

An Introduction To Playing



The RPG

Epic: The RPG

I come to you as a reformed player of Advanced Dungeons and Dragons. “Reformed?” you ask, and I say yes, reformed. Don’t get me wrong— AD&D is a wonderful game. However, there comes a point when we all grow older and start to wonder “Hey... why do they call this a *role-playing* game anyway? All I can really do is kill stuff.” And while killing everything you come in contact with is fun for a while, it gets old quickly.

Epic grew out of an effort by my friend Gavi Begtrup and I to modify AD&D so it would be more role-playing-friendly. After several months of frenzied effort, however, we realized that we didn’t just need an overhaul; we needed a new system.

So, in the end, we went for something new, something more character-based, something less combat-centric; something I decided to call Epic. Epic is designed with a simplified, cleaner combat system and boasts an infinitely improved magic system. But even better than all of that, it takes a new in-depth approach to character creation that allows you to do something with your characters that you've probably never done before... role-play! In addition, Epic utilizes a freestyle progression system inspired largely by Fallout, and all the ridiculous nonsense of character classes, saving throws and alignment were chucked wholly out the window.

But let's suppose for a moment that you would rather spend more of your role-playing sessions tossing dice than playing your character, and that hack-and-snore dungeon-crawling is precisely your cup of tea. Or let's say that you enjoy playing one-dimensional clichés and bundles of stats. There is absolutely nothing in Epic to prevent you from playing this way. In fact, there is nothing in any RPG that can force you to role-play. But should you choose to reform, I believe that you will find in Epic an invaluable tool to this end. I certainly have...

Sincerely Yours,

Craig Stern

Basic Lingo

Here's a brief list of the Epic jargon you'll hear most often as you traverse the rules and play.

Abilities- certain specialized skills that characters can learn; these range from rudimentary crafts to acrobatic feats to being able to translate foreign languages. Certain abilities are available to chars due to their race.

Attack- in melee or unarmed combat, a series of blows that either miss the intended target or end with a single hit. In projectile combat, a single instance of shooting/hurling a weapon. *Also*: the percentage chance to hit a given target in combat.

Chars- characters; namely, those you players play.

Concentrating- a requirement for feats of mental duress (such as maintaining crafted spells). Under these circumstances, the char concentrating can do little more than walk slowly and talk.

Cpi- "cost per increment"; the cost in expertise to improve an ability by a 1 percentile increment. Similarly, 2Cpi is the cost for a 2 percentile increment, and so on.

EP- endurance points; a measure of how much your char can endure in the way of injury and pain before his faculties give out and he faces death. Training in physical and mental discipline can increase this.

Epic- the RPG you're learning to play, in case you hadn't figured that out yet.

Ether- the magical energy that pervades the air; it is channeled in use of spellcraft.

Expertise- measured in points, expertise is a measure of how a character's newfound knowledge and experience may be unleashed in training to improve upon his capabilities.

GM- no, it's not General Motors; it's the Gamemaster. The GM is the only

person involved who is technically not a player, as the GM has no character. Instead, the GM is essentially a narrator. It is the GM's job to construct (and constantly describe) the environment in which the chars are placed, to play all NPCs, to decide what rules to implement and when, and so on. The success of a role-playing session often depends on the GM's flexibility, creativity, and fairness. It's a difficult job, but some poor bastard's got to do it...

Line of Sight- what a char is *capable* of seeing from his current vantage point (not necessarily what he *does* see).

Mage- a term referring to someone who can channel ether. Known amongst themselves as "conduits."

NPCs- non-player characters; any that the players don't play. The GM role-plays every single one of these himself (it's a tough job, so be nice to your GM).

P- see *Purchase*.

p-die- commonly referred to as the "hundred-sided die", the p here stands for "percentile". Hundred-sided is a misnomer, however, as you actually use two ten-sided dice, one designated as the tens place, the other as the ones place. A "00" is one-hundred. P-dice are frequently used in the game for determining the outcomes of various actions you take involving abilities and combat.

Percentile- a score for an ability based on a scale of 100.

Player- everyone but the GM in a group; they play a single char, for whom they are solely responsible. It is their task to develop their character as they see fit while responding to the scenarios put forth by the GM.

Purchase- a unit equal to 50 expertise; used in increasing percentiles for abilities and in purchasing new ones (for example, an ability whose starting cost was 8P would cost 400 expertise to learn), as well as honing skills and raising EP.

Quirks- unique idiosyncrasies that add conflict or flavor to a character and can immeasurably enhance the fun of playing them.

Race- a defining facet of a character showing his blood origins; different races are listed in Character Creation. Different races start with different trait modifications and abilities.

RPG- Role Playing Game. A game where people play the roles of fictional characters. Can ya dig it?

Spellcraft- a very powerful skill; refers to the channeling of ether to form spells.

Talent- an ability or skill at which a char is especially adept. Three or four are chosen during character creation based upon the character bio.

Traits- facets of your character's being that help determine his potential for acquiring and becoming proficient in certain abilities.

Turn- a period lasting approximately one minute. This unit of time is primarily used for combat.

x-die, or **dx**- a die with x number of faces (a 6-die, or d6, has 6 faces).

ydx- roll x-die y times (e.g. 2d6 means roll a 6-die twice and add the two results together)

ydx + w- roll x-die y times, then add w to the sum.

The Traits

Strength- your char's ability to perform strenuous physical tasks. Affects carrying capacity, unarmed damage, and what weapons and armor your char can effectively use.

Toughness- your char's hardiness, endurance, and resistance to physical shock. Affects your char's EP and rate of survival from poisons and such.

Agility- your char's manual dexterity, limberness, and hand-eye coordination. Affects your char's attack and defense in combat, as well as many abilities.

Speed- your char's ability to react quickly in combat and elsewhere. Affects his/her rate of movement and reaction time.

Perception- what escapes your char's attention and what he/she notices. Affects projectile weapons usage, chances to sense danger, and a wide range of abilities.

Charisma- trait of your self-confidence and ease of demeanor; the ability to influence other people. Affects numerous abilities such as lying, conversation, diplomacy and haggling.

Weapon Skill- trait measuring your experience with weaponry. Affects attack and damage levels in combat. **Levels 0-19**

melee- skill with hand-to-hand weapons

unarmed- skill at combat without weapons, as well as with claws, gloves, and boots

projectile- skill with ranged weaponry

Magic Skill- trait measuring how strong you are in performing feats of magic. Affects your limitations in spellcraft, witchcraft, and faerie magic. **Levels 0-15**

Character Creation

The Character Bio

The first and by far most crucial part of creating a character is creating a character bio. A character bio is essentially a summarized biography of the character you wish to play in the game.

Creating a bio is a fairly direct process. Get a sheet of paper, and spend anywhere from 10-45 minutes writing about particular aspects of your character's life up to the present.

Your first objective is to determine the character's origins. Origins should include how they were raised, where they were raised, and what factors influenced them while they were growing up. Perhaps he was a slave born to now-deceased parents, perhaps he was the spoiled child of an aristocrat, perhaps she grew up on a farm, perhaps she was orphaned and was raised by a gang of thieves. The character's origins will have a profound effect on every other aspect of their person. An escaped slave and an aristocrat are likely to have very different views and talents.

Your next objective is to flesh out most or all of the following:

- *Outlook*- how does the character see the world? Is he a cynic? Is she a pragmatist? Is he an opportunist? Is she religious? Outline your character's view of society and of life.
- *Goals*- your character must have a reason for setting out. Does she wish to escape from someone or something? Does he have wanderlust? Is she ambitious? Does he want revenge? It is often useful to consult the GM on this portion of the bio, so that your char's motivation can be integrated into the GM's intended storyline.
- *Personality traits*- how does the character get along with people? How does he treat others? Is he self-serving or altruistic? Does she take herself seriously? Does she take an interest in other people? These will have a direct impact on how you play your character.
- *Quirks*- (see *Quirks*)
- *Skills*- growing up, what did your character learn? A farmer's daughter might be good at finding and fixing things, a merchant's son might be a master of barter and conversation, someone who grew up on the docks might be an excellent swimmer. Perhaps the aristocrat's son was sent off to a Mage's guild to learn spellcraft; try to decide without looking at the abilities listed later on in the book.
- *Fears and personal wounds*- finally, we have these. What gives your character bad dreams? What seemingly innocuous subject will set your character off into a rage? This area is by far the hardest to determine immediately, and can be left for later development while playing.

Scoring Traits

Once your bio is complete, it's time to fill out a character sheet. You begin by assigning a score to each of these six traits: Strength, Agility, Speed, Perception, Toughness, and Charisma.

You are given 34 points to distribute as you like among them, provided that each score ends up being 3, 10, or any number in between. *Weapon and Magic Skills all begin at 0.*

An example:

Strength	3	(poor)
Agility	4	(below average)
Speed	5	(average)
Perception	6	(above average)
Toughness	7	(very good)
Charisma	9	(excellent)

Scores should be based upon the attributes of your character given in his or her bio. If your character has lived in the wilds all of his life, he should have a high perception. An oily businessman or a politician should have a good charisma. A laborer should have a good strength. Also, please keep in mind that interesting characters have flaws as well as strengths. Don't be afraid to give your character strengths and weaknesses, for only the only "bad" character is the average one. As they say, there's nothing worse than being ordinary.

Picking a Race

There are various races available to players who create characters. Certain races are more conducive to certain skills than others, and while this should not be your primary reason for choosing a race, you may wish to consider it (for example, a person who wanted to play a martial arts master would be advised not to play a Damantsi). (see *The Races*, p. 33) Beginners will want to start out as humans, the most versatile race. For others, however, here's a brief run-down of each race available for play:

Humans- humans are the only race to get four talents and no trait score restrictions. Average size: 5'3" - 6'1" tall.

Damantsi- relatively small, winged, gargoylish creatures with various unusual powers, such as possessing spell books. They alone among the

racers can fly. Average size: 2' - 3' tall.

Wisps- slight, humanoid faerie creatures with light green skin and emerald hair. They can perform faerie magic at will, and while not terribly physically imposing, are typically cunning and wily. Average size: 4' - 5'6" tall.

Bakri- large creatures that look like heavily muscled, grey-skinned bipedal bats. They can glide, and have incredible hearing. Bakri are deadly in unarmed combat. Average size: 5'6" - 6' tall.

Skuki- slim, hairless, dark-skinned humanoid creatures adapted to living in caves. They can camouflage their skin, scale sheer surfaces, and have near perfect night vision. Average size: 4'6" - 5'6" tall.

Trait Modifications by Race

Race	Necessary Modifications
Human	None
Damantsi	Str limit 5, Tgh limit 6, Magic Skill: 2*
Bakri	Spd limit 8, Per +1, Str +1
Skuki	Str limit 7, Tgh limit 6, Spd +1
Wisp	Str limit 6, Tgh limit 6, Agl +1

* the character's starting Magic Skill is 2 provided that his/her talents include spellcraft or witchcraft

If a char's score for a trait exceeds the limit imposed by his or her race, redistribute the points for that trait until it doesn't. Afterwards, add any racial bonuses to the appropriate traits.

Quirks

There is nothing you can do at the very beginning of a game that is better for an RPG than to create an interesting character. Percentiles and scores are nothing but numbers that are occasionally used in play. The real worth of a character is her uniqueness and her psychological development. Few things aid this better than giving your character some sort of "weakness;" a physical defect, an abnormality, a phobia, an obsession. Insofar as the purpose of the game is to play the role of your character, such things are in fact not weaknesses at all— they are invaluable.

There follows a list of example character quirks, but these should not be relied upon for play; the best quirks are always unique and character

specific. Once you have selected yours, you may discuss their effects on gameplay with your GM. It is advisable not to select more than two or three at most.

baby-faced- Can more easily feign innocence, but has a harder time intimidating others. +5% to *basic lying* and +15% to *begging*, but -30% to *intimidation*.

book-smart- Learns abilities more easily, but requires more experience to implement them correctly. $1/2$ starting cost for new abilities, but they start at 10% when learned.

deep sleeper- Improved EP recovery during sleep, but greater difficulty waking up (such as in an emergency). +2 EP recovery from sleep, is nearly impossible to wake up in a pinch (only 10% normal chance).

fancy fighter- Goes for the jugular; does not deal damage as consistently, but has a greater chance of critical hits. -5% to all attack, but gets criticals on rolls up to 5 percentiles higher than normal, and criticals deal 2d8 more dmg instead of 1d8.

intimidating- Intimidates others easily. +40% *Intimidation*, -10% *Diplomacy*, *Begging*, *Haggling*, and *Conversation*.

jack-of-all-trades- Finds it easier to improve in every area, but has no true specialties. Cpi becomes 3Cpi, but he starts with no talents.

low metabolism- More resistant to poison and longer duration of imbibed potions, but less resistant to changes in temperature. +10% poison resistance, 150% potion duration, +25% damage from extreme temperatures.

magic resistant- Resistant to both harmful and beneficial magic. (10 Tgh)% universal resistance to magic.

masochistic- Resistant to physical pain, but vulnerable to manipulation. +4 starting EP, people using manipulative abilities get +15% bonus to their checks.

nonchalant- A better liar and less conspicuous, but a poorer negotiator and motivator. +15% *Basic and Advanced Lying*, +30% *Sneaking*, -20% *Haggling*, -20% *Diplomacy*, -15% *Begging and Intimidation*.

one-eyed- Poor depth perception, but has improved other senses to compensate for loss in eyesight. -30% *Throwing*, -30% to *Projectile Weapon attack*, +1 Per with regard to other senses.

pacifist- Poorer weapon and attack skills, but improved healing and negotiating skills. -1 all *Weapon Skills*, +30% *First aid and Heal*, +20% *Diplomacy*.

sensitive ears- Improved hearing, but increased vulnerability to sonic attacks. Per +1 for purposes of hearing, +50% damage from sound-based attacks.

smiler- Smiles while talking. +20% *Conversation*, -15% *basic and*

advanced lying.

strong-willed- More skilled at getting exactly what he wants, but poor at negotiating compromises. +10% *Flattery, Intimidation, and Begging*, but -15% *Haggling and Diplomacy*.

well-rounded- Is exceptionally competent in simple skills, and so is not as motivated to specialize. +10% to all non-talent basic abilities, double starting cost for new special abilities.

Basic Abilities

After you've created the fundamentals of your character, it's time to fill out his or her Basic Abilities. These are abilities in which all characters start out knowing something, regardless of their talents. Of course, how much they know is dependent upon their traits. (Note: some of these abilities are available only to certain races).

Ability name	Description	Base Ability Percentile	Cpi
Cartography	<i>Creating and using maps properly so as to not get lost.</i>	5Per	1P
Climbing	<i>Climbing up the side of a steep surface.</i>	5Agl	1P
Conversation	<i>Both making interesting conversation and getting information from others.</i>	5Cha	1P
Diplomacy	<i>Negotiating, debating, and convincing others of the validity of your views.</i>	Per + 4Cha	1P
First Aid	<i>Attending to cuts and bruises; doubles recovery over time if successful.</i>	2Agl + 3Per	1P
Haggling	<i>Bargaining with money.</i>	Per + 4Cha	1P
Leaping	<i>Making long or dangerous jumps.</i>	Agl + 2Spd + 4Str	1P
Lying	<i>Being able to convincingly tell a probable lie.</i>	5Cha	1P
Scavenging	<i>The ability to scrounge for objects over time.</i>	2Per + 3Tgh	1P
Sneaking	<i>The ability to move about unnoticed.</i>	5Agl	1P
Swimming	<i>The ability to sidestroke, float and tread water.</i>	3Agl + 4Str	1P
Throwing	<i>Hurling hand-held objects that are not normally weapons at a specific target.</i>	3Agl + 2Per	1P
Scaling (Skuki)	<i>Clinging to and climbing across a sheer surface, including ceilings.</i>	25% + Str + 2Agl	1P
Chameleoning (Skuki)	<i>Adjusting color and texture of one's skin to camouflage oneself.</i>	40% + Per	2P

Gliding (Bakri,Damantsi)	<i>Flying on currents of wind under less than nominal conditions.</i>	30% + 3Agl	1P
Hovering (Damantsi only)	<i>Hovering in mid-air under less than nominal conditions.</i>	20% + 2Tgh	2P
Possessing (Damantsi)	<i>Possessing a spell book within sight.</i>	45%	1P
Composing (Damantsi)	<i>Crafting a spell from memory.</i>	25%	3P
Faerie magic (Wisp)	<i>Innate racial magic use.</i>	45%	2P

Talents

Once you've finished the Basic Abilities, it's time to pick Talents. Talents are abilities or skills at which your character excels; these abilities will begin at a higher percentile and can be advanced more quickly. Pick 3 (4 if you're a human); no more than two may be a special ability.

If you pick a Basic Ability for a Talent:

+35% to starting percentile,
its Cpi becomes 30 expertise

If you pick a Special Ability for a Talent (no advanced abilities are allowed unless you also pick its basic counterpart):

no starting cost,
begins at 45%,
its Cpi becomes 40 expertise

If you pick a Weapon Skill for a Talent:

begins with +1 to the chosen Weapon Skill

Special Abilities

Special Abilities can be learned later as your char advances. These will require a starting cost, and begin at 20% + twice the score for the listed trait. Advanced abilities do not require a starting cost if learned after having reached at least 75% with their basic counterparts (ex. if you have 80% in Swimming, Advanced Swimming can be trained for without cost in expertise).

Acrobatics (Agl)- flips, rolls, dives, handsprings, and any other acrobatic maneuvers fall under this ability. When doing combinations of moves, a separate check must be made for each move in the sequence; one failure means every subsequent move fails. You probably also fall on your ass. **Starting cost:** 14P **Cpi:** 1P

Alchemy (Per)- essentially the practical application of advanced chemistry; the creation and identification of non-magical potions,

ointments, toxins, gases, fuels, powders, and other mixtures. **Starting cost:** 22P **Cpi:** 2P

Begging (Cha)- the ability to appear deserving of pity and mercy. This ability is usable in all senses of the term. **Starting cost:** 7P **Cpi:** 1P

Craftsmanship (Agl)- the ability to use raw materials and tools for creating or repairing a craft or a basic, non-metal tool or weapon. **Starting cost:** 12P **Cpi:** 1P

Engineering (Per)- the ability to design structures and simple machinery, as well as a competent knowledge of physics (ex. this might be used when designing a catapult, building a trap, or just figuring out where to place a pulley). **Starting cost:** 17P **Cpi:** 2P

Flattery (Cha)- the ability to appeal to someone's ego under nominal circumstances for the purpose of favors. **Starting cost:** 8P **Cpi:** 1P

- **Advanced Flattery (Cha)**- the ability to flatter so well as to convince the victim that you genuinely idolize them. **Starting cost:** 14P **Cpi:** 1P

Healing (Per)- the setting of broken limbs, the treatment of burns, the purging of recently ingested poison, and the treatment of severe wounds. When applied to wounds, it immediately heals 1d4 EP per 25% of ability, and triples recovery time. **Starting cost:** 17P **Cpi:** 1P

Horseback Riding ($\text{Agl}+\text{Cha}/2$)- this ability allows for the proper handling and control of a mount under normal conditions without a check, and with a check under strenuous conditions. **Starting cost:** 12P **Cpi:** 1P

Hunting (Per)- the ability to stalk people and to kill nondangerous wildlife for food or sport. Successful usage removes the need for travel rations in the wilderness. **Starting cost:** 15P **Cpi:** 1P

Impersonation (Cha)- a group of skills grouped into one ability that includes disguise, mimicry of body language, and vocal impersonation of individuals. The char must have seen or heard the person he's impersonating at least once to succeed. This also allows for the creation of convincing personas of the char's own design; this does not include advanced lying abilities. **Starting cost:** 14P **Cpi:** 2P

Intimidation (Cha)- the ability to coerce others into granting your requests through real or perceived threats. Note: success means that the target feels threatened; this is not always desirable. **Starting cost:** 7P **Cpi:** 1P

Juggling (Agl)- besides granting the ability to juggle, having this reduces the SP cost for attacks with thrown objects and weapons to $\frac{1}{2}$ total SP, and once Juggling reaches 80%, to $\frac{1}{3}$ total SP. **Starting cost:** 12P **Cpi:** 1P

Ancient Languages (Per)- the ability to read, comprehend, translate and speak texts in ancient languages. **Starting cost:** 16P **Cpi:** 1P

Modern Languages (Per)- the study of commonly used modern-day tongues; essentially the ability to become a translator. The char knows all widely used languages of the period (the char's percentile determines his

fluency). **Starting cost:** 8P **Cpi:** 1P

Lip Reading (Per)- pretty self-explanatory; if you can't hear someone, successful use of this ability will permit you to determine what they're saying by reading their lips. **Starting cost:** 5P **Cpi:** 1P

- **Advanced Lying (Cha)**- the ability to get away with highly improbable lies, or to perform lies that involve physical acting and/or scripted or improvised stunts (ex. pretending to throw yourself off a cliff to your death, only to grab onto the side as you fall). **Starting cost:** 12P **Cpi:** 1P

Mechanics (Per)- being handy with tools and construction; knowledge of construction and repair of machinery. This includes the ability to disarm mechanical traps. **Starting cost:** 9P **Cpi:** 1P

Meditation (Per)- the ability to relax and clear your mind; using this before combat or before using an ability will improve your rolls by 10%. Meditation requires at least 20 minutes. Once meditation reaches 80%, this bonus increases to 15%. **Starting cost:** 13P **Cpi:** 1P

Musical Instrument (Agl)- knowing how to play up to three musical instruments (singing counts as an instrument); especially handy for a bard or other paid entertainer. **Starting cost:** 8P **Cpi:** 1P

Picking Pockets (Agl)- the ability to lift an object off of a person's garments. Failure means they notice you. **Starting cost:** 9P **Cpi:** 1P

Picking Locks (Agl)- the ability to pick key-locks; requires the aid of a dagger, a set of lockpicks, a hair pin, or any other slender object (a fingernail might do it for a Bakri). **Starting cost:** 8P **Cpi:** 1P

Rune Sketching (Per)- the ability properly sketch runes and geometric shapes with thauma-chalk; highly recommended for spellcrafting characters. **Starting cost:** 4P **Cpi:** 1P

Sailing (Tgh)- the ability to effectively row, steer, and otherwise control and maintain ships, as well as smaller vessels. **Starting cost:** 9P **Cpi:** 1P

Smithing (Str)- the crafting and repair of metallic items, such as armor and melee weapons, as well as the ability to appraise such an item's worth.

Starting cost: 17P **Cpi:** 1P

Spellcraft (Per)- the powerful ability to channel ether and use it to craft spells. **Starting cost:** 18P **Cpi:** 1P

- **Advanced Swimming (Str)**- the ability to swim deep underwater, dive from high places into water safely, carry another person while swimming, see underwater, and fight underwater. **Starting cost:** 10P **Cpi:** 1P

Verse (Per)- the ability to rhyme extemporaneously, write sonnets, read poetry correctly (speak in the correct meter and with the correct dialect), and other spoken skills of a bard. **Starting cost:** 9P **Cpi:** 1P

Wilderness Survival (Tgh)- the ability to survive in harsh or foreign climates; this also reduces the chance a char has of having potentially fatal

encounters in the wilderness. **Starting cost:** 11P **Cpi:** 1P

Witchcraft (Per)- this is the knowledge of potions and rituals used for permanent or enduring magical effects such as enchantments, creation of creatures and gates, and the bestowing of magical properties upon inanimate objects. **Starting cost:** 16P **Cpi:** 1P

What's the deal with...

Basic and Advanced lying? Basic is for somewhat probable, easily believable lies, and for verbal lies only. Advanced can incorporate physical deception, as well as the ability to pull off more improbable fibs. Which is which are, of course, up to the GM's discretion. An important note about lying: success does not necessarily mean that they believe you! Die rolls should never supersede common sense. Under certain circumstances, success could simply mean that they do not immediately disbelieve you.

Engineering and Mechanics? Engineering is the knowledge of design and how to build something. Mechanics deals more with something's actual construction, repair, or disassembly. There are instances where both will be necessary to perform a certain task.

Craftsmanship, Mechanics and Smithing? Craftsmanship and mechanics, unlike smithing, do not handle unworked metal; they primarily use materials such as rope, wood, and fabrics. Worked metal may be affixed to the finished craft, but metal cannot be worked without smithing. Smithing is the working of raw metal.

Craftsmanship and mechanics are different in that mechanics handles complicated mechanisms and machinery while craftsmanship handles simple constructs.

For example: In creating weapons, craftsmanship handles basic non-metal weapons (ex. sling, bow, staff, net), smithing handles basic metal weapons (ex. knife, axe, sword), and mechanics handles complicated non-metal weapons (ex. catapult, ballista). A weapon such as a cannon, which is almost entirely metal and is complicated as well, would require both smithing and mechanics to build or repair (and probably engineering to design).

Spellcraft, Alchemy and Witchcraft? Alchemy is simply applied chemistry, and does not involve magical mixtures. Rather, it involves the identification and creation of mundane solutions and mixtures with multifarious effects. Witchcraft is more for forming magical constructs, long-term enchantments, and magical potions and mixtures. Witchcraft does not deal with instantaneous magical effects. Spellcraft is the crafting

of spells, most of which are of short duration. Unlike witchcraft or alchemy, spellcraft does not require physical ingredients, but neither does it create objects with enduring effects. Of the three, spellcraft is the only ability well-suited to spontaneous use.

Conversation, Flattery, and Diplomacy? In some instances, there is a very thin line between each of these abilities. Conversation is for entering into a protracted discussion, generally for the purpose of stalling, casually dropping information, or getting the person to inadvertently spill information. Diplomacy is the only ability that overtly attempts to influence people. A diplomacy roll is made only when the character is clearly trying to influence someone openly. Flattery is similar to conversation, but it is rolled only when trying to influence someone with compliments. It may require a separate roll following a conversation roll if slipped in midway through a discussion.

The Spellcraft Ability

In Epic, the air is alive with an energy called ether. You can't see it or smell it, but it exists. Centuries ago, Damantsi learned the secret of immersing themselves in ether, of how to shape the energy into spells. This art form, known as spellcraft, was gradually discovered by other races over the years, and by this time all races have had some exposure to it in one form or another. It is currently practiced by men and women known as magi.

Put simply, spellcraft is a process in which the mage shapes raw ether into a spell. The process goes like this:

1. The mage falls into himself and concentrates, sensing the ether coursing around him.
2. He allows the ether to flow through him unobstructed (this is referred to as "becoming a conduit", or "channeling ether").
3. He speaks the proper ritual incantation from his spell book, his hand motions shaping the ether into a spell (this is referred to as "crafting the spell").
4. He releases the ether, letting the spell follow its course (this is referred to as "casting the spell").

There are certain basic requirements for crafting spells. First, you need the proper training. After that, you need to practice; while crafting a spell, any number of things can go wrong. Your concentration might lapse, you might not be completely open to the ether, or you might stumble over an incantation. Your experience with the ritual aspects of spellcraft is represented by the percentile of your spellcraft ability, and since you have to make a check with every spell you cast, a higher percentile doesn't hurt.

On the more materialistic side of the spectrum, you also need a spell book. You don't have to memorize spells ahead of time as in AD&D; you can read them on the spur of the moment out of your spell book. However, without your book, you *cannot* craft spells (with the sole exception of Invoke).

Crafting spells in combat also requires two free hands; one to hold the spell book, and the other to make the proper hand motions. However, mages are also able to make these gestures with a wand or small staff in their second hand.

Are there any limits to the number of spells I can cast per day?

Yes; you can craft one spell per level of your Magic Skill per day. Failed

spells do not count towards this limit, although spells countered by a flash do.

Why is there a limit?

This limit is imposed for several reasons. One reason is that channeling ether is an exhausting process. The other (more significant) reason is this: being able to cast unlimited spells per day would unbalance game play horribly.

So how do I get it?

Apprenticeship training can be paid for at a mage's guild. The typical apprenticeship fee is **500m** plus labor (after all, you are an apprentice). Apprenticeship typically lasts at least six months until graduation, although Damantsi and Wisps can often graduate a month or two early. More advanced training can be had at academies of magi, located in large Damantsi cities. The instruction there is superior to that in typical guild schools.

Okay, I've gotten the ability. What do I do now?

Good question. The GM can change this if it suits his purposes, but the standard protocol for a graduate mage is this: he/she is given a sigil (a unique rune that serves as a mage's signature), a spell book with four spells of his/her choice (plus Invoke), and a small stick of thauma-chalk.

What's thauma-chalk?

Thauma-chalk is a glittering blue-white cylinder of compressed ether dust that is used in the sketching of runes and magical diagrams. Certain spells (such as wards) require the use of thauma-chalk to work.

How do magical items work?

It's pretty simple, actually. Items that need to be activated to reveal their magical properties are activated by a spell called Invoke.

Does this mean people without spellcraft can't activate magical items?

Yup; non-spellcrafters can only make use of magical items that are always activated when equipped, such as enchanted armor.

So you have to use your spellbook to use magical wands and staves and stuff?

Actually, no. The complete memorization of Invoke is required for

graduation from even the lowliest mage's school. Even if your spellbook has been sucked into a cosmic void, you will never be without the ability to activate magical items, since the spell will always be committed to memory.

So then can-

And no, you can't memorize any other spells like that.

But-

Invoke is a lot simpler than any other spell, which is why you can memorize it and not the others.

But... but...

Oh, stop blubbing; it's not that bad.

Fine. So how do I get more spells?

This can be somewhat complicated. The easiest way of obtaining new spells is to take another mage's spell book, remove their sigil, affix your sigil to it, and copy their spells into your spell book (see below). At the GM's discretion, you may also remove your sigil and give it and your spell book to the Mage's Guild, which can use these to inscribe new spells into your book via an involved (and expensive) process involving duplicating your sigil.

If me and someone else in the party want to copy one another's spells, can we?

All spell books are created with a mage's sigil plated on the cover. Each mage has his own unique sigil, and as long as it is on the cover of his spell book, the following applies:

- He can read his spells.
- Others *cannot* read his spells.
- Spells copied from his spell book into anything else immediately become completely indecipherable.

If your mage's sigil is removed, you immediately lose the ability to read your spells. Therefore, in order for someone else to copy your spells, you would have to be willing to give them your spell book permanently. The sole exception to this is the ability of Damantsi to possess spell books, which will be discussed later.

Oh. So what kinds of spells are there?

There are essentially three types of spells in spellcraft:

Temporary- Temporary spells are spells whose effect is either instantaneous or prolonged for a short period of time.

- *The effects of a temporary spell, if not instantaneous or given a specific duration, should be assumed to last 1 turn (1 minute) per point of Magic Skill. Most spells fall under this category.*

Maintained- Maintained spells are spells whose durations depend entirely upon the continued concentration of the mage upon the spell. Should the caster cease to concentrate, the spell will end.

Wards- Wards are unique spells that lie latent until triggered by passersby. Wards require triggering runes to be drawn by thauma-chalk; once someone passes by the runes, the ward is triggered. Unless otherwise specified, wards all have a duration of "until triggered".

- *The effects of a triggered ward, if not instantaneous or given a specified duration, should be assumed to last 10 turns (10 minutes) per level of Magic Skill.*

The Spell Library

Well, here's the moment you've all been waiting for. The spells. So, without further ado, here are over 45 spells for you to choose from.

All ranges not specifically mentioned in the spell descriptions should be assumed to be line of sight.

* means *maintained*

^ means *ward*

otherwise, it's *temporary*

Anchor

Creates a temporal anchor exactly where the mage is standing. This lasts until dawn breaks twice over the spot where it was placed. See: *Space Jump* and *Space Leap*

Atmosphere bubble*

Creates a bubble of clean, breathable air around the mage that maintains room temperature, low humidity and average barometric pressure at sea level.

Beckon

The mage extends an arm and a chosen object (no heavier than a large book or sword) within 20' flies through the air into his hand.

Belch^

When triggered, all within 10' of the ward become bloated with gas. All thus affected are unable to make vocalizations, as these instead come out as gut-ripping, cheek-quivering belches. Naturally, this prevents verbal communication and the use of spellcraft.

Bind

One pair of the target's limbs (either two arms or two legs) clamp together and become completely immobile.

Bleed

The target begins to gush blood, spilling it profusely from a location on their bodies that the mage chooses. As it is not actually their blood, they suffer no direct damage, but the blood can cause them to choke (bleeding internally), be blinded (bleeding from the eyes), go deaf (bleeding from the inner ear), or have other assorted effects depending on the place chosen.

Breeze

An ethereal breeze erases all thauma-chalk markings that the mage sees at the moment of casting, ruining any spells dependent on them.

Circle of Protection[^]

The mage draws a circle on the ground around him with thauma-chalk, placing in it the runes of one other ward he knows (this doesn't count as casting a second spell). The effects of the chosen ward latch on to all who pass over the circle's border. This spell ends only when the mage leaves the circle or a breeze is cast.

Clumsiness[^]

When triggered, all within 10' of the ward become utterly incapable of correctly handling their weapons until sanctified. Those affected have their Weapon Skills drop to 0 (if already at 0, all of their attack rolls fail automatically).

Compass^{*}

The mage essentially becomes a compass. Whenever he points in a given direction, he immediately spins to face north. The mage can also sense deposits of metal within a few hundred feet.

Crumble

The mage touches a wall, boulder, or similar stone barrier and it simply crumbles to dust.

Displace motion

For a short amount of time, the force from the mage's physical motion is displaced to a chosen point within 20' (ex. The mage swings his arm and someone across the room is slapped).

Dream leech*

The mage summons a small, sapphire-colored leech that will attach itself to a target sleeping nearby. Once attached, the victim stays asleep, becoming a sleepwalker under the mage's control. The spell ends automatically if the victim is knocked or jarred awake (50% chance of a sleeper awakening from being knocked, unless they are a deep sleeper, in which case there is only a 5% chance). Awakening detaches the leech and kills it. Otherwise, the spell ends when the mage wills it (the maximum duration is one hour per level of Magic Skill). If the spell ends this way, the victim remains blissfully asleep.

Eavesdrop

The mage draws a small circle with thauma-chalk on a solid surface not more than 10' thick (ex. A door or wall). By placing his ear to the circle, the mage can now hear through the surface as though it did not exist.

Fire breathe *Damage: 3d8 when ignited (projectile attack roll required)*

The mage inhales deeply upon completion of the spell. Upon exhalation, the mage breathes out a 15' long stream of methane gas (for those of you not gifted with knowledge of chemistry, that's very highly flammable). The mage is not burned by ignition of the gas.

Flash

Interrupts the ether flow in the surrounding area, causing all spells being crafted or maintained at the time of casting to fail.

Flatten

The mage flattens into a two-dimensional form; he can see only directly in front of him, and can only be seen from the front and back. He can also slide sideways through thin openings (ex. cracks in doors) and affix himself to flat surfaces.

Float

The targeted item is placed in the air upon completing the spell, and it stays put. The object floats, following the mage around relative to his position. The object darts out of reach should anyone but the caster attempt to touch it. The spell ends when the mage plucks the item back out of the air (an action which requires 0 speed points in combat).

Float fall

Gravity affects the target at only 1/8th its normal strength for purposes of falling, meaning that the target floats slowly down to the ground rather than plummeting. This spell can also release someone who is under the effects of a gravity well.

Force Field

The mage draws two lines along surfaces which must be roughly parallel and facing one another (ex. on two opposing walls) using thauma-chalk. Upon casting the spell, the mage causes an invisible wall of force to spring up between the lines. Its dimensions are dependent on the size and location of the lines drawn; the spell will fail if the lines are not completely vertical. It lasts 10 minutes per level of Magic Skill.

Gravity Well[^]

When triggered, the force of gravity increases tenfold within 10' of the ward, and anything on or above the floor not firmly fastened down is sucked flat onto it and held immobile until released. The effects of the ward last until dusk settles over the area of effect.

Hallucination[^]

When triggered, the triggerer is cursed with a lapse into a hallucinatory state in which he cannot distinguish between illusion and reality. While in this state, the victim should be considered completely insane for purposes of role-playing. This state lasts 5 turns per level of Magic Skill of the caster.

Heat[^] *Damage: 6 on 1st turn, 15 on each succeeding turn*

When triggered, all metal worn by the triggerer begins to heat rapidly, reaching white heat in a matter of one minute. It continues to grow hotter until it melts or is removed; once removed, it cools down.

Hover^{*}

The mage lifts several inches into the air, the bottoms of his feet no longer touching the floor. He walks normally, except that he leaves no tracks, makes no footfall noises, can walk over water or lava, and avoids triggering floor panel traps.

Illuminate

A small globe of light appears hovering over the mage's open palm, illuminating the surrounding area. It vanishes when his hand flips over or closes, but has no other defined duration.

Imp

A small winged creature appears on the mage's shoulder, bound to perform tasks for the crafter before vanishing. Its tasks may be complex in nature, but may not be suicidal for the imp or the imp will refuse to perform them and leave. It performs one task per level of Magic Skill.

Imp

Str 4	Per 6	Tgh 3	Agl 7	Spd 8
Atk 60% (<i>unarmed</i>)		Dmg 4 (<i>unarmed</i>)		
EP 8	Def 12	Amr 0		

Invoke

This is a simple spell that all magi know; when cast upon any magical item that the mage is touching, this spell activates its magical ability. This works on scrolls, wands, staves, cloaks, or basically anything.

Lighter

The mage snaps his fingers and causes a small flame to ignite in the air, wavering an inch or so above the palm of his hand. It extinguishes when his hand flips over or closes, but has no other defined duration.

Maggot

A small diseased maggot appears in the mage's hand and slowly creeps towards its target, attempting to burrow underneath the skin. If it succeeds, the maggot infects the victim with a rotting disease that gradually reduces every stat the target possesses. If not treated by the end of two weeks, the victim literally falls apart at the seams. Maggots are unaffected by gravity wells.

Maggot

Str 0	Per 0	Tgh 0	Agl 0	Spd 1
Atk 90%	Dmg 1			
EP 1	Def 0	Amr 0		

Minion

A small animate sphere appears floating at the mage's eye-level above the ground. This non-living construct can obey only very simple commands such as "move there" or "kill that one". It follows the mage around loyally until destroyed or dismissed. Minions attack by firing a thin green beam of energy that will hit targets up to 10' away. Only one minion may serve the mage at a time.

Minion

Str 3	Per 3	Tgh 5	Agl 8	Spd 6
Atk 70%	Dmg 4 + 1/level Magic Skill energy damage*			
EP 15	Def 8	Amr 1		

*Note: energy damage bypasses 1/2 Amr automatically

Overload *Damage: 1d4+3 per turn (initial unarmed attack roll required)*

The mage grabs the forehead of the target and delivers a rapidly pulsing electrical shock through his hand, overloading the target's synapses. As long as he remains grabbing the target's forehead, the target cannot move at all. Upon releasing, the target flies backwards through the air (distance varies based on size; a 150-pound target will fly up to 20'). The damage caused by Overload bypasses normal armor protection completely. The charge lasts up to one turn + 1 per level of Magic Skill.

Project impression

This spell causes people seeing the mage for the first time to take something about his identity for granted (such as wealth, status, occupation, skill, personality, temperament, etc.) The mage decides upon casting what impression he gives out. This lasts one hour per level of Magic Skill.

Purify

The mage waves his hand over a person or object, and in so doing purges the target of all toxins and diseases. (Magical diseases are not affected by this spell.)

Repulsion bubble*

A magical barrier of air springs up around the caster in a 10' diameter circle. The bubble deflects all non-magical projectiles that strike it; however, anything cannon ball-sized or larger will shatter the bubble upon being deflected.

Rubber feet

The bottoms of the mage's feet become amazingly bouncy, and he gains a vertical leap of up to 60'. He may bounce once, plus once more per level of Magic Skill before the spell ends (note: falling from a height of 60' once the spell's protection ends *will deal damage*; it is advised to save the last bounce for landing purposes).

Rust[^]

When triggered, all metal items on the triggerer instantly rust, flake, and fall apart.

Sanctify

The mage sends a stream of cleansing ether throughout the target's body, cleansing him/her of curses, paralysis, ward effects, magical diseases and petrification.

Scab

The next person the mage touches with his casting hand (himself included) will cease to bleed from all wounds on his body, as his wounds will immediately scab over and begin to heal. They recover up to 12 EP, plus 4 EP per level of Magic Skill.

Scan*

The target's conscious thoughts are reproduced verbatim in the mind of the mage. This spell fails immediately if the target makes eye contact with the caster or if the target leaves his line of sight.

Shadowport

The mage steps into a dark shadow nearby and reemerges from another within 40' (the mage chooses the destination) with all items on his person. The initial shadow must be large enough to cover the mage's feet.

Shrink

The mage is shrunk to the height of about 2 inches, along with all items and clothing on his person.

Sight

The mage draws a large circle with thauma-chalk on a solid surface not more than 10' thick (ex. A door or wall). By looking into the circle, the mage can now see through the surface as though it did not exist.

Somnolence

The sound of the mage's voice becomes incredibly soothing and deep. Anyone hearing the mage speak uninterrupted for a full turn will fall fast asleep right where they are standing.

Space jump

The mage (and up to two other people per level of Magic Skill) are immediately teleported to a temporal anchor within 30 miles. All items on their persons are teleported as well.

Space leap

The mage (and one person and/or item per level of Magic Skill) are

immediately teleported to a temporal anchor anywhere in the world. Items are *not* automatically teleported as well, although all clothing on their persons are.

Spark[^]

When triggered, fiery sparks go flying through the air in all directions, igniting all flammable materials they touch.

Stench[^]

When triggered, invisible gas sprays into the air, enveloping all within 5'. Those enveloped in the gas acquire an immensely powerful scent not dissimilar from that of decomposing meat, and can be smelled at a distance of 20' away per point of perception of the smeller (thrice that downwind). Did we mention their charisma drops by 5? Anyone with a charisma of below 3 becomes unbearable to anyone around them.

Stretch voice^{*}

The mage can alter the pitch and resonance of his voice to any degree that does not exceed the bounds of human hearing. (This ability can greatly enhance the use of Intimidation.)

Swordbreaker *Damage: 2d6 + Magic Skill (initial unarmed attack roll required)*

The next bladed weapon that the mage willingly touches (not that touches him, mind you) explodes into tiny jagged fragments, dealing 2d6 shrapnel damage to the bearer, plus one additional damage per level of Magic Skill.

The Faerie Magic Ability

Long before the discovery of spellcraft, races existed who could perform tricks with ether naturally. As it happens, the faerie races were among them. Wisps, by nature of being faeries, have a few unique magical tricks to help them along. Like spellcraft, faerie magic is the creation of spells through the manipulation of ether. Faerie magic does not require a spellbook as spellcraft does though, since these spells are racially innate.

Faerie magic is also more physically taxing than spellcraft, as the caster shapes the spell without the aid of an incantation. Thus, each day a Wisp may use faerie magic once per 25% his faerie magic ability is at. Thus, he begins at one use per day and ends at four.

The char begins with two faerie magic spells. For each 25% the Wisp gains, he learns a new spell; thus, he begins with two, learns another at

50%, learns a fourth at 75%, and learns his fifth and final spell at 100%.

So, for your choosing enjoyment, here are the faerie magic spells:

Accelerate

This causes the caster's speed to increase rapidly, making him move faster, attack faster, and run faster. His speed increases by $\frac{2}{3}$ the level of his Magic Skill, and attacks cost only $\frac{1}{2}$ of his total Speed Points, $\frac{1}{3}$ of his SP if his Magic Skill is above 6, or $\frac{1}{4}$ of his SP if his Magic Skill is above 9 (not cumulative with Juggling). This increase lasts as long as the user's adrenaline remains pumping.

Conjure fog

It's cold, it's wet, it obscures vision, and you can summon it at will within an area you define. This negates all fire damage, reduces vision to no more than ten feet, and can be lethal in the northern climes. It lasts one turn per level of Magic Skill.

Conjure vines

This conjures webs of flimsy, entangling vines from the ground under the control of the caster. The vines have a strength equal to $\frac{2}{3}$ the caster's Magic Skill. They can't actually deal damage from squeezing, but they can render the target immobile. They last until broken free of or destroyed.

Earthport

This trick causes the ground beneath the caster's feet to spontaneously split apart and swallow them. The earth will belch the caster back up the next turn at a chosen point within 50'.

Mindlink*

This trick allows for mental communication between the caster and another intelligent being or a tamed animal he knows, over any distance. However, he must be able to visualize the face of the person or creature he wishes to contact. This lasts until one of the two breaks the contact through conscious decision or until it is broken by a lapse in concentration.

Pollen blow

This trick conjures a sudden gust of ragweed, grass, and pollen particles that is so potent that anyone hit becomes temporarily debilitated, coughing, hacking, sneezing, and wiping their eyes. The blast lasts exactly 1 turn. For an hour thereafter, melee and unarmed attack and defense of affected individuals are decreased by 25, projectile attack drops by 40, and concentration for abilities like spellcraft becomes impossible. Be warned, however; it affects allies as well as enemies.

Refract light*

This is an illusion spell which refracts light in order to displace an image of the target. The target's image is displaced to a location several feet away, and they gain a defense bonus of +45. However, should they be hit, or should the caster cease concentrating, the illusion will vanish.

Tame

This will cause animals and unintelligent monsters to leave the caster alone, and in some cases, make them wish to serve him! If the spell succeeds, the targeted creature will cease to have hostile intentions towards the caster and his friends. If the spell succeeds by more than 25%, the creature will try to aid the caster for a short period of time (10 minutes per level of Magic Skill). Should the trick succeed with a roll of 1-6%, however, the creature will become the caster's loyal pet. This ability becomes terribly effective when used with mindlink.

Combat

There are **five key statistics** to combat: endurance points, attack, defense, damage and armor. These are handled simply in the hope that having a fast and simple mechanism for doling out normal damage will leave room for creativity and tactics. Combat is about more than rolling dice, after all.

Endurance Points (EP)- a char's capacity for withstanding physical punishment. If you've played other RPGs, these are most commonly referred to as "hit points". To determine your char's Initial EP capacity, use the below formula:

$$\text{Tgh} + 10 = \text{Base EP}$$

Abdul is ready to find his char's Starting EP. Since her Toughness is 6, he would calculate her EP by doing the following:

$$6 + 10 = 16 \text{ EP}$$

Attack (Atk)- a person's potential to hit a desired opponent. This combat stat is based mostly on Weapon Skill.

Melee attack

$$30\% + 4 \text{ Wpn Skill Melee} + 2\text{Agl} = \text{Base Melee Atk}$$

Unarmed attack

$$30\% + 4 \text{ Wpn Skill Unarmed} + \text{Str} + \text{Agl} = \text{Base Unarmed Atk}$$

Projectile attack

$$30\% + 4 \text{ Wpn Skill Projectile} + 2\text{Per} = \text{Base Projectile Atk}$$

It is important to note that it is never impossible to hit or miss someone. Rolls in the critical hit or miss range always hit or miss respectively. If these are the only rolls that will hit or miss the target, rolling them will just count as a normal hit or miss. (see *Optional Stuff*)

Defense (Def)- a person's potential to avoid being hit. A person's Def is based on their agility and whether they are armed or not. It is determined as follows:

Defense when armed

$$\text{Agl} + \text{Wpn Skill Melee} = \text{Base Def}$$

Defense when unarmed

$$\text{Agl} + \text{Wpn Skill Unarmed} = \text{Base Def}$$

"Unarmed" refers to a character who is not currently armed with a melee or projectile weapon. Certain pieces of equipment may provide bonuses or penalties to a char's defense when he or she wears them.

So how do you know if you have hit?

Subtract the opponent's Defense from your Base Attack; this number is your attack for this specific target. Roll the p-die. If you roll at or below your attack, you have hit.

So what happens when I hit?

That is determined by two aspects of combat illustrated below.

Damage (Dmg)- the potential of a successful attack to harm its target.

Armed Damage

$$\text{Base Dmg from weapon} + \text{modifiers from Wpn Skill} = \text{Dmg}$$

In armed combat, damage is a matter of the weapon used for the blow; the more harmful the weapon, the greater its Dmg. There are also potential additions to damage from the attacker's Weapon Skill. *Starting at level three, every other level of Weapon Skill affords a one point bonus to damage with appropriate weapons. Thus:*

Jarive Margules is a Damantsi with a Projectile Weapon Skill of 4; he carries a short bow with wooden arrows (this weapon has a damage of 6). Whenever he attacks with it, his Weapon Skill affords him a Dmg modifier of +1, making his Dmg with that weapon 7. If he trained and increased his Weapon Skill to 5, the Dmg modifier would increase to +2, making his Dmg with that weapon 8.

Unarmed Damage

$$\text{Base Dmg from Str} + \text{modifiers from weapon and Wpn Skill} = \text{Dmg}$$

Strength determines the base damage in unarmed combat as follows: people with average strength or less have a base damage of 1; for every point of strength over five a person has, however, this base unarmed damage increases by one. Thus, someone with a Strength of 6 would have a base unarmed damage of 2, someone with a Str of 7 would have 3 for base damage, and so on. Unarmed Weapon Skill has the same

damage-enhancing effect as it does in armed combat.

Martin, a human gladiator with a Strength of 7 and an Unarmed Weapon Skill of 6, has a cestus wrapped around his fist. He is fighting for his life against a Bakri slave in the arena. When he delivers a blow to his opponent, his Strength affords him a Base Damage of 3. Due to the cestus (+2 to damage) and his Weapon Skill (+2 to damage), however, he deals 7 damage on a successful hit.

Life loss from all damage is determined as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} &EP \text{ Loss} \\ &Dmg - Amr = EP \text{ lost from hit} \end{aligned}$$

Armor (Amr)- the ability of armor to absorb blows. Whenever someone is hit in combat, the Dmg dealt to him is always reduced by his Amr (except in instances of certain critical hits or targeted attacks that bypass armor protection).

Jarive fires an arrow at an opponent wearing chain mail and hits. He deals 7 Dmg with the arrow. Chain mail provides an Amr of 4; $7 - 4 = 3$; the enemy loses 3 EP from being hit.

So how does it work? Are there turns?

Everyone tells the GM what they want to do; the faster a char's speed, the more quickly they get to move, attack, escape, rummage through their inventory, or what have you. Speed can be the difference between life and death in combat, and frequently is. A turn is assumed to last approximately 1 minute, which means that "an attack" is really a prolonged assault (melee and unarmed) or the process of preparing the weapon, aiming, and firing several times (projectile). But for purposes of realism, it is assumed that only one of these strikes hits, if any.

How much can you do when you go?

Good question; that depends on your speed, and something called Speed Points (SP). You get a number of Speed Points equal to your Speed (+2 if you are wearing normal clothing, rather than armor +3 if you are naked; otherwise, consult the armor list for adjustments).

What you do	Speed Points it takes	Your Total SP	SP req'd to attack
Move 5' / yell to someone	1	3-4	2

Get item out of belt	1		5	3
Put item in belt	1		6-7	4
Pick item off ground	2		8-9	5
Use an ability	3		10	6
Go into inventory/ get up	4		11-12	7
Begin an attack	3/5 total SP	→	13	8

Performing each of these actions in combat is permissible, as long as you don't go past your Speed Point limit. Concentrating reduces your speed points to 2 (you cannot attack while concentrating).

Who goes first?

1. The combatant with highest number of *total* SP. People with equal SP go simultaneously.

OR

2. The GM may wish to base this on *remaining* SP instead in order to introduce an element of strategic complexity to combat. In this case, combat operates similarly to golf; the action constantly switches to the combatant with the greatest SP until everyone runs out or forfeits the remainder of their turn.

Optional Stuff:

Critical hits- if you ever roll your agility or less in an attack, you have scored a critical hit (if it was not possible to hit with higher rolls, they instead score an ordinary hit). A critical hit is a particularly devastating blow whose effects hinge upon the means of its delivery.

- *piercing* should bypass armor protection, dealing full damage and causing profuse bleeding that must be addressed via Healing or First Aid.
- *bludgeoning* should bowl the target over, or knock the target out. (Consider most unarmed attacks bludgeoning attacks.)
- *slashing* should break flimsier shields or armor, ruining them for subsequent attacks.
- **All** critical hits also deal an extra 1d8 points of damage to the target.

Critical failures- if you ever roll at or above 85 + your agility when attacking, your character has screwed up; his weapon goes flying out of his hand, he slips and falls, or his weapon breaks (note: weapon breakage is much more likely in cheaper weapons).

Targeted attacks- if your GM is nice, he'll just let you roll normal attack rolls for these aimed blows. If he's a bastard, consult the below adjustments for attacks at various distances, and for opponents of different sizes (shaded regions are for targets of 2'-5' of height, unshaded are for 5'1" to 7').

Area Targeted	Adjustment for <i>melee-5'</i>	Adjustment for <i>6'-(15Per)'</i>	Adjustment for <i>(15Per)'-(60Per)'</i>
Torso	-15%	-30%	-65%
Torso	-5%	-25%	-55%
Chest	-10%	-20%	-50%
Chest	-5%	-15%	-50%
Arm	-10%	-45%	-80%
Arm	-10%	-30%	-70%
Leg	-15%	-30%	-75%
Leg	-15%	-25%	-65%
Hand	-30%	-45%	critical hit roll
Hand	-25%	-30%	-75%
Foot	-50%	-65%	critical hit roll
Foot	-40%	-50%	-75%
Head/Face	-20%	-35%	-70%
Head/Face	-35%	-45%	-85%
Groin	-30%	-45%	critical hit roll
Groin	-45%	-60%	critical hit roll
Eyes	-40%	-60%	critical hit roll
Eyes	-55%	-75%	critical hit roll
Finger/Toe	-85%	critical hit roll	N/A
Finger/Toe	-80%	critical hit roll	N/A

GMs should feel free to completely ignore this chart and simply decide their own penalties as the situation dictates.

Expertise

Whenever a char accomplishes a task of some difficulty, be it vanquishing an enemy, completing a mission, escaping danger, uncovering information, or simply convincing others to help him, it is up to the GM to allot expertise to the char as a measure of the knowledge he or she has gained from their experiences.

Expertise may be spent by chars in order to improve in their abilities, to learn new ones, increase their EP, and to hone combat and magic skills. However, a char cannot just spend expertise and magically become better; when improving his abilities, he must spend a few days or weeks training with a mentor (they might desire payment for this), or in the instance of abilities where the knowledge is intuitive (ex. lying, begging, intimidation, verse, etc.), the GM may allow you to train without the aid of an instructor. It is really up to the GM whether an ability requires training with a teacher. If you make a good case for it, you should be allowed to learn independently.

All new abilities, by contrast, require that the char spend at least a few weeks or so training at his newfound talent, usually with a knowledgeable instructor. The instructor is much more key with new abilities, and GMs shouldn't let players teach themselves without a really compelling reason.

As for improving Weapon or Magic skill, there must always be an instructor. Period. Improving your EP generally requires the aid of some sort of trainer; this can usually be accomplished with a few weeks at the local gymnasium.

This all seems a bit stringent. How are chars supposed to find all of this stuff?

Most major cities have guilds (such as the thieves', merchants', craftsmen's and magician's guilds) where they offer instruction to members through limited apprenticeship. Also, nearly all cities have at least a few old adventurers, craftsmen, woodsmen, fishermen, historians, etc. who would be more than willing to make some extra gold by helping you improve on an ability they've had years of practice with; in fact, it's not too hard to find buildings where just such people are giving informal classes (the larger the city, the better the chars' chances of finding what they need).

But what if I want to improve in the middle of an adventure?

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Unless the adventure can afford to be delayed for a week or two while you train, that's basically a moot point anyway. However, if your GM allows you to stop, then there's no technical reason why you couldn't.

So how do I improve on my Weapon Skill, EP, or Magic Skill?

There are tables for determining this; see them below:

Weapon Skill Level	Cost to Raise a Level
0-3	6 P
4-8	12 P
9-12	18 P
13-16	24 P
17-18	30 P
19	-

Magic Skill Level	Cost to Raise a Level
0	<i>getting the spellcraft/witchcraft skill</i>
1-3	6 P
4-5	12 P
6-7	15 P
8-10	18 P
11-12	20 P
13	25 P
14	28 P
15	-

Current Total EP	EP gained from Training	Cost to Train*
13-15	2	6P
16-17	3	6P
18-20	4	8P
21-23	5	10P
24-26	6	12P
27-31	7	12P
32-35	8	15P
36-41	9	15P
42-50	10	18P
51-60	12	18P
61-75	14	20P
**Above 75	15	24P

* the cost for elevating EP always includes a week or two of hard training at improving the char's physical and mental discipline.

** the EP limit for a character is 16 + 8 Tgh. (Range: 40-96)

The Races

Of Epic

The races of Epic do not exist in a vacuum; their characteristics, idiosyncrasies and powers exist within a socio-cultural context that it is important for a GM and his players to understand in order to role-play them effectively. This section is dedicated to flushing out such details.

The Bakri

The staple of the Bakri diet is the juk-juk fruit, which is very slow to spoil and can be found in almost all of the world's forests. Bakri societies, which depend upon juk-juk fruit for food, have always existed in the world's forests. The greatest of Bakri civilizations have always sprung up in tropical climes, where juk-juk grows best.

Bakri society is extremely patriarchal. A Bakri civilization consists of a conglomeration of tribes and (to a much lesser degree) families within those clans. Bakri do not have warriors per se; they have hunters who both slay the dangerous beasts of the forest and and return their valuable meat the family and the clan. A large portion of all meat found is to be given to the tribe; dinners are a collective affair so no member of the tribe goes hungry. Storytellers and hunters are the most respected members of any Bakri society. Visiting bards and warriors are always honored guests in a Bakri village. Religious figures always take second place to these two social strata.

The juk-juk fruit is poisonous to almost all non-Bakri races, and thus a Bakri who has been eating juk-juk for the past few weeks will find in his saliva an effective weapon against non-Bakri. Bakri who fail to consume juk-juk often enough will not have juku in their saliva.

Bakri saliva colored with juk-juk is called juku, and most Bakri consider juku to be an important part of their health; it is rare to find a Bakri without his juku, as such an individual will be considered be sickly and weak. A bite from a Bakri with juku will slowly paralyze most creatures (except of course for other Bakri). Hence, in attempting to subdue a target, a Bakri will use its superior size and gliding abilities to dive and knock the victim flat. They will then bite the target in order to get juku into their bloodstream. Juku, once within a major artery, will paralyze most humanoids in under two minutes. Juku poisoning can last for up to an hour.

Non-Bakri races are terribly allergic to juku--if juku comes into contact with their skin it will cause rashes and hives to break out.

Juku in the eyes will cause them to swell shut for up to twenty minutes. In pitched battles, Bakri marksmen armed with blowguns will sit perched beyond reach and spit wads of juku at the eyes of enemy archers.

Conventional armors are almost all too heavy and bulky for use by most Bakri, who rely upon flight and maneuverability in order to strike their targets. Instead, most Bakri create a flexible carapace over their bodies by preening.

Juku gradually forms a carapace over the body of a Bakri as he preens. As juku builds up and hardens on his skin, it forms a flexible and tough carapace that provides the protective properties of armor without impairing movement.

Preening can be undone by wearing conventional armor, however, as it will scrape off the carapace. Wearing normal armor will not provide cumulative bonuses for a Bakri, no matter how thick his carapace.

As juku is purple, carapaces will appear deeper violet as they grow thicker with age. It can take years to achieve a truly powerful carapace, and many Bakri consider it a sacrilege for their own kind to wear conventional armor.

The Wisps

Wisps are faeries that inhabit large expanses of enchanted, giant vines--called tendrilyles--all across the Aboveworld. The vines entwine to form buildings, streets and gardens. They grow fruit for visitors and sprout glowing flowers to see by at night. In effect, tendrilyles are the equivalent of cities.

Wisps are a race collectively obsessed with altered states of consciousness. They do not eat: they gain sustenance from the dreams and visions of mortals. Many Wisps delight in elaborate pranks and surprises, while others prefer to debate the nature of existence with mortals. All wisps, however, have an in-born delight in shocks to mortal perception.

Wisps tend to be very loyal to certain concepts that vary with the individual. Those things to which a Wisp owes his loyalty are known as his "passions." Passions are not something to be discussed in polite company.

It is unspeakably rude to ask a Wisp what his passions are, and he will likely ignore you for having asked.

Wisps have a symbiotic relationship with the mortal races of the Aboveworld, Humans and Bakri. Once in a rare while, a Wisp gets a "calling," a hunger for mortal perceptions. Using thoughtsense, the Wisp searches for a compatible mortal. Compatibility is usually not based on any criteria whatsoever: the Wisp chooses its mortal and visits him with a vision. Wisps do not decide the contents of the visions; visions typically draw on preexisting desires present in the mortal and instill him with the urgent need to see them fulfilled, even at grave personal risk. The Wisp then accompanies the mortal, gaining sustenance as it aids him. In this way, Wisps are often catalysts in the world of men.

It is folly to attack a tendrilyle, for the vines that compose it will untangle themselves and tear apart whatever has been so foolish as to attack it. Any wisp, no matter how small, has some degree of control over a tendrilyle, though for most, it is a quite limited form of control.

Tendrilyles are overseen by shamans, ancient and powerful Wisps. They alone work to guard the race against danger, and have some small notion of the ancient ones who hunt them...

The Skuki

The Skuki of the Aboveworld are oppressed creatures. They came to the great human cities at first in small groups of enterprising merchants seeking trade, and later in large waves of refugees fleeing oppression and severe economic recession as the Great Coalition of the Beneath dissolved into civil war.

Skuki in the Aboveworld are looked at with scorn and distrust by both humans and Skuki native to the Beneath. Humans distrust them for their ability to chameleon, scale walls and see in the dark, and have taken to calling them "skulkers." In the human cities of the Aboveworld, Skuki are relegated to ghettos and crumbling tenements. There the most resourceful of Skuki have firmly established themselves with the black market. Others, by contrast, choose more legitimate but less lucrative means of getting by. The old Skuki art of engineering is banned in most human cities, and the old enginemen who dwell there must practice their tinkering in secret.

Skuki who were not born in the Aboveworld suffer immense shock and uncontrollable nausea from seeing the sky. They call this "ristakas," fear of

the void. Naturalized Skuki will overcome the worst of this by pubescence, and will be able to do all but stare at the sky for extended periods of time with impunity. Adult immigrants from the Beneath will never lose their ristakas. Even Skuki native to the Aboveworld will regress into ristakas in their old age.

Especially young and old Skuki in the Aboveworld frequently wear a boortak, a hood with a drooping triangular visor, usually attached to a cape to form a cloak (such cloaks are also called boortaks). The boortak prevents accidental glances at the void. They also work to assure humans that the Skuki will not be able to chameleon effectively.

The Skuki ability to chameleon is dependant on what kind of clothing they wear. The more skin they show, the more effectively they can blend in with their surroudings. A naked Skuki will be almost completely invisible, particularly so when standing still.

Damantsi

Damantsi are small reptilian creatures with claws, wings, tails, and snouts that end in a curved beak. While not physically imposing, Damantsi are more magically adept than most races. This fact manifests itself in their curious ability to inhabit spellbooks. Any damantsi can possess a spellbook within their line of sight, their physical form vanishing entirely in the process. They can then cast all spells contained within that spellbook with impunity.

Damantsi are fairly solitary creatures by comparison to the other races. They form together in families, but rarely do these families extend beyond 20 members. They have no cities to speak of, but Damantsi can be found in and around Human, Skuki, and Wisp cities all across the world.

Currency and Equipment

Common Currency

Various societies have different systems of currency; however, most major societies in Epic have currencies that revolve around precious metals, based upon the unit of the shekel. The currency common to each of the races detailed in this manual goes as follows.

Silver shekels (sh)- light silver coins; the smallest specie.

Silver marks (m)- heavy silver coins; worth 10 shekels.

Gold auoms (au)- heavy gold coins; worth 100 marks (1000 shekels).

In a society consisting of labor, middle and upper classes with a sizable difference in income, the average daily income of members of the labor class is 6 shekels a day, the average daily income of members of the middle class is 24 shekels a day (8.76au a year), and the average daily income of the upper class is 60 shekels a day (21.90au a year).

Equipment Lists

These items should be available in most stores. Of course, the society in which the store is placed should determine the availability of certain wares (ex. even large towns are not likely to offer every weapon listed, and some stores are rarer than others).

It is advisable to give each char 72-110 (2d20 + 70) shekels to begin with, some clothing, some rudimentary weapons, and possibly some light armor.

General Store (Common Shoppe):

Cost:

Length of Rope	1sh / 10' of length
Grappling Hook	4sh
Torch	1sh
Lantern	25sh
Candle	1sh
Tinderbox	3m
Sheet of Parchment	4sh
Quill	6sh
Ink well	6sh
Suit of Clothing	12sh
Pair of Boots	12sh
Cloak	15sh
Belt (inventory item)*	9sh

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Gloves	8sh
Backpack (<i>inventory item</i>)*	22sh
Travel Rations	5sh / person / week

*inventory items are essential for carrying large amounts of equipment

Tavern:

Cost:

<i>Drinks:</i>	
Beer	1sh / mug
Ale	1sh / mug
Mead	2sh / mug
Rum	5sh / bottle
Whiskey	4sh / bottle
Brandy	6sh / bottle
Common Wine	3sh / glass
<i>Food:</i>	
Bread	2sh / loaf
Meat	7sh / plate
Cheese	3sh / block
Vegetables (not readily available in cities)	3sh / plate
<i>Lodgings:</i>	
Poor	2sh / night
Labor Class	4sh / night
Middle Class	8sh / night
Upper Class	2m / night

Weapon Smithy:

*Range:

Cost:

Dmg:

Hands to attack:

Str Req:

<i>Melee Weapons:</i>					
Hand Axe	<i>ml</i>	11m	7	1	5
Battle Axe	<i>ml</i>	30m	11	2	6
Club	<i>ml</i>	13m	7	1	5
Dagger	<i>ml</i>	6m	5	1	
Flail	<i>ml</i>	28m	11	1	7
Ball Mace	<i>ml</i>	25m	9	2	6
Flanged Mace	<i>ml</i>	48m	12	1	6
Main Gauche (<i>gives Def +2</i>)	<i>ml</i>	17m	6	1	
Short Sword	<i>ml</i>	21m	7	1	4
Broad Sword	<i>ml</i>	25m	8	1	5
Scimitar	<i>ml</i>	27m	9	1	5
Rapier	<i>ml</i>	30m	9	1	4
Bastard Sword	<i>ml</i>	32m	10 or 13	1 or 2	6

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Whip	<i>ml-5'</i>	5m	4	1	
<i>Polearms:</i>					
Halberd	<i>ml-5'</i>	55m	15	2	8
Lance (<i>mounted only</i>)	<i>ml</i>	25m	18	1	6
Partisan	<i>ml-5'</i>	35m	12	2	5
Spear	<i>ml-(3Str)'</i>	21m	8	1	4
Staff	<i>ml</i>	12m	4 or 7	1 or 2	-
<i>Ranged Weapons:</i>					
Bola	<i>10'-(9Str)'</i>	5m	8	1	6
Short Bow	<i>20'-(35Str)'</i>	25m		2	4
Long Bow	<i>45'-(60Str)'</i>	50m	+6	2	6
- wooden arrow	Bow	7sh	6	-	-
- steel arrow	Bow - 40'	2m	10	-	Bow +1
Blowgun	<i>5'-(7Str)'</i>	8m		1	-
- dart, hollow	-	4sh	3	-	-
- dart, barbed	-	6sh	4	-	4
Boomerang	<i>10'-(13Str)'</i>	10m	5	1	-
Chakram	<i>5'-(11Str)'</i>	16m	7	1	5
Crossbow	<i>20'-450'</i>	70m		2	4
- quarrel	-	4m	11	-	-
- hollow quarrel	-	6m	9	-	-
Sling	<i>50'-(40Str)'</i>	6m		1	4
- stone	-	-	6	-	-
- bullet	<i>Sling +50'</i>	1m	9	-	<i>Sling +1</i>
Throwing Axe	<i>ml-(9Str)'</i>	12m	6	1	5
Throwing Knife	<i>ml-(9Str)'</i>	8m	5	1	-
<i>Hand-to-hand Weapons:</i>					
Cestus	<i>ml</i>	4m	+2	1	-
<i>Accessories:</i>					
Looped Belt	A special belt with a series of loops across the front of it, it can hold up to 20 darts or crossbow quarrels. Costs 5m .				
Pouch	Comes with a sling, can hold up to 12 stones or bullets.				
Quiver	A sort of leather satchel, worn over the shoulder, that can hold up to 25 arrows. Comes with a bow.				
Sheath	A loop, scabbard, or other holding piece for a melee weapon, it is usually attached to one's belt. Comes with a melee weapon.				

**ml* is melee distance, any distance under 5'

Armor Smithy:	Cost:	Amr:	Def:	SP adjustment:	Str Req:
Robes	18sh	0	+3	+2 to SP	

Quilted Mail	6m	1	+1	-	
Leather Mail	10m	2	-	-	4
Cured Mail	18m	2	+2	+1 to SP	
Patchwork Mail	26m	3	-	-	4
Chain Mail	45m	4	-	-	5
Chain Mail Hauberk	75m	5	-	-	7
Banded Mail	80m	5	-	-	5
Breast Plate	95m	6	-	-	7
Body Plate	150m	7	-1	-	7
Full Plate	220m	8	-2	-1 to SP	8
Field Plate	340m	12	-3	-1/2 of SP*	8
Buckler	2m	-	+2	-	
Small Shield	6m	-	+4	-	
Banded Shield	12m	-	+5	-	4
Iron Shield	24m	+1	+3	-	6
Herald Shield	45m	+2	+5	-	5
Tower Shield	60m	+3	+10	-1 to SP	7
Helmet†	8m	-	+1	-	
Helm	14m	-	+3	-	4
Full Helm**	35m	+1	+5	-	5
Wrist Brace***	3m	-	-	-	

*Field Plate reduces the wearer's speed by 1/2 unless the wearer is mounted.

**see item description

***This adds +6% to attack with bows.

Now that you've been able to look over the equipment lists for the most common stores, there's a good chance that you have questions about what some of the equipment actually is. Luckily for you, we will now have a pair of sections detailing your basic weapons and armor for sale at Weapon and Armor Smithies.

Keep in mind, however, that most armor is crafted to fit Humans, Wisps, and Skuki; Bakri and Damantsi (Damantsi in particular) must have armor custom-made for them, and even then, they cannot fly with anything heavier than banded mail.

Weapon Descriptions:

Bastard Sword- a long hand-and-a-half sword (that is, it can be used either one or two-handed) with a tapered metal blade and a long hilt.

Battle Axe- an axe with large curved blades on either side of the haft; intended for two-handed use.

Ball Mace- a long haft topped by a large, spiked iron ball. Generally used in attempting to crush the enemy's bones, it is a particularly brutal

weapon.

Blowgun- a carved wooden tube into which a dart is placed; the dart is propelled out of the tube by blowing with great force into it.

Bola- a group of cords with weights on the end of them attached to a central handle. The bola is swung about the head and thrown, whereupon the bola fans out and spins. Once it hits a target, the cords wrap around its legs and twist together.

Boomerang- a curved weapon with a sharp edge that spins through the air when thrown; it returns to the thrower if it misses its target.

Broad Sword- a medium-sized sword with a wide blade intended for slashing attacks rather than stabbing. One of the most commonly used weapons by those who use them often.

Cestus- a leather strap inlaid with bronze studs; it is wrapped around the fist for boxing. Makes a good impression. Or two.

Chakram- a steel ring, around half a foot in diameter with a razor sharp edge; it is thrown in combat.

Club- a thick wooden bludgeon with metal bands and spikes. Popular among low-lives and mercenaries.

Crossbow- a small bow affixed horizontally to a thick wooden shaft. The string is pulled back mechanically by a crank, and it is fired with a trigger.

Dagger- a knife intended for melee combat. It is most useful as a stabbing weapon, though it can also slash. Popular among assassins and thieves.

Flail- also known as morning star, the flail is a ball-and-chain attached to a handle. In combat, it is swung about the head and brought down with crushing force upon the enemy.

Flanged Mace- a more effective version of the ball mace. Instead of a spiked ball, it has long metal ridges projecting radially from the haft. Popular among the military upper class.

Halberd- a polearm approximately 5-8' long. An axe blade is affixed to the head of the pole, from the back of which projects a hook intended for dismounting horsemen, and the top of which houses a long tapered point intended for punching through armor.

Hand Axe- a medium-sized axe with a single blade. It requires only a single hand to be used effectively.

Lance- a long, sharpened pole intended for use while mounted, it is held with one hand while the reins are held with the other. The force of the blow comes from the momentum of a charging horse. Lances have a great tendency to break upon impact (particularly wooden ones).

Long Bow- a tremendous bow, ranging from 5 ½ to 6' high; it is usually taller than its wielder. One hand is required to hold it upright on the ground, the other to nock and fire arrows.

Main Gauche- a companion weapon to the rapier, the main gauche simply looks like an exceptionally short-bladed rapier, and is typically held in the left hand (thus, its name). The main gauche aids the wielder's defense as well as being capable of damage itself. It only imparts the defense bonus when used in conjunction with another one-handed slashing or stabbing weapon, however.

Partisan- a pole-arm similar to the spear, but longer and more deadly. The blade atop the pole has two smaller blades jutting out beneath it to ensure that the partisan does not get stuck in a stabbed opponent.

Rapier- a fairly long sword with a hand guard and quillions, the rapier can be used either for slashing or stabbing. One of the most graceful and effective melee weapons, especially with a main gauche.

Scimitar- a sword with a relatively short, thick, curved blade, the scimitar is purely a slashing weapon.

Short Bow- a common bow, generally from 3-4' long. One hand is required to hold the bow, the other to nock and fire arrows.

Short Sword- a sword with a short, thin blade, sometimes concealed inside of canes. Can be used for slashing, but is mainly designed for stabbing. Short swords, like rapiers, are popular weapons for dueling and self-defense among the affluent.

Sling- a cord with an open pouch in the middle, intended to hold stones or sling bullets. The sling is swung about the head with both ends of the cord in one hand, whereupon one end of the cord is released, sending the object flying through the air.

Spear- a pole arm with a shaft 4 to 5' in length, fitted with a metal stabbing head. Its stabbing range is only *ml*, but it may be thrown a fair distance as well.

Staff- a long wooden pole used to trip and batter opponents. Large staves require two hands, while short staves may be held one-handed. These are popular weapons among the poor.

Throwing Axe- also known as a hatchet, this small hand-held axe is easily thrown head-over-haft style. It can also be used in melee.

Throwing Knife- a knife intended for throwing, this is favored by assassins over the throwing axe, as it is far more easily concealed.

Armor Descriptions:

Banded Mail- armor made by sewing chain mail to leather armor, then attaching overlapping strips of metal to the outside. Affords more protection than any other type of mail, except for a hauberk.

Banded Shield- a circular wooden shield with a metallic outer rim and steel bossing. More effective than a simple wooden shield, and will break

less often when subject to critical hits.

Body Plate- a suit of armor consisting of a chain mail hauberk below a breastplate, arm plates, and steel gauntlets, each connected with flexible greaves. Affords superior upper-body protection.

Breast Plate- a solid piece of metal armor worn on the upper body. It protects the chest, back, shoulders and abdomen.

Buckler- a small shield that is buckled to the forearm and requires no hands to use; it only works on an arm that can move independently of the other, and thus is useless in conjunction with two-handed polearms and bows.

Chain Mail- made of a sheet of small interlocking rings, chain mail is both flexible and fairly effective. It protects the chest, abdomen, shoulders, and upper thighs.

Chain Mail Hauberk- chain mail that extends over the body, even including sleeves for arms and a mail hood for the head. Due to this coverage, it affords somewhat better protection than banded mail. However, it is also significantly heavier and more cumbersome.

Cured Mail- high-quality armor made from the cured animal hide, it offers unprecedented range of motion and great flexibility. It also has the added advantage of being completely silent, which makes it tremendously popular among roguish sorts.

Field Plate- this massive armor is akin to full plate, but thicker and with layers of leather and a mail hauberk. It is unbelievably hot, not to mention heavy (often about 80 pounds), and thus is not very effective for the unmounted. The preferred armor of wealthy knights.

Full Helm- A complete head covering with movable visor. Incurs a -3 to defense instead of a +5 if it is not atop some type of plate armor, as it will move around and obscure the wearer's vision.

Full Plate- like the body plate, but has leg plates, a groin plate, and knee greaves as well. Slow, heavy armor, but very effective.

Helm- like a helmet, but its conical design protects the sides of the head, as well as the face. It has a T-shaped opening for seeing and breathing.

Helmet- a metal headpiece that protects the top and back of the head.

Herald Shield- a sizable shield made of wood, with a an outer layer of steel. More wieldy and maneuverable than the iron shield.

Iron Shield- a round shield made entirely of iron. While these shields are very heavy, they are also extremely solid and will not often break.

Leather Mail- armor made of leather. Form-fitting and durable, it's also good weather protection in cold climates. However, it can also be very hot...

Patchwork Mail- generally leather or quilted mail with odd scraps of metal sewn in for added protection. Popular among mercenaries.

Quilted Mail- thick fabric studded with brass buttons, it encompasses the

chest and abdomen. Not terribly effective, but cheap and easy to move around in.

Robes- free-flowing and flexible, robes sacrifice protection for speed. They also have a tendency to obscure target areas from attack, aiding defense.

Small Shield- a small shield made of wood. It works well, but has a tendency to break; this problem was partly remedied in the creation of the banded shield.

Tower Shield- a massive rectangular shield nearly the height of a grown man. Offers excellent protection, but at the price of mobility. Often used in phalanx formations to protect against archer fire.

Wrist Brace- a small leather and metal brace that attaches to the wrist and aids steadiness in firing bows.

Making Checks

(A GM-Specific Section)

Throughout the game, you may find that a player wants to do something seemingly ordinary, but you might not be sure how to handle it. For example, the player might want their char to break down a door, or try to find his way out of a maze. Besides freaking out and calling the Psychic Hotline, there are several things you can do.

Your first action when something like this comes up should be to use common sense. Ask yourself: is this something the character could perform without any difficulty whatsoever? If so, simply let them do it. On the other hand, if they request something obviously beyond their capabilities (ex. A Damantsi trying to carry a human to safety, or a char trying to sneak past a guard he just stabbed), simply inform them that they cannot do it. Checks should only be made in instances of uncertainty.

If the action falls within the realm of uncertainty, feel free to simply determine the outcome yourself in the way that best advances the story. Die rolls should not serve as a crutch for creativity and storytelling!

If there is no reason why the outcome would have a significant impact on the storyline, your third move should be to perform a roll. See if what they want to do falls in with any of their abilities. For example, finding one's way out of a maze would fall under cartography, and distracting a guard by striking up a conversation would fall under conversation. In these instances, simply make a check (if the scenario is especially difficult or easy, then you may wish to use modifiers).

A warning, however; do not ever let die rolls interfere with common sense. With abilities that have natural consequences for failure (ex. climbing has the risk of falling, and swimming has the risk of drowning), subsequent checks should be allowed if the first fails and the char survives intact. With abilities that have no natural consequences for failure, however, if they fail their check, it is simply poor judgment to let them make another. For example, with First Aid, if they fail a check, it means that they just haven't the ability to poultice that particular wound correctly, and tell them so.

If the action does not fall under any specific ability, then you will need to make a trait check. Which trait you make the check for is dependent on what the char wishes to do. A char who wanted to break down a door would make a Strength check, and a char who was listening for footsteps would make a Perception check. Trait checks are relatively simple matters; you roll 1d12, and if the number that shows up is at or beneath the score for the appropriate trait, it succeeds. Of course, what

success really means depends on what you're doing. In the case of the char listening for footsteps, if there were, in fact, no people about, then success would mean that he heard no footsteps. To add suspense to situations like this, it often pays to roll the checks secretly.

Ex. Seples is walking through an abandoned crypt searching for a cursed ring when she accidentally triggers a floor panel trap. Spears shoot up through the floor to skewer her. Abdul, noting his char's good speed, asks the GM if he can try to dodge the trap.

The GM thinks for a minute. *Hm... it isn't certain whether she can dodge the spears or not. I'll make a check. Let's see... there are no abilities for dodging projectiles, so this will be a Speed check to see if she can react quickly enough. Then again, those spears are coming out of the ground awfully fast; I think I'll put a -1 modifier on the roll.*

Having made his decision, the GM rolls 1d12. In order to succeed, the roll must be a 6 or below (7 is Seples's speed, but the -1 modifier makes the target number 6). The number comes up 12.

Abdul: Oh, crap!

GM: Alas, your valiant effort to evade the spears fails miserably, and you take 8 damage as one stabs you in the leg...

Now hang on a second; why wouldn't that be handled like an attack roll?

Because no one was attacking her. Spears are inanimate, and on their own have no attack; the outcome is dependent solely on the char in this situation. Thus, we make a check.

Okay... so why Speed? Why not Agility or Defense?

Defense is evasion of attacks, and as we have already said, this was not an attack. Agility measures flexibility and coordination, which were only mildly relevant here. But Speed, which measures reaction time and quickness of movement, was very relevant to whether she evaded it or not. Therefore, Speed was the appropriate choice.

As we discussed earlier, common sense should be the deciding factor in these situations. With a creative group of players, situations where checks are necessary are likely to keep cropping up. There is no substitute for experience in this area, and it may take some practice before you get it down. Make sure you do get it down, though; a GM who does not know how to handle inventiveness will either strangle it or let it get out of control, and as you may well have guessed, a balance between realism and inventiveness is one of the keys to a good playing session.

Suggested reading: *An informed GM is a good GM. Do some reading up on conceptual physics to aid your understanding of the limits of what a char can do in the game.*