the Frost and Flame, fiery-haired and icy-eyed and ageless, her hands covered with the cold fire of precious stones, rubies burning on the fingers of her left hand, diamonds glinting on the fingers of her right. At her side, in a chair three times the size of any other in the room, was a great, bloated mountain of fat. He was known as Ulowadjaa, the Twister of Bones. His gleaming, hairless head seemed to float on billowing collars of flesh; his swarthy face was creased in a broad, empty smile, but his eyes, under thick tangles of brow, were alert and busy.

—a description of just a few of the evil wizards ranged against Ambescand in *Greymantle*, by John Morressy

Perhaps the most common stock villain in Fantasy, the Evil Wizard (or his close cousin, the Evil Priest) uses his magic powers to bend others to his will, slay entire armies, conjure hordes of demons, and attack the heroes with foul monsters.

Useful Features: An Evil Wizard not only has enough power to take on the heroes by himself, he makes an excellent puppetmaster. He could be the "man behind the curtain" for every adversary the PCs face during the campaign! An Evil Priest may have the blessings of one or more gods who keep him supplied with power and minions as necessary.

Potential Problems: A powerful spellcaster pitted against characters with little ability to resist magic may be too strong to overcome. Conversely, if the spellcaster's powers aren't effective in a confrontation, the PCs can simply chop his head off or run him through (the fate of many Evil Wizards in *Swords And Sorcery* tales).

Variations: If an Enemy Race has mystic powers, it may be a nearly unstoppable (and very sinister) foe. Sorcerer-kings can literally rule the world by force of will, turning captured enemies into loyal servants.



THE HONORABLE ENEMY

Although he's a villain, he can still be a gentleman. Honorable enemies respect the heroes as worthy opponents even as they try to foil or kill them. Historical examples are common: even amid the carnage of World War I, pilots sometimes dropped flowers over enemy airfields when an ace was killed.

Useful Features: An Honorable Enemy may well grant mercy to defeated opponents, letting them run away to fight another day. When confronted with some genuine evil, an Honorable Enemy could join forces temporarily with his adversaries in the name of common decency. An Honorable Enemy who meets his foes on neutral territory could form friendships or even romantic connections — catnip for dedicated roleplayers.

Potential Problems: It's difficult to make a villain ruthless enough to pose a genuine threat and still keep him likeable. Players sometimes hold grudges against anyone who thwarts them, no matter how honorable. They can also be very Machiavellian, using the Honorable Enemy's own code of honor against him.

Variations: A villain may only pretend to be honorable, abandoning his facade when things get desperate (or when he thinks he's won). A really successful Honorable Enemy can reach Tyrant or Dark Lord rank. Heroes who violate the code of conduct an Honorable Enemy follows may discover he now views them as unworthy opponents — vermin to be destroyed.

THE MERCENARY

The flip side of an Honorable Enemy is the Mercenary. He serves the opposition simply because they pay him, and if Good offers a better price than Evil, he'll happily change sides. Many assassins and bounty hunters fit this archetype.

Useful Features: It may reassure slightly shady heroes to find a foe with motives similar to their own. A Mercenary with highly marketable skills could wind up serving different master villains, turning up against the heroes when they least expect him. Characters can bribe mercenaries in a pinch, and dire events can motivate a Mercenary to join forces with the PCs against some menace which threatens the free enjoyment of their wealth. Mercenary villains usually cut and run when the situation looks hopeless.

Potential Problems: The major difficulty with a Mercenary villain is that sufficiently wealthy heroes can just buy them off; GMs who don't like this should beware (or institute a "Code of the Mercenary" system whereby honorable Mercenaries don't abandon a contract until they satisfy its terms). Unless the Mercenary is powerful, or protected by a heavy helping of Combat Luck or GM's fiat, keeping him alive to bedevil the PCs again and again may prove difficult.

Variations: To make a Mercenary more sympathetic, perhaps his greed has a noble purpose — supporting a loved one, acting as a Robin Hood, or the like. To make him less attractive, give him depraved appetites or a sadistic streak. Since players may expect a Mercenary to redeem himself, the GM can throw them a curve by having him decide to put aside his materialistic goals and support the Tyrant or the Dark Lord!

THE PUPPET

A Puppet is a villain controlled by another. The fact that he's controlled may be common knowledge, or a deep secret revealed only at the climax. Mundane puppets are people like a weak ruler dominated by his shrewd minister, or a politician who owes favors to the Thieves' Guild. Fantasy also allows for puppets who really *are* puppets — magically controlled by Evil Wizards, or replaced by wicked shapeshifters.

Useful Features: If nobody knows someone else controls the Puppet, the heroes may struggle to defeat their ultimate enemy, only to discover he's a hapless victim. If the Puppeteer is a weak-willed incompetent, the heroes have to cope with the problem that removing the evil councillor leaves the Puppet in charge by himself. And of course, a sufficiently powerful Puppeteer may decide the heroes themselves make good Puppets.

Potential Problems: Trigger-happy heroes may not let their opponent survive long enough to reveal that he's a Puppet. Mundane Puppets tend to be weak personalities, making them kind of boring as enemies.

Variations: A really shrewd villain may only pretend to be a Puppet, so that when things go bad he can blame his Puppeteer. In a Machiavellian campaign, there could be several layers of Puppeteers, each pulling the strings of those below him. A Corrupt Hero may turn out to be a Puppet.

THE TYRANT

A Tyrant is a powerful ruler who uses his position to oppress his subjects, victimize the weak, and perhaps establish an empire. You can draw on a depressingly long list of historical examples. Notable fictional ones include usurpers of the Deryni Interregnum in Katherine Kurtz's novels, King Casimir of Lyonesse, and most of the emperors of Melniboné.

Tyrants command vast armies and fleets, but tend to remain in their heavily fortified castles until the final battle with the heroes. The main difference between an Enemy Race and the forces of a Tyrant is that the Tyrant holds his empire together by force of will and personality. Without the top man, the heroes and their allies can easily mop up the Tyrant's legions — in fact, the Tyrant's men may convert to the right side with a little talking-to.

Useful Features: Giving evil a face and a name solves the problem of how to defeat an entire empire — cut off the head and the body dies. A colorful tyrant can be whimsical, or motivated by love or revenge. If the heroes learn something about the tyrant's personality and blind spots, they may be able to fool or outmaneuver him.

Potential Problems: A tyrant who's too villainous risks becoming implausible. If the Emperor casually beheads underlings who fail him, why haven't his underlings conspired to overthrow him? If he uses a Spell of Devastation to annihilate areas of rebel activity, eventually he won't be Emperor of anything but a bunch of gravel.

Variations: An hereditary empire might have a whole family of Tyrants, all busily scheming against each other for the throne and thus offering plenty of opportunities for wily heroes to divide and conquer. A more sympathetic Tyrant may become an Honorable Enemy. Sometimes the Tyrant turns out to be nothing but a Puppet of some even bigger and badder opponent. For a more scaled-down tyrant, GMs may want to use the "Napoleon on Elba" option of a former overlord scheming to regain power.

THE UNDEAD MASTER

Alive through death, the Lord of the Lich had been entombed for three centuries[.] Once the mightiest of all wizards, feared by dragonkind and all manner of men, he had chosen this malevolent form that he might live forever in the shroud of death. And though none could equal his vast power even while he lived, in his transformation only greater ruin did he wreak upon men.

—a description of Xanthak, the Godling, from "The Wizards Are Dying," by John L. Jenkins

Fantasy roleplaying game adventures often feature powerful undead enemies — typically vampires or liches (undead spellcasters), but sometimes a ghost who yearns for a return to corporeal existence or the like.

Useful Features: In most settings, the undead are evil through and through, making it easy for the PCs to hate and oppose them. They usually have hordes of lesser undead to use as cannon fodder, and perhaps necromancer servants as well. Their powers of corruption and death may make even powerful heroes fearful, and their unnatural resilience makes it hard to kill them — and even if the heroes succeeding in slaying them, they may return from the dead yet again....

Potential Problems: Undead beings typically have certain weaknesses PCs know well; exploiting these could end an encounter with an Undead Master all too soon. They may be so two-dimensional that they risk becoming bland and predictable.

Variations: Perhaps an Undead Master is also an Honorable Enemy, or a Puppet forced back to life to serve some horrible overlord. Slaying an Undead Master may only cause him to ascend into some even more powerful form of unlife, giving the PCs another challenge to overcome.



A gigantic mass of quaking, blubbery slime met her eyes. It had no limbs, no head, no eyes. Somehow it could shape extensions of itself, and three of these long tentaclelike extrusions of hard jelly were looped about her.

—Carthalla is attacked by a *shioogua* in *Kellory The Warlock*, by Lin Carter

The flickering flames took on structure. From a rounded outline grew two small, earlike flaps, long-lobed and filled with coarse hair. Over a low, slanting brow, deep-sunk eyes darted back and forth behind pockmarked lids. A high and crooked nose sat above a long, thin mouth that turned down in a malevolent sneer. The head rose with the flame; as it did, a body filled in underneath, hunchbacked and spindly, naked and tufted with hair on a scaly skin that flaked off into the fire.

—Alodar witnesses the manifestation of a demon in *Master Of The Five Magics*, by Lyndon Hardy

MONSTERS

A special category of “villain” common to Fantasy adventures is the Monster — fantastic beasts and creatures the characters encounter, fight, and slay. Some (such as orcs, ogres, minotaurs, and trolls) are humanoid beings with monstrous appearances and forms; others are more like creatures; some bear no resemblance to any form of life native to the world.

CREATING MONSTERS

With a sharp alder twig he scratched on the ground a monstrous outline. [A television camera] lens served for one eye, a beer bottle pushed neck-first into the soil the other.

During the middle hours, while the moon died behind wisps of pale cloud, he carved a word on the dark forehead; then recited the activating incantation.

The ground rumbled and moaned, the golem heaved up to blot out the stars. ... The golem stumbled forward to crush Fair, but was halted by the pang of protective magic.

—Howard Fair creates a golem in “Green Magic,” by Jack Vance

Creating just the right monster for your campaign can be quite a challenge! Sometimes it seems as if it’s all been done before, and coming up with something new is simply impossible. But usually it’s not too difficult to devise a new and intriguing foe for the heroes to encounter.

First, review the information in Chapter One of *The HERO System Bestiary*. In addition to some useful advice about the role and use of creatures (including monsters) in your campaign, it has all sorts of ideas, tips, and tricks for creating them — including templates that let you easily change an existing monster into something the players might not immediately recognize.

Second, consider the game sessions you’ve run recently, and the types of monsters you’ve used in the past. What sorts of foes have the PCs encountered? Looking at what types of monsters you’ve already featured in the game may point out “gaps” you haven’t covered. For example, perhaps you’ve used a lot of humanoid monsters, but relatively few fantastic beasts; now it’s time for the PCs to match wits and blades against a pride of intelligent manticores or some fiendish carnivorous plant-creatures.

Third, look at the PCs’ abilities — both what they *can* do, and what they *can’t*. If they’re heavily laden with spells and enchanted items, maybe they should meet up with a monster that’s immune to magic, or one with the ability to drain enchantments. If they’ve got enough combat ability to

slaughter physical monsters with ease, perhaps you can attack them with a demon who possesses innocent villagers. If they can gang up on a single large monster and cut it to pieces in just a few Phases, maybe you should switch to groups of monsters about as powerful as they are... or even a monster who turns into *lots* of monsters whenever it’s injured.

Fourth, think about customizing or changing existing monsters. If the PCs have seen one minotaur, they’ve seen them all... until you introduce a minotaur sorcerer who fights with spells instead of weapons, a demonic minotaur, or a minotaur from the Realm of Elemental Fire. Or maybe you switch the bull’s head for the head of another animal, such as the hyena, the lion, or the dragon. You might even add some abilities, such as wings, to create a monster that’s as much “animal” as “man.”

Of course, you may not *want* to come up with something new — sometimes an old favorite, like a hydra, giant wolf, or fire demon is just what you’re looking for. If so, *The HERO System Bestiary* has what you need; it also includes Hit Location charts for various types of monsters and beasts.

MONSTERS IN YOUR WORLD

From a “realistic” perspective, including monsters in your world implies certain other changes or types of societal behavior. First, it tends to indicate a reasonably high level of magic in the world. Unless you want to assume creatures like chimerae and dragons could somehow evolve naturally, their existence assumes at least enough magic to let a god or wizard create monstrous beings — which is why monsters are most common in High Fantasy games. Low Fantasy games often have no monsters at all, and Swords And Sorcery settings usually downplay them in favor of human opposition.

Second, if monsters exist in the setting, people will take steps to protect themselves against them. Small settlements will be more likely to have walls and garrisons of soldiers, in case a flight of hippogriffs decides to raid the sheepfolds. Even the average peasant may have his own sword and enough training to use it without hurting himself, in case that band of orcs living in the woods decides to attack and the manor militia has to defend the women and children. Caravans will hire large groups of guards to keep humanoid marauders and hungry griffins from attacking.

Third, adventuring becomes more possible as a legitimate profession in a world with monsters. *Someone* has to go out and kill all those dragons and sea serpents, after all! An entire class of “bounty hunters” and “monster killers” could arise, with individuals hiring their services to a village, city, or king as needed. In turn, knowledge of monsters would become more widespread as adventurers develop tactics for slaying them... and monsters’ valuable body parts and hoard contents might boost (or ruin) local economies.



USING MONSTERS

Not without peril, therefore, would the shaman Yhemog traverse the prehistoric jungles and reeking fens of the young continent, for such were the haunts of the ravening catoblepas and the agate-breasted wyvern, to cite only the least formidable denizens.

—some of the monsters of Hyperborea are described in “The Scroll Of Morloc,” by Lin Carter and Clark Ashton Smith

Once you’ve decided to use monsters in your game, you should give some thought to the best way to do so.

BALANCED MONSTER ENCOUNTERS

The most important thing to consider when incorporating a monster (or monsters!) into an adventure is how the encounter stacks up against the Player Character group. Some monsters you expect the heroes to deal with easily, some present an even match, and some have significantly more power than any one PC or even the entire group.

Creating balanced monster encounters is an art more than a science. The open-ended character creation philosophy of the *HERO System* means it’s not possible to peg characters’ points or abilities to monsters’ points or abilities in a definitive way. You can follow some of the guidelines

discussed below, but ultimately you and you alone know what the PCs in your campaign can do, and how best to challenge them.

First, take a look at the PCs’ and the monsters’ total points. That provides a rough benchmark for a being’s power, but only a rough one. In a one-on-one encounter, two characters with the same points should be relatively evenly matched, but only if all other circumstances remain equal. If one character is designed primarily for combat, or one is wounded, that changes the dynamics of the confrontation, and you have to account for that in your design.

In an encounter pitting a group of PCs against a single monster, or fewer monsters than one per PC, balance issues become even trickier. While it’s possible to compare total PC points to the monster’s points, that doesn’t tell you the whole story. Even if a monster has more points than all the PCs put together, it only gets a number of Actions per Turn equal to its SPD. The PCs get a total number of Actions equal to their combined SPDs — three to six times as many as the monster, if not more. That’s a *decisive* advantage, even if the average PC attack has fewer DCs than the average monster attack. The monster’s going to need a high DCV, lots of BODY and STUN, lots of defense, or all of the above to survive the encounter (or at least present a credible threat).

Second, examine the DCs in the characters’ attacks. If the average PC can do 4 DCs of damage, then 15 points of Resistant Defense should keep a monster safe from most blows (or at least from the

BODY damage; the STUN may be much higher) — assuming you want it to remain safe. Tailoring the average defenses to the average attacks goes a long way toward arranging an encounter the way you want it, though you may need to find a clever work-around if a PC strikes a lucky blow early in the encounter.

Similarly, consider the Active Points in the characters' spells and abilities, as well as the number and types of powers they have. A group of adventurers with access to many different forms of attack may have more potential to unbalance a game than one with lots of DCs in only a couple different types of attacks, since you can't realistically prepare every monster for every type of attack the PCs might throw at it.

PLACED VERSUS RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Most Fantasy Hero adventures feature “placed” monsters — creatures you've included in the scenario at a specific place for the characters to encounter when they reach that place. This allows you to customize the encounter to go the way you want it to. A clever monster picks a defensible spot for a lair, and if possible arranges the local environment to suit itself. For example, a dragon might strew the floor of its cave with sand so that one mighty beat of its wings blows a miniature sandstorm right into the heroes' eyes. If it can swim, it may dam a local stream to create a pond it can hide in.

On the other hand, some monsters hunt or prowl around their territory; intelligent ones, such as goblins, may institute regular defensive patrols. Similarly, the characters' light sources, the noises they make, their distinctive scents, or even the magic they carry may attract other monsters. Characters encounter these monsters “randomly” — away from the monsters' lairs, in situations where at least one of the “sides” doesn't expect to meet up with the other. If you want to use random encounters, you need to devise a way to determine whether an encounter occurs, and if so with what. For most adventures, you can look at the monsters you've placed, decide which ones may wander about for various reasons, and then create a table you can roll on to determine whether the characters meet one (and if so, which one). Of course, if the PCs slay a monster they meet randomly, you should remove it from the placed encounter it was designed for. You may want to add in some other possible encounters, if outside monsters could wander into the adventure zone.

For times when the characters travel through wilderness areas and other regions with possible monster infestations, you could prepare an overall “monster ecology” table listing the monsters in the area that wander, and then use it to determine the nature and content of a random encounter. This saves you the trouble of worrying about the heroes ruining a placed encounter, but may accidentally pit them against a monster too strong for them.

TREASURE

It was an incredible thing — and its value must have been fabulous. It was like a great collar and heavy pectoral, but it was fashioned entirely from strange gems whose like the barbarian youth had never before encountered. The gems varied in size from that of a kernel of corn to great lumps as large as hawks' eggs. They were uncut but polished smooth, and they were the pale lucent green of clear water or the fresh bright jade of young leaves.

—Thongor finds a wondrous treasure in “Keeper Of The Emerald Flame,” by Lin Carter

In Fantasy roleplaying games, one of the most enjoyable things about monsters is that they tend to have treasure — heaps, chests, or sacks of coins and other valuables. Treasure is the in-game reward the characters receive for slaying a fell beast or powerful enemy (the out of game reward is the Experience Points earned for an adventure, of course).

Not all monsters have treasure. Those who are little better than beasts may not have any concept of money or value, so the only “treasure” they have would be objects accidentally acquired — for example, the equipment of a knight slain and dragged back to the lair. Other monsters may understand the concept of “valuable things,” but haven't acquired any (or have lost what they had to thieves and other adventurers). On the other hand, some monsters, such as dragons, are famed for the treasure they hoard.

For monsters that do have treasure, you should consider the following issues:

AMOUNT OF TREASURE

First, how much treasure should a monster have? The amount depends in large part on how dangerous the monster is; you don't want an easily-slain monster to have heaps of riches lying around just waiting for the PCs. By the same token, it usually doesn't sit well with the PCs if they risk life and limb fighting some powerful monster only to find out its “hoard” consists of a few handfuls of copper pieces. Thus, you should tailor the amount of treasure a monster has (and to some extent the type of treasure; see below) to the threat it presents.

If you'd prefer to determine the contents of a treasure hoard randomly, you can easily devise some tables you can roll on that list types and amounts of treasure. For example, perhaps you set an “Activation Roll” for every monster based on its dangerousness; a goblin is only a 9-, while a dragon is 16-. If the roll succeeds, you roll 3d6 on the appropriate table to determine amount and kind. There are four tables (one each for Weak, Average, Powerful, and Very Powerful monsters), corresponding to four classifications of monsters based on total points. Each table has

roughly the same entries (mostly raw money and gems, some valuable objects, a few enchanted items), but the amount received increases as the power of the monsters increases. A roll of 9 on the Weak Monsters Table yields only 1d6 gold pieces, whereas a 9 on the Very Powerful Monsters Table yields 1d3 x 1,000 gold pieces!

TYPE OF TREASURE

The standard form of treasure in most Fantasy roleplaying campaigns is coinage — gold pieces, silver pennies, copper bits, or whatever the main currency happens to be. Some monsters also have gems and jewelry in their hoards. Both forms of treasure have the advantages of being (relatively) portable and easily exchanged for goods and services.

But if you want to be more “realistic,” or just give the heroes something to worry about besides killing monsters, you could include more unusual, but no less valuable, items in monsters’ hoards. After all, in medieval economies, coins weren’t the only medium of exchange — barter and trade occurred just as frequently. Some of the possible valuables you could place in a pile of treasure include:

- Armor
- Artwork and decorative items
- Bulk goods
- Fine clothes
- Fine liquors, wines, and other beverages
- Furs
- Glasswares
- Rare spices and foodstuffs
- Slaves
- Weapons

All of those items are valuable — but they create logistical concerns for the PCs. How do they gather up and transport the items safely? What if bandits try to rob them on the way? Once they get the goods to a civilized area, is anyone willing to buy them from the PCs... and if so, for how much? The heroes may have to accept pennies on the guilder (so to speak) just to get big, bulky items off their hands!

MAGICAL TREASURE

Some monsters may even have enchanted items in their hoards. How often this occurs largely depends on the subgenre — it’s a fairly frequent happening in some High Fantasy campaigns, but much rarer (or even non-existent) in other subgenres. In many settings, magic items are so unusual and important that one never finds them at random; they’re deliberately placed into the story by the author (or GM).

If a monster has a magical item in its treasure, it may use the item against the PCs. A guardian ape may not be able to wear armor sized for a human, but perhaps it could make a magic wand work, or fit a large ring onto its pinkie. Some wizards may even outfit their servants and “pets” with enchanted items to make them more of a threat to adventurers.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

The world isn’t divided evenly into heroes and villains. Most people in a campaign setting are simply Non-Player Characters — NPCs.

In most cases what you need for a good, enjoyable NPC is a realistic, well-developed character. But that isn’t always true. Realistic, well-developed NPCs tend to take over the story, leaving the heroes as spectators. It’s actually more effective to keep many of your NPCs one-dimensional, but make them into memorable one-dimensional characters. Give them a distinctive habit or a manner of speaking for the heroes to remember. Players often forget NPC names, but they recall “the halfling with the elvish accent” or “the man who whittled.”

Non-Player Characters have the same motivations as villains — desires, fears, and beliefs — and these motives provide a good way to give them a little personality. The PCs can bribe a greedy knight, but one who follows the code of chivalry precisely reacts poorly (to say the least) to bribe offers. Obviously, spear-carriers and faceless hordes don’t all need to be this well-developed, but it’s worth coming up with one or two motivations for any NPC the heroes directly interact with.

Important NPCs need as much care and feeding as villains — a hero’s DNPC, Rival, or Hunter should have some independent goals and a recognizable identity. Dependent NPCs usually are nice people (though one can have a good deal of fun with a hero who feels protective of a cranky or irritating NPC). Rivals should have a mix of good and bad traits, and above all should be competent enough for the Rivalry to mean something — if the hero always wins, it’s scarcely a Rivalry.

If a hero is Hunted, the GM should give some thought to the motives of the Hunters. This is true even if it’s a large organization. *Why* is the King’s corps of spies watching the character? What do they want to find out? Even when the Hunter is a group, it’s useful to give that group a face in the form of a “case officer” or some other member of the group who is the one the heroes have the most dealings with. For example, every time the orcs of the Bloody Moon tribe show up to confront the heroes, they’re led by a canny one-eyed shaman named Zoga. Other orcs may track the PCs, ambush them, or attack them, but it’s Zoga who leads the attacks, who tries to capture the PCs and sacrifice them to her orcish gods, and who keeps the Bloody Moon orcs focused on them.

NPC ARCHETYPES

These are some standard character types who turn up again and again in Fantasy stories. You can use them as-is, or play against the stereotype by creating NPCs very different from these.

THE ANCIENT WIZARD

Long white beard, wizard's robes, staff, and a hood or pointed hat are the hallmarks of this NPC, who fulfills a variety of functions in Fantasy settings. Most often he's a provider of information and sage advice. When the PCs realize something odd is going on in the ruins to the northwest, but they can't interpret the strange, blood-red glyph they saw on a stone near there, they ask the Ancient Wizard to give them the benefit of his knowledge.

In High Fantasy campaigns, the Ancient Wizard may also serve as a source of enchanted items and spellcasting supplies. Having given up on adventuring or power acquisition, he keeps himself busy brewing potions, forging magic swords, crafting wands, and preparing commissioned magical items. If the PCs come back from their adventures with enchanted items they don't want, he can buy them for a fraction of their resale value.

In some games, particularly ones in the Swords And Sorcery subgenre, the Ancient Wizard may be a somewhat more menacing and mysterious figure. Often bald and wizened, he keeps to himself in an isolated tower or castle that no one dares to approach because of his fabled powers and fearsome guardian monsters. The PCs may eventually have to sneak into his domain, or try to kill him.

Variations: The Ancient Wizard may not be ancient after all, but a young prodigy or an adventurer who's retired due to an injury that magic cannot heal. Alternately, he might be quite old compared to a human being, but young by the standards of his race. Some Ancient Wizards require exotic or bizarre substances to maintain the spells that keep them alive... such as human blood or virgins' hearts.

THE BUREAUCRAT

Many Fantasy societies have elaborate bureaucracies, with officials ranging from the king's powerful Chamberlain and ambassadors, to the tax collector, to the lowly scribes who work in the far reaches of the palace. In empires and kingdoms too far-flung or populated for the ruler to keep a direct eye on things, these bureaucrats can wield enormous power, often becoming virtual kings of distant provinces themselves.

In most Fantasy stories, the bureaucrats heroes encounter fall into two camps: corrupt and incorruptible. The former take bribes, skim tax money for themselves, and otherwise work the system for their own benefit; the latter have nothing to do with any untoward activity and would report corruption to their superiors if they discovered it. More bureaucrats tend to fall into the "corrupt" category, since that makes for better stories, but by no means all do.

All that the unsuspecting Bilbo saw that morning was an old man with a staff. He had a tall pointed blue hat, a long grey cloak, a silver scarf over which his long white beard hung down below his waist, and immense black boots.

—Bilbo's first impression of Gandalf in *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

Variations: Guardsmen and sentinels often fall into bureaucrat-like roles, especially in large cities. They're responsible for inspecting cargoes, deciding who to admit through the city gates without a search, and so forth. They're just as likely to take bribes as true bureaucrats — perhaps moreso due to the conditions they have to tolerate on the job.

THE DESPICABLE PRIEST

The priest Kaman Thuu was old and skeletal, his lean body wrapped in a robe of crimson velvet whereon the symbols of the Seven Gods of Zangabal were worked with stiff gold thread. Jeweled rings flashed and glittered on his clawed fingers and his eyes burned keen in his shaven, skull-like head.

—Lin Carter describes a pretty typical Swords And Sorcery priest in "Thieves Of Zangabal"

For whatever reason, priests often get short shrift in Fantasy, particularly in Swords And Sorcery (where they epitomize "civilization"). If they're not downright Evil (as servants of Evil gods), then they have some other negative quality that tends to dominate their personality. Hunger for power seems to be the most common trait, with greed a close second. Many are also lechers, poisoners, worshippers of demons and foul gods, or traitors.

Variations: Of course, not *all* priests have to be bad. Some may be genuinely kind and helpful people, particularly in a world with competing Good and Evil gods — the Evil gods have Evil priests, the Good gods priest who have more acceptable personality traits. Some priests may simply be corrupt, rather than truly evil; they steal from the temple and commit debaucheries, but don't harm people or scheme for power.

THE GOD

In High Fantasy settings, and sometimes worlds emulating other subgenres, a god or gods may enter into the story. Usually gods manifest to help their servants, goad someone into action, or announce a prophecy. But sometimes they come to fight, play mischievous tricks upon the heroes, or compel the heroes to undertake a quest.

Given their power, and their often extreme natures, gods make difficult NPCs to use with any frequency. Bring them into play too often, and the PCs may feel railroaded by the divine will — unless, of course, the PCs have enough power to enough to stand up to the gods.

Variations: Instead of the gods, you can use other, similarly powerful, beings. Demons sometimes put in an appearance as something other than a foe to be banished from this plane, and Jack Vance's *Lyonesse* trilogy shows how much mileage you can get out of interactions between human heroes and the capricious faerie-folk.

THE GREEDY MERCHANT

If a merchant enters into a Fantasy story, he's almost invariably depicted as grasping and greedy. If he doesn't have money, he'll do anything to get it; if he's already wealthy, he guards his wealth with a miser's obsession. Typically he hires the PCs to recover some valuable bauble a thief stole from him, or to guard a caravan until it reaches its destination — and he expects maximum value for his gold pieces! He may try to trick the PCs out of their fee, or cheat them out of their wages, inevitably turning himself into their target in the next adventure.

Alternately, the greedy merchant may have been the PCs' target all along. Having heard of his wealth, they plan to break into his well-guarded treasure house and rob it, or perhaps the Thieves' Guild hires them to commit a theft it cannot manage.

Variations: To run against type, you might want to occasionally introduce the PCs to a merchant who doesn't have greed as his defining characteristic. He wants to make money, of course, but perhaps his true love is art, or he plans to go into politics. Another variation is the merchant-adventurer, usually the leader of a caravan, who's traveled widely and experienced many things; he and the PCs can often interact more as equals than as employer and employee.

THE HIRELING/HENCHMAN

Ruby of Ultinar: *Nodwick the Henchman!*

You are the first mortal in a hundred years to touch the Ruby of Ultinar! You are granted one wish! Name it, and it shall be done!

Artax the Wizard: *Sorry, Ruby, he's a salaried employee, and not entitled to a share of the loot. Therefore, we wish our treasure haul to be quadrupled.*

[Nodwick is buried under a pile of gold coins]

Ruby: *My condolences.*

Nodwick: *That's okay. I'm used to it....*

—Nodwick once again suffers at the hands of his employers in the comic book *Nodwick*, by Aaron Williams

It doesn't befit a powerful and respected adventurer, a hero born and bred, to do menial work! For that, heroes have hirelings and henchmen. Common types include porters, torchbearers, teamsters and drivers, footmen, maidservants, heralds, and entertainers, but many other types are possible. Some adventuring parties have entire retinues following them around.

Hirelings and henchmen often serve as a form of comic relief or an adventure hook: the torchbearer has too much ale in the local tavern, gets himself into some sort of scrape, and the PCs have to get him out of it. In a few cases, a hireling can become a valuable adjunct to the adventuring party, whose advice the PCs seek in desperate situations.



Variations: Instead of hired help, some campaigns feature slaves. In game play, this doesn't usually create many differences, though PCs may have a greater ability to abuse or take advantage of a slave compared to a henchman. Another possibility is that the character's renown attracts actual followers who want to learn from him; in exchange for their doing chores, he teaches them swordplay, spellcasting, thievery, or the like.

THE LIKEABLE ROGUE

Most thieves and other rogues are detestable scum, but occasionally one comes along with style. Try as they might, the PCs can't entirely hate him, even when he robs them blind — something about his manner and the way he conducts himself elicits at least a little admiration. He may be a highly-skilled cat burglar, a suave con man, or a deft cutpurse, but regardless of how he steals, he does so with panache. If the adventuring group has a rogue of its own, particularly one who operates in the same manner as the Likeable Rogue, the two may become Rivals.

Variations: Instead of a Likeable Rogue, the party may encounter a Likeable Assassin. Though it's harder to create a ruthless killer the PCs can also respect, he may have a code of professionalism they can identify with, or even work solely for causes they support (such as a particular king or temple). The Likeable Spy may be even more fun, since he can drag the PCs into all sorts of adventures.

THE NOBLE LEADER

While the heroes remember many NPCs for their less than admirable qualities, the Noble Leader is someone they can definitely look up to, even if he has less personal power than they do. Handsome, fair-minded, and dedicated to the welfare of his subjects and/or troops, the Noble Leader fights valiantly on behalf of just causes. He may even defy a higher authority, such as the king, to do what he thinks is right.

In most cases, the Noble Leader is also noteworthy for his competence. While he may not have as high a rank as some other nobles, he's a more skilled tactician, inspirational leader, just ruler, or all of the above than they are. This is one of the things that makes PCs like him; he's as good as they are in at least some respects.

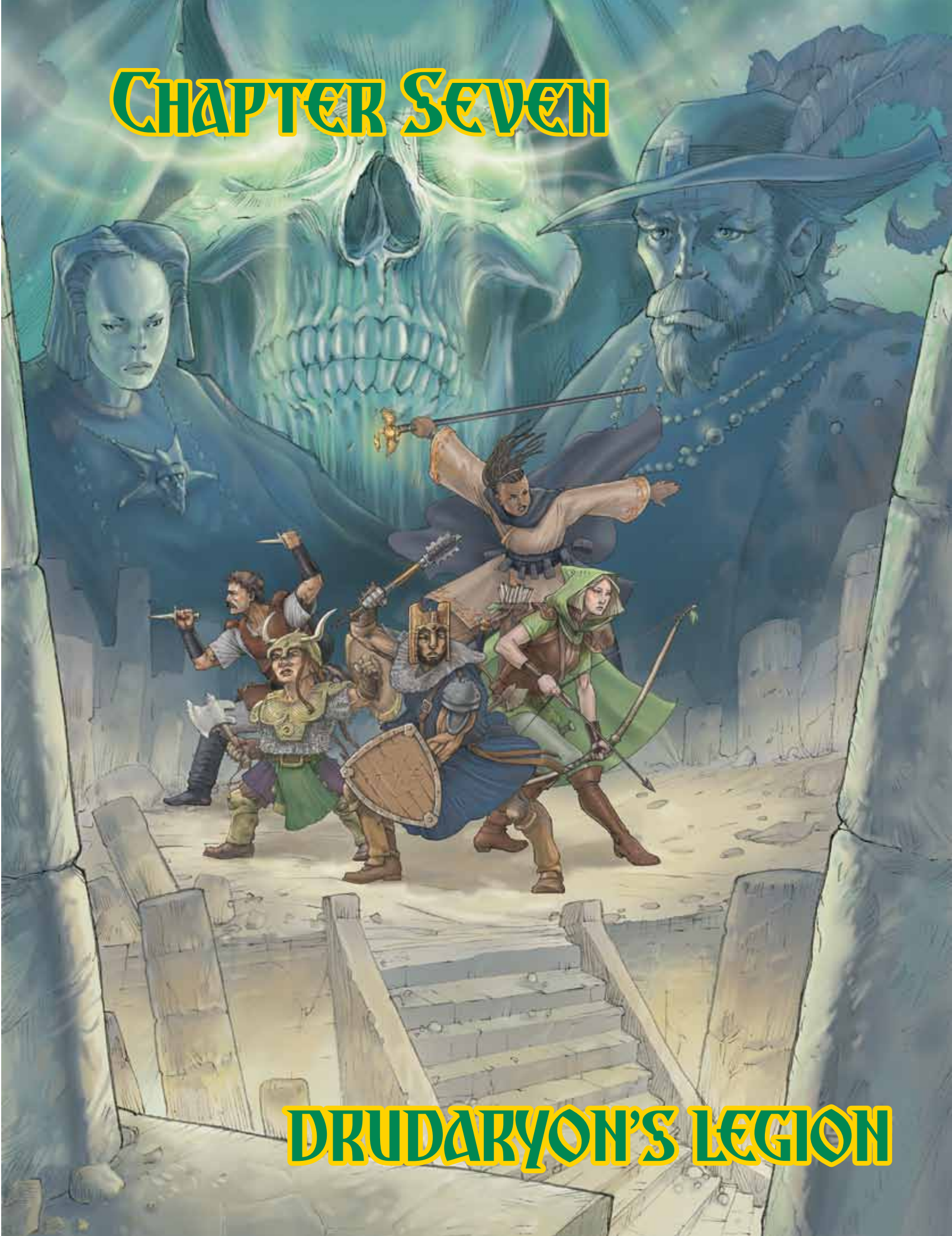
Variations: Sometimes the Noble Lord is actually a Noble King or Prince, with much greater authority and ability to affect positive change. The Noble King usually serves as a patron of the PCs, giving them work in exchange for money or royal favors.

THE NONHUMAN RACE

Sometimes an entire race plays an NPC-like role in the campaign. Some examples include:

- **The Ancient Race:** A race of beings who have lived in the world far longer than humans, or who at least have far longer memories than humans do. They provide information (when the heroes can pry it out of them due to dire need, otherwise they remain frustratingly inscrutable), and may hold the key to various "deep mysteries" in the campaign world.
- **The Downtrodden/Shunned Race:** This race lives in squalor and poverty in the shadow of other races. They may once have been mighty and powerful, but fell due to hubris or the anger of the gods. Sometimes the race groups together into wandering bands that criss-cross the world like Gypsies — and usually with a similarly poor reputation. Despite their lack of station, the race may possess magics, skills, or knowledge no one else does.
- **The Spellcasting Race:** The members of this race can all cast spells, or have innate mystic powers of some sort. Either their powers, or some restriction placed on them long ago by the gods or a powerful wizard, sets them apart from normal races; this restriction, and/or their scant numbers, prevent them from taking over the world with their magic.
- **The Trading Race:** This race shows up in the game only in a mercantile context. They've either come with goods to trade, or they've got the money to buy the PCs' goods or hire them to do a job. Members of this race are often fabulously wealthy, and use their wealth to hire the best security they can.

CHAPTER SEVEN



DRUDARYON'S LEGION



DRUDARYON'S LEGION

Membership: Drudaryon, Valerius the Harper, Halfreda, Tarina, and Drago

Background/History: Drudaryon's Legion, a group of five bold adventurers serving causes good and true (and often profitable as well), formed because of a prophecy uttered by a god. Nelaros, god of just causes, appeared in a dream to the paladin-to-be Drudaryon sarHalwyn and told him that not only was he fated to one day confront a great evil, but he must recruit a group of like-minded heroes to help him fulfill his destiny. One of these heroes he would know; the others were strangers who would soon become like close kin to him.

The hero Drudaryon knew was obvious to him as soon as he awoke: his brother Valerius, called the Harper, a wizard of skill and renown. Tired of academic life and eager to serve the causes of the Gods of Light, Valerius left his studies to join his brother's quest.

While journeying through the Crown March one cold winter day, Drudaryon met the second member of his band of heroes. Halfreda the dwarven warrior came to the aid of him and his brother, using her axe to help the paladin slay a tall orc-chieftain. Recognizing a true hero when he saw one, Drudaryon offered her a position in his company, and she accepted.

The fourth member of the group, Drago of the Hlastroi, a thief of Antyratori, Drudaryon saved from a group of assassins sent to slit his throat. By the customs of the Hlastroi, Drudaryon now "owned" Drago's life, and though the paladin told Drago he could go his way in peace, the wiry, clever thief chose to stay by Drudaryon's side and adopt his cause... though he's always looking for a chance to garner a few gold pieces in the process.

Tarina, a half-elven ranger and scout, joined the group much like Halfreda — by coming to the aid of a member (in this case Valerius) whom she thought needed help. Impressed by her forthright heroism and bravery, and in need of a woodcrafty scout, the group asked her to join.

Drudaryon's Legion takes its name from a comment made by a Sarkovian lord it once saved from an attack by a Wolflord of the Gorthunda, who said the paladin and his comrades were worth as much as a legion of ordinary soldiers. The group wears its name with pride, and takes as its symbol two hounds circling a blue D-rune.

Group Relations: The members of Drudaryon's Legion spend most of their time together, either as a group or in twos and threes. Fortunately, they get along well. To one degree or another, they all serve the as-yet nameless cause Drudaryon's preparing for, and they all respect him as their leader.

Only a few disagreements divide the Legion, and most of these have to do with the group's tactics. Tarina and Drago favor stealth, guile, and other "indirect" means of confrontation whenever possible; they care little, if anything, for "honorable" combat or the tenets of chivalry. Halfreda, on the other hand, considers all their skulking about dishonorable; she prefers open conflict fairly engaged in. Drudaryon often agrees with Halfreda, but he's practical enough to recognize the value in Tarina's methods.

Other problems arise when it comes to issues of survival and expense. Drudaryon cares little for money, preferring to focus on his quest and believing the gods will provide what he needs. But Drago and Halfreda, and to a lesser extent Tarina, realize a little treasure goes a long way toward making life simpler and easier, so they often urge the group to attempt adventures designed as much to line their pockets as to advance the cause of Good.

Tactics: Drudaryon's Legion is a group of well-trained fighters and adventurers who've tailored their individual combat styles to suit their respective strengths. Drudaryon and Halfreda are the "front line," the fighters who wade into the thick of battle to engage the foe. Tarina and Valerius stand back from the fight, using arrows and spells, respectively, to aid the two warriors. They usually focus on other ranged combatants first (particularly spellcasters), then HTH combatants. Drago works around the periphery of battle, darting in to strike a blow with his dagger when he can do so safely, or sometimes throwing his knives with lethal accuracy.

Campaign Use: How you use Drudaryon's Legion depends largely on the orientation of your own group of PCs. If the Player Characters serve the cause of Good, then the Legion could become their staunch allies, ready to aid them with any difficulty, and perhaps asking for help in return from time to time. If the PCs serve Evil, then Drudaryon and his comrades become their

implacable foes, doing their best to thwart or slay them (in that case, perhaps some of the enemies described below, such as Taal Salira, may team up with the PCs to oppose the Legion). If the PCs are simply self-serving, the Legion helps them on adventures serving the cause of Good, but otherwise treats them warily. The Legionnaires may also become Rivals or romantic interests for appropriate PCs.

The ground rules for the Turakian Age campaign the Legion comes from allow characters to have up to 40 points' worth of Complications of any one type. You may need to adjust the Legion's members' Complications if you don't use a similar rule.

DRUDARYON

Background/History: The third son of House Halwyn, a noble family of the Mhendarian Palatinate, Drudaryon (doo-DAIR-ee-un) thought to become a knight. He would not ascend to his father's title, as would his eldest brother Kelsicon, nor was he of studious bent like his older brother Valerius. That left only the knighthood, or the priesthood...

...or perhaps both.

One day, while training with his old swordmaster, Drudaryon received a vision from the Blue Gods. Nelaros, god of just causes, spoke to him, telling him he must go to the temple in Tretha and tell of his vision to the priests there. Count Halwyn, while misliking the idea of his young son traveling so far from home, was a devout man who believed the vision a true one, and he let Drudaryon go with an escort of guards. Valerius accompanied his brother, intent on studying at the college of wizardry in Tretha.

The priests realized Drudaryon's vision told them to train him as a paladin, and so they began his schooling in an altogether different form of warfare. He proved to have a gift for it, becoming as strong in the powers of the gods as he was in limb. Many years passed as he learned and practiced.

The night before the priests inducted him into the Knights of the Azure Banner, Nelaros spoke again to Drudaryon, this time in a dream. He said a great evil, spawned not of the Scarlet Gods but beings distant kin to them, threatened the world. Drudaryon was fated to face that evil and, perhaps, overcome it. To stand beside him he must recruit a legion of like-minded folk of all races, for as evil harms all, so all must oppose it.

After his induction into the Azure Knights, Drudaryon began walking the path the gods had laid before him. First he sought the aid of

his brother Valerius, now a powerful wizard, who gladly joined his cause. As the two of them journeyed across the realms, encountering and defeating evil, they met other like-minded folk who chose to walk the path with them. Drudaryon knows not what evil he will face, or when the test will fall upon him, but he is right glad to have at his side so many stout-hearted companions.

Personality/Motivation: Drudaryon is a paladin through and through, wholly devoted to the just causes of the Blue Gods. He could no sooner commit an evil or selfish act than he could live without breathing. A born leader, he inspires confidence, dedication, and bravery in others — in part because he won't ask anyone to take a risk he won't take himself.

Drudaryon is normally kind-hearted and quick to make friends (though he's not nearly as gregarious as his brother Valerius). But when facing evil, or the possibility of evil, he becomes a stern and single-minded crusader, unwilling to waver from the cause for any but the most serious of reasons. Valerius, and the other members of the Legion, sometimes worry he pushes himself too hard, but despite their best efforts they can rarely make him relax and enjoy life for more than an hour or two.

Quote: "We will fall upon you like waves crashing on the sand, and when we pass, we will wash your evil from this world forever."

Powers/Tactics: As a paladin, Drudaryon possesses two potent weapons. The first is his martial skills. Extensively trained with the sword, mace, lance, and other weapons, and garbed in plate armor provided him by the temple, he can stand toe-to-toe with any fighting man and hold his own.

The second, and often more impressive, weapon is his paladin powers. Given to him by the Blue Gods, they allow him to cast their Light into dark places, sense the power of Evil and strike mighty blows against it, and even heal the sick and injured with but a touch.

When he preaches or makes Presence Attacks, Drudaryon is fond of using metaphors and symbolism involving water, waves, and similar phenomena.

Appearance: Drudaryon is a human paladin, 6'2" tall. He's a young Mhendarian male who looks to be in his early 20s (though he's actually almost 30), with the strong muscles and well-defined build of someone who's spent years engaging in intensive exercise. He wears plate armor and carries a shield. He favors the longsword as his chief weapon, but sometimes substitutes a mace. He has black hair which he cuts short, and a short black beard. His eyes are green.

DRUDARYON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
18	STR	8	13-	Lift 300 kg; 3½d6 HTH damage [2]
16	DEX	12	12-	
18	CON	8	13-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	5	12-	
20	PRE	10	14-	PRE Attack: 4d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
4	DMCV	3		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
7	PD	5		Total: 7 PD (0 rPD)
6	ED	4		Total: 5 ED (0 rED)
8	REC	4		
35	END	3		
14	BODY	4		
32	STUN	6		Total Characteristics Cost: 105

Movement: Running: 12m



Cost	Powers	END
3	Create Light: Sight Group Images 1m radius No Range (-½), Only To Create Light (-1), Requires A Faith Roll (-½)	1
5	Detect Evil: Detect Evil 12- (no Sense Group) Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Requires A Faith Roll (-½)	0
10	Lay On Hands: Simplified Healing 3d6 Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Requires A Faith Roll (-½), 4 Charges (-1)	[4]

Perks

2 **Membership:** Knights of the Azure Banner

Talents

19 **Sacred Warrior:** Deadly Blow (+1d6 Killing Damage with weapons against Evil foes)

Skills

8 +1 HTH
2 +1 OCV with Long Sword
7 Faith 14-
2 KS: Blue Gods Doctrine 11-
1 Literacy
3 Persuasion 13-
3 Riding 12-
5 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Lance

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 70

Total Cost: 175

175 Matching Complications (50)

20 **Hunted:** Lord Garethon (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
25 **Psychological Complication:** Devotion To The Blue Gods And Their Purposes (Very Common, Total)
15 **Psychological Complication:** Must Defend The Weak And Innocent (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 60

Experience Points: 0

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR Min	Notes
Long Sword	+0	—	1d6+1	1d6-1	12	
Dagger	+0	+0	1d6-1	1d6-1	6	Can Be Thrown
Mace	+0	—	1d6+1	1d6-1	10	
Lance, heavy	+0	—	2d6	1d6-1	15	Must be mounted

Armor

Plate armor (8 PD/8 ED)
Large shield (+3 DCV; 3d6 N, STR Min 15)

Gear: Heavy warhorse; various types of adventuring gear (tent and bedroll, flint and steel, torches, rations, and so forth)

VALERIUS THE HARPER

Background/History: The second son of House Halwyn, a noble family of the Mhendarian Palatinate, Valerius was a weak and sickly child, clearly not fit for the life of a warrior. His father hoped he'd become a priest, but the only thing that ever caught his fancy was music. Before he was ten, he could play a fair tune on his father's harpist's harp. Despite misgivings about letting his son become a bard, Valerius's father allowed him to continue studying music.

Music filled Valerius's life until the day the renowned wizard Yallesard Demon's-Master defended Castle Halwyn from the attack of a dragon. Even more intrigued by magic than by music, Valerius began studying both, splitting his time between his father's bard and whatever wizards came to visit the estate.

Valerius soon reached the point where he'd learned as much as he could from casual study; he needed more formal instruction. With his father's permission, he accompanied Drudaryon, his younger brother by about a decade, to the city of Tretha so he could enroll at the college of spellcraft there.

Valerius's career as an apprentice was a stormy one. It was obvious to the masters there that he possessed great talent; he'd already learned much on his own, and was now learning at a much faster pace than most of his classmates. He displayed a particular skill for fire wizardry. But he was stubborn and headstrong, preferring to study and practice on his own instead of attend classes or do his tasks. Many a time the master to whom he'd been assigned as a helper for the day found his chores undone and Valerius himself holed up in the library, reading some obscure tome.

It was in one of these tomes that Valerius chanced across a mention of the Orbs of Power, enchanted crystal spheres linked to various forces and powers. The description of the Orbs matched the description of an item he'd read about in a lorebook recounting tales from one of the Drakine Lands. His mind afire with the possibilities, he decided he'd had enough of schooling and would go in search of this fabled Orb.

Bidding his masters goodbye, Valerius headed east, using his skills as a bard and a minor worker of magic to earn his keep. Several times he stopped for a few months to study with a wizard whom he felt had something to teach him, but he always kept going. Eventually, after many harrowing adventures, he found the Orb he'd long sought. It seemed to inspire him and increase his power; with it in his possession, he crafted several new or improved fire spells.

Orb in hand, Valerius returned to the School of Tretha, where his knowledge, power, and experiences led the masters to offer him a mastership as well. He spent several years there teaching, occasionally taking time to go on other adventures. When his brother Drudaryon came to tell him of the great destiny he had embarked upon, Valerius gladly gave up his position at the School to become a full-time adventurer. He hopes during his adventures to come across other Orbs of Power.

Personality/Motivation: Thanks to his bardic training, Valerius lacks the somber mien of so many wizards. Quick-witted, gregarious, talkative, entertaining, and ever-curious about the world around him, he makes friends easily and often seems more like the leader of the Legion than Drudaryon does. He's equally at home in the company of kings and peasants, and seems able to command the respect of all and sundry for both his wisdom and his power.

As with many wizards, magic fascinates Valerius. The mere rumor of a strange new spell or enchanted item (particularly anything that sounds like it might be one of the Orbs of Power) is often all it takes for him to start persuading the rest of the Legion to accompany him on a quest to find it... and he may go in search of it himself if they don't want to come along.

Despite his kind-hearted nature, Valerius doesn't brook insult or challenge. He's often too quick to take offense at jibes (unless they're obviously meant in fun, in which case he responds in kind), and if provoked may try to cow his antagonist with a minor display of power (such as lighting or extinguishing all the candles in the room). His touchiness has gotten the Legion in trouble on more than one occasion.

Quote: "Do not think you can stand before one who commands the power of magefire!"

Powers/Tactics: An accomplished wizard, Valerius has a wide selection of spells to call upon, though he favors spells that use or control the Element of Fire. In combat he usually remains in the rear, taking advantage of his spells to attack the Legion's enemies at range. He usually concentrates on enemy archers or spellcasters.

In addition to his magic, Valerius is a skilled bard. He sometimes prefers to go "undercover," concealing his sorcerous powers and conducting himself as a simple harpist and teller of tales. If necessary he can earn the Legion's keep for the night by playing and singing in some tavern. He often entertains his comrades around the campfire with sagas and epic poems.

GM's note: Valerius is built on a few more Character Points than the rest of the Legion because he's had more experience as an adventurer, and has spent more time studying and training.



VALERIUS THE HARPER

Val Char Cost Roll Notes

10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
15	CON	5	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
10	EGO	0	11-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6

5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
4	OMCV	3		
4	DMCV	3		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12

4	PD	2		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 4 ED (0 rED)

4	REC	0		
20	END	0		
10	BODY	0		
22	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 72

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Spells

2	Belzorath's Spell Of Waking Dreams (Images)	2	END
5	Fireball (RKA 2d6, 12m Radius)	5	
3	Jezric's Spell Of True Seeming (Multiform into animals)	18	
3	Khelred's Flammifer (RKA 1 point to kindle fires)	0	
3	Protection From Fire (Resistant Protection (14 ED) versus fire)	4	
5	Quench Flame (Dispel Fire 12d6)	4	
5	Stelrane's Spell Of Dispersion (Dispel Magic 14d6)	5	
6	Valerius's Sparklings (RKA 2d6, +2 Increased STUN, Accurate)	6	
2	Wizard's Power (+30 PRE for Presence Attacks)	3	
2	Wizard's Shield (Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED))	2	

Powers

14	Greater Orb Of Fire: Endurance Reserve (80 END, 12 REC)	0	
	OAF (-1)		

Talents

5	Magesight
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Skills

10	+2 with Spells
9	+3 with Power (Magic) rolls
3	Greater Orb Of Fire: +3 with Elemental Magic (Fire) rolls
	OAF (-1)
2	Cryptography 13-; Translation Only (-½)
3	Elemental Magic (Air) 13-
3	Elemental Magic (Earth) 13-
7	Elemental Magic (Fire) 15-
3	High Society 13-
1	Literacy



2	PS: Play Harp 11-
2	PS: Singing 11-
1	Riding 8-
5	Sorcery 14-
1	WF: Staff
5	Wizardry 14-
3	Scholar
2	1) KS: Arcane And Occult Knowledge 13-
1	2) KS: Herbalism 11-
1	3) KS: History 11-
1	4) KS: Legends And Lore 11-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 120

Total Cost: 192

175 Matching Complications (50)

5	Distinctive Features: Wizard (Not Concealable; Noticed And Recognizable; Requires Unusual Sense [Detect Magic])
20	Hunted: Lord Garethon (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
10	Psychological Complication: Self-Sacrificing; Willing To Risk His Life In The Cause Of Good (Common, Moderate)
15	Psychological Complication: Curiosity About/Fascination With Magic (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 17

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Notes
Orb-Staff	+0	—	4d6 N	—	10		
Dagger	+0	+0	1d6-1	1d6-1	6		Can Be Thrown

Armor

Cuir-Bouilli armor (3 PD/3 ED)

Gear: Spell components; harp; flute; light warhorse; various types of adventuring gear (tent and bedroll, flint and steel, torches, rations, and so forth)

Appearance: Valerius is a human wizard who stands about 6'0" tall and has a trim, fit build. He uses a silver fillet to bind his long, dark brown hair back out of his eyes. His clean-shaven face betrays his age of about 40. Although his countenance is generally lighthearted, optimistic, and inquisitive, the cares of a wizard are many, and sometimes furrow his brow or raise a look of anger. His look can become deadly serious and stern quickly.

Valerius wears a black or tan long-sleeved long robe, cut for riding. Embroidered flames run around the hem, the cut, and the borders of the sleeves. Over this he wears a long black cloak, its hem and edges likewise embroidered with flames. His feet are clad in good, strong leather boots; a leather belt worked to resemble a series of intertwining dragons clasps his waist and supports the usual wizards' coterie of belt pouches. It also holds a long, thin case that many people suspect contains a magic wand, but which actually carries his flute.

Valerius carries his Wizard's Staff, a long, straight, polished length of black wood about his height, at all times, only putting it aside (and within easy reach!) when he needs to use both hands. Topping the staff is a golden dragon which clasps with its body/legs the Greater Orb of Fire, a powerful magical artifact.

SPELLS

BELZORATH'S SPELL OF WAKING DREAMS

Effect:	Images to Sight, Touch, and Hearing Sense Groups
Target:	4m Radius
Casting Time:	Half Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures:	Focus, Gestures, Incantations
Duration:	Constant
Range:	250m
Magic Roll Penalty:	-2
END Cost:	2

Description: This spell, crafted aeons ago by the famed sorcerer Belzorath and since refined and perfected by many hands, allows the caster to create illusions so believable they even appear real to the touch.

Game Information: Images to Sight, Touch, and Hearing Sense Groups, Area Of Effect (4m Radius; +¼) (25 Active Points); OAF Expendable (three quartz crystals of different colors, Difficult to obtain; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Sorcery Roll (-½), Spell (-½). Total cost: 7 points (cost to character: 2 points).

THE TURAKIAN MAGIC SYSTEM

Since Valerius and the other members of the Legion adventure in the Turakian Age setting of the Hero Universe, you need to know a little about the magic system for that campaign to understand his spells.

In the world of the Turakian Age, wizards organize arcane magic into about a dozen *arcana*, such as Alchemy, Divination, Elemental Magic, Necromancy, and Sorcery. To cast spells from an *arcana*, a spellcaster must have a *Power Skill* for that specific *arcana*. Spellcasters buy their spells individually — they can't buy them in *Power Frameworks*, though they can sometimes define a single spell as a *Framework* — but they divide the *Real Point* cost of the spell by 3.

Priests' spells — divine magic — do not belong to any *arcana*. Instead, they're all cast with a version of the *Power Skill* called *Faith*. Paladins also use this *Skill* for their powers.

All spells, arcane or divine, must take *Requires A Roll* as a *Limitation* unless the GM allows an exemption. Attack spells must also take *Spell* (-½) as a *Limitation* (see page 276). No other *Limitations* are required, though *OAF*, *Gestures*, and *Incantations* are extremely common, and several others (*Concentration*, *Extra Time*, *Side Effects*, *Ritual*, and the like) are also used.

Turakian Age spellcasters may buy *Endurance Reserves* to power their spells. If a *Reserve* is depleted or lost, the character may use his personal *END* to cast spells, but they cost double their normal *END* cost.

FIREBALL

Effect:	RKA 2d6
Target:	12m Radius
Casting Time:	Half Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures:	Focus, Gestures, Incantations
Duration:	Instant
Range:	300m
Magic Roll Penalty:	-5
END Cost:	5

Description: A favorite of many mages, this spell produces a large sphere of magefire hot enough to injure almost any foe.

Game Information: RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (12m Radius; +¾) (52 Active Points); OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires An Elemental Magic (Fire) Roll (-½), Spell (-½). Total cost: 15 points (cost to character: 5 points).

JEZRIC'S SPELL OF TRUE SEEMING

Effect:	Multiform (16 animals of up to 200 points each)
Target:	Self
Casting Time:	1 Turn
Casting Procedures:	Gestures, Incantations
Duration:	Constant (see text)
Range:	Self
Magic Roll Penalty:	-6
END Cost:	18

Description: This spell allows the caster to assume the form of various animals. However, he must not spend too long in any one form, lest he take on the animal's personality and instincts and remain trapped in that form forever.

This spell counts as Constant because it costs END to change forms. Since it costs no END to maintain the change, and it has the *Personality Loss* Limitation, the character doesn't revert to his true form if Knocked Out while in animal shape; he retains the animal form.

Game Information: Multiform (16 animals of up to 200 points each) (60 Active Points); Costs Endurance (to change only; -½), Increased Endurance Cost (3x END; -1), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Personality Loss (1 Hour; -1), Requires An Elemental Magic (Earth) Roll (-½). Total cost: 10 points (cost to character: 3 points).

KHELRED'S FLAMMIFER

Effect:	1 point RKA, Penetrating
Target:	16m Radius, Selective
Casting Time:	Half Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures:	Gestures, Incantations
Duration:	Uncontrolled (until runs out of fuel, or is extinguished)
Range:	30m
Magic Roll Penalty:	-2
END Cost:	0

Description: One of the first spells bought by any fire mage, Khelred's Flammifer allows a wizard to set flammable objects on fire. He can light every flammable object within a 16m radius (including things like other peoples' clothes, hair, and fur), or only specified objects. The spell *also* has the Area Of Effect (1m Radius Accurate) Advantage, so every Attack Roll made with it to selectively attack targets is made against DCV 3.

Any flammable object that touches an object lit on fire with the Flammifer also catches fire. The flames keep burning until they run out of fuel or air, or someone puts them out. Dousing one burning person or object doesn't affect any of the others; each person or object must be extinguished individually.

Game Information: RKA 1 point, Area Of Effect (16m Radius Selective, +1), Area Of Effect (1m Radius Accurate; +½), Constant (+½), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Sticky (only affects flammables; +¼), Uncontrolled (spell ends when it runs out of fuel or oxygen, or someone extinguishes the flames; +½) (24 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Limited Range (30m; -¼), Requires An Elemental Magic (Fire) Roll (-½), Spell (-½). Total cost: 9 points (cost to character: 3 points).

PROTECTION FROM FIRE

Effect:	Resistant Protection (0 PD/14 ED), Usable By Other, Only Works Against Fire
Target:	One person
Casting Time:	Half Phase
Casting Procedures:	Focus, Gestures, Incantations
Duration:	Uncontrolled (duration of 1 Hour, +1 Hour per +1 by which the character makes his Elemental Magic (Fire) roll)
Range:	Touch
Magic Roll Penalty:	-4
END Cost:	4 to cast

Description: This spell allows the caster to confer on himself or one other person a high degree of protection from fire attacks. The defense applies against both normal and magical fire, and lasts for a minimum of 1 Hour. For each point by which the caster makes his Elemental Magic (Fire) roll, the duration increases for 1 Hour. The recipient of the spell may choose at any time to end it.

Game Information: Resistant Protection (0 PD/14 ED), Usable By Other (+¼), Uncontrolled (see summary; +½) (37 Active Points); OAF Expendable (vial of alchemically-prepared sand, Very Difficult to obtain; -1½), Costs Endurance (only to cast; -¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Only Works Against Fire (-½), Requires An Elemental Magic (Fire) Roll (-½). Total cost: 9 points (cost to character: 3 points).

QUENCH FLAME

Effect:	Dispel Fire 12d6
Target:	One character
Casting Time:	Half Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures:	Focus, Gestures, Incantations
Duration:	Instant
Range:	360m
Magic Roll Penalty:	-5
END Cost:	5

Description: What a fire mage calls up, he must be able to put down. This spell lets him do just that. It extinguishes fires both mundane and magical, snuffing them out without so much as a puff of smoke remaining.

Game Information: Dispel 12d6, Variable Effect (any Fire power one at a time; +½) (54 Active Points); OAF Expendable (a few drops of water, Easy to obtain; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Noisy (-¼), Requires An Elemental Magic (Fire) Roll (-½), Spell (-½). Total cost: 14 points (cost to character: 5 points).

STELRANE'S SPELL OF DISPERSION

Effect: Dispel Magic 14d6
Target: One character
Casting Time: Half Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures: Focus, Gestures, Incantations
Duration: Instant
Range: 420m
Magic Roll Penalty: -6
END Cost: 6

Description: One of the most basic spells in any wizard's arsenal, the Spell Of Dispersion breaks apart and neutralizes mystic energies, causing spells to cease functioning. When casting it, a wizard hits the palm of one hand with a small silver hammer wielded in the other, thus signifying the "smashing" of the targeted magic; the hammer disintegrates into worthless powder as the target magic disperses (or if it fails to disperse).

Game Information: Dispel 14d6, Variable Effect (any Magic power one at a time; +½) (63 Active Points); OAF Expendable (silver hammer, Very Difficult to obtain; -1½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Noisy (-¼), Requires A Wizardry Skill Roll (-½), Spell (-½). Total cost: 15 points (cost to character: 5 points).

VALERIUS'S SPARKLINGS

Effect: RKA 2d6, +2 Increased STUN Multiplier
Target: 1m Radius Accurate
Casting Time: Half Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures: Focus, Gestures, Incantations
Duration: Instant
Range: 300"
Magic Roll Penalty: -6
END Cost: 6

Description: Valerius's primary attack spell is one he developed himself. It "conjures" a small, intensely hot wisp of flame resembling a ghost, wraith, or miniature fire elemental. This "being" flies toward the target, causing intense pain and burns when it hits.

Game Information: RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (1m Radius Accurate; +½), +2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½) (60 Active Points); OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires An Elemental Magic (Fire) Roll (-½), Spell (-½). Total cost: 17 points (cost to character: 6 points).

WIZARD'S POWER

Effect: +30 PRE, Only For Presence Attacks
Target: Self
Casting Time: Half Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures: None
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
Magic Roll Penalty: -3
END Cost: 3

Description: This spell surrounds the caster's body with a display of arcane power that impresses and cowers those who witness it. He need not gesture or incant to invoke this ability, nor use a Wizard's Staff or material components; he simply calls upon his innate mystic powers.

Game Information: +30 PRE (30 Active Points); Only For Impressiveness/Fear Presence Attacks (-1½), Noisy (-¼), Requires A Wizardry Roll (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Spell (-½). Total cost: 7 points (cost to character: 2 points).

WIZARD'S SHIELD

Effect: Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED)
Target: Self
Casting Time: Half Phase
Casting Procedures: Focus, Gestures, Incantations
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
Magic Roll Penalty: -2
END Cost: 2

Description: A basic defensive spell taught to many mages, the Wizard's Shield provides protection against most forms of attack. It does not shield the caster against exotic forms of attack created by some spells.

Game Information: Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED) (24 Active Points); OAF (Wizard's Staff; -1), Costs Endurance (-½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Wizardry Roll (-½). Total cost: 7 points (cost to character: 2 points).



HALFREDA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH damage [2]
15	DEX	10	12-	
20	CON	10	13-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
6	OCV	15		
6	DCV	15		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 8 PD (0 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 6 ED (0 rED)
8	REC	4		
30	END	2		
15	BODY	5		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 108

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost	Powers	END
8	Rock-Hard Dwarven Fists: HA +2d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)	1

Martial Arts: Dwarven War Art

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
4	Avoidance	+0	+5	Dodge All Attacks, Abort
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
5	Chop/Smash	-2	+1	Weapon +4 DC Strike
5	Ogre-Slaying Stroke	+1	+3	Weapon
4	Side Slash	+0	+2	Weapon +2 DC Strike

Talents

2 **Lightning Reflexes:** +4 DEX to act first with All HTH Attacks

Skills

16 +2 HTH

1 Armorsmith 8-

2 Language: Tornathian (fluent conversation; Dwarven is native)

2 Language: Mhendarian (fluent conversation)

1 Literacy

3 Stealth 12-

3 Tactics 11-

3 Trading 12-

4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 67

Total Cost: 175

175 Matching Complications (50)

15 **Enraged:** if accused of dishonor, cowardice, or the like (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 11-

20 **Hunted:** Lord Garethon (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)

15 **Psychological Complication:** Hatred Of Orcs (Common, Strong)

10 **Psychological Complication:** Code Of Dwarven Honor (Common, Moderate)

Total Complications Points: 60

Experience Points: 0

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR Min	Notes
Battle Axe	+0	—	2d6	1d6-1	13	
Francisca	+0	+0	1½d6	1d6-1	10	Can Be Thrown
Dagger	+0	+0	1d6-1	1d6-1	6	Can Be Thrown

Armor

Plate and chain armor (PD7/ED 7)
Small shield (+1 DCV; 1d6 N, STR Min 5)

Gear: Light warhorse; various types of adventuring gear (tent and bedroll, flint and steel, torches, rations, and so forth)



HALFREDA

Background/History: Halfreda was born into a family of dwarves who were subjects of a dwarven kingdom in the Ironheart Mountains. As a young dwarf, she often accompanied her parents — traders in metalwork and other wares — on their long journeys into Besruhan and the city-states of the Tornathian League.

One fateful day, a band of orcs ambushed her family's caravan, slaughtering the traders almost to a dwarf before despoiling the wagons. Halfreda survived by hiding in an empty barrel, then trekked all the way back to the mountains on her own by sneaking through the wilds. With her family dead, all she had left was her hatred of the greenskins who'd slain them.

Abandoning the trader's life, Halfreda trained as a warrior, taking to the axe and shield as one born to them. After helping her people destroy several tribes of mountain orcs, including (she believes) the one that slew her family, she set out to become an adventurer — a career that combined her desire for glory in battle with her love of gold and riches.

Halfreda met Drudaryon and his brother Valearius over the dead body of a mighty orc chieftain. While traveling through the Crown March one winter, she heard the clash of arms and rushed to the scene. There she found the two brothers hard-pressed by a band of orcs. Without a thought for her own safety, she jumped into the fray, slaying a half-dozen of the orcs before they realized she was there. She and Drudaryon simultaneously struck killing blows against the orc-chief, and the paladin instantly recognized a kindred spirit in the dwarven warrior-woman. He asked her to join his quest on behalf of the Gods of Light, and she agreed at once.

Personality/Motivation: Halfreda is a curious blend of the noble and practical. She agrees with Drudaryon's cause, and espouses a dwarven code of honor that makes her eschew anything she regards as "ignoble" or "low" (such as attacking from ambush or employing other dishonorable fighting tactics). But at the same time she's got a strong practical streak. She makes no apologies for her love of treasure and wealth, for one must have money to survive and fight! She spends a lot of her hard-earned gold extravagantly, buying rounds of ale for the house and then making lavish gifts to the poor of whatever city she's in while she's too drunk for her natural cupidity to stop her.

Although she's usually pleasant enough, particularly with people she knows, Halfreda has a bit of a temper and can go from friendly to furious in a heartbeat if someone says the wrong thing. Any accusation of cowardice, stupidity, or dishonorable conduct is likely to make her throw the first punch and ask questions later. She falls into foul moods at the least setback or frustration, and has trouble shaking them.

Quote: "It's not *my* size you should worry about, orc-spawn! It's the size of the hole my axe is about to make in your hide."

Powers/Tactics: Halfreda is a "heavy fighter" who wears strong armor and relies on her strength and large weapons to win battles. With her shield in one hand and battle axe in the other, she's both well-defended and able to strike deadly blows; she occasionally attempts a shield bash if she thinks her opponent's not expecting it (and few are, since the size and sharpness of her axe tends to focus their attention on it). (At the GM's option, she can use her HA dice with a shield bash.)

Halfreda prefers to charge right into battle and lay her opponents low with swift axe-blows. Although she carries a crossbow and can use it well, she regards ranged combat as at least a little dishonorable, so she avoids it when she can. If the members of the Legion decide to lay an ambush or attempt some other tactic she disagrees with, she usually volunteers to be the "bait" or leading edge of the assault, to minimize the stain on her honor.

Appearance: Halfreda is a female dwarf. She wears heavy armor — a combination of heavy chain mail plus some strategically-placed bits of plate armor (breastplate, gauntlets, shoulders, boots/greaves). She carries a dwarven battle axe and a shield, and has a crossbow slung across her back. Her arms and body are heavily muscled; she's even stronger than Drudaryon.

Halfreda's face is relatively plain, though her appearance improves when she's in one of her infrequent good moods. She has brown hair woven into two long braids, as well as two small "warrior's braids" on each side of the front of her head.



TARINA

Background/History: Born of an elven father and a human mother, Tarina grew up among her father's people, in Elvenholme near the land of Umbr. Quick of wit and deft of hand, she became a skilled hunter and tracker, her archery as good as the best of her full-blooded elven kin.

When grown to womanhood, Tarina decided to learn more of her mother's folk, and to see the wide world beyond the borders of the forest. Taking her bow, her blade, her faithful hound Togar, and a corselet of fine elven chainmail her father gave her, she journeyed to Velkathy-Tashan to seek her fortune. Her first impressions of the world of men were not good ones; the crowded, noisy, stinking city offended her senses, and an unfortunate encounter with a thief cost her most of the coins she carried. In less than a week she was already thinking about returning home.

A chance encounter near the Silver Rose Inn changed her mind. She came upon four footpads robbing a harper. Concerned more for him than for her own safety, she drew her sword and attacked, downing two of the thieves quickly. Then, to her amazement, the harper gestured, and fire flew from his fingertips! The other two thieves, hair and clothes smoldering, fled for their lives.

Impressed with Tarina's bravery, skill, and valor, the harper — Valerius — offered to buy her a drink and a meal by way of thanks. Grateful for some pleasant company, she agreed. At the inn, Valerius introduced her to his brother Drudaryon and the other members of the Legion. Upon learning the group was bound for the Valician Hills to investigate rumors of an ancient ruin filled with treasure, Tarina asked to accompany them, and was accepted into the Legion. Since then, her bow and blade, not to mention her consummate woodcraft, have served Drudaryon's cause well and willingly.

Personality/Motivation: A young and kind-hearted half-elven woman, Tarina was raised to believe she should use her gifts to help others, and she enjoys doing so. While she's quick to condemn folly or vainglory for what they are, she can recognize injustice and genuine need, and always responds to both as best she can. She's more devoted to the causes for which Drudaryon founded the Legion than any other member besides Drudaryon himself.

Although usually pleasant-mannered and lighthearted, ready to laugh or jest, Tarina becomes grimmer and quieter in cities, which she dislikes; she has a difficult time trusting city folk. She prefers the wilds, as rough and dangerous as they may sometimes be, to the streets of men. At least in the fields and woods she can recognize the predators for what they are.

When not adventuring, Tarina enjoys competing in games and sports when she has the opportunity, and reading or discussion when she does not. She has a fine singing voice and often accompanies Valerius when he plays for the Legion.

Quote: "Cityfolk — fah! I'd sooner trust a wolf!"

Powers/Tactics: Trained in woodland skills and archery, Tarina is a superb ranger and scout. She can track a fleeing orc across inhospitable ground, fell a running hare at a hundred paces with one swift bowshot, and hold her own in battle. She usually fights with her short sword in her right hand and a small axe in her left, making it difficult for an opponent to know where she'll strike next; sometimes she substitutes a buckler for the dagger.

Tarina prefers stealth, ambush, and guile to open combat when possible. She sees no point in risking a fight when she can lay an enemy low with an arrow or trick him into surrendering. In this she often argues with Halfreda, who finds such methods dishonorable.

Appearance: A half-elven female in her early 20s, Tarina wears nonrestrictive leather armor (augmented by a chain corselet at times), knee-high boots made of tough leather, and a brown-grey hooded cloak. She carries a longbow; she has a quiver of arrows on her back, a short sword in a scabbard on her left hip, and a hatchet at her right hip.

Tarina is beautiful, with an elven cast to her features and a slight point to her ears. Her hair is blonde, and not quite shoulder length; her eyes are a piercing blue.

TARINA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 300 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
16	DEX	12	12-	
16	CON	6	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
5	PD	3		Total: 8 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
10	BODY	0		
24	STUN	2		Total Characteristics Cost: 103

Movement: Running: 14m

Cost	Powers	END
2	Swift-Limbed: Running +2m (14m total)	1
6	Senses Like A Cat's: +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0

Talents

- 8 Combat Archery
- 6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

Skills

- 4 +2 OCV with Bows
- 12 **Targeting Skill Levels:** +4 versus Hit Location Modifiers with All Attacks
- 3 Climbing 12-
- 2 KS: Flora And Fauna 11-
- 2 Language: Mhendarian (fluent conversation; Elvish is native)
- 1 Literacy
- 3 Riding 12-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 4 Survival (Mountains, Temperate/Subtropical) 12-
- 7 Tracking 14-
- 5 Two-Weapon Fighting (HTH)
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 72

Total Cost: 175



175 Matching Complications (50)

- 20 **Hunted:** Lord Garethon (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Self-Sacrificing; Willing To Risk Her Life In The Cause Of Good (Common, Strong)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Distrusts City Folk (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 0

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Notes
Short Sword	+0	—	1d6	1d6-1	10		
Hand Axe	+0	+0	1d6	1d6-1	6		Can Be Thrown
Dagger	+0	+0	1d6-1	1d6-1	6		Can Be Thrown
VH Bow	+0	+0	2d6	1d6-1	10†		40 arrows, 2H, No Horse, Conc

Armor

Light chainmail corselet (PD 5/ED 5 on Hit Locations 9-15)
Cuir-bouilli (PD 3/ED 3) for other Locations, but no armor on the Hands

Gear: Light warhorse; various types of adventuring gear (tent and bedroll, flint and steel, torches, rations, and so forth)



DRAGO

Background/History: A member of the Hlastroi, a hill-tribe well-known for its wily tactics and fierce fighters, Drago ran away from home to Antyratori as a young man. The lure of the Keldravian capital and its riches appealed to him in a way the rough life of the hill-men did not. He soon found that his toughness, wits, and agility suited him to a career as a thief. Over time, he progressed from simple robberies and burglaries to far more sophisticated jobs... all without joining the Shadow Folk, the thieves' guild of Antyratori.

Displeased with Drago's "unfriendliness," the Shadow Folk sent two skilled assassins after him. They cornered him in a darkened alley, and Drago feared all was lost. But then an armored warrior, glowing with holy light, slew his attackers! Drudaryon the paladin had seen the fight begin; sensing evil in the attackers but not their victim, he came to Drago's rescue.

By the traditions and customs of the Hlastroi, Drago's life now belonged to Drudaryon. The paladin refused to accept it, declaring that Drago's life was his own, but asking that he abandon the wayward life of a thief to help the Legion in its quest. Regarding the paladin's refusal of his life as meaningless, Drago took this request as an order, and has faithfully served the Legion ever since.

Personality/Motivation: Raised by a hard, unforgiving people in a hard, unforgiving land, Drago has little respect for the property or lives of others. To him, life is about survival, and those who can take something they want deserve to have it despite what the laws or priests may say. He often makes suggestions for "practical" (treacherous, underhanded, sneaky, vicious) actions that the rest of the Legion, to his chagrin, ignores. While Drudaryon's influence has done much to turn him to the causes of the Blue Gods, at heart he still has far too much of the greedy thief in him.

Quote: "Look, Lord Darros is corrupt. I know it, you know it, we all know it. Why not let's just knife him now and have done with it, instead of waiting until he finds some way to set the City Guard to hunting us?"

Powers/Tactics: Drago is a burglar and cut-purse, one who's honed his skills to a razor's edge on the streets of Antyratori, but he's something more than your average thief. He brings to the roguish life his skills as a Hlastroi hill-warrior, making him more dangerous in combat than the average footpad.

In Drago's book, fighting fair is for fools. He looks for every bit of unfair advantage he can get, and prefers to attack his opponents from behind (often while they're busy fighting Drudaryon or Halfreda). He avoids open combat whenever possible.

Appearance: Drago is a human male in his mid-30s; he's about 5'7" tall. He wears a dark grey tunic and leggings, black boots, a black belt with a couple of pouches, and black bracers around his wrists. (While adventuring he wears leather armor as well.) He carries several daggers. The two obvious ones are on his hips, but dagger pommels peek out from the tops of his boots, inside his sleeves, and other places. He sometimes also carries a Hlastroi *gul'hach* ("Red Caress"), a "dagger" that's as long as a short sword.

Drago's face is timeworn, with a prominent scar along the left jawline. He has short black hair badly cut (he just hacks it off with a dagger when necessary), a moustache, and no beard.

DRAGO

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150 kg; 2½d6 HTH damage [1]
20	DEX	20	13-	
14	CON	4	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6

7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12

4	PD	2		Total: 7 PD (3 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 7 ED (3 rED)
5	REC	1		
25	END	1		
10	BODY	0		
22	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 104

Movement: Running: 14m

Cost Powers

2	Swift-Limbed:	Running +2m (14m total)	1
10	Favor Of Fortune:	Luck 2d6	0

Talents

6	Combat Luck	(3 PD/3 ED)
12	Daggermaster:	Weaponmaster (+1d6 Killing Damage with Daggers HTH)

Skills

6	+2 with Daggers	(HTH or Thrown)
6	+1 with Agility Skills	
3	Acrobatics	13-
3	Climbing	13-
3	Lockpicking	13-
3	Security Systems	12-
3	Sleight Of Hand	13-
7	Stealth	15-
3	Streetwise	12-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons,	Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 71

Total Cost: 175

175 Matching Complications (50)

- 20 **Hunted:** Lord Garethon (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Greedy And Self-Centered (Common, Strong)
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Drudaryon Owns His Life (will do whatever Drudaryon wants him to) (Common, Total)

Total Complications Points: 55

Experience Points: 0

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Notes
Dagger	+0	+0	1d6-1	1d6-1	6		Carries 12, Can Be Thrown

Armor

Heavy Leather (2 PD/2 ED)

Gear: Thieves' tools; climbing gear; Riding horse; various types of adventuring gear (tent and bedroll, flint and steel, torches, rations, and so forth)



DRAGO



VILLAINS

TAAL SALIRA

Background/History: A mean and hateful girl, given to using her charms to stir up trouble in the village where she grew up, Salira Reshar joined the priesthood of the Scarlet Gods because she thought it a good road to power and riches. But she soon felt within her the stirrings of true religious devotion, particularly toward Tharex, the god of curses — a minor member of the Scarlet pantheon, to be sure, but that didn't trouble her. She soon found that being in the “small pond” of Tharex's followers wasn't entirely bad; she advanced more quickly through the priesthood than she would have in the hierarchy of a more popular divinity. The god himself showed his favor toward her by helping her craft a powerful Staff Of Curses for use against her enemies.

Taal (“Priest”) Salira's path crossed that of Drudaryon's Legion when she met the paladin himself at a Szarvasian court function. Taken with the handsome young man, she made advances toward him, which he curtly rebuffed. Infuriated, she vowed to make him regret the way he treated her. She used her spells to bedevil the Legion while it remained in Szarvasia, almost getting Halfreda killed at one point. Since then, she's frequently been a thorn in the Legion's side, hatching all sorts of plots and schemes to kill them or make their missions more difficult.

Personality/Motivation: Spiteful, cruel, vengeful, vicious, and ruthless — these are all words that apply to Taal Salira. Add to that the mystic power of a high-ranking priest of Tharex, and you have a potent force for evil in the world. She delights in intrigues and schemes from the petty to the grandiose, and hopes one day to gather enough power to herself to advance the cause of the god of curses both in the world and in heaven.

As a competent, cunningly smart, and beautiful woman, Taal Salira is used to getting her way in just about everything. Anyone who denies her or thwarts one of her plans earns her ire — and while she often strikes hard and quickly out of fury, she can also nurse a grudge for long years before she makes her displeasure known.

Quote: “You'll find my favor a blessing of no little worth — and my disfavor a curse most terrifying.”

Powers/Tactics: As a priestess of Tharex, god of curses, Salira possesses many of the usual priestly powers, such as the ability to command the undead and cast spells. Unlike most priests, her spells run to the offensive — various curses that inflict pain, weakness, or other difficulties. In combat she relies on her magic, but if it doesn't have a significant effect quickly, she usually retreats to a position of safety before continuing the fight. She tries to have at least two or three possible escape routes from any encounter.

Taal Salira wears armor and carries a weapon if expecting combat, but usually prefers her priestly vestments. Her most powerful weapon is her Staff Of Curses, which not only lets her inflict various types of harm on others but provides END for itself and her spells. (It's a Personal Focus.)

Campaign Use: Taal Salira acts as a powerful, though not overwhelmingly powerful, foe for the PCs. While she can cast spells and use enchanted items, her ability to affect the PCs lies as much in her Contacts, influence in society, and ability to send temple soldiers and servitors against them. Unless she has a strong personal grudge against them, she won't confront the PCs initially; she'll wait until her underlings have weakened or defeated them before revealing herself.

To make Taal Salira more powerful, give her more spells. She has relatively few listed on her character sheet (since she's got the Staff Of Curses to augment her abilities), but Tharex could easily grant her more if he desired. To weaken her, remove the Staff or reduce its Active Points of Drain.

Appearance: Salira typically wears priestly vestments — sweeping black robes with holy writings embroidered in two vertical lines down the front, and an elaborate jeweled golden necklace displaying the symbol of Tharex. She carries her Staff Of Curses in her left hand.

Salira is a woman in her early 40s, 5'5" tall and of average build. She has short black hair streaked with grey here and there, but retains much of the beauty she was renowned for in her youth. Her face and eyes have the obsessed look of the religious fanatic, which spoils the effect of her beauty somewhat.

TAAL SALIRA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
15	DEX	10	12-	
18	CON	8	13-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
20	EGO	10	13-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
5	OCV	10		
7	DCV	20		
4	OMCV	3		
5	DMCV	6		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
4	PD	2		Total: 7 PD (3 rPD)
4	ED	2		Total: 7 ED (3 rED)
6	REC	2		
35	END	3		
12	BODY	2		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 118

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Spells **END**

3	Blessing (+1 Overall for up to 8 people)	0
5	Curse Of Unluck (Major Transform 6d6 to inflict Unluck 3d6)	6
4	Divine Shield (Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED))	3
3	Healing-Spell (Simplified Healing 4d6)	4
6	Inflict Illness (Drain STR and CON 2d6, No Range)	7

Powers

37	Staff Of Curses: Drain Characteristics 3d6 Variable Effect (any one Characteristic at a time; +½), Delayed Recovery Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Minute; +1); OAF (-1)	7
30	Staff Of Curses: Endurance Reserve (160 END, 30 REC) OAF (-1)	0

Perks

30	Contacts: various and sundry throughout the Turakian lands
5	Fringe Benefit: Religious Rank
1	Fringe Benefit: Right To Marry

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
24	Turn Undead (+120 PRE)

Skills

12	+4 with Magic
3	Charm 13-
3	Conversation 13-
13	Faith 18-
3	High Society 13-
3	Interrogation 13-
1	KS: The Priestly World 8-



5	KS: Scarlet Gods Religious Doctrine 14-
1	Literacy
3	Oratory 13-
3	Persuasion 13-
3	PS: Priest Of The Scarlet Gods 13-
3	Riding 12-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Streetwise 13-
2	WF: Common Melee Weapons
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 218	
Total Cost: 336	

175 Matching Complications (50)

20	Enraged: if refused/denied (Common), go 11-, recover 11-
10	Negative Reputation: scheming, power-hungry, ruthless priestess of a Scarlet God, 11-
25	Psychological Complication: Devotion To Tharex And His Purposes (Very Common, Total)
15	Psychological Complication: Hunts Drudaryon's Legion (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 161

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Notes
Staff Of Curses	+0	—	4d6 N	—	10	2H	
Small Mace	+0	—	1d6	+0	8		

Armor

Chainmail (6 PD/6 ED)
Medium Shield (+2 DCV, 2d6 N, STR Min 10)

Gear: Priestly vestments, holy symbol, sacred text



SPELLS



BLESSING

Effect: +1 Overall Level
Target/Area Affected: Up to 8 characters simultaneously
Casting Time: Half Phase
Casting Procedures: Gestures, Incantations
Duration: Time Limit (5 Minutes' duration)
Range: Touch
Magic Roll Penalty: -3
END Cost: 0

Description: See page 299.

Game Information: +1 Overall, Usable Simultaneously (up to eight people at once; +1), Time Limit (5 Minutes' duration; +¾) (33 Active Points); OAF (holy symbol; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Faith Roll (-½), Only When Serving The God's Purposes (-½), Appropriate Uses Only (-½). Total cost: 8 points. (cost to character: 3 points).



CURSE OF UNLUCK

Effect: Major Transform 6d6 (normal person into person with Unluck 3d6)
Target/Area Affected: One character
Casting Time: Half Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures: Focus, Gestures, Incantations
Duration: Instant
Range: Touch
Magic Roll Penalty: -6
END Cost: 6

Description: One of the most potent spells granted to the priests of Tharex, the Curse Of Unluck inflicts ill fortune on someone. In game terms, they gain the Complication *Unluck 3d6*, and keep it until the priest who cast the spell sees fit to lift it or counter-curse magic is applied.

Game Information: Major Transform 6d6 (normal person into person with Unluck 3d6, heals back through another application of this spell or any curse removal spell) (60 Active Points); OAF (holy symbol; -1), No Range (-½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Faith Roll (-½), Only When Serving The God's Purposes (-½), Limited Target (sentient beings; -¼). Total cost: 14 points (cost to character: 5 points).



DIVINE SHIELD

Effect: Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED)
Target/Area Affected: Self
Casting Time: Half Phase
Casting Procedures: Gestures, Incantations
Duration: Constant
Range: Self
Magic Roll Penalty: -3
END Cost: 3

Description: This spell calls upon the priest's god to reach forth his hand and protect his servant against attacks. However, it doesn't defend the priest against exotic forms of attack created by some spells.

Game Information: Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED) (30 Active Points); Costs Endurance (-½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Requires A Faith Roll (-½). Total cost: 12 points (cost to character: 4 points).



HEALING-SPELL

Effect: Simplified Healing 4d6, Can Heal Limbs
Target/Area Affected: One character
Casting Time: Half Phase (Attack Action)
Casting Procedures: Focus, Gestures, Incantations
Duration: Instant
Range: Touch
Magic Roll Penalty: -4
END Cost: 4

Description: With this spell, the priests of Tharex (or other gods) can heal the injured. After applying the spell to a wound, the character must wait an entire day before he can use it again on that same wound.

Game Information: Simplified Healing 4d6, Can Heal Limbs (45 Active Points); OAF (holy symbol; -1), Concentration (½ DCV throughout; -½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (throughout; -½), Requires A Faith Roll (-½), Only When Serving The God's Purposes (-½). Total cost: 8 points (cost to character: 3 points).

INFLICT ILLNESS

Effect: Drain STR and CON 2d6, Delayed Return Rate (5 Character Points per Day)

Target/Area Affected: One character

Casting Time: Half Phase (Attack Action)

Casting Procedures: Focus, Gestures, Incantations

Duration: Instant

Range: Touch

Magic Roll Penalty: -7

END Cost: 7

Description: This spell allows the priests of Tharex to inflict the curse of illness on another person. The disease makes the target sick and weak, though he'll recover naturally over the course of a day or two.

Game Information: Drain STR and CON 2d6, Expanded Effect (two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Delayed Return Rate (points regain at the rate of 5 per Day; +2¼) (75 Active Points); OAF (holy symbol; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), No Range (-½), Requires A Faith Roll (-½), Only When Serving The God's Purposes (-½). Total cost: 19 points (cost to character: 6 points).

LORD GARETHON

Background/History: Eldest son of Toradoc Rennigar, a duke of the Mhendarian Palatinate, Garethon assumed his father's title when the middle-aged man died prematurely in his sleep. Untroubled by whispered rumors that he poisoned his father, he soon earned a reputation as a harsh lord, one willing to enforce his oppressive dictates with shows of force whenever necessary. The vultures know the outside of his castle walls well.

Ever eager for greater power and wealth, Lord Garethon has schemed to take lands and titles away from other Mhendarian nobles, particularly the counts of House Halwyn, who've opposed him at court on several occasions. The fact that the adventurers Drudaryon and Valerius, scions of Halwyn, have foiled several of his schemes and embarrassed him personally has only made him hate them and their family even more. He's determined to destroy the upstart heroes once and for all, and then find a way to claim the Halwyn lands for his own.

Personality/Motivation: There's little good one can say of Lord Garethon's personality, other than the fact that he can be exceedingly courteous when he wants to. He's powerhungry and ruthless, always looking for ways to increase his personal influence and holdings. If he feels he can get away with it, he's even willing to hire assassins or use other criminal means to obtain what he wants.

When not scheming or governing his lands, Lord Garethon occupies himself with the usual activities befitting one of his station, such as

hunting, falconry, or tournaments. He's no miser; he's more than willing to spend lavish amounts of money to enjoy himself and/or impress others.

Quote: "M'lord jests if he thinks he can outdo me in the lists... or on any other field of battle."

Powers/Tactics: Canny and clever, Lord Garethon never approaches a confrontation without doing everything he can to ensure he has the upper hand. As patient as a viper, he'll coldly calculate the odds for a long time before committing himself... though he's quick to snatch a fleeting advantage if he feels it's worth the risk.

In battle, Garethon wears plate armor and wields a bastard sword with well-honed skill. When facing opponents without significant protection (weak armor and/or no shield), he'll fight aggressively, using OCV-boosting Martial Maneuvers and putting his Combat Skill Levels into OCV or damage. When fighting a shielded opponent, or one whose fighting skills he's unaware of, he'll fight defensively at first until he can take his foe's measure, then shift to attacks designed to exploit any weaknesses he's uncovered. He usually tries to keep some of his knights or soldiers nearby to save him in case the fight goes against him.

When fighting, Lord Garethon gladly uses underhanded tactics if he can do so without revealing his perfidy. He's not even above outright cheating, such as putting clear poison on his blade, if he feels he can get away with it.

Campaign Use: Lord Garethon attacks the heroes in two ways. First, he can go after them directly. While he's unlikely to do that at first, he will if sufficiently angered, or if his other options don't work. Second, he can assault them indirectly, using his connections and political power to make their lives difficult. It would take very little to get most PC groups declared outlaws, for example. If necessary, Garethon uses his wealth against the PCs, too; for example, he could hire spellcasters or mercenaries to attack them.

To make Lord Garethon more powerful, increase his fighting abilities — add a few Combat Skill Levels, or some Extra DCs for his Martial Arts. You could also equip him with whatever enchanted items he might need to confront the PCs. If he's already too tough, reduce his Characteristics a little and remove two or three Martial Maneuvers.

Appearance: Lord Garethon is in his mid-30s, stands 5'9" tall, has short, stylish black hair and a well-manicured black beard and moustache. He dresses in the finest of fashions: richly-made, elaborately-decorated tunic, leggings, cape, and hat. Jeweled rings bedizen his fingers, and the long dagger at his belt has a large gem set in the pommel. Although he looks somewhat foppish at court, in truth he's a skilled and deadly fighter, well-muscled and perfectly capable of taking care of himself in any confrontation.

LORD GARETHON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
18	STR	8	13-	Lift 300 kg; 3½d6 HTH damage [2]
15	DEX	10	12-	
16	CON	6	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	5	12-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
6 OCV 15				
6 DCV 15				
3 OMCV 0				
3 DMCV 0				
4 SPD 20 Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12				
7 PD 5 Total: 7 PD (0 rPD)				
5 ED 3 Total: 5 ED (0 rED)				
7 REC 3				
35 END 3				
16 BODY 6				
34 STUN 7 Total Characteristics Cost: 126				

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers

Martial Arts: Swordfighting				
<i>Maneuver</i>	<i>OCV</i>	<i>DCV</i>	<i>Damage/Effect</i>	
4	Counterstrike	+2	+2	Weapon +2 DC Strike, Must Follow Block
4	Lock	+1	+0	Bind, 28 STR
4	Half-Sword Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 28 STR for Disarm roll, Requires Both Hands
3	Half-Sword Trip	+2	+0	Weapon Strike, Target Falls, Requires Both Hands
4	Parry	+2	+2	Block, Abort
5	Plunging Strike	-2	+1	Weapon +4 DC Strike
4	Slash	+0	+2	Weapon +2 DC Strike
5	Thrust	+1	+3	Weapon Strike

Perks

- 50 **Contacts:** various and sundry in the Mhendarian Palatinate and neighboring realms
- 8 **Fringe Benefit:** Lordship (Duke)
- 10 **Money:** Wealthy

Talents

- 15 **Combat Sense** 13-

Skills

- 24 +2 Overall
- 10 +2 with Swordfighting
- 3 Bureaucratics 13-
- 3 Conversation 13-
- 5 High Society 14-
- 3 Interrogation 13-
- 3 KS: Laws Of The Mhendarian Palatinate 13-
- 2 KS: Swordfighting 11-
- 1 Literacy
- 3 Persuasion 13-

- 2 PS: Brew Poison 11-
- 2 PS: Falconry 11-
- 3 Sleight Of Hand 12-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 1 Streetwise 8-
- 6 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Lance, Whip

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 190

Total Cost: 316

175 Matching Complications (50)

- 10 **DNPC:** Toradoc (his only son) (Infrequently, Normal)
- 10 **Hunted:** the Mhendarian king (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 **Hunted:** Count Halwyn (Frequently, As Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 **Negative Reputation:** ruthless noble, 11-
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Powerhungry (Very Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 141

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Notes
Bastard Sword	+0	—	1½d6	+0	13		
Battle Axe	+0	—	2d6	+0	13		
Dagger	+0	+0	1d6-1	1d6-1	6		Can Be Thrown

Armor

Plate Armor (8 PD/8 ED)

Gear: Heavy warhorse; fine clothes



MINION GALLERY



The following “generic” character sheets represent typical human NPCs and enemies Fantasy Hero PCs might encounter, such as city guards, merchants, and thieves. As always, you should change or supplement them as desired. (For monsters and similar opponents, see *The HERO System Bestiary*.)

For the spellcasting adversaries — the Priest and the Wizard — the GM should choose an appropriate selection of spells from *The HERO System Grimoire* or his own spell lists. If necessary for the campaign’s magic system, remove the *Magic Skill* or make any other relevant changes.

BANDIT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150 kg; 2½d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
13	CON	3	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6

5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	PD	2		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
6	REC	2		
25	END	1		
11	BODY	1		
24	STUN	2		Total Characteristics Cost: 56

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Skills

8	+1 HTH
3	Climbing 12-
3	Concealment 11-
3	Fast Draw (Common Melee Weapons) 12-

2	AK: Local Forest/Region 11-
3	Riding 12-
3	Stealth 12-
2	Survival (choose one category) 11-
3	Tracking 11-
5	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Sling

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 35

Total Cost: 91

100 Matching Complications (30)

15	Hunted: by a local lord or sheriff 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Capture/Kill)
15	Psychological Complication: Greedy, Selfish, And Cruel (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 30

Experience Points: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Battle Axe	+0	—	2d6	+0	13		
Bow, Medium	+0	+0	1d6+1	+0	9 †	10	RC
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6		
Longsword	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	12		
Sling	+0	-1	1d6+1	+1	8 †	10	RC
Spear, Short	+0	+0	1d6+1	+0	8		

Armor

Cuir-Bouilli Armor (PD 3/ED 3)

Small Shield (+1 DCV)

Gear: Horse, bedroll and tent, flint and tinder, rations

Clothing: Everyday clothes, cloak

BARBARIAN WARRIOR

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH damage [2]
15	DEX	10	12-	
17	CON	7	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
6	OCV	15		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	PD	3		Total: 5 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
7	REC	3		
35	END	3		
13	BODY	3		
32	STUN	6		

Total Characteristics Cost: 84

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Skills

16	+2 HTH
3	Climbing 12-
2	AK: Home Region 11-
2	KS: Enemy/Rival Tribe 11-
3	Riding 12-
3	Stealth 12-
2	Survival (choose environment) 11-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 35

Total Cost: 119

100 Matching Complications (30)

None

Total Complications Points: 0

Experience Points: 19

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Battle Axe	+0	—	2d6	+0	13		
Bow, Heavy	+0	+0	1½d6	+0	10 †	10	RC
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6		
Javelin	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	8		
Greatsword	+1	—	2d6	+0	17		
Longsword	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	12		

Armor

Chainmail Shirt (PD 6/ED 6, protects Hit Locations 8-13) (or Soft Leather [PD 2/ED 2] overall)

Medium Shield (+2 DCV)

Gear: Flint and tinder, whetstone, horse

Clothing: Furs, skins, leather clothing

CITY GUARD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
13	DEX	6	12-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
13	CON	3	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
4	OCV	5		
4	DCV	5		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
6	REC	2		
25	END	1		
10	BODY	0		
24	STUN	2		Total Characteristics Cost: 44

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Skills

8	+1 HTH
4	+2 OCV with one weapon of character's choice
2	Range Skill Levels: +2 versus Range Modifier with Light Crossbow
2	CK: city the character guards 11-
2	KS: Heraldry 11-
3	Riding 12-
3	Tactics 11-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 28

Total Cost: 72

100 Matching Complications (30)

20	Social Complication: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
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Total Complications Points: 20

Experience Points: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Crossbow, Light+0	—	+1	1d6+1	+0	12	†	10 RC
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6		
Longsword	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	12		
Pole Axe	-1	—	2d6	+0	13		
Spear, Medium+0	—	1½d6	+0	10			

Armor

Chainmail (PD 6/ED 6) (or Brigandine [PD 4/ED 4] in smaller, less prosperous cities)

Medium Shield (+2 DCV)

Gear: Horse, metal polishing kit

Clothing: Fighting clothes

HORSE NOMAD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
15	DEX	10	12-	
14	CON	4	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
6	OCV	15		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	PD	2		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
10	BODY	0		
24	STUN	2		
Total Characteristics Cost: 66				

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Skills

10	+1 with All Combat
2	Animal Handler (Equines) 12-
2	AK: Home Region 11-
2	KS: Enemy/Rival Tribe 11-
7	Riding 14-
3	Stealth 12-
1	Survival (Temperate Plains) 11-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 31

Total Cost: 97

100 Matching Complications (30)

None

Total Complications Points: 0

Experience Points: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Bow, Medium	0+0	1d6+1	+0	9 †	10	RC	
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6		
Javelin	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	8		
Longsword	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	12		
Scimitar	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	11		
Spear, Medium	+0	—	1½d6	+0	10		

Armor

Chainmail (PD 6/ED 6) (or Cuir-Bouilli [PD 3/ED 3])

Medium Shield (+2 DCV)

Gear: Horse, saddle and tack, flint and tinder, whetstone

Clothing: Riding clothes, everyday clothes

KNIGHT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
15	CON	5	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
6	OCV	15		
6	DCV	15		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	PD	2		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
10	BODY	0		
26	STUN	3		Total Characteristics Cost: 76

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Perks

2 **Fringe Benefit:** Knight

Skills

- 8 +1 HTH
- 3 +1 with Longsword, Lance, and War Hammer
- 6 **Riding Skill Levels:** +2 OCV versus Mounted Combat penalties with All Attacks
- 3 High Society 12-
- 2 KS: Heraldry 11-
- 2 KS: Knights 11-
- 3 Persuasion 12-
- 7 Riding 14-
- 3 Tactics 11-
- 3 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Lance

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 42

Total Cost: 118

100 Matching Complications (30)

- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Code Of Chivalry (Common, Strong)
- 25 **Social Complication:** Subject To Liege Lord's Orders (Very Frequently, Severe)

Total Complications Points: 30

Experience Points: 18

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6		
Hammer, War	-1	—	1d6+1	+1	13		
Lance, Medium	+0	—	1½d6	+0	13	†	
Longsword	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	12		

Armor

Plate Armor (PD 7/ED 7)

Medium Shield (+2 DCV)

Gear: Horse, barding, heraldic banners and pennants

Clothing: Field clothes, fine/court clothes

MERCHANT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
10	DEX	0	11-	
10	CON	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
3	OCV	0		
3	DCV	0		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
2	PD	0		Total: 2 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
4	REC	0		
15	END	-1		
10	BODY	0		
16	STUN	-2		Total Characteristics Cost: 8

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Skills

3	Bribery 13-
3	High Society 13-
3	Persuasion 13-
3	PS: Merchant 12-
3	Riding 11-
7	Trading 15-
1	WF: Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 23

Total Cost: 31

100 Matching Complications (30)

None

Total Complications Points: 0

Experience Points: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0			6

Armor

None

Gear: Writing kit, sample trade goods

Clothing: Everyday clothes appropriate to income

NOBLEMAN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
12	STR	2	11-	Lift 133 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
12	DEX	4	11-	
11	CON	1	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	2	11-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
3	OCV	0		
3	DCV	0		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
4	REC	0		
20	END	0		
10	BODY	0		
22	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 34

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Perks

10	Contacts (GM's choice)
3	Fringe Benefit: Lordship
5	Money

Skills

3	Bureaucratics 13-
3	Conversation 13-
1	Gambling (Card Games) 8-
3	High Society 13-
1	KS: Heraldry 8-
2	KS: The Noble World 11-
3	Persuasion 13-
3	Riding 11-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 41

Total Cost: 75

100 Matching Complications (30)

None

Total Complications Points: 0

Experience Points: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6		
Longsword	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	12		

Armor

Plate Armor (PD 7/ED 7)

Medium Shield (+2 DCV)

Gear: Just about anything he wants, within reason; fine clothing

PIRATE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150 kg; 2½d6 HTH damage [1]
15	DEX	10	12-	
13	CON	3	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	PD	2		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
6	REC	2		
25	END	1		
11	BODY	1		
24	STUN	2		
				Total Characteristics Cost: 58

Movement: Running: 12m
Swimming: 6m

Cost Powers **END**
1 **Strong Swimmer:** Swimming +2m (6m total) 1

Skills

8 +1 HTH

3 Climbing 12-
7 Combat Sailing 14-
2 AK: Home Seas And Coasts 11-
2 KS: The Pirate World 11-
2 PS: Sailor 11-
3 Stealth 12-
3 Streetwise 12-
2 Survival (Marine) 11-
4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 37

Total Cost: 95

100 Matching Complications (30)

None (though may have some deriving from his criminal career: Hunted by local authorities, Distinctive Features for a lopped nose or ears, Social Complication, or the like)

Total Complications Points: 0

Experience Points: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Bow, Medium	+0	+0	1d6+1	+0	9†	10	RC
Cutlass	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	12		
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6		

Armor

Cuir Bouilli (PD 3/ED 3)

Gear: Flint and tinder, whetstone

Clothing: Everyday clothes

PRIEST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [2]
10	DEX	0	11-	
12	CON	2	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
18	EGO	8	13-	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
3	OCV	0		
3	DCV	0		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
4	REC	0		
25	END	1		
10	BODY	0		
20	STUN	0		

Total Characteristics Cost: 31

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers END

40 **Priestly Magic:** 40 points' worth of spells and priestly abilities

Perks

3 **Fringe Benefit:** Religious Rank

1 **Fringe Benefit:** Right To Marry

Talents

12 Turn Undead

Skills

17 Faith 20-

3 High Society 12-

2 KS: Religious Doctrine 11-

1 Literacy

3 Oratory 12-

3 Persuasion 12-

2 PS: Priest Of [Religion] 11-

2 WF: Common Melee Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 89

Total Cost: 120

100 Matching Complications (30)

25 **Psychological Complication:** Devotion To The God And His Purposes (Very Common, Total)

20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 30

Experience Points: 20

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Hammer, War	-1	—	1d6+1	+1	13		
Mace	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	10		
Quarterstaff	+1	—	4d6 N	—	10		

Armor

Chainmail (PD 6/ED 6)

Medium Shield (+2 DCV)

Gear: Holy symbol, copy of sacred text(s)

Clothing: Everyday robes, ritual vestments

SOLDIER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
13	CON	3	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
4	PD	2		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
6	REC	2		
25	END	1		
11	BODY	1		
26	STUN	3		

Total Characteristics Cost: 59

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Skills

8	+1 HTH
4	+2 OCV with one weapon of character's choice
2	KS: Heraldry 11-
3	Riding 12-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Tactics 11-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 27

Total Cost: 86

100 Matching Complications (30)

20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 0

Experience Points: 0

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min Shots
Battle Axe	+0	—	2d6	+0	13	
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6	
Longsword	+0	—	1d6+1	+0	12	
Spear, Medium	+0	—	1½d6	+0	10	

Armor

Brigandine (PD 4/ED 4) (or Chainmail [PD 6/ED 6] in more prosperous or well-equipped armies)

Medium Shield (+2 DCV)

Gear: Horse, metal polishing kit, flint and steel

Clothing: Fighting clothes

THIEF

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150 kg; 2½d6 HTH damage [1]
17	DEX	14	12-	
10	CON	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
5	OCV	10		
6	DCV	15		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
5	REC	1		
20	END	0		
10	BODY	0		
22	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 62

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Skills

3	Acrobatics 12-
3	Breakfall 12-
1	Bribery 8-
3	Climbing 12-
3	Concealment 12-
1	Contortionist 8-
3	Lockpicking 12-
3	Security Systems 12-
3	Sleight Of Hand 12-
7	Stealth 14-
5	Streetwise 13-
5	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Garrote

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 40

Total Cost: 102

100 Matching Complications (30)

15 **Hunted:** by the city watch, a local lord, the sheriff, or the like (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Capture/Kill)

Total Complications Points: 15

Experience Points: 17

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Bow, Light	+0	+0	1d6	+0	8†	10	RC
Club	+0	—	4d6 N	—	10		
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6		
Sword, Short	+0	—	1d6	+0	10		

Armor

Cuir Bouilli (PD 3/ED 3)

Buckler (+1 DCV if character succeeds with a DEX Roll)

Gear: Climbing tools, lockpicks and other thieves' tools, belt pouches

Clothing: Dark clothing appropriate to the setting

WIZARD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
12	DEX	4	11-	
12	CON	2	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
12	EGO	2	11-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
4	OCV	5		
4	DCV	5		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
4	REC	0		
25	END	1		
10	BODY	0		
20	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 51

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers

END

60 **Magic:** 60 points' worth of magic spells, abilities, and items

Skills

3 Analyze Magic 13-
 3 Inventor (Spell Research) 13-
 3 KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
 3 KS: a type or school of magic 13-
 12 KSs (GM's choice)
 17 Magic 20-
 3 Paramedics (Healing) 13-
 3 Stealth 11-
 2 WF: Blades, Staff

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 109

Total Cost: 160

100 Matching Complications (30)

None

Total Complications Points: 0

Experience Points: 90

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min Shots
Dagger	+0	—	1d6-1	+0	6	
Quarterstaff	+1	—	4d6 N	—	10	

Armor

None

Gear: Spellbooks, spell components, pouches (belt, scroll, wand)

Clothing: Wizard's robes, wizard's hat

BIBLIOGRAPHY



FANTASY FICTION

This part of the Bibliography is not an attempt to cover the entire Fantasy genre. Instead, it simply lists the author's favorite Fantasy works, both to show the influences over his approach to the genre and, hopefully, to introduce other lovers of Fantasy to some works they haven't had the pleasure of encountering yet. By the same token, it doesn't list Fantasy novels the author dislikes, regardless of how popular they may be, or novels he doesn't consider particularly noteworthy. Other works are mentioned throughout this book.

Various. The mythologies of the world. From the Arthurian epics, to Greek tales and romances, to Norse sagas, and beyond, the legends, myths, and folktales of the world are a rich mine of fantastic themes, events, and creatures — many as yet untapped for gaming purposes.

Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*. A delightful Fantasy depicting the quest of several rabbits to find a new, safe home. Contains an interesting rabbit mythology (complete with folktales) and fictional language.

Adams, Robert, ed. *Barbarians*. A enjoyable collection of short stories on the title subject; inspirational and fun for gamers who want to play such characters.

Anderson, Poul. *The Broken Sword*. A Norse epic-like Fantasy chronicling the adventures of Valgard the Changeling, a mighty warrior.

—*Three Hearts And Three Lions*. A Crossworlds Fantasy in which an engineer from Earth finds himself in a Northern European-style Fantasy realm where he takes on a paladin-like role.

—*Operation Chaos* (and oft-anthologized excerpt, "Operation Salamander"). An Urban Fantasy in which magic is common (for example, it's studied at universities and used by the military).

Anthony, Piers. *Battlecircle*. Actually a Post-Apocalyptic novel, and thus more in the realm of Science Fiction, this collection of three shorter novels (*Sos The Rope*, *Var The Stick*, *Neq The Sword*) features an intriguing warriors' dueling culture that would adapt well to Fantasy settings.

Asimov, Isaac. *The Magical Worlds Of Fantasy* anthologies. These fine collections of short stories, each centered around a theme (*Spells*, *Wizards*, *Witches*, *Curses*, and so on), are full of entertaining reading and scenario ideas.

Asprin, Robert. The "Thieves' World" anthologies. The first of the "shared world" short story collections that later proliferated throughout Fantasy literature, these books depict the city of Sanctuary and its many intriguing inhabitants. The first two are by far the best, though all the volumes in the series have stories worth reading.

Barker, M. A. R. *The Man Of Gold*, *Flamesong*, *Lord Of Tsámra*, *Prince Of Skulls*, and *A Death Of Kings*. These books, set in Professor Barker's wonderfully detailed world of Tékumel — the first setting ever published by TSR, shortly after the publication of a little game called *Dungeons & Dragons* — depict a world completely different from most "generic Western Europe"-style Fantasy settings. The influences are more Indian, Chinese, Mayan, and Babylonian than European, but regardless of how strange it may at first seem, Tékumel has plenty of ideas for clever GMs to adapt to their own games.

Barnitz, Charles. *The Deepest Sea*. A quasi-historical Low Fantasy novel about the adventures of an Irish Viking in the eighth century. Contains lots of little details gamers will enjoy.

Bischoff, David, et al. *A Personal Demon*. An enjoyable, lighthearted Urban Fantasy novel about a college professor who summons a succubus.

Boyer, Elizabeth. *The Sword And The Satchel*. A novel set in a world heavily influenced by Norse saga and legend. Boyer has done several others in the same style (*The Thrall And The Dragon's Heart*, *The Elves And The Otterskin*) which are also good light reads.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. *Lythande*. A collection of short stories about a mercenary magician with a dangerous secret. Fun light Swords And Sorcery fare, with some interesting ideas for wizards' organizations, spells, and the like.

Brooks, Terry. *The Sword Of Shannara*. Although an obvious pastiche of *The Lord Of The Rings*, this novel contains a few details and characters you could adapt to Fantasy Hero games. Many sequels and prequels were later published.

- Brust, Steven.** The “Vlad Taltos” series (*Jhereg* and its progeny, including *Yendi*, *Teckla*, and *Taltos*). Focusing on an unusual protagonist — Vlad Taltos, an assassin also accomplished in witchcraft — these novels contain lots of bits and ideas easily adapted to gaming.
- The Phoenix Guard*. A Fantasy take on *The Three Musketeers* — fun to read, with a lot of nice High Fantasy touches.
- Butcher, Jim.** The “Harry Dresden” novels, beginning with *Storm Front*. Excellent Urban Fantasy, full of intriguing ideas for players and GMs.
- Cabell, James Branch.** *The Chronicles Of Fabled Poictesme*, also known as “The Biography Of The Life Of Manuel” (modern reprintings typically include the following volumes: *Figures Of Earth*, *The Silver Stallion*, *Domnei*, *The High Place*, *Something About Eve*, *Jurgen*, and *The Cream Of The Jest*). These stories are set in, or relate to, the Fantasy realm of Poictesme, its most famous ruler Dom Manuel, and his descendants. They sometimes seem rather slow and dry to modern readers, but contain many delightful characters any GM could turn into memorable NPCs.
- Carter, Lin, ed.** The *Ballantine Adult Fantasy* series. In the Sixties and Seventies, Carter was responsible for reviving many long-forgotten Fantasy gems (including the works of Cabell, Dunsany, Lovecraft, Smith, and many others) through this series. The various volumes in it, and the numerous short story anthologies Carter put together (such as *Kingdoms Of Sorcery*, *Realms Of Wizardry*, *Golden Cities Far*, and *The Young Magicians*), are well worth reading.
- Kellory The Warlock*. A novel about the personal quest for vengeance of a crippled barbarian who becomes a powerful wizard. The magic system is interesting, and readily adaptable to Fantasy Hero.
- Lost Worlds*. A collection of the best of Carter’s short stories, full of wondrous Fantasy images, characters, and gameworthy ideas.
- Crichton, Michael.** *Eaters Of The Dead*. The book on which the movie *The Thirteenth Warrior* was based, an attempt to re-tell the Beowulf saga in a more modern way.
- Coe, David B.** *The Lon Todyn Chronicles*. This trilogy of novels (*The Children Of Amarid*, *The Outlanders*, *Eagle-Sage*), about a society of wizards with bird familiars, has an unusual magic system and many other ideas gamers could use in Fantasy Hero campaigns.
- Coyne, John.** *Hobgoblin*. A horror novel centered around a roleplaying game based on Irish legend and myth.
- deCamp, L. Sprague.** *The Reluctant King* trilogy (*The Goblin Tower*, *The Clocks Of Iraz*, and *The Unbeheaded King*). Funny, enjoyable stories about a former king of many skills who’s on the run from a kingdom that wants to behead him.
- The Fallible Fiend*. The story of a rational demon forced to obey some rather unusual human masters.
- The Tritonian Ring*. A Swords And Sorcery story in a setting derived from Greek myth, chronicling the adventures of Prince Vakar of Poseidonis.
- deCamp, L. Sprague and Fletcher Pratt.** *The Complete Compleat Enchanter*. A collection of Crossworlds Fantasy stories about Harold Shea, a professor who works magic and finds himself in all sorts of unusual situations as a result.
- The Land Of Unreason*. Another Crossworlds Fantasy about a human diplomat kidnapped into Faerie.
- deLint, Charles.** Pretty much his entire body of work, including *Moonheart*, *Greenmantle*, *Trader*, *Someplace To Be Flying*, *Spirits In The Wires*, *Moonlight And Vines*, and many more. DeLint is one of the modern masters of the Urban Fantasy subgenre, and many of his works are worth reading.
- Donaldson, Stephen.** *The Chronicles Of Thomas Covenant The Unbeliever* (a trilogy consisting of *Lord Foul’s Bane*, *The Illearth War*, and *The Power That Preserves*). The “hero” of these novels, Thomas Covenant, a leper and probably the greatest anti-hero and most dislikeable protagonist in Fantasy, is an annoying whiner and a rapist. But the Land (the setting in which the stories take place) and many of the other characters are quite enjoyable, making this Crossworlds Epic High Fantasy worth reading despite Covenant’s teeth-grating conduct. The sequel trilogy isn’t nearly as interesting.
- The Mordant’s Need* duology (*The Mirror Of Her Dreams*, *A Man Rides Through*). Like the *Covenant* trilogy, these books tell a Crossworlds tale about a person from our world who travels to a Fantasy realm to find out she possesses immense powers she doesn’t understand and can’t control. However, the heroine is *much* more likeable than Covenant, and the story is a marvelously complex mystery. The setting features a unique magic system based around mirrors that you could use to good effect in an RPG setting.
- Dunsany, Lord.** Pretty much everything he wrote. Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, the eighteenth Baron Dunsany was, besides being a fantasist, a veteran of the Boer War and World War I, a safari hunter, a chess master, and a playwright (he once had five plays running simultaneously on Broadway). His Fantasy — typically short stories contained in collections like *Time And The Gods*, *Beyond The Fields We Know*, *The Gods Of Pegana*, and *At The Edge Of The World*, but also novels such as *The King Of Elfland’s Daughter* and *The Charwoman’s Shadow* — is wondrous, whimsical, evocative, heroic, fantastical, and thoroughly enjoyable. His stories, written with a distinctive language and tone, and often anthologized, range from High Fantasy (“The Sword Of Welleran,” “The Hoard Of The Gibbelins,” “The

- Fortress Unvanquishable, Save For Sacnoth”), to unusual Urban Fantasy (“The Coronation Of Mr. Thomas Shap,” “The Wonderful Window,” “The Three Sailors’ Gambit”), to many others that aren’t quite classifiable — they are simply Dunsany. Readers interested in becoming more familiar with his work should start, if they can, with the excellent (and beautifully illustrated) collection *Gods, Men, And Ghosts*, the more recently printed *The Hashish Man*, or the Fantasy Masterworks collection *Time And The Gods*.
- Eddings, David.** *The Belgariad*. This Epic Fantasy in five books isn’t particularly well-written or original, but contains a lot of starkly-drawn archetypal characters and other ideas GMs can use. Despite the books’ rather lackluster writing, the story has an oddly mesmerizing quality that keeps the pages turning.
- Eddison, E. R.** *The Worm Ouroboros*. A long, dry tale of the adventures of four heroes in a conflict between Demonland and Witchland. Many of the characters are quite picturesque and readily adaptable to gaming.
- Eisenstein, Phyllis.** *Sorcerer’s Son*. An enjoyable Fantasy tale featuring some unusual forms of magic, including ring-based demon conjuration and magic related to spiders, spinning, and weaving.
- Erikson, Steven.** The “Malazan Book of the Fallen” series. These elaborate Fantasy novels depict a High Fantasy world complete with clashes of empires, a strange magic system, ancient curses and prophecies, battle wizardry, thieves, assassins, and much more that gamers will enjoy.
- Farland, David.** The “Runelords” books (beginning with *The Runelords*, appropriately enough). An intriguing Fantasy world where nobles can get direct grants of power from their subjects, becoming superhuman in some unusual ways. May provide some GMs with fodder for interesting magic systems.
- Fox, Gardner.** The “Niall of the Far Travels” stories. These Swords And Sorcery stories were printed in early issues of *Dragon Magazine*, and have lots of ideas and details GMs could adapt for their own games.
- Garner, Alan.** *The Weirdstone Of Brisingamen*. A sort of Crossworlds Fantasy/Urban Fantasy about an ancient war between the forces of Good and Evil in the English countryside, in which two children become involved. The sequel, *The Moon Of Gomrath*, is not as good, and Garner’s other Fantasy novels aren’t worth tracking down.
- Garrett, Randall.** *Too Many Magicians*. A strange sort of Urban Fantasy in which the Plantagenets still rule in the Sixties and Lord Darcy, Chief Investigator for His Royal Highness, uses magic to perform detective work and solve mysteries.
- Goldman, William.** *The Princess Bride*. The basis for the equally wonderful movie of the same name.
- Haggard, H. Rider.** *Erik Brighteyes*. Although best known for his Victorian adventure stories, such as *King Solomon’s Mines* and *She*, Haggard also wrote this excellent Fantasy story in the style of Viking epics.
- Hardy, Lyndon.** *Master Of The Five Magics*. This superb novel, about the quest of the apprentice Alodar to win the hand of Queen Vendora, drives the plot through Alodar’s need to learn about each of five different magical crafts — Thaumaturgy, Alchemy, Magic, Sorcery, and Wizardry. Each of the crafts is so well-defined and delineated that the magic system is highly inspirational for GMs and could easily be adapted to gaming on its own. A sequel, *Secret Of The Sixth Magic*, isn’t nearly as good; another, *Riddle Of The Seven Realms*, is no good at all.
- Herbert, Frank.** *Dune*. Although a Science Fiction novel, this epic story contains so many Fantasy-like elements — semi-mystical cults, strange powers, bizarre creatures, prophecy, assassination — that any Fantasy GM or player can easily gather lots of ideas from it.
- Howard, Robert E.** Various, particularly the stories of Conan and Kull. Howard in many ways defined the Swords And Sorcery subgenre with his stories of the barbarian Conan, who later became King of Aquilonia, and Kull the Conqueror, ruler of Valusia. Much of Howard’s other Fantasy fiction, such as the tales of Bran Mak Morn, Cormac Mac Art, and Solomon Kane, is also worth reading.
- Jones, Diana Wynne.** *The Tough Guide To Fantasyland*. A whimsical (and decidedly British) examination of common Fantasy tropes, in an encyclopedia format.
- Kay, Guy Gavriel.** The *Fionavar Tapestry* trilogy (*The Summer Tree*, *The Wandering Fire*, *The Darkest Road*), *Tigana*, *The Lions Of Al-Rassan*, *A Song For Arbonne*, the *Sarantine Mosaic* duology (*Sailing To Sarantium* and *Lord Of Emperors*), *The Last Light Of The Sun*, and other works. Possibly the best fantasist currently writing today, Kay creates lush, richly detailed, lavishly realized Fantasy settings and characters. The *Fionavar Tapestry*, his first (and probably least interesting) work, is an Epic Fantasy, but the rest of his work qualifies more as Low Fantasy (some, such as *Lions*, has no magic at all; others have a flavorful but uncommon magic). Although they’d only work as inspiration for roleplaying-heavy games, any fan of Fantasy who hasn’t read Kay’s work owes it to himself to do so.
- Kurtz, Katherine.** The “Deryni” novels, in five trilogies (*The Chronicles Of The Deryni*, *The Legends Of Camber Of Culdi*, *The Histories Of King Kelson*, *The Heirs Of Saint Camber*, and *The Childe Morgan Trilogy*), plus miscellaneous other works (*The Deryni Archives*, *King Kelson’s Bride*, and *Deryni Magic*). Set in a Fantasy world based primarily (though not exclusively) on the medieval British Isles, and featuring a powerful faux Roman Catholic Church, these

wonderful novels present intriguing, elaborate characters involved in various political, religious, and social intrigues and incidents. Most of the main characters are Deryni, gifted with the ability to practice magic (primarily in the form of psionic-like mental powers), and often shunned or discriminated against because of it. A GM looking to run a campaign based on the maneuverings of kingdoms, churches, nobles, and armies instead of small groups of adventurers conducting quests couldn't find a better way to prepare for his game than to read these novels.

LeGuin, Ursula. *The Earthsea Trilogy (A Wizard Of Earthsea, The Tombs Of Atuan, and The Farthest Shore)*. Set in the archipelago world of Earthsea, these novels are worth examining just to look for ideas on how to set up campaigns based around groups of islands instead of large continents. The fascinating and highly detailed magic system, easily re-created using the Fantasy Hero rules, just makes them all the more worthy to sit on any Fantasy GM's shelf. The additional books written for the same setting in more recent years (*Tehanu, The Other Wind, Tales Of Earthsea*) aren't nearly as interesting, but do contain many interesting details about the setting.

Leiber, Fritz. The "Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser" series (*Swords And Deviltry, Swords Against Death, Swords In The Mist, Swords Against Wizardry, The Swords Of Lankhmar, and Swords And Ice Magic*). These Swords And Sorcery classics, featuring the strong barbarian Fafhrd and the wily thief (and sometimes hedge-wizard) the Gray Mouser, contain plenty of entertaining stories and ideas that adapt to gaming easily. Leiber's world of Nehwon, and particularly the large and fascinating city of Lankhmar, have inspired many GMs as they created their own worlds. An additional book of stories about the pair, *The Knight And Knave Of Swords*, published many years later, isn't nearly as good as the earlier collections, but has a few gems.

Lewis, C. S. *The Chronicles Of Narnia (The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe, Prince Caspian, The Voyage Of The Dawn Treader, The Silver Chair, The Horse And His Boy, The Magician's Nephew, and The Last Battle)*. The greatest stories of the Crossworlds Fantasy subgenre, these books, written for children but still utterly entertaining for adults, transport young people from our world to the Fantasy realm of Narnia — a land of dryads, Deep Magic, talking beasts, and the enchanted lion Aslan. They contain a heavy element of Christian allegory, but this doesn't detract from them in the slightest. Gamers could incorporate many elements of Narnia into High Fantasy and lighthearted Fantasy campaigns.

Lovecraft, Howard Phillips. Various stories, including the "Cthulhu Mythos" cycle of stories. Though more Horror than Fantasy, these chilling tales, by the greatest of America's

horror writers, contain plenty of elements gamers can adapt to Fantasy, including terrifying alien gods and weird magic items.

Martin, George R. R. *The Song Of Ice And Fire* series. Although marred by the author's frequent inclusion of sex scenes, and his predilection for killing off characters, these books are an enjoyable more-or-less Low Fantasy saga with lots of ideas that GMs running games centered around politics and warfare could borrow.

Mayhar, Ardath. Various, including *The Seekers Of Shar-Nuh* and "Thurigon Agonistes." Intriguing short stories, often with a Dunsanian flavor, and full of interesting ideas and scenes.

McCaffrey, Anne. *The Harper Hall Trilogy (Dragonson, Dragonsinger, Dragondrums)* and McCaffrey's other Pern novels. Although McCaffrey's later Pern books are more appropriately classified as Science Fiction, the early works, particularly the wonderful Harper Hall novels, are so close to being Fantasy that any Fantasy gamer could readily find things to adapt in them. The Harper Hall books focus on Menolly, a young musical prodigy who happens to end up with nine fire lizards (miniature dragons) as pets. Lots of good information and ideas for bard/troubadour-type characters.

McKillip, Patricia. The *Three Stars* (or "Riddlemaster") trilogy (*The Riddlemaster Of Hed, Heir Of Sea And Fire, Harpist In The Wind*). A rich story about a simple man who possesses great power he doesn't understand, and how he learns what it means and how to use it. The setting has a lot of subtle, flavorful magic and a heavy Celtic/Welsh influence in the names and history. Not only is the story itself excellent, but many of the details — riddles and their place in society, Great Shouts, the word-locking of grimoires, the role of harpists — might influence your gaming.

— *The Forgotten Beasts Of Eld*. Although not as good as the *Three Stars* trilogy, this novel about a lonely young woman and her magical animal companions is worth reading for the same reasons.

Millennium. The *Fantasy Masterworks* series. This collection, an imprint of the British publisher Gollancz, has brought back into print dozens of Fantasy classics that have long been hard to find, usually with valuable scholarly commentary accompanying each volume. If you have trouble finding any of the older works referenced in this Bibliography, try the Fantasy Masterworks series.

Mohan, Kim, ed. *Dragontales*. This anthology of Fantasy short stories, associated with but never published in *Dragon Magazine*, contains many wonderful tales. Some of the stories relate to the *Dungeons & Dragons* game, some not.

Moon, Elizabeth. *The Deed Of Paksennarion* trilogy (*Sheepfarmer's Daughter*, *Divided Allegiance*, and *Oath Of Gold*). An enthralling series of books about a young woman who becomes a paladin after first learning to fight as a member of a mercenary company. The *Dungeons & Dragons* references — dark elves, paladins and their warhorses, evil cults, and more — make it obvious the books grew out of Fantasy roleplaying.

Moorcock, Michael. The “Elric of Melniboné” stories (*Elric Of Melniboné*, *Sailor On The Seas Of Fate*, *Weird Of The White Wolf*, *The Vanishing Tower*, *The Bane Of The Black Sword*, and *Stormbringer*). These excellent Swords And Sorcery novels are set in a detailed and intriguing world unlike any other in Fantasy — one populated with strange races, creatures, and gods usually aligned with one of two cosmic forces, Law or Chaos. The protagonist is Elric, a powerful sorcerer and the last emperor of Melniboné, an island realm whose powerful magics, alliances with extradimensional entities and gods, and armada of dragons have allowed it to rule the world for millennia. Melniboné's time is coming to an end, as the upstart “Young Kingdoms” assert their independence and prerogatives. Elric, blessed (or perhaps cursed) with something his countrymen lack — a conscience — is also cursed with albinism and weakness, which he can only keep at bay with potent drugs. His dependence on drugs ends when he obtains the powerful magic sword Stormbringer, whose black, rune-encrusted blade can steal the souls of those he kills and feed their energy to him in the form of greater strength and endurance. Shackled by necessity to an evil sword that's as likely, with its malevolent intelligence and will, to kill his friends as his enemies, and driven by ancient pacts to serve Arioch lord of Chaos, Elric finds himself doing evil and working harm despite his best intentions. He's a fascinating and intriguing character, one of the most original and evocative in all Fantasy, and Moorcock tells his story wonderfully. Later novels about Elric (*The Fortress Of The Pearl*, *The Riddle Of The Rose*) generally lack the quality of the earlier stories. Elric is but one incarnation of “the Eternal Champion.” Moorcock wrote about many others, including Corum Jhaelen Irsei (*The Swords Trilogy*) and Dorian Hawkmoon (*Hawkmoon*), and their stories are worth reading as well. Moorcock's work is unparalleled in its use of alternate dimensions and planar travel; GMs thinking of running such campaigns should definitely give his work a look.

Morressy, John. *The Iron Angel Trilogy* (*Ironbrand*, *Grey mantle*, *Kingsbane*) and *The Time Of The Annihilator*. An obscure but wonderful Low Fantasy trilogy telling a story that spans hundreds of years. *Annihilator* is in the same style, but takes place in another time and/or setting.

—the “Kedrigern” stories. Comedic Fantasy short stories about the hapless wizard Kedrigern and his friends. They've been collected in two volumes that also contain some other stories.

—the “Conhoon of the Three Gifts” stories. Charming and whimsical stories about an Irish wizard, his apprentice Kate O'Farrissey, and their various escapades. Sadly, these have not been collected.

Niven, Larry, et al. *The Magic Goes Away*, *The Magic May Return*. Two collections of short stories about a world with an ambient magic system, what happens when magicians use up all the *mana*, and the effects of magic's slow return.

Powers, Tim. Pretty much his entire body of work, including *Last Call*, *On Stranger Tides*, *Expiration Date*, *The Anubis Gates*, and *Declare*. These masterpieces of Urban Fantasy, usually focusing on stories of the “hidden history” variety, provide plenty of ideas for plots, characters, and events Fantasy Hero GMs can use.

Rahman, Glenn. *Minarian Legends*. Originally published as a column in *Dragon Magazine*, and now available online and on CD-ROM, these colorful short stories chronicle the history and peoples of Minaria, the setting for the Fantasy wargame *Divine Right*. They're full of characters and ideas GMs and players could easily use in Fantasy Hero games.

Rothfuss, Pat. *The Kingkiller Chronicle*. Although only the first book of this trilogy has been released as of this writing, that one book is the fascinating story of the early life of Kvothe, a spellcaster, musician, and adventurer, and is full of details Fantasy Hero players will enjoy. Unlike most Fantasy novels, it's written in the first person.

Saberhagen, Fred. *Empire Of The East*. A series of three books chronicling the efforts of a small group of rebels to overthrow a powerful empire in a world where magic has arisen in the wake of nuclear holocaust.

Saunders, Charles. *Imaro*. A Swords And Sorcery novel set among Fantasy African tribes rather than a quasi-medieval European setting. Well-written, fun, and a good example of what can be accomplished by stepping beyond the “generic Western Europe” Fantasy mainstream.

Shetterley, Will and Emma Bull. *The Liavek* anthologies. Another “shared world” collection, this one focusing on the *Arabian Nights*-influenced world of Liavek. Among other unusual features, Liavek includes some gunpowder weapons and a magic system unlike any other in Fantasy (one easily simulated in a gaming campaign).

Smith, Clark Ashton. Pretty much everything he wrote. A contemporary and colleague of H. P. Lovecraft, Smith wrote numerous Fantasy short stories during the era of the great Pulp magazines. Many are set in various worlds or lands he created (Zothique, Hyperborea, Poseidonis, Averroigne), others stand alone; most are Swords And Sorcery tales. They all possess

a distinctive eerie quality that makes them fascinating reading. Gamemasters and players alike can mine them for interesting character and story ideas.

Taylor, Keith. The “Bard” series (*Bard*, *Bard II*, and so forth). Enjoyable Low Fantasy novels set in a fictionalized Northern Europe of the first millennia. The protagonist is a bard who gets involved in many adventures. Flavorful and fun.

Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord Of The Rings* and related works (*The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion*, *Unfinished Tales*, and the *History Of Middle-earth* series). Widely regarded as the greatest Fantasy novels ever written, and unquestionably the greatest Epic Fantasy story ever told, Tolkien’s work sets the standard by which all other Fantasy work is judged (to one degree or another). Without his influence, many of the works mentioned in this Bibliography might never have been written. For depth of detail about a setting and writing that inspires and enthralls, Tolkien has no equal.

Vance, Jack. The “Dying Earth” series (*The Dying Earth*, *The Eyes Of The Overworld*, *Cugel’s Saga*, and *Rhialto The Marvellous*). If anyone can come close to matching Tolkien for evocative prose, it is Jack Vance, though his Fantasy is almost nothing like Tolkien’s. In Vance’s “Dying Earth” (our Earth, many aeons from now, as the sun slowly dies), everyone is venal and corrupt, the world is a strange and dangerous place, and quick wits take you further than skill with a blade. The magic system is wonderful, and easily modelled for gaming. In the early works, wizards had to memorize spells (a powerful wizard could memorize perhaps five of the potent incantations), and then re-memorize them after they were cast; this was the inspiration for the magic system in *Dungeons & Dragons*. Later works such as *Rhialto* depict wizards so powerful they enslave magical creatures called “sandestins” who can work virtually any effect the spellcaster can think of. In either case, the spells have wondrous, flavorful names — the Excellent Prismatic Spray, the Omnipotent Sphere, Lugwiler’s Dismal Itch — that only add to the already lush and amazing feel of the setting.

—The *Lyonesse* Trilogy (*Suldrun’s Garden* [also simply titled *Lyonesse*], *The Green Pearl*, *Madouc*). Set on the mythic island of Lyonesse before it sank into the sea, this series has a feel different from that of the Dying Earth, but is just as good (if not better). As in almost all of Vance’s works, cleverness and a good heart are what carry the hero forward, not strength of arm, skill with a sword, or the size of one’s army. Magic is not as commonplace, but is definitely there, and provides an excellent flavor for the setting.

No Fantasy fan should miss out on the joys of Vance’s wonderful writing. The only shame of it is that he’s spent so much time writing equally good Science Fiction that his Fantasy oeuvre is comparatively slight. Selections among them, such as The Dragonmasters, “The Moon Moth,” and “The Miracle Workers,” are worth reading for their Fantasy-like elements.

Wagner, Karl Edward. The “Kane” stories, including such novels and short story collections as *Bloodstone*, *Night Winds*, *Darkness Weaves*, and *Dark Crusade*. Classic Swords And Sorcery tales in the Conan mold, but featuring a hero who’s rather more complex than Conan. Great stuff.

Wellman, Manly Wade. The “John the Balladeer” stories. A sort of Urban Fantasy series set in the Appalachian Mountains in the mid-twentieth century, with all sorts of unusual creatures, haunts, and hexes. Excellent reading; decidedly different from typical Fantasy stories.

Wolfe, Gene. *The Book Of The New Sun*. This four-volume series (*Shadow Of The Torturer*, *Claw Of The Conciliator*, *Sword Of The Lictor*, *Citadel Of The Autarch*) plus a fifth volume (*The Urth Of The New Sun*) are, like Vance’s work, set in a future so distant that Earth is virtually unrecognizable. The Low Fantasy story chronicles the life of Severian, an apprentice torturer who goes on to become the Autarch of the world. Complex, detailed, and rich with antique words rarely used in English anymore, the story repays repeated readings.

Zelazny, Roger. *Dilvish*, *The Damned*. This book tells the story of Dilvish, who fights his way back out of Hell to take revenge on those who’ve wronged him. Armed with potent spells and magical talismans, he overcomes many obstacles to achieve his goal. The enchanted items, spells, and monsters are all easily adapted to gaming. The second Dilvish novel, *The Changing Land*, isn’t nearly as good.

—*Changeling* and *Madwand*. A Crossworlds Fantasy in which a boy from Earth is transplanted to a Fantasy realm, where he develops technology, and a boy from the Fantasy realm takes his place on Earth, where he learns magic. The depiction of magic, and how each practitioner views it somewhat differently, is interesting and fun.

—*Jack Of Shadows*. An intriguing story set in a future Earth that has stopped spinning, where magic rules the night side and science the day side. Jack and the other main characters are all powerful magical beings. A GM looking to run a High Fantasy campaign with powerful PCs but few of the races or other trappings common to most Fantasy games might find some inspiration here.

NONFICTION BOOKS

- Bradbury, Jim.** *The Medieval Siege*
- Bunch, Bryan and Alexander Hellemans.** *The Timetables Of Technology*
- Clute, John, et al.** *The Encyclopedia Of Fantasy*
- DeVries, Kelly.** *Medieval Military Technology*
- Diagram Group.** *Weapons*
—*Musical Instruments Of The World*
- Diamond, Jared.** *Guns, Germs, And Steel*
- Edge, David and John Miles Paddock.** *Arms And Armor Of The Medieval Knight*
- Friedman, John and Kristen Figg.** *Trade, Travel, And Exploration In The Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*
- Gies, Joseph and Frances Gies.** *Cathedral, Forge, And Waterwheel: Technology And Invention In The Middle Ages*
—*Life In A Medieval Castle*
—*Life In A Medieval City*
—*Life In A Medieval Village*
- Hodges, Henry.** *Technology In The Ancient World*
- Kenyon, Sherrilyn.** *The Writer's Guide To Everyday Life In The Middle Ages*
- McCall, Andrew.** *The Medieval Underworld*
- Ohler, Norbert.** *The Medieval Traveller*
- Payne-Gallway, Ralph.** *The Book Of The Crossbow*
- Rector, Mark, trans.** *Medieval Combat*
- Robards, Brooks.** *The Medieval Knight At War*
- Ross, S. John.** *Medieval Demographics Made Easy*, <http://www.io.com/~sjohn/demog.htm>
- Salgado, Gāmini.** *The Elizabethan Underworld*
- Spufford, Peter.** *Power And Profit: The Merchant In Medieval Europe*
- Steele, Lisa.** *Fief: A Look At Medieval Society From Its Lower Rungs*
—*Town: A City-Dweller's Look At Thirteenth To Fifteenth Century Europe*
- Stone, George Cameron.** *A Glossary Of The Construction, Decoration, And Use Of Arms And Armor*
- Woonsam-Savage, Robert and Anthony Hall.** *Brassey's Book Of Body Armor*
- Writer's Digest Books.** *The Writer's Complete Fantasy Reference*

MOVIES AND TELEVISION

This, once again, is a list of the author's favorites, or movies and TV shows he considers noteworthy for some reason (sometimes because, even though not strictly Fantasy, they're similar to the genre and provide ideas for scenarios and characters). Given the popularity of Fantasy fiction, the number of good Fantasy and Fantasy-related movies is surprisingly small.

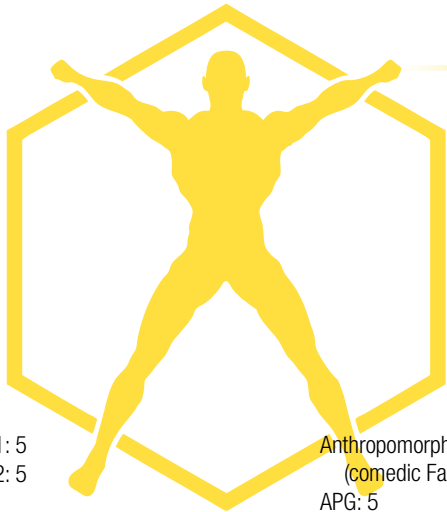
- Braveheart*
Brotherhood Of The Wolf
Dark Kingdom
The Dresden Files

- Excalibur*
Highlander
Kull
Labyrinth
Ladyhawke
The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe
Monty Python And The Holy Grail
The Princess Bride
Rob Roy
The Thirteenth Warrior
The Three Musketeers (various versions)
The Tudors

ROLEPLAYING GAMES

While no game can top the *HERO System*, there are plenty of Fantasy or Fantasy-related games and game supplements on the market that might provide inspiration, ideas, or source material you can use in your Fantasy Hero games. Some of the best include:

- Ars Magica* (Lion Rampant/White Wolf/Atlas Games)
Authentic Thaumaturgy (Steve Jackson Games)
Call Of Cthulhu (Chaosium)
Castle Falkenstein (R. Talsorian Games)
The Compendium Of Weapons, Armour, And Castles (Palladium Games)
Deadlands (Pinnacle Entertainment Group)
Delta Green (Pagan Publishing)
The Deryni Adventure Game (Grey Ghost Press)
The Dresden Files Roleplaying Game (Evil Hat Productions)
Dungeons & Dragons (TSR/Wizards Of The Coast)
The Dying Earth Roleplaying Game (Pelgrane Press)
Various GURPS sourcebooks (Steve Jackson Games)
Hackmaster (Kenzer & Company)
Hero Wars (Issaries, Inc.)
In Nomine (Steve Jackson Games)
Legend Of The Five Rings (AEG)
The Lord Of The Rings Roleplaying Game (Decipher)
Nephilim (Chaosium)
Pendragon (Chaosium/Green Knight Publishing)
Rolemaster (Iron Crown Enterprises)
Runequest (Chaosium)
Shadowrun (FASA)
Sorcerer (Adept Press)
Stormbringer (Chaosium)
Washbucklers of the 7 Skies (Evil Hat Productions)
The "World of Darkness" series of games (White Wolf Game Studios)



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