

Level UP

Tabletop Fantasy Gaming Book of Lists



Surprise your gaming group!
Learn fantasy gaming secrets!
What are the types of magical currency?
Why do wizards live in towers? What are the
best books released for tabletop fantasy adventure gaming?
Find all the answers inside and more!

Courtney C. Campbell

LEVEL UP!

THE BOOK OF FANTASY GAMING LISTS

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LEVEL UP!

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TOP TEN DUNGEON RESOURCES

Well, you've got a dungeon. And you've got all these factions.

Apparently they all live in total harmony because they don't really have anything to fight over.

That doesn't sound like an environment ripe for adventure.

THE TOP 10 SCARCE DUNGEON RESOURCES THAT MONSTERS FIGHT OVER!

1. **Water:** Everybody's got to drink! Except those damn vampires on level four. And they can go to hell! Oh? Yeah, that's through level sixteen. Why would you want to go to hell?
2. **Mines:** What are we here for? Gold! When do we want it? Now! Who's going to get it? Kobolds! That's right! Now go enslave some kobolds!
3. **Ley lines/magical components:** No, the nexus point is over there in those corridors. What? I don't care if the gnolls live there, take care of it!
4. **Access:** I'll repeat it again more slowly for you. We-Are-The-Tax-Dwarves. That will be 10 gold pieces to delve.
5. **Magic pools:** What do you mean "A snake made out of water lives there now?!"
6. **Gate-houses:** It would be a lot safer here if we could keep people from meandering around.
7. **Stairways:** Oh, the 10 gold? It's not for using the stairway. It's for paying us to ungrease it and disarm the traps.
8. **Food:** Peoples got to eat! It's a good thing you are so tasty!
9. **Slaves:** Nobody is getting my slaves. I need them, for my projects.
10. **Special power/
Fuel source:** Arcanite stones!? A hidden engine of ultimate power? I'm sure we don't keep anything like that around here.



ON 10 WAYS TO OPEN A CHEST

Assuming it was a treasure hunting expedition and the lower floors of the tower were reasonably cleared, with a path of escape blocked only by wandering monster rolls, what would a party need to do to safely open a chest?

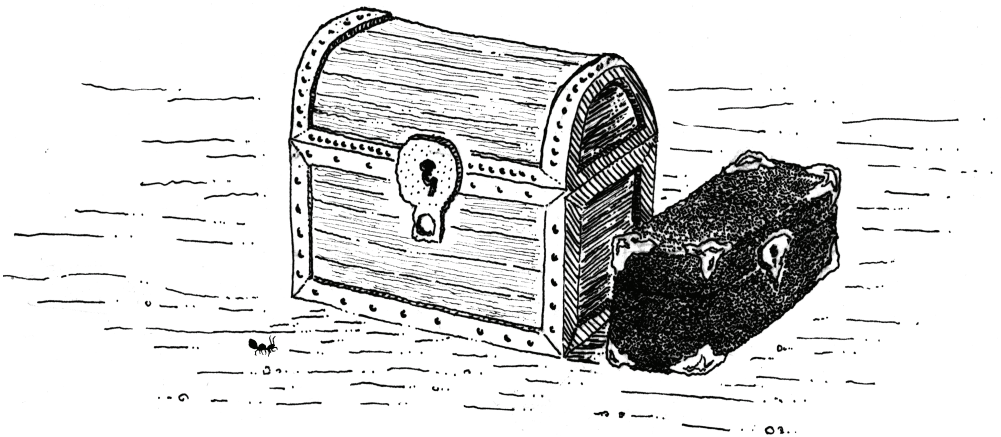
10 WAYS TO OPEN A CHEST SAFELY!

1. Pour acid in the lock.
2. Use a pick and chisel to break apart the lock mechanism.
3. Use a crowbar and specialized tools to pry the lock out of the chest.
4. Saws!
5. Carry the chest back to town and pay the thieves' guild to open it.
6. Hammers!
7. Make the wizard cast *Knock!*
8. Unscrew the lid hinges.
9. Pry off the back of the lid!

And the number one way to open a chest safely?

10. Have the thief open it, there's always more where they came from!

Why don't they do these things by default? They are time-consuming, loud, or require heavy encumbrance penalties. It's usually worth the time to just find the key. Getting possession of the key once you find it—that's the adventure!



ON THE 13 TYPES OF SECRET DOOR

There are an awful lot of secret doors in adventure game modules.

Secret doors are puzzles—finding the secret door doesn't give you any information about how to open it. The secret door is found and yet it remains closed. How is it operated?

This is interesting.

If a scenario requires locating a secret door in order to progress, it is a bad one. If the players miss the secret door (which is both possible and likely) then everything grinds to a halt. The players are forced to scour every space to locate the secret passage. Spend one turn, roll your chance to find the secret door, move on to the next section. Repeat ad infinitum.

When dealing with a secret door, (randomly) determine its mechanism, add those mechanisms to the room, along with some red herrings nearby. They can search and discover the door; then try to figure out how to open it, or dick around with the mechanisms and be surprised when the door opens.

So let's assume you aren't into tedium, and you only include optional (but cool) content behind secret doors; Or, you're running a module.

Holy crap! 27 secret doors! That's Bullshit!

So, for your edification, here are some secret door mechanisms that you can apply to any old random secret door.

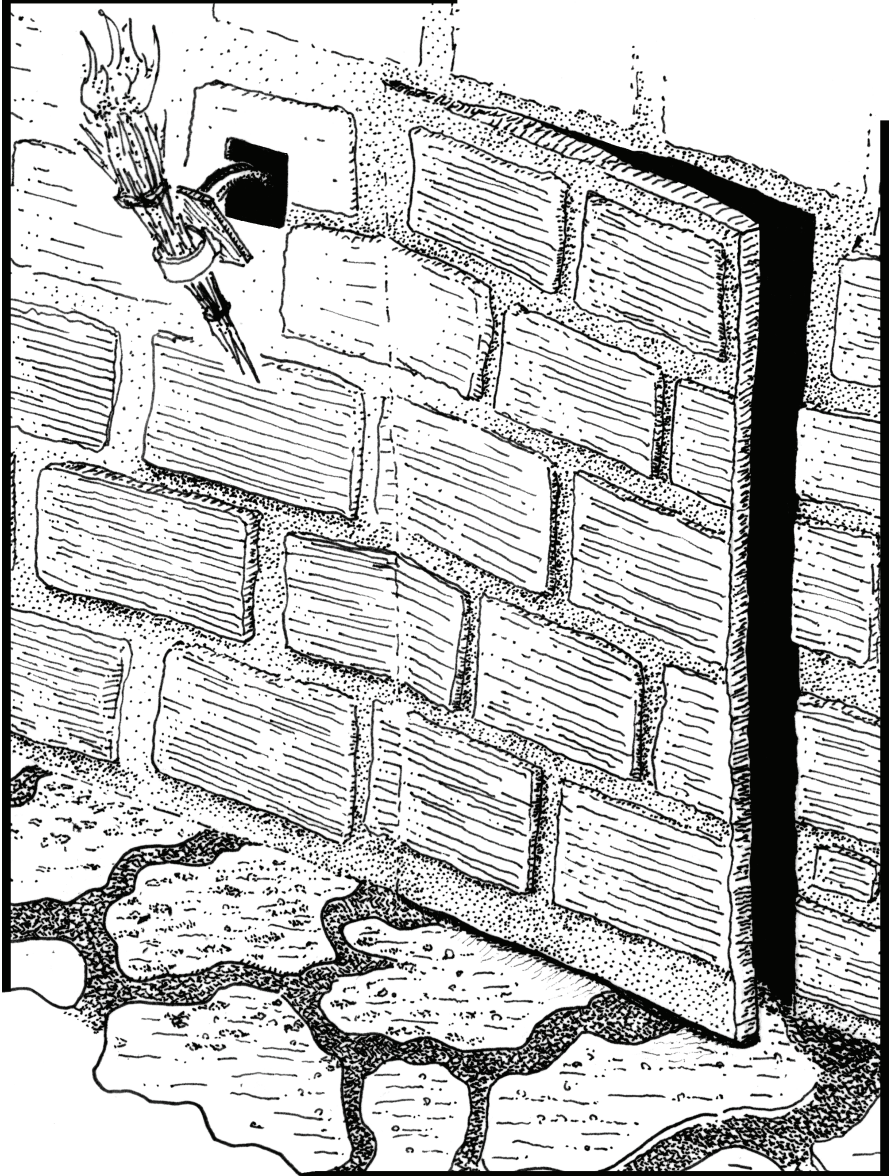
A BAKERS DOZEN OF SECRET DOORS

1. The secret door is a wall that swivels on its center point or edge.
2. Pull a nearby scone, idol, or book to open the secret door.
3. A wardrobe or armoire with an open back hidden behind clothes, or a false back that opens with a simple push.
4. The secret door slides to the side.
5. The secret door lifts up like an overhead garage door.
6. The secret door opens just like a normal door, it just matches the wall exactly.
7. A stone when pressed will open the secret door.
8. A hole must have a long length of steel inserted to be able to move the door open.
9. The secret doors are illusionary walls. They can be walked through with no difficulty.
10. The secret door is a block of stone that rests in the wall. It can be pulled out and set aside to enter the passage-way.
11. A mirror or other object obscures the door, and upon closer inspection, is the actual door

Bonus vertical secret doors!

12. Stairs lift up with a solid tug on the railing.

13. A 'trap door' lifts up on the ground. The cover is shaped like a normal large stone. A cursory examination will reveal the handle. These are often concealed by a rug.



ON THE TOP 10 (11!) MASTERMIND MONSTERS

Building a dungeon and need a boss? A big boss? A MAJOR Boss? A FINAL BOSS?

Here's a list of the master major malign bosses.

Usable for dungeon leaders all the way to campaign masterminds.

11 BOSSIEST BOSSES THAT EVER BOSSED

- 11) **Yuan ti**: Snakeman cultists, that can look like normal people and take class levels? What's not to love! Also, snakes! Also, I wassssss once a maaaaaaaan.
- 10) **Sladd**: Chaos frogs from the plane of chaos, because to hell with well-laid plans. Fight vomit made from space bugs formed from sentient color.
- 9) **Demons**: They can't be permanently killed, they come in a thousand different varieties, they excel at long term manipulation, their goals consist of 'new and interesting ways to dick humanity around' and they present no moral crisis to slay.
- 8) **Vampires**: Knife-stab them in their stupid sparkly faces. Or in the hearts, with stakes. Whatever works.
- 7) **Rakshasta**: Look at that debonair micky ficky! He's wearing a smoking jacket and smoking a pipe! Also, he's an animal-headed master of necromancy, enchantment, and illusion that is super hard to kill. What is the procedure for blessing a crossbow bolt anyway?
- 6) **Lich**: So, feel like fighting the man? Here's someone that plans on being the man forever. Also, immortal spellcasters that can't be killed until their maguffin is found!
- 5) **Beholders**: YOU ARE NOT PURE. Killing Nazis is always fun, but levitating anti-magic Nazis with disintegration rays? The most fun.
- 4) **Illithids**: It's bad enough to think about being consumed by beings that will just turn everything into excrement. But for a creature to just eat the part of a body that contains ego and intelligence, and dispose of the rest? Terrifying.
- 3) **Avolakia**: Imagine an octopus that is shaped like a worm and looks like an insect. Now imagine that it can polymorph itself. Now imagine that its favorite thing to do is to animate undead corpses and ride around inside them. WARNING! SURPRISE ZOMBIE. ACTUALLY CONTAINS DEMON WORM.

That's not the best part though. The best part is the towns underground where their food, dead animate corpses, serve them till they become hungry.

2) **Aboleth:** Ancestors are an unbroken line back to the beginning of life. Whereas the aboleth that is hunting was there at the beginning of life and is only now deigning to end your line.

And the number one evil mastermind, the big cheese,

1) **Neogi:** Eel spiders with umber hulk slaves, who need slaves to feed all the eggs they laid in their elder. Oh, also, they're from space, so good luck with that!



ON THE TOP TEN BRUISER MONSTERS

A mastermind needs muscle. What are the top classic enforcers?

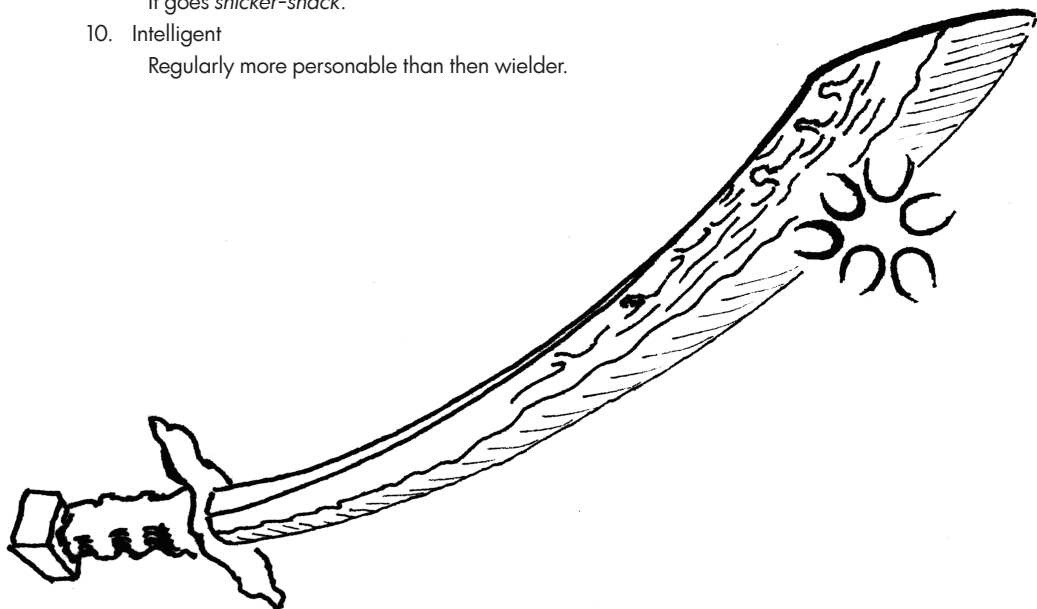
TOP 10 BRUTIEST BRUTES

1. **Bugbears:** When it's time to drop the hammer, it's best if they don't see it coming.
2. **Ogre:** Maybe ogres seem a little dull, but four hit dice, bonus damage and something to make first level characters panic, the ogre is a classic for a reason.
3. **Bears:** To hell with your ranger.
4. **Giants:** You know, an additional point of damage doesn't do it. How about an additional seven damage. How does that treat you?
5. **Trolls:** Yes, yes, pull out the flame. But still, they hit hard and keep coming.
6. **Minotaurs:** That first hit is a doozy. Also mazes!
7. **Men:** These are too often overlooked. What can a zero-level human do? not much. What can 20-200 do? Cause a lot of problems for eighth level characters.
8. **Hydra:** Not a classic enforcer. Hydra guards will cause the players to think twice when monster attack routines require borrowing dice.
9. **Elementals:** No reason to feel bad for killing these.
10. **Umber Hulk:** He got his small brain, his tunneling, his eyes of confusion, his three attacks, using two or three dice of damage each. Also, no chance of any Neogi around, right?



THE TOP 10 WEAPON ENCHANTMENTS

1. Elemental
Flaming and fabulous. Freezing and not fun at parties. Electric and not manic at all.
2. Singing!
♪ *I feel pretty! Oh, so pretty!* ♪
3. Weeping
Blood, tears, astral energy, acid etc. Usually because of the singing.
4. Seething
Pissed-off sword of *I'm gonna cut you bitch +2* doesn't have the same ring to it.
5. Brilliant Energy
It's not a lightsaber. Promise.
6. Shrieking
AKA screaming, thundering, or the sword of Yelling Really, Really, Loud all the time.
Usually called the sword of "*Will you please sheath that thing already?*"
7. Dancing
Pairs well with the weapon of singing.
♪ *Hello my baby, hello my honey, hello my rag time gal* ♪
8. Lucky
♪ *If you wish, upon a star. . .* ♪
9. Vorpal
It goes *snicker-snack*.
10. Intelligent
Regularly more personable than then wielder.



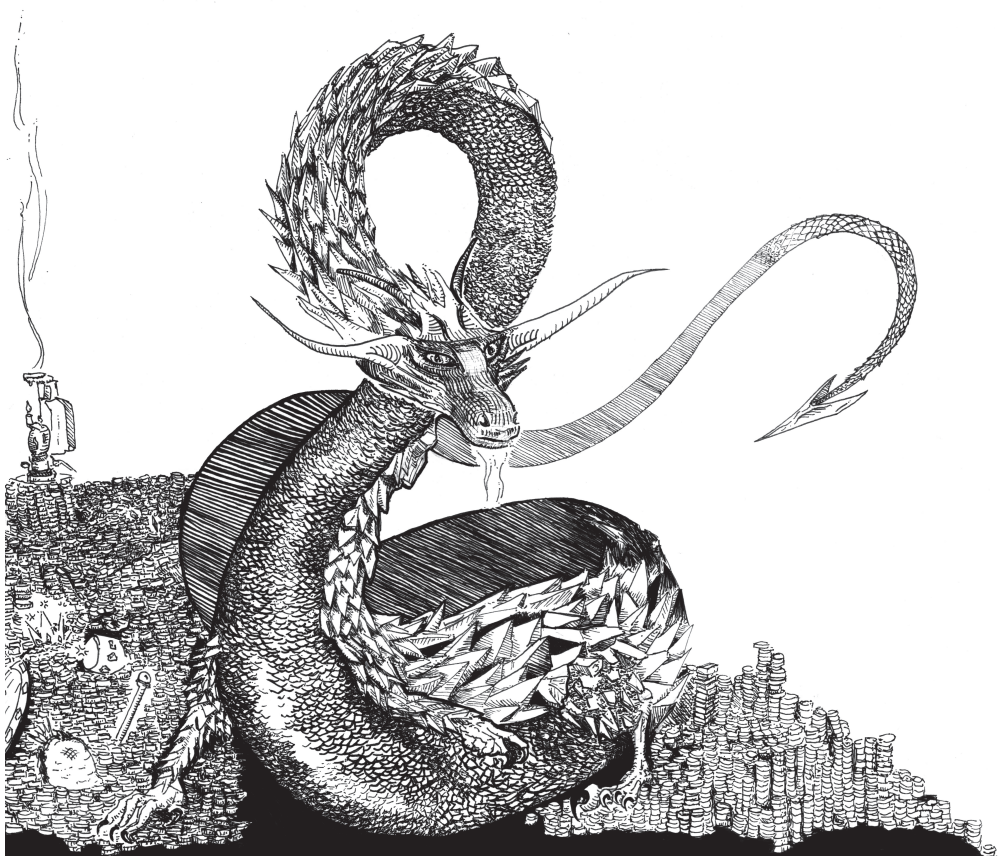
10 BEST VERSIONS OF DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

Somehow, the problem is chopping it down to ten! Repeats are ties!

- 10.) **Adventurer, Conqueror, King:** Taking the greatest gaming system of all time (Moldvay Basic and Cook/Marsh Expert) and reconfiguring it to make sure the math makes sense all the way up to the domain level? Yes, please.
- 9.) **Basic Fantasy:** It isn't just the basic/expert inspired simple gameplay, or the modified sections such as race and class, it's the ridiculously well-supported online download and support. Free and comprehensive, it's popular for a reason.
- 8.) **Castles & Crusades:** D20 style Dungeons and Dragons simplified? Its greatest strength is that any d20 material requires no conversion. Fast and the SEIGE system is an ingenious way to handle skill checks.
- 7.) **Labyrinth Lord:** The gold standard in free retro-clones. One minor advantage over classic is that all the text is in one book. Of course all the experience point tables are redone. Labyrinth Lord compatibility is code for "This is compatible with Dungeons and Dragons®!"
- 7.) **Lamentations of the Flame Princess:** A beautiful treatise on the nature of Dungeons & Dragons®. A smooth, intuitive ruleset. No hiccups, no bumps. Great for lower power, real world, weird campaigns. By far the most beautiful printings and books in the role-playing game market, bar none. More fabric-bound embossed full-color fully illustrated books than any publisher.
- 6.) **Dungeon Crawl Classics:** The edition of the game Goodman wants to play! Weird dice and weirder random tables makes for a focus on a good time at the table, rather than rules that conceptually make sense or focus on verisimilitude. And it just drips old school flavor like honey off a bear's paw from all the artwork from classic artists
- 6.) **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons:** "*Random chance plays a huge part in everybody's life.*"
-Gary Gygax
- 5.) **Original Dungeons & Dragons:** Well, if this doesn't inspire you to do your own imagining. .
- 4.) **Pathfinder:** The most baroque, complete, overbearing, option-filled ruleset that ever existed. Really popular with people who like to build and design characters mechanically. Probably a little math-heavy for most gamers.

- 3.) **BECMI**: Frank Mentzer's five volume series, Basic, Expert, Companion, Masters, and Immortals. The version they won't put into print, because no one will ever need another version of Dungeons & Dragons® again!
- 2.) **Hackmaster 4th/5th edition**: The first, original, retro-clone does Dungeons & Dragons® better than nearly any version ever released. Really! It is the greatest!
- 2.) **Fifth edition Dungeons and Dragons®**: It's the best selling and most popular edition in history for a reason.
- 1.) **Basic/Expert**: There is no version that is both a better introduction to role-playing, an effective tool for use while playing, and something that supports your imagination. Great work has been put towards creating a pure collected version as *Old School Essentials*.

These are all currently available online.



TOP 10 UNDERPLAYED FLAILSNAILS CLASSES

The Flailsnails conventions are the idea that a single character can move from game to game, no matter who is running the game, or even which system the game is in.

Too many fighters! Too many wizards! Let's see something more. Here are the top ten classes that are underplayed in FLAILSNAIL games!

1. Warlord! Use powers of yelling really loud to screw enemies in combat. Healing, or a bonus to armor class, or an extra attack, or more. As the first sentence of the class says, "Warlords are awesome and if you disagree then f**k you."
What a metal class!
2. Blue Mage! Gain the powers of enemies by not dying after getting hosed by their special abilities. Necrophagy for fun and profit.
3. Random Class! If playing a basic class, why not play the awesome random version? Roll for statistic increases, powers, and traits at each level.
4. The Mountebank! Playing Dungeons and Dragons for too many years? Why do you keep playing on easy mode? Here's a character who eventually can talk super convincingly. BEWARE ORCUS, YOUR DOOM IS NEIGH.
5. Tourist! Because it's a class that eerily is similar to what players are actually doing.
6. Dandy! Because dressing well is the best defense. Also, everyone needs someone in the party who can talk with sailors, homosexuals, prostitutes, and aesthete monsters such as demimonde medusas, vampire flaneurs, and githyanki fops?
7. Myconid! If the idea of a mobile sentient depressed potion creating zombie fungus doesn't appear, you've got bigger problems in life than picking which class to play in a FLAILSNAILS game.
8. Alice! Everyone is a pretty princess sometimes. Doesn't everyone like to feel a bit special?
9. Vat Spawn! Guaranteed to start at least 1 in 4 arguments! Also, holy crap, what a sweet class.

And the number one, underplayed class across the FLAILSNAILS universe, the class that needs so much more attention than it gets, the crèm de la crèm, check out Ian Johnson's

10. MUSCLE WIZARD! *"Muscle Wizards. . . instead regain spells by pumping weights and doing calisthenics. They do this instead of sleeping, which, while it does not have any mechanical effect, means that most Muscle Wizards are unpredictable and weird."*

All of these can be located with a quick Google! Roll the next class created off this list. LET THE AWESOMEIZATION BEGIN.

THE TOP 10 BEST BOOKS EVER RELEASED FOR DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

Dungeons and Dragons® has been around long enough to complain about back pain. Millions of resources have been published in the last several decades; when it comes down to studded leather brass studs what are the best books ever published for fantasy role-playing games?

Midkemia Press Cities

Though out of print, Midkemia offer the .pdf from their website. Requiring more rolls than expected for modern players, it's an engine that allows you to customize encounters for different kinds of cities. As a resource for exploring large fantasy cities, it's a plethora of interesting encounters, plots, and dangers, just from walking around a local burg. It makes exploring a large strange city into a series of small dramas and encounters with personalities, that both the referee and the players can discover through play. It's a way to make cities as interesting as dungeons for the players.

It has extensive city creation tables that include chances for rare buildings. Although not necessary to build a city in the amount of detail it provides (down to individual storefronts) it does allow the answer the question is there a jeweler/clockmaker/physician et. al.

Another fascinating mechanic is the downtime system which takes characters that are not actively adventuring with various downtime events. There's an option for smarter or wiser characters to avoid or seek danger. Following the downtime tables is a comprehensive table of adventure and events, from being offered dangerous missions, to falling ill, to having living quarters infested by pests.

It finishes off with a mission generator, a tavern/inn generator, rich occupational background tables, street traffic density, a dice conversion table, and a stable generator.

Pretty good for a resource from 1981.

Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue

Yeah, but what about knife boots?

Aurora's was ostensibly a shop in Faerun in the Forgotten Realms, this supplement is what a world filled with "adventuring" as a career would produce. If thieves needed to infiltrate, wizards needed to stock a lab, or clerics are on the lookout for new ways to serve, this little book had a bit of everything.

The entire book is devoted to equipment lists. This makes it the best setting supplement ever produced for the Forgotten Realms®. Run a game with this book in play and it provides more direct setting information, useful in play, than any of the many setting books with dry histories and texts.

From ale to cheese, wine to jewels, diversions, storage, hardware and clothing; the book is filled with what a society would sell, if beset by monsters, powerful gods, crafty wizards, stealthy thieves, and brave fighters.

It contains dozens of useful and interesting items, infravision lanterns, special thieving helmets (with ears that are not at all ostentatious) that allow you listen, book safes, and quick access scroll cases, among many others.

1st Edition Dungeon Master's Guide

Gygax poured his soul into this book in the prime of his life, and at the end he crafted an artifact. Every time this book is opened in its thirty year history, there's some new text that you haven't seen before. Text becomes lost, only to be found in a distant future reading, hidden in pages flipped through dozens of times.

There is no other book like this in existence. It is unique, a vision of one man. The pattern of his thought and knowledge laid bare, every paragraph a facet of an endlessly complex gem. But this is no shaggy dog. Every time one returns to it, it provides new insight, new revelations. Not because anything new is there, but because you have changed.

It's pretty brilliant. If you haven't ever read it, what are you waiting for?

Encyclopedia Magica

Sometimes there's too much and a pause button is desired. This collection of leather-bound volumes contains every magical item created anywhere from Original Dungeons & Dragons® till the late 90's at the dusk of the second edition of Dungeons & Dragons®. It has a huge random table in the back; when a magic item is needed there are tens of thousands of possible results.

Many of these items are strongly tied into whatever their history is. It makes the treasure interesting, unique, usually requiring some adjustment to use in play. But it also interjects unexpected problems and surprises. A spellbook may be inexorably linked to a dragon. A great treasure, but also great risk.

It encapsulates twenty-five years of magic items giving a time-capsule glimpse into the design of magic items over time. Plus it's really fun to roll on the d10,000 table for magic items.

Wizard Spell Compendium

This is similar to the last collection and indeed, collects every spell printed. This is Jack Vance's 1,000 lost spells of the Dying Earth. Assigning random spells and only providing new spells randomly from this list creates a different kind of magic system, one where spells are capricious, unknown, and wildly vary in power. Not allowing players to pick spells from the book, but instead having players seeking them out, and carefully selecting those spells which they are able to learn (remember the limits of spells per level and chances to learn!) creates powerful, but unpredictable wizards.

In games not focused on combat, but instead adventure or survival, having dozens of variations and types of spells lead to an eclectic toolkit that becomes a signature for the wizard.

It also outlines the entirety of "Dungeons and Dragons®" magic theory, with all the official schools of magic covered, from shadow magic to chromomagic for masters of time, elemental magic, all the way to the incantrix and more.

Judge's Guild Ready Reference Papers

The Judge's Guild was playing a lot of Dungeons & Dragons® back in the day. This is a giant reference hodgepodge, used in play for their settings. It's a lot like a selection of house rules, but functions more as an expansion, providing more, well, everything.

It covers everything from social levels, decade appropriate sexist tables of women, proclamations, boons, wills, crime and punishment, poisons, justifications for uncalled for aggression, wizards guide to enchantment, movement obstacles, hirelings, encounter tables, flora, construction costs, and more.

That's a lot of stuff for 1978. It's dense, arcane, interesting and eclectic. Flipping through the pages gives manifold ideas for campaigns that integrate easily.

Forgotten Realms Boxed Set 1st Edition

Since the Forgotten Realms has been taken from Greenwood, set on fire, and then handed back, laden with weight of ages; Mary and Marty Sues teleporting around and impregnating gods who are hiding as bears, eye rolling in its baroque ridiculousness, it's hard to remember it's so popular, based on the strength of this particular supplement.

This works as a useful tool for a Dungeon Master to run a campaign. The first book covers the calendar, language, names, currency, religion, and maps and short descriptions of settings.

The second book is full of nothing but rumors, ideas, and other inspiration for belabored Dungeon Masters. This book can provide years and years of play with this straightforward

setting, filled with a selection of colorful personalities, and most notably, a long section on events and rumors occurring every month over the course of two years. There's even a little mark for which ideas Ed Greenwood had planned for further expansion. A fun game is looking back and seeing where each of those ideas finally ended up.

The Dungeon Alphabet

Beyond the fact that this book combined with Stonehell gave us the gift of Michael Curtis writing full time, the Dungeon Alphabet is a seminal work itself. Although his adventures are mostly linear, they are ripe with lurid entertaining descriptions.

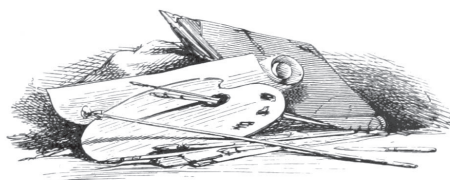
And it's in part this way with words that makes this book so very good. In a time when 3rd edition Dungeons and Dragons® and Pathfinder® had just sapped the life from fantasy adventure gaming, reducing adventures to linear combats and leaving no room for old-school type play, this book stood out (and sold) like a beacon to all those who remembered the weird and exciting play involving mysteries below the ground. A solid source of ideas on each page, all of which will make the game more exciting.

Book of War

There have been many attempts at modeling mass battle for Dungeons & Dragons®. This masterwork put together by Delta Collins is the best of them. The Book of War allows simple resolution of any mass combat that the players are involved in, and is designed to match the statistical outcomes of any monster as a unit in the game. It's fast, quite nice, and really makes running into 30-300 bandits a fun time instead of a logistical nightmare.

It's designed to take into account the actual game statistics, requires no conversion for any version of Dungeons and Dragons® and smoothly scales for various sizes of armed conflicts. Additionally, the system encourages smart tactics, making large battles a strategic challenge for both the Dungeon Master and the players.

The ability to allow your players to command 100 footmen and 50 archers, fighting 300 orcs in a massive battle without slowing everything down to a crawl is worth the price of admission and something you should do at your table as soon as possible.



Tome of Adventure Design

Gamers are a particular bunch, often concerned with minutia. At some point, everyone has thought, what if you just put all the ideas ever into one book.

This is that book.

It's top selling, because it's useful. It's an exhaustive collection of plots, ideas, schemes, structures, ideas, traps, substances, and more. It's intentionally designed so that random results work in tandem, providing the structure and inspiration to make creativity easy.

Finch outdid himself with this book. It will remain useful for many years to come.

Grimtooth's Traps

Early traps are a strange thing. Often teens running games would submit breathless descriptions of traps that involved no agency of the players as well as a plethora of run on sentences.

This presented traps as they were in the original megadungeons. Not gotcha hit point taxes, but each a strange occurrence and presentation. The traps become the encounter. How do you get that gem off that pedestal without getting slammed into the ceiling or smashed by an absurdly large hammer? How do you get this cage across the ceiling to avoid the giant crabs? How do you get that treasure from the bottom of the pool? They are presented tongue in cheek, but it doesn't matter how silly a trap is, when it's doing 57 points of damage to a fighter it's deadly serious.

It's lovingly illustrated by Steve Crompton and is full of ideas that can be integrated into your next dungeon for a fun puzzle.

Creature Catalogue

The Creature Catalogue was a British release, but it was a monster manual for Basic/Expert version of Dungeons & Dragons®, forming a weird patchwork of monsters that were representative of Mystara, the crazy high-fantasy setting of Basic/Expert.

At a certain point in a gamemaster career, realization dawns that monster books are worthless for the stats—monsters provide particular combat or encounter effects, the actual hit dice and armor class are not nearly as important as the idea.

The creature catalog is the best type of setting book. Using just the monsters in that book, immerses your players in a specific weird ecosystem.

The Wilderness Alphabet

Not nearly as popular as the Dungeon Alphabet, but instead written by a long time gamer, this provides a wonderful character to the overworld, lading hexes and areas with imaginative description and mystery. It's idiosyncratic, and yet, very universal. Useful for all wilderness expeditions.

Rogues Gallery + Geomorphs

This combination of supplements seems as though it's nothing but meaningless lines and numbers. And it sort of literally is. And yet, these arcane numbers and lines create adventures remarkably similar to the ones that took place in Castle Greyhawk, by virtue of the fact that the geomorphs are from Castle Greyhawk, and the encounters matrix was the one in use for dungeon play.

The fact that the Rogue's Gallery has write ups for a dozen classic non-player characters, along with a bunch of pre generated classes with relevant equipment made it useful in play.

Metamorphica

A lot of these products take it to the bone. This is one of them. This is bar-none the resource for mutations. Running a campaign with mutations, want to hand out random effects? Is somebody touching the altar of Jubilex? Boy, is this book a good solution. Never leave home without it.

On the Non-Player Character

It's an objective answer for non-player character interactions. It uses player skill, not magical tea parties to determine the outcome of conversation and social conflict. The non-player character descriptors aren't a random list, they are specifically selected to be immediately accessible to the players in play. It's a book I'd never run a game without, the back page is always open during play as a reference.

That's the list. Find what you wanted?

Chainmail To Original
Dungeons & Dragons:



1971

OD&D Clones
Swords & Wizardry
White Box for the
three original books
Complete for the three
books plus the
expansions



1974

Eric J. Holmes Blue Edition
Clones: *Blueholme*

Holmes was asked to rewrite for beginners. Holmes basic edition was almost immediately rewritten and released as the Basic/Expert set Referred to as B/X



1977



1989

2nd Edition

Advanced Dungeons
& Dragons 1st Edition
Clones: OSRIC



1978-81



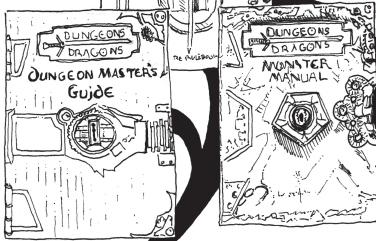
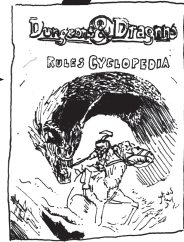
1981

Basic/Expert (B/X) clones:
Lamentations of the Flame Princess
Adventurer Conqueror King
Old School Essentials
Labyrinth Lord



2000

The Cyclopedia combines the Frank Mentzer written Basic-Expert-Companion-Masters-Immortal set of rules



4th Edition

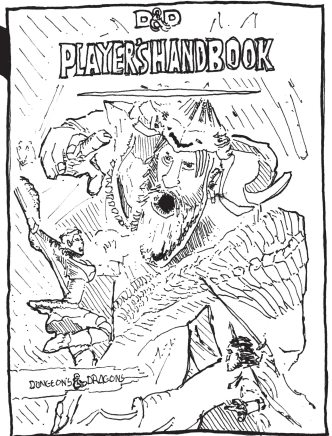
Dungeons & Dragons
2008



2008

3rd Edition Dungeons & Dragons,
and its spiritual successor,
Pathfinder.

Editions of Dungeons & Dragons through the years...



5th Edition Dungeons & Dragons

2014

ON THE TOP 10 PRESTIGE CLASSES

Using a prestige class in a classic style game is easy. Have an entrance requirement. This triggers the drawbacks and restrictions. Then the character may split experience points between his two classes as he wishes.

TOP 10 PRESTIGE CLASSES

10) **Thief**: If taking the thief as a class, perhaps it works best as a prestige class. This is likely the original intent. If you have it, players dump experience into the class to acquire the skills, at the expense of their primary class.

9) **Assassin**: This is a fantastic prestige class. It has an entry requirement of killing someone for money. It gives basic thieving skills after a level or two along with the ability to use disguises and poisons. It lacks the ability to disarm magical traps and locks. The assassin prestige class allows the character to raise money by committing murder for hire in their free time. Class abilities can be lost if anyone discovers your true nature.

8) **Paladin**: Real holy power in exchange for a restricted moral leeway. This prestige class is more stringent than the others, replacing fighter classes only and preventing improvement in the original class. It also comes with a number of moral imperatives depending on the god along with an annoying vow of poverty, but the holy powers of laying on hands, detection of evil, protection from evil, being able to use holy swords and mounts provide power to make up for the restrictions.

7) **Mystic Theruge**: A spell caster who's interested in magic from all sources, not just wizard or cleric spells. Masters may be available from rare temples or places in the wilderness. Each level taken in this grants new spells from a variety of magical traditions, druidic, wizardly, clerical, or even stranger sources of sorcery. Working with arcane energies is very physically taxing and often will cause strange deformations in those who break such natural boundaries.

6) **Necromancer**: All the spells for death shouldn't be assigned to different classes. Close association with the dead brings unwanted attention and odd smells. Bargains with the dead tend to imperil souls. On the plus side, undead servants don't complain when used to set off traps.

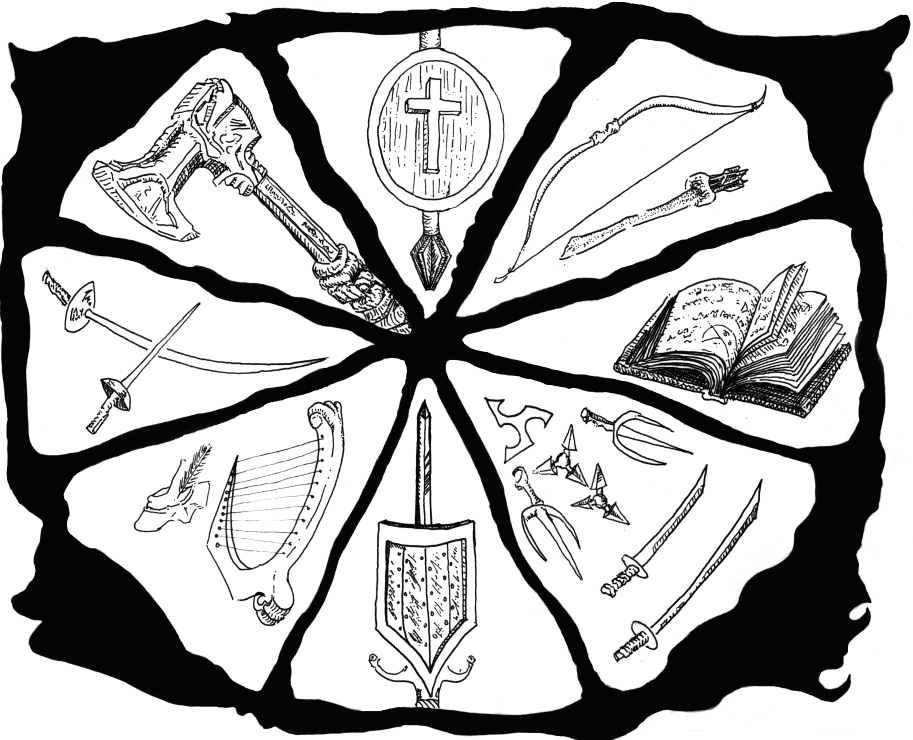
5) **Pirate**: Specific skill sets and tropes work well as prestige classes because they represent an investment, create history, and add skills, and still allow the character to advance normally. Time spent among a pirate ship can give a basic proficiency at all ship related tasks, bonuses on ship to ship combat, skill at fighting on rigging and moving across vertical surfaces quickly, mastery of mounted shipboard weaponry (such as cannon), and an increase armor class and breath weapon/wand saves in light or no armor based on their level. Surprisingly useful when your ship suddenly takes off into space.

4) **Magical or Martial Speciality:** This prestige class takes a specific magical or martial style, like gladiator, elemental, pyromancer, or cavalier and provides additional abilities. Sometimes players want to have a specific focus, and using prestige classes in this way allow the DM and the player to work out how that happens mechanically. This is useful for when the natural customization options of flavor and class don't provide abilities the character seeks. Some sacrifices, limitations, experience point expenditure and in game effort later and they can give up normal advancement for some of these abilities.

3) **Beastmaster/Rider:** Fiction abounds with the bond between characters and their pets and mounts. Adding a little mechanical benefit: Spider-rider, Dragon-friend, Worm-rider.

2) **Cultist:** Because if the party is going to be fighting them, shouldn't they have some unique abilities? And when players end up joining them, the preparation is done.

1) **Ninja:** But not at my table.



TOP 10 NON-TRADITIONAL CURRENCIES

What are the top non-traditional currencies?

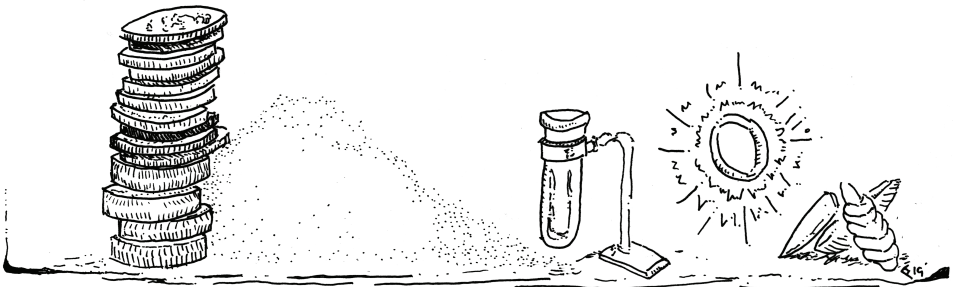
1. **Runic Arcanite:** It works a lot like Bitcoin, only using actual labor and value. It can be used to power magic items and enchantments, but must be mined and constructed from raw materials.
2. **Ceramic Coins:** Originally from *Dark Sun*, these are glazed, hampering counterfeiting.
3. **Boon Debt:** Mimicking the relationships of the eternally damned, every good transferred, also transfers a specific amount of labor debt. The value of time is equal to what the debtor can provide. In many underworld economies, this has indebted thousands of goblins, orcs, and ogres to overlords who will dominate their time for years to come. After debt exceeds twice your lifespan, your very life is at their disposal.
4. **Light:** Anything that produces illumination is of value in underground environments. Magical light is not at the top of the list; instead ranking near bioluminescence and other sources of uncontrollable light. The candle is the basis for such a system, with lanterns and lantern oil near the top. Torches are less useful than candles for the degree to which they foul the air.
5. **Animal Parts:** Usually of rare or dangerous creatures. This follows one of the key functions of economic materials, which is that the more people that seek to acquire the substance the more rare and difficult to acquire the substance becomes. Feathers, scales, teeth, preferably of dangerous beasts all work quite well as currency.
6. **Occultum:** Psychic particles bonded with gold that makes shadowy weightless high value coins that cost nothing to carry, but that lose value every time they are counted or observed as they shift back to gold
7. **Letters of Credit:** For when you want to just say 'to heck with it' and have everyone use paper money.
8. **Mushrooms:** Or fungus, or mold, or other rare delicate plants that can be traded, smoked, or consumed when dried. Tobacco, Coffee plants, and other natural drugs are also sporting commodities.
9. **Water:** On a crapsack world, in a grimdark era, basic water is the exchange unit in the world. Difficult to transport, in constant need and use. Other examples from this type of currency include steel, weapons, armor, food, threats of violence, and other basic expectations in a civilized society. Expect some sort of waste recycling methods.
10. **Gems:** Nothing is more portable, rare, beautiful, difficult to acquire and valuable than shiny rocks. Strange but true.

ON THE TOP TYPES OF MAGICAL CURRENCY

After a certain point, money just doesn't cut it anymore. When access is gained to limited wish, outer realm creatures can be summoned and grant any desire, what exactly motivates you to adventure? When gems are just so much dross, platinum is too heavy to bother with, and even a kingdom is more trouble than it's worth. What is worth having?

TOP 10 TYPES OF MAGICAL CURRENCY

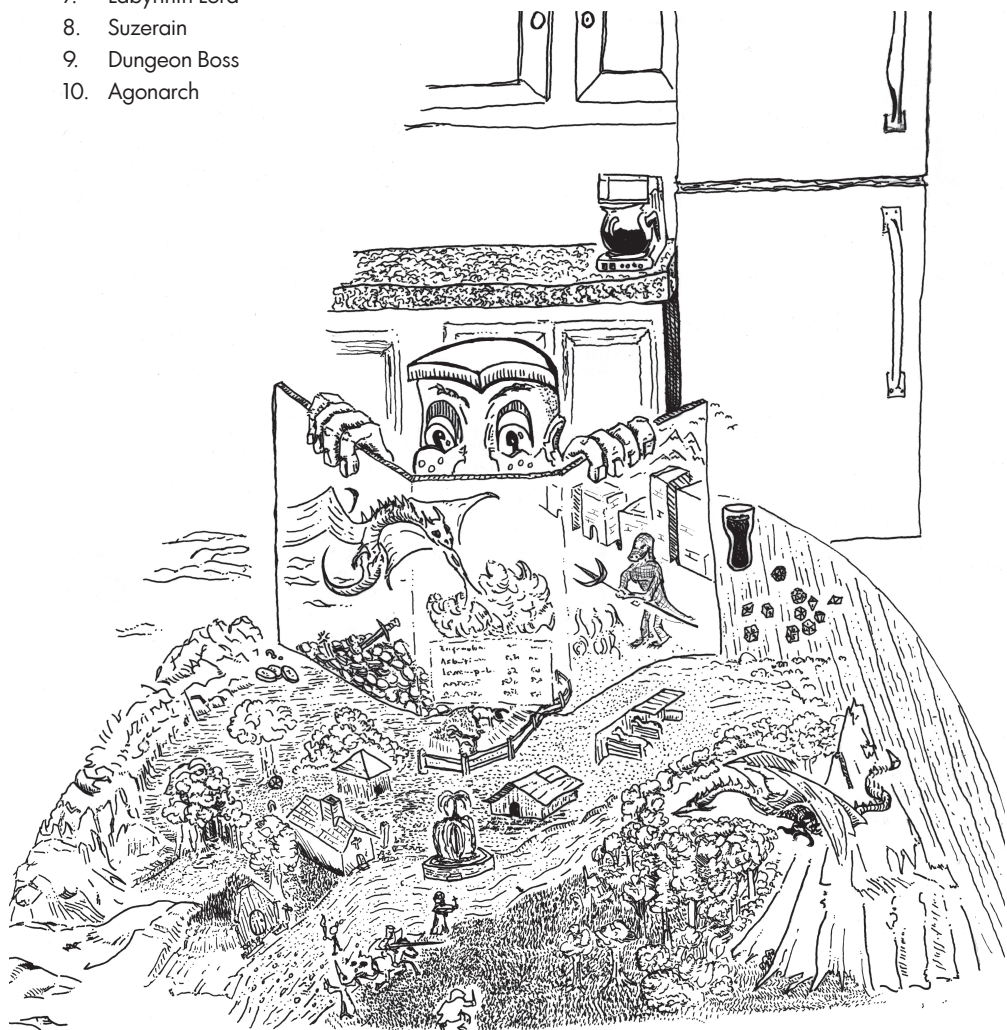
1. **Quintessence or Residuum:** The collected essence of magic. The magic item is less useful than the energy it contains! This is the result of breaking down already bound magic. Find essences of raw magic, usable before it is shaped.
2. **Prestige or Fame:** Better than the responsibility of a domain, this is a way to have the world provide for needs without having to carry anything at all.
3. **Fairy Dust:** Because it's pretty difficult to get your hands on, and those that do usually snort it up before it can be used. Comes from the *Xanax Fairy*, the *Ativan Fairy*, and the *Valium Fairy*.
4. **Dragon Scales:** Only useful if removed from the dragon first.
5. **Monster Essence:** Alchemists draw these out of monsters, usually worth about 500 gold pieces per hit die or more. Useful in the enchantment of new magical items, as well as consumables.
6. **Raw Chaos or Pure Planar Essence:** These are often condensed into physical form, planar pearls or astral diamonds. These can be traded at 10,000 gold to the pound.
7. **Concentration:** Once you can survive in the outer planes, you discover what's really valuable there. Ideas can take physical form. They appear solid, but actually are liquid that flows so slowly as to be imperceptible. It trades at 50,000 gold a pound.
8. **Hope:** In the realms even further from the prime material emotions may be found and hope is the rarest of all. It has plenty of mass, but actually removes weight from those that carry it. It sheds light and is worth upwards of 100,000 gold a gram.
9. **IOUN Stones:** Though the value of each stone varies, they are rare enough that when many are collected together, they fetch a much higher price. Mined from the interior of a dead sun.
10. **Souls:** are usually valued at the hit dice of the creature squared, times 1,000 gold.



THE TOP 10 NAMES FOR THE DUNGEON MASTER

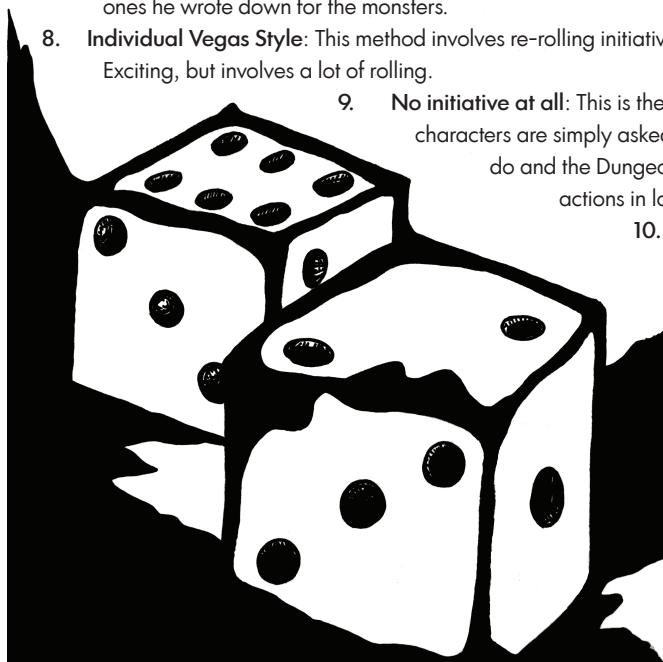
Besides Dungeon Master of course.

1. You bastard (or other popular insults)
2. Referee, moderator, narrator and other dull system neutral terms
3. Screen monkey
4. Keeper of arcane law
5. Holmeister, for all your *HOL: Human Occupied Landfill* needs
6. Chill master
7. Labyrinth Lord
8. Suzerain
9. Dungeon Boss
10. Agonarch



THE TOP TEN DIFFERENT STYLES OF INITIATIVE

1. **Phased initiative:** This is a declare action first style, where you say what you're going to do, and then the actions run in the order of what you're doing. *Old School Hack* and *Holmes Bluebook Dungeons & Dragons*® use this style. E.g. ranged, then movement, then melee, then spells.
2. **Individual initiative:** This is where each individual rolls and a count goes in order. Rounds are usually a minute long and results are modified by the weapon, spell or item used. Each count can be referred to as a segment. (1d6 is 10 second segments, 1d10 is 6 second segments and 1d12 is 5 second segments). Sometimes, like in *Shadowrun*®, initiative is a total that gets counted down by a value, allowing additional actions if the total is high enough.
3. **Ordered by statistic:** Usually in order of Dexterity or Intelligence. Sometimes this can be weapon length.
4. **Winner's Choice:** This allows the person who's action it is to pick who goes next when their action is complete.
5. **The Speed Check:** Players roll against a target to see if they go before or after the opposition. The party takes actions in their split order; winners before, losers after.
6. **The Count System:** Used by the new Hackmaster, this involves a single die for surprise, and then your actions take time, you can swing your sword every seven counts.
7. **Written orders:** This is declare before by writing down what you are planning to do, and then having the Dungeon Master execute those orders simultaneously with the ones he wrote down for the monsters.
8. **Individual Vegas Style:** This method involves re-rolling initiative after every action. Exciting, but involves a lot of rolling.
9. **No initiative at all:** This is the original method. The characters are simply asked what they are going to do and the Dungeon Master resolves the actions in logical order.
10. **Vegas style!** This is a comparative roll, resulting in one entire side or the other going first. It is exciting and simple. The threat of having to suffer through two rounds of attacks means the rolls are pretty exciting.



ON THE TOP 10 DIFFERENT MAGIC SYSTEMS

10) **Spell Points** “*Mana was defined in the introduction to the mage classes in Chapter 3 as the energy which powers most of the magik used by most mages.*” —Arduin, *The Compleat Arduin Book I*

9) **Sorcery** “*A sorcerer casts arcane spells which are drawn primarily from the sorcerer/wizard spell list. He can cast any spell he knows without preparing it ahead of time, the way a wizard or cleric must.*” —*Players Handbook 3rd edition*

8) **Ley Line Magic** “*Ley lines are a matrix of natural Potential Psychic Energy that run in straight lines across the globe. The source of the energy is unknown and apparently inexhaustible.*” —*Palladium core book*

7) **Channeling Holy Power** “*The Channeler derives his power from another being, and is in its debt. If not for his deity, the Channeler would have no power himself. This is how a Channeling spell user should view his power and ability.*” —*Channeling Companion, Rolemaster*

6) **Spell Lists** “*Spells are grouped into lists. A spell list is an ordering of spells based upon the correlation of level, intricacy, and potency. Spell lists are learned in stages, as the character progresses in experience, knowledge, and power.*” —*Spell Law, Rolemaster*

5) **Recharge Magic** “*In this variant, spellcasters don’t have a hard limit on spells per day. Instead, it takes time to gather the magical energies required to cast a spell of a particular level, so the characters must wait a number of rounds, minutes or hours before casting such a spell again.*” —*Unearthed Arcana*

4) **Incantation and Ritual Magic** “*Rituals are complex ceremonies that create magic effects. You don’t memorize or prepare a ritual; a ritual is so long and complex that no one could ever commit the whole thing to memory. To perform a ritual, you need to read from a book or scroll containing it. A ritual book contains one or more rituals that you can use as often and as many times as you like, as long as you can spare the time and the components to perform the ritual. . .*” —*Players Handbook, 4th edition*

3) **Spheres** “*Fifteen magic arts describe your mastery of the various fields of magic: five techniques and ten forms. The techniques describe what you do, and the forms describe what you are affecting. Each spell combines one form and one technique. Thus a “Create fire” spell would produce light, heat, or fire, and a “Control Fire” spell could somehow control light, heat, or fire. Each of the fifteen arts has a Latin name.*” —*Ars Magica*

2) **Fatigue Casting** “*The effort of manipulating mana can exhaust or even injure a magician. . . Drain damage is usually stun damage.*” —*Shadowrun 3rd edition core book*

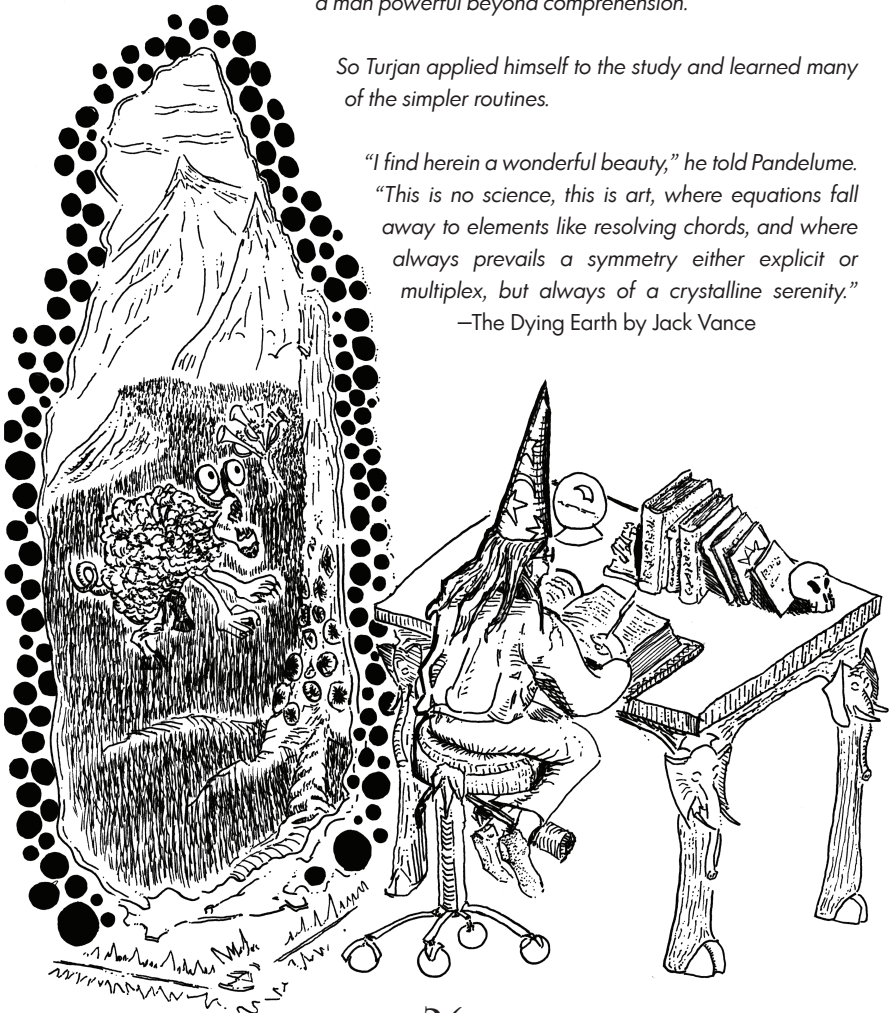
1) **Vancian Magic** "In this fashion did Turjan enter his apprenticeship with Pandelume. Day and far into the opalescent Embelyon night he worked under Pandelume's unseen tutelage. He learned the secret of renewed youth, many spells of the ancients, and a strange abstract lore that Pandelume termed "Mathematics".

"Within this instrument," said Pandelume, "resides the Universe. Passive in itself and not of sorcery, it elucidates every problem, each phase of existence, all the secrets of time and space. Your spells and runes are built upon its power and codified according to a great underlying mosaic of magic. The design of this mosaic we cannot surmise; our knowledge is didactic, empirical, arbitrary. Phandaal glimpsed the pattern and so was able to formulate many of the spells which bear his name. I have endeavored through the ages to break the clouded glass, but so far my research has failed. He who discovers the pattern will know all of sorcery and be a man powerful beyond comprehension."

So Turjan applied himself to the study and learned many of the simpler routines.

"I find herein a wonderful beauty," he told Pandelume. "This is no science, this is art, where equations fall away to elements like resolving chords, and where always prevails a symmetry either explicit or multiplex, but always of a crystalline serenity."

—The Dying Earth by Jack Vance



ON 10 NEW AND OLD IDEAS ABOUT WANDS

Some thoughts on wands. . .

1. Wands have between 1 and 50 charges that are spent to produce specific effects, such as *fireballs* or *cure light wounds*.
2. Wands do a certain type of damage (fire, shock, ice) if the target fails a save versus spells.
3. Wands of a certain magic school allow the caster to make a save versus spells to avoid losing the spell from that school.
4. Spell wands reduce the resistance between the wizard and the target, either making the save more difficult to resist or increasing the damage per die.
5. Wizards can store a certain number of spells in the wand to be used that don't count against their daily total.
6. Wands are actually physical constructs that are spells. Each one provides a very specific unique power. Without access to wands, wizards are nothing more than conjurers of cheap tricks.
7. A wand provides no special bonus, but without the wand magical energy cannot be focused. The more powerful the energy, the more rare the substance needed. 1st level spells will work with heart oak, but 7th require solid pearl.
8. Wands all produce unique damage effects, like a 10' lightning storm or a force push that knocks someone 15', but only have a handful of charges. Then they become 'burnt out' and must be re-crafted using a variety of items and gemstones.
9. Wands aren't necessary, but they aim the magic like an antenna preventing its detection from nearby wizards and witches. Otherwise the magic is broadcast like a powerful radio signal.
10. Wands act like a sidearm, allowing the wizard to cast any spell he knows when out of spells or mana, but at a much reduced effectiveness.



10 **TOTALLY** METAL CHANGES FOR WIZARDS

On How We Have FAILED!

What is the singular most important lesson fantasy fiction teaches us?

Warriors are 'fskin METAL! Wizards are degenerate reprobates.

And what, exactly, does nearly every iteration of fantasy role playing teach you?

That wizards are the source of ultimate power.

And warriors cease to be relevant soon after creation.

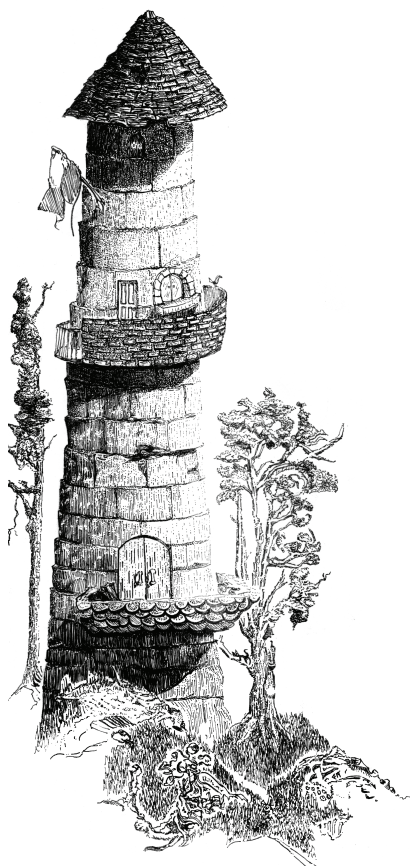
Here's 10 ways to fix the problem!

1. Give wizards mutations for using spells!
2. Force wizards to roll to successfully cast spells!
3. Awesome up your fighter!
4. Allow wizards to learn only one spell a level!
5. Strictly enforce time and money constraints associated with spellcasting!
6. Spell failure, and 10,000 interesting consequences thereof!
7. Magic dead zones, ley lines, and w-w-w-wild SURGES!!!
8. Make sure your fighter gets his army at level 9!
9. Metal burrrrrns the magic-user! It burrrns him!
10. Everybody really hates you. Although magic is awesome, Townsfolk object to being kidnapped to fuel your dark magics!

11 REASONS FOR THE WIZARD'S TOWER

Why do Wizards hang out in towers?

1. Symbolism! The tower is an ancient symbol of arrogance and hubris. Look at how high my tower reaches over my demense! Behold my power and glory!
2. Isolationism! Towers represent the idea of someone who wishes to remove themselves from polite society. They are above it.
3. Fortification! There is only one entrance. In order to invade, you must storm up the stairs. There is literally less square surface area to enchant and protect.
4. Visibility! If you wield vast cosmic power, you wouldn't want anyone approaching to be able to hide from you?
5. Display of Power! It takes knowledge, engineering and know-how to build a tower, otherwise every peasant would do it.
6. Protection! Robbery, home invasion, and murder were commonplace. Nobody can just break into a tower—the separation and height protect it from stealthy infiltration.



7. Power! Ley lines and magical sources are more corrupted near the ground. The higher the tower the more energy is available.
8. Peace and Quiet! Being up in the air like that gives you some distance from whatever distracting hustle and bustle is on the ground.
9. Freedom! It's cheaper than a castle and there's no lawn or grounds! Upkeep is easy and they can avoid all those distracting mundane tasks that they are forced to engage in.
10. Safety! It provides protection and a convenient excuse for all those irate peasants who are certain that you are the reason all their cows are sick.

And the main reason for wizards to live in towers—

11. It's the most efficient layout for storing all their damn books!

10 THINGS YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT HIT POINTS

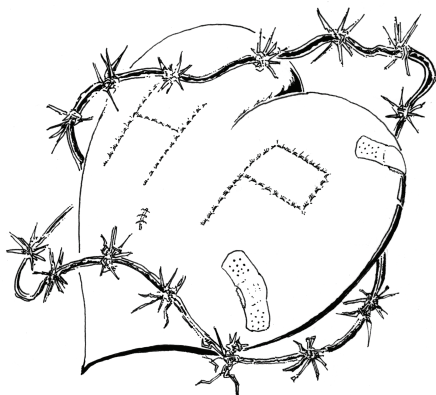
What is the most important thing about hit points?

That they are fun for the players!

But they aren't realistic.

So?

People should get weaker as they get hurt? Are you familiar with the death spiral? That's no fun in an adventure game about heroes.



TEN DIFFERENT WAYS TO HANDLE HIT POINTS!

1. Classic! Roll and add to your maximum hit points once per level gained.
2. Old School! Reroll hit points every level and replace the maximum if the new total is higher. Optional: Add +1 hit point or +Con or +1+Con if it is not.
3. Carcosan! Reroll hit points every combat! And damage! EVERYTHING RANDOM.
4. The LoFP! Roll hit points for a normal man and have those be your actual physical health.
5. The Warhammer! Once your hit points are gone, you start taking critical hits.
6. The Star Wars! Constitution is wounds, and hit points protect those—criticals go straight to wounds.
7. The Canadian Paladin! Spend random values of your hit die to do extra damage to your opponent.
8. The Hackmaster! Called shots and specific hit locations on criticals.
9. The Strange Magic! You can't do more damage than the amount of hit points you have.
10. The 4th edition! H-H-H-Healing S-S-S-S-SURGE!

And last, but not least, for the hardest of the hard core, for the ultimate grognard in us all!

11. The Chainmail! You can take one hit per level!

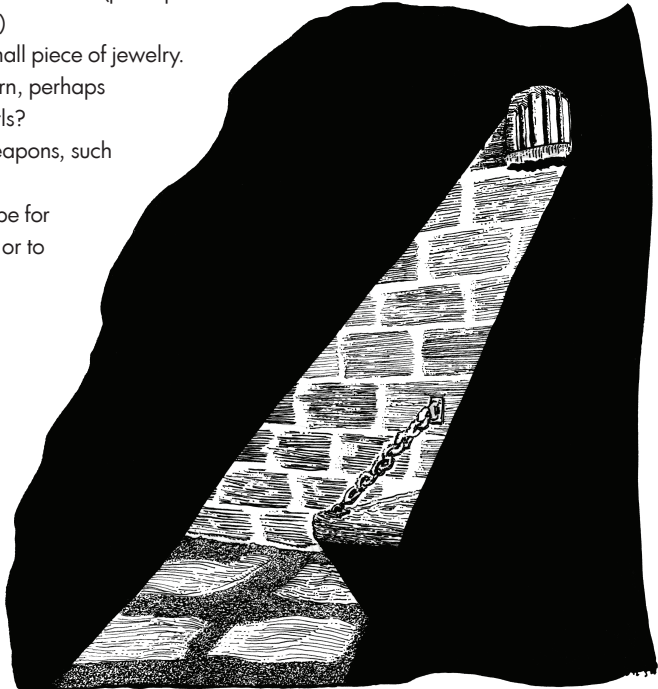
ON THE CONTENTS OF CELLS IN PRISON

On a list of what you might find in a prison cell!

A prison cell is a room or chamber designed for the purpose of confining people awaiting trial or sentencing. The contents of a cell that is 'empty' can include: a pallet, bed, desk, quill, paper, scrolls, books, bench, privy, straw, cot, stool, waste, stale or urine odor, blood, skeletons, manacles, wall cressets, trash/refuse, jug, plate, fork, spoon, file, barred window. —Empty Rooms, Tricks & Basic Trap Design

What kind of interesting things can be found in a cell?

1. A window to the outside or surface.
2. A skeleton with basic gear.
3. Rats or other vermin eating scraps of remaining meals.
4. A monster, such as a dungeon inhabitant or spy.
5. A wild animal.
6. A small tool or key hidden under a mattress.
7. A baby.
8. A secret hidey-hole, filled with food, or the start of a tunnel to freedom (perhaps even completed!)
9. Coins or a small piece of jewelry.
10. A stash of porn, perhaps monster-girls?
11. Makeshift weapons, such as a shank.
12. A prisoner, ripe for recruitment or to replace a player character!



ON THE TOP 30 QUEST REWARDS

1. Gold
2. Cattle/Livestock/Trained Animals
3. Deed to land
4. Magic Items/Relics
5. Men
 - i. Slaves
 - ii. Soldiers
 - iii. Hirelings
 - iv. Expert Aid
6. Information
7. Maps
8. Keys
9. Loyalty/Lying for them
10. Spells
11. Material components or Rare ingredients
12. An antidote (possibly to the poison they were drugged with)
13. A pardon (for the murder they were framed for)
14. Gratitude
15. Transportation
16. Accompaniment
17. Room and board
18. Accolades
19. Titles
20. Healing
21. Equipment
22. Introductions to secret organizations
23. Religious absolution
24. Patronage
25. Food
26. New identities
27. Training
28. Fame/Nobility
29. Someone's hand in marriage
30. Freedom

TOP THIRTY LIST OF PROBLEMS AT THE BREWERY

What the heck has gone wrong at the brewery?

1. The Barley King has arisen to take back what is rightfully his.
2. The rats are plotting a takeover.
3. The yeast has become sentient.
4. All the water has turned to blood and it looks like a charnel house more than a brewery.
5. The undead workforce are on strike.
6. A band of goblins is scavenging copper from the brew kettles.
7. The barrels turned out to be mimics.
8. Otyughs have decided the mash is “treasure” and will fight to keep it.
9. Hallucinogenic fungus growing in barrels.
10. Nocturnal gnomes stealing brew.
11. Worker thinks he knows alchemy. Wants to use equipment for his lab.
12. An alcoholic cleric/monk decided the beer was too weak and used a spell from the Bacchus-esque god of alcohol to make the beer stronger. The god decided it would be nice to make it real strong, but with a slow build. In the end: lots of really drunk townsfolk... brawls? romance? defenseless against attack? being taken advantage of by wily sober thieves?
13. A witch cursed everyone in town (maybe even the kingdom) with gluten allergies and the brewmaster is contemplating suicide because he knows of no alternatives.
14. The dead bodies of prominent thieves keep appearing in perfectly sealed kegs of beer. No signs of tampering are evident, and it's even happening in kegs that have been specially marked.
15. The duke made an offhand joke about how dwarven ale was almost as good as what they made in his hometown, and now dwarven ego must be soothed before they'll resume work. Good luck with that.
16. Something is wrong with the beer! When you drink it, you NEVER SOBER UP.
17. A dragon has demanded an impossible tribute of fifty thousand barrels of beer. The dwarves are collapsing from fatigue and the dragon is growing impatient.
18. The rival brewery has sent dwarven “ninjas” to sabotage it.
19. The hill giants have taken over the brewery and are drinking all the beer in some sort of hill giant rager. They're normally very dangerous, but they are really, really drunk.
20. Sentient mead.
21. Horrible molds and fungi start growing, feeding on the evaporated alcohol.
22. Prohibition.
23. Japanese saki demon.
24. A coven cursed them with perpetual sobriety.
25. A hag has taken over the hop kiln, and has taken to calling herself the Wicked Witch of the Oats.
26. Horrible wolf-bees have been sent to cause havoc by the rival meadery.

27. The Green Hop Goddess has moved into the human frame of a brewery worker, demands weekly sacrifice in return for doubling output, death by forced ingestion of green hop beer.
28. The stills animate into a golem. A perpetually drunk golem.
29. Giant Hornets suck. What sucks more? Drunk Giant Hornets.
30. She wants to take a bath in alcohol? Take her to take a bath in alcohol!

TOP 10 MOST TERRIFYING WOLF MONSTERS

1. Wolf Spider
2. Wolf-Bees
3. Wolf-Elk
4. Wolf-Snake
5. Wolf-Dragon
6. Wolf-Bear
7. Wolf-Cat (panther, etc.)
8. Zombie Wolf
9. Wolf-Demon
10. Wolfalich!

TOP 10 GOOD TACTICS IN HOSTILE DUNGEONS

10. **Lard & Grease:** Whether a squeaky door, a greased staircase before a fight, or assisting with opening rusty and old latches, having some lard and grease is always useful.

9. **Tiny birds:** What would happen if someone went somewhere, only without knowing if it was safe enough to go. With this small sack of birds, check for traps, trade to people for passage, notice if the air is toxic, or even distract unintelligent opponents. Taking them along extends life, at the expense of theirs.

8. **Paying attention:** Dungeons & Dragons[®] is about exploring a resonant fantasy realm filled with archetypal representations. This process is handled via conversation using the Socratic method. Players ask questions, the Dungeon Master gives answers. If not asking questions or listening, you're watching your friends play. When everyone jumps in and works together, it raises the experience for all involved.

7. **Gloves & Helmet:** If it's not necessary to touch with your bare hands, don't. Don't press parts of your body (like ears or eyes) against things. You call people that don't wear covers corpses. Get a hat, preferably one made out of metal that lets you see in the dark, grants telepathy, or makes you smart or something.

6. **Equipment shenanigans.** Casting a *light* spell on a shield illuminates opponents and plays havoc with enemy archers. A metal sectioned pole allows you to attach a hook, vary length, and carry one in cramped quarters. Collect potions and scrolls; don't hesitate to use them. There's always more magic to find.

5. **Hammer & Piton:** It holds doors both closed AND open. It draws a lot of attention. It attaches rope to things. Hammers & pitons solve problems.

4. **Torchbearers & Porters:** When there are things that need to be done, having a man or two around who can do them is helpful. Purchase them brightly colored festive outfits. Give them nets and poles to trip up enemies, ball bearings, oil, caltrops and other things they can throw. They can pull people to safety and best of all, they draw archer fire. People don't get into this vocation because they want a safe workplace.

3. **Elves & Dwarves:** Everyone loves their tiefling, half-cat, half-turtle, kenku-whatever sub race, but facts remain. You want an elf for secret door detection and a dwarf for detecting stonework traps and sliding doors. Often they can see in the dark. If you don't have one in your party, hire one in town as a buddy.

2. **Oil:** You don't want to need it and not have it. If you want to be sure something is dead, burn it to ash.

1. **Ten-Foot Pole:** You will want to touch things and not be near them. Trust me.

TOP NEWS STORIES FROM DUNGEONS & DRAGONS HISTORY

We should remember the past, lest. . .

If it were a fad, you wouldn't be reading about it right now.

Dungeons & Dragons® was always a fast starter. The first printing of 1,000 copies were gone in just a few months. That print run was doubled and sold out even faster the second time. What made it such a fast starter?

Due to a mixup with rights to the books by J. R. R. Tolkien—Donald Wollheim of Ace Paperback was upset because Tolkien snubbed him when he asked to print *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* in paperback. When Donald's limited 5 year license to print them ran out, he just decided that it was public domain and began publishing it illegally. In order to stop this, in the late 60's they ran a huge publishing campaign to assert their rights in the United States, making the *Lord of the Rings* a very well marketed as well as popular book in the early 1970's. The themes in the book and the rising counterculture made it a nationwide phenomenon.

A lot of that popularity contributed to the fast success of Dungeons & Dragons®, which in turn began to spawn more fantasy novels. With distribution channels in bookstores, gas stations, sears, and cheap child friendly books (Moldvay/Cook and Mentzer Basic) along with ads in boy's life and other teenage magazines, it sold millions of copies. 12.9\$ million dollars worth in 1981—That's almost 50 million dollars in 2019 money.

Money Troubles

One of the reasons Dungeons & Dragons® was able to get into so many distribution channels is that they were sitting on a large pile of money, and therefore willing to take the risk of distributing to bookstores. If a book didn't sell, you could return the cover for your money back. Once control of the game was wrested away from the Gygax family, by the selfish and despicable Blume brothers, everything changed. No longer were they interested in employee feedback. Through a series of poor business decisions, and a rumor of a large stock of suddenly returned books from Sears in the late 90's, Dungeons & Dragons® found itself solidly in the red.

But like anything wonderful and good that asks nothing of the world, people remember and give back. Turns out, Dungeons & Dragons® was a fan favorite, A long time player and creator of an idea that prints money, Richard Garfield decided *Wizards of the Coast* would purchase the game. They did so, changed the corporate environment, immediately made a series of good business decisions, and began to work on 3rd edition Dungeons and Dragons.

Third edition is coming. . . .

In the late 90's Dungeons & Dragons® was mostly dead. In addition to releasing more and more tone-deaf supplements that sold terribly, modern gamers had confusion over why it's good to have gold for experience and many other classic gaming tropes. They had grown up with fantasy gaming, and everyone had moved to the more mature and adult role playing game Vampire: The Masquerade®. In addition to being a bizarre synthesis of of the most overbearing aspects of 'narrative second edition play' (i.e. illusionism, or railroading), it also had a cool cache, and it was a fair sight easier to hook up after a vampire game than nerdy fantasy games.

But in late 1998, rumors began—a new edition of Dungeons and Dragons? I perused the neophyte site EN world sometimes more than one time a day for details.

And it didn't disappoint. It was released, along with the D20 license allowing Dungeons and Dragons to flourish as content came out. But even from the release of the early third edition adventures the path we are on began to form. Characters complained about the open dungeon, and the monsters that were stronger or weaker than the enemy, leading to design that increasingly became more mechanical, linear, and focusing on the slaying of monsters. (Literally, "We couldn't kill the roper because it's too difficult for a low-level party", That's the idea of risk versus reward and thinking creatively.)

Nothing lasts forever. . .

Fourth edition was eventually announced. The game had become weighty and the people that played online spent their wrath in character optimization boards arguing endless spherical cows. Adikson had left, the D20 glut had gutted sales, and it was time to move forward. A new game was designed, creating lists of powers—with copyrightable names, of course—and planned integration with online tools. Unpopular races like gnomes were removed, and tieflings and dragonborn were made core (because people really like playing half-demons and dragon/lizard people. It's a fetish.) Since people were playing it like a tactics game, they designed it like one. Healing surges, powers with cooldowns, and more.

Many people would say that it was disconnected rules or that the change was too radical. That's not necessarily true. There wasn't a great deal of excitement about 4th edition, but it got played plenty. It was just really bad. Even when they tried to correct it later in official materials, it was too little, too late. Combats with creatures or opponents with hundreds of hit points, exhaust all your powers (which were printed on cards), and then left with each person doing their damage or missing to chip away at the ridiculous hit point totals. It was not a fast process, and in fact was easy to calculate average damage per round and figure out, on average, how many rounds it would take to deplete the monster's hit points. The Dungeon Master, campaign setting, and all the rest was fine. Many things were strange. Paladins were holy warriors who had a lazer that blew things up because that's something paladins could do in fourth edition.

But you couldn't shoot anything that wasn't an enemy in combat, that's the only time the lazer could be shot. There were issues with skill challenges that made them nearly impossible to use and thinking through the real world effects on the spell list caused due to rituals.

Murder and suicide

That wasn't the worst news to come out of the 4th edition debacle. Originally their marketing plan was to distribute "patches" to the ruleset and require a paid subscription to an online tool to create characters. The rules were designed to be integrated into a true virtual table top that would allow play in much the way modern virtual table tops such as Fantasy Grounds do. Sadly, the director of the project suffered a breakdown when his wife filed for divorce, and he killed her, then himself.

It's unlikely it would have changed anything in regards to 4th edition but it never even had a chance after the virtual table top plan collapsed.

Patricia is Bothered about Dungeons and Dragons

Though the most famous Dungeons & Dragons[®] news story of all time, has to be the Patricia Pulling story. She had a bright intelligent son, who suffered from a psychotic break. He began barking and acting like a wolf, killing animals in their backyard. He soon committed suicide. Ms. Pulling claimed that her son died because of a Dungeons & Dragons curse[®]. She brought lawsuits against his school, TSR inc, and more. They were thrown out of court for being meritless. She then began a campaign of lies and disinformation that lasted years.

She was a confused angry lady. She once claimed that 8% of people were Satan worshipers because she estimated 4% of kids were and 4% of adults were and if you add them together you get 8%. When it was pointed out to her that this isn't how math works—not even addressing her claim is a made up estimate—she said it didn't matter because 8% of everyone being a satan worshiper was a conservative estimate. Her organization, Bothered about Dungeons and Dragons, died out when she did, in 1997, but the world had already moved on.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TSR AND THE OSR!

Soon after production of Dungeons & Dragons® began, the publishing company was branded Tactical Studies Rules (TSR). The name Tactical Studies Rules was quickly dropped, but the acronym remained. TSR was insolvent by the late 1990's and was bought by Richard Garfield. The name was dropped. But once Wizards of the Coast began producing product, old school and original gamers kept playing and writing about older versions of Dungeons & Dragons. This became more and more popular eventually coalescing in the OSR (Old School Renaissance) movement, taking place on forums, blogs, and the late Google+.

What are the top ten differences between TSR and OSR?

1. Far less focus on ninjas in the OSR
2. The OSR is profitable
3. Artists have had 20 years to become more awesome and draw something that someone else didn't draw first
4. Somehow the bard is still stupid
5. Fans of the OSR don't get beat up nearly as much
6. The OSR has a dozen times the number of zombies as TSR did
7. Forum arguments happen much faster then they did in Dragon Magazine. . . .
8. . . . But they are all still on the same topics!
9. The OSR can keep more then 2 rulesets going at the same time

and finally, number one. . .

10. The OSR doesn't mess around with putting "NPC" in front of new classes.

ON THE TOP TEN SANDBOX LOCATIONS

You're in a Dungeons & Dragons sandbox, you look around and find:

1. A giant rock carved like a skull. Cultists are rumored to lair there, and at night, sometimes the eyes glow as if it is possessed (or more likely that torchlight is reflected). Perhaps there are many levels of this dark place below.
2. A wizard's tower where strange lights and sounds emanate from realms beyond. Not many people would risk their souls in a wizards tower.
3. Rumors of great treasure and a hidden artifact are said to lie under caverns in the nearby hills. None who have survived the search have been successful.
4. A chateau is the home of a quite dysfunctional royal family with such wealth and power!
5. An old house, upon a hill. It's said to be haunted, those are just children's tales. Yet people have gone missing and there are sometimes mysterious comings and goings.

6. A castle, ran by a reclusive old man. Rumors swirl about demons and blood magic being performed, but who can tell these days?
7. The ancient and hidden tomb of a malign creature. Those who have found it and returned, speak of death and horrible traps and mysteries.
8. In the nearby foothills are large buildings, several of them, of primitive make. Sometimes, if you watch, you can see a large shadow of some creature. Trolls or giants perhaps, surely. You've heard of the raids nearby.
9. A ruined moathouse, falling apart. Be careful of the large toads and collapsed roofs.
10. A small keep, with good folk, an amusing village idiot, and a respectable brick wall. It's also possible their ale is both well-brewed and affordable. They also are rather fond of folks, who happen to be of a certain sort of miscreant or wanderer. There's surely a cleric around, but I wouldn't trust him.

ON THE TOP 10, ERR 20 REALLY DISGUSTING CONTENTS OF A GOBLIN BAG

What does the goblin have in his bag?

Let the players discover why that is a stupid, stupid, question.

This is not a pleasant list!! I suggest you don't read it as quickly as possible!

1. Vomit
2. 1d8 gnawed fingers
3. Rotting meat covered in maggots
4. His feces collection
5. A handful of rotten teeth
6. Filthy string
7. Spores
8. His scab collection
9. Giant ball of nose mucus
10. Silverfish or house centipedes
11. Brain matter
12. A mummified fox head
13. A used love doll, made from fruit
14. His toenail collection
15. A doll of a small child with oversized and super-realistic genitalia
16. A bezoar
17. An abstract sculpture using human flesh, teeth, and hair
18. Fetal rats
19. A petrified animal penis
20. Pile of snakeskin and insect molting shells

PARLOR GAMES USEABLE IN DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

You know, for kids!

Sometimes, it will be necessary to have a small diversion during play. Perhaps a character is gambling, or they have an opportunity to avoid combat. Some of these can even be used to resolve appropriate situations. Here are some popular and easy parlor games that can be integrated into Dungeons & Dragons. These are not full time replacements for mechanics, but modular one-offs. As always, it's never recommended to put these in the way of the game progressing. Non-traditional tasks should be optional.

10. Two lies and a truth. The rules to this game are simple. Make three statements, one of which is a lie and the other person must guess which one. This is particularly useful for Dungeons & Dragons because you are playing characters, adding a second layer upon the game. The statements are made in character, and the interplay between the characters over the players provides interesting situations, while also empowering players to expand on their backstory!

9. Piggy. This is good for a game in a maze or darkness. Have the character seeking a way out close their eyes. Then have a person in the group squeal like a hog. If the blind player can determine who is the person that made the noise, they have succeeded in their sightless navigation (or made their listen roll, etc.)

8. Codes, puzzles and riddles. Simply searching for word puzzles and riddles will give you more than needed for years of play, but it's a good idea to have a couple famous ones in mind. Much like Jeopardy questions, people like knowing trivia. *"No hinges, latches or lid, inside a golden treasure is hid!"*

7. Don't Laugh! This is great for a test of will or constitution. The game is simple. The player must not crack a smile for 60 seconds while the rest of the group attempt to make them laugh. Be careful not to infringe on personal space inappropriately during this game.

6. Slaps. Did you like bullies in high school? Relive the memory awkwardly with your friends by playing slaps! The Dungeon Master puts out his hands palm up. Someone places their hands a few centimeters above the Dungeon Master's hands. The Dungeon Master tries to slap the players hands. If they fail, the player succeeds at the task. If they hit the player, that probably sucks for the player because getting slapped on the hand hurts. If the player flinches or pulls their hands away before the Dungeon Master starts moving, they also fail.

5. High Card or War. Pick a card, reveal your card. The higher card wins! This is a classic game. War is played to win the deck. The number of cards gathered or lost can be used to determine outcomes of actual battles, where you get cards equal to your troop count. Ties have a runoff, where three cards are burned (Each player turns 3 cards face up to add to the weight of the conflict), and the fourth duels, high card winning. Ties cascade of course.

4. Game of Phones! Name a word or theme, and give everyone in the room 60 seconds (90 seconds if the phone is more than a few years old) to come up with the best image or video from the internet related to the word or theme. Players vote for their favorite.

3. Never have I ever played in character can be entertaining. The game is played by a person saying "Never have I ever. . ." and then states an embarrassing occurrence, such as having sex in an uncomfortable place (like the back seat of a volkswagen). It doesn't have to be sexual. *"Never have I ever been robbed while drunk!"*

2. Race the dice. A simple game is everyone rolls 2d6 and the low roll loses a 'life'. You can set a number of losses. This is an interesting way to handle a race. Different factors can change the die sizes. Bonuses are very powerful since you are averaging two dice, so probably you shouldn't use them!

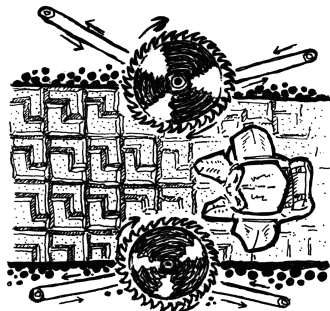
1. Finally, Liar's dice. This classic game is played with 5d6. Each player rolls their dice and hides them behind a wall or cup. This is a pure test of player skill and the ability to bluff and lie, making it a possible tool for a tense social situation! The first player has to bid on how many dice of a certain number there are. The next player either has to raise the bid, either by increasing the number of dice or the number on the die or both, or they can challenge and call. If called, all dice are revealed. And if the dice are there, the caller loses a die. If not, the liar loses a die. The game continues until only one player has dice, them being the winner. Quicker games can be played with fewer dice and fewer players. A 1 on 1 game with the Dungeon Master could be used to resolve a deception or insight attempt. Variants include 1's being considered wild cards and representing whichever numbers are generated.

TOP 10 CLASSIC TRAPS

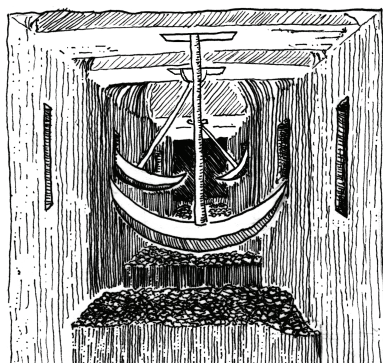
Snares



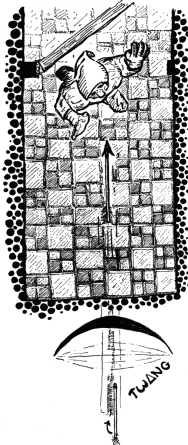
Buzzsaws



Swinging Blades



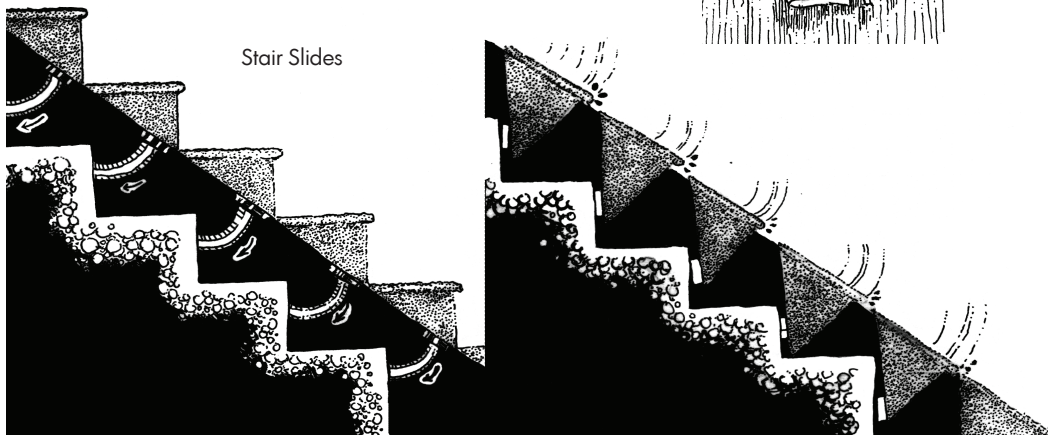
Arrow Traps



Yellow Mold

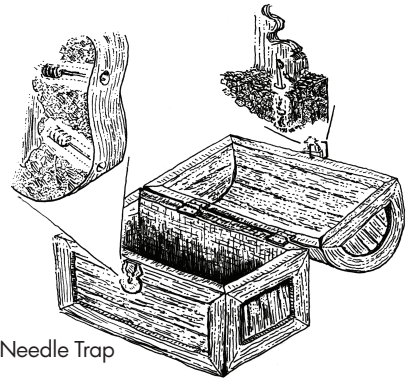


Stair Slides

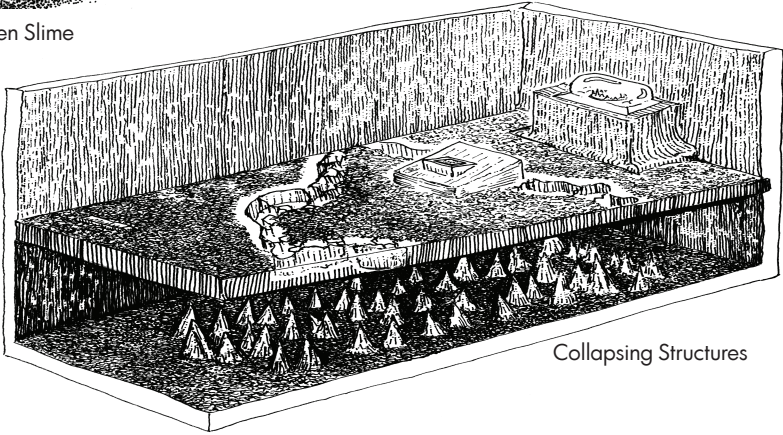




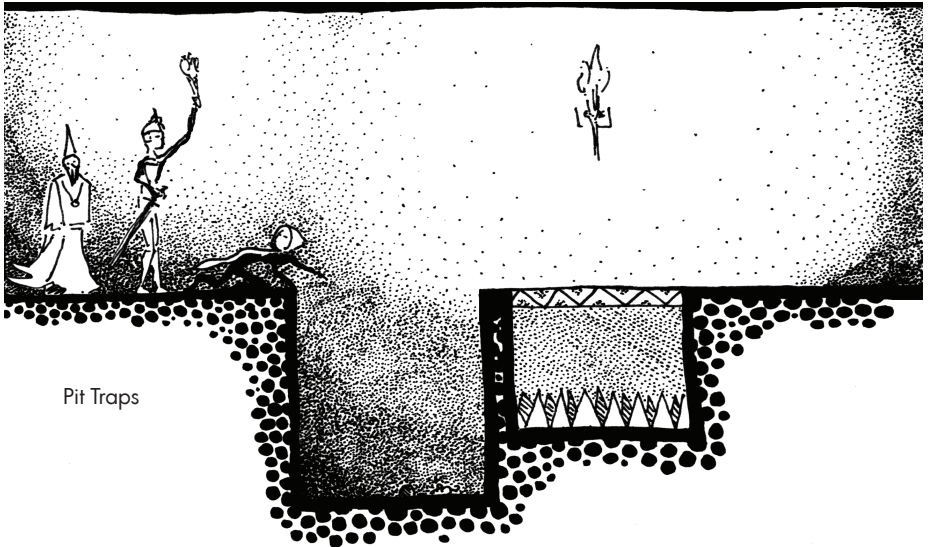
Green Slime



Needle Trap



Collapsing Structures



Pit Traps

AFTERWARD

I hope you enjoyed this look at gaming!

If you like my work, you should know there's a lot of it, nearly all of it free on my blog *Hack & Slash!*

I am three feet long and covered in fur. I am a full time writer/illustrator who pushes buttons on the Internet in a desperate attempt to complete my hard mode quest "Live indoors as an independent creator". If you'd like to assist this slow catastrophic disaster, I will accept help on my quest. I have a daughter and hope to one day afford pets.

Courtney Campbell
Writer/Illustrator

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Other books by Courtney Campbell available at Lulu Print and Drive-thru RPG



On the

NON-PLAYER CHARACTER



Dungeon Master Aid 3

SOLVING THE SOCIAL TRAP

A compiled volume of information for players of Classic Fantasy Role-Playing Games, including: encounter procedures; non-player character design; objective resolution to social encounters; social combat; argumentation procedures; and advice on managing players

CAMPBELL

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