

FOURTH EDITION

HACKMASTER®



HackJournal Issue #28 Winter - 2008

Welcome to the latest edition of HackJournal, the HackMaster fanzine written by Players and GameMasters around the world! Whether you profess to be the greatest fighter, magic-user, cleric or thief, you can't afford to pass up a single issue! Here's just a sampling of the inventory of secrets revealed herein:

- A detailed article about armor and armor parts
- A new creature for your HackMaster campaign
- Three maps of the Splendorous Deeps cave complex
- Answers to your questions about HackMaster Basic
- Special HackJournal coupons found only in this issue!

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ABOUT THE HACKJOURNAL

The HackJournal is a PDF supplement written specifically for (and by) the members of the HackMaster Association - an organization of HackMaster players and GameMasters who meet online and in person to discuss and play the HackMaster 4th edition roleplaying game. Each issue's game content contains GM's option material for the HackMaster 4th edition game system.

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PLAYER'S ADVANTAGE:

The Lore of Armor Parts

by Jochen Lins (HMA# D-1-10155-07)

Nâgrub the Hobgoblin smiled as he squinted around the stalagmite. Lantern light and the scraping of metal heralded the approaching adventurers across the cavern. Too confident in the protection of their armor these warriors were. Grimly Nâgrub remembered how ill his younglings had scored against those banded mails. Now the "Gaping Maws" were prepared, not so the feet of the intruders, Nâgrub thought, as he hefted the bag of caltrops.

Elsewhere...

The squire circled his mount. The robbers attacking his caravan were numerous. Still, they were rabble, but for that hulking brute even now swinging his monstrous battleaxe to fell a guard. The leader appeared a tough one, given the spear haft protruding from his studded leather. The eyes of the squire alighted on bare forearms, though. He spurred forward his mount. Grinning, the brigand lifted his axe - only to gape as a rising sword sheared through his hand...

Still further afield...

As a surgeon, Kalliodorus was used to mayhem inflicted on the human body, but not to the idiocy going along with it. He stared down at the young Lord of Hohenfels on his litter. At the side where the skull was caved in, one eye was missing, and blood was congealing on the once spotless plate carapace. Still, ragged breathing could be heard from what was left of the gallant's face. Kalliodorus cursed - who would ever think of riding into the grand melee without his helmet?

Every hard-working fighter knows that, when all is said and done, armor remains the decisive element of protection. Some people might don armors for many reasons: to improve their Comeliness, for Honor gains, to adjust their presence, to appear more intimidating, to demoralize opponents, or even just for fashion's sake (as pointed out by Keith McCormic's article "What's Her Armor Class?" in *HackJournal* #22). However, the essential function of armor is protection - the more complete, the better.

Fortunately for the endeavoring warriors of the *HackMaster* worlds, our diligent researchers have analyzed all imaginable forms of protective wear and duly categorized those along considerations of tech level, culture and materials available. Each of these default suits of armor grant the wearer an overall measure of protection versus the general blow, according to his preferences, restrictions, and (more often than not) funds available.

Regrettably, Scott Meredith's article "HackMaster Armor Coverage" in *HackJournal* #9 proved that only the most sophisticated and therefore costly (such as plate armors) provide complete protection. All lesser armors lack coverage somewhere, sometimes only for the joints, more often for the extremities altogether.

While a called shot for these "blind spots" might prove temporarily disabling, a critical hit on an unprotected area is usually devastating. Still, a considerate fighter can mitigate the risk of losing his limbs - and his life. He might don additional armor parts

for areas his suit does not cover, either extending its basic protective value to these areas or - in case the new armor part is superior - even improving upon it.

This article shows players and GMs alike where the "blind spots" of the different armor suits are, what additional protection in form of armor parts might be available, their protective value, the time needed to don/doff those parts, and what the drawbacks for using such are. You thought there weren't any? Heck, what do you think *Hard Eight Enterprises* went into all that analyzing trouble for, you ungrateful whelp!

Tournament Note: *While this article is suitable for use in a home game, it may only be used in a tournament at the Head GM's discretion. As with any rules from sources other than the main HackMaster rulebooks, the player must bring a copy of this article along with his character sheet.*

RULES ABOUT HITS TO SPECIFIC BODY PARTS

The rules for how to handle called shots to, or critical hits on, specific body parts are dispersed throughout the *GameMaster's Guide* (p100, 110), *Combatant's Guide* (p104, 130-132) and the *HackMaster errata PDF* (p25). For convenience's sake, the relevant sections are summarized below:

- Damage to a specific body part results from either a targeted called shot or a critical hit rolled for that location.

- Calling a shot on a specific location can be done any time, but must be announced prior to the to-hit roll. Depending on the targeted body part, a called shot suffers a to-hit penalty of at least -2. Tables 8V (*GMG*, p100) and 5C (*CG* p104) list standard target locations and the respective to-hit penalties. In order for the called shot to succeed, one must hit the AC of the target location, including all penalties. So, even a roll of 20 is a miss, if the tables prove it insufficient to connect at all.

- AC of body parts, however, might differ from the overall AC of the target, depending on the quality (or lack) of armor worn on that location. Thus, the bare head of a fighter in full plate has an AC of 10, while his overall AC is still 1.

- Provided the called shot hits, the chance for delivering a critical doubles to rolls of 20 AND 19. Also, the critical affects the targeted location.

- In a critical hit, the respective AC of the location determines its base severity level, not overall AC. Thus, a fighter in banded mail (overall AC 4) wearing only soft boots (AC 9) automatically suffers a severity level 5 higher, when critted on his calves.

- Even on a non-critical hit, body parts might become disabled if cumulative damage exceeds their maximum HP allowance. See figure 8.2 (*GMG*, p111) for the damage capacities of the humanoid body parts as well as the effects of disabling them listed in the *HackMaster errata*. In most cases, the disablement lasts until the damaged body part properly heals.

Thus, not only thick-headed battle tanks should seek to optimize their armor protection. As for basic suits, the best are usually the most expensive and might not readily be available. And if they are, the off-the-shelf solution might still prove too cumbersome or restrictive - often a case with sprightly griftmasters. Then, some not so hardened spellslingers just want to protect their undu-

ly exposed extremities at a bearable risk to their concentration ability.

The reasons to go for armor parts along with, or instead of, the basic suits are manifold. Finally, coverage of most basic suits is limited somewhere.

WHAT BASIC ARMOR REALLY PROTECTS

Table HJ28-A: Body Parts protected by Basic Armor Suits shows the hit locations covered by the default armor suits. Cross-index the location in the columns with the armor types: y(es) signifies coverage, n(o) indicates lack thereof. The table is based on the findings of Scott Meredith (“HackMaster Armor Coverage” from *HackJournal* #9), and includes some new armors from the *Combatant’s Guide* and *Goods and Gear: the Ultimate Adventurer’s Guide*.

While the *Combatant’s Guide* (p131) says that every armor suit comes along with an appropriate helmet, *Goods and Gear* (p103) stipulates helmets to be available only at the GM’s discretion. We recommend the latter. It is a harsh world outside. Otherwise, some people might take their survival for granted too.

All armor suits protect the groin either in form of a codpiece, shirt or lamellar faulds (faulds are horizontal strips of material attached to the torso armor). However, only the advanced plate variants transfer complete protection. Except for these and the breastplate (sporting a culet – a kind of faulds for the haunches) no suit adequately protects the buttocks. Fortunately, the hind does not appear to be a regular target for called shots, since your character normally faces his opponent. Sharp minds, however, are quick to deliver a smack on the buttocks, if given the chance (e.g. on a fleeing opponent). Regarding to-hit penalties and effects, such an attack is similar to a called shot for the groin.

Also note that the knees and the elbows obviously warrant a too small or irrelevant target to qualify for a standard called shot location. As such, they are normally not subject to disablement by means of a called shot, unless you score a critical hit.

AC DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH ARMOR COVERS

So, at what point does armor confer an overall AC at all? A valid question, considering that most suits do not provide complete coverage, but the AC of complementary armor parts only extends to that particular location. However, trust our people from Hard Eight Enterprises to come up with an easy answer to a complicated matter... In order to confer an overall AC, armor needs to cover the body by at least 50%. And if that does not strike you as straightforward as a clout between the eyes, consult *Table HJ28-B: Size of Body Parts Relative to the Whole*.

The given percentages correspond to the relative difficulty of placing a called shot on the desired location. Thus, differing statistics to calculate the exposure of body parts in combat are revealed for what they really are - spurious.

All armor suits achieve the prerequisite body coverage ratio by default. Note that robes/garments qualify as a suit, conferring an overall AC of 9. Thus, robust clothing counts as an always-on default suit. Lacking even this, characters might also attain an overall AC through use of armor parts only, provided these cover the body by at least 50% (that is the total of head, forearms, hands, thighs, calves and feet). Armor parts covering less than 50% of the body do not count towards overall AC, but do provide their AC against called shots or critical hit effects on that specific body part.

A character is eligible for an overall AC either by suit, parts only or a combination calculated AC by averaging the values for the FOUR best-protected areas. Always truncate results to integer, so

Table HJ28-A: Body Parts Protected By Basic Armor Suits

Armor suits	AC	Head	Chest	Arm, Upper	Elbow	Forearm	Hand	Groin	Thigh	Knee	Calf	Feet
Robes/Garments	9	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	y	n
Leather	8	n	y	n	n	n	n	y	y	n	n	n
Padded	8	n	y	y	n	y	n	y	n	n	n	n
Ring mail	7	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	n	n	n
Studded leather	7	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	n	n	n
Brigandine	6	n	y	y	n	y	n	y	y	n	n	n
Elven Chain shirt	6	n	y	y	n	n	n	y	n	n	n	n
Chain shirt	6	n	y	y	n	n	n	y	n	n	n	n
Hide	6	n	y	n	n	n	n	y	y	n	n	n
Scale mail	6	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	y	n
Breastplate	5	n	y	y	n	n	n	y	n	n	n	n
Elven chain	5	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	n	n	n
Chain mail	5	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	n	n	n
Banded mail	4	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	n	n	n
Bronze plate	4	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Heavy chain	4	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	n	n	n
Splint mail	4	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	y	n
Plate mail	3	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Field plate	2	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Full plate	1	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y

Elbows and knees should normally not be subject to simple Called Shot effects, but only to Critical Hits!

Table HJ28-B: Size of Body Parts Relative to the Whole

Body parts	Relative Size
Head/Face/Neck	7%
Chest/Groin	35%
Groin	7%
Arms, upper	8%
Forearms	8%
Hands/Fingers	5%
Thighs	17%
Calves	8%
Feet/Ankles/Toes	5%

characters are guaranteed the minimum AC of every suit type. Note that they also can improve overall AC by selectively adding superior armor parts. Extensive field tests have shown the addition of any armor part with just +1 higher than default AC also raises overall protection value by one. And remember: the breastplate is the only suit besides the plate variants to protect the buttocks. Thus it extends to four areas, not three.

Put differently, a fighter wearing a chain shirt (AC 6) over his suit of clothes (AC 9) is guaranteed an overall AC of 6. A chain shirt covers the chest, groin and upper arms, while the clothing extends to the fourth location. This calculates as $3 \times AC 6 + AC 9 = 27 / 4 = 6.75 = AC 6$. In concern over his delicate fingers, he adds chain gauntlets (AC 5) as well. Despite becoming the butt of many a lewd dandy joke, his overall protection rating still improves to $AC 5 + 3 \times AC 6 = 23 / 4 = 5.75 = AC 5!$

One should bear in mind that, while the following tables list a plethora of parts for every blind spot conceivable, complementing coverage and protective value of the basic suits incurs additional penalties to specific skills and abilities. See? There's a reason why *Hard Eight Enterprises* conceived of easy-to-use default suits in the first place.

PROTECTING ONE'S HEAD, FACE AND NECK

Table HJ28-C: Additional Armor Protection for the Head and Neck lists the relevant armor items from the *Combatant's Guide* (p13), and includes some new items as well. Also given is the exact hit location, which the different forms of head protection cover together with the adjustments on respective abilities. A "y" means the item protects the said location by its AC value. If there is a range, the item is available in differing quality. However, a specific armor part MUST have a specific AC. If characters opt to stack multiple armor parts onto a single location – let them. Account for only the AC of the best-protective item, but be sure to add the weight for determining encumbrance. See below for sensible combinations of armors and their parts, and the effects of layering.

Wearing most head protections lowers one's chance to detect noise, increases the likelihood for surprise, and might also impair the vision. All adjustments affect the result of the dice roll. The modifiers stack in case armor parts are combined or layered. Note that vision checks are usually ability checks, which require a d20 roll. The figures here are in percent, so that characters might easily substitute the Observation skill for vision checks. Just divide the percentiles by five to convert them back to d20.

An aventail is a mail skirt attached to the bottom edge of either a basinet or close-faced helmet, covering neck and shoulders. As such it is only available with these complementary armor parts.

The gorget is a collar that covers the neck and the top of the chest. It is typically fashioned from plate, although cheaper types are made of boiled leather (cuirboilli). Anyway, every one makes strangulation nigh impossible. Gorgets for full plate armor also come along with a bevor, protecting chin and lower face. Note that the great helmet always includes a gorget, thus its better AC. Conversely, there is no full plate equivalent (AC 1) of the gorget.

The *Combatant's Guide* (p131) meticulously describes the additional saving throw benefits of wearing certain helmet types in conjunction with plate mail, field plate or full plate armor suits. Otherwise, *Table HJ28-C* gives the cost, weight and the likelihood of availability for the respective armor types. Note that the origi-

Table HJ28-C: Additional Armor Protection for the Head and Neck

Armor items	AC	Cost	Weight	Body Parts Protected			Adjustments On*			Availability		
				Face	Head	Neck	VIS	DN	SPR	H	M	L
Aventail**	4-6	70 gp	1.5 lbs.	n	n	y	0%	0%	0	95	90	80
Aventail, elven**	5	100 gp	1 lbs.	n	n	y	0%	0%	0	30	20	10
Cap, padded/Hat	9	0.5 gp	2 lbs.	n	y	n	0%	-5%	-1	95	85	75
Cap, leather/Hat	8-9	1 gp	2 lbs.	n	y	n	0%	-5%	-1	95	90	85
Cap, steel	7-8	10 gp	2 lbs.	n	y	n	0%	-5%	-1	90	85	80
Coif, leather	5-7	20 gp	2 lbs.	n	y	y	0%	-5%	-1	95	90	80
Coif, chain	4-6	100 gp	3 lbs.	n	y	y	0%	-5%	-1	90	85	75
Coif, elven	5	140 gp	1.5 lbs.	n	y	y	0%	-5%	-1	30	20	10
Gorget, leather	8	1 gp	1.5 lbs.	n	n	y	0%	0%	0	95	85	75
Gorget, steel	2-3	200 gp	2 lbs.	n	n	y	0%	0%	0	70	65	60
Helmet, Basinet	3-5	125 gp	5 lbs.	n	y	n	-5%	-10%	-2	95	90	85
Helmet, closed	2-3	800 gp	5 lbs.	y	y	n	-10%	-15%	-2	70	65	60
Helmet, Great	1	1,600 gp	10 lbs.	y	y	y	-20%	-20%	-3	65	60	55

*VIS = Vision; DN = Detect Noise; SPR = Surprise

**An aventail needs to be attached to either a basinet or a close-faced helmet. Thus weight and cost add up.

Table HJ28-D: Additional Armor Protection for the Arms and Hands

Armor items	AC	Cost	Weight	Body Parts Protected			Adjustments On*			Availability		
				Elbow	Forearm	Hands	PP	RT	SF	H	M	L
Gloves	9	1 gp	0.5 lbs.	n	n	y	0%	0%	0%	95	85	75
Gauntlets, leather	7-8	5 gp	1 lbs.	n	n	y	-5%	-5%	5%	95	90	80
Mittens, chain	5-6	60 gp	3 lbs.	n	n	y	-20%	-20%	15%	95	90	80
Gauntlets, chain	4-6	100 gp	3 lbs.	n	n	y	-8%	-8%	10%	90	85	75
Gauntlets, elven	5	150 gp	1.5 lbs.	n	n	y	-5%	-5%	5%	30	20	10
Gauntlets, steel	1-3	550 gp	3 lbs.	n	n	y	-12%	-12%	20%	70	65	60
Cannons, leather	7-8	5 gp	1.5 lbs.	n	y	n	0%	0%	0%	95	90	85
Cannons, bronze	4	275 gp	3 lbs.	n	y	n	0%	0%	5%	90	85	80
Cannons, steel	2-3	500 gp	3 lbs.	n	y	n	0%	0%	5%	70	65	60
Vambraces, brz.**	4	320 gp	5 lbs.	y	y	n	0%	0%	5%	85	80	75
Vambraces, steel**	1-3	575 gp	6 lbs.	y	y	n	0%	0%	5%	70	65	60

*PP = Pick Pockets; RT = Remove Traps; SF = Spell Failure
 **These armor parts also protect the joints/elbows via Couters.

nal prices in the *Combatant's Guide* refer to the cheap costs of raw material and involved craftsmanship peculiar to some worlds. For most settings, we recommend using the new, higher values, as they are more consistent with the cost of obtaining respective suits.

For items with AC ranges, prices pertain to their maximum AC and absorption capacity. See below for "How Much Damage Can Armor Parts Withstand?" To find the item's price for a worse AC, lower the value per cost of armor hit point. Example: An aventail costs 70 gp at AC 4 and 21 HP. Cost per armor HP is 3.3 gp. Thus the price for an aventail of AC 5 quality with 15 HP amounts to 50 gp. This is half the price of the elven chain equivalent, just as it should be! All types are Man-sized; consult the *Player's Handbook* in order to determine weight and price for smaller or larger creatures.

PROTECTING ONE'S ARMS AND HANDS

Table HJ28-D: Additional Armor Protection for the Arms and Hands shows the available armor items for one's upper extremities. Its structure is the same as for *Table HJ-C*. Once more, if specific armors have an AC range, the items are available in differing quality. Most protections for the arms and hands impair one's chance to successfully pick pockets, remove traps, and increase the likelihood for spell failure if the spell requires a somatic or material component. Yes, Magic Missile necessitates a pointed index finger, albeit the middle one is admittedly a tad more prominent!

All modifiers stack if armor parts are combined or layered.

Cannons are large plate bracers that encircle the whole lower arm and might provide some wrist protection. Note that there exists no full plate (AC 1) equivalent of steel cannons; instead vambraces are employed. Vambrace is the name for greave, if worn on the arms. They are more elaborate than cannons and always come along with protectors for the elbows known as couters.

This explains why vambraces are more expensive than simple cannons, as expounded in *Table HJ28-D*. Prices and weights listed are for a pair. Again, these pertain to Man-sized items and (given an AC range) to their maximum AC and absorption capacity. See above for how to calculate the value of larger/smaller items or with a worse AC.



PROTECTING ONE'S LEGS AND FEET

Table HJ28-E: Additional Armor Protection for the Calves and Feet lists the relevant items concerning the lower extremities. Their use cumulatively impairs a character's success chance for Climbing and Move Silently skill checks, and reduces the distance for a jump by the indicated percentage. Since you opted to become choosy, the more reason to watch yer feet!

Sabatons are best known as plate gaiters for the feet, consisting of lamellar armor ending in a toecap. As chain armor sabatons are an integral part of the chain leggings, or chausses. Thus, by themselves, chain sabatons cannot be fastened anywhere. Cuisses in turn are – as their French name implies – protectors for the thighs, either made of hard leather, studded leather, splints or plate. Note, that an AC 1 equivalent of cuisses is obsolete, since full plate breastplates have integrated tassets instead. Greaves constitute the lower-region counterpart for vambraces and usually come along with some sort of knee protection, like poleyns.

Once more, prices and weights given in *Table HJ28-E* are for a pair and refer to Man-sized items of maximum AC as well as absorption capacity. Return above for how to calculate the value of larger/smaller items or with a worse AC.

(SENSIBLE) ARMOR & ENCUMBRANCE COMBOS

First of all, let me state clearly that combining different pieces of armor grants no other direct advantages to the wearer, apart from those summarized below:

- In regard to determining success and effects of called shots and critical hits (e.g. BSL) to particular locations, combinations (or layers) provide the AC of the best-protecting item.

- The sole exception is donning a ring mail, chain mail or heavy chain suit together with corresponding chain mail chausses. This augments the AC of the thighs by +1.

- Combining armor pieces with suits might improve overall AC, provided the parts are of superior quality. By themselves, armor parts do only confer an overall AC if they cover the body by at least 50%. In this case, calculate overall AC by averaging the AC of the four best-protected areas (always truncate result to integer).

- Layering certain armor types grants versatility instead, for example wearing a helmet over a coif. Thus the fighter can remove his helmet in order to lessen the penalties on his ability checks, while still retaining a modicum of protection. Similarly, characters might combine gloves with mittens, and sabatons with shoes.

Remember that sabatons and boots never go together. The same holds true for gloves and gauntlets, as well as cannons and vambraces, while greaves and chausses make a quite senseless combination. The combined weight is prohibitive. This said, we turn our attention to the encumbrance effect of armor parts. In general, the weight of any kind of armor worn ALWAYS accumulates. Only the ways to calculate effects of encumbrance differ, depending on:

- Whether the character adds armor parts to an existing suit. In this case, weight of the parts simply stacks with the encumbrance of the suit. For example, a fighter complements his chain mail suit (fairly bulky, weight 40 lbs.) with basinet (weight 5 lbs.), chain gauntlets (3 lbs.), chain chausses and sabatons (total 20 lbs.). Suit and parts sum up to 68 lbs. The weight alone qualifies him as lightly encumbered (3/4 Move), unless he has a higher Strength than 13. Barring that, his actual movement is half the normal rate, as the restrictions of the suit stack with his weight penalties (i.e. $0.75 \times 0.75 = 0.56$, rounded down to 0.5).

- Whether the character's armor consists of parts only, excluding any suit except for clothing. As outlined, this entitles you for either partial protection on certain limbs OR for an overall AC. In case of the former, just sum up the weight of the parts, compare

Table HJ28-E: Additional Armor Protection for the Legs and Feet

Armor items	AC	Cost	Weight	Body Parts Protected			Adjustments On*			Availability		
				Thigh	Calf	Feet	CLB	MS	JD	H	M	L
Shoes/Sandals	9	0.5 gp	2 lbs.	n	n	y	0%	0%	0%	95	85	75
Boots, soft	9	1 gp	2 lbs.	n	y	y	0%	0%	0%	95	85	75
Boots, hard-shod	7-8	5 gp	2.5 lbs.	n	y	y	-5%	-5%	-10%	90	85	75
Boots, high	8-9	3 gp	3 lbs.	n	y	y	0%	0%	-10%	85	75	65
Sabatons, chain**	4-6	95 gp	4 lbs.	n	n	y	-5%	-5%	-10%	90	85	75
Sabatons, elven**	5	145 gp	2 lbs.	n	n	y	-3%	-3%	-10%	30	20	10
Sabatons, steel	1-3	550 gp	6 lbs.	n	n	y	-10%	-10%	-15%	70	65	60
Chain chausses^	4-6	220 gp	16 lbs.	y	y	n	-10%	-10%	-25%	90	85	75
Chausses, elven^	5	350 gp	8 lbs.	y	y	n	-7%	-7%	-20%	30	20	10
Cuisses, leather	7-8	6 gp	3 lbs.	y	n	n	0%	0%	-10%	95	90	85
Cuisses, splint	4	125 gp	4 lbs.	y	n	n	-5%	-5%	-10%	95	90	85
Cuisses, steel	2-3	600 gp	6 lbs.	y	n	n	-10%	-10%	-10%	70	65	60
Greaves, leather	7-8	5 gp	3 lbs.	n	y	n	0%	0%	-10%	95	90	85
Greaves, bronze^	4	365 gp	8 lbs.	n	y	n	-15%	-15%	-15%	85	80	75
Greaves, steel^	1-3	650 gp	9 lbs.	n	y	n	-15%	-15%	-15%	70	65	60

* CLB = Climbing; MS = Move Silently; JD = Jumping Distance

** Mail sabatons ALWAYS come along with chausses. Thus weight and cost add up.

^ These armor parts also protect the knees, in case of greaves that is via poleyns.

the total to your carrying capacity, and abide by the (possible) restrictions. In the latter instance, also use the overall AC to apply the bulk and movement modifiers of an appropriate armor suit on top! Thus the accoutrement of a self-styled gladiator donning a helmet, cannons, and gauntlets together with chain chausses and sabatons – all of which are AC 4 - is considered bulky, limiting his move to 2/3 normal BEFORE taking its 31 lbs. of weight into account!

Burying oneself under armor this way carries its own penalties, of which some boors might not be aware of. The above tables were designed with the fact that most armor historically never came in neatly categorized; deployment of weaponry, experience and technology quickly facilitated the available protection to converge upon certain styles – which for ease-of-reference we from *Hard Eight Enterprises* phrased as suits of armor.

Based on the grade of materials, design, and craftsmanship available, the default suits confer an optimal protection rating, regarding body coverage, cost and encumbrance involved. It is by no means coincidence for example, that a leather suit with a weight of 15 lbs. still counts as non-bulky compared to padded armor (10 lbs.) or that field and full plate both rate as bulky, but the latter confers a +1 AC over the former while only “weighing” 10 lbs. more. Full plate and leather suits as well DO NOT include separate parts such as cuisses for protecting the thighs anymore. Instead, their breastplates sport lamellar tassets extending to the thighs. This is also the reason why there exists no AC 1 equivalent for cuisses.

Therefore, if some wisecracks out there opt to wrap themselves in layers upon layers of putative protection, let them do so by all means. Just be sure to note down all the weight and the costs. Our research proves that imitating a proper suit through an assembly of parts costs between 5-15% more and adds at least 10% armor weight.

On the other hand, there is one indirect advantage to building one's armor piece by piece. This way armor might withstand substantially more punishment than a comparable suit. Done properly, the increased HP absorption potential could very well be worth the higher costs and weight.

WHAT DAMAGE CAN ARMOR PARTS HANDLE?

Armor protection does not only entail deflection, as expressed in AC, but also damage absorption capability measured in hit points. This holds true whether a character dons a complete suits or parts thereof. While armor parts deflect and absorb damage only for specific locations (unless covering at least 50% of the body), each constituent generally contributes a share to overall deflection capability as well as the HP total of one's armor. Thus armors of similar composition, but a higher coverage ratio, have more HP than less complete armors.

For example, scale mail confers an AC of 6 as compared to ring mail and studded leather (AC 7), not because scales necessarily constitute a superior design or material, but since the former also covers the knees and lower legs. Therefore scale mail can absorb 14 HP, ring mail but nine and studded leather only seven. See the

Player's Handbook (p117) for the HP absorption potentials of the common armor suits, then the *Combatant's Guide* (p135) for heavy chain mail and *Goods and Gear* (p107) for the chain shirt and breastplate.

Naturally, armor of better quality also yields more HP than a less sophisticated protection. Besides workmanship, the most obvious criterion of quality is the material used, e.g. metal is superior to horn/hide, leather, and cloth. Because some materials are harder and more durable than others, they better deflect blows or withstand other kinds of damage longer. Closely linked to the factor of the material is the form in which it is fashioned, since form can make the same material more flexible, resilient, or cohesive. In this regard, plates are superior to strips, and small rings to scales or discs. Thus, while material and its form decide the armor's basic virtues regarding deflection (AC) and durability, a specific part's final absorption capacity remains the matter of how large/small it is, namely how much body coverage it provides. Careful readers will easily discern this guiding principle behind *Tables HJ28-F to H: HP Absorption for Damaged Armors*. While the *Combatant's Guide* apparently breaks this rule by assigning excessive HP to helmets, that actually is not so! Armor points for helmets purely matter for called shots, and after one critical hit to the head any helmet degrades as a standard leather coif (5/4/2/1) – p132.

For armor parts with AC ranges, add armor HP up to the respective AC value, and ignore the rest. Thus a normal chain gauntlet has an AC of 5, or a total of 6 HP.

But isn't there more to quality than just material and form? Right you are. The third factor of quality (besides material and form) is the design of the armor. Design comprises the armor's composition and ease-of-use. Composition involves the possible combination of different materials in order to achieve greater flexibility or accentuated protection of delicate body parts, like with leather/padded backings or mail/plate combinations. Ease-of-use, on the other hand, chiefly depends on the armor's weight distribution. This involves whether the armor is single-suit or piece armor, how many or what kind of straps/baldrics are employed for fastening. Advanced armor designs are not only sophisticated in regard to achieving optimal deflection by point-on combination of materials, but also by interlinking component parts in order to limit the number of straps to their supporting function.

Via minimizing redundancy this way armorers succeeded with full plate, for example, to achieve double the protective rating of chain mail (AC 1 vs. AC 5), while the latter still is more than half as encumbering as the former (40 lbs. vs. 70 lbs.). Naturally design and redundancy will only matter to suits, not singular armor parts, as these are conceived on a stand-alone basis. If combined, the redundancy of armor parts might very well improve the HP absorption capacity of one's armor overall!

Now, read on before you despair in face of calculating the armor HP of all the possible combinations or layers. Despite the necessity to track particular locations separately, only three variants determine overall absorption capacity. These you (better yet the players – it is their advantage after all) have to calculate once depending on whether:

Table HJ28-F: HP Absorption for Damaged Armors - Heads & Necks

Armor items	Armor Class								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Aventail				6	5	4	3	2	1
Aventail, elven					6	5	4	3	2
Cap, padded/Hat									2
Cap, leather/Hat								2	1
Cap, steel							4	2	1
Coif, leather						5	4	2	1
Coif, chain				10	8	6	4	2	1
Coif, elven					9	7	5	3	2
Gorget, leather								2	1
Gorget, steel		24*	12	10	8	6	4	2	1
Helmet, Basinet				10	8	6	4	2	1
Helmet, close-faced*		24*	12	10	8	6	4	2	1
Helmet, Great*	36*	24*	12	10	8	6	4	2	1

*These armor parts may absorb 2 HP per damage die, provided their AC is 2 or 1.

Table HJ28-G: HP Absorption for Damaged Armors - Arms & Hands

Armor items	Armor Class								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Gloves									1
Gauntlets, leather							1	1	1
Mittens, chain					2	1	1	1	1
Gauntlets, chain				2	2	1	1	1	1
Gauntlets, elven					3	2	2	1	1
Gauntlets, steel*	4*	4*	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Cannons, leather							1	1	1
Cannons, bronze				2	2	2	1	1	1
Cannons, steel*		4*	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Vambraces, bronze				2	2	2	1	1	1
Vambraces, steel*	6*	4*	2	2	2	2	1	1	1

*These armor parts may absorb 2 HP per damage die, provided their AC is 2 or 1.

Table HJ28-H: HP Absorption for Damaged Armors - Legs & Feet

Armor items	Armor Class								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Shoes									1
Boots, soft									1
Boots, hard-shod							1	1	1
Boots, high								1	1
Sabatons, chain				2	2	1	1	1	1
Sabatons, elven					3	2	2	1	1
Sabatons, steel*	4*	4*	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Chain chauses				3	3	2	2	2	1
Chain chauses, elven					4	3	2	2	1
Cuisses, leather							2	1	1
Cuisses, splint				2	2	2	2	1	1
Cuisses, steel		4*	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Greaves, leather							1	1	1
Greaves, bronze				2	2	2	1	1	1
Greaves, steel*	6*	4*	2	2	2	2	1	1	1

*These armor parts may absorb 2 HP per damage die, provided their AC is 2 or 1.

1) A suit is worn **and** the parts extend coverage. In this case add total HP of the parts **up to** the **overall** AC level of the armor. The still superior AC and damage absorption potential of parts only affects called shots or critical hit effects on that specific body part. Distribute all relevant armor HP across the AC range according to the HP sum for each particular AC level.

Thus, a warrior clad in chain mail (AC 5) and wearing superior chain gauntlets (AC 4) will have an overall AC of 4, his armor thus 29 overall HP (= suit 21 HP + 8 HP for the gauntlets up to AC 4). These allocate 2/10/7/5/3/2 as compared to 8/6/4/2/1 for a simple chain mail suit.

2) A suit is worn **and** the part comes on top of existing coverage. In order to calculate overall armor HP for layers, account for the superior item's hit points **up to** the **overall** AC level of the armor **and** deduct total HP of the inferior item, or nearest equivalent. Once more, the superior HP and AC come into play for called shots and critical hits. Then, distribute the resulting HP difference across the AC range of the armor as above. This way, layers of similar items will just increase armor weight, but otherwise cancel each other out - you do not have greaves of double thickness, but two layers of greaves, which is a wobbly affair at best.

As mentioned before, a fighter combining his chain mail suit with chausses improves his AC on the thighs from 5 to 4, likewise his overall AC. Chain chausses for AC 4 have a total of 13 HP, from which you deduct the 10 HP up to AC 5. Add the remaining 3 HP to the 21 total HP for chain mail, which nets this warrior 24 overall armor HP. These allocate as 3/8/6/4/2/1 across the relevant AC levels.

3) All armor parts cover the body by 50% or more, which fact qualifies for an overall AC. In this case a possible suit will **not** matter anymore; just sum all the parts' armor points **up to** the **overall** AC level of your armor equivalent. Either overall AC of the parts is superior to that of your suit, or you will need to return to point 2. So long as you remember to deduct the armor points for the inferior items, but to add their weight, nobody minds a warhorse acting the beast-of-burden for a while.

So let us return to that gladiator-type having invested more than 800 gp in a basinet (ignore HP), bronze cannons (HP 9), chain gauntlets (8) with like chausses and sabatons (13 + 8 = 21 HP). As the parts provide 50% body coverage, his overall AC is 4. But although his armor assortment weighs only 31 lbs. its encumbrance is bulky, thus limiting movement to 2/3 normal. His armor's overall absorption capacity sums up to a considerable 38 HP, which allocate as 9/9/6/5/5/4. Still, as this warrior leaves his chest, groin, upper arms unprotected, he is at best AC 9 at locations, which are also the easiest to target.

By stark contrast, a heavy chain suit costs 400 gp and weighs 50 lbs., but is just as bulky. Moreover, heavy chain covers the body by 75%. While it leaves out the head, hands, calves and feet, these four locations rank among the more difficult to target. On the other hand, with 38 HP, the combination has a 27% higher absorption potential. The 30 armor HP of a heavy chain distribute as 9/8/ 6/4/2/1.

Meticulous research has shown that the imitation of suits by a piecemeal collection of similar armor parts might provide between 10% to 40% more absorption potential, depending on the type of

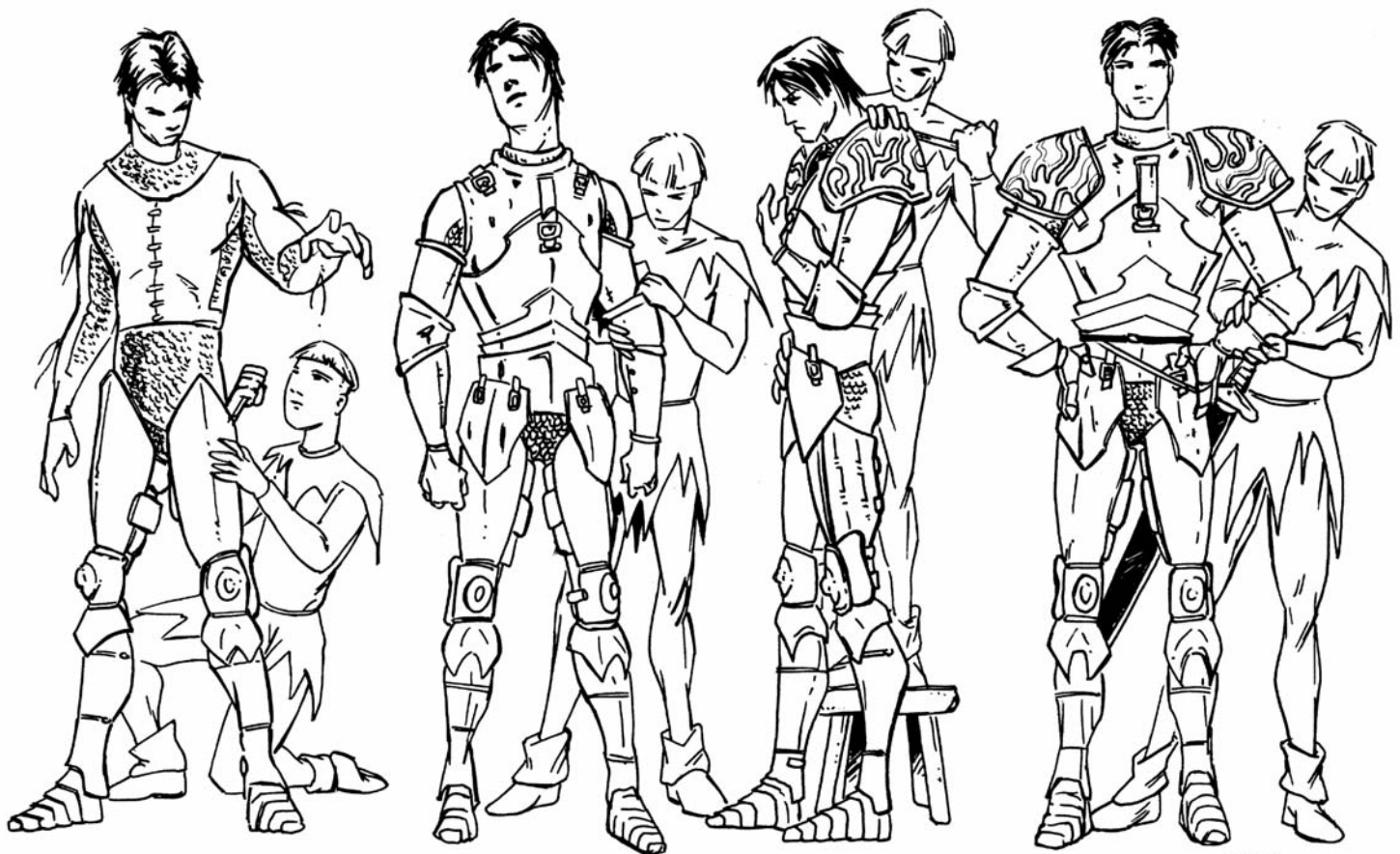


Table HJ28-I: Additional Rounds to Don/Doff Separate Armor Parts

Armor items	Rounds	Armor items	Rounds	Armor items	Rounds
Aventail*	1	Coif, chain	0	Greaves, bronze**	2
Aventail, elven*	1	Coif, elven	0	Greaves, leather	1
Boots, hard-shod	1	Coif, leather	0	Greaves, steel**	2
Boots, high	1	Cuisses, leather	1	Helmet, Basinet	0
Boots, soft	0	Cuisses, splint	1	Helmet, close-faced	0
Cannons, bronze	1	Cuisses, steel	1	Helmet, Great**	1
Cannons, leather	1	Gauntlets, chain	1	Mittens, chain	0
Cannons, steel	1	Gauntlets, elven	1	Sabatons, chain	0
Cap, leather/Hat	0	Gauntlets, leather	1	Sabatons, elven	0
Cap, padded/Hat	0	Gauntlets, steel	1	Sabatons, steel	0
Cap, steel	0	Gloves	0	Shoes/Sandals	0
Chain chausses*	2	Gorget, leather	1	Vambraces, bronze**	2
Ch. chausses, elven*	2	Gorget, steel	1	Vambraces, steel**	2

*These items take an additional round to don/doff.

suit mirrored. Considering the in total higher price and encumbrance, this passive benefit to a redundant armor built seems a fair trade-off.

Armor repair costs just the same, regardless of whether lost HP are restored to suits or parts thereof. Thus even the maintenance of parts costs comparably more than that of suits. Last but not least, one should not forget the time needed to buckle all those different straps on.

HOW MUCH TIME TO DON/DOFF ARMOR?

For armor suits, the *Player's Handbook* (p117) differentiates between single-piece suits and piece armors. With aid, the former takes 1 round to don (e.g. hide), or 2 rounds if made of metal (such as chain mail). The latter in turn require 1d6+4 rounds to fasten the diverse straps and buckles, even when assisted. Without aid, time to slip into single-piece suits doubles to 4 rounds, or actually triples for piece armors. Doffing armor suits is much faster: it usually just takes one round to discard single-piece suits, and 1d+1 rounds for piece armors (and half that time, if cutting the straps).

It should be obvious even to the uninitiated that - compared to suits - every separate part listed above counts as piece armor. Of course, some parts are easier to put on than others. Separate armor items for any location **always** take one additional round to don/doff, barring the following exceptions: gloves, mittens, caps, coifs, helmets, shoes, soft boots and sabatons do not require any more time to slip into or out of, provided they are not combined. Pairs count as one item. However, items marked with two asterisks take yet another round to don/doff, as their fastening is quite complex. Assistance while donning parts requiring one or more rounds halves the total time necessary to put on all pieces; the same goes for cutting straps while stripping. Still unsure when wily William wobbles back to the surface, if at all? Then consult *Table HJ28-L: Additional Rounds to Don/Doff Separate Armor Parts*.

For the sake of comparison, we can assure you that attiring oneself in piecemeal suit equivalents certainly takes a while: donning a leather cap, same vambraces, gloves, cuisses and boots requires three rounds, instead of only one for a leather suit. Similarly, a

chain mail suit just takes two rounds to don, compared to the four rounds necessary for strapping on a basinet, chain shirt together with chausses.

Let's face the facts: armor parts are a nice complementary protection for one's delicate spots, but come at the price of additional costs, weight and penalties to certain skills/abilities. If superior to existing armor or achieving minimum body coverage, parts might even provide or improve overall AC, although there exists only a couple of sensible combinations. Because any part needs to be attached separately, layering generally is a hindrance, but might disclose some interesting circumstantial benefits. However, the protective redundancy of armor parts results in their much higher HP absorption capacity when compared to suits, making them a worthwhile choice for characters either too generous, strong or clumsy for their own good.

Conversely, armor suits provide the best value for their money. Suits generally qualify characters for an overall AC, as every one fulfills minimum body coverage criteria of locations, which are not only difficult to protect otherwise (such as the upper arms) but also the most vulnerable - thus most easy to hit. Moreover, their basic composition allows for easy donning/doffing as well as holistic design changes, whose summary benefits surpass those for each single part, e.g. better overall AC, relief in costs, weight and encumbrance. Regrettably, the less redundant the components of a suit, the more difficult it becomes to sustain its integrity - thus any but the most sophisticated suits have lower HP absorption capacity compared to the sum of its components. Still, sticking by their suit remains a viable choice for people either flush in their pockets, ignorant of their protection's weaknesses, or too confident of their prowess.

So, Sons of Sunder - Take care!

Editor's Note: Sadly, Jochen passed away in December 2007 at the age of 40. Jochen was a passionate roleplayer ever since the early 1980s, and a devoted fan of the HackMaster game and discussion forums. He will be greatly missed.

RUSTLERS OF THE NIGHT:

Island Giant

by Charles Brown (HMA# MA-1-01384-03)

Island Giant

AKA: Abominable Beachman

HackFactor: 20

EP Value: 5,500

Climate/Terrain: Volcanic Isles

Frequency: Very Rare

Organization: Family or Solitary

Activity Cycle: Any

Diet: Carnivore (prefers seafood)

Intelligence: Low (5-7)

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

No. Appearing: 1-3

Size: H (18' tall)

Movement: 12", Swim 12"

Psionic Ability: Nil

Attack/Defense Modes: Nil/Nil

Morale: Brave (14)

Armor Class: 4

No. of Attacks: 2 or 1

Damage/Attack: 1d6+7/1d6+7 fists or 3d6+7 bite

Special Attacks: Hurl Rocks (2-16), Wrestle

Special Defenses: Heat Resistance

Magic Resistance: Standard

Hit Dice: 14+4

Fatigue Factor: 7

Threshold of Pain: Yes

Combat Wheel: S

DESCRIPTION: Rumored to be the result of a visually-impaired hill giant mating with an unknown Jurassic Animal (or at least the animal refuses to admit it), this strange creature appears to be a squat, broad humanoid standing 15-20' tall. It has a thick, dark brown leathery skin, and a head that resembles some kind of hideous crossbreed between a crocodile and a shark. Fortunately, these creatures only reside in cavern complexes near active volcanoes on tropical islands, and thus are rarely encountered – except by tourists, and who counts them?

COMBAT/TACTICS: Typically, these creatures avoid combat except to obtain food or keep intruders away from their cavern lairs. They discourage visitors by throwing a hail of boulders at them (200' range), and love to use this to tip over boats and pluck flyers out of the sky. If forced into combat,

they typically bludgeon foes with their massive fists for 1d6 damage, +7 due to their great Strength, per blow. Against size L foes, or against creatures they intend to eat, however, they prefer to engage in Wrestling attacks, and count as having one level of Specialization per the rules in the Combatant's Guide to Slaughtering Foes (page 107). Due to a lifetime of engaging in unarmed combat and their thick, leathery hide, Abominable Beachmen suffer no penalties for grappling (i.e. normal Initiative rolls are made, and foes do not get a bonus to hit them if they are wrestling) – indeed, their Strength and skill allows them to strike at +5 to hit! A grappled foe, as well as a foe of 12' or more in height, may be subject to a bite attack by the giant for 3d6 damage (+7 for Strength).

Because these creatures frequent volcanic areas, they have developed a resistance to extreme heat; any heat or fire-based attack inflicts -2 points of damage per die (minimum 1) on a failed save, and has absolutely no effect on the Abominable Beachman if the save is made. They save vs. cold based attacks at -2, and suffer an additional point of damage per die from such assaults.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: These creatures tend to be loners, avoiding contact even with their own kind. When multiple Island Giants are encountered, it is always a family, with a male and female of equal combat ability, and a child with 6-10 HD (d5+5), AC 6 and only a +4 bonus to damage from Strength. They seem to prefer avoiding contact with other creatures, including members of their own race. They are excellent swimmers, capable of holding their breath for up to 15 full minutes.

ECOLOGY: Island Giants live on a diet of seafood, preferring giant eels but also devouring sharks, squid and occasional careless fishermen. They make their homes in the lava tunnels of dormant volcanoes.

YIELD:

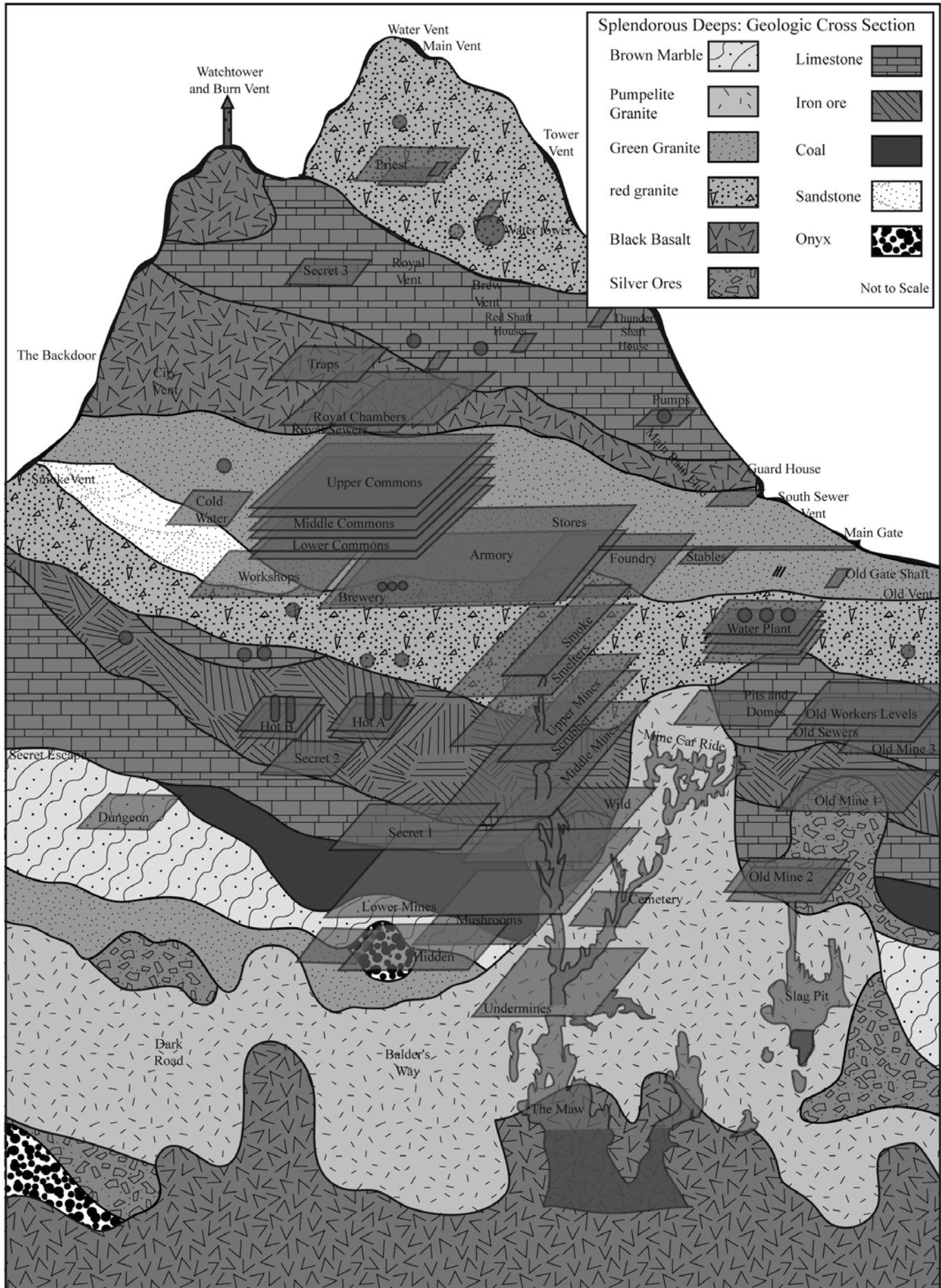
Medicinal: Nil

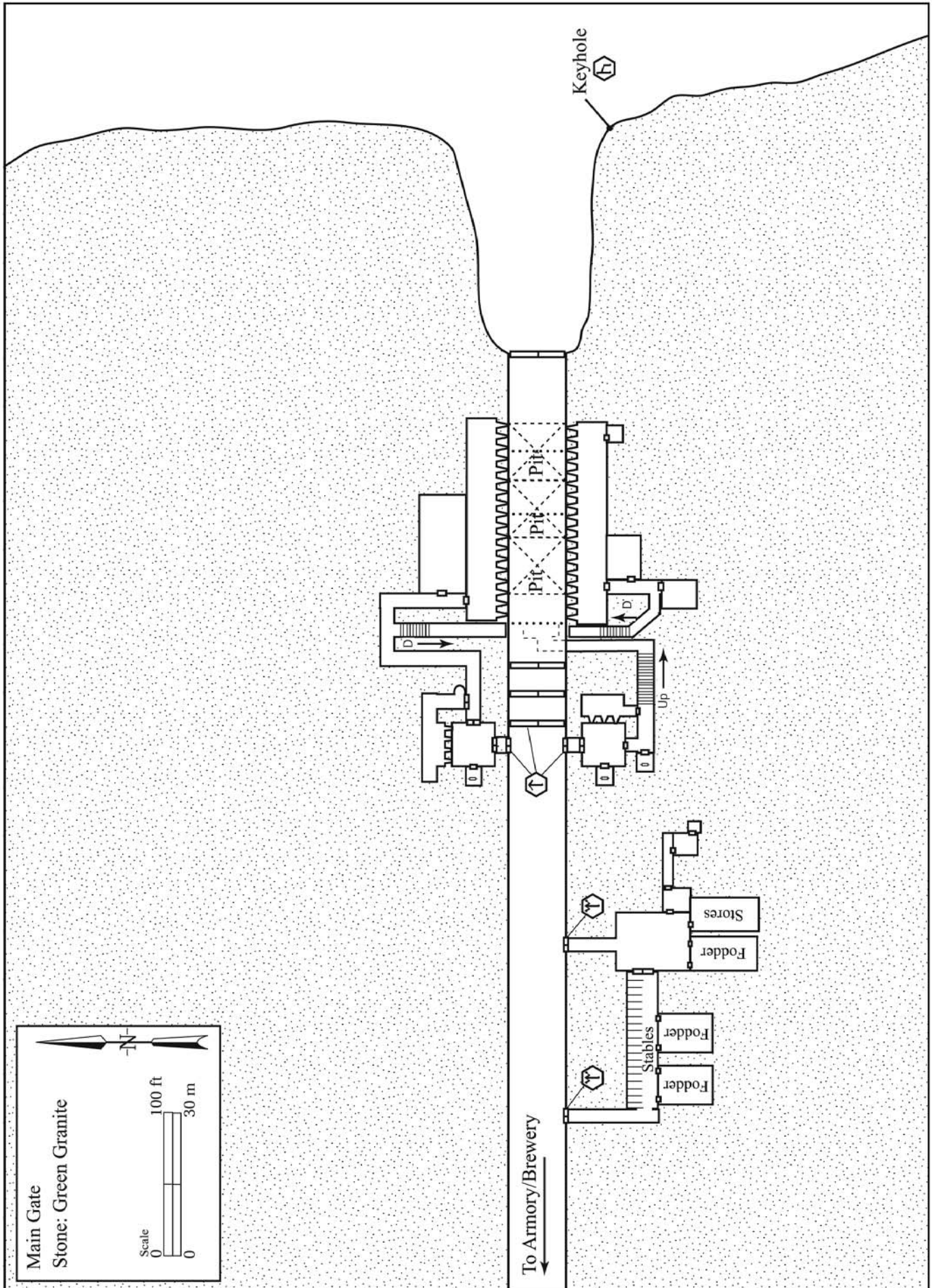
Spell Components: Nil

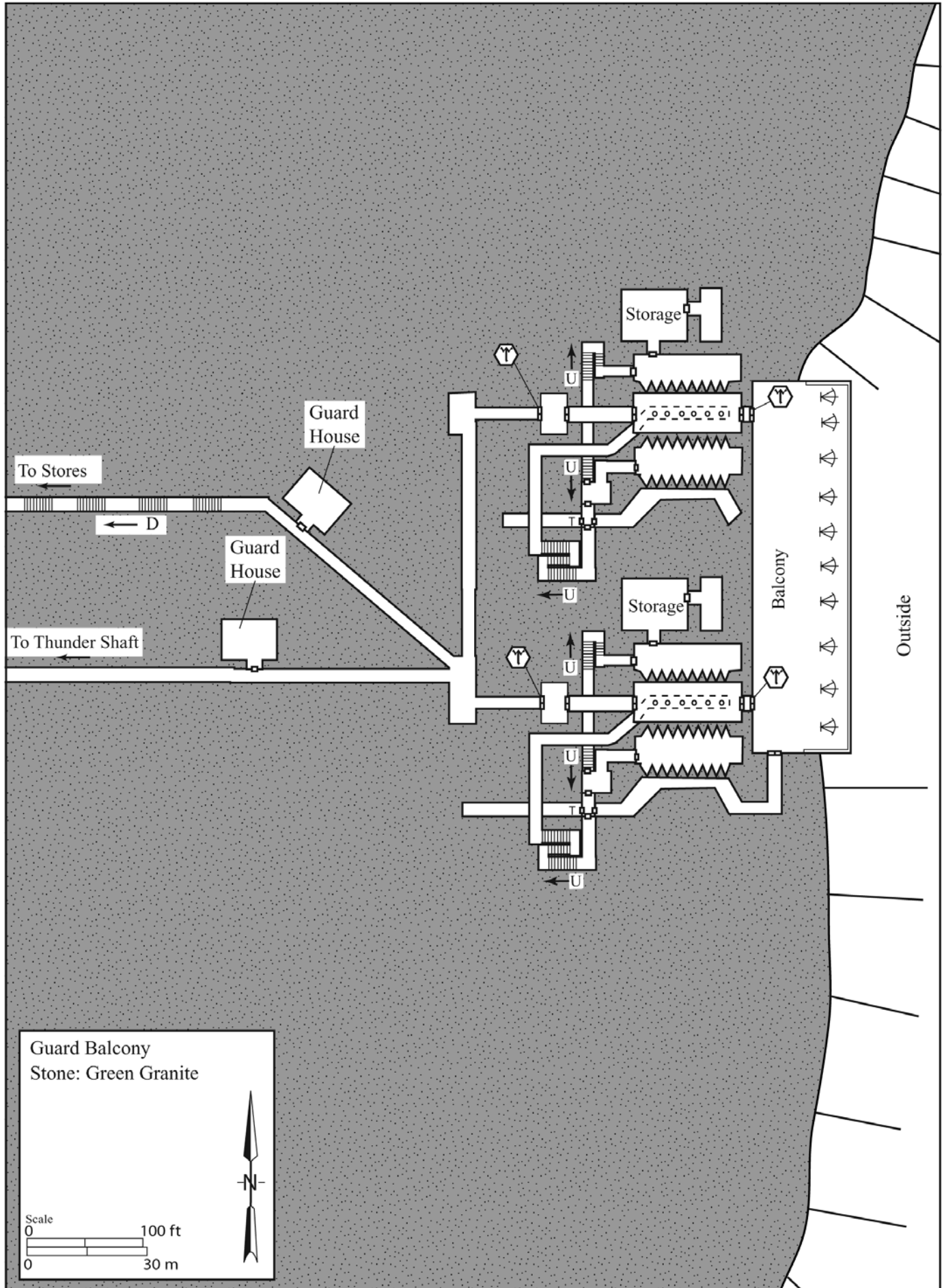
Hide/Trophy Items: Nil

Treasure: D

Other: The sweat of one of these creatures can be used for Potions of Giant Strength, and its brain can be used for Potions of Giant Control. Its bones may be used for constructing Rings of Swimming and Helms of Underwater Action.







FROM THE CUBICLE OF THE CHANCELLOR:

HackMaster Basic Spoilers

edited by Mark Plemmons (HMA# IL-8-00005-01)

As you all probably know, we're working hard on the next edition of *HackMaster*. However, if you don't visit our online discussion forums, you may have missed David Kenzer's recent HackMaster Basic spoiler answers to fan questions. This article compiles the spoilers so far (Dec 08, 2008) for easy reference. (Keep in mind that any of this information may change between now and the final publication date.)

RELEASE INFORMATION

HackMaster Basic will be paperback, roughly 192-224 pages long, with a cover price of \$19.99. The scheduled release date is Summer 2009. HMB will cover levels 1-5. HMB includes some sample monsters/magic items and otherwise gives you everything you need to roll the bones and go. It's PHB, GMG and HOB all wrapped into one.

Within 12 months of HMB will be three *Advanced HackMaster* hardcovers (*Hacklopedia*, *GameMaster's Guide*, and *Player's Handbook*). AHM will cover levels 1-30. You won't have to buy HMB to play AHM, but you'll want to.

After the hardcovers, we plan to release more *HackMaster* supplements such as class books and a *GameMaster's Shield*.

ALIGNMENT

Role-playing your alignment is tied directly to Honor. Playing your alignment is worth -3 to 4 honor points per level (this may get massaged some). HMB has 9 alignments.

CHARACTER GENERATION

Q: Race/class based system?

A: Yes.

Q: Point buy based generation system or random dice roll?

A: Random, but BPs are still there for you.

Q: Will players still have incentive to burn a couple BPs to ensure Two Loving Parents?

A: Maybe, but not in HMB.

Q: Will there be rolls for every bloody relative of your family?

A: Not in basic. It'll be optional in AHM. Of course, if you don't roll for your family, you leave it open for your GM to do so....

Q: How integral are quirks & flaws to creation (i.e. if you don't pick some will your stats be lame)?

A: Stat bumping through Qs and Fs is possible, but not as extreme as in HM4. There are caps and limiting returns. Also multiple Qs and Fs give limiting returns as in A&8s.

Q: Describe the average character creation time. Half-hour?

A: About or less if you know what you want. 7+ days if you can't make decisions.

Q: When the first PC's start dying, I want players to be able to jump back into the slaughter (er ... game) as quickly as possible.

A: I suggest you have them bring 2 or 4 to the game, then. Me? I prefer people to sit out and suffer for their character dying. It's a good way for players to feel the pain of their stupidity and to take better care next time.

Q: How much book keeping is a player required to perform?

A: In HMB? Not that much – as long as your record sheet has all your modifiers properly marked. You have to keep track of when your next attack comes and how long it takes to perform your actions and your EPs. Oh, and your treasure and items. Skills have less book keeping than in A&8s.

Q: A good game has a full character on one side of one page in size 14 font. Will HMB characters require reams of paper just to record starting basics, not to mention a heap of scrap paper to perform calculus and determine the most basic things?

A: No. AHM might. AHM is being made only for ADVANCED role-players, though.

CLASSES

Q: Are the classes balanced against each other? Or does every class need a different amount of XP based on how powerful it is?

A: Right now they're pretty balanced. As subclasses arise, we may need to go the XP route. But we also have costs to purchase in creation (i.e., it takes Building Points to buy your class).

Q: Are a fighter's bonuses to defend going to be higher than a mage for example?

A: Generally, yes. Your defense bonus also goes up with talents, specialization, magic items and so on. Fighters can specialize with weapons faster and easier than anyone else.

Q: How many HP does a 1st level fighter have on average?

A: About mid to upper 20s, depending on race (size determines part of the kicker), con (your con adds to your starting HP) and your hit point roll (d10). It ranges from 9 to 38, actually. A human fighter with a 12 Con would have 23-33 HPs.

Q: Generic cleric class or priest for each god?

A: One for each god. There are 5 gods in HM HMB – 44 in AHM.

Q: Are thief skills their own thing or just a regular skill that they are limited to? (i.e. AD&D vs. 3.5)

A: Some of each. Most thief skills anyone can learn, but thieves are just better at it (unless you blow a lot of BPs).

Q: Do thieves have similar skills as in 4th? And does backstabbing work the same?

A: Yes, and no. Backstabbing has to use a smaller weapon (like a dagger) and it avoids armor (and the associated damage reduction) - the thief finds a seam/opening and stabs a sharp pointy through it rather than just a straight multiplier. End result is similar, though - extra damage.

Q: Will AHM feature anything akin to the previous edition's HackMaster classes (HackLeric etc.) or D&D3's "prestige" classes?

A: It'll have HackMaster classes...but not until the class books.

Q: Basiran Dancers, Brigands, Gladiators, Infiltrators, Shaman, Spellsingers, and Watchmen: will these make an appearance in a "Kalamar Player's Guide for HackMaster"?

A: No, they'll be mixed in with all the other classes in either the AHM PHB or the various class books.

COMBAT

Q: Initiative works how?

A: Roll d12 (except thieves, who get a lower die as they get higher in level), add init modifier (based on Dex and Wis) 10 seconds. Although we don't use the 'rounds' terminology. Just '10 seconds'. Makes it easier to use real time...for, um, time keeping.

Q: You mentioned d12 for init, is this just at the beginning or after each action?

A: Just at the start of combat - it also is the surprise mechanic. You're surprised until your number comes up.

Q: Still use a AD&D-ish "to hit" system, or something else?

A: Sort of. The attacker rolls a d20 to-hit and the defender rolls a d20 to defend. Higher roll wins.

Q: Given the attack vs. defend thing, does that mean armor class does not exist in HM at all?

A: Not the way it did in prior editions, no.

Q: I assume that in adding the bonuses to defend, the armor a person is wearing counts somehow?

A: Armor makes it more likely to be hit (because it hinders movement) but less likely to be damaged (because it provides a barrier between the offending weapon and your fleshy bits). Thus, a fighter in heavy full plate fighting a quick kobold with a stick is likely to get hit over and over, but the stick will be unlikely to ever damage the fighter (get through the armor).

Q: How is whether or not a PC gets damaged determined?

A: If they fail their defense roll and the monster's damage exceeds the absorption value of the armor (if any). Note: Characters that 'make' their defense roll, but are using a shield may also take damage if their shield gets really walloped. Using a shield against an orc, generally good idea. Against a fire giant swinging an oak tree... not so much.

Q: Different AC for flank and rear or just same AC and different (D12 or D8) defense roll?

A: Different defense roll; d8 from behind (essentially, the attacker's chance of missing with the defender potentially ignorant of the attack), d10 from rear flank, d12 from flank, d20 from front (with shield).

Q: So far I love what I'm hearing, but I'll admit to being slightly apprehensive regarding all of the opposed rolls. Is there a mechanic to streamline this, or could you provide a better description of how this works? For example, if 3 opponents are attacking one PC, does the PC get a single defense roll, or 3 separate ones?

A: Three separate rolls for defense. In AHM, depending on certain factors, like shield size, his defense roll changes (the die drops). So after X attackers, you can only defend with a d12. Or d8 from behind, etc. In other words, even high-level dudes that get surrounded are in for a world of hurt.

Q: I thought it was said you always roll at d20 to hit (and therefore can get a critical hit) but you roll another die as the defender, and that die varies depending on where they're attacking you. (i.e.. you have less defense (lower die) if attacked in the rear). Is that correct?

A: Yes, and you can't get a 'perfect defense roll (natural 20) in those cases. Or even a near-perfect defense roll (natural 19). In HMB, attacker always rolls 1d20 (this might vary in AHM; unknown or unstated at this time). Unmodified 1 = Fumble, 20 = Critical Hit. Defender USUALLY rolls a d20 (maybe ALWAYS in HMB, but AHM will PROBABLY use different rolls, based on situation). Unmodified 1 = Fumble, 20 = Critical Defense. If you're rolling a die that doesn't have a 20, it becomes impossible to crit. Also, the defender can get a nearly perfect defense (19) and get a free punch/kick/eye poke/knee to the groin/elbow/etc. in. Small damage (two d4-2) but every bit counts, eh?

Q: I love what I'm hearing about HM5 -- but this is a bit concerning -- as the opposed role thing can be a pain in large combats -- especially when there are multiple attack forms per opponent...

A: In practice it is much easier to compare rolls than to look up AC. You roll your attack and add all your bonuses, then I roll my monster's defense and add all my bonuses (at the same time as you roll). Higher wins (tie goes to defense). As GM, sometimes I'll roll 3-4 attacks at once with different colored dice...really no different than prior editions there. Also, defenders can 'crit' getting a free immediate riposte...or fumble suffering an immediate second attack. We found that there's a lot more range to what you can do for both attack and defense, including talents, specialization, magic items, etc. the possibilities open dramatically once freed from the static AC.

Q: If you can't get a crit on the d12/d8 defenses from being attacked from the flank/rear, do you still fumble on a 1?

A: Yep.

Q: Will the crits in AHM be as detailed as HM4?

A: Yes, but more streamlined.

Q: Will missile fire into melee be MORE dangerous, LESS dangerous, or roughly the same as it is in HM4?

A: Roughly the same, I guess. Missile fire itself is (a) much slower – more in-line with historical accuracy and (b) less effective at longer and even middle ranges – more in-line with reality. Also: shields can really put a damper on the effectiveness of an archer.

Q: Will leveling/training be different from HM4? For me, it was not just about bookkeeping, it was also about characters having to stop in the middle of the adventure and go train. My players hated it and only trained when they absolutely had to gain important powers or skills; otherwise they would pay the EP penalty and auto level instead. It didn't take a genius to figure out it was better to be a wealthy well equipped 5th level character than dirt poor 6th level character.

A: HMB has auto-leveling for those that can't hack training and paying for it and associated delays (in-game). AHM has full training rules.

Q: About how many hits from a mace would it take to kill a kobold (not including crits, etc)? 1 or 2 like D&D, or 5/6 like in HM4?

A: 2-3, depending on who's swinging... but one solid one will force a Threshold of Pain check.

Q: How does fighting multiple opponents work? For example in previous systems if you were fighting one creature and it died or another one came up to attack you then you were stuck fighting the first one for the rest of the round. I realize that you are tracking seconds instead of rounds but how does it work when in combat with multiple opponents?

A: If you have a weapon that allows one attack every, say, 8 seconds, when in combat with a foe (this is an important distinction; if you have a sword and whack a wall, you can hit it once a couple second or 3, but if you're attacking me and I'm swinging back...not as often for serious/likely to hit attacks), you can swing every 8 seconds or so, even if you fell that orc on your left. But if you slaughter your last opponent and move on to another skirmish, say 20 feet away where the MU is being shredded by a couple of goblins, you can attack as soon as you get there/within reach (if you have a reach weapon, for example).

Q: How are multiple attacks and two-weapon fighting handled?

A: Two-weapon fighting is in AHM, but basically, the character can hit more readily, but can also be hit easier. Not having a shield is a huge loss in HMB/AHM. Shields are super-important, esp. at low levels. There's a reason why shields were used for a couple of millennium. Multiple attacks? The creature/character simply get to roll to hit more frequently.

Q: Is there a game mechanic reason to not dual-wield?

A: No shield. Shields are uber-important in HMB. We tried for more realism in combat and discovered through our research that shields are pretty effective at stopping ranged attacks and absorbing blows. A dual-wielding guy might attack twice in 10 seconds with some penalized to-hit (say -2/-6) vs. once with no penalty...BUT his defense die is d20-4 whereas the guy with the shield has a d20 defense die AND the shield also affords a +4 or higher bonus (+6 for large shields, +8, IIRC, for a body shield). Essentially, as in real life, if you wield two weapons, you better take your foe down fast or you'll get clobbered. Good for one on one fighting but not so much in pitched battles (where 2+ opponents might attack you...in that case, the dual wielder will absolutely get butchered).

Q: How about ranged combat? Are you using the A&8 mechanics, HackMaster mechanics, or something entirely new? Handling Shot Clocks for all the monsters in the Hacklopedia sounds kind of unwieldy.

A: No shot clocks, though we're considering them for an optional supplement at some point a few years down the pike. Ranged combat is closer to HM4, but still different. Essentially, the attacker tries to hit his target based on range and size of the target. The defender can't do much to avoid being shot in most cases, except that shields provide cover. Ducking behind one is a good way to avoid being shot (or make it less likely, anyway).

Q: How about the classic off hand punch or kick when fighting one handed, will you be able to do that without getting major penalties?

A: That's built into the core rules...the 'near perfect defense' allows a free counter attack with the off hand or knee or pommel.

Q: Are running away attacks (aka attacks of opportunity) still brutal, getting all your bonuses, and normal attacks against a fleeing target? Running away was never worth it.

A: There are many ways to retreat, from Give Ground, to Fighting Withdrawal to Flee. They vary in level of danger to the coward retreator. One of the pluses inherent in the new combat system is the flexibility afforded by many in-melee movement options and knock backs (based on damage dealt).

GAMEPLAY MISC.

Q: Outside of rolling damage, do you use all the dice in HackMaster? Are there one or two really prevalent polyhedrals?

A: Yes, and yes. d12 and d20.

Q: Is there a universal mechanic, or a lot of good, meaty specifically tailored mechanics?

A: Both, I guess. A lot of the game involves competing rolls d20 vs. d20, but that's not universal.

Q: Will there be penetration dice?

A: Yes. We have a notation to clarify penetrating vs. not, the little 'p' follows the die type in the rules where penetration is possible.

sible. d20p to attack, d20p for saves, d12 for init, 2d8p damage for a long sword, etc.

Q: Will the game use hit points, specific injuries or a mixture of both?

A: Hit points. In the AHM game we have some specific injuries, especially with crits.

Q: Are you using the A&E count system?

A: Yes.

Q: Are there still saving throw categories - and if so, do they follow a semi-specific list like 1e/2e and HM (Poison/Paralyzation/Death Magic, Rod/Staff/Wand, Petrification/Polymorph, Breath Weapon, Spell and Apology) or broad categories like 3.x (Fortitude, Willpower and Reflex)?

A: The saves don't fall into categories like D&D. That said, different abilities affect different types of saves (Con affects saves vs. poison, disease, etc.)

Q: What are saving throws like?

A: Most saves are competing rolls – roll d20 (high), add bonuses (and/or deduct penalties) vs. d20 plus modifiers (virulence factor for poison, e.g.) For spells, a magic-user rolls a d20, adds his level plus any bonuses. The victim, also rolls a d20, adds their level plus any bonuses. Higher roll wins.

Q: You've mentioned that saving throws use the same opposed roll mechanics as attacks. Does this apply for characters and items, or will items have different rules?

A: Items follow the same rules. If a wand works at 12th level, for example, the wand rolls a d20 +12 and the character rolls a d20 and adds bonuses (based on level, stats, talents, race, etc.)

Q: Rules for things like pushing others, pulling others, overwhelming or overbearing, or defending a spot without moving?

A: Not covered in HMB (except the last one in some ways – see below). If a person stands in a door to block a pile of enemies can they be overwhelmed or do they just block it until they die? there are ways to move people OFF of a spot – knock backs, special attacks, moves to keep opponents at bay (by jabbing puncturing weapons, esp. with reach), vicious attacks to force them to give ground, etc.) . Charging is a good way to knock a person back as well. Also, doing a lot of damage can knock them back or even send them on their keister (or worse).

Q: How does the power curve track?

A: Characters start as pissant losers and work their way up to great heroes that bitch-slap local rulers.

Q: Will a STR 25 fighter still be able to carry roughly 8000 suits of hide armor on his back?

A: 18 is the maximum Strength in HMB.

Q: I saw earlier that HMA is going have levels ranging from 1-30. I was wondering if that meant what you gain for leveling up is more spread out, is there just more of it, or both?

A: More spread out.

Q: Did you limit the materials of coins to the three coin metals (Cu, Ag and Au)?

A: Yes and no. The game is on the silver standard (not gold standard). There are smaller denomination coins below Coppers that we call 'trade coins'. These are made of a wide variety of material (nickel, stone, lead, ceramic shards, glass beads, etc.) and vary by realm/jurisdiction. they're used by most folk within an area to trade/sell/buy. The coins themselves have little to no inherent metal value, but are worth something to local traders, etc. take it to the next realm and they drop in value...a few kingdoms over and they'll be viewed as worthless junk.

Q: How many silver coins have the worth of one gold coin? 10 or 100?

A: We went back and forth, but ultimately settled on 10:1 as easier for all involved.

Q: How much does one coin weigh? Money was quite heavy in HackMaster 4.

A: About 50 coins per pound. Coins are the size of a US nickel, roughly. This is more historically accurate.

Q: Experience Points abbreviation: "EP", "XP" or other?

A: EP.

Q: How does EP work? Do you get a set amount per monster, or some other method?

A: 50% of EPs come from defeating things. The other 50% come from 'story awards'. Story Awards are EPs gained by characters as they accomplish goals. For example, I ran a goblin lair some months back and the PCs receives 700 EP from goblins and other victims and 100 for finding some hidden treasure (not for the treasure itself, mind you, treasure is its own reward), 200 for ending the goblin threat (could be earned without killing them, theoretically), 250 for finding an important clue, 50 each for safely rescuing some prisoners.

Q: So for HMB there's a unified EP table?

A: Yes... so far.

Q: Will you still gain EPs for getting treasure or drinking your potions?

A: No. We've done away with those concepts.

Q: Aces & Eights uses the hex mechanic for battle mats and miniatures, which works well with facing. Will HMB use hexes or squares or will it not matter because it is less of a miniature games than other inferior newly released products?

A: HMB is not designed to be mini-specific, although, like its Gygaxian predecessors, minis help battles along. The choice of hex or square is entirely up to you.

Q: What does the pace of leveling feel like? That is, given reasonably productive game sessions of an average length, how long does it take to crawl up the ladder from first to whatever?

A: About one level every 15 hours of play (or 4 average game sessions). Your mileage may vary, obviously.

Q: In the Honor discussion, you mentioned that there is an Honor hit for not paying a certain amount of funds per level (i.e., being a cheapskate with your choice of inns, food, buying rounds, etc.). Will the Funds per Level apply to Social Class, or just level?

A: Just per level. It replaces the cost for training. You now never have to pay to train, but it means your honor and fame will never be great and may possibly be low all the time. Essentially, are you a cheapskate dirtbag or a real hero?

Q: So, is the old cost of Level Training pretty much just spread out over time, i.e. over the long run players spend the same amount just in bits instead of one lump sum?

A: One, it's a LOT less. Two, no. Leveling is just a convenient time to spend the money and keep track (it replaces paying at inns and buying rounds and all the minor cash-spending on services bits for those that don't want to sweat the details). It also covers the standard training weapons, upkeep, flasks and equipment, church/guild dues, etc, etc, spent in the old 'training funds'. Of course, this can still be done on an accounting level if your group likes it, but the spend should come out the same over a level. Basically, it's offered as a way to cut back on bookkeeping but keep the spending happening. It also allows miserly players/characters (depending on if it's the player or the quirk dictating...) to hoard their cash, but at the expense of honor. It's a game problem with an in-game trade off.

You can, in fact, choose to run it so that it's a gradual spend over time. Or, if players happen to role-play paying for drinks, interacting with barkeep, renting rooms, etc., they can deduct that from later "training" costs. In short, the GM/table has control over how they do it, but the spend per level needs to be consistent for inter-campaign/tournament play/comparing notes when both playing Mines of Chaos, etc.

HEALING

Q: How will healing work in HM5?

A: Natural healing works the same way as in A&8s – every wound heals independently of one another, but very slowly for big HP wounds and quickly for lots of small 1 HP guys. Magical healing varies by level, but is a straight penetrating die roll (not level dependant). So at very low levels healing is very weak and characters may spend a fair amount of time healing up at the inn. That said, the healing skill is quit useful and there are a number of magic items and non-magical special items (like minor healing potions, salves and so on) that can also be used to help the healing process along or for immediate effect. Generally speaking, about level 3-5 an adventuring party with but one cleric starts to hold its own (assuming one or two have taken the healing skill), but before that, you have to be careful not to get stabbed so often. Also, healing spells work better on anointed followers of a cleric's religion than on non-believers.

Q: So wounds will take you out of commission for extended amounts of time, combat sounds dangerous (at least at low levels), and you can't simply wade through rank

after rank of orcs, you have to play it smart... The mechanics are different from Aces & Eights, but am I wrong in thinking that the philosophy is similar?

A: Well, at low levels the danger factor is certainly amped... but nowhere near the danger factor of A&8s. Let's face it, there's no 'shotgun' weapon to blow off your leg (or face) in 1/10 of a second. Low-level characters are certainly less 'heroic' than in HM4. More on par with the old 1e games where a good stab or two can take you out. Also, the uber-stat pumping from HM4 isn't there so much, so it's tough to start out let's call it 'overly exceptional'.

Q: Does damage work differently at different levels? Or just that by high levels, characters become better able to deal with it?

A: The latter.

Q: Death at "0" hp or "-10" hp?

A: Neither. A character can survive (bleed) to -(Con/2). There are various rules for barely maintaining consciousness (to attest to your final will, for example), but I can't recall if these are in AHM or HMB.

Q: So...if I stabbed you in the gut and you lived, how long would you be laid up in bed?

A: Natural healing is slow for very serious wounds. Trying to naturally heal up a 10-point stab wound would put a character out of commission for nearly 2 months! First aid would cut 10 days right off the top. Some magical healing, though, would cut that down to a few days, especially if the wounded character is a follower of the deity in question.

Q: How harsh is physical damage? By which I mean will hp damage be nothing to worry about, just 'pass a healing potion,' or will physical damage to characters be longer lasting and harder to heal (as in A&8)?

A: Like A&8s at low levels (in HMB) and like HM4 at higher levels. Smart parties never need to run. But when you do retire from the dungeon, it may take a week or longer to heal up. Although, goblins and kobolds tend NOT to deliver the type of nasty, deep wounds that take a month to heal, but more the 1-3 days and all better ones are more common.

HONOR

Q: Will Honor be a part of HMB?

A: Absolutely, although a new honor level gets added with AHM (as does Fame, with Fame being far 'meatier' than in HM4). Honor is based on 4 role-playing factors: 1) defending personal honor (against insults, etc.), 2) role-playing alignment, 3) role-playing class, 4) General role-playing (in particular quirks and flaws).

Q: Are you encouraged to use Honor for dramatic effect and are rewarded based on how appropriate/Selfless the honor burn/purge was, or is it like the current Honor system, where you tend to hoard it unless you get into Too Much Honor. Because of the benefits of being in Great Honor, players tend to hoard it to get in the window.

A: There are better guidelines for gaining/losing it per level than in the previous edition with specifics left to the GM. That said, when push comes to shove, players can burn it off... and do. If done heroically, you get it back (just like in HM4).

Q: Can you give us a few random spoilers on specific things that will pay out in honor or hurt your honor? Just a couple specific example of who has feathered their nest by peeing in a well or paying for a burial or something.

A: Same stuff as in HM4 (you mention some good examples), basically, but it's now far more closely tied to role-playing your alignment/class/quirks and flaws as well. There's more GM discretion, but better guidelines as to how much the max bonus/penalty is for outstand/crafftastic play.

Q: Is there no "Great Honor Window" or will that still be part of the game?

A: Still part of the game. We originally went with a more A&8s-like approach, but playtester feedback made us re-evaluate this and go with the honor window. HMB has all the same honor levels as AHM except Legendary honor (characters have to be higher than 5th level to qualify for Legendary Honor).

KINGDOMS OF KALAMAR

Q: Are the books setting specific, or will any setting ideas be released later as a supplement?

A: The books are generically setting specific to Tellene. You will not need Kingdoms of Kalamar to play just like you didn't need Garweeze Wurld to play HM4. There will be a re-release of Kalamar products to account for the new system. It'll be wicked kewl. Jaw-dropping in an A&8 core book material way, yet different.

MAGIC

Q: Is spell casting still using the Vancian memorization system, if not what?

A: There is a memorization system, but any spell in a wizard's spell book can be cast at any time. 'Memorization' that morning makes it 'cost less' to cast.

Q: How are spells and spell lists organized?

A: Probably alpha by level.

Q: Are specific effects and status conditions generalized, or described separately/differently for each spell?

A: Each spell has its own entry.

Q: Approximately how many spells are there at each level for each class, for example MU and cleric?

A: I can't answer this because the number of spells is still shifting based on layout. I think HMB will have about 50-70 MU spells (covering apprentice through 5th level) and 25-35 cleric spells (levels 1-5).

Q: In AD&D 1st/2nd edition, and HM4, on paper clerical and spellslinger magic works the same way (same rules for memorizing, casting, etc with very minor differences). Is this

true in HMB as well? If not, how are they different in the game mechanics?

A: Clerical spells have spell slots and depend on Wis and your deity to grant them. MU spells require you to have them in your PC's spell book and they depend on Spell Points for casting. Magic-users have more flexibility powering/modifying their spells. Priests get what their deity gives 'em. Also: clerical spells work better on ordained followers of their religion.

Q: How do Spell Points work?

A: The MU gets a set number per day. He can cast spells until they run out...but spells cost a fair amount, so a 1st level MU will only be able to cast 2-4 spells (depending if they're 1st level or apprentice or journeyman spells). You can also cast spells you haven't memorized, but that costs double... so you're better off memorizing the right spells. (This mechanic allows an MU to cast that rare specialized spell that you never use, but is just right for a very narrow set of circumstances, but at great cost). The main use of Spell Points is to modify memorized spells on the fly – increase range, damage, save difficulty, effect and so on, by throwing more power into a spell than is 'standard'. SPs are also used to help power magic wands, staves and other items. The higher order powers of such things cost SPs not merely charges. All in all, SPs as used in HM give spellslingers a lot more flexibility and make them more interesting to run because of more varied options... but yet not unbalancing or 'silly' like in inferior games. Magic is still rare and special, but wondrous when it 'pops'.

Q: Can I ask why you decided to introduce spell points as a method of casting spells rather than a limited number of spells people can cast per day?

A: SPs are used in conjunction with memorized spells, not instead of.

Q: Will there be spell levels past nine, or did you do away with the spell level system and come up with something else? Perhaps just having some spells take up more spell points per day?

A: Did away with the current spell level system. Spells still have levels... but also cost more per day. So both!

Q: Interesting that all spells come down to a die roll as to whether they stick or not. Are some spells more hardcore (i.e. at higher levels, are there spells that have no defense roll?)

A: Not all spells have saves, even some low level saves.

Q: Will spell caster initiative be similar to HM4 - i.e. d4 plus spell casting time?

A: d4 is to find components, otherwise init is the same for magic-users as other classes.

Q: Can spell casters move prior to casting in a combat "round"?

A: Yes.

Q: Will casters be able to cast spells higher than their level - through scrolls -- or by reading spells written in their spell books?

A: Yes.

Q: In terms of spell mix how would you characterize them -- in terms of combat only vs. utility spells?

A: I'd characterize them as 'mixed to perfection'.

Q: Will spell components, hand gestures and verbal steps be required to cast spells - like the Vancian stuff of old?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of spells can a 1st-level magic user throw out?

A: Starts with 3 spells: Apprentice level, journeyman level and 1st level. They vary in what they do and none are overly powerful. They 'good stuff' is largely for levels exceeding those in Basic.

Q: How difficult is spellcasting in melee?

A: Easy if your opponent doesn't attack you or is held.

Q: Will spells such as fireballs require a to-hit roll?

A: Depends on the spell, but not fireball, no. Most spells have the caster pick their spell location (be it, center of area of effect, target, etc) , just like past editions.

Q: What effects will magic armor have? Will it still reduce the encumbrance of the armor, the one step up in bulkiness, extra hit points? Also, since armor only gets damaged on crits and penetrations, what will magic armor do here?

A: Harder to be hit (i.e., defense penalty not as bad as non-magical ilk), less encumbrance, extra HPs, harder to break.

MISCELLANEOUS

Q: Why did you decide to do HMB?

A: An introductory set for new players. This way folks can get in and see what HM is all about for under \$30, hopefully under \$20.

Q: Is HMB just to bring in new players?

A: All players are new players for the new edition (except playtesters).

Q: Truth be told, while I'll probably buy a copy of the book, I'm not so sure my group will as they're more interested in AHM, so I'll probably never even play a HMB game. Also, unless I missed it, there hasn't been a release date set for AHM yet, has there? If not, will there be an announcement when HMB comes out?

A: There has been no date set for AHM. There hasn't even been a firm date set for HMB. AHM is being worked on even as we wrap up HMB. It might also interest you to know that folks playing HMB will be able to get started on AHM through various planned Knights of the Dinner Table and web articles between releases.

Q: Will there be greater editorial scrutiny over future HM articles published in Knights of the Dinner Table?

A: That's one of the benefits of combining the HM and Kalamar lines, actually.

Q: Let's not take too long in getting a optional shot clock supplement out. Years is too long - maybe in a year or less after AHM?

A: We'll see. We'll likely release it with a gladiator arena book (Kalamar's blood sports and all) because it works best for one on one fights.

Q: Will coupons from HM4 be usable in the new edition?

A: Not in HMB.

Q: When can we expect to see HM5 exclusive stuff in the Hack Journal?

A: As soon as people write the articles.

Q: I do demos at cons a lot. Will there be something that people like myself could demo at cons before it comes out to get the word out?

A: I hope so.

Q: I bought just the PHB of 4E. It didn't suck but it didn't click with me. Why should I buy HMB/AHM?

A: We're attempting to recreate but improve upon the magic of HM4. If you liked innovations like the HP 'kicker', penetration damage, Honor, interesting/humorous rules reading, clawing and scratching your way to the top, GMs that challenge players to the limit and the like, then you will find the new HM to your liking. If you prefer story-telling games with no winners and losers, games where you start out heroic and swim up waterfalls for exercise, and other pastimes (these are not 'games'), then the new HM may not be to your liking.

Q: Can my character from HM4 be readjusted to fit the new rules?

A: Yes.

Q: Will this cause my blood to boil with anger and my head explode with confusion over the new rules?

A: Only if you are unreasonable and stupid. But even then, if you have a buddy with the requisite gaming IQ and skill, he can help you choose which dice to roll and coach you, so you may be OK...plan to buy 3 copies so you can store one in the car and in the can as well as in your backpack.

Q: Percentage of similarity to AD&D?

A: 0% for legal purposes. 90+% for play purposes.

Q: Gawd or god?

A: Good question...don't think we're settled on that yet.

Q: Coupons included?

A: Not discussed/decided. Probably for AHM, not sure for HMB. Probably not in HMB due to price considerations.

Q: Is feedback from HMB going to be taken into consideration for AHM, or will that project be too far along by that point?

A: We hope to make some tweaks based on feedback from HMB.

Q: What modules do you expect to release with the rules?

A: *Funny you should ask because are plans recently changed in this area. We may no longer have space in the main book for a sample adventure, so that may become a free download. I'd been working on 'Frondor's Keep' (Little Keep 10 years later, set in the Krond Heights, just north of P'Bapar). But it got to the point where it outstripped the HMB rules (i.e., characters could go past level 5 if they survived that long), so I think we'll be breaking it into two products: B1: Frondor's Keep and B2: Mines of Chaos. Only the release of B1 will coincide with the HMB rules. B2 will come later.*

Q: Will there be a semi-campaign like Little Keep to get us started when HMB comes out?

A: *B1 will handle that nicely.*

Q: Will there be any conversion notes from HM4 or any version of D&D to HM5 available? Or will we be on our own?

A: *We're going to make every effort to have conversions available.*

Q: Will it be available as a PDF?

A: *Yes.*

Q: What is the 'target age' of the product? (I'd like to teach/play HM with my son, but there are topics and pictures in HM4 which I don't feel are appropriate for a 9 year old.)

A: *We don't target age, we target IQ (high). But HMB will not have pr0n or questionable hacking. We saved that for AHM.*

Q: Is it easy enough for children under the age of 5 and players of 4e D&D to understand?

A: *Former with parental aid but not latter.*

Q: Will you be releasing a HM miniature line again?

A: *No, but we'd be willing to grant a license to a solid mini company. If you have one you like, start an email campaign and get them to contact us!*

MONSTERS

Q: Drow?

A: *Dark elves will be moved back to the original Poul Anderson model. They'll probably light their cities with fluorescent plants and animals (fire beetles) and magical sources. A PCs would be unplayable in most traditional games since any creature that has lived underground and genetically evolved for such an existence would certainly be blinded by sunlight, even worse than goblins traditionally have suffered.*

Q: Have high-level monsters been adjusted, particularly nefarions (AD&D had a bit of a problem in that demons, giants, and dragons were under-powered compared to high-level PCs) to challenge high-level PCs?

A: *Yes.*

Q: Do monsters have natural spell resistance on top of the 'defense roll' thing?

A: *Only very special ones.*

Q: Are Dragons going to be the wusses they are some other games? Will taking one down be a real reason for bragging rights?

A: *No, and yes.*

Q: Describe the average monster/NPC stat block. Will it be like the classic D&D type statistics block that was, maybe, 20 characters long, or can we expect the encyclopedic nonsense from D20? Some sort of happy medium?

A: *In-between. A lot like the HM4 stat blocks.*

Q: Will monsters have the same seven ability scores as PCs the way that other company did it for their 3rd edition?

A: *Not sure yet...probably not.*

Q: My only worry is that monster and NPC stats will end up dominating the text instead of the room descriptions.

A: *Not if the stats are in battle sheets.*

Q: Will there be energy-draining attacks?

A: *Yes, even in HMB. but it works differently. Drains ability point (Str, Int, etc., depending on undead type). Permanent loss... just as feared by players and makes more sense than losing your experience.*

MOVEMENT

Q: Are movement and actions going to tracked separately like they are in A&8? Cause that's kind of a nightmare.

A: *Yes, but the nature of time in-game makes it far simpler. See, in A&8, when you're tracking draw speeds and firing actions that happen in fractions of a second, each count was 1/10th second. So movement, would happen every few to 10 counts (0.3 to 1.0 seconds depending of whether the character is running or walking, etc.). The dual tracking melds together in HM because each 'count' is one second (we largely drop 'count' as a term, we just say you can move X ft/second, the spell has a casting time of 3 seconds, etc., etc.). So, yes, 'movement' and attacks are tracked separately, but since no 'moves' can happen faster than one second, you just move when your count comes up and you forget about it...so you don't have to keep track of moving...just when your next attack comes up (on X 'count' or 'init' number). It's all very simple, actually.*

Q: Any hints, spoilers, or explanation about what a fighting withdrawal involves?

A: *Fighting Withdrawal's pretty simply, a character can move at a walk speed back, sideways, whatever, while still fighting. The opponent can choose to follow on pace or not. it's just a way to try to give ground slowly while not exposing your back/dropping defenses (such as Fleeing).*

QUIRKS AND FLAWS

Q: Are quirks & flaws included in the HMB version? If so, will they be 'expanded' later on?

A: *Yes...and yes! In HMB, they're very minor and every character starts with one of each (to streamline character creation but to ensure that new players get a flavor for the joy of quirks and*

flaws). You must role-play your Qs and Fs to your detriment to get the full Honor award every level (those without Qs and Fs get it automatically).

RACES

Q: Can you tell us what races will be in the HMB and AHM editions?

A: HMB: Human, Elf, Dwarf, Halfling. AHM (not set in wet concrete yet): The ones in HMB plus "half breeds" (orcs, elves, sil-karg), pixie-fairies, gnomes, various sub races.

Some of these may be pushed to various racial books due to space considerations. I'd like 10-12 races in AHM, but we'll see. Kalamar-specific races will be mixed in with all the other races in either the PHB or the various supplements.

Q: Will the game still use the odd term "demi-humans" for elves, dwarves, and halflings?

A: Of course!

Q: Will demi-humans (have) level limits?

A: No. Instead we made the other races on par with humans so that there's no in-game need for 'evening them out' the way it had to be done in HM4.

Q: Do you have to buy your race, or is race what determines how many BP you actually get to start with?

A: Yes, you buy race. Different races have different costs associated with buying different classes (based on affinity). Dwarves make good fighters but not so much for mages.

Q: Do the different races get Stat Adjustments or the harder-to-explain-but more "fair" and functional Ability Roll adjustments (e.g., instead of a dwarf getting a -1 to CHA, they get a -1 to all d20 rolls involving CHA, and a penalty to CHA-based stats - but also a +1 to CON based rolls and stats; Elves get a penalty to CON rolls, but a bonus to DEX ones, etc.)?

A: No. They get ability modifiers. Far bigger than generally in HM4, in fact.

Q: Are there any hit point 'kickers' for different sizes/races?

A: Yes, based on size.

Q: How mechanically relevant is "race" in the new HackMaster anyway? Are there just a few ability modifiers and a size-dependent HP kicker or is there maybe a whole "talent tree" for each race from which a character can learn talents throughout his career?

To phrase the question differently: Is race (mechanically) just an initial template that comes with some modifiers and a few innate abilities or is it more of a "secondary class" in regard to how much it defines what the character can do and learn?

A: A bit of both. Race is at least, if not more, important than in previous editions. That said, the races are more balanced (this is code for if you love elves you will feel cheated, but if you love any other race, you will be happy – our research indicated that elves

were essentially getting 2-3x the BP value of the next closest race... so they've been gimped in comparison and are now merely equal to the other classes). One major change is no more infravision - at all. Torches and lanterns and light spells oh my. Another is race modifiers to abilities are magnified. Each race (except human) also excels at particular classes, but are not restricted in any way (but gimped in starting BPs if chosen 'against the grain').

Q: Infravision?

A: As far as seeing in the dark, some monsters will have that ability as well as low light vision (like cats and dogs). Indeed, dwarves can see twice the range of humans in torchlight for this very reason. But no light at all means no visual sensory information.

Q: Do dwarf women still have beards?

A: Yes.

SKILLS, TALENTS, PROFICIENCIES

Q: Are STPs and the whole background creation in the AHM book?

A: Yes, but skills and talents are still in HMB as well, just less of 'em.

Q: Do skills go down in percentage like A&8s? If so does it start at 100%? If so, please tell me it's a lot harder to start with low (i.e. good) skills than in A&8's!

A: Yes and yes. A&8s is a level free game, so starting with really good skills makes more sense. On the other hand, some HM characters, particularly magic-users in the academia area, may be fairly good or even advanced in some areas.

Q: Will there be Talents in HMB?

A: Yes.

Q: Can anyone use the various skills/specializations (offense/defense) in combat, or are some restricted to warriors/fighters only?

A: In HMB, yes.

WEAPONS

Q: Are there no weapon restrictions based on class? Someone could have a mage who is competent with a sword or mace or whatever?

A: For the most part. Clerics have restrictions based on religion. There are no hard restrictions for the others...but learning weapons 'out of class' becomes pricey, so it's a trade off.

Q: Will pole arms actually be useful and worth taking?

A: Yes! Reach plays an important factor. You can even keep opponents at bay indefinitely if you continue to successfully 'jab' them with your superior reach weapon. Also great in the second rank in hallways.

Q: Does Dex constantly modify your initiative and weapon speeds?? It often seems to me the attribute most likely to end up an "uber-stat" in many games since it modifies so many things (init, to-hit, defense, dual-wielding, etc).

A: No. Dex modifiers your first init roll (the only one, actually), but not your weapon speed. WS is completely dependant on your weapon and your skill with said weapon (degree of proficiency/specialization). Also fighter level. WS is essentially "attacks per round" but you get it gradually (instead of 1, 3/2, 2, 5/2, etc.).

Q: I hope you were able to sort out the difference between a short sword, arming sword, long sword, bastard sword and great sword.

A: Right now only three of those, if I remember correctly, are in HMB. They vary by speed (how frequently a wielder can strike), reach (who strikes first), whether they can successfully jab/thrust to keep an opponent with inferior reach at bay, and, of course, damage. Note also that hacking/puncturing and crushing aspects of weapons have more impact in more places in the game, so flexible weapons (ones with more than one of those uses) can be more effective against more monsters, but also against shields.

Q: Will there be differences between the various great weapons (i.e. the fact that great sword is a totally different thing in terms of speed, defense, and attacks than say a Saxon axe?

A: Yes. The finer points won't be fully fleshed until AHM due to added complexity/rules, but the combat rules allow for a lot more flexibility/differentiation so you can count on that. Also, hacking, puncturing and crushing are already very different, even in HMB, in the way they damage shields, are used for reach, etc.

Q: Will there be rules for parrying ("historically" this was the primary use for dual wielding IIRC - generally a "parrying dagger" in one hand and a light blade in the other; use one weapon to block an incoming attack and the other to get past the defenses of the now-exposed attacker) with one or two weapons?

A: That's in AHM, but basically, it works like this: should you choose NOT to use your second weapon to attack, you get a d20p for defense (instead of a d20p-4). Also: that near perfect defense we talked about: if you have a WEAPON in your offhand, you damage with THAT instead of the two d4-2. Thus, we've incorporated the tie them up and dirk under the ribcage move.

QUESTIONS WHERE THE ANSWER IS ESSENTIALLY "FOR AHM OR OTHER FUTURE PRODUCT."

Q: Will a PC who has clawed their way up the ladder start being able to send demons after their enemies, collapse cliffs into the sea, and otherwise do large-scale sword-and-sorcery stuff?

Q: Are there going to be rules for all that name-level stuff?

Q: Building castles and towers, gathering taxes, carving out a kingdom, the clash of armies, etc?

Q: Can attributes (Str, etc.) increase over time and levels?

Q: Bards? Paladins? Monks? Rangers? Specialty fighters?

Q: Fatigue? Morale?

Q: Rules for alchemy/enchanting items?

Q: Will there be a mechanic in the game to handle spell failures/ fumbles/criticals?

Q: Dual-wielding? **(A:** Basically, you can hit more often and get hit A LOT more often.)

Q: "Background and Training" book with the class-specific background tables, and more detailed level-up tables?

Q: Does petrification equal very bad or just a slight inconvenience that you soon get over? **(A:** Not in HMB.)

Q: How about just plain death, does it last or is it just a brief loss of EP? **(A:** There's no Raise Dead in HMB.)

Q: And how about weapons like whips and nets? How is "damage" handled with those types of weapons? **(A:** In AHM (whip) and the CG (net).)

Q: Will there be new races?

Q: Will we still have our beloved HackMaster +12?

Q: What sort of magic specialists will be available? **(A:** They're in AHM, and then only a couple. Most will be in an upcoming Spellslinger's Guide.)

Q: In-game coupons? **(A:** AHM, but possibly still HMB.)

Q: Can wands be recharged?

Q: Specific in-combat penalties for certain wound levels/areas (like A&8)? **(A:** AHM will have this for crits.)

Q: Dual- and multiclass options for PCs?

Q: Are you going to ditch the training rules, or at least banish them to an optional appendix where I don't have to look at them? **(A:** The training rules are in AHM only and are substantially changed. there's still a required expenditure, but it has been scaled back and also encompasses day-to-day living expenses for the past 'level' for those that want to ease up on bookkeeping.)

Q: Does armor and shields take damage and get destroyed? **(A:** In AHM, shields get destroyed based on damage dealt to the shield in a single blow. Armor only gets damaged on crits and penetration.)

Q: There are charts for puncturing, bludgeoning or hacking weapons. Will there be a chart for a critical spell ever?

Q: Does the system differentiate between lethal and non-lethal damage?

Q: Psionics? Mounted combat rules? Proteges?

Q: Any rules for underwater combat?

Q: Encumbrance rules? Infection and disease rules?

Q: Smartass Smackdown table?

Q: Will there still be rules regarding the relative damage capacity of different body parts (25% for a limb, etc.)? Will called shots still up your chance of dealing critical hits?

Q: Will there be some kind of counter-spelling mechanic?

Q: Reduced facing; talent, skill or nonexistent?

Q: "GM's Eyes Only" Material?

Q: Can wizards learn healing magic? **(A:** At higher levels, but it works differently.)

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BOOK OF THE MONTH CLUB

Receive *Songs of the Sirens*
(150 gp value)




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WITH MY EYES CLOSED

Automatically succeed at
any skill check

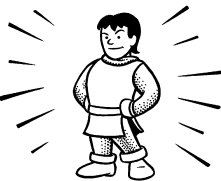


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HACKJOURNAL COUPON

ADRENALINE RUSH

Gain +2 To-hit for
10 melee rounds




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HACKJOURNAL COUPON

THE CURE IS WORSE

Play to cure any disease.
Patient must make a System
Shock check or the remedy
fails and patient suffers 3d6
points of damage.




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GAMEMASTER COUPONS

HACKJOURNAL COUPON

THE GAWDS MUST BE LAZY

Deduct -2/die from a
curing spell




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HACKJOURNAL COUPON

DAY OF THE WEAK

Suffer an automatic fumble.




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HACKJOURNAL COUPON

MONSTER VITAMINS

Suffer double damage
from any blow suffered
in melee




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HACKJOURNAL COUPON

THE PRINCESS AND THE PEABRAIN

+1 more hour of sleep needed
before memorizing spells



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