

COMBAT ADVANTAGE

4th Edition D&D streamlined the skill process and concluded that all heroes should be able to accomplish the same tasks outside of combat. This made no one dependent on anyone, but also reduced the impact of skills and the uniqueness of an individual character's training. If the only thing separating two characters' skills are their level modifiers and a +5 training bonus, skills are just a background facet of a character. This is why I wanted to come up with something that would bring skills into the forefront for those who sought the same outcome.

Talents are "skill powers," a means by which a player can stand out and perform a deed other characters in his party cannot. A talent is written up and used exactly as powers and create exceptions to the standard rules. For example, anyone with training in Thievery can open locks, but someone with an Open Locks talent can open the lock and re-lock it without anyone ever knowing someone broke in.

These talents are for the heroic tier, but there are more to come. In the meantime, we'd like to hear from you and get some feedback, as always. Let us know what you think we'd love to see some more out there, so feel free to post them on our boards for others to share in.

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Heroic Talents

Talents are a form of utility power concentrated on skill use. They are a means by which a character stands out amongst others to display a knack or exception training in a particular skill. A talented character can put a skill to use that most other characters can only think about and make themselves more useful in non-combat encounters.

The talents presented here are designed for heroic tier characters, but any character can select one at any level in which they gain a new utility power or can select a replacement utility power. A talent replaces a utility power and functions just as a power would, except that it rarely has any combat application (save for a player with an active imagination – if a player can find a way to use a talent in combat, it is allowed but rare) and can be used once per encounter or daily. There are no at-will talents and selecting a talent does not grant any modifiers to an overall skill (save any modifiers provided during the use of a talent).

A character can only select a talent for a skill he is trained in, no matter how high his level modifier is. Trained characters are the only ones capable of accomplishing such tasks and most talents utilize the "trained only" function of a skill (such as detecting magic with the Arcana skill).

Below are a list of talents divided into the skills they are connected to and are available to any character in the heroic tier and beyond.

How to Read a Talent

Talents are presented as powers and function exactly as they do, since they are designed to replace utility powers at heroic levels. They can only function as encounter or daily powers and are listed as heroic, paragon, or epic talents. (Only heroic talents are provided at this time; stay tuned for paragon and epic talents to be released later.) The power source of the talent remains blank as a talent is suited to any class, regardless of their power source.

Acrobatics

Flexible, quick, and dangerous, an acrobatic hero can twist himself into positions to gain advantage over opponents and seize the upper hand. More often, they can use their agility to avoid danger or prevent it from getting any worse, particularly from traps. Last Second Escape is an acrobatic talent for curious explorers who find themselves dodging danger in a heartbeat's notice.

Last Second Escape

Acrobatics Talent (Heroic)

Just as the trap is sprung, your body unconscious avoids it.

Encounter

Immediate Interrupt **Personal**

Trigger: Any attack is made against your Reflex defense.

Effect: You can make an Acrobatics check against the total attack roll made against you. If you roll higher than the attack, you dodge and avoid any damage or other effects.

Arcana

Knowledge of the deepest workings of magic can change a person in strange and unforeseen ways. For those who take its oddest secrets to heart, they find themselves able to decipher and sense magic beyond those of their peers.

Detect Elements

Arcana Talent (Heroic)

You can feel the presence of magical elements.

Daily

Minor Action **Burst 5**

Effect: You can detect the presence of powers using the core, fire, lightning, or thunder keywords specifically. While this can be used to apply to mundane events, you can decipher the use of magical or extraordinary acts of these keywords. This talent functions just as the detect magic ability of the Arcana skill.

Athletics

Physical abilities are the key to surviving the dangers of dungeon exploration and many heroes train themselves long and hard to surpass those ordeals. A select few harden themselves like steel to go beyond survival and accomplish some extraordinary.

Burst of Strength

Athletics Talent (Heroic)

Surging with adrenaline, you can accomplish just as much with one hand as you can with two.

Daily

Move Action **Personal**

Effect: You avoid suffering any penalties to an Athletic check when you are impaired in any way. For example, you can still pull yourself up the side of a cliff with one good arm.

Special: The use of this talent applies to a single Athletic event, such as climbing a wall, swimming across a small channel, and jumping a single gap. This talent can only last up to your Constitution score in rounds.

Bluff

Understanding the guiles and quirks of people, there is a way to bend their thoughts to your will... even if for a short moment in time. A split second is all that's needed to gain the upper hand in any situation and training past the norms can grant that extra second.

Slippery Shift

Bluff Talent (Heroic)

Psyche them out and avoid some serious harm.

Encounter

Immediate Interrupt **Personal**

Trigger: You can struck by any AC or Fortitude attack.

Effect: Replace your AC or Fortitude defense with your Reflex defense.

Diplomacy

As the sole skill to which there is no combat application, Diplomacy talents focus on snatching the upper hand in negotiations at any cost. One sly remark or insight comment can shift someone in just the right way to gain whatever you need from them.

Snide Remark

Diplomacy Talent (Heroic)

A simple, well-placed word slips everyone off their guard and gives you the chance to seize it all.

Encounter

Standard Action **Close burst 1**

Target: One person in which you can use the Diplomacy skill during a skill challenge.

Attack: Diplomacy vs. Will

Effect: The target is taken aback by your comment and suffers -2 to all checks in this skill challenge.

Dungeoneering

There is much to read on the topic of Dungeoneering, but you have to experience a dungeon for yourself to truly walk away with anything. More to dungeon crawling than just avoiding traps and identifying monsters, a master dungeoneer can use the dungeon against itself.

Blend

Dungeoneering Talent (Heroic)

Your knowledge of your surroundings gives you an edge to infiltrating it.

Daily

Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: Make a Diplomacy check and divide the result by 5. This is the bonus you receive to all Dungeoneering, Perception, and Stealth checks for a number of rounds equal to your Intelligence score.

Endurance

Some heroes get stuck in a bind to which they have to endure and hang on until they can escape. Seeing a well-toned body and determination as the last measure of survival any hero can have, these trainees step up their capabilities to perform amazing feats of stamina.

Meditation

Endurance Talent (Heroic)

When the going gets rough, you can fall into a trance and stretch out your endurance.

Daily

Free Action

Personal

Requirement: You must be in a skill challenge with Endurance as the dominant skill.

Effect: While making your Endurance checks, you fall into a meditative trance. If you roll a natural 20 during this skill challenge, you gain a surge of strength and continue the skill challenge with the DC for any Endurance check restored to its original level.

For example, you have to make five Endurance checks to stay afloat in rising water with the base DC of 10 and increasing by +2 per check. On your third check, you roll a natural 20. From this point on for the remaining of the skill challenge, your next Endurance DC will be 10 instead of 16 and increasing from +2 per following check.

Heal

There is only so much the mortal body can withstand on its own and those who understand its physiology are best served to treat their comrades because no good deed goes unpaid. Heroes with the Heal skill do not rely on magic and potions to aid their fellows and can accomplish some powerful aids in battle.

Restore

Heal Talent (Heroic)

Your ally is beaten and sore, but your healing care can boost his strength back.

Daily

Move Action

Close burst 1

Target: One bloodied ally.

Effect: The ally is no longer considered bloodied, even though his hit points remains the same.

History

Commonly regarded as the pursuit of scholars and wizards, History is a skill of great memory and passion. Many a hero has found the incredible memory of a historian valuable in recalling legends used to bring down the fall of a wicked villain. For some, it is more than just conscious memory.

Unconscious Memory

History Talent (Heroic)

There is little a well-read mind can't recall...

Encounter

Free Action

Personal

Effect: You can make passive History checks with a base score of 15 instead of 10.

Insight

Intuition is what leads you on when all training fails you. Standing in darkness, with all senses failing you, it is that inner voice inside your head that can pull you out of the fire and leave you wondering how you did it. Insight is commonly used for personal interaction with other characters, but an intuit hero can do more than just read thoughts with this knack...

Gut Feeling

Insight Talent (Heroic)

Something is not right and you're instincts tell you there's danger.

Daily

Immediate Reaction **Area burst 5**

Trigger: An undetected danger awaits in range; this danger can be a trap, hidden monster, or anything else that can cause damage and has not been perceived by any character in the party.

Effect: You can feel something in the back of your mind telling you that something is wrong and allow everyone in your party to re-roll any Perception checks or other means to discover the danger in the room.

Special: If the danger remain undetected after the re-rolled attempts, this talent is still considered spent.

Intimidate

A useful means for getting information or simply getting some space to draw your sword with, intimidation is a ploy long used by many heroes. Some are more skilled at it than others and use unique methods to extract fear from your opponents.

Shout

Intimidate Talent (Heroic)

Your voice booms into the ears of your targets and forces them to fear you even more.

Daily

Minor Action

Area blast 2

Effect: You gain a +2 power bonus to your next Intimidate check this round. In addition, you can use this talent to attempt another Intimidate check on a target who has already passed a previous attempt.

Nature

The natural world is a wide open place with thousands of undiscovered reaches to find. Wandering the wilds in search of treasure and monsters can lead to a curious wonderment of the wilderness and those who revere nature for its beauty can interpret many helpful signs when the going gets rough.

Back on the Path

Nature Talent (Heroic)

You won't be lost for long with a good understand of nature on your side.

Daily

Immediate Interrupt **Personal**

Requirement: This talent must be used during a skill challenge to discover a location in the wild.

Effect: You can re-roll a Nature or Perception check during the skill challenge.

Perception

A swift blur in the distance, a faint odor of body sweat, or a slight breeze between two stones can make the difference between surviving a quest or dying in it. Perception is the most commonly used skill in the system and its use should never be taken lightly. You never know what minute detail could keep you alive for the next level.

Finely Tuned Senses

Perception Talent (Heroic)

There is very little that can escape your five senses...

Daily

Standard Action **Close burst 1**

Effect: While actively detecting something using the standard Perception skill rules, you gain a +5 bonus to your Perception check for anything within range.

Religion

The presence of the gods is all around us and evidence of their intent can be seen every day. Following their path can be tricky and left to much interpretation, but you have studied their teachings and know how others perceive their objectives. This kind of knowledge can come in handy from time to time and one never knows when a small deed can be rewarded in the afterlife.

Obscure Knowledge

Religion Talent (Heroic)

The study of gods and immortals can often lead to an interesting fact that can be recalled at any time.

Daily

Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: Make one Religion check with a +5 bonus and gain an extra healing surge if you roll 25 or higher. This healing surge can be used at a later time in the day, but expires when you take an extended rest.

Stealth

To be hidden is to continue and there are times when drawing a weapon will not guarantee your success in a quest. The subtle steps of an assassin or thief is called for and even the burliest fighter must learn this.

Deep Cover

Stealth Talent (Heroic)

Just when it looks like you'll be caught, your skill overcomes and you can remain hidden.

Daily

Immediate Reaction **Personal**

Trigger: You failed an opposed Stealth check.

Effect: Re-roll your Stealth check against the opposed Perception check. If it is higher than your previous, you can replace it and try to remain hidden from your target.

Streetwise

Some areas of town were never meant for civilization, but they are the streets you must pass through. Information is your guide and keeping a close ear to the cobblestone can spare you long nights of aimless wandering. In some cases, it's not who you know, but who you pretend to know that matters.

False Source

Streetwise Talent (Heroic)

There's nothing a small lie can get when the truth fails you.

Daily

Immediate Interrupt **Close burst 1**

Trigger: You failed a Streetwise check.

Effect: Re-roll the Streetwise check and use the new result to replace your previous roll.

Thievery

Never viewed as an honest profession, there are uses to a pick pocket and skilled locksmith, but sometimes you need to pin the blame on someone else to make a clean getaway. Especially if that decoy just happens to be a guard looking to arrest you...

Divert Attention

Thievery Talent (Heroic)

You can snatch an item while making the target think someone else did it.

Daily

Immediate Reaction **Close burst 1**

Trigger: A successful Thievery check used to pick pockets.

Effect: You make it appear that someone else within the burst tried to pick the target's pocket.

*Combat Advantage is a series of free supplemental material for the
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