# FANTASY·AGE

## BASIC RULEBOOK

## DESIGNED BY CHRIS PRAMAS

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Welcome to *Fantasy AGE*, a roleplaying game that lets you be the hero in your own sword & sorcery adventures. In *Fantasy AGE* you and your friends take on the personas of warriors, mages, and rogues in a fantastical world and try to make your names by overcoming sinister foes and deadly challenges. You may face down a monstrous ogre in ancient dwarven ruins, engage in a duel of wits with a haughty noble, or uncover the secrets of lost civilizations. You may win renown or you may die alone in the trackless wilderness. Whatever your fate, your story is your own to tell. In *Fantasy AGE* you make the choices and try to survive the consequences.

## WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

*Fantasy AGE* is what's known as a tabletop roleplaying game, so named because you usually play while sitting around a table with your friends. The action is similar to computer roleplaying games. You will play a character who goes on exciting and dangerous adventures in a fantasy world. The difference is that you do it all with your imagination instead of a computer. One person must be the Game Master (GM). The GM presents the story and acts as a referee. Those remaining are the players. Each player makes a character and roleplays him or her in the ensuing adventures.

If you don't grasp how this works, don't worry. Keep reading and by the time you finish the introduction, you should understand the basics of tabletop roleplaying and the *Fantasy AGE* RPG.

## GETTING STARTED

The first thing you need is a group of friends to play with, and one of you must take on the role of Game Master, or GM. While you can play with as small a group as one GM and one player, the game works best with one GM and three to five players. It is possible to play with more players, but that can slow down the pace of the game.

The GM has a key position, so try to make sure that he or she really wants the job. Running a game is fun, but it's a different experience than playing. The second half of this book (starting with **CHAPTER 7: THE GAME MASTER**), explains the GM's role in detail. The GM (and only the GM) should read that part of the book. If you are a player, you should only read the first half of the book (**CHAPTERS 1-6**).

Once you've settled on a GM, everyone else needs to make characters, known as PCs or Player Characters. In *Fantasy AGE* your character has the potential to become a great hero,

but begins as just another hungry adventurer scrabbling for glory. You do not get to start play as a knight or master mage. Those are positions that must be earned, and that's what playing the game is all about.

Your character is your primary responsibility as a player in an RPG. This is your alter ego in the fantasy world where your adventures takes place. Over the course of many game sessions, your character will grow and change, but every hero needs a starting point. That is exactly what **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION** provides, giving you not only game stats—the abilities and corresponding numbers that tell you what your character is good at—but also a character concept, starting goals, and ties to other Player Characters. Once play begins the portrayal and development of your character is all up to you. Playing your character, achieving goals, and navigating the perils of a fantasy world—this is the fun of playing an RPG.

## PLAYING YOUR CHARACTER

### "WHAT DO YOU DO?"

When playing an RPG, that's the question you must ask yourself all the time. The Game Master will describe a situation, framing a scene for one or more of the Player Characters. It is then up to you to decide what your character does and why. You tell the GM what you want to do, as do the other players, and then you all work out what happens. Sometimes, you use dice to resolve actions. Other times, you simply interact with the other players and the characters portrayed by the GM, which are known as Non-Player Characters, or NPCs.

### "WHO ARE YOU?"

This is the question to keep in mind when making decisions. When you create your character, you will decide on some traits and goals as a starting point. You can then flesh out your PC, and there are two basic approaches to this. The first is to paint your character in a few broad strokes and then jump right in to playing. The intention here is to come up with details about your character during play, often by using the springboard of the current adventure to create touchstones to your character's past. This is a common storytelling technique and a perfectly valid approach if you don't want to spend a lot of time working on your character before starting play. The second approach is to come up with a lot of details and roleplaying ideas before the first session. If you can come to the table with a good idea of who your character is before the first die is rolled, that can help get the game going.

However you approach your character, playing the game will help you refine your ideas. After you have played your character for a while, you should have a strong sense of person-

ality and an intuitive sense of what your character would do in a particular situation. Of course, not all situations present easy choices. It is from difficult choices that tension and drama emerge.

## ADVENTURE, CAMPAIGN, AND SETTING

An adventure is a discrete story and scenario in an RPG. You can think of it as a single novel or an episode of a TV show. There may be several plot threads, but in the end it tells one story. The difference between a roleplaying adventure and a book or show is that you have authorship. The decisions made by you and your fellow players drive the story to its exciting conclusion.

A campaign is a series of interlinked adventures. If an adventure is a novel or TV show, a campaign is a series or a season. Some adventures may have self-contained plots, while others will tie together to tell a larger story. During a campaign the characters of the adventuring group earn experience points and gain levels. Over time they will gain more powers and abilities, face greater challenges, and perhaps gain renown for their deeds. A full *Fantasy AGE* campaign will take characters from levels 1 through 20, and provide hundreds of hours of game-play and entertainment.

The game takes place in a fantasy world, though which one is up to your group. There are many worlds to choose from, or you can have the fun of making up your own. Since the world is where your campaign takes place, it is known in RPG parlance as a "campaign setting" or just setting for short. The GM can find out more about them in **Chapter 11: The Campaign Setting**.

## EXAMPLE OF PLAY

What follows is an example of play with three characters. This should give you an idea of what a game of *Fantasy AGE* is like. You'll note various points where the example refers to dice rolling and its results. You don't need to worry about the particulars of that right now. Just follow along with the action and see how the GM uses the rolls to test the skill of the characters.

In this example Jack is the Game Master (GM). Kate is playing an elf rogue named Najah, Chris is playing a gnome mage named Varuker, and Nicole is playing a human warrior named Brigitte.

**Jack (GM):** You've been traveling for several hours under the hot midday sun. The road passes through a small forest and for a few minutes at least you find some respite in the shade the trees provide. As you emerge on the other side of the forest, you see a caravan up ahead. It is not moving, but neither has it set up camp.

**Kate (Rogue):** Do I see any guards around the caravan?

**Jack (GM):** Make a Perception (Seeing) test and tell me your result.

**Kate (Rogue):** [Rolls dice] I got a 13.

**Jack (GM):** Good roll. Your eyes quickly adjust to the sunlight and you scan the caravan. You see many carts and wagons but no people. The only things moving are the draft animals and they seem restless.

**Nicole (Warrior):** This doesn't look good. I want to take a closer look.

**Jack (GM):** Just you, or are you all going?

**Chris (Mage):** Let's all go. If this is a trap, better to be together than separated.

**Kate (Rogue):** Why don't you two go straight up the road and I'll swing around the right side and approach from there. I'll try to move quietly, crouched down with my bow out.

**Nicole (Warrior):** My two-handed axe is at the ready and I'm heading straight up the road.

**Chris (Mage):** I stay behind the warrior and keep an eye on the woods as we advance. We don't need any surprises from that direction.

**Jack (GM):** You approach the caravan and no threats emerge. When you get close, you see the bodies. There are at least six corpses spread out around the carts. They look like dwarves.

**Nicole (Warrior):** That seems strange.

**Chris (Mage):** Not really. My dwarf cousins are great merchants. They buy and sell all over.

**Kate (Rogue):** How did they die? Do I see any arrows sticking from the corpses?

**Jack (GM):** You can try to figure that out with a Perception (Seeing) test or an Intelligence (Healing) test.

**Kate (Rogue):** I'm better at Perception so I'll stick with that. [Rolls dice] Ha, I got a 15 this time.

As many of you surely know already, the *Fantasy AGE* RPG is the game played on *Titansgrave: The Ashes of Valkana*, Wil Wheaton's web series on Geek & Sundry. Wil is a big fan of Green Ronin's *Dragon Age* RPG and had featured it in Season 1 of his *Tabletop* show. When it came time to do Titansgrave, he approached Green Ronin about using the AGE rules and of course we said yes! We worked hard to make the show a reality and we're really excited to be a part of something that's introducing new people to the fun of tabletop RPGs. If you've enjoyed the show or just want a cool science fantasy adventure series, you can check out our companion book *Titansgrave: The Ashes of Valkana*! It has all the adventures from Season 1 plus world info, rules support, and new options so you can make the story your own.

**Jack (GM):** You approach one of the corpses and look it over. The wounds were not made by weapons. The way the clothing and armor are torn, you'd guess claws. Big claws.

**Chris (Mage):** Do the corpses smell?

**Jack (GM):** Now that you are closer, yes, they do. The hot sun is making it worse by the minute, too.

**Chris (Mage):** So they've been dead for a while, which probably means the attack ended some time ago. I don't see any creatures with claws in the area, so I'm going to move into the caravan and search for survivors.

**Nicole (Warrior):** I'm going to climb on the one of the carts and use the vantage point to keep an eye on things.

**Jack (GM):** Roll a Perception (Searching) test, Chris.

**Chris (Mage):** [Rolls dice] I got a 9. Not a great roll.

**Jack (GM):** No, not great. You find more bodies but no survivors.

**Nicole (Warrior):** Maybe some of the dwarves ran away. If I watched my friends get torn open like that, I might hoof it.

**Kate (Rogue):** You could be right. I'll look for tracks. That's a Perception (Tracking) roll, right?

**Jack (GM):** That's correct.

**Kate (Rogue):** I rolled an 11.

**Jack (GM):** The tracks are confusing around the caravan. You can see many sets of prints, some dwarf and some from larger bipeds.

**Chris (Mage):** Bipeds with large claws. I don't like the sound of that.

**Jack (GM):** You do find one set of dwarf prints leaving the scene though. Whoever it was seems to have been wounded, as there are drops of blood every few feet. The trail leads off the road and back towards the forest.

**Chris (Mage):** Let's follow it.

**Kate (Rogue):** Agreed. I will lead the way.

**Jack (GM):** You follow the trail back into the woods. Maybe 30 feet from the edge you find a dwarf under a fallen log. He looks unconscious and wounded, but alive.

**Chris (Mage):** No time to mess around. I approach the dwarf and cast my Healing Touch spell. I'm using 2 magic points.

**Jack (GM):** Make your casting roll. As I recall, Heal has a Target Number of 10.

**Chris (Mage):** It does indeed. [Rolls dice] And I got a 12. [Rolls dice again] He gets back 7 Health from the spell.

**Jack (GM):** You touch the prone dwarf and the healing magic spreads from your hands. He's lost a lot of blood but the spell revitalizes him and he wakes up with a start.

**Chris (Mage):** Easy, friend. You're safe now.

**Jack (GM):** The dwarf relaxes a bit and regards the three of you. "Thank you for helping me. Where are the rest of my kin?"

**Kate (Rogue):** You are the first dwarf we've found alive I'm afraid.

**Nicole (Warrior):** Can you tell us what happened?

**Jack (GM):** "It was the damn caravan master," says the dwarf. "He thought we could save time if we pulled up camp in the middle of the night. I argued with him but he wouldn't listen. I was worried when we passed into those woods but thought we were all right once we made it through. Then they came at us from the shadows — big brutes with claws as big as my head. After I saw three of the guards go down, I made a run for it. One of them caught me in the shoulder with a claw but I kept running. I made it to the woods and hid. After some time the screams and sounds of battle faded, then I passed out. Next thing I saw was you."

**Nicole (Warrior):** The size makes me think ogres but that doesn't seem quite right.

**Chris (Mage):** No, it doesn't. Ogres are not stealthy and they usually attack with weapons, not claws. We've got a mystery on our hands.

**Kate (Rogue):** As usual! So much for a sunny day of leisurely travel.

# THE GROUP DYNAMIC

Much of this book is focused on teaching you the rules and how to make a character. It is important to remember that roleplaying is a group activity. There are two aspects to this: the adventuring group and the player group.

Your character is one member of the adventuring group (also known as a party). Each character in the group has individual goals, but there are also larger group goals. The characters may have their disagreements and even feuds, but for the game to go on they must remain together. The adventures

themselves often assure this by their plot and structure, but a good group dynamic can help. This can start during character creation when everyone is settling on what they want to play. It's a smart idea, for example, to make sure you have at least one character of each class in the group. When working out ties and goals amongst the PCs, you can build in reasons for the characters to adventure together.

The people gaming with you make up the player group and that too has a dynamic. You and your friends are going to be spending a lot of time together, so you want a group of people who fundamentally get along. Roleplaying is meant to be fun for everyone, so be aware of tension around the table. Some players try to make the game all about them, hogging the spotlight and trying to insert themselves in every scene. Don't act that way; .everyone deserves a chance to shine, so be ready to take a step back when someone has a good idea or is pursuing something important for his or her character.

If a game session didn't go well for some reason, talk it about it afterwards. It won't do any good if everyone goes home to stew. Try to figure out where things went wrong and see if you can come up with solutions so it doesn't happen again.

A common problem is a player who is unhappy with their character. Maybe the character doesn't fit into the group well, or maybe the player finds another class preferable after some play experience. This doesn't have to be a problem. It's perfectly fine for a player to make a new character of the same level and retire the old character. It is preferable to do that than to make a player continue to play a character they aren't having fun with.

# BASIC GAME CONCEPTS

Before you delve into the rest of the book, here's a brief overview of the basic concepts of the game. You'll learn more about all of these things as you read on.

## CHARACTERS

In the *Fantasy AGE* RPG you will make a character. You can play a dwarf, an elf, a gnome, a halfling, a human, or an orc. You then pick one of three classes: mage, rogue, or warrior. Your class defines the core of your character and determines the powers at your command. Your character begins at level 1 as an inexperienced adventurer. By surviving encounters and overcoming challenges, your PC gains experience points and rises in level. Your character may eventually make it to level 20 and become one of the mightiest heroes of the campaign setting. It won't be easy, though.

## ABILITIES

Your character has nine abilities, such as Intelligence and Strength, and each one has a numeric rating, with 1 being average. When your character wants to do something, the GM may call for an ability test. This is a dice roll to determine success or failure, and it's the most common roll in the game. To make an ability test, you simple roll three six-sided dice (3d6), add the results together, and add the appropriate ability. This generates a test result, which you want to be as high as possible.

### TEST RESULT = 3D6 + ABILITY

You may have to apply other bonuses or penalties, most commonly ability focuses that represent areas of special expertise. Once you determine your test result, the GM will let you know if it's a success or a failure and what happens.

Your character also has a Health score. When damage is inflicted, this reduces Health. If it reaches 0, your character may die.

## STUNTS

In combat your character can perform stunts. When doubles are rolled on an attack roll, this generates "stunt points." You can then use these points to pull off a number of special maneuvers. Stunts help keep combat dynamic and fun. There are also spell stunts, which let mages enhance their spells.

## GAME DICE

*Fantasy AGE* only uses one type of dice: the six-sided die, also known as the d6. This is the most common die and it can be found in many classic boardgames if you need to scrounge for some. In general dice are rolled four different ways in *Fantasy AGE*:

- **1D3:** Sometimes you need to generate a number from 1-3. In that case you roll a d6 but halve the result, so a roll of 1-2 = 1, a roll of 3-4 = 2, and a roll of 5-6 = 3.

- **1D6:** You roll a single die and simply read the result. Sometimes there is a modifier attached, for example 1d6+3. In that case, just add the modifier to the die roll. If you rolled a 2, for example, you'd add the modifier of 3 to get a result of 5.

- **2D6:** As above, but you roll two dice and add them together. If you rolled a 3 and a 6, for example, your result would be 9.

- **3D6:** As above, but you roll three dice and add them together. If you are making an ability test, you must ensure that two of the dice are one color and the third a different color. That third die is known as the Stunt Die, and it's important. The result of the Stunt Die can determine your level of success and allow you to perform stunts.

# WHERE NEXT?

If you are a player, Chapters 1-6 are for you. They provide the key information you need to know about the game. When you are ready to make a character, go to CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION. That will explain the process and get you going.

If you are the Game Master, you should familiarize yourself with these chapters as well, as they contain the core rules of the game. You should then move on to CHAPTERS 7-12. They explain your unique and important role in a tabletop RPG and give you valuable advice and resources.

You are now ready to enter the world of *Fantasy AGE*. Game on and may fate protect you!
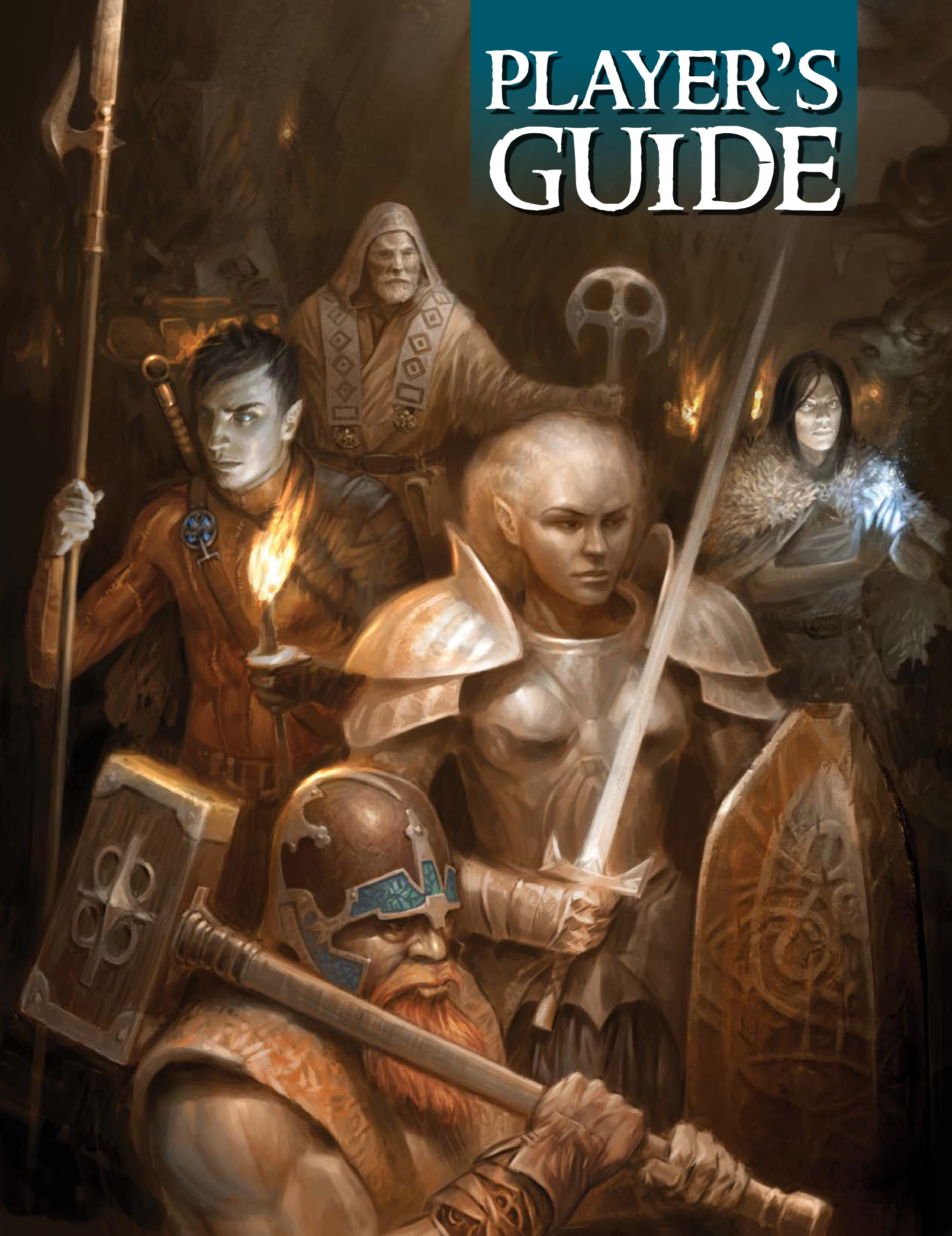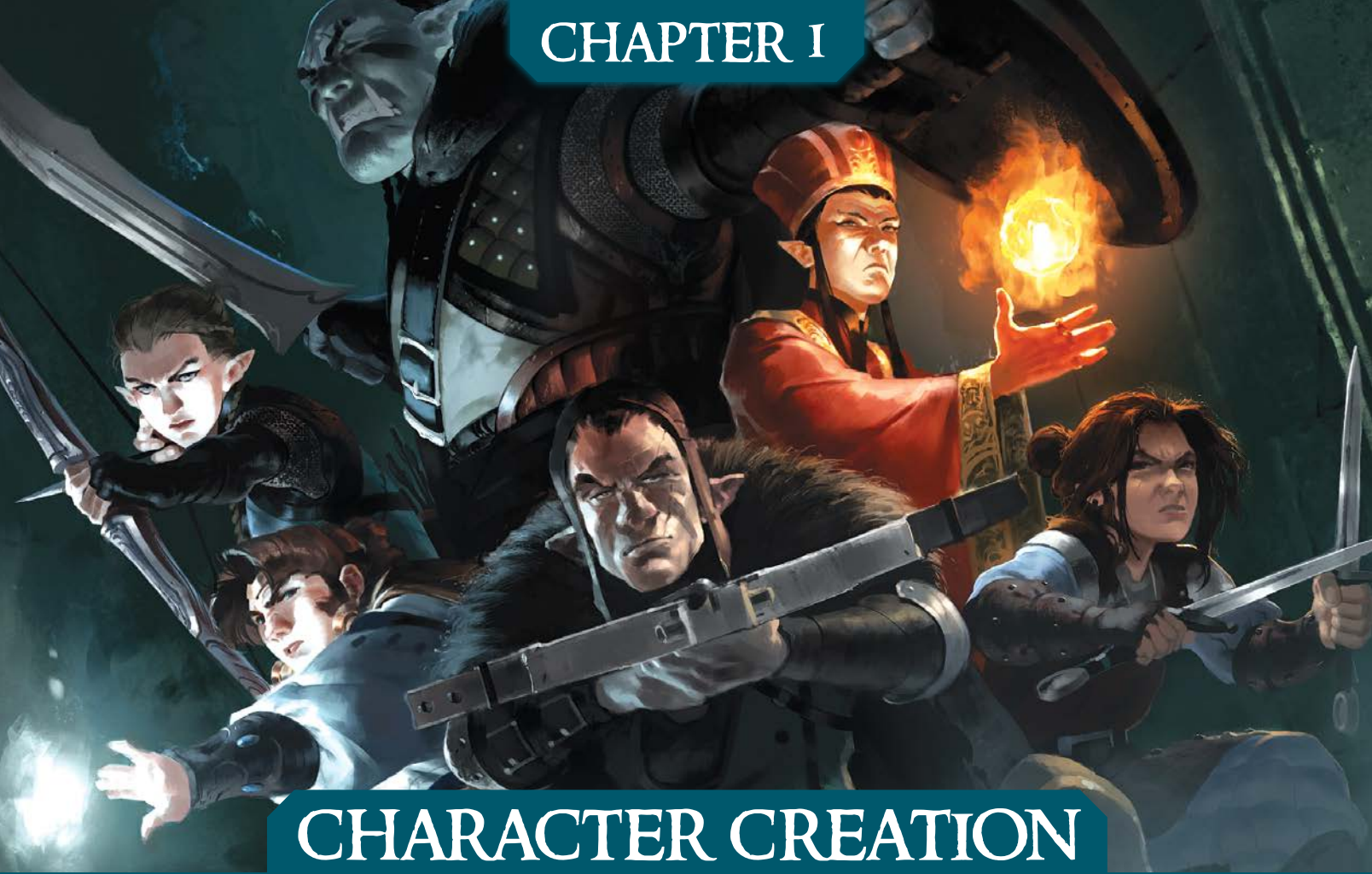
# CHARACTER CREATION

To play in a roleplaying game, you must first make a character. This is your alter ego in *Fantasy AGE*, the persona you'll take on as you experience exciting and perilous adventures. Since your character is the focus of your play experience, making the right character for you is quite important. If you end up with a character you find unappealing or who isn't fun to play, your enjoyment of the game will diminish. So don't be afraid to take some time and put some thought into creating your character. This chapter explains the whole process and provides examples so you can see how it's done. When you are finished, you'll have a character ready to play.

## GETTING STARTED

The first time you read this chapter, you will come across rules and terms you don't understand yet. Don't panic. You'll learn everything you need to know as you work your way through the chapters and you'll want to at least skim the first six chapters before you sit down to make a character. Also remember that there is a glossary at the back of the book. You can look up important terms there at any time.

Before you start making a character, you will need a character sheet. This is a record of your character and you use it to keep track of your various abilities and powers. You'll find a blank character sheet in the back of this book that you can copy if you wish. You can also download a PDF version of the sheet from **greenronin.com**.

## MAKING A CHARACTER IN 9 EASY STEPS

Making a *Fantasy AGE* character is a straightforward process that you can complete in nine easy steps. The steps are listed here, and the rest of the chapter covers each step in order.

1. **CREATE A CHARACTER CONCEPT.** This is a rough idea of the sort of character you'd like to play.

2. **DETERMINE ABILITIES.** These are your character's core physical and mental attributes.

3. **CHOOSE A RACE.** Your character can be an elf, dwarf, gnome, halfling, human, or orc.

4. **DETERMINE SOCIAL CLASS AND BACKGROUND.** Your background is what you did before becoming an adventurer.

5. **CHOOSE A CLASS.** This is your character's calling in life. You can choose mage, rogue, or warrior.

6. **PICK STARTING EQUIPMENT.** Your character needs gear before the adventures begin.

7. **CALCULATE DEFENSE.** This helps your character survive combat encounters.

8. **PICK A NAME.** Every hero needs a good name!

9. Choose goals and character ties. They help give your character personality.

# CHARACTER CONCEPT

Before you sit down to make a character, you should learn a little bit about the setting you'll be playing in. *Fantasy AGE* can be used with a wide variety of settings, so talk to your GM to find out where your game will be set. Once you've found out some basic information about the world, you can start thinking about what kind of character you want to play. You'll make the three most important choices—your race, background, and class—in steps 3 to 5 of character creation, but before you get there it's a good idea to come up with a basic character concept. This can be quite broad to start; the process of character creation will help you focus it.

When coming up with a character concept, remember that one of the conceits of the game is that your character begins as an unknown and struggling adventurer. You don't get to start play as the crown prince or an archmage. You have to earn your honors, and you can be sure there will be a price. So start thinking about who your character is and how they became an adventurer. Here are some example character concepts:

- Street urchin who'll do anything to survive.
- Free spirit who fled from an arranged marriage for a life of adventure.
- Naïve farmer who wants to travel farther than 5 miles from where he was born.
- Child of a disgraced knight who wants to return honor to her family name.
- Cynical mercenary who trusts little but coin.
- A seeker of forbidden knowledge who often acts before thinking.
- An artist seeking inspiration in dark and dangerous places.
- A refugee whose village was sacked and destroyed.
- A child of the forest more comfortable around animals than people.
- Scion of a merchant family who wants more from life than ledger books.

## EXAMPLE

*Nicole and her friends are starting a Fantasy AGE campaign, so she must make a character. After talking over the setting with the group, Nicole decides that the despotic King executed her character's parents on trumped-up charges for political reasons. Her character grew up hard in a church-run orphanage and as an adult she yearns for justice and vengeance in equal measure.*

# ABILITIES

Your character is defined by nine abilities: Accuracy, Communication, Constitution, Dexterity, Fighting, Intelligence, Perception, Strength, and Willpower. Taken together these abilities map out your character's strengths and weaknesses. You determine your abilities randomly by rolling dice, giving each one a numeric rating ranging from –2 to 4. The higher the ability, the better. A –2 is quite awful while a 4 is outstanding; a 1 is average.

## ABILITY OPTIONS

The character creation rules were designed with the beginner in mind. Random elements make the process easy because they cut down on decision making. If you have some RPG experience or just want more control when determining your abilities, however, you can use one of the following two options for determining abilities, with your GM's permission.

### OPTION 1: ARRANGING ABILITIES

In this option you roll your abilities randomly as described below. However, you can assign the results as you wish, so you can decide which rating goes with which ability. Instead of rolling in the ability order of the character sheet, you simply roll nine times on the **Determining Abilities** table and note the results on a piece of scratch paper. Then you assign each rating to the ability of your choice.

### OPTION 2: BUYING ABILITIES

Option 1 provides you with more power over your character's starting abilities, but some players want total control. In this option your character's abilities start at 0 and you get ten advancements to increase them. Each advancement you spend raises an ability by 1, but no ability can be greater than 3. You must spend all ten advancements. Races and backgrounds then modify these starting ratings as normal.

Note that unlike some similar systems in other RPGs, this option does not allow you to make some abilities worse so you have more advancements to spend on others.

During play your abilities can increase as you gain experience and learn how to better harness your natural aptitudes.

Abilities are a key component of the game and you'll be using them frequently. You'll find it useful to understand the nature of each ability, so descriptions of them follow.

- **ACCURACY** represents your character's physical precision and skill with finesse and ranged weapons, such as bows and rapiers.
- **COMMUNICATION** covers your character's social skills, personal interactions, and ability to deal with others.
- **CONSTITUTION** is your character's fortitude and resistance to harm.
- **DEXTERITY** encompasses your character's agility, hand-eye coordination, and quickness.
- **FIGHTING** is your skill at combat with heavier weapons, such as axes and spears.
- **INTELLIGENCE** is a measure of your character's smarts, knowledge, and education.
- **PERCEPTION** covers all the senses and the ability to interpret sensory data.
- **STRENGTH** is your character's physical prowess.
- **WILLPOWER** encompasses mental toughness, discipline, and confidence.

| DETERMINING ABILITIES | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3D6 ROLL | STARTING ABILITY | 3D6 ROLL | STARTING ABILITY |
| 3 | –2 | 11 | 1 |
| 4 | –1 | 12 | 2 |
| 5 | –1 | 13 | 2 |
| 6 | 0 | 14 | 2 |
| 7 | 0 | 15 | 3 |
| 8 | 0 | 16 | 3 |
| 9 | 1 | 17 | 3 |
| 10 | 1 | 18 | 4 |

# DETERMINING ABILITIES

You roll dice to determine your starting abilities. You will need three 6-sided dice (3d6). Roll all three and add them together to get a result. If you rolled 3, 4, and 6, for example, your result would be 13 (3 + 4 + 6 = 13).

You need to make nine of these rolls all together—one per ability. On your character sheet, you'll notice a list of abilities. Starting at the top, make a dice roll for each one, and consult the **Determining Abilities** table to determine your starting ability. A roll of 11 on the chart, for example, means the ability's starting score is 1. Continue this process until all nine abilities have starting scores.

When you are done, you may swap any two abilities. This gives you a chance to customize your character a bit.

### EXAMPLE

*Nicole must now roll for her character's abilities. She rolls 3d6 and gets a 10. Looking at the character sheet, Nicole sees this gives her character a starting score of 1 on her first ability (Accuracy). She makes 8 more dice rolls, getting 7, 13, 10, 13, 8, 14, 13, and 16. Her character's starting abilities are thus Accuracy 1, Communication 0, Constitution 2, Dexterity 1, Fighting 2, Intelligence 0, Perception 2, Strength 2, and Willpower 3. She then has the option of switching two of her scores. Nicole decides to swap Strength and Willpower, so she ends up with a Strength 3 and Willpower 2.*

## ABILITY FOCUSES

A focus is an area of expertise within the larger ability. While Intelligence as a whole determines how smart your character is, for example, a Heraldry focus would indicate a special knowledge of coats of arms and royal families. In game system terms, if you have a focus, your ability is effectively 2 higher than normal when working within that specialty. This is explained in greater detail in **Chapter 2: Basic Rules**.

Ability focuses (or focuses for short) are one of the ways to make your character unique. There may be another warrior in your adventuring party, but your focuses can be completely different. You don't need to worry about choosing focuses now; that happens later in the character creation process.

Your character will get access to focuses through backgrounds, classes, and talents. For more information about ability focuses, see **Chapter 3: Character Options**.

*Fantasy AGE* includes the following focuses. You may find new focuses in various AGE setting books.

- **Accuracy:** Arcane Blast, Bows, Black Powder, Brawling, Dueling, Grenades, Light Blades, Staves.

- **Communication Focuses:** Animal Handling, Bargaining, Deception, Disguise, Etiquette, Gambling, Investigation, Leadership, Performance, Persuasion, Seduction.

- **Constitution Focuses:** Drinking, Rowing, Running, Stamina, Swimming.

- **Dexterity Focuses:** Acrobatics, Calligraphy, Crafting, Initiative, Legerdemain, Lock Picking, Riding, Piloting, Sailing, Stealth, Traps.

- **Fighting:** Axes, Bludgeons, Heavy Blades, Lances, Polearms, Spears.

- **Intelligence Focuses:** Arcane Lore, Brewing, Cartography, Cryptography, Cultural Lore, Engineering, Evaluation, Healing, Heraldry, Historical Lore, Military Lore, Musical Lore, Natural Lore, Navigation, Religious Lore, Research, Writing.

- **Perception Focuses:** Empathy, Hearing, Searching, Seeing, Smelling, Tracking.

- **Strength Focuses:** Climbing, Driving, Intimidation, Jumping, Might, Smithing.

- **Willpower Focuses:** Courage, Faith, Morale, Self-Discipline.

# RACE

You can choose from six races in *Fantasy AGE*: dwarf, elf, gnome, halfling, human, and orc. Your choice may have important implications in the setting you're playing in, so check with your GM if you have any questions. It also has concrete effects on your developing character. Your choice of race will modify one or more of your abilities, give you one or more focuses, determine the languages you can speak and write, and possibly provide other benefits as well. Once you decide on your race, you'll get certain benefits automatically, plus two more rolled on a random table.

This rulebook covers what are considered the classic fantasy races. Your campaign setting may have some more unusual options. Your GM will let you know if that's the case.

### EXAMPLE

*Nicole considers the various races, but decides to stick with human for her character. This allows her to increase her Fighting from 2 to 3. She can then choose between two focuses: Dexterity (Riding) or Constitution (Swimming). She decides equestrian lessons were pretty unlikely at the orphanage, so goes for Swimming. She then notes her basic Speed and that she speaks and reads the Common Tongue. She then rolls twice on the **Human Benefits** table and gets a +1 to her Constitution (bringing it to 3) and the focus Accuracy (Brawling). Apparently it was a hard knock life at that orphanage.*

Some campaign settings include mixed heritage characters (half-elves, to pick a classic example). Exactly which races can procreate together varies depending on the setting, so talk to your GM about what you'd like to do before making such a character. You can create a character of mixed heritage easily enough with the rules. First, decide which race in the character's heritage is dominant. Use that race's basic rules with one exception: Instead of rolling twice on the dominant race's **Benefits** table, you'll roll once on that and once on the **Benefits** table of your character's other race.

## EXAMPLE

*Kate wants to play a character whose parents were an elf and a human. She decides her character's elven heritage is dominant. While making her character, she uses the elf rules. However, she only rolls once on the **Elf Benefits** table. Her second roll is on the **Human Benefits**, to represent her character's human heritage. She rolls +1 Accuracy from the **Elf Benefits** table and +1 Strength from the **Human Benefits** table.*

# DWARF

Courageous and stalwart, dwarves are known for their skill at arms and their talent as miners and builders. They call the hills, mountains, and underground cities home, but many dwarves are wanderers or merchants, responsible for bringing both trade and news back to their holdfasts. Dwarf enclaves are also common in human cities. While not xenophobic, they are considered gruff and exclusionary by many of the other races. However, once a dwarf considers someone a friend, they are loyal and kind forever after. By the same token, a dwarf who's been betrayed has a long memory and will bear that grudge for centuries.

Dwarves are organized into clans of varying sizes, which are connected by a web of alliances and rivalries. The amount of responsibility an individual dwarf holds depends entirely on their standing in the clan. A young but trustworthy dwarf could hold significantly more power than an older, more experienced family member who's proven unreliable.

Not as small as halflings, nor as tall as humans, adult dwarves range in height from four to five feet, but are stocky and solidly built. Dwarves are famous for their beards, which they grow long and wear plaited, braided, in tails, or any number of other styles.

## DWARF NAMES

**Female Names:** Ailine, Dara, Kalin, Klara, Mora, Telka, Ulma.
**Male Names:** Bodag, Crag, Doffin, Hador, Gurt, Throrik, Warrik.
**Clan Names:** Bronzeblade, Highcliff, Ironshield, Rockhammer, Steelhelm, Stonebones.

## PLAYING A DWARF

If you choose to play a dwarf, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Constitution ability.

- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Constitution (Drinking)** or Intelligence (Evaluation).

- You have Dark Sight, which allows you see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

- Your Speed is equal to 8 + Dexterity (minus armor penalty if applicable).

- You can speak and read Dwarven and Common Tongue.

- Roll twice on the **Dwarf Benefits** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

| 2D6 Roll | Benefit |
|---|---|
| 2 | +1 Willpower |
| 3-4 | Focus: Intelligence (Historical Lore) |
| 5 | Focus: Constitution (Stamina) |
| 6 | Weapon Group: Axes* |
| 7-8 | +1 Fighting |
| 9 | Focus: Strength (Smithing) |
| 10-11 | Focus: Intelligence (Engineering) |
| 12 | +1 Strength |

*DWARF BENEFITS*

\* If the class you choose provides this already, you can take the focus Fighting (Axes) instead.

# ELF

Elves are graceful and perceptive people with intrinsic connections to the natural world. They make consummate hunters and scouts, and are heirs to ancient magical traditions as well. They favor woodlands, rainforests, and jungles, constructing their dwellings and cities in and amongst the trees, sometimes high off the ground. Some branches of elfkind leave the forests behind for mighty stone cities or life on the seas.

Elves are a mercurial race, changing attitude and course of action like the wind changes direction. This often takes them far from home as they explore the world beyond their homelands. Elves embrace the adventure of meeting new people and going to new places. They are open and friendly, but it's often difficult to tell if they're being sincere or sarcastic. Regardless, most elves are brave and helpful, often coming to the aid of those who don't know as much as them about surviving in the wild.

Elves are tall, thin, and graceful people. They run in height from five to six feet with a slight build. Elves are particularly long lived, and their leaders are usually selected for their age and wisdom.

**Female Names:** Alowar, Celemor, Elowen, Faerenel, Hereal, Lanathiel.
**Male Names:** Alagolin, Effolond, Kyriel, Larrendir, Melloran, Serren.
**Family Names:** Andurarl, Arvanor, Derendil, Ellendi, Kellovan, Talloran.

## PLAYING AN ELF

If you choose to play an elf, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability.

- Pick one of the following ability focuses: Intelligence (Natural Lore) or **Perception (Seeing)**.

- You have Dark Sight, which allows you see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

- Your Speed is equal to 12 + Dexterity (minus armor penalty if applicable).

- You can speak and read Elven and the Common Tongue.

- Roll twice on the **Elf Benefits** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

### ELF BENEFITS

| 2d6 Roll | Benefit |
| --- | --- |
| 2 | +1 Communication |
| 3-4 | Focus: Intelligence (Cultural Lore) |
| 5 | Focus: Perception (Hearing) |
| 6 | Weapon Group: Bows* |
| 7-8 | +1 Accuracy |
| 9 | Focus: Dexterity (Initiative) |
| 10-11 | Focus: Communication (Persuasion) |
| 12 | +1 Perception |

\* If the class you choose provides this already, you can take the focus Accuracy (Bows) instead.

# GNOME

Gregarious and clever, gnomes are natural builders, tinkers, and engineers. They are always busy doing something, whether it's expanding their warren-like homes, fixing broken contraptions, or negotiating business deals. Like dwarves, they are known for their love of gold and gems, but unlike dwarves, they aren't miners. Gnomes would rather work or trade for the valuables they desire. A long history as merchants and wanderers have made them a race known for their business acumen. Gnomes also have magic in their blood, and commanding arcane power has helped them stand up to larger races on countless occasions. For this reason mages are always welcome in gnomish settlements and caravans.

Gnome cities are typically underground, though some branches prefer to live in wooded hills. Other gnomes take to the road and live in wagons outfitted with all the comforts of home (and a number of traps to keep thieves at bay). Whether on the road or in a settlement, gnomes defer to the wisest of their community for leadership and guidance.

Gnomes have large eyes, bulbous noses, big heads, and knobby fingers. They stand only three to four feet tall and are sleight compared to their dwarf cousins.

## GNOME NAMES

**Female Names:** Alyce, Emma, Flora, Gale, Muriel, Ruby.
**Male Names:** Cog, Flinder, Garret, Hoster, Weldon, Yost.
**Family Names:** Gemspinner, Goldwarren, Minder, Rocktapper, Trundle, Underhill.

## PLAYING A GNOME

If you choose to play a gnome, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability.

- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Constitution (Stamina)** or **Dexterity (Legerdemain)**.

- You have Dark Sight, which allows you see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

- Your Speed is equal to 8 + Dexterity (minus armor penalty if applicable).

- You can speak and read Gnomish and the Common Tongue.

- Roll twice on the **Gnome Benefits** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

### GNOME BENEFITS

| 2d6 Roll | Benefit |
| --- | --- |
| 2 | +1 Constitution |
| 3-4 | Focus: Dexterity (Traps) |
| 5 | Focus: Intelligence (Evaluation) |
| 6 | Focus: Perception (Hearing) |
| 7-8 | +1 Willpower |
| 9 | Focus: Intelligence (Arcane Lore) |
| 10-11 | Focus: Communication (Bargaining) |
| 12 | +1 Intelligence |

# HALFLING

Kindly folk who are known mostly for their love of food, drink, and the simple life, halflings are a hardworking people who make their way in life as farmers, innkeepers, and merchants. There are always those halflings who yearn for a life of adventure, however. To them the quaint villages of yeoman farmers are stultifying, so they leave at the first opportunity to see the wider world. While often stereotyped as thieves, halfling adventurers have many and varied pursuits.

Halflings call the farmlands and rolling hills home. Some build their homes inside the hills, while others prefer human-style buildings. When they live in human dominated cities,

halflings often build their homes in basements and construct larger accommodations aboveground if they expect to have boarders or do business with non-halflings.

Roughly half the size of humans (as one might expect from their name), adult halflings rarely stand more than three feet tall. They are sometimes portly, but this extra weight does little to hinder them.

## HALFLING NAMES

**Female Names:** Brook, Fiona, Merriel, Rose, Violetta, Yvonda.
**Male Names:** Braddock, Dougal, Hallaver, Samson, Perrin, Tamshan.
**Family Names:** Brewster, Buckleberry, Hornbuck, Pennywise, Summerton, Tankard.

## PLAYING A HALFLING

If you choose to play a halfling, modify your character as follows:

- Add 1 to your Dexterity ability.

- Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Communication (Bargaining)** or **Dexterity (Stealth)**.

- Your Speed is equal to 8 + Dexterity (minus armor penalty if applicable).

- You can speak and read Halfling and the Common Tongue.

- Roll twice on the **Halfling Benefits** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

| HALFLING BENEFITS | |
|---|---|
| **2d6 Roll** | **Benefit** |
| 2 | +1 Perception |
| 3-4 | Focus: Communication (Persuasion) |
| 5 | Focus: Dexterity (Initiative) |
| 6 | Focus: Willpower (Courage) |
| 7-8 | +1 Communication |
| 9 | Focus: Perception (Hearing) |
| 10-11 | Focus: Strength (Climbing) |
| 12 | +1 Accuracy |

# HUMAN

Humans are most numerous and adaptable of all the races. In fact, it's their ability to adapt to their environment that's allowed them to spread far and wide across the world, inhabiting lands alongside all the other races and making new homes for themselves in the harshest environments. Whereas there are a number of traits closely associated with the other races, humans aren't as easily pigeonholed. Some humans are greedier than the greediest dwarf, while others reject the entire concept of wealth and give away all their worldly possessions. Humans represent that which is best and worst in the world.

Human settlements run the gamut from small hamlets to vast cities, with homes from tents and wagons all the way to huge mansions and castles. Their forms of government are also many and varied. The only thing one can say with certainty

about humans is that they will always find new and inventive ways to divide themselves, squabble and even wage war on each other. The other races are grateful for this, as humans would likely take over if they could ever stop fighting amongst themselves.

Humans usually stand between five and six feet tall, but their height can vary up to a foot or more above and below that range.

**FEMALE NAMES:** Catrin, Iona, Lyn, Nikki, Sienna, Zara.
**MALE NAMES:** Aarin, Donal, Jorm, Kellan, Marric, Thom.
**FAMILY NAMES:** Apart from noble lineages, common human surnames include professions (Baker, Cooper, Smith, Ward, etc.) and place names (Highgate, Lakeside, Silverton, and so forth).

## PLAYING A HUMAN

If you choose to play a human, modify your character as follows:

• Add 1 to your Fighting ability.

• Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Dexterity (Riding)** or **Constitution (Swimming)**.

• Your Speed is equal to 10 + Dexterity (minus armor penalty if applicable).

• You can speak and read the Common Tongue.

• Roll twice on the **Human Benefits** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

| HUMAN BENEFITS | |
|---|---|
| **2D6 ROLL** | **BENEFIT** |
| 2 | +1 Intelligence |
| 3-4 | Focus: Constitution (Stamina) |
| 5 | Focus: Perception (Searching) |
| 6 | Focus: Communication (Persuasion) |
| 7-8 | +1 Constitution |
| 9 | Focus: Communication (Deception) |
| 10-11 | Focus: Accuracy (Brawling) |
| 12 | +1 Strength |

### BUT WAIT, AREN'T ORCS EVIL?

Orcs became a fantasy staple because of *Lord of the Rings*, and to many folks they retain the essential character of Tolkien's novels. In this view orcs are foot soldiers of evil, a vicious horde ever ready to destroy civilization. Orcs have now appeared in many fantasy worlds, however, and they are not always such clichés. Orcs walk the streets in Green Ronin's Freeport setting, for example. This is why we offer orcs as a core race in *Fantasy AGE*.

# ORC

Considered brutes by most races because of their practice of raiding settlements for food and supplies, orcs are powerful warriors with an undeniable ability to survive in the worst of environments. Most orcs live in wastelands, badlands, rifts, and ruins because everywhere else in the world has been claimed by the other races. In order to survive, orcs scavenge what they can from the land and attack surrounding towns and cities for everything else they need.

Orcs organize themselves into tribes controlled by the most cunning, physically powerful, or magically adept orcs. Orc chieftains maintain their positions through strength and leading successful raids, but they must always be on the watch for rivals who will challenge them to become chief.

Orcs are the most bestial of the intelligent races, with pointed, bat-like ears, slits for nostrils, hairy bodies, broad mouths, often with under bites that expose tusk-like teeth. They stand between five and seven feet in height with broad, sturdy builds. They take no great pains to cultivate their appearance, except to accentuate whichever features make them more intimidating.

**FEMALE NAMES:** Beska, Eldra, Grisha, Mag, Oota, Vol.
**MALE NAMES:** Feld, Gar, Harsk, Kurg, Scag, Tor.
**CLAN NAMES:** Blackfire, Heartblood, Irontusk, Redaxe, Sunder.

## PLAYING AN ORC

If you choose to play an orc, modify your character as follows:

• Add 1 to your Strength ability.

• Pick one of the following ability focuses: **Constitution (Stamina)** or **Strength (Might)**.

• You have Dark Sight, which allows you see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

• Your Speed is equal to 10 + Dexterity (minus armor penalty if applicable).

• You can speak and read Orcish and the Common Tongue.

• Roll twice on the **Orc Benefits** table for additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together. If you get the same result twice, re-roll until you get something different.

| ORC BENEFITS | |
|---|---|
| **2D6 ROLL** | **BENEFIT** |
| 2 | +1 Constitution |
| 3-4 | Focus: Perception (Smelling) |
| 5 | Focus: Dexterity (Stealth) |
| 6 | Focus: Strength (Intimidation) |
| 7-8 | +1 Fighting |
| 9 | Weapon Group: Bludgeons* |
| 10-11 | Focus: Accuracy (Brawling) |
| 12 | +1 Willpower |

* If the class you choose provides this already, you can take the focus Fighting (Bludgeons) instead.

# BACKGROUNDS

Your character did not spring from nothing. Just like real life, upbringing and circumstances shape personality and attributes. This is represented by backgrounds in *Fantasy AGE*. They determine what your character did or trained to do before deciding on a life of adventure. The backgrounds are broad by design, and you have some room to interpret exactly what each background means in the context of your campaign setting. Your character will get one focus from the background, but just as importantly it should serve as inspiration for your character's history and personality.

Determining a background requires two rolls. First, roll on the **Social Class** table. Once you have that result, roll on the appropriate backgrounds table on the following page. If your character's social class is Middle Class, for example, roll 1d6 on the **Middle Class Backgrounds** table and record the result on your character sheet. Your background gives you the option of taking one of two ability focuses. Pick the one you want and note it down.

You'll refer to your social class again when buying equipment in Step 6 of character creation.

## EXAMPLE

*Nicole rolls a 2 on the **Social Class** table, which means her character comes from the Lower Class. She decides that her character's parents had been Middle Class, but her upbringing in the orphanage after their murder left her at a disadvantage. Nicole then rolls on the **Lower Class Backgrounds** table and gets a 5: soldier. That lets her choose one of these two focuses: Accuracy (Brawling) or Communication (Gambling). Since she already has Brawling from her race (and you can't double up on focuses at level 1), she picks Gambling. Nicole gives her results some thought, and decides that becoming a soldier was a good way for her character to escape from her circumstances. She would not join the army of the king who killed her parents, though, so Nicole is thinking she joined a mercenary company that passed through her home town.*

## SOCIAL CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

- **Outsider:** Strangers, outcasts, or vagabonds that may have had a home at some time, but now find themselves in a new land. They own nothing but what they can carry and often make a living doing whatever they need to in order to survive. Outsiders can be gruff and off-putting with no interest in making new friends; or open, gregarious, and willing to make friends who will hopefully give them work or some coins.

- **Lower:** Those who handle backbreaking labor or work at jobs that pay little more than room and board. It's a hard life and sometimes surprisingly secure if you're willing to put life and limb on the line. Other times it's a scramble to survive with nights spent sleeping in doorways while looking for the next job.

- **Middle:** The lucky few who have well-paying jobs or benefit from families who can support them. For some

in this class, life is difficult because a new source for money is always needed in order to support the overhead required by the business. For others, there is no shortage of demand for the services being offered and they thrive on taking advantage of a populace that wants what they have to offer. Families in the middle class sometimes fail and fall into the lower class, while a small few grow wealthy and successful enough to join the upper class.

- **Upper:** The wealthiest and most connected of all the classes. The people from this class are rich, important, well-known, and superior in every way. In addition to their wealth, they often have rights not possessed by the other classes. They rarely think about money or where it comes from, unless they're particularly greedy or miserly. Often, being a member of this class involves doing no work at all because being a member of the upper crust is a job all its own.

| SOCIAL CLASS | |
|---|---|
| **1d6 Roll** | **Social Class** |
| 1 | Outsider |
| 2-3 | Lower Class |
| 4-5 | Middle Class |
| 6 | Upper Class |

# BACKGROUND DESCRIPTIONS

Each background is open to interpretation depending on a character's history and experiences, so you will need to customize the background with details that make it unique to your characters. An apprentice might have studied under a kindly wizard in the middle of a cosmopolitan city, or they might have suffered through an abusive apprenticeship under a warlock with dark inclinations and lived in a tower in the middle of a swamp. Both are apprentices, and both learned important lessons that define their character, but the details are very different.

### APPRENTICE                                     UPPER

You've been trained by a spellcaster and were on your way to becoming a powerful mage. Your apprenticeship wasn't easy, but you came out the other side with valuable knowledge and experiences that set you apart from those not able or willing to delve into the mystic arts.

### ARTIST                                         LOWER

Beauty drives you. It's really all that matters. Whether beauty takes the shape of a painting, a sonnet, a sculpture, or something else entirely doesn't matter. The fact that it's beautiful and, most importantly, you made it, does. You've either apprenticed with another artist, perhaps in a studio with other would-be artists, or you have exceptional natural talent. Regardless, you likely specialize in a particular form of art. Now you just need to figure out how to make a living at it.

### CRIMINAL                                       OUTSIDER

You make your living on the streets. More accurately, you make your living off other people walking the streets. You

were an urchin, orphan, or outcast with no place in the world until others taught you how to survive … the hard way. Now, you know your way around the city. You know how to spot a mark. You know how to spot a house worth robbing. You also know, if you're caught, you're dead.

Being wealthy has afforded you opportunities to indulge in the best of life. You study what interests you, you wear whatever's in fashion, you drink fine wines and eat refined foods, you have the most interesting friends, and you're always on the lookout for the next bit of gossip. Life is fine, indeed. You may revel in your role as a member of the upper crust, or you may be the black sheep of your family. Ultimately what matters is that you're never bored.

## EXILE                                        OUTSIDER

You are a true outcast. Wherever you're from, you or your family did something that resulted in you being exiled. Perhaps you were on the wrong side of a war, had the wrong friends at the wrong time, made some business dealings that didn't end well, or simply broke some very taboo laws. Whatever it was, you've lived on the road for a while, perhaps years, and know how to make your way in the world.

## GUILDER                                        MIDDLE

You work for one of the powerful mercantile or craft guilds that control trade in the larger cities. You may know a trade, or you may just know how to manipulate money and

### OUTSIDER BACKGROUNDS

| 1D6 ROLL | BACKGROUND | FOCUS |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Criminal | Communication (Deception) or Dexterity (Lock Picking) |
| 2 | Exile | Communication (Bargaining) or Intelligence (Cultural Lore) |
| 3 | Hermit | Constitution (Stamina) or Willpower (Self-Discipline) |
| 4 | Pirate | Dexterity (Sailing) or Strength (Intimidation) |
| 5 | Radical | Communication (Persuasion) or Communication (Leadership) |
| 6 | Wanderer | Constitution (Stamina) or Intelligence (Navigation) |

### LOWER CLASS BACKGROUNDS

| 1D6 ROLL | BACKGROUND | FOCUS |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Artist | Intelligence (Cultural Lore) or Intelligence (Evaluation) |
| 2 | Laborer | Constitution (Stamina) or Strength (Might) |
| 3 | Performer | Communication (Performance) or Intelligence (Musical Lore) |
| 4 | Sailor | Constitution (Drinking) or Dexterity (Sailing) |
| 5 | Soldier | Accuracy (Brawling) or Communication (Gambling) |
| 6 | Tradesperson | Communication (Bargaining) or Intelligence (Evaluation) |

### MIDDLE CLASS BACKGROUNDS

| 1D6 ROLL | BACKGROUND | FOCUS |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Guilder | Communication (Etiquette) or Dexterity (Crafting) |
| 2 | Initiate | Intelligence (Religious Lore) or Willpower (Faith) |
| 3 | Innkeeper | Communication (Bargaining) or Perception (Empathy) |
| 4 | Merchant | Communication (Bargaining) or Communication (Deception) |
| 5 | Scribe | Dexterity (Calligraphy) or Intelligence (Writing) |
| 6 | Student | Intelligence (Historical Lore) or Intelligence (Research) |

### UPPER CLASS BACKGROUNDS

| 1D6 ROLL | BACKGROUND | FOCUS |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Apprentice | Intelligence (Arcane Lore) or Intelligence (Research) |
| 2 | Dilettante | Communication (Gambling) or Constitution (Drinking) |
| 3 | Noble | Communication (Etiquette) or Intelligence (Heraldry) |
| 4 | Official | Communication (Leadership) or Communication (Persuasion) |
| 5 | Scholar | Intelligence (Historical Lore) or Intelligence (Religious Lore) |
| 6 | Squire | Intelligence (Heraldry) or Intelligence (Military Lore) |

people to get what you want. Your talents and connections ensure you and your family do quite well, which is how you hope to keep it.

### HERMIT · OUTSIDER

You left civilization for some reason to become a hermit. Perhaps you took a holy vow, perhaps you needed time alone to ponder an important question or remove yourself from a difficult situation, or perhaps you just don't care for people and are happy to be on your own. Time on your own has hardened you and made you self-reliant.

### INITIATE · MIDDLE

You are a believer and worshiper who has joined an organized religion. You may work as an acolyte or priest of a church, be a member of a circle of druids, or even a member of a cult. You have learned from holy books and other followers about your chosen religion or the natural world around you.

### INNKEEPER · MIDDLE

You run or work at an inn. You know what's needed to keep an inn running and the customers happy, or at least happy enough to pay you for services rendered. Your inn's long-term survival often relies on your ability to spot trouble before it happens. Sometimes by turning away people you have a bad feeling about, and sometimes by making friends you can rely on for support.

### LABORER · LOWER

You carry, lift, tote, throw, handle, move, or otherwise deal with loads of material that have to be moved off of or onto ships or wagons, or into buildings. The work isn't difficult, but it is *hard* and you have the stamina and strength to show for it.

### MERCHANT · MIDDLE

You have a way with people and you use that in your business dealings to become successful. You use your charisma to get the best deals or to convince others they're getting the best deal, but all in service to your success. You may have a small merchant stand selling odds and ends in a bazaar or operate a thriving shop that specializes in carpets, foreign imports, or other valuables. Instead of a store, perhaps you travel from one place to another, buying unusual items in one place and transporting them to sell in another. Regardless of the type of merchant you are, you know how to come out ahead in any deal.

### NOBLE · UPPER

You were born a noble and raised to believe not only that you're naturally superior to everyone of a lower station, but that it was your role to take care of them as you would children who have no idea how to get by in the world. Some may call you snooty, but doing so only reveals their ignorance. You've always enjoyed the best in life and that is as it should be. If your family hasn't managed to hold onto its position, you may be trying to regain it, but no matter what, you're still a noble.

If you use the option for buying abilities, you may want to apply the same kind of system to race and background benefits for a totally custom character. There's an easy way to do just that. Instead of rolling on the various character generation tables, allot yourself 4 advancements instead. You can spend these advancements on benefits from your race table and the background of your choice. You can buy one of the ability increases for 2 advancements, or any of the other listed benefits for 1 advancement each. If you were playing an orc radical, for example, you could spend 2 advances to increase your Fighting by 1 and 1 advance to take Dexterity (Stealth) from the orc table, and then 1 advancement to get Communication (Persuasion) from the radical background (from the **Outsider Backgrounds** table).

## OFFICIAL                                    UPPER

Your game is politics and you have risen to significant heights despite your non-noble birth. Perhaps it's your way with the masses or your ability to convince others of the wisdom of your ideas, but people tend to follow your lead.

## PERFORMER                                  LOWER

You are a dancer, actor, musician, singer, or some other sort of performer. You enjoy getting in front of a room of people and affecting them in some way with your performance. You especially like it when they show their appreciation in other ways, such as with money or affection.

## PIRATE                                  OUTSIDER

You may not have been born on the water, but you call it home now. Any city you visit is merely a brief stop before heading back out to sea to find more ships to prey on. Perhaps you're actually a lawless pirate with no loyalties but to your ship and captain, or perhaps you're a privateer who only attacks and captures vessels of an enemy state. You may have been forcibly brought into your life as a pirate or signed up on your own in order to get away from a past you have no interest in reconnecting with.

## RADICAL                                 OUTSIDER

You are a troublemaker and rabble rouser. You have dedicated yourself to opposing a ruler, politician, political party, government, religion, or religious institution, and you do everything in your power to spread the word about them and their corruption. Your goal is to remove that person from power or overthrow the current system.

## SAILOR                                      LOWER

You know your way around a ship better than most. You've trained and lived at sea for long stretches of time, either in a navy or on a trading ship—maybe both at different times. You may call some port home, but most of your time is spent at sea, so you've traveled to many different parts of the world and seen things few can dream of.

## SCHOLAR                                     UPPER

When lords, generals, and politicians have questions, they come to you. You've studied extensively and if you don't know an answer to a question, you can likely find someone else or a book that does. Others may change the course of history, but you're the one who tells them how to do it.

## SCRIBE                                      MIDDLE

Books, scrolls, and portfolios are what you fill your time with. The greatest libraries, universities, and scholars of your time require your services to do what they do and they pay well for your services. Knowledge that no one ever sees isn't knowledge—it's a secret. When you get your hands on secrets, you commit them to books, then preserve and spread that knowledge across the world and through time. You may revel in the importance of your profession or despise it as an isolating, backbreaking task.

## SOLDIER                                     LOWER

You are a soldier, possibly even a guard or mercenary, who has signed up to fight for your country. You've trained for combat, but also had an education in how to live and work as part of a unit as well as how to take and execute an order. A soldier who doesn't follow orders is useless. Perhaps your time as a soldier is over and you're on your own again, or maybe you deserted for some reason.

## SQUIRE                                      UPPER

There are many knights in the world and all of them need help taking care of their mounts, cleaning their armor, sharpening weapons, and doing whatever else the knight asks. That is the role of the squire. In exchange for all that work, you get to learn what it takes to become a knight yourself. That day may be far off or very near.

## STUDENT                                     MIDDLE

Rather than spend your life making goods, fixing them, or selling them, you are one of the few wealthy, connected, or smart enough to attend a university. As a student, you spend most of your time in classes or studying—at least that ought to be the case, but it's also entirely likely that you spent your time in other pursuits you find more interesting or enjoyable.

## TRADESPERSON                                LOWER

Resting somewhere between the laborer and guilder, the tradesperson specializes in some kind of skilled manual labor, such as masonry, carpentry, clockmaking, blacksmithing, or any of dozens of other trades. You've been trained in a trade and know how to talk about its practical and theoretical applications, which allows you to accurately plan and execute jobs.

## WANDERER                                 OUTSIDER

The open road has always called to you and you have answered. Instead of calling a single location home, you regard the entire world as yours. You love to wander, find new places, and meet new people. You rarely get lost, but even when you do, it usually turns out to be an adventure worth experiencing.

# CLASSES

If background is where you came from, class is what you've become. Classes are both mythic archetypes and frameworks for your character's advancement. You have your choice of three: mage, rogue, and warrior. If you want a character that can cast spells, play a mage. If you want a character that is sneaky, play a rogue. If you want a character that can fight, play a warrior.

The classes are quite broad by design. A rogue could equally represent a thief with a penchant for burglary and a scout in a mercenary company. Your class helps define what your character can do, but it's up to you to interpret how those capabilities fit with your character concept.

### EXAMPLE

*With her background of soldier, the warrior class makes sense for Nicole's character. She could decide to buck that if she was keen to play another class though. Maybe she made a poor soldier but the mercenary company had a mage that took her as an apprentice. Nicole considers such options, but decides that delivering bloody vengeance with a two-handed axe is more her style, so chooses to make her character a warrior.*

Your character starts at level 1, which means that they are a novice adventurer. As characters complete adventures and gain experience points, they'll go up in level and get access

to new powers. There are 20 levels total in the game, with 1-5 roughly being "beginner" levels, 6-12 "middle" levels, and 13 and up being "high" level.

## CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

Each class determines certain key features of your character. A class description includes the following elements:

- **PRIMARY ABILITIES:** A class has four primary abilities. These are the abilities most important to the class and the ones used most often.

- **SECONDARY ABILITIES:** A class has five secondary abilities. These abilities are not as important as primary abilities, but all can be useful in the right circumstances.

- **STARTING HEALTH:** Health is a measure of your character's fitness and wellbeing. Class choice determines starting Health.

- **WEAPON GROUPS:** Your class determines the weapons your character knows how to use. Weapons are divided into groups and this entry tells you which ones your character is trained in. For more information in weapons and weapon groups, see **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT**.

- **CLASS POWERS:** A class provides your character with a variety of special powers, such as ability focuses and talents. These powers are listed by level in each class description.

# MAGE

A mage is a user of mystical power, able to cast magical spells that seem miraculous to most. The classic mage is a wizard whose knowledge of the arcane unlocks the secret powers of the multiverse. The mage class can be used to represent any user of extraordinary powers, however. *Fantasy AGE* treats all magic the same way, and does not presume a specific source (which can vary depending on your campaign setting). The mage class can thus equally represent sorcerers who derive power from the world's mana, priests who channel the power of the gods, or even psychics who harness the power of the mind. Your GM will let you know the specifics of magic in the campaign setting and you can come up with any concept that fits within that framework.

As a mage you are a master of supernatural power. You should stay away from melee combat (let warriors handle that) and use your spells to help your allies and harm your enemies. Mages generally don't wear armor, so you can't take as many hits as other classes. You also have limited access to weaponry. Your access to spells makes up for these limitations, though. You get access to many different spells; a mage who masters their use is a powerful character.

While mages only start with four spells, they gain more over time. These ever-increasing options require more decision making than other classes during encounters. If you've never played an RPG before, you might want to consider that before choosing this class. Whatever your experience, you'll want to read **Chapter 5: Magic** to learn more about the rules and terms used in spell casting.

Mages gain specializations as they level up, which allow them to focus their magic in various ways. They are detailed in **Chapter 3: Character Options**.

**Primary Abilities:** Accuracy, Intelligence, Perception, and Willpower

**Secondary Abilities:** Communication, Constitution, Dexterity, Fighting, and Strength

**Starting Health:** 20 + Constitution + 1d6

**Weapon Groups:** Brawling and Staves

## CLASS POWERS

Mages gain the following powers at the specified level.

### Level 1

**Arcane Blast:** If you are holding your arcane device (see following), you can make a special Ranged Attack that damages foes with a blast of magical energy. This is resolved like a normal Ranged Attack (so stunts are possible), but the attack roll is an Accuracy (Arcane Blast) test. An Arcane Blast has a range of 16 yards and inflicts 1d6 + Willpower damage. It requires no magic points to make this attack.

**Arcane Device:** Each mage has an arcane device through which they can focus magical energy. Its primary use is the channeling of Arcane Blasts, but it is used with certain spells as well. The exact nature of the arcane device differs from mage to mage. It could be a staff, wand, holy symbol, amulet, etc. You should decide what form your arcane device takes when you make your character. If you lose your arcane device, you can attune a new one to you by spending one hour and 5 magic points to do so.

**Magic Training:** This is the most important of the mage's powers. It allows a mage to cast the spells that are the hallmark of the class. You begin with two magic talents and four spells. See **Chapter 5: Magic** for more information about choosing and casting spells.

**Magic Points:** You use magic points (MPs) to power your spells. You start with a number of magic points equal to 10 + Willpower + 1d6. You must keep track of your current magic points; this is a measure of how much magical power is at your command at any given time. You spend magic points when you cast spells. You regain them through rest

and meditation. See **Chapter 5: Magic** for details. You gain more magic points as you rise in level. From levels 2 to 10, you gain Willpower + 1d6 magic points whenever you gain a new level. From levels 11 to 20, you gain only your Willpower in MPs because increasing your power at higher levels is not as easy.

**Starting Talent:** You become a Novice in one of the following talents: Chirurgy, Linguistics, or Lore. See **Chapter 3: Character Options** for more information.

## Level 2

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 3

**New Magic Talent:** You become a Novice in a magic talent or gain a degree in one you already have.

## Level 4

**New Specialization:** You may choose one specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent. See **Chapter 3: Character Options**.

## Level 5

**New Magic Talent:** You become a Novice in a magic talent or gain a degree in one you already have.

## Level 6

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 4.

**Spell Blast:** You can cast a spell after hitting a foe with an arcane blast. This is a stunt that costs 3 stunt points, and the spell you cast cannot have a magic point cost greater than 3. A casting roll is required as usual. For more information about stunts, see **Chapter 2: Basic Rules**.

## Level 7

**New Magic Talent:** You become a Novice in a magic talent or gain a degree in one you already have.

## Level 8

**Big Blast:** The range of your Arcane Blast attack becomes 24 yards.

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 4.

## Level 9

**New Magic Talent:** You become a Novice in a magic talent or gain a degree in one you already have.

## Level 10

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

**Power Blast:** You can increase the damage of an Arcane Blast attack by 1d6 by spending 2 magic points. You must spend the MPs before making the attack roll, and you cannot do this more than once per attack.

## Level 11

**New Magic Talent:** You become a Novice in a magic talent or gain a degree in one you already have.

**Magic Points:** Starting at level 11, you only gain magic points equal to your Willpower ability when you gain a new level.

## Level 12

**New Specialization:** You may choose one new specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent.

## Level 13

**New Magic Talent:** You become a Novice in a magic talent or gain a degree in one you already have.

**Stunt Bonus:** You are so practiced with your arcane blast that you can make attacks faster than lesser mages. When attacking with an arcane blast, you can perform the Lighting Attack stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3.

## Level 14

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 12.

## Level 15

**New Magic Talent:** You become a Novice in a magic talent or gain a degree in one you already have.

## Level 16

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 12.

## Level 17

**New Magic Talent:** You become a Novice in a magic talent or gain a degree in one you already have.

## Level 18

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 19

**New Magic Talent:** You become a Novice in a magic talent or gain a degree in one you already have.

## Level 20

**Epic Mage:** Pick one type of stunt (combat, exploration, role-playing, or spell). You gain a +1 bonus when generating stunt points of that type.

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

# ROGUE

The rogue class represents the classic trickster. You can use it to represent a thief, scoundrel, or conman, or a scout, expert, or spy. While a warrior gets by on brute strength and a mage on arcane power, a rogue relies on quickness and cleverness. Whether engaging in witty repartee or slipping a dagger between an enemy's ribs, a rogue must be artful to win the day.

As a rogue you are the eyes and ears of your adventuring group. You are excellent at ranged combat and can launch devastating melee attacks with your pinpoint attack ability. You are not, however, a true frontline fighter. Your Defense will be good due to your Dexterity, but your light armor means you can't absorb a lot of damage. Let the warriors go toe to toe with the enemy while you use stealth and surprise to keep your foes off balance.

The rogue is the most open-ended of the classes. If you aren't sure where you want to go with your character, rogue is a good choice, as the class provides the flexibility to develop in many directions.

Like Mages, Rogues gain specializations as they level up, allowing them to focus their skills in various ways. They are detailed in **Chapter 3: Character Options**.

**Primary Abilities:** Accuracy, Communication, Dexterity, and Perception

**Secondary Abilities:** Constitution, Fighting, Intelligence, Strength, and Willpower

**Starting Health:** 25 + Constitution + 1d6

**Weapon Groups:** Brawling, Light Blades, Staves, and either Black Powder or Bows

## CLASS POWERS

Rogues gain the following powers at the specified level.

### LEVEL 1

**Pinpoint Attack:** Once per round, you can add 1d6 to the damage of a successful attack if your Dexterity is greater than your opponent's.

**Rogue's Armor:** You are at home in leather armor. You can ignore the Armor Penalty of leather armor altogether. It affects neither your Speed nor your Dexterity.

**Starting Talents:** You become a Novice in one of the following talents: Contacts, Scouting, or Thievery. See **Chapter 3: Character Options** for more information.

### LEVEL 2

**Stunt Bonus:** You become more adept at finding the weak spots in your opponents' armor. You can perform the Pierce Armor stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2.

### LEVEL 3

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 4

**New Specialization:** You may choose one specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent. See **Chapter 3: Character Options**.

## Level 5

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

**Take Aim:** When you take the Aim action, you gain +2 on the attack roll instead of the normal +1.

## Level 6

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 4.

**Stunt Bonus:** You become adept at noticing the many dimensions of a tricky situation. You can perform the That Makes Me Wonder exploration stunt for 2 stunt points instead of the usual 3. See **Chapter 6: Stunts** for more information on exploration stunts.

## Level 7

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

**Stunning Attack:** You can daze opponents with sharp blows to vulnerable areas. To make a stunning attack, you must use the Aim action and then hit with a Melee or a Ranged Attack. If successful, you inflict no damage but your opponent must make a successful TN 15 Constitution (Stamina) test or become stunned. Stunned opponents can attempt the test again at the start of their turn, and if successful can act normally. Otherwise, stunned characters can only take a single Move action on their turn. While your opponent is stunned, you can use Pinpoint Attacks against them with no regard for Dexterity. Stunts are possible on your initial attack roll, so you could stun your opponent and then use lightning attack for an immediate pinpoint attack, for example.

## Level 8

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 4.

## Level 9

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 10

**Lethality:** You use your wits to hit enemies where it hurts. You can add your Intelligence to your damage when making attacks.

## Level 11

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 12

**New Specialization:** You may choose one new specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent.

**Slippery:** You are hard to pin down in combat. Opponents do not gain an attack bonus for outnumbering you in melee combat. Normally, attackers can gain up to a +2 bonus in such circumstances. If you also have the Master degree in the Single Weapon Style, your Defense bonus increases to +3 when fighting in that style.

## Level 13

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

**Stunt Bonus:** You know how to act with style and grace. You can perform the With a Flourish exploration stunt for 3 SP instead of the usual 4.

## Level 14

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 12.

## Level 15

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

**Perforate:** You know how to take advantage of an enemy whose guard is down. Perforate is a special stunt that you can perform for 2 SP if you've just hit an opponent with a pinpoint attack. You can make a second pinpoint attack against the same opponent; this second attack does not generate stunt points.

## Level 16

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 12.

## Level 17

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 18

**Quick Shot:** You can make a Ranged Attack vs. a visible opponent within range as a minor action. The attack roll and damage of the Quick Shot suffer a –2 penalty. You cannot combine Quick Shot with other powers such as Pinpoint Attack or Stunning Attack.

## Level 19

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 20

**Epic Rogue:** Pick one type of stunt (combat, exploration, or roleplaying). You gain a +1 bonus when generating stunt points of that type.

# WARRIOR

The warrior is the classic fighter. You can use this class to represent any kind martial character. Your character could be an ex-soldier, a caravan guard, a mercenary, a militiaman, or a former blacksmith turned adventurer. A warrior may fight for honor, revenge, justice, money, or a better tomorrow. Some members of the warrior class have received formal training and others fight by instinct. All can handle themselves in a scrap.

As a warrior you'll usually find yourself in the thick of combat. You have access to heavier armor and more weapons than members of any other class, and you can dish out and take a lot of damage. It is often up to you to engage the hardest-hitting enemies, so the rogues and mages of the group have the chance to use their abilities.

Like mages and rogues, warriors gain specializations as they level up, which allow them to focus their fighting abilities in various ways. They are detailed in **Chapter 3: Character Options**. If you've never played a tabletop RPG before, the warrior is a good class to start with. Your powers are straightforward and you have plenty to do in any combat encounter.

**Primary Abilities:** Constitution, Dexterity, Fighting, and Strength

**Secondary Abilities:** Accuracy, Communication, Intelligence, Perception, and Willpower

**Starting Health:** 30 + Constitution + 1d6

**Weapon Groups:** Brawling, plus any three of the following: Axes, Black Powder, Bludgeons, Bows, Heavy Blades, Light Blades, Spears, or Staves

## CLASS POWERS

Warriors gain the following powers at the specified level.

### LEVEL 1

**Starting Talents:** You become a Novice in two of the following talents: Archery Style, Dual Weapon Style, Pole Weapon Style, Single Weapon Style, Throwing Weapon Style, Two-Hander Style, Unarmed Style, Weapon and Shield Style. You also start as a Novice in Armor Training.

### LEVEL 2

**New Ability Focus:** You now gain one of the following ability focuses: **Dexterity (Riding)**, Intelligence (Military Lore), or **Strength (Climbing)**.

### LEVEL 3

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 4

**New Specialization:** You may choose one specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent. See **Chapter 3: Character Options**.

**New Weapon Group:** You learn a new weapon group of your choice.

## Level 5

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

**Stunt Bonus:** You can strike so fast in combat that your weapons are a blur. You can perform the Dual Strike stunt for 3 stunt points instead of the usual 4.

## Level 6

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 4.

## Level 7

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

**Stunt Bonus:** You know how to unhinge your opponents. You can perform the Threaten stunt for 1 stunt point instead of the usual 2.

## Level 8

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 4.

**New Weapon Group:** You learn a new weapon group of your choice.

## Level 9

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 10

**Expert Strike:** You know when to strike with precision and when to strike with power. When you make an attack, you can take up to a –3 penalty on your attack roll to receive a corresponding bonus to your damage roll. For example, you can take a –2 penalty on your attack roll to get a +2 bonus on your damage roll. Alternately, you can receive up to a +3 bonus on your attack roll if you take a corresponding penalty on your damage roll. You must choose before you roll.

## Level 11

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 12

**New Specialization:** You may choose one new specialization for your class. You gain the Novice degree of its specialization talent.

**Veteran:** Persevering through long hours of practice and many bloody encounters has made you a fearsome combatant. When you inflict damage with an attack, you can add your focus bonus to your damage total if you have an applicable weapon group focus. The focus must match the weapon group of the weapon you attack with. For example, if you attack with a battle axe, you must have the Strength (Axes) focus to get the +2 bonus damage of this power. If you have the same focus twice, the damage bonus increases to +3 as well.

## Level 13

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

**New Weapon Group:** You learn a new weapon group of your choice.

## Level 14

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Journeyman degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 12.

## Level 15

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

**Quick Strike:** You can make a Melee Attack vs. an adjacent opponent as a minor action. The attack roll and damage of the Quick Strike suffer a –2 penalty. This action cannot be combined with an Expert Strike.

## Level 16

**New Specialization Talent:** You gain the Master degree in the specialization talent you gained at level 12.

## Level 17

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 18

**Stunt Bonus:** You can sweep opponents before you. When you perform the Dual Strike stunt with a Melee Attack, you can hit two secondary targets instead of one. All three of your targets (the original target and the two secondary targets) must be adjacent to you either when you made the attack or after you've used the Skirmish stunt to move next to them.

## Level 19

**New Talent:** You become a Novice in a new talent or gain a degree in a talent you already have.

## Level 20

**Epic Warrior:** Pick one type of stunt (combat, exploration, or roleplaying). You gain a +1 bonus when generating stunt points of that type.

# GAINING LEVELS

There are two ways to gain levels in *Fantasy AGE*. First, the GM may simply elect to inform players when their characters advance a level. This usually occurs after a major milestone or campaign event is reached, such as the end of an adventure or plot arc. However, sometimes advancement can occur during a session, especially if there is a lot of in-game downtime.

The other way to advance is through experience points, or XP. The GM can choose to award experience points at the end of every adventure or session. When characters have enough experience, they advance to the next level. GMs can award more or less experience if they want to slow or increase advancement during play. The rules and guidelines for awarding experience points are in Chapter 10: Rewards.

The experience points required to attain each level are summarized on the accompanying table. When your experience point total is high enough, your character gains a level. When this occurs, four things happen immediately:

- Your character's Health increases. You gain 1d6 + Constitution at levels 1-10, and just your Constitution ability at levels 11-20 (minimum 1).

- You get one advancement to spend on one ability. When you gain an even-numbered level, you must spend it on a primary ability. When you gain an odd-numbered level, you must spend it on a secondary ability.

- You can pick one new ability focus. When you gain an even-numbered level, you must choose a focus from one of your primary abilities. When you gain an odd-numbered level, you must choose a focus from one of your secondary abilities. Starting at level 11, you can select a focus you already have to increase your bonus with that focus from +2 to +3.

## EXPERIENCE POINT TABLE

| XP Total | Level | XP Total | Level |
|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| 0 | 1 | 25,000 | 11 |
| 2,000 | 2 | 28,000 | 12 |
| 4,000 | 3 | 32,000 | 13 |
| 6,000 | 4 | 36,000 | 14 |
| 8,000 | 5 | 40,000 | 15 |
| 10,000 | 6 | 44,000 | 16 |
| 13,000 | 7 | 48,000 | 17 |
| 16,000 | 8 | 52,000 | 18 |
| 19,000 | 9 | 56,000 | 19 |
| 22,000 | 10 | 60,000 | 20 |

## ABILITY ADVANCEMENT TABLE

| New Ability Rating | Advancements Required |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| -1 to 5 | 1 |
| 6 to 8 | 2 |
| 9 to 12 | 3 |

- You gain the class powers for your new level. You can find them in the class descriptions.

- When you go up a level, you may also want to review your goals. Have any of them been achieved? Based on the events of the campaign, do you have any new goals? You can do this any time, of course, but leveling up is a convenient time to check in and reassess.

### EXAMPLE

*At the end of her most recent adventure, Nicole's character receives enough experience points to make it to level 2. First, she rolls to add to her Health. She rolls a 4 and adds her Constitution of 3, thus gaining 7 Health total. Second, she adds 1 to her Strength, making it 4. She could have raised Constitution, Dexterity, or Fighting instead, but chose Strength because she wants to do more damage with her melee attacks. She is also allowed a new focus for one of those same four abilities, so she takes Fighting (Axes). Lastly, she gets the warrior's level 2 class powers. This lets her choose one of the following three focuses: Dexterity (Riding), Intelligence (Military Lore), or Strength (Climbing). She chooses Dexterity (Riding). Nicole's character is now leveled up.*

## ABILITY ADVANCEMENT

When characters gain a level, they get an ability advancement. For lower ranked abilities this translates into a direct increase, but as a character grows in power it becomes more difficult and expensive to increase their most potent abilities. The exact number of advancements required to advance your rating to the next number depends on the new rating you're trying to obtain. For abilities up to 5, it costs a single advancement. For abilities from 6 to 8, it costs two advancements. For abilities from 9 to 12, it costs three advancements. This is summarized in the accompanying table. You get no benefit from advancements spent until you've gained the new rating. You should obviously keep a careful record of advancements spent that have not yet increased the relevant ability rating.

### EXAMPLE

*Nicole's character reaches level 6 and so receives one ability advancement. She wants to raise her Strength, which is currently 5. It takes two advancements to raise an ability to 6, so she spends one now to start the process. For the time being her Strength is still 5, but she is halfway to a higher rating. She receives another advancement at level 7 but must spend it on a secondary ability (she chooses Willpower). It is not until she achieves level 8 that he can spend a second advancement and increase her Strength to an impressive 6.*

## STARTING EQUIPMENT

Player characters do not generally start their adventures with much to their names. In play your character will have a chance to get better equipment but must start with the basics. Think of better gear as something to aspire to.

Characters begin play with the following:

- A backpack, traveler's garb, and a waterskin.
- If you are a mage, you get one weapon and an arcane device (see class description).
- If you are a rogue, you get light leather armor and two weapons.
- If you are a warrior, you get heavy leather armor and three weapons.
- If you choose a bow or crossbow, you get a quiver and 20 arrows or bolts.
- If you have the Weapon and Shield talent, you get a medium shield.

Make sure to pick weapons from weapon groups your character knows. Otherwise, you'll suffer penalties when you wield them, and there will be little point in carrying the weapons around. Also remember that some weapons have a minimum Strength requirement, so be sure your character is strong enough before picking something like a two-handed sword. You'll also want to write down your armor's Armor Rating on your character record sheet. This is a measure of the armor's protection and you'll need to know that during combat.

Your character also gets some silver pieces with which to buy additional gear. The amount of starting money depends on your character's social class. See the **Starting Money** table below to see what you have to spend. You'll find a complete list of available items in Chapter 4: Equipment.

| STARTING MONEY | |
|---|---|
| Social Class | Silver Pieces |
| Outsider | 15+3d6 |
| Lower Class | 25+3d6 |
| Middle Class | 50+3d6 |
| Upper Class | 100+3d6 |

### EXAMPLE

*Nicole is ready to outfit her warrior. She writes on her character sheet that she has a backpack, traveler's garb, and a waterskin. As a warrior, she gets heavy leather armor and three weapons. She chooses two-handed axe, mace, and crossbow. Since she took a crossbow, she also gets a quiver and 20 bolts. She then rolls 3d6 and gets 12. With her Lower Class background that means she starts with 37 silver (25 + 12). She spends 17 silver on 20 yards of rope, a lantern, and a small tent. That leaves her with 20 silver as the campaign begins, so she has some resources for food, lodging, and the like.*

Of course starting equipment is merely a suggestion and should be tailored to individual campaigns and concepts as needed. A game featuring a group of nobles might have characters who start out with substantially better arms, armor, and resources, while a party made up of escaped slaves or prisoners might not start out with even the modest equipment provided here.

# DEFENSE

There is one final number you need to calculate for your character: **Defense**. Defense measures how hard it is to hit your character in combat. The higher the Defense, the better. You calculate Defense as follows:

$$\text{Defense} = 10 + \text{Dexterity} + \text{shield bonus (if applicable)}$$

Shield bonuses are explained in **Chapter 4: Equipment**. For the moment, you just need to know that light shields have a +1 bonus and medium shields a +2 bonus.

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> *Nicole now calculates her warrior's Defense. With her Dexterity of 1, her Defense is 11 (10+1). Since her primary weapon is the two-handed axe, she can't raise that by using a shield.*

# NAMES

What is a character without a name? Although this step is toward the end of the character creation process, it should not be an afterthought. The right name can be that little something that sums up who the character is or wants to be. Each race description includes some sample names to get you started, but there are thousands of names from dozens of cultures—historical and fictional—that you can choose from. Making up your own is also, of course, an option.

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> *Nicole needs to name her warrior. She looks through some name lists and settles on Brigitte.*

# GOALS AND TIES

Now your character is almost ready to go. Before you jump into your first adventure, though, take a few minutes to think about your character's goals and what ties you might have to other characters in the group. Even if you've made your character on your own, it's a good idea to take these last steps together. Setting up goals and ties as a group allows you to riff off each other and come up with ideas that are complementary.

## GOALS

Your character can have any number of goals, but try to come up with at least three. Goals usually have something to do with why your character became an adventurer in the first place. It's not a common calling after all, and certainly not a safe one. These driving forces often translate into one or more goals.

When making your list, try to come up with a mix of short- and long-term goals. Short-term goals are things you want to focus on now, and long-term goals are of a size and scope that

may require years or even decades of struggle. A good GM will take your goals into account when running the game, and the more info the GM has to work with, the better.

So what makes a good goal? Two things. First, a good goal should help define your character by making explicit what is important. Second, it should provide story hooks that other players and the GM can grab and use in play.

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> *Nicole is nearly finished with Brigitte. At the first session of the campaign, she gets together with her group to finalize their characters. She decides Brigitte's greatest goal is to overthrow the king who murdered her parents. That's obviously a long term goal, but one that the GM can get a lot of use out of when coming up with adventures. Brigitte's next goal is to find out more about the political group her parents were a part of. Since she was young when they died, and no one in the orphanage told her anything, she knows little about it. She'd like to know what it was her parents died for. Lastly, Brigitte is looking for her best friend from her days as a soldier. The two were deployed to different units and lost track of each other. Brigitte has no family, so finding this friend is important to her.*

## TIES

The classic RPG set-up has the group meeting up in a tavern and embarking on a series of death-defying quests together despite being virtual strangers. That sort of approach can work if you are developing the characters as the campaign goes on. The group's cohesion will be stronger, however, if the characters start with some ties. It doesn't mean that all the characters need to know each other before play begins, but they should have some connections. Characters might have grown up in the same village, served in the same military unit, or even been romantic rivals. Or maybe they are distant cousins, chased by a shared enemy, or in debt to the same underworld figure.

You should try to come up with at least one tie for each other player character, even if it's a tenuous one. The group bond will grow over time but it's a good idea to plant the seed early so it can grow.

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> *The other players in Nicole's group are Kate, who is playing an elf rogue named Najah, and Chris, who is playing a gnome mage named Varuker. The players talk about some potential ties between them. Kate likes the idea of the despotic king from Brigitte's background, so she decides that Najah spent several months in the king's prison for stealing a piece of art that was, in fact, taken by a corrupt official. Chris suggests that Varuker met Brigitte when three bounty hunters attacked the warrior in a bar, and he used his magic to even the odds. Nicole likes that idea, so they make it so. With that finished, they are ready to play!*

# BASIC RULES

Now that you've made a *Fantasy AGE* character and learned a bit about the game, it's time to see how all the rules work together in play. That is what this chapter is all about. First, it gives some practical advice on being a player. It follows that up with the basic rules of play, giving you what you need to know when you sit down at the table. Here you will find rules for ability tests, narrative and action time, combat, stunts, and healing. If you feel a bit overwhelmed after reading this chapter, don't worry. You don't need to memorize all this to play. The GM is there to help adjudicate the rules, and you'll pick things up as you play. And while reading the rules is important, nothing is a substitute for play. It is during a live game that you'll really see how it all fits and works together.

## PLAYER BASICS

As you've surely noticed by now, this book contains a fair amount of rules material. The nuts and bolts of the game system are explained, along with plenty of examples to make everything clear. If you've never played a roleplaying game before, though, you may still be wondering what it means to be a player. Before getting into the nitty-gritty of ability tests and running combats, it's worth taking a step back and reviewing a few basics.

Your character sheet is a good place to start. You'll find a character sheet at the back of the book and you can photocopy this as needed (or download a PDF from www.greenronin.com).

The character sheet is the cornerstone of your Player Character. Make sure you bring it to each game session, as playing without it is difficult. Some players leave their character sheets with, or make copies for, the GM to make sure this isn't a problem.

You should also ensure that your character sheet is up to date. It's up to you to track Health, experience points, ability increases, money, and other details. When you show up at a session, your character should be ready to go. Health is going to change the most, going up and down as your character gets into fights and heals up. You may want to track this on scratch paper so you don't have to constantly erase your sheet during play. If your character is wounded at the end of a session, be sure to note current Health so you have that for next time. If you're playing a mage, your Magic Points will also change frequently as you cast spells.

You'll also want to bring dice (at least 3d6, with a different color for the Stunt Die), a pencil, some scratch paper for notes, and any drinks and snacks you might want during play. You may also need to bring one or more miniatures if you are using battle maps (see the **Using Battle Maps** sidebar in this chapter).

## PLAYING ADVENTURES

During a session you will play your character through an adventure. It's the GM's job to present the adventure and yours to play a leading role. An adventure is played out in a series of scenes known as encounters. Each encounter builds on the last and leads ultimately to a climax and a conclusion.

At the end of each play session you get experience points based on the resolution of each encounter. Rules for experience points are in **Chapter 10: Rewards**.

There are three basic types of encounters in *Fantasy AGE*:

- **Combat Encounters:** These are the classic action scenes that pit the adventuring group against one or more foes.

- **Exploration Encounters:** These scenes are about delving into the environment, and include such challenges as finding clues, overcoming natural hazards, avoiding traps, and solving puzzles.

- **Roleplaying Encounters:** These scenes are for conversation, intrigue, and investigation.

Each type of encounter has different challenges and rewards. Some require a lot of dice rolling and others none at all. Different players around the table may prefer different types of encounters. One may live for the thrill of combat, another for the challenge of problem solving, and another for the immersion of roleplaying. A good adventure will use all three types of encounters to mix things up and provide something for everyone.

# ABILITY TESTS

During a game session, the GM sets the scene and then the players decide how their characters act and what they do. As a player, you narrate the actions of your character. You might say, "I search the library for a tome about the Korrite Heresy." The GM tells you the results of your action, and may introduce new elements into the scene. For example: "You search for 10 minutes but before you find what you are looking for an angry priest bursts into the library and confronts you."

When your character is taking everyday actions that do not have a significant chance of failure, no dice need to be rolled. It's enough to say that you are walking to the tavern or buying a dagger from the local weaponsmith. When you want your character to do something that requires risk or has a real chance of failure, that's when the dice come out.

To resolve actions you must roll an ability test. These tests are the heart of the *Adventure Game Engine* and you'll make many in each game session. Ability tests are easy to learn and quick to resolve, so the game can keep moving at a good pace.

To make an ability test, first pick up three six-sided dice (3d6). Two of the dice should be one color and the third a different color. The off-color die is known as the Stunt Die (see **The Stunt Die**). Roll all three dice and add the results together; you want to roll high. You then add the ability you're testing and another 2 if you have an applicable ability focus. The final number is your test result.

### Test result = 3d6 + ability + focus

Even if you have several focuses that could apply, you can only use one on a test. You can never gain the benefits of more than one focus on an ability test.

## EXAMPLE

*The rogue Najah is trying to vault over a fence while on the run. The GM decides this is a Dexterity test. Najah's player rolls 3d6 and gets a 10 (3 + 3 + 4). She then adds her character's Dexterity of 3 and another 2 because she has an applicable focus (Acrobatics). Najah's final test result is 15 (10 + 3 + 2).*

When ability tests are referred to in *Fantasy AGE* books, they use the following format: Ability (Focus). Intelligence (Arcane Lore) and Constitution (Swimming) are examples of this format. In most cases, it does not matter if you have the listed focus. You can still attempt the test; you just won't get the bonus a focus provides. Some tests demand specialized skill or knowledge to even attempt, however, and those require you to have the focus to even attempt the test. If you don't have the required focus, you automatically fail. These tests note that the focus is required by using this format: Intelligence (Navigation required).

## EXAMPLE

*The mage Varuker and the rogue Najah find a book written in a strange script. Naturally, they try to decipher it. The GM tells the players that the test will be Intelligence (Arcane Lore required). Varuker has the Arcane Lore focus so he is able to make a test and read the book. Najah does not have the focus, so she has no hope of deciphering the book. It's gibberish to her.*

## STUNT POINTS

When doubles are rolled on certain types of tests, this generates stunt points (abbreviated SP). You can then use these points to pull off a number of special maneuvers. Stunt points are used primarily in combat encounters to keep fights dynamic and fun, along with spell stunts, which let mages enhance their spells.

If your GM permits it, you can also use stunt points in exploration and roleplaying encounters. Check out **Chapter 6: Stunts** for more information on those options.

## TYPES OF TESTS

Now that you have the final result of the ability test, you need to compare it against another number to determine the

outcome of the attempted action. There are two common types of test, basic and opposed, and you resolve each in a different way.

## MAKING A BASIC TEST

This is the most common sort of test. In a basic test, you are rolling against a fixed target number (abbreviated TN) determined by the GM.

1. You tell the GM what you are trying to do.

2. The GM determines the ability to be used and the applicable focus (if any), then assigns a target number to the task based on its difficulty and the prevailing circumstances.

3. You make an ability test and figure out your test result.

4. If your test result is equal to or greater than the target number, you have successfully passed the test and completed the action.

### EXAMPLE

*The rogue Najah is trying to climb a building in the dark of night. The GM decides this is a Strength test and Climbing is the obvious focus. The wall has many handholds but it is dark, so the GM decides the target number is 13. Najah's player rolls and her test result is a 14. Despite the darkness, the rogue skillfully climbs the wall.*

## MAKING AN OPPOSED TEST

When your character is competing with another character directly, you must make an opposed test to see what happens. In this type of test, both characters get to roll and the results are compared. Another way to think about is that your target number is determined by your opponent's test result.

1. You tell the GM what you are trying to do.

2. The GM determines the ability and applicable focus (if any) to be used by you and your opponent. The GM may then assign bonuses or penalties to the ability rolls to either of you that take circumstances into account.

3. You and your opponent both make ability tests and figure out the test results.

4. Compare the test results. If you beat your opponent's test result, you win. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Stunt Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins. If there is *still* a tie, you both should re-roll the test.

This same process can be used when more than two characters are competing. In such cases, everyone makes an ability test and all results are compared. The highest test result is the winner, with ties broken as in step 4.

Also note that that it isn't necessarily the case that all characters will be using the same ability. That would make sense in an arm wrestling bout, for example, with both characters making Strength tests. Other situations may require pitting one ability against a different one. A bodyguard trying to penetrate a spy's

### BASIC TEST DIFFICULTY

A character making a basic test must roll vs. a target number (TN) picked by the GM. The GM determines the target number based on an assessment of the test's difficulty. The GM should take all relevant factors into account, including terrain, weather, equipment, assistance, and so on. The following table provides benchmarks for basic test difficulty.

| BASIC TEXT DIFFICULTY | |
|---|---|
| **TEST DIFFICULTY** | **TARGET NUMBER** |
| Routine | 7 |
| Easy | 9 |
| Average | 11 |
| Challenging | 13 |
| Hard | 15 |
| Formidable | 17 |
| Imposing | 19 |
| Nigh Impossible | 21 |

disguise, for example, would take a Perception (Seeing) test and their opponent a Communication (Disguise) test.

### EXAMPLE

*Najah has made her climb, but she notices that a woman is taking the night air on the opposite side of the roof. She wants to quietly sneak to the trapdoor and slip into the building without the woman noticing. The GM decides that this is an opposed test of Najah's Dexterity (Stealth) vs. the woman's Perception (Hearing). Najah's player rolls a 10 and the GM rolls a 12 for the woman. The GM relates that the rogue was approaching the trapdoor when she kicked a potted plant she hadn't seen in the dark. At the sound the woman whips around and sees Najah. Now the rogue may be in trouble.*

## TESTS AND TIME

The GM determines how much time each test takes. This can vary from just a couple of seconds to an hour or more depending on what you are attempting. Sliding a dagger up your sleeve without anyone seeing would be a minor action taking but a moment, while asking around town a specific person might take two hours.

While you most commonly take tests when you initiate an action, sometimes you take them as a reaction or to resist something or someone. If pushed to the edge of a cliff, for example, you might have to pass a Dexterity test to avoid falling. Or if a mage casts a spell at you, you might have to make a Willpower test to resist the effects. These sorts of reaction tests usually happen on another character's turn and taking them is considered to take no time. When it comes around to your turn again, you get your two actions as usual.

## DEGREES OF SUCCESS

Most of the time, you only need to know if you succeeded in your ability test. Sometimes, however, it's important to know how well you succeeded. Did you just barely accomplish the task, or easily succeed at it, perhaps even with a bit of panache? This is one of the uses of the Stunt Die. Check the dice on your ability test and note the number on the Stunt Die. If you are level 6 or higher, you can add the test's focus to the Stunt Die if you have it. The higher the number, the more impressive your success is. A result of 1 on your Stunt Die means you barely pulled it off, while a 6 or better means you did it flawlessly. Note that if you failed the test, the result of the Stunt Die is irrelevant.

Your GM will tell you when the result of your Stunt Die is important.

## NARRATIVE TIME

It is the GM's job to track time in the game. It is divided into two types: narrative time and action time.

For much of play, approximate time tracking is sufficient. It isn't important to track things to the minute in most circumstances. If you tell the GM you want to climb a ridge to get a view of the surrounding countryside, the response might be, "It takes you about an hour to make the climb." Long distance travel is usually handled this way. A GM might say, "Three days later you ride into town." This sort of loose tracking is narrative time. A typical game will have sections of narrative time and action time interspersed. When the GM says, "Roll for initiative," that's the signal that the game is switching into action time.

## ACTION TIME

When things get tense and it starts to matter who does what in which order, narrative time ends and action time begins. Action time is most commonly used to handle combat, but it has other uses as well. Anything that would be considered an action scene in a movie can be handled with action time.

While narrative time is loose, action time is more tightly defined. Once it begins the GM tracks time in 15-second increments called rounds (so there are 4 rounds in a minute). During each round every character or creature in the encounter gets an opportunity to act (called a turn). Once everyone has taken a turn, the round ends and a new one begins. When action time begins, the following procedure is used.

1. The GM says, *"Roll for initiative."* Action time is now in effect.

2. Each player makes an initiative roll. This is a **Dexterity (Initiative)** ability test. The GM rolls initiative for each major Non-Player Character and each group of minor NPCs (major NPCs act individually, while minor NPCs act together in groups).

3. The GM compares the test results of all the characters and arranges them from highest to lowest into an initiative list. This is the order that characters will take their turns in each round of the combat. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Stunt Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.

4. The character at the top of the initiative list takes a turn. On a turn, a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. Once the actions are resolved, this character's turn is over.

5. The next character on the initiative list takes a turn.

6. Repeat step 5 until each character has taken a turn.

7. Once each character has taken a turn, the round ends and a new one begins. Continue steps 4-7 each round. Initiative does not need to be rolled each round. The order remains set for the duration of the encounter. If new characters join the encounter, they roll initiative at the start of the round they appear and are added to the initiative list.

8. When the encounter is finished, the GM declares that action time is over. Narrative time now resumes.

### EXAMPLE

*The rogue Najah, the warrior Brigitte, and the mage Varuker are investigating an ancient graveyard when four skeletons attack them. The players each roll for initiative and the GM rolls once for the skeletons (as a group—they will act at the same time on the initiative list). Putting the test results in order, the GM writes down the initiative list: Brigitte 14, Najah 12, Skeletons 9, and Varuker 8. Brigitte takes her turn first, followed by Najah, the skeletons, and Varuker. Then a new round begins with Brigitte taking another turn, and so on.*

## TAKING ACTIONS

When it's your turn in a round, you tell the GM what you want to do. On your turn you can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. You can take these in any order and can take fewer actions if you like. You can talk while taking your actions, but since a round is only 15 seconds long, what you can say is limited.

Some actions take a negligible amount of time. They are known as free actions and they don't count toward your usual limitation on actions. The rules will note when something is a free action.

A list of the most common major and minor actions follows. You are not limited to these actions. If you want to do something else, just say so and the GM will adjudicate it. The GM may require you to roll an ability test depending on what you are trying to do.

There are two additional actions of importance: cast and Reload. Cast is used with a mage's spells and Reload is used with missile weapons. Depending on the spell, weapon, and related talents, cast and Reload can be major actions, minor actions, or free actions. See **Chapter 4: Equipment** and **Chapter 5: Magic** for more information.

## MAJOR ACTIONS

### ALL-OUT ATTACK

You attack one adjacent enemy in hand-to-hand combat, throwing the full weight of your Strength behind the attack even though your ability to react to counterattacks will suffer. If you hit, you do +1 damage, but whether or not this attack hits, you suffer –1 to your Defense until your next turn.

### CHARGE

You may move up to half your Speed (rounded down) in yards and then make a Melee Attack against an adjacent enemy. You gain a +1 bonus on your attack roll.

### DEFEND

You concentrate on defending yourself this round. Until the beginning of your next turn, you gain a +2 bonus to your Defense.

### HEAL

You provide some quick first aid to an injured ally. You must be adjacent to your ally and you must have bandages ready. This is a TN 11 Intelligence (Healing) test. If you are successful, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to the Stunt Die + your Intelligence. A character cannot benefit from another Heal action until additional damage is taken.

### MELEE ATTACK

You attack one adjacent enemy in hand-to-hand combat. An enemy within 2 yards of you is considered adjacent.

### RANGED ATTACK

You fire or throw a missile weapon at one visible enemy within range.

### RUN

You can move up to double your Speed in yards. You cannot take this action if you are prone (you'd need to use the Move action to stand up first).

## MINOR ACTIONS

### ACTIVATE

This action allows you to start using certain powers or items, such as fighting styles and potions.

### AIM

You take the measure of your opponent and plan your next strike. If your next action is a Melee Attack or Ranged Attack, you gain a +1 bonus on your attack roll.

## GUARD UP

You put your skill to use balancing action and defense. Add +1 or +2 (your choice) to your Defense until the end of this round. However, you suffer the amount you choose as a penalty to all tests you make, even opposed tests, for the remainder of the current round as well. (This is a key difference between the Guard Up and Defend actions. Guard Up only lasts until the end of the round, where Defend lasts until the beginning of your next turn.) If you choose this minor action, you must do it before any major action you take this turn. You can't follow up a Guard Up action with a Defend action.

## MOVE

You can move up to your Speed in yards. You can also go prone, stand up, mount or dismount a horse or vehicle, but if you do so you can only move at half Speed (rounded down).

## PREPARE

You pick one major action that you prepare to execute and then end your turn. Any time until your next turn, you can interrupt another character and take your prepared action immediately. If you don't use it by your next turn, the action is lost. You cannot take the prepared action if you've already taken a major action on your turn.

## PRESS THE ATTACK

You stand ready to pursue an enemy if they should fall back or flee your blows. Declare an adjacent enemy combatant when you take this action. Until the beginning of your next turn, if that enemy moves away from you, you may immediately move up to your Speed in yards in direct pursuit of that enemy at no additional cost in actions. This occurs immediately after your foe's movement, before they can do anything else. However, you can only use this minor action on an enemy you have already successfully struck in melee combat this turn (whether you inflicted damage or not). When you make your move, it need not bring you adjacent to that enemy if you can't go that fast. In that case, you simply move as far as you can before stopping. You are free to forego some or all of the movement this action allows when your enemy triggers it, if you wish.

## READY

You can unsheathe a weapon, pull out a potion, or otherwise ready an item that is stowed. As part of this action, you can put away something already in hand. You could thus put away your bow and a draw a sword, for example.

## STAND FIRM

You lower your weight and prepare to resist any and all efforts to move you from the place where you stand. Until the beginning of your next turn, any enemy who uses the Skirmish or Knock Prone stunts to move you or knock you to the ground must succeed in an opposed test pitting their Strength (Might) vs. your choice of your own Strength (Might) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) in order to move you or knock you prone. This test can only be attempted after your opponent spends the

relevant stunt points, which are nevertheless expended to no effect if you win the test. An opponent who attempts to Skirmish you more than once as part of a single attack (to move you more than 2 yards) only makes a single opposed test against you, with all of the skirmishing movement hanging in the balance.

# VARIABLE ACTIONS

## CAST

You attempt to cast a spell, which requires a casting roll. This may be a major action, minor action, or free action depending on the spell and the stunts used.

## RELOAD

You reload a missile weapon. This may be a major action, minor action, or free action depending on the weapon used, your talents, and the stunts used.

# COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

Sometimes words are not enough. Sometimes conflict can only be settled in brutal combat. Young adventurers seek out such trials in the quest for honor and glory; veterans know that any fight you walk away from is a good one. Few are ready for the overpowering din of battle. Arrows hiss through the air, steel clashes with steel, magical fire explodes, and the injured and dying cry for aid. Here you must fight for your life or become another forgotten corpse in the endless battles of *Fantasy AGE*.

Combat is the major feature of action time. Like everything else in *Fantasy AGE,* the core of combat is the ability test. Since lives are on the line, however, some additional rules are required. Specifically, you need to know how attacks are made, how damage is inflicted, and what it takes to kill a character.

## MAKING ATTACKS

There are two basic types of attack: melee and ranged (magical attacks from spells are covered in **Chapter 5: Magic**). Both are handled the same way.

1.  You start by picking a target. To make a melee attack, you must be adjacent to your opponent. Adjacent means within 2 yards of your target. To make a missile attack, you must be able to see your target and be within range. See **Chapter 4: Equipment** for more information about weapon ranges.

2.  You make an attack roll. This is an ability test based on the weapon group of the weapon you are using (Fighting for heavy blades, for example, or Accuracy for bows). This is modified by a focus if applicable and any other relevant bonuses (such as aiming, charging, magic items, talents, etc.).

3.  Your attack roll is a basic ability test. Your target number is your opponent's Defense.

4.  If your test result is equal to or greater than your opponent's Defense, your attack has hit.

## EXAMPLE

*It's the warrior Brigitte's turn. She sees a skeleton 3 yards away and uses the Charge action to close the distance and make an attack. Brigitte's player makes an attack roll. Brigitte is using a two-handed axe, so this is a Fighting (Axes) ability test. The roll is a 9, and she gets +3 for her Fighting ability, +2 because she has the Axes focus, and another +1 for charging. Her test result for the attack roll is thus 15 (9 + 3 + 2 + 1). This beats the skeleton's Defense, so Brigitte hits the creature with her axe.*

## INFLICTING DAMAGE

Once you've hit an opponent, you then inflict damage. Your damage roll determines if you struck a telling blow or one that was glancing and ineffectual. Armor is important here, as it protects the wearer from a certain amount of damage. The procedure for calculating damage follows.

1.  Roll your weapon's damage and add your Strength ability and any other relevant modifiers (such as talents and magic). You can find the damage for each weapon in **Chapter 4: Equipment**. For certain weapons (such as bows), you add Perception instead of Strength to the weapon's damage.

2.  Subtract the Armor Rating of your opponent's armor (unless it's penetrating damage, in which case skip this step).

3.  The result of steps 1 and 2 is your damage total. You inflict this amount of Health damage on your opponent. Note that if your opponent is well armored you may hit but inflict no damage at all.

## EXAMPLE

*The warrior Brigitte has just hit a skeleton with a two-handed axe. The axe's damage is 3d6, so Brigitte's player rolls 3d6 and gets a 10. She adds Brigitte's Strength of 3, and then subtracts the skeleton's armor rating of 4. The damage total is 9 (10 + 3 – 4), so the GM deducts 9 from the skeleton's Health.*

## KILLING CHARACTERS

As characters lose Health, they get closer to death. Player Characters whose Health reaches 0 are dying. Note that Health never goes below 0 (there is no negative Health).

Heroes will die after a number of rounds equal to 2 + Constitution unless they receive healing. Dying characters can talk but cannot take any other actions. They die at the start of their turn on the final round, so allies have until then to save them. Most NPCs simply die when their Health reaches 0. GMs may choose to apply the PC rules to major NPCs, however.

## EXAMPLE

*The rogue Najah tries to escape from an angry mob. She takes a wrong turn down a dead end street and is cornered. She defends herself for 2 rounds, but a blow from street tough reduces her to 0 Health and Najah collapses on the cobbles. Since her Constitution is 2, Najah will die at the start of her turn 4 rounds from now. She had better hope her friends show up.*

## COMBAT STUNTS

| SP Cost | Stunt |
|---|---|
| 1+ | **SKIRMISH:** You can move yourself or the target of your attack 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend. |
| 1 | **RAPID RELOAD:** You can immediately reload a missile weapon. |
| 1 | **STAY AWARE:** You take a moment to make sure you're mindful of everything that's happening around you. Make a TN 11 Perception test with the focus of your choice. If you succeed, the GM may either make you aware of some battlefield situation that has so far escaped your notice, or give you a +1 bonus to the next test you make. This bonus can never stack with any other test bonus other than from a focus, must be used on the very next test you make (even if you're the defender in an opposed test), and expires at the end of your next turn if you haven't used it by then. |
| 2 | **KNOCK PRONE:** You knock your enemy prone. Any character making a melee attack against a prone foe gains +1 bonus on the attack roll. |
| 2 | **DEFENSIVE STANCE:** Your attack sets you up for defense. You gain a +2 bonus to Defense until the beginning of your next turn. |
| 2 | **DISARM:** You attempt to disarm the target with your melee attack. You and your opponent must make an opposed attack roll. If you win the test, you knock your enemy's weapon 1d6 + Strength yards away in a direction you choose. |
| 2 | **MIGHTY BLOW:** You inflict an extra 1d6 damage on your attack. |
| 2 | **PIERCE ARMOR:** You find a chink in your enemy's armor. The target's armor rating is halved (rounded down) vs. this attack. |
| 2 | **TAUNT:** You insult or distract one opponent of your choice within 10 yards of you. You must make an opposed test of your Communication (Deception) vs. the target's Willpower (Self-Discipline). If you win, the target suffers a –1 penalty on attack rolls and casting rolls on their next turn. |
| 2 | **THREATEN:** You strike a threatening pose, challenging an opponent of your choice within 10 yards of you. You must make an opposed test of your Strength (Intimidation) vs. the target's Willpower (Self-Discipline). If you win, they must attack you in some way (melee, missile, spell, etc.) on their next turn. |
| 3 | **LIGHTNING ATTACK:** You can make a second attack against the same enemy or a different one within range and sight. You must have a loaded missile weapon to make a Ranged Attack. If you roll doubles on this second attack roll, you do not get any additional stunt points. |
| 3 | **SET UP:** You create an opening an ally can exploit. Pick an ally. On their next turn, the ally receives a +2 bonus on the ability test of their choice. This decision must be made before the dice are rolled. |
| 4 | **DUAL STRIKE:** Your attack is so strong it affects two targets. First, pick a secondary target. This target must be adjacent to you if you are using a melee weapon or within 6 yards of your primary target if you are using a missile weapon. Apply the test result of your original attack roll to the secondary target (in other words, you only make one attack roll and apply it to both opponents). If you hit the secondary target, roll your normal damage for them, also. |
| 4 | **SEIZE THE INITIATIVE:** Your attack changes the tempo of the battle. You move to the top of the initiative order. This means you may get to take another turn before some of the combatants get to act again. You remain at the top of the order until someone else seizes the initiative. |
| 5 | **LETHAL BLOW:** You inflict an extra 2d6 damage on your attack. |

## KNOCKING OUT OPPONENTS

Sometimes characters want to incapacitate their opponents instead of killing them. When a blow is struck that would otherwise slay a character, the attacker can choose to pull the killing blow at the last second. This leaves the character unconscious with 1 Health. The character regains consciousness in 2d6 minutes unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

## DELIVERING A COUP DE GRACE

A dying or unconscious character can be killed by a coup de grace. Any adjacent enemy can perform a coup de grace as a major action, and this automatically kills the target. A ranged attack can be used to deliver a coup de grace if the attacker makes a successful attack roll vs. Defense 10.

## COMBAT STUNTS

Combat is more than two fighters taking turns whacking at each other. A good fight should be dynamic and feature a lot of movement and action. The rules described so far create a good framework but to that the game adds stunts to mix things up and make fighting a little more unpredictable.

The combat stunt system is simple. If you make a successful attack roll and get doubles on any of the dice, you can perform one or more stunts in addition to dealing your normal damage. You receive a number of stunt points (SP) equal to the value shown on the Stunt Die and must use them right away to perform stunts. Initially, all characters choose from the same list of stunts, but as characters gain levels they may get access to new stunts or get to use standard ones for fewer stunt points. These details can be found in each class's description.

You can only perform a given stunt once in a round. The only exception to this rule is the Skirmish stunt, which can be used multiple times as long as you have enough stunt points.

Once you have decided on what stunts you want to use, you can narrate how your character pulled them off. You can perform the stunts in any order you choose.

## EXAMPLE

*Brigitte is trying to fight her way through the crowd to rescue Najah before she dies. She attacks a tough on the outside of the crowd. Her attack roll is a 16 in total and her dice read 3, 5, and 5, with one of the 5s being her Stunt Die. This beats the tough's Defense so Brigitte hits. Since she also rolled doubles, she receives a number of stunt points equal to her Stunt Die (5 in this case). Brigitte is trying to fight her way through the crowd, so she decides to perform three stunts. She spends 1 stunt point to use Skirmish on the target of her attack, moving him to the side 2 yards. He also takes normal damage from the attack. Then Brigitte spends a second stunt point to use Skirmish on herself to step into the spot recently vacated by her opponent. Lastly, she spends her remaining 3 stunt points to make a Lightning Attack. Since she is still adjacent to her original target, she could attack him, but chooses to attack a new opponent: the woman now in front of her. She rolls another successful hit and gets doubles again. She does not, however, get any more SP (this is spelled out in the Lightning Attack stunt description). Brigitte's player describes how she barrels into the crowd shouting her war cry, smashing the tough aside and pushing forward to rescue her comrade.*

# GRENADES

Grenades are unusual in *Fantasy AGE* (see **Chapter 4: Equipment**) and attacking with them works differently than normal attacks. You don't need to actually hit your targets, just get close enough to catch them in the blast.

All grenades are missile weapons with a short range of 4 yards and a long range of 8 yards. Grenade attacks are handled as follows:

- To use a grenade you must first prepare it with a Ready action. If you do not throw the grenade the same round you prepare it, you become susceptible to the Kaboom! stunt (see following).

- You must pick a target area within 8 yards of you. It doesn't need to be visible to you, but there must be a way for the grenade to get there. You can throw a grenade over a hedge, for example, but you can't throw one through a stone wall.

- Once the grenade's prepared, you can throw it with a Ranged Attack action. Unlike other attacks, the target number is not a character's Defense, but a TN based on the difficulty of the throw.

- The ranged attack is a TN 11 Dexterity (Grenades) test. The GM may modify the target number for difficult throws, such as tossing a grenade through a small window.

## USING BATTLE MAPS

Many game groups play through combat encounters without the use of props. Actions are described and the GM keeps a mental picture of the battlefield and adjudicates distances and relative position on the fly. This keeps combat loose and doesn't bog the game down in tactical details. Other groups find they like to use a battle map and miniatures or other tokens to handle combat encounters because it makes it easier to see what's going on in the fight. And miniatures, particularly painted ones, look great and add a nice visual element to the game.

If your group is going to use battle maps, you'll need a miniature or token for each character. You have many choices here. The most popular miniatures are sized at 28mm and are made of either pewter or plastic. These days there are several pre-painted lines, though many gamers prefer to paint their own. There are also some cheaper options than miniatures, such as 2D tokens and cardboard stand-ups. Several companies make these in PDF format, so you can print out what you need when you need it. If all else fails, you can always use coins, colored stones, or even dice to represent characters on the map. If you do use dice, make sure no one scoops them up to make a roll!

You will also, of course, need battle maps. These come in a variety of sizes and formats. A popular option is the vinyl battle map overlaid with either squares or hexes. These can be drawn on with wet-erase markers, so terrain can be sketched out and then wiped away when the encounter is over. Dungeon walls, pits, water features, and even furniture can be quickly sketched in for all to see. Wet-erase markers come in different colors, allowing scenes to use blue for water, black for buildings, green for vegetation, and brown for relative altitudes of terrain. The height of objects can be written next to them, allowing players to distinguish quickly the 10-yard wall from the 20-yard tower.

Some companies make pre-printed maps of common locations like inns, shrines, dungeons, and so on. These have the advantage of looking great, but they must be used as is. Another option is map tiles, which are smaller areas that can be built out into a larger map. You can get printed sets of such tiles, or PDFs that you can print out as needed. There are also some computer programs that let you design your own maps and then print them.

Using miniatures and battle maps in *Fantasy AGE* is easy. Two yards in the rules translates into 1 square or hex on the map. Round down if needed. So a character with Speed 9 would move 4 squares or hexes on a battle map with a Move action. A short bow with a range of 32 yards can shoot up to 16 squares or hexes on a battle map.

A final option is to use miniatures with 3D terrain instead of a map. Some gamers, particularly those who regularly play miniatures games, have a ready supply of 3D terrain, such as hills, buildings, ruins, and so on. A table with built-out terrain is a beautiful thing. A cheaper option is again provided by PDF products. You can find fold-up terrain that you can print out and assemble as needed.

If you go with 3D terrain, there are no squares or hexes to regulate movement. Instead simply use a ruler or tape measure with each 2 yards of distance in the rules translating to 1″ on the tabletop (and again, round down). So a throwing axe with a range of 8 yards could be thrown 4″ on the tabletop.

- If the test is a success, the grenade lands in the target area and explodes. If the test fails, the grenade misses its target and goes 1d6 yards in a direction of the GM's choosing (have fun with that, GMs!) before exploding.

- Everyone within 2 yards of the explosion—friend and foe alike—takes damage from an exploding grenade.

You can use stunts with grenade attacks. Each stunt can only affect one target but you need not assign all stunts to the same target. If you catch two bandits in the blast of a grenade and generate 4 stunt points, for example, you could use Pierce Armor on one bandit and Knock Prone on the other. Anyone carrying grenades is asking for trouble. All enemies attacking such characters can perform the Kaboom! stunt.

| SP Cost | Stunt |
|---|---|
| 3 | **Kaboom!:** Your attack detonates a grenade held (that is, prepared to throw) or carried by your target if grenades are visible (in a bandolier, for example). It inflicts its full damage on your target and anyone else within 2 yards (including you). Held grenades must always be affected before carried grenades, if both are legal targets. If multiple grenades are being carried the exploding grenade is determined randomly by the GM. |

## MOUNTS AND COMBAT

Combatants can ride horses and other mounts. Accounting for that requires a few special rules.

- You can mount or dismount an animal as part of a Move action. If you do so, you can only move half your Speed in yards (a Move action normally lets you move your Speed in yards).

- Once you are mounted, you use move and Run actions as normal, but you use the Speed of the mount instead of your own.

- When engaging in melee combat, you get a +1 bonus on attack rolls vs. opponents on foot. The GM may rule that this does not apply vs. particularly large monsters.

- Many mounts do not have attacks of their own (they aren't trained for fighting). Those that do take their attacks on your turn in a round. You don't need to roll initiative separately for the mount.

- Enemies can choose to attack you or your mount. You must keep track of your mount's Health.

- Opponents can use the Knock Prone stunt to try to dismount you. This is more difficult than overbearing someone on foot, though, so you get a chance to resist it. If you make a successful Dexterity (Riding) test, you remain mounted. The TN for this test is equal to 10 + opponent's Strength. If you fail, you are knocked to the ground, take 1d6 penetrating damage, and are now prone. The GM controls the actions of the mount until you re-mount or the encounter ends.

- Passengers do not have to use move and Run actions, as they are simply carried along. They take actions as normal but the GM should bear their situation in mind.

These rules also apply when driving a vehicle like a cart or wagon, but you use Strength (Driving) for tests instead. If Knock Prone is used against a passenger of a vehicle, Dexterity (Acrobatics) is used to resist it.

## FLYING COMBATANTS

Some combatants have the ability to fly. These are mostly monsters, but PCs may get access to magic that lets them fly, so the rules are included here for your reference. You can skip this section when you are just learning to play, as no characters can fly at level 1.

Flight is indicated parenthetically after the character's Speed. A character with Speed 6 (Flying 12), for example, moves at 6 on the ground, but 12 when flying. *Fantasy AGE* handles fliers with the use of special actions available only to them. When flying a character must use one of the following actions each turn: Circle, Dive, Fly, or Fly High. A character who fails to do so for any reason is

subject to falling damage (see **Handling Hazards** in Chapter 8: Mastering the Rules). Only one of these four actions can be used on a turn. A character could not, for example, Dive and then Circle. Flying characters cannot take the Charge, Move, or Run actions until back on the ground.

For the most part stunts affect fliers the same as other characters. The exception is the Knock Prone stunt. If used, this reduces the character's Flying Speed by 3 until the end of their next turn instead.

## MINOR ACTIONS

### CIRCLE

The flying character circles above the battlefield at a low altitude, moving a number of yards equal to their Flying Speed. Ranged attacks from the ground add 20 yards to the horizontal distance from the shooter to the target to represent the height of the flier. A circling character can attack other circling characters at no penalty. A character must start their turn Flying to Circle.

### FLY

The character moves a distance equal to their Flying Speed. The character is roughly 3 yards off the ground and can be attacked in melee by opponents on the ground. The character's own melee attack rolls receive a +1 bonus vs. opponents on the ground due to the height advantage. A character can choose to land after flying, in which case the normal rules once again apply. Prone characters cannot Fly until they take a Move action to stand up first.

## MAJOR ACTIONS

### DIVE

A character that was circling or flying high the previous round can dive this round. A character that was circling can move a number of yards equal to Flying Speed and make a Melee Attack against an opponent on the ground. A character who was flying high can move a number of yards equal to double their Flying Speed and make a Melee Attack against an opponent circling or on the ground. In either case the attack can take place at any point in the character's movement and receives +1 bonus on the Melee Attack roll and damage roll. At the end of the dive the character is roughly 3 yards off the ground, just as if they had taken the Fly action.

### FLY HIGH

The character can move a number of yards equal to their Flying Speed while climbing far above the battlefield. While flying high, the character can neither attack nor be attacked (even by other characters flying high). A character must start their turn Circling to Fly High.

### EXAMPLE

*A castle warden dispatches a raven to deliver a vital message. The raven takes to the air on its turn with the Fly action. An enemy scout sees the raven and fires off a quick shot. No penalties apply, but the shot still misses. Next the raven takes the Circle action and continues to move away. The*

*scout takes another shot, determined to bring the bird down. The horizontal distance to the raven is 20 yards, but since it's circling another 20 yards is added to that to determine range. This makes it 40 yards, which is long range for a long bow. The scout thus incurs a −2 penalty and misses again. On its third turn, the raven flies high. The scout curses as the raven streaks skyward and out of range.*

# HEALTH AND HEALING

Health measures a character's fitness and wellbeing. A character with full Health is vigorous and ready for action. A character with less than full Health is fatigued or wounded. A character reduced to 0 Health is dying. Unless healing is received in 2 + Constitution rounds, the character dies.

Health is fairly abstract by design, as is the nature of the damage received. When a character takes damage from a sword hit, for example, it can represent bruising, fatigue, loss of breath, or actual wounds. It would be tedious to track each cut or broken bone, so the rules sacrifice realism for the sake of playability. The exact nature of the damage isn't important. You just need to watch your character's Health and be careful when it gets close to 0.

When your character is wounded, there are several ways to heal.

- Another character can aid you with a Heal action, as described previously in this chapter. You can't benefit from another Heal action until you take more damage (there is only so much benefit you can gain from first aid).

- You can take a breather after a combat encounter. This is a 5-minute rest that lets you catch your breath, tend to minor cuts and abrasions, drink some water, and so on. After a breather, you get back 5 + Constitution + Level in Health. You can only take one breather after an encounter. If you were at 0 Health when the combat encounter ended, you cannot take a breather at all.

- You can get some sleep. If you can get at least 6 hours of restful sleep, you gain 10 + Constitution + Level in Health.

- You can receive magical healing. This would most commonly be a spell from the Healing Arcana (see Chapter 5: Magic).

### EXAMPLE

*Brigitte drives off the toughs before Najah dies, and the combat encounter ends. She is still at 0 Health and dying, so Brigitte tries to save her with a Heal action. She makes an Intelligence (Healing) test, which is not her strong suit. However, she gets an 11 and just manages to save Najah's life. She rolled a 10 (3 + 3 + 4) and then added her Intelligence of 1 for a total of 11. Najah gets back 5 Health (the Stunt Die result of 4 plus 1 for Brigitte's Intelligence). Not much, but better than dying. With Najah saved, Brigitte can relax a bit and take a breather. She rests for 5 minutes. She is a level 2 warrior with a Constitution of 2, so she gets back 9 Health (5 + 2 + 2). Since Najah had 0 Health when the combat encounter ended, she cannot take a breather.*
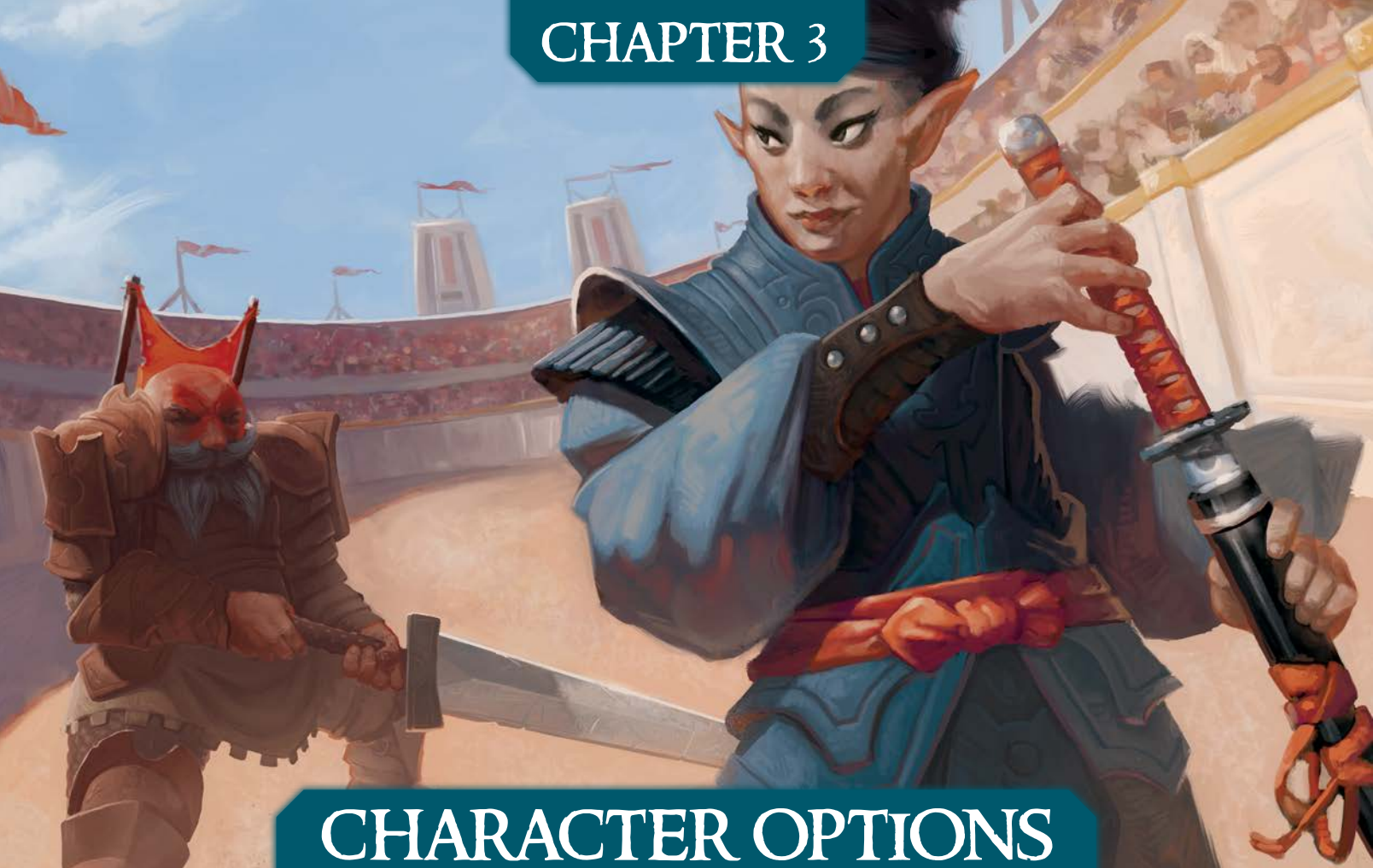
# CHARACTER OPTIONS

Focuses, talents, and specializations are the building blocks of your character. All provide ways to make your character unique.

Your character starts with focuses and talents through the process of character creation, and will earn more by gaining levels in play. Ability focuses are usually gained through race, background, class, and talents. Talents are usually gained through class alone. There are magic items, however, that can grant both focuses and talents.

Focuses and talents provide game system benefits, but they also give you convenient back-story hooks. Let's say you take the Horsemanship talent. Well, where did your character learn to ride horses? Perhaps an aunt passed on her expertise or maybe it was part of militia training. You can come up with anything you like, but answering the question tells you more about your character.

Specializations provide a further way to customize your character but as they represent advanced techniques you do not start with any at level 1. You get access to them through your class and each one opens up a special talent that is off-limits to other characters. They help distinguish your character from others of the same class as well as making them more effective.

## ABILITY FOCUSES

As noted in **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION**, a focus is an area of expertise within a larger ability. A character with Communication 3 and the Deception focus is a good communicator in general, but excels at fooling others. If you have a focus, you get a +2 bonus when making an ability test related to it. If you are level 6 or higher, the focus also adds to the test's degree of success. The GM will usually let you know what focus applies to each test, but if it isn't clear don't be afraid to ask if a focus applies. You can learn more about ability tests and how focuses apply in **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**. Descriptions of the ability focuses follow. The GM has the final call on whether a focus applies to a given test.

Here is a complete list of focuses in the core game. You may find new focuses in other *AGE* books.

### ACCURACY FOCUSES

**ARCANE BLAST:** Using the mage's class power of the same name. See **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION**.

**BLACK POWDER:** Proficiency with weapons from the Black Powder Weapon Group. Black powder weapons are not in every campaign setting, so ask your GM before taking them.

**BOWS:** Proficiency with weapons from the Bows Weapon Group.

**BRAWLING:** Proficiency with weapons from the Brawling Weapon Group.

**DUELING:** Proficiency with weapons from the Dueling Weapon Group.

**GRENADES:** Making ranged attacks with grenades.

**LIGHT BLADES:** Proficiency with weapons from the Light Blades Weapon Group.

**STAVES:** Proficiency with weapons from the Staves Weapon Group.

## COMMUNICATION FOCUSES

**Animal Handling:** Interacting with and caring for animals.
**Bargaining:** Negotiating with others and making deals.
**Deception:** Lying to and tricking those less mentally adept than you.
**Disguise:** Making yourself look like someone else or a different class of person.
**Etiquette:** Knowing the social niceties of various cultures.
**Gambling:** Playing games of chance and profiting from them.
**Investigation:** Interviewing people for information and finding and deciphering clues.
**Leadership:** Guiding, directing, and inspiring others.
**Performance:** Entertaining an audience with an artistic talent.
**Persuasion:** Convincing others to agree with you.
**Seduction:** Making winning moves in the game of love.

## CONSTITUTION FOCUSES

**Drinking:** Consuming large quantities of alcohol and avoiding the aftereffects.
**Rowing:** Propelling a vessel with oars.
**Running:** Moving quickly in both short sprints and long distance hauls.
**Stamina:** Enduring fatigue, disease, and privation.
**Swimming:** Moving through the water and staying afloat.

## DEXTERITY FOCUSES

**Acrobatics:** Executing gymnastic, balancing, and tumbling maneuvers.
**Calligraphy:** Writing with artful penmanship.
**Crafting:** Making items with manual skills, like woodworking, sculpting, leather working, glassblowing, etc.
**Initiative:** Acting quickly in tense situations.
**Legerdemain:** Using sleight of hand to trick others, hide things, and pick pockets.
**Lock Picking:** Opening locks without using keys.
**Riding:** Directing a mount such as a horse or pony.
**Stealth:** Sneaking about quietly and out of sight.
**Traps:** Detecting and disarming traps and other mechanical devices.

## FIGHTING FOCUSES

**Axes:** Proficiency with weapons from the Axes Group. See **Chapter 4: Equipment**.
**Bludgeons:** Proficiency with weapons from the Bludgeons Group.
**Heavy Blades:** Proficiency with weapons from the Heavy Blades Group.
**Lances:** Proficiency with weapons of the Lances Group.
**Polearms:** Proficiency with weapons of the Polearms Group.
**Spears:** Proficiency with weapons from the Spears Group.

## INTELLIGENCE FOCUSES

**Arcana (various):** There is a separate focus for each arcana and only mage's can take these focuses. See **Chapter 5: Magic** for more information.
**Arcane Lore:** Knowing about magic and its traditions.
**Brewing:** Making ale, mead, and other concoctions.
**Cartography:** Making and reading maps.

**Cryptography:** Creating and deciphering codes and ciphers.
**Cultural Lore:** Knowing the traditions and beliefs of various cultures.
**Engineering:** Knowing the practicalities of construction, building, and invention.
**Evaluation:** Determining the value of goods and objets d'art.
**Healing:** Aiding the wounded and sick.
**Heraldry:** Knowing coats of arms and royal families.
**Historical Lore:** Knowing important events and personalities from the past.
**Military Lore:** Knowing strategy, tactics, and famous applications thereof.
**Musical Lore:** Knowing musical traditions and songs.
**Natural Lore:** Knowing natural flora and fauna.
**Navigation:** Planning and following a route from one place to another.
**Research:** Making a systematic investigation, usually using records, archives, and books.
**Religious Lore:** Knowing religious traditions and practices.
**Writing:** Expressing yourself with the written word.

## PERCEPTION FOCUSES

**Empathy:** Discerning the feelings and emotions of others.
**Hearing:** Using your auditory sense.
**Searching:** Finding things that are hidden or obscured, such as secret doors.
**Seeing:** Using your visual sense.
**Smelling:** Using your olfactory sense.
**Tasting:** Using your gustatory sense.
**Touching:** Using your tactile sense.
**Tracking:** Following tracks and other signs of passage.

## STRENGTH FOCUSES

**Climbing:** Scaling walls and other vertical obstacles.
**Driving:** Directing and guiding carts, carriages, and other wheeled vehicles.
**Intimidation:** Overawing others with physical presence and threats.
**Jumping:** Springing and leaping.
**Might:** Performing feats of raw power, such as lifting or holding up heavy objects.
**Smithing:** Forging items made of metal, from weapons to jewelry.

## WILLPOWER FOCUSES

**Courage:** Overcoming fear in the face of adversity.
**Faith:** Deriving inner strength through spiritual or moral belief.
**Morale:** Maintaining good spirits and confidence in yourself or your group. NPCs tend to use this focus more than Player Characters.
**Self-Discipline:** Focusing your mental energy or controlling your impulses and emotions.

# IMPROVING FOCUSES

Focuses grant a flat +2 bonus to one's ability tests. For more powerful characters, that measure of focus is not always enough to win the day or to set your character apart from others with similar training. Therefore, at higher levels, char-

*Fantasy AGE* is not the game of everyday life; it's about adventurers facing grave threats in extraordinary circumstances. This is why, while there are focuses to cover trade skills, they are quite broad. There is one focus—Smithing—that covers armorers, weaponsmiths, goldsmiths, and so on. This is not an accurate simulation of the differences between artisans, but nor is it meant to be. For the purposes of most *Fantasy AGE* games, the Smithing focus is enough.

Some players, however, may want finer distinctions than the current focus list provides. Maybe your character is a dwarf from a famous family of weapon makers and it's important to you that their skills are specifically those of a weaponsmith, rather than a common blacksmith. If you want to do that and your GM agrees, you can take almost any medieval trade you can think of and turn it into a focus. You just need to figure out the most appropriate ability (most will likely be Dexterity, Intelligence, or Strength). These focuses will be much narrower than most in the game, but if that suits your character concept (or an NPC's nature, in the case of the GM) the option is open to you.

acters can take a focus for a second time to further improve their bonus on those rolls. Starting at level 11, when you would gain a new focus you may select a focus you already have to increase your bonus with that focus bonus to +3 (instead of the +2 it was before). Underline the focus on your sheet to indicate you've chosen it a second time.

You still must always select a focus for a primary ability on even-numbered levels and a focus for a secondary ability on odd-numbered levels, as usual.

# TALENTS

Your character has areas of natural aptitude and/or special training called talents. They provide a way to customize your character that goes beyond background and class. Choosing talents is thus an important part of developing your character.

Each talent is divided into three degrees: Novice, Journeyman, and Master. Each of these provides a game system benefit. You have to be a Novice in a talent before you can become a Journeyman, and a Journeyman before you can become a Master.

You gain new talents and new degrees through your class, which also limits the talents you have access to. Each talent lists the classes it is available to; you cannot take talents that are not open to your class. Most talents also have requirements, like specific focuses or weapon groups. If you don't have the requirement, you cannot take the talent.

When talents are listed for a character, the standard format is talent first, followed by the degree achieved in parentheses. Command (Journeyman), for example, or Music (Novice).

A catalog of the talents available follows. They use the following format:

## TALENT NAME

**CLASSES:** Classes that can take this talent are listed here.
**REQUIREMENT:** You cannot take this talent unless you have the specified requirement(s).

A short description of the talent.

**NOVICE:** The benefit gained when you become a Novice.

**JOURNEYMAN:** The benefit gained when you become a Journeyman.

**MASTER:** The benefit gained when you become a Master.

## ALCHEMY

**CLASSES:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**REQUIREMENT:** Intelligence 2 or higher

You know how to create grenades using alchemical formulas. These vials are not magic, though some may treat them that way. If you have the ingredients, you can make a vial in an hour. See the **Grenades** section in CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT for details on the vials you can make with this talent.

**NOVICE:** You know the basics of alchemy. You can make blast vials and thunder vials.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You are at home in a laboratory. You can make fire vials and ice vials.

**MASTER:** Your alchemical knowledge is vast. You can make acid vials and lighting vials.

## ANIMAL TRAINING

**CLASSES:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**REQUIREMENT:** None

You know how to train animals.

**NOVICE:** You know the basics of dealing with animals. With a week of training, you can teach an animal to follow a simple one-word command like "heel," "follow," or "attack." You can teach a single animal a number of commands equal to your Communication.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You can train animals to follow more complex commands, like "guard this place" or "return to me when strangers approach." Teaching a complex command takes two weeks of training and the total number of commands a single animal can learn is equal to your Communication +2.

**MASTER:** Your training can turn animals into prime examples of their kind. With a month of training, you can increase an animal's Dexterity or Strength by 1. It also gains the Willpower (Morale) focus. An animal can only receive such training once.

## ARMOR TRAINING

**CLASSES:** Warrior
**REQUIREMENT:** None

You have learned to fight while wearing armor. You only take the armor's penalty to your Speed, while those without this talent suffer the penalty to all Dexterity-based tests and calculations (including Speed).

**Novice:** You can wear leather and mail armor without suffering a penalty to Dexterity.

**Journeyman:** You can wear plate armor without suffering a penalty to Dexterity.

**Master:** You can get the most out of your armor. You gain the benefit of half the Armor Rating (rounded down) of your armor when you take penetrating damage. (Normally, armor provides no defense against penetrating damage.)

## ARCHERY STYLE

**Classes:** Rogue and Warrior
**Requirement:** Trained in the Bows Group

You are experienced with bows and crossbows.

**Novice:** You know how to punish enemies who get too close. When shooting a bow or crossbow at an enemy within 6 yards of you, you inflict +1 damage.

**Journeyman:** Due to long hours of practice, you can reload faster than common bowmen. You can Reload a bow as a free action and a crossbow as a minor action.

**Master:** When shooting a bow or crossbow, you can perform the Lightning Attack stunt for 2 stunt points instead of the usual 3. (If you are using a crossbow you'll also need to perform a Rapid Reload stunt to take advantage of this benefit, since you must have a loaded weapon to use Lightning Attack.)

## CAROUSING

**Classes:** Mage, Warrior, and Rogue
**Requirements:** Communication and Constitution 1 or higher

You take your fun seriously.

**Novice:** You can drink other people under the table. When making Constitution (Drinking) tests as part of an advanced test, you gain a +1 bonus to the result of each Stunt Die. This allows you to reach the success threshold faster.

**Journeyman:** The tavern is your second home. Choose one of the following Communication focuses: Gambling or Seduction. If you fail a Communication test with your chosen focus, you can re-roll it but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**Master:** When you're having a good time, (you think) you're invincible! Choose one of the following roleplaying stunts: Flirt or Tower of Will. You can perform that stunt for 3 SP instead of the usual 4 SP and you gain a +1 bonus to the opposed test for that stunt. Thus, if you choose Tower of Will, your bonus on opposed tests is +2 instead of the usual +1.

## CHIRURGY

**Classes:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**Requirement:** Intelligence (Healing) focus

You can treat wounds and illnesses.

**Novice:** You have trained in the art of chirurgy and your aid is swift and sure. Heal is a minor action for you.

**Journeyman:** You have the hands of a healer. When you use the Heal action, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to (Stunt Die × 2) + Intelligence.

**Master:** Your healing ability is legendary. When you use the Heal action, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to (Stunt Die × 3) + Intelligence.

## COMMAND

**Classes:** Mage and Warrior.
**Requirement:** Communication 2 or higher

You are a natural leader.

**Novice:** Your presence inspires your allies. If you take a major action to make a heroic gesture (raise your sword, shout a battle cry, wave a flag, etc.), your allies gain a +1 bonus to Willpower (Courage) tests for the rest of the encounter.

**Journeyman:** Your allies follow your lead. Any NPCs that you lead gain a +1 bonus when rolling for initiative.

**Master:** When you stand firm, your allies stand with you. When you lead NPCs in an encounter, they do not have to take a Willpower (Morale) test until more than two-thirds of your side's combatants are out of the fight (dead or incapacitated). If you leave the fight or fall in battle, this benefit is lost.

## CONTACTS

**Classes:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**Requirement:** Communication 1 or higher

You know people, sometimes in the unlikeliest places.

**Novice:** You can attempt to make a contact out of a NPC with a successful Communication (Persuasion) test. The GM will set the target number based on the likelihood of you knowing the NPC or having mutual friends. The more distant the NPC's homeland or social class from yours, the more difficult the test will be. A contact will be friendly to you, but won't go out of the way to help you without additional motivation. You can't make a contact out of a NPC who already dislikes you or is an enemy.

**Journeyman:** Once you've established a contact, you can try to get a favor with another successful Communication (Persuasion) test. The target number is based on the nature of the favor and whether it puts the contact in any danger.

Master: You can turn an acquaintance into an ally with a show of loyalty. If you do a significant favor for a contact, he will treat you as a friend when you ask him for favors. He will go out of his way to help you and will be willing to put himself in danger for you.

## DUAL WEAPON STYLE

**Classes:** Rogue and Warrior.
**Requirement:** Dexterity 2 or higher

You can fight with a weapon in your main hand (your primary weapon) and another in your off hand (your secondary weapon). Neither can be a two-handed weapon, and the secondary weapon is considered to have a Minimum Strength 2 higher than normal (you'd need Strength 1 to use a short sword as a secondary weapon, for example). Unless otherwise stated, your attacks come from the primary weapon.

**Novice:** Wielding two weapons can aid you in attack or defense. If you take the Activate action, you can gain either a +1 bonus on your melee attack rolls or a +1 Defense bonus vs.

melee attacks until the end of the encounter. You can switch the bonus you are taking with another Activate action.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You can perform the Lightning Attack stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3 but the extra attack must come from your secondary weapon.

**MASTER:** You can overwhelm opponents with blows from both weapons. If you make a Melee Attack with your primary weapon and you are not charging, you can make another attack with your secondary weapon as a minor action. The second attack cannot generate stunt points, and you only add half of your Strength (rounded down) to damage.

## HORSEMANSHIP

**CLASSES:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**REQUIREMENT:** Dexterity (Riding) focus

You are a skilled rider and can handle horses and other beasts of burden with ease.

**NOVICE:** You can jump into the saddle quickly. Mounting a steed is a free action for you.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You can ride like the wind. When you ride a mount, it gains a +2 bonus to its Speed.

**MASTER:** You were born in the saddle. You add +1 to your Defense while mounted. You may also re-roll a failed Dexterity (Riding) test, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

## INTRIGUE

**CLASSES:** Mage, Warrior, and Rogue
**REQUIREMENTS:** Communication 2 or higher

You are a master of secrets.

**NOVICE:** You understand how to navigate the waters of social situations. Choose one of the following Communication focuses: Etiquette, Deception, or Seduction. If you fail a Communication test with your chosen focus, you can re-roll it but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You always gain more information than you give out. You can perform the And Another Thing roleplaying stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2. In addition, you gain a +1 bonus on any further tests the stunt allows.

**MASTER:** You know how to end a conversation. You can perform the Stunned Silence roleplaying stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3. In addition, you have the opportunity to change this immediately into a combat encounter. If you do so, you and one ally per extra stunt point you spend can act in the first round of combat. Everyone else is surprised.

## LINGUISTICS

**CLASSES:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**REQUIREMENT:** Intelligence 1 or better

You can learn new languages easily. When you learn a new language, you learn to both speak and read it.

The languages noted here are generic by necessity. Your campaign setting may have specific languages native to it. If so, your GM will let you know which ones are options for this talent.

**Novice:** You learn an additional language from the following list: Elf, Dwarf, Gnome, Halfling, Human, Orc.

**Journeyman:** You learn an additional language from the previous list. You can also imitate a specific dialect with a successful Communication (Performance) test.

**Master:** You learn two more languages from the previous list. You can also pick any one language you know and speak it like a native—that is, without an accent.

## LORE

**Classes:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**Requirement:** Intelligence 2 or higher

You have an inquisitive mind and absorb facts easily.

**Novice:** You have studied hard. When you make a successful Intelligence test with a lore focus, the GM should give you an extra piece of information on the topic. A lore focus is any Intelligence focus with the word "lore" in it, such as Cultural Lore and Historical Lore. The GM determines the additional information and it may or may not be pertinent to the main question at hand.

**Journeyman:** You are an accomplished researcher. When making Intelligence (Research) tests as part of an advanced test, you gain a +1 bonus to the result of each Stunt Die. This allows you to reach the success threshold faster. Advanced tests are detailed in **Chapter 8: Mastering the Rules**.

**Master:** While your knowledge is vast, you have two areas of particular specialization. Pick any two of your lore focuses. When making tests using those focuses, you can re-roll a failed test but you must keep the result of the second roll.

## MOUNTED COMBAT STYLE

**Classes:** Warrior
**Requirements:** Dexterity (Riding) focus

You are a trained cavalryman, adept at fighting on horseback.

**Note:** Two-handed weapons and long bows cannot be properly used on horseback (by anyone, not just those with this talent). If you attempt it, they count as improvised weapons.

**Novice:** You can use the mobility of your mount to your advantage in combat. When mounted and making a Move action, you can move part of your allowed distance, then use your major action to make a Melee or Ranged Attack, and then move the rest of your allowed distance. The total distance moved cannot be more than your mount's Speed. Normally, you'd have to finish moving before attacking.

**Journeyman:** Your mounted charge is fearsome. You can move at your mount's full Speed when making a Charge action and inflict +1 damage if your attack strikes home.

**Master:** You and your mount are as one. The Knock Prone stunt cannot dismount you.

## MUSIC

**Classes:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
**Requirement:** Communication (Performance) focus or the Intelligence (Musical Lore) focus

You have a natural talent for music.

**Novice:** You know how to play an instrument, sing, and write and read music.

**Journeyman:** Your musical journey continues as you learn to play more instruments. You know how to play a total number of instruments equal to your Communication.

**Master:** You are a true virtuoso. You can play all the instruments common to your culture. If you come across a more exotic instrument, you can learn to play it with 1d6 weeks of practice.

## OBSERVATION

**Classes:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**Requirements:** Perception 2 or higher

You have an eye for detail.

**Novice:** You notice things others do not. Choose one of the following Perception focuses: Empathy or Seeing. If you fail a Perception test with your chosen focus, you can re-roll it but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**Journeyman:** Analysis of your observation often leads to insight. You can perform the That Makes Me Wonder exploration stunt for 2 SP.

**Master:** Nothing escapes your scrutiny. You can perform the Object of Your Attention exploration stunt for 2 SP. In addition, the stunt gives you a +2 bonus instead of the usual +1.

## ORATORY

**Classes:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**Requirements:** Communication (Persuasion) focus

You are a skilled public speaker who can sway others with your words.

**Novice:** You know how to work a crowd. If you fail a Communication (Persuasion) test when trying to convince a group, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll. You can't take this re-roll in an intimate setting or when trying to persuade an individual.

**Journeyman:** Your words are like magic. Each time you perform the Sway the Crowd roleplaying stunt, you affect three additional people instead of one.

**Master:** You can agitate a crowd. If you make a successful Communication (Persuasion) test when addressing a group and the result of your Stunt Die is 5 or 6, you rouse them to immediate action. You can't necessarily control what they do, though you can try with Communication (Leadership) tests, but they take your words to heart and act on them.

## POLE WEAPON STYLE

**Classes:** Warrior
**Requirements:** Trained in the Polearms Group or the Spears Group

Pole weapons can be cumbersome, but not in your hands. You can fight in this style with the two-handed spear or any weapon of the Polearms Group.

**Novice:** You can use the length of your weapon to your advantage. You treat enemies up to 4 yards away as if they were

adjacent to you, so you can make melee attacks against them (they can't do the same unless they also have this talent). If an ally is between you and your opponent, you can still attack. In fact, this is a common tactic.

**Journeyman:** Once prepared you are hard to move. You can set yourself with an Activate action. Until the end of the encounter, any opponent that attempts to use the Skirmish stunt or the Novice degree of the Two-Hander Style against you must first make an opposed attack roll. If you win, your opponent fails to move you and wastes the stunt point(s). If your opponent wins, he may perform the Skirmish stunt(s).

**Master:** You get the most of your weapon's design features. If wielding a military fork or two-handed spear, you can perform the Pierce Armor stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2. If wielding a glaive or halberd, you can perform the Knock Prone stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2. In addition, mounted combatants do not gain the +1 bonus for fighting against an opponent on foot when attacking you.

## QUICK REFLEXES

**Classes:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior.
**Requirement:** Dexterity 2 or higher.

You react to threats speedily and instinctually.

**Novice:** You can prepare yourself for action in an instant. Once per round you can use Ready as a free action on your turn.

**Journeyman:** You can flip yourself up or drop down with lightning speed. You can go prone or stand up as a free action. (These normally can only be done as part of a Move action.)

**Master:** It is hard to get the drop on you. You may re-roll your initiative roll at the start of a combat encounter, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

## SCOUTING

**Classes:** Rogue
**Requirement:** Dexterity 2 or higher

You are skilled at the art of reconnaissance.

**Novice:** You can use the lay of the land to your advantage. If you fail a Dexterity (Stealth) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

**Journeyman:** You know how to get the drop on your enemies. You can perform the Seize the Initiative stunt for 2 stunt points instead of the usual 4.

**Master:** You are a skilled observer. If you fail a Perception (Seeing) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.
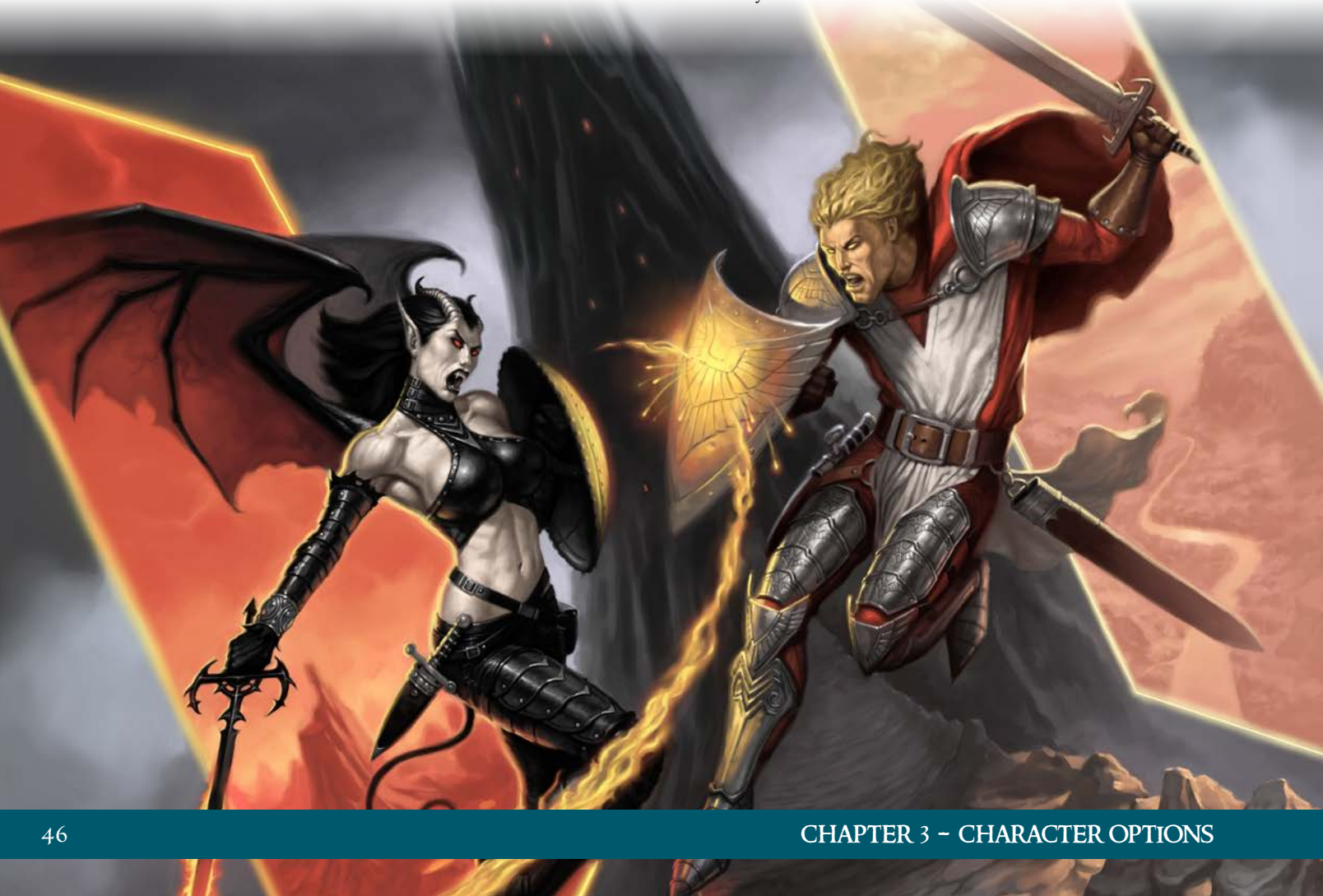
## SINGLE WEAPON STYLE

**Classes:** Rogue and Warrior
**Requirement:** Perception 2 or higher

You can fight effectively wielding only a single-handed melee weapon.

**Novice:** Fighting with a single weapon demands increased awareness. If you take the Activate action, you gain a +1 Defense bonus until the end of the encounter while fighting in this style.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You can create a web of steel with but a single weapon. Your bonus to Defense increases to +2 while fighting in this style.

**MASTER:** You know how to fight several enemies at once. Opponents making melee attacks against you never gain a bonus on their attack rolls for outnumbering you.

### THIEVERY

**CLASSES:** Rogue
**REQUIREMENT:** Dexterity 2 or higher

What's yours is yours and what's theirs is yours too.

**NOVICE:** You don't let locks stand in your way. If you fail a Dexterity (Lock Picking) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You are familiar with many types of traps. If you fail a Dexterity (Traps) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

**MASTER:** You know how to find what's hidden. If you fail a Perception (Searching) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

### THROWN WEAPON STYLE

**CLASSES:** Rogue and Warrior
**REQUIREMENT:** Trained in the Axes Group, Light Blades Group, or Spears Group

You are adept with throwing weapons.

**NOVICE:** Your accuracy is uncanny. You gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls with throwing weapons.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You can ready a throwing weapon in an instant. You can Reload a throwing weapon as a free action instead of a minor action.

**MASTER:** You know how to bypass your enemy's armor. When you perform the Pierce Armor stunt with a throwing weapon, your damage is penetrating. (That stunt normally halves your opponent's armor rating, but penetrating damage allows you to ignore it altogether.)

### TWO–HANDER STYLE

**CLASSES:** Warrior
**REQUIREMENT:** Strength 3 or higher and training in the Axes Group, Bludgeons Group, Heavy Blades Group, Polearms Group, or Spears Group

You are deadly with two-handed melee weapons.

**NOVICE:** The length of your weapon and the power of your attacks forces foes to yield ground. When you hit with a Melee Attack with a two-handed weapon, you can move the target 2 yards in any direction.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You can strike fearsome blows with your weapon. You can perform the Mighty Blow stunt for 1 stunt point instead of the usual 2 when wielding a two-handed weapon.

**MASTER:** You and your weapon are as one. When wielding a two-handed weapon, you can choose to re-roll your damage, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

### UNARMED STYLE

**CLASSES:** Mage, Rogue, and Warrior
**REQUIREMENT:** Trained in the Brawling Group

You know a thing or two about brawling.

**NOVICE:** Your hands are as tough as iron. When you attack with your fist, you inflict 1d6 damage instead of 1d3.

**JOURNEYMAN:** Your punch can drop the toughest opponents. You can perform the Knock Prone stunt for 1 stunt point instead of the usual 2 when attacking with your fist or a gauntlet.

**MASTER:** You can't be disarmed, but the same can't be said of your opponents. When performing the Disarm stunt, you gain a +2 bonus to your attack roll in the opposed test.

### WEAPON AND SHIELD STYLE

**CLASSES:** Warrior
**REQUIREMENT:** Strength 2 or higher

You've been trained to fight with a single-handed melee weapon and shield.

**NOVICE:** You can use shields of all shapes and sizes. You get the full Defense bonus when using a shield.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You know how to get the most from your shield. You can perform the Defensive Stance stunt for 1 stunt point instead of the usual 2.

**MASTER:** Opponents must work hard to get by your defenses. The shield bonus of any shield you use increases by 1.

# SPECIALIZATIONS

A specialization is another way to customize your character and focus your class. If you say your character is a warrior, that's a broad statement. If you say that your character is a knight, it says quite a bit more.

You get access to specializations through your class. As described **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION**, you can take a specialization for the first time at level 4. That grants you the Novice degree in the appropriate specialization talent (a talent unique to that specialization). You gain the Journeyman degree at level 6 and the Master degree at level 8; this is the only way to gain new degrees in specialization talents. You can take a second specialization at level 12, with further degrees at levels 14 and 16. The specializations included in this book are: Arcane Scholar, Assassin, Berserker, Duelist, Elementalist, Guardian, Knight, Mage Hunter, Miracle Worker, Sharpshooter, Swashbuckler, and Sword Mage.

### EXAMPLE

*Tollan the warrior reaches level 4 and his player, Steve, considers a suitable specialization. He initially thought of giving Tollan the Knight specialization, thinking of him as a heroic champion with sword and shield, but Tollan doesn't meet the Knight's requirement for the Mounted Combat talent. On the other hand, the Guardian specialization fits Steve's notion well, and Tollan qualifies, so he chooses that, giving his character the Novice degree of the Guardian Talent.*

The classes are designed so you finish one specialization at level 8 by taking one degree of the specialization talent at each of levels 4, 6, and 8. It could be, however, that you don't want to take a specialization, or can't qualify for one. If you prefer, you can always take a degree in a regular talent instead of a specialization talent at these levels. The next time you'd get a new degree in a specialization talent, you can take a specialization at that point or take another regular talent.

### EXAMPLE

*The mage Varuker reaches level 4. He could take a specialization at this point but decides he'd rather take another magic talent instead. He gains a degree in Fire Arcana instead of taking of a specialization. When he gets to level 6, he faces the same choice. This time he decides to become an Elementalist, taking the Novice degree of that specialization talent. When he reaches level 8, he takes the Journeyman degree. When he reaches level 12, he could take the Master degree or the Novice degree of a new specialization.*

## ARCANE SCHOLAR

### MAGE SPECIALIZATION

While all mages have a certain working knowledge of arcana, some choose to go deeper into the study of magic, delving into ancient texts and the works of renowned scholars, collecting knowledge and lore like others do gold, and valuing it at least as much. You learn many secrets of arcane lore and through them master insights beyond those of any other spellcaster. Perhaps one day, future arcane scholars will seek out and study your famous works in order to learn more.

### ARCANE SCHOLAR TALENT

**Classes:** Mage
**Requirements:**
Intelligence 3 or higher and the Intelligence (Arcane Lore) focus.

You have made a study of arcane lore and magic items.

**Novice:** You have a wide knowledge of magic theory and practice. If you fail an Intelligence (Arcane Lore) test, you can re-roll it, but must keep the results of the second roll.

**Journeyman:** Enchanted items cannot be hidden from you. By touching an object and spending 1 MP, you can determine whether it is a magic item. This doesn't tell you what the item does, only that it is enchanted in some way.

**Master:** You can learn a magic item's secrets. If you spend 10 minutes and 5 MP, you can divine the powers of a magic item.

## ASSASSIN

### ROGUE SPECIALIZATION

Quiet and cunning rogues can learn to use their talents to master the art of death. Assassins are never the obvious threat. They leave the blustering and the battle cries to warriors. Assassins are the shadow in the night, the knife in the back. While many assassins are professional killers for hire, others take up their vocation for another purpose, whether fanatical devotion to a death-cult or a desire to eliminate certain targets from the world for the greater good.

### ASSASSIN TALENT

**Class:** Rogue.
**Requirement:** Dexterity and Intelligence 2 or higher.

You know how to kill quickly and efficiently.

**Novice:** You can assess a nearby opponent and spot weaknesses to exploit in combat. With an Activate action you can Mark for Death a visible target within 10 yards of you. All ranged and melee attacks against a target marked for death receive a +1 damage bonus. The Mark lasts until the end of the encounter, the target is slain, or you pick a new target with another Activate action. You can't maintain active Marks on multiple targets at the same time. A single character cannot be Marked for Death more than once in the same encounter.

**Journeyman:** You know how to exploit your target's weaknesses. When you make a Pinpoint Attack against an opponent you have marked for death, you inflict an extra 1d6 damage.

**Master:** Even the quickest of targets cannot escape you. You can make Pinpoint Attacks against all opponents, no matter what their Dexterity is.

## BERSERKER

### WARRIOR SPECIALIZATION

All warriors fight, but not all feel the call to battle singing in their blood, or see the crimson haze of battle lust. Those who do can learn to channel that primal rage to become berserkers, fearsome foes on the battlefield, focused solely on

The default assumption of the rules is that every specialization for your class is open to you when you hit level 4. This gives you the broadest array of choices. Your GM may require you to work to access certain specializations, however. If that is their decision, you can unlock a specialization in three ways:

- You can find a trainer. This is an NPC who already has the specialization. Trainers have motivations of their own, of course, so they may require money, favors, oaths, or actions before agreeing to teach you.

- You can go on a quest. These can vary wildly but basically your GM will create a special side adventure, the completion of which will unlock the desired specialization. If you wanted to become an assassin, for example, you might have to go to a major city and impress its Assassins' Guild.

- You can find a tome. The knowledge of some specializations has been written down and can sometimes be learned by reading and study.

Since you know that you'll be getting a specialization at level 4, it's a good idea to start thinking about what you're going to choose at that next level, when you hit level 3. Then discuss it with your GM. This will give your GM a chance to prepare and work your choice into the campaign. If he decides you must find a trainer, for example, that's something you can pursue while working toward level 4. Then when you get there, you'll be ready for the specialization.

destroying their enemies. Some berserkers revel in this power and the glory of combat, while for others it is a grim necessity, allowing them to fight and survive another battle, another day, to perhaps enjoy a time of unbroken peace, where their rage will no longer be needed.

### BERSERKER TALENT

**Class:** Warrior.
**Requirement:** Strength and Willpower 2 or higher.

You use your rage as a weapon.

**Novice:** You can drive yourself into a killing frenzy. First you must use the Activate action to become Berserk. You receive a +2 bonus on Willpower (Courage) and Willpower (Morale) tests while Berserk. You also receive a +1 bonus on your damage rolls in melee combat. However, you suffer a –1 penalty to Defense and to Perception tests while Berserk. You return to normal at the end of the encounter or if you force yourself out of your berserk state with another Activate action.

**Journeyman:** Your rage becomes more potent. While Berserk you gain the same bonuses and penalties as described in the Novice entry, but your bonus damage in melee combat increases to +3.

**Master:** Your fury is unstoppable! When Berserk, you can perform the Lethal Blow stunt for 4 stunt points instead of the usual 5.

## DUELIST

### ROGUE SPECIALIZATION

Heavily armed and armored warriors may dominate the battlefields of the world, but duelists rule the streets and alleys of its cities. In such conditions the quick blades and wits of duelists can be far more deadly than raw strength or brute force. They eschew cumbersome shields and fight with a weapon in each hand instead. These savvy fighters have even developed a suite of weapon customized for their style of fighting. The classic duelist fights with a rapier and either a main gauche or a spiked buckler in their off-hand,

though some pride themselves on fighting with more unusual weapon combinations.

### DUELIST TALENT

**Class:** Rogue.
**Requirement:** Accuracy and Dexterity 2 or higher, and Dual Weapon Style (Novice).

You are a master of speed and precision on the battlefield.

**Novice:** You learn the Dueling Weapon Group if you don't know it already. When fighting in the Dual Weapon Style and using a melee weapon that uses Accuracy, you gain both +1 on your attack rolls and +1 Defense vs. melee attacks. (Normally when fighting in that style, you must choose between these benefits.)

**Journeyman:** Your precise attacks hit opponents where it hurts. While fighting in the Dual Weapon Style, you inflict +1 damage with melee attacks.

**Master:** Your pinpoint accuracy can find the gaps in your opponents' armor, to devastating effect. When you perform the Pierce Armor stunt with a Melee Attack, your damage is penetrating. (That stunt normally halves your opponent's Armor Rating, but penetrating damage allows you to ignore it altogether.)

## ELEMENTALIST

### MAGE SPECIALIZATION

One of the foundations of the arcane arts is the understanding of the balance between the elements, the primal forces of the world: earth, air, fire and water. While most mages work with all the different elements as versatile tools, some possess (or are drawn to forge) a deep connection with one or more of them in particular. Their focus on a particular element gives elementalists greater effectiveness in wielding (and resisting) it, and eventually deepens their understanding of the other elements. For some mages, this connection to the elements is profoundly spiritual, alost religious, while for others, it is all about knowledge, understanding, or power.

## ELEMENTALIST TALENT

**CLASSES:** Mage
**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have one of the following talents: Air Arcana, Earth Arcana, Fire Arcana, or Water Arcana.

You have a talent for elemental magic. Choose one of the following magic talents to be your favored arcana: Air Arcana, Earth Arcana, Fire Arcana, or Water Arcana.

**NOVICE:** You gain a +2 bonus when resisting spells from your favored arcana.

**JOURNEYMAN:** Your knowledge of your element is deep. When casting spells of your favored arcana, their cost in magic points is reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1.

**MASTER:** You understand the ties between elemental forces. You can choose a second favored arcana from the list.

## GUARDIAN

### WARRIOR SPECIALIZATION

Many warriors fight for personal glory; not so guardians. They are trained to consider not just their own position on the battlefield but those of allies. They can assess who needs protection and when, and their timely intervention often prevents situations from going out of control. Since shielding others is their first priority, guardians often leave themselves vulnerable to make sure they block attacks on allies. Those of long service have many scars as badges of their sacrifice. Guardians naturally make excellent bodyguards and are often employed as such. Mages, often vulnerable in hand-to-hand combat, particularly value guardians.

### GUARDIAN TALENT

**CLASSES:** Warrior
**REQUIREMENTS:** Constitution and Dexterity 2 or higher and the Weapon and Shield Style (Novice).

You know how to protect others.

**NOVICE:** You can protect an ally with the tactical use of your shield and body. Choose an ally and enter Guardian mode with an Activate action. When this ally is adjacent to you, they gain a +2 to their Armor Rating. However, each time your ally takes damage, you take 2 points of penetrating damage. You can choose to switch your protection to a different ally with a free action. You can leave Guardian mode with a free action.

**JOURNEYMAN:** Once you plant yourself, you cannot be moved. While in Guardian mode, the Skirmish and Knock Prone stunts have no effect on you.

**MASTER:** Those who attack the one you guard suffer the consequences. When you are in Guardian mode and an opponent successfully hits or damages your protected ally, you can immediately attack that opponent (moving up to 2 yards to get adjacent if necessary) as a free action, generating stunt points as usual. You may only do this once per round. After the attack, the normal initiative order resumes. This retaliation does not count as your turn.

## KNIGHT

### WARRIOR SPECIALIZATION

In the worlds of *Fantasy AGE,* an armored and mounted knight is one of the greatest forces on the battlefield, and the goal many hope to attain through years of rigorous training as squires. Knighthood is generally seen as an honorable vocation, even if not all knights manage to live up to that ideal. Knights are most often sworn to a feudal liege-lord who commands them, but might also be devoted to a particular cause, faith, or community, while the rare, romantic knight-errant wanders the land, righting wrongs and giving aid to those in need.

### KNIGHT TALENT

**CLASSES:** Warrior.
**REQUIREMENTS:** Strength and Dexterity 2 or higher and Mounted Combat Style (Novice).

You are the elite of mounted warriors.

**NOVICE:** You learn the Lances Weapon Group if you don't already know it. You also learn to unnerve your enemies and goad them into battle by challenging them. You can perform the Threaten stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2. You may substitute Communication (Etiquette) when making the stunt's opposed test if you prefer. This represents an honorable challenge to a worthy opponent.

**JOURNEYMAN:** Your lance hits with the strength of an ogre. When making a mounted Charge, you can add 1d6 to your damage if you are wielding a weapon from the Lances Group. If wielding any other melee weapon, you inflict +1 damage instead.

**Master:** You get the most from your steed. While mounted, you can Run as a minor action and add +1 to your Defense when you do.

# MAGE HUNTER

## WARRIOR SPECIALIZATION

Magic is power, neither inherently good nor evil, but dependent on the intentions of the wielder. Unfortunately, not all mages are good, and someone must protect the world from their ill-intentioned spells. Someone like you. You have learned how to fight spellcasters, steeling your mind and spirit against their powers, and eventually learning how to weaken those powers so you can finish them off. You might be devoted solely to dealing with mages who abuse their powers, or you might see all magic, sorcery, or witchcraft as a potential threat, given time.

### MAGE HUNTER TALENT

**Classes:** Warrior
**Requirements:** Accuracy and Willpower 2 or higher.

You suffer no arcane evil to live.

**Novice:** You learn the Black Powder Weapon Group if you don't know it already. Bullets from your guns count as magical. If your campaign does not include black powder weapons, choose another Weapon Group and your attacks with those weapons count as magical

**Journeyman:** You have bolstered your mental bulwarks. You receive a +2 bonus on ability tests to resist spells and other magical effects.

**Master:** Your strikes can drain mages of their power. When you do damage to a mage (or any creature that uses Magic Points), your target loses 1d6 + your Willpower in magic points in addition to taking normal damage.

# MIRACLE WORKER

## MAGE SPECIALIZATION

While magic can indeed work wonders, the mysteries of life and death ultimately lie in the hands of the gods themselves. Still, some mages become so skilled in the arts of medicine, herbalism, and healing that they gain reputations as "miracle workers" when it comes to sustaining the fragile embers of life and fanning them back into a full and healthy flame, no matter how low they seem to have ebbed. Some miracle workers serve as doctors or healers in great cities or feudal courts, while others are lone hermits, preferring solitude, save for when someone in need comes to the door.

### MIRACLE WORKER TALENT

**Classes:** Mage
**Requirements:** You must have Intelligence and Willpower 2 or higher and Healing Arcana (Journeyman).

You have a naturally affinity for healing magic.

**Novice:** Your magic teems with life energy. When you cast Healing Arcana spells, targets regain extra Health equal to your Willpower.

**Journeyman:** When you cast the Healing Touch spell, you can spend an extra 5 MP to cure the target of a single disease.

**Master:** Your magic can bring back the recently dead. You can cast a more powerful version of the Revival spell for 25 MP. The target can have been dead for up to 2 minutes. Normally, Revival only works on the dying, not the dead.

# SHARPSHOOTER

## ROGUE SPECIALIZATION

Sharpshooters are crack shots who can take down enemies at a distance. Other than their extraordinary skill with missile weapons, most sharpshooters have little in common. Some are soldiers, others mercenaries for hire, and others wanderers trying to win prize money in shooting competitions. While sharpshooters are deadly with any ranged weapon, each has a favorite type and often a signature example that they have customized to their liking. To steal such a weapon is to ask for terrible retribution.

### SHARPSHOOTER TALENT

**Classes:** Rogue
**Requirements:** Dexterity and Perception 2 or higher and either Archery Style (Novice) or Thrown Weapon Style (Novice).

You are an expert shot.

**NOVICE:** Your missile attacks are so powerful they can fling opponents back and knock them off their feet. You can perform the Knock Prone stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2 when making ranged attacks. Additionally, you may push the target directly away from you 2 yards before applying the knockdown. (This is similar to the Skirmish stunt but more limited).

**JOURNEYMAN:** You can unleash a storm of missiles on your opponents. You can perform the Volley stunt for 5 SP. This allows you to make two more ranged attacks, at the same target or at others in sight and within 10 yards. You must have a loaded missile weapon to make a Ranged Attack, so use of up to two Rapid Reload stunts may be required to use Volley. If you roll doubles on either of these attack rolls, you do not generate any additional stunt points.

**MASTER:** You can find the vulnerable spot on any opponent. When you perform the Pierce Armor stunt with a Ranged Attack, your damage is penetrating. (That stunt normally halves your opponent's Armor Rating, but penetrating damage allows you to ignore it altogether.)

# SWASHBUCKLER

## ROGUE SPECIALIZATION

A life of adventure for you! While many face great risk seeking great rewards, for some the risks *are* rewards in and of themselves. These swashbucklers like nothing more than an opportunity to laugh in the face of danger and to show off their ability to handle it, not just with skill, but with *style*. Swashbucklers are the dashing rogues who swing from the rigging of pirate ships and leap from one careening wagon or horse to another, their tongues and their wits often as sharp as their blades.

### SWASHBUCKLER TALENT

**CLASSES:** Rogue
**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have Dexterity 2 or higher and the Dexterity (Acrobatics) focus.

You know how to fight with panache.

**NOVICE:** Nothing gets in your way. If you fail a Dexterity (Acrobatics) test, you can re-roll it, but must keep the results of the second roll. You can also perform the Taunt stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You and your weapon are never parted. You cannot be disarmed; stunt points spent trying to part you from your weapon are wasted.

**MASTER:** You are a blur in combat. You can perform the Lighting Attack stunt for –1 SP (1 minimum).

# SWORD MAGE

## MAGE SPECIALIZATION

While few mages have the time to divert from their studies to take up arms, you are among those who understand the magic of swordsmanship alongside the power of a well-placed spell. Indeed, you find the two arts quite complimentary, as a blade never exhausts its power, while a spell can often overcome a foe immune to mere steel—or enhance said steel to overcome that foe. Sword Mages are most common in cultures that balance the magical and the martial, particularly for elves, whose long lives and magical natures give them to time and talent to hone both skills.

### SWORD MAGE TALENT

**CLASSES:** Mage
**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have Willpower 2 or higher and either Accuracy of Fighting 2 or higher.

You meld the arts of magic and swordsmanship.

**NOVICE:** Pick one of the following swords to become the form of your arcane device: long sword, rapier, or short sword. In your hands the blade counts as a magic weapon (so it could hit incorporeal creatures, for example) if it is not already. You are considered trained in the chosen sword.

**JOURNEYMAN:** Magic flows through your blade. When wielding your chosen sword, you can substitute Willpower for Strength when inflicting damage.

**MASTER:** You train to fight with both sword and spell. You can perform Eldritch Assault, a special combat stunt, for 4 SP. This allows you to immediately cast a spell after resolving a successful Melee Attack with your chosen sword. It must have a casting time of a major action or a minor action and the casting roll cannot generate stunt points.

# EQUIPMENT

Your character has many types of equipment to choose from, all of which can be found in this chapter. Starting characters choose from equipment packages (see **Chapter 1: Character Creation**) to make getting started easy. During the course of play, though, your character will have the chance to earn (or steal!) money, and may buy or gain access to additional equipment. In this chapter you'll find details on armor, weapons, clothing, foodstuffs, and miscellaneous goods and services. The prices presented are typical, but they can vary widely depending on the setting you are playing in.

## CURRENCY

*Fantasy AGE* uses a silver standard for its basic economy. This means that silver is the day-to-day currency for most people, with gold being more rarely seen. The game uses the following abbreviations: gold piece (gp), silver piece (sp), and copper piece (cp). 10 copper pieces equals 1 silver piece, and 10 silver pieces equals 1 gold piece.

**1 gold piece = 10 silver pieces = 100 copper pieces**

When building the economy of a fantasy game world, it's easy enough to change or customize the kinds of currency to fit whatever your ideas may be. Use these prices as a proportional guideline in that case. Prices can also vary in different campaign settings. When in doubt, ask your GM.

## ARMOR AND SHIELDS

Armor and shields protect you from harm, but in different ways. Shields make you harder to hit, while armor reduces the damage you take when you are struck. Depending on your class and your talents, you may use neither, one or the other, or both armor and shield. Warriors and rogues start with some training in armor use, and warriors usually wear the best armor they can afford. Using a shield properly requires the Weapon and Shield Style talent; this is most common among warriors. Those who prefer two-handed weapons or archery, however, usually forgo shields. You'll find more information on the role of armor and shields in **Chapter 2: Basic Rules**.

## ARMOR AND SHIELD DETAILS

The **Armor** and **Shields** tables provide game system information for armor and shields. The following details are provided:

- **Armor Rating:** Each armor type has a numeric rating. When you take damage in combat, you subtract the armor rating before losing Health. This applies each time you are hit, so over time even poor armor can prevent you from taking a lot of damage. Certain attacks, however, can bypass the effects of armor. They inflict what is called penetrating damage, which ignores armor altogether. Armor offers no protection against penetrating damage.

## ARMOR

| Armor | Armor Rating | Armor Penalty | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
| Light Leather | 3 | 0 | 15 sp |
| Heavy Leather | 4 | –1 | 30 sp |
| Light Mail | 5 | –2 | 50 sp |
| Heavy Mail | 7 | –3 | 75 sp |
| Light Plate | 8 | –4 | 100 sp |
| Heavy Plate | 10 | –5 | 150 sp |

## SHIELDS

| Shield | Shield Bonus | Cost |
|---|---|---|
| Light Shield | +1 | 15 sp |
| Medium Shield | +2 | 30 sp |
| Heavy Shield | +3 | 60 sp |

- **Armor Penalty:** Each armor type also has a penalty that represents its weight and bulk. The penalty applies to your Speed if you are trained in the armor's use, but to both Speed and Dexterity if you are not. See the Armor Training talent in **Chapter 3: Character Options**.

- **Cost:** The item's price in silver pieces.

- **Shield Bonus:** If you are carrying a shield, you get the listed bonus to your Defense. This helps you avoid getting hit in the first place. You need proper training to get the most out of shields, however. If you do not have the Weapon and Shield Style talent, the maximum Defense bonus you receive from a shield is +1. In other words, you must have the talent to get any benefit from using a medium or heavy shield.

- **Weight:** The item's weight in pounds.

# ARMOR AND SHIELD DESCRIPTIONS

Descriptions of the various armors and shields follow. They are classed into broad categories for ease of play. It is not important to know every little piece of armor your character wears. For game purposes you just need to know the overall level of protection. Light mail, for example, could indicate a mail shirt and a helmet, a full suit of ring mail, or a mix of heavy leather and chainmail with a coif. You can decide the specifics if you like, using the categories as a guideline.

**Heavy Leather Armor:** Boiling it in water or wax hardens the leather, which is then fashioned into breast and back plates and shoulder guards. More flexible leather is used for the leggings, gauntlets, and so forth. Some versions are sewn with metal rivets or studs.

**Heavy Mail Armor:** Also called chainmail, heavy mail is armor made by interlocking small metal rings to form a mesh. Heavy mail is normally worn over a layer of quilted cloth to make it more comfortable, reduce chafing, and absorb some of the force from blows.

**Heavy Plate Armor:** A full suit of armor favored by knights and lords, plate armor is composed of shaped steel plates fitted over most of the body. The plate is strapped and buckled on over a padded doublet, evenly distributing the weight over the entire body, so it is less restrictive than it might seem.

**Heavy Shield:** This is the large shield of heavy infantry troops. It is most common on the battlefield, as its use requires the kind of training usually provided only to professional soldiers. Heavy shields can be rectangular or kite shaped.

**Light Leather Armor:** Light leather is the most common armor. Cured and hardened for protection, it is supple enough to be worn like regular clothing. This category also includes hide, quilted, or padded armor.

**Light Mail Armor:** Also known as ring mail, this armor is made of interlocking metal rings worn over hardened leather armor. The rings are bigger than those used to make chainmail, so it is not as effective.

**Light Plate Armor:** Light plate, also known as half-plate, is a full suit of heavy mail with select pieces of plate armored (typically a breastplate and greaves) layered on top.

**Light Shield:** A small shield, sometimes called a target, usually made of wood but sometimes of metal. Light shields are usually round.

**Medium Shield:** The most popular shield among warriors, this provides good protection without being ungainly. Medium shields can be rectangular, round, or kite shaped.

# WEAPONS

Adventurer is not a safe occupation. Sooner or later you'll find yourself set upon by bandits or cornered by rampaging monsters. When that happens, you'll want a good weapon in your hand. It's also important that you be trained in the weapon's use. If you're not, you'd be better off trying harsh language.

## WEAPON TRAINING

As discussed in **Chapter 1: Character Creation**, weapons are broken down into weapon groups, in which you receive training through your class. If you are trained in a weapon group, you can use any weapon in that group that you are strong enough to wield (see **Weapon Details**, following). If you are untrained in a weapon group, however, you take a –2 penalty on attack rolls and inflict half damage (rounded down) when using a weapon from that group. If it's a missile weapon, the range is cut in half as well. When halving damage, add your Strength (or Perception for Bows and Black Powder weapons) before cutting the damage in half.

## WEAPON DETAILS

The **Weapons** table on page 56 summarizes the game statistics for the most common weapons. They are broken down by weapon group and the governing ability is noted in parentheses. The first entry, for example, is Axes Group (Fighting). When you attack with a weapon from this group, your attack roll is a Fighting (Axes) test.

The following details are provided for each weapon:

- **Cost:** The weapon's price in silver pieces.
- **Damage:** This is the weapon's damage. When you hit an enemy, you inflict this amount of damage plus your Strength if you are trained in the weapon group. If you are untrained, damage is halved (rounded down).
- **Minimum Strength:** Some weapons are heavy and/or difficult to wield. You must have the minimum Strength listed to use a weapon effectively. If you don't, the weapon only inflicts 1d6–1 damage.
- **Weight:** The weapon's weight in pounds.

# MISSILE WEAPONS

You can make ranged attacks with missile weapons. These are weapons you either shoot or throw. Due to the nature of ranged combat, these weapons require a few more details. They are summarized on the **Missile Weapon Ranges** table. The following details are provided for each weapon:

- **Short Range:** If your target is within this range, you attack normally.
- **Long Range:** If your target is within this range, but farther way than short range, your Ranged Attack suffers a –2 penalty.
- **Reload:** After you make a Ranged Attack, you must reload before you can fire again. Reload is an action (see **Chapter 2: Basic Rules**); this can be a major, minor, or free action depending on the weapon and your talents. This entry on the table indicates the type of action required to reload each weapon. Talents may change this.

# WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

Descriptions of the various weapons follow. Sometimes a weapon may represent a category of similar weapons. This is noted in the text. Black Powder weapons are included for settings with a Renaissance level of technology but should be considered optional. Ask your GM is if your setting includes black powder weapons.

## AXES GROUP

**Battle Axe:** A wicked, broad-headed axe that is larger than a hand axe, used to cleave through armor and shields. Some battle axes are double-bladed.

**Throwing Axe:** A warrior's version of a hatchet, smaller than a battle axe and balanced to be thrown.

**Two-handed Axe:** A greater cousin to the battle axe, this imposing weapon may end in a double-bladed axe head or may have a spike opposite the axe blade.

## BLACK POWDER GROUP

**Arquebus:** A muzzle-loaded firearm with a matchlock or wheellock firing mechanism. It requires two hands to use.

| MISSILE WEAPON RANGES | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Weapon** | **Short Range** | **Long Range** | **Reload** |
| Arquebus | 12 yards | 24 yards | Major Action |
| Blunderbuss | 6 yards* | – | Major Action |
| Crossbow | 30 yards | 60 yards | Major Action |
| Long Bow | 26 yards | 52 yards | Minor Action |
| Pistol | 8 yards | 16 yards | Major Action |
| Short Bow | 16 yards | 32 yards | Minor Action |
| Throwing Axe | 4 yards | 8 yards | Minor Action |
| Throwing Knife | 6 yards | 12 yards | Minor Action |
| Throwing Spear | 8 yards | 16 yards | Minor Action |

\* See description for special rules.

**Blunderbuss:** This short barreled firearm shoots a spray of small lead balls from its flared muzzle, potentially damaging several opponents. The blast is 6 yards long and 2 yards wide. You make one attack roll when firing a blunderbuss and compare it to the Defense of each target in the blast area. Stunts affect targets individually. A Mighty Blow, for example, would apply to one target of your choice, not all targets in the blast. You cannot use Lightning Attack with a blunderbuss, but you can Dual Strike. A blunderbuss requires two hands to use.

**Pistol:** Similar to the arquebus, but smaller and designed to be fired with one hand. It takes two hands to reload, however, so many users carry several loaded pistols into combat.

## BLUDGEONS GROUP

**Mace:** A blunt crushing weapon designed to smash armor, a mace consists of a heavy head of stone or metal set upon a wooden or metal shaft. The head is often flanged or knobbed to better penetrate armor.

**Maul:** Normally a blacksmith's or woodsman's tool, this long-handled hammer may be used in warfare as a bludgeon to smash foes.

**Two-handed Maul:** A stout wooden shaft about four feet in length topped with a brutal metal hammerhead.

## BOWS GROUP

**Crossbow:** A crossbow is a type of mechanized bow where the bow is mounted to a wooden stock and drawn with a lever.

**Long Bow:** A tall bow, roughly the height of a man, made from a single piece of wood and with a long draw.

**Short Bow:** Sometimes called a horseman's bow, this weapon is smaller than a long bow but handier to use.

## BRAWLING GROUP

**Fist:** The favored weapon in barrooms everywhere.

**Gauntlet:** A heavy glove made of leather and sometimes reinforced with metal. This category also includes weapons like brass knuckles.

| WEAPONS | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Weapon** | **Damage** | **Min. Str.** | **Cost** | **Weapon** | **Damage** | **Min. Str.** | **Cost** |
| **Axes Group (Fighting)** | | | | **Heavy Blades Group (Fighting)** | | | |
| Battle Axe | 2d6 | 1 | 14 sp | Bastard Sword | 2d6+1 | 2 | 20 sp |
| Throwing Axe | 1d6+2 | 1 | 10 sp | Long Sword | 2d6 | 1 | 18 sp |
| Two-handed Axe | 3d6 | 3 | 20 sp | Two-handed Sword | 3d6 | 3 | 23 sp |
| **Black Powder Group (Accuracy)*** | | | | **Lances Group (Fighting)** | | | |
| Arquebus | 2d6+3 | — | 40 sp | Heavy Lance | 2d6+1 | 3 | 20 sp |
| Blunderbuss | 1d6+2 | — | 35 sp | Jousting Lance | 1d6+1 | 0 | 6 sp |
| Pistol | 1d6+3 | — | 25 sp | Light Lance | 1d6+3 | 1 | 12 sp |
| **Bludgeons Group (Fighting)** | | | | **Light Blades Group (Accuracy)** | | | |
| Mace | 2d6 | 1 | 12 sp | Dagger | 1d6+1 | — | 9 sp |
| Maul | 1d6+3 | 1 | 14 sp | Short Sword | 1d6+2 | –1 | 14 sp |
| Two-handed Maul | 2d6+3 | 3 | 19 sp | Throwing Knife | 1d6 | — | 10 sp |
| **Bows Group (Accuracy)*** | | | | **Polearms Group (Fighting)** | | | |
| Crossbow | 2d6+1 | 1 | 20 sp | Glaive | 2d6+1 | 1 | 23 sp |
| Short Bow | 1d6+1 | –1 | 9 sp | Halberd | 2d6+3 | 3 | 25 sp |
| Long Bow | 1d6+3 | 1 | 15 sp | Military Fork | 2d6 | 2 | 18 sp |
| **Brawling Group (Accuracy)** | | | | **Spears Group (Fighting)** | | | |
| Fist | 1d3 | — | - | Spear | 1d6+3 | 0 | 12 sp |
| Gauntlet | 1d3+1 | — | 4 sp | Throwing Spear | 1d6+3 | 0 | 12 sp |
| Improvised Weapon | 1d6–1 | — | - | Two-handed Spear | 2d6 | 1 | 20 sp |
| **Dueling Group (Accuracy)** | | | | **Staves Group (Accuracy)** | | | |
| Main Gauche | 1d6+1 | — | 11 sp | Club | 1d6 | — | 1 sp |
| Rapier | 1d6+3 | 0 | 18 sp | Morningstar | 1d6+3 | 1 | 11 sp |
| Spiked Buckler** | 1d6–1 | –1 | 15 sp | Quarterstaff | 1d6+1 | — | 3 sp |

*Weapons from the Bows and Black Powder Weapons Groups add Perception instead of Strength to damage.
**The spiked buckler gives the wielder a +1 Defense vs. melee attacks.

**Improvised Weapon:** When you try to bash someone with whatever's at hand, it's an improvised weapon. This can be nearly anything.

## DUELING GROUP

**Main Gauche:** This is a long dagger specifically designed for use in the off hand, as a parrying weapon.

**Rapier:** A rapier is a long, narrow thrusting weapon favored by duelists. It is a weapon of finesse, its users prizing deftness over the raw power of heavy blades.

**Spiked Buckler:** This is a very small shield with one or more extruding spikes. It can be used to block blows or punch opponents. It is a weapon but also gives the user +1 Defense vs. melee attacks.

## HEAVY BLADES GROUP

**Bastard Sword:** Also known as a hand-and-a-half sword, a bastard sword has a longer blade and hilt than a long sword.

**Long Sword:** A common weapon of knights, these one-handed blades are also known as broadswords or simply "swords." The blades are about three feet in length, double-edged, and mounted on a hilt with a heavy crossguard.

**Two-handed Sword:** A large, powerful blade that requires both hands to wield effectively. Two-handed swords can reach five or six feet in length.

## LANCES GROUP

Lance weapons are meant to be used while mounted. When used on foot, they count as improvised weapons.

**Heavy Lance:** This is a long spear used couched under the arm of a horseman.

**Jousting Lance:** Also known as a tourney lance, this weapon lacks the sharp metal tips of other lances. It is meant for completion instead of battle. Once you make a successful attack with a jousting lance, it splinters and is destroyed.

**Light Lance:** Similar to the heavy lance, but it can be used overhand or underarm.

## LIGHT BLADES GROUP

**Dagger:** A long knife used to stab and pierce, often carried as a tool as much as a weapon. Long daggers are sometimes called dirks.

**Short Sword:** Shorter than a long sword but longer than a dagger, the short sword is a one-handed blade meant for thrusting.

**Throwing Knife:** Similar to a dagger, but shorter and balanced for throwing.

## POLEARMS GROUP

All polearms are two-handed weapons.

**Glaive:** A glaive is a pole weapon with a long curved blade on the business end.

**Halberd:** This weapon features an axe head and spike mounted at the end of a long pole.

**Military Fork:** Descended from the farmer's pitchfork, the military version is designed to punch through armor.

## SPEARS GROUP

**Short Spear:** A simple weapon used for hunting and battle, a short spear is made of a shaft of wood with a sharpened steel head.

**Throwing Spear:** A light spear that is thrown as a ranged weapon. This category also includes weapons like javelins.

**Two-handed Spear:** Also called a long spear, a two-handed spear has a wide head of steel at the end of a long wooden shaft.

## STAVES GROUP

**Club:** A short cudgel fashioned of hard wood or sometimes metal. This category also includes weapons like saps.

**Morningstar:** A short-hafted weapon with a spiked head on the business end.

**Quarterstaff:** A simple weapon made from a length of hardwood, sometimes reinforced with metal tips.

# GRENADES

Grenades are unusual weapons that are not available in all campaign settings. The grenades described here are alchemical concoctions stored in vials that are easy to throw. They can be purchased from alchemists or made by a character with the Alchemy talent (see **Chapter 3: Character Options**). They thus have two prices: one to buy a ready vial and one to buy the ingredients to make one. Rules for attacking with grenades are in **Chapter 2: Basic Rules**.

**Acid Vial:** On impact this grenade sprays acid in all directions. Any target wearing armor must reduce its Armor Rating

| GRENADES | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gear** | **Damage** | **Buy Cost** | **Make Cost** |
| Acid Vial | 3d6* | 24 sp | 8 sp |
| Blast Vial | 2d6 | 9 sp | 3 sp |
| Fire Vial | 3d6* | 18 sp | 6 sp |
| Ice Vial | 3d6* | 18 sp | 6 sp |
| Lightning Vial | 2d6* | 24 sp | 8 sp |
| Thunder Vial | 1d6* | 9 sp | 3 sp |

*See description for special rules.*

by 1 (before damage is calculated) and hits from multiple acid vials can continue to degrade it. Armor remains damaged until repaired with a TN 11 Strength (Smithing) test for metal armor or Dexterity (Crafting) for leather armor.

**Blast Vial:** This grenade creates a small explosion, damaging opponents with shards of glass and concussive force.

**Fire Vial:** On impact this grenade sprays liquid fire. As with any fire-based attack, the fire vial may ignite flammable items in the area of effect at the GM's option.

**Ice Vial:** This grenade creates a haze of frost that hardens to ice on contact. Targets reduce their Speed by half (rounded down) for the rest of the encounter.

**Lightning Vial:** On impact this grenade creates arcs of lighting in all directions. Damage from a lighting vial is penetrating.

**Thunder Vial:** This grenade creates a thunderous boom and great concussive force. Targets must make a successful TN 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test or be knocked prone.

# CHARACTER GEAR

Your heroes are now properly armed and armored. But there's a lot more equipment and resources that can come in handy in the life of an adventurer. The following pages cover adventuring gear, trade goods, clothing, tools, food, lodging—almost anything the Player Characters might need in the course of their heroic exploits.

## TRAVELING AND ADVENTURING

This section includes common equipment favored by adventurers, and those who live their lives traveling.

**Arrows:** Ammunition for bows.

**Bedroll:** More than just a blanket, a bedroll includes a piece of attached waxed canvas to give some protection from the damp ground. More expensive versions include pockets into which leaves or other material can be stuffed for additional insulation and warmth, and straps and buckles that make for tighter packing and easier attachment to a pack or mount.

**Blanket:** A simple wool blanket, but it can be all that stands between an adventurer and death (or at least discomfort) on a cold night.

**Bolts:** Ammunition for crossbows.

**Candle:** A simple wax candle that illuminates a small (2-yard) radius and burns for 1 hour.

**Candle clock:** Expertly made to burn at a very particular rate marked on the candle itself or on a rod that stands alongside it. An adventurer will be able to tell within 10 minutes how much time has passed since the candle clock was lit, provided it burned continuously. Will burn for up to 12 hours, but only illuminates a tiny (1-foot) radius around it.

**Chain:** A length of iron links. A blacksmith can attach multiple short lengths together, or attach a chain to other items, such as shackles.

**Chalk:** A finger-length piece of white chalk.

**Compass:** A delicate piece of equipment with a needle floating in oil or water, reliably pointing north.

**Cord:** Thin line that comes in both a cheap quality useful for tying up parcels, as well as a more expensive version that can withstand the stress of fishing.

**Cup:** A simple tin cup that can, in a pinch, be used to heat a liquid over a fire.

**Dice:** Six-sided cubes made of polished wood or bone inscribed with runes and used to play games of chance. Cheaper versions may be misshapen and will not roll all results with equal probability; more expensive versions are shaped (or loaded with internal weights) to increase the frequency of a particular outcome.

**Dining utensils:** Small pieces of tin shaped into a spoon and fork, for those travelers who can't make do with just their knife and their fingers.

**Fishing tackle:** A small selection of hooks, weights, and corks to make fishing an easier task.

**Flint and steel:** A set of flint and steel is used to start a fire; striking the pieces together causes sparks, which are shed on tinder to begin a blaze.

**Floater:** A large piece of cork with an attached cord typically used to bind it to cargo being carried over open water to keep it from getting lost to the depths. Some adventurers who can't swim cling to a floater in the same situations. A single floater is the size of a large book and provides enough buoyancy to keep an unarmored adventurer from sinking below the surface.

**Hook:** A length of metal with a ring on one end allowing a rope to be attached. The hook is then flung up to a ledge or branch to secure the rope and allow for easier climbing. A climbing hook is a simple J-shaped piece of metal, easy to carry and throw, but often difficult to get to "stick." A grapnel hook has multiple prongs and a greater chance of finding purchase but is heavier and more difficult to throw properly.

**Hunter's snare:** A short length of wire that can be looped and used as a snare for small animals.

**Incense:** A small stick of slow-burning, pleasant-smelling material. Incense comes in a variety of scents. A single piece of incense burns for 1 hour.

**Lantern:** A lantern is like a lamp but is enclosed in glass. It may have shuttered or hinged sides to control how much light it emits. A lantern will burn for about the same amount of time as a lamp (6 hours), but it normally illuminates a wider area (a 10-yard radius). (See **Lamp** under **Home and Hearth**.)

**Lockpicks:** A set of tools used to manipulate locks.

| Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arrows (20) | 2 sp | Flint and steel | 10 cp | Rope (20 yards) | 2 sp |
| Bedroll | 10 sp | Floater (cork) | 30 sp | Rope (silk, 20 yards) | 1 gp |
| Blanket (wool) | 6 sp | Hook (climbing) | 25 sp | Shackles | 3 gp |
| Bolts (20) | 3 sp | Hook (grapnel) | 4 gp | Smoke bomb | 15 sp |
| Candle (2) | 5 cp | Hunter's snare | 8 sp | Spark tube | 8 sp |
| Candle clock | 10 sp | Incense | 2 sp | Spike | 5 cp |
| Chain (5 yards) | 1 gp | Lantern | 5 sp | Spyglass | 15 gp |
| Chalk | 2 cp | Lockpicks | 12 sp | Stinker | 6 sp |
| Compass | 5 gp | Mirror (hand, metal) | 3 sp | Tarp (canvas) | 20 sp |
| Cord (fishing, 50 yards) | 2 sp | Pan (frying, iron) | 5 sp | Tarp (canvas, waxed) | 35 sp |
| Cord (twine, 50 yards) | 1 sp | Plate (tin) | 7 cp | Tent, small | 10 sp |
| Cup (tin) | 10 cp | Playing cards | 35 sp | Tent, large | 35 sp |
| Dice | 20 sp | Pole (10 foot) | 3 cp | Torch | 10 cp |
| Dining utensils | 2 sp | Pot (iron) | 10 sp | Whetstone | 10 cp |
| Fishing tackle | 10 sp | Powder and shot (10) | 5 sp | Whistle | 22 sp |

**MIRROR:** A small, palm-sized piece of metal polished until it is highly reflective on one side. More expensive versions come in a metal or wooden frame with a small handle.

**PAN:** A heavy iron skillet, about 10 inches in diameter.

**PLATE:** A simple tin platter.

**PLAYING CARDS:** A deck of pasteboard cards, identical on one side and woodcut-printed on the other with a variety of pictures and symbols that allow for playing a variety of games.

**POLE:** A straight, 10-foot shaft of cleaned and smoothed wood that can be put to a variety of uses.

**POT:** A heavy iron pot with a lid and a looped handle that allows it to be suspended over a fire.

**POWDER AND SHOT:** Propellant and ammunition for black powder weapons. Double the cost for blunderbusses.

**ROPE:** A length of twisted fibers normally made from hemp, but more expensive varieties are made from lighter, stronger silken cords woven into a rope.

**SHACKLES:** With the use of a hammer, these shackles can be riveted shut around the wrists or ankles of any normal-sized humanoid. The two bracelets are usually connected by a one-foot length of chain, but more expensive versions are separated by a stiff iron rod to further restrict the prisoner's movements. A skilled blacksmith given a length of chain can connect two sets of shackles such that a prisoner's ankles and wrists can be simultaneously restrained, or to connect multiple sets of shackles so that prisoners can be moved as a group.

**SMOKE BOMB:** One round after the fuse on a smoke bomb is lit, it will begin spewing a thick cloud that will spread outward at a rate of 1 yard per round for 5 rounds until an area 10 yards in diameter is filled with smoke that obscures normal vision.

**SPARK TUBE:** Immediately when lit, this eight-inch tube shoots a five-foot funnel of bright sparks out one end. The sparks cause no damage, but can be used as a distraction or as a way to signal at a distance.

**SPIKE:** A sharp stake of metal, often with an eyelet on the end. The spike is driven into a rock or ice face, or a castle wall, and a rope can be passed through the eyelet or tied off to assist in climbing a difficult surface.

**SPYGLASS:** Two carefully crafted lenses placed at the ends of a sheet of leather, rolled, and held in place to create a tube that magnifies distant objects for whomever looks through it. More expensive versions come in fixed, wooden cylinders with caps that can be fitted over the ends to better protect the lenses, and the most costly come in brass tubes that collapse down for easier carrying.

**STINKER:** A small clay bottle of extremely potent and noxious liquid that can be spread in a 5 yard radius in an attempt to slow or confuse any pursuers who might be tracking an adventurer by scent.

**TARP:** A square of canvas 10 feet on an edge that can be put to a multitude of uses; some adventurers and travelers use it to provide partial shelter from the wind. More expensive versions are waxed to provide a further degree of water-proofing, and have holes around their edges reinforced with brass grommets making the tarp easier to tie down over cargo or stake out as shelter.

**TENT:** A small tent is intended for one man, with arms and armor. Two would find it cramped. A large tent can fit up to four adventurers.

**TORCH:** A short piece of wood or length of flax or hemp, with an end soaked in tallow to make it easier to light. A torch illuminates about a 6-yard radius and burns for approximately 1 hour.

**WHETSTONE:** A small palm-sized stone used to keep weapons sharp.

**WHISTLE:** A hollow, wooden tube notched so that it makes a shrill sound when someone blows into it.

# CARRYING AND STORAGE

Those who live a life of travel and adventure sometimes bring a significant number of items along on their journeys. Just as often, they return with even more belongings and want to stow them away securely. This section includes a multitude of ways that items can be transported or stored.

**BACKPACK:** Many adventurers prefer a small, standard backpack. This simple canvas sack won't get in the way in a fight and can carry up to 25 pounds of cargo. Those with more belongings or who want more organization carry a traveler's backpack: a larger backpack separated into several compartments, each secured behind its own tie-down flap, and with a total capacity of 75 pounds.

**BARREL:** A large wooden vessel bound with iron hoops, a barrel can carry up to 35 gallons of liquid or 175 pounds of a solid material (such as flour). Barrels are typically made of whatever wood is native to the area of its construction, but more expensive barrels are made of rarer materials or wood chosen for how it will flavor or affect what's stored inside.

**BASKET:** A simple, open container woven of dried reeds.

**BOTTLE:** A small, fragile container available in a variety of sizes that can contain anything from a few ounces of liquid up to 3 pints. Typically made of baked clay, more expensive versions are made of colored glass, but all come with a clay or cork stopper to seal it shut.

**BUCKET:** Whether you're fighting a fire, carrying up to 5 gallons of fresh water, or just flipping it over to make an improvised stool, this wooden bucket is what you need.

**CASK:** A smaller barrel, a cask holds between 9 and 10 gallons of liquid or 50 pounds of solid material.

**CHEST:** A sturdy, wooden box with a hinged lid and a hasp that allows it to be locked shut using a separate lock. Small chests have up to 3 cubic feet of internal storage, while large chests can contain up to 12 cubic feet of material.

**CRATE:** A reinforced wooden box, crates can be constructed anywhere from 1 to 3 feet on an edge in order to contain a wide variety of objects and materials.

**FLASK:** A small, flat metal container designed to carry up to one pint of liquid in a pocket.

**HASP:** Two pieces of metal that can be attached to a container, then one folded over the other to provide a loop where a lock can seal the container shut. A hasp and a pair of hinges can convert a simple crate into a crude chest.

**HINGE:** A jointed piece of metal that allows a door or lid to swing open and closed.

**LOCK:** Intricate clockwork mechanisms designed to keep something closed or sealed. Cylinder locks are opened by twisting dials that move the tumblers inside its casing, slowing thieves but able to be opened by those with enough persistence to attempt enough possibilities. Keyed locks are more secure, opening only to those who carry a unique, matching key, but are vulnerable to thieves skilled in using lockpicks.

**POUCH:** A small bag held shut by a button or drawstring. More expensive pouches have leather tabs that allow them to be threaded onto a belt for easier carrying and access.

**SACK:** A simple bag of rough material that can carry up to 40 pounds of cargo, but is very prone to ripping open if overloaded, and can be difficult to seal shut if near to full.

**SAWDUST:** Clean, fresh sawdust is sold cheaply in quantity to those who wish to fill in the loose space in a container with packing material to protect its contents from damage in transit.

**SKIN:** Water is a necessity and a prepared adventurer ensures a ready supply. Wine is a luxury, but many adventurers try to bring some of it along as well.

# TOOLS

An adventurer without tools may be stuck without a way to open a sealed tomb, or forced into trying to chop down trees with a longsword to make a raft in a flood. This section includes items adventurers might carry to be better prepared for specialized or heavier tasks, or items that might be found in a professional crafter's workshop.

Tools such as axes or hammers are very similar to some weapons, but are typically ill weighted for use in combat, or made with materials that might quickly break, splinter, or shatter in the heat of battle.

**ANVIL:** Similar to the enormous chunk of iron next to a blacksmith's forge, this smaller version still weighs 40 pounds but can be moved around and used on the road for emergency repairs of weapons, armor, horseshoes, and more.

**AWL:** A short wooden handle attached to a metal spike, used to punch holes in heavy materials such as leather.

**AXE:** A heavy axe on a three-foot shaft, appropriate for felling and trimming trees.

**BELLOWS:** An air bladder with a nozzle on one end and a pair of handles that allow the air inside to be quickly expelled in a strong gust to keep coals burning as hot as possible.

**CHISEL:** A short bar of iron sharpened into a blade at one end, used with a hammer to shape or cut wood or stone.

**CROWBAR:** A two-foot length of iron flattened on one end, allowing an adventurer to wedge it into a gap and lever upon the surrounding material. More expensive crowbars are longer (and heavier), allowing for greater leverage.

**DRILL:** With one end bent into a handle that allows the adventurer to spin the other, sharpened end in place, a drill can bore a hole the size of the sharpened end (the bit) into wood or stone. More expensive drills allow for the bit to be removed and replaced with a new one when it becomes dull, while the bits on cheaper drills are simply sharpened in place.

**GLUE:** A viscous material sold in airtight pots. When spread between two surfaces that are pressed together and left to dry, glue creates a strong bond—though one that can be easily broken if enough force is applied.

**HAMMER:** A wide variety of hammers are available for the similar variety of tasks that can be accomplished by banging on something as hard as possible. A simple, one-handed iron hammer can handle most simple tasks. A forge hammer, specially tempered and shaped for metalworking, is often found in the hands of a blacksmith. Those dealing out large

## CARRYING AND STORAGE

| Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Backpack | 9 sp | Cask | 3 sp | Lock (cylinder) | 2 gp |
| Backpack (traveler's) | 15 sp | Chest (large) | 5 gp | Lock (keyed) | 6 gp |
| Barrel | 9 sp | Chest (small) | 1 gp | Pouch (belt) | 1 sp |
| Basket (reed) | 7 cp | Crate | 20 cp | Pouch | 8 cp |
| Bottle (clay) | 3 cp | Flask, metal | 50 cp | Sack | 5 cp |
| Bottle (glass) | 8 cp | Hasp | 4 sp | Sawdust (1 cu. foot) | 1 cp |
| Bucket (wooden) | 11 cp | Hinge | 1 sp | Skin, water/wine | 40 cp |

## TOOLS

| Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Anvil (portable) | 40 sp | Hammer (iron) | 5 sp | Pitchfork | 5 sp |
| Awl | 3 sp | Hammer (sledge) | 20 sp | Rake | 3 sp |
| Axe (woods) | 8 sp | Hatchet | 5 sp | Saw | 4 sp |
| Bellows | 12 cp | Hoe | 2 sp | Scythe | 35 cp |
| Chisel | 1 sp | Knife (skinning) | 5 sp | Shovel | 3 sp |
| Crowbar | 3 sp | Ladder, Rope (4 yards) | 3 sp | Sickle | 5 sp |
| Drill | 5 sp | Ladder, Wooden (4 yards) | 3 sp | Spade | 4 sp |
| Glue (small pot) | 7 cp | Mallet (wooden) | 6 cp | Tongs (forge) | 4 sp |
| Hammer (forge) | 8 sp | Nails (25) | 20 cp | Tongs (hand) | 1 sp |

amounts of brute force often carry a sledge hammer, a heavy hammerhead mounted at the end of a three-foot shaft.

**HATCHET:** A small, one-handed version of an axe. It would be difficult to fell a tree with a hatchet, but it's the perfect tool for trimming branches from a fallen log, or chopping firewood down to size.

**HOE:** A simple tool with a flat, metal blade at one end, used by farmers and fieldworkers to break up hard earth.

**KNIFE, SKINNING:** A small knife with a specially shaped blade that makes short and clean (as possible) work of separating a creature's pelt from its carcass.

**LADDER, ROPE OR WOODEN:** For those willing to carry its bulk where it's needed, a ladder allows nearly anyone to make an easy, stable climb. Wooden ladders are sturdy but long and inflexible. A rope ladder is bulky and harder to climb, but is easier to move in enclosed spaces.

**MALLET:** Unlike a hammer, a mallet has a wooden head, making it usable for light work but easy to break if used on sharp edges or metal materials.

**NAILS:** Short pieces of metal, sharpened at one end and flattened at the other for easy pounding.

**PITCHFORK:** A long, wooden shaft with three to five sharpened tines attached to one end, perfect for separating and turning hay or other materials.

**RAKE:** A broom, but with the bristles replaced with metal nails or tines, used to loosen soil or separate dead grass or plants from the still-living.

**SAW:** A piece of metal edged in sharpened teeth, used (via the attached handle) to cut apart pieces of wood.

**Scythe:** A long, curving handle with a similarly long and curving blade attached perpendicularly at one end, used for mowing grass or reaping crops.

**Shovel:** With a wide, flat blade on one end, a shovel is perfect for moving around earth or other loose materials.

**Sickle:** A hand-held tool with a crescent-shaped blade designed for harvesting grain or chopping apart loose vegetation.

**Spade:** Similar to a shovel, but with a narrower, longer blade allowing for easier digging and breaking apart of hard-packed earth.

**Tongs:** Pincers that allow materials to be grasped and moved about at a distance, hand tongs are made of two pieces of wood connected by a pivot. Forge tongs are made of iron allowing for the handling of heavier and hotter materials such as those found in a blacksmith's workshop.

# CLOTHES AND FASHION

Few adventurers go about naked. Once someone decides to wear clothing the options they have are limited only by fashion, imagination, and necessity.

More so than nearly any other table in this section, the items in this table are only broad guidelines as to what an adventurer may be able to purchase. Prices on the table are indicative of quality but common versions of the item, made of standard materials. Adventurers might pay less for a version made of lesser material, or for one that has been heavily (and usually badly) used, but they might also be able to pay more for any of the following options:

- *Better materials,* such as a wool or silk shirt rather than a cotton one.
- *Sturdier construction,* for clothing that will better withstand the rigors of adventuring and travel.
- *Adornment,* such as embroidery or fur trim on a cloak or a fancier buckle on a belt.
- *Bespoke fitting,* for clothes designed especially to fit an individual's size or form.
- *Fashion,* for items in a style favorable to the fashion-sensitive portions of an area or culture.
- *Coloring,* when an object is desired in particular shade rather than that of the raw materials or what's available.

- *Season,* for clothing better suited to a particular time of year or climate, such as heavier and warmer, winter-weight gloves as opposed to thinner, summer-weight ones.

The more of these options desired for the same item, the more expensive it may be. Similarly, the more specialized the clothing the more difficult it may be to find, and may require the buyer to instead find a tailor or other professional that can custom-make the item.

**Breeches:** Tight trousers that fasten just below the knee.

**Belt:** A length of leather cinched through a simple buckle.

**Boots:** Heavy foot coverings that extend up to near the knees.

**Cloak:** A sleeveless, cape-like garment that clasps around the neck, often with an attached hood.

**Dress:** A one-piece garment with a shirt that billows into an attached skirt around the legs.

**Gloves:** Hand coverings with separate parts for each finger and the thumb.

**Gown:** Similar to a dress, but longer, bulkier, and more formal.

**Hat:** A head covering that perches atop the head and comes in many forms.

**Hood:** A head covering that drapes loosely over the entire head.

**Jacket:** A garment worn over the torso and arms, to provide additional protection, warmth, or style.

**Jerkin:** A sleeveless jacket that extends down over the hips.

**Loincloth:** The simplest of garments, a single strip of cloth covering the groin and fastened in place with a short length of rope.

**Mask:** Used to disguise or cover the face, a mask can be a simple strip of cloth or can be a shaped piece of plaster covered in decoration or designed to look like something else (such as the stylized face of a monster).

**Pants:** Full-length trousers that cover the legs from the waist to the ankles.

**Robe:** A simple item of sleeved clothing that drapes down the full length of the body but hangs open in the front unless held shut with buttons or a sash. Dressing robes are worn around the home as simple and comfortable clothing, while some wizards wear heavier robes as their everyday garments.

| CLOTHES AND FASHION | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gear** | **Cost** | **Gear** | **Cost** | **Gear** | **Cost** |
| Breeches | 8 cp | Jacket | 2 sp | Sash | 5 cp |
| Belt | 7 cp | Jerkin | 9 cp | Shirt | 1 sp |
| Boots | 5 sp | Loincloth | 1 cp | Shoes | 1 sp |
| Cloak | 3 sp | Mask (cloth) | 8 cp | Skirt | 7 cp |
| Dress | 12 cp | Mask (plaster) | 3 sp | Slippers | 8 cp |
| Gloves | 4 sp | Pants | 1 sp | Stockings | 16 cp |
| Gown | 40 sp | Robe (dressing) | 11 cp | Tabard | 7 cp |
| Hat | 1 sp | Robe (wizard's) | 6 sp | Underclothes | 3 cp |
| Hood | 5 cp | Sandals | 6 cp | Vest | 6 cp |

**SANDALS:** A leather or wooden sole held onto the foot with small thongs to provide the foot with basic protection from the ground.

**SASH:** A short length of cloth worn as a decorative item, wrapped around the head or waist, or used in any of dozens of ways.

**SHOES:** Sturdy soles attached to upper pieces of leather that cover and protect the foot.

**SHIRT:** A light piece of clothing covering the entire upper body except the head and hands.

**SKIRT:** A loose garment worn around the waist and draping down to billow around the legs.

**SLIPPERS:** Shoes that provide limited protection, but some comfort and style.

**TABARD:** A full-height piece of cloth, sleeveless and worn via a hole for the head, typically emblazoned with a symbol or a coat of arms.

**UNDERCLOTHES:** Simple garments worn beneath other clothing. They are also known as smallclothes.

**VEST:** A tight, sleeveless piece of clothing that buttons closed over the lower torso.

# TRADE GOODS AND RAW MATERIALS

Not every item is carried because of its utility. Some are carried because of their value. The table in this section provides a base value for the listed items, but even before haggling begins there may be wild swings in an item's value based on the availability of that particular commodity, whether it is in season, if it's of particularly high (or low) quality in that area, or based on the reputation of its producer.

Similarly, this list is only the beginning of what items a traveler might carry from one place to another in hopes of making a profit. Many items on the table (such as food, pelts, and spices) come in a wide variety of types, and some items that are nearly worthless in one area may be incredibly valuable in another. Making a profit requires intelligence, nerve, money, and the ability to move items safely from one place to another. Adventurers might be able to make some easy money if they have empty room in their packs—but they may also decide that it's easier to hunt monsters and collect bounties than it is to try and win big profits away from established traders.

**BEADS:** Small pieces of glass, stone, or other material with a hole drilled through them so that they might be strung together or otherwise incorporated into jewelry, clothing, or artwork.

**BEESWAX:** The raw wax produced by bees when they make their honeycombs. Used to make candles and for other purposes.

**COTTON:** A simple fiber that can be put to a variety of purposes. Often spun into thread and then woven into fabric.

**DYE:** A liquid used to add color to fabrics and other materials.

**FEATHERS:** Gathered from a variety of birds, with rarer or more attractive feathers used for decorative purposes and cheaper and more common feathers used to stuff mattresses and pillows.

**FLOUR:** Ground grain used to make a variety of foodstuffs.

**FOOD:** Dried or otherwise preserved food lasts much longer before becoming inedible, which is important when moving it between distant markets. Fresh food spoils faster, but commands a higher price (and a higher profit) if still edible and salable at its destination.

**HONEY:** Sweet, long-lasting, and highly portable, honey is valued for its sweetness.

**LEATHER:** Tanned and ready for use, leather comes in as wide a variety of shapes as the creatures it initially belonged to, requiring it to be sold by the pound.

**LINEN:** A light, simple textile woven from fibers of flax.

**PELT:** The skin of an animal or other creature, with the fur, hair, scales, or wool still attached.

**SALT:** Used as a flavoring for food, but also as a preservative and to cure meats.

**SILK:** The most luxurious of fabrics.

**SPICES:** Seeds and other plant substances typically used in small quantities to bring flavor to food.

**WOOL:** As a trade good, wool is usually transported in loose bundles of material recently shorn from sheep, cleaned but not yet made into yarn or fabric.

# PROFESSIONAL GEAR

Some items are typically only acquired and used by those members a profession that requires its use. Many of the items on the **Professional Gear** table are expensive, but they are also of high quality and extremely well suited for their intended purpose.

| TRADE GOODS AND RAW MATERIALS | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gear** | **Cost** | **Gear** | **Cost** | **Gear** | **Cost** |
| Beads (10) | 15 cp | Food (1 pound, dried) | 4 sp | Pelt (small) | 15 sp |
| Beeswax (1 pound) | 10 sp | Food (1 pound, fresh) | 3 sp | Salt (1 pound) | 25 sp |
| Cotton (10-yard bolt) | 20 sp | Honey (1 ounce) | 2 sp | Silk (1 square yard) | 35 sp |
| Dye (1 pint) | 25 sp | Leather (1 pound) | 8 sp | Spices (1 ounce) | 5 gp |
| Feathers (1 pound) | 45 sp | Linen (10-yard bolt) | 15 sp | Wool (1 pound) | 35 cp |
| Flour (1 pound) | 2 sp | Pelt (large) | 40 sp | | |

| PROFESSIONAL GEAR | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gear** | **Cost** | **Gear** | **Cost** | **Gear** | **Cost** |
| Book (blank, 30 pages) | 10 gp | Ink (red, one vial) | 25 cp | Paper (mapsheet) | 1 sp |
| Book lock | 2 gp | Musical instrument (horn) | 15 sp | Paper (page) | 3 cp |
| Canvas | 5 sp | Musical instrument (drum) | 8 sp | Quill | 3 cp |
| Healer's kit | 25 sp | Musical instrument (stringed) | 20 sp | Scroll | 1 gp |
| Horn (hunting) | 8 sp | Musical instrument (wind) | 10 sp | Sealing ring (custom) | 6 gp |
| Illuminating kit | 5 gp | Paint (pot) | 3 sp | Sealing ring (standard) | 5 sp |
| Ink (black, one vial) | 20 cp | Painter's kit | 1 gp | Sealing wax | 5 cp |

**Book:** Blank pages bound between sturdy covers, ready for whatever the author chooses to inscribe on them.

**Book lock:** Attached to the covers of a book with small nails, the parts of a book lock fold together, latch, and require a simple key to open. A book lock will provide little or no barrier to those with lock picks or those willing to use brute strength to pry the book open, but it will slow those hoping to casually or surreptitiously peek within.

**Canvas:** Stretched across a sturdy framework, a canvas provides a smooth clean surface for a painter to work upon. A standard canvas is square and about two feet on an edge; the prices of larger and smaller canvases vary proportionally. (Note that the price of a canvas does not include that of a frame, often crafted or purchased after the artwork is complete.)

**Healer's kit:** This kit contains bandages, herbs, salves, small knives, thread and needle, and other tools used to treat injuries.

**Horn:** A tapered, rigid tube made from a hollow animal horn or shaped from metal. It can be used to blow a few loud, clear tones, and is used to sound warnings or coordinate hunters across long distances.

**Illuminating kit:** This kit contains the variety of intricate tools needed to decorate a page (but not any raw materials, such as inks or gold leaf.)

**Ink:** A fluid used for writing, drawing, and printing. Ink comes most commonly in black, but ink in red (and sometimes other colors) is available for a higher price.

**Musical instrument:** Nearly anything can become an instrument in the hands of a skilled musician, but well-crafted instruments can help that skilled musician perform something akin to magic.

**Paint:** Many artists produce their own paint, but often also jump at the chance to use high-quality paint or paint in unique colors produced in faraway places. Transported and sold in pots sealed with wax to prevent the paint from drying before use.

**Painter's kit:** This kit includes a variety of brushes, a small palette, and other tools a painter can use to produce their art.

**Paper:** Paper comes in as wide a variety of forms as the materials used to make it, but the larger a piece of paper the more expensive it is, up to and including broad sheets used to craft large maps.

**Quill:** A carefully selected feather that when properly prepared is particularly well suited for writing or drawing using ink.

**Scroll:** A length or paper or vellum three feet long and one foot wide, affixed at both ends to a wooden or metal rod allowing the paper to be rolled around them for storage and transport.

**Sealing ring:** A ring that can be pressed into hot wax sealing a letter or parcel that leaves a particular impression. Sealing rings are often available with a standard variety of basic (and reused) shapes on them, but custom sealing rings featuring a unique sigil or a coat of arms can be fashioned for a higher price.

**Sealing wax:** Small blocks of wax that can be heated with a candle and dripped onto a surface, ready to be impressed with a sealing ring.

# HOME AND HEARTH

The items in the **Home and Hearth** table are of little use to adventurers on the road, but are often part of what makes a comfortable home to come back to after their journeys.

**Bed frame:** A wooden framework with a net of rope woven among them to provide support for a mattress.

**Blanket:** Though it wouldn't stand up long under the rigors of travel, this cotton blanket will provide considerable comfort at home.

**Bowl:** A simple dish for serving or eating food, available in a variety of materials.

**Broom:** A collection of straw bristles bound at the end of a long handle, used to clean floors.

**Brush:** A bound collection of bristles and a handle, used to detangle and style hair.

**Cauldron:** A large, heavy iron pot used to prepare stews and large quantities of food.

**Chair:** A basic piece of furniture, available as a simple wooden chair or as a more expensive (and more comfortable) version with upholstered cushions.

**Comb:** A simple piece of carved wood or bone used for hair styling.

**Cup:** Simple drinking vessels found around the house, available in a variety of materials.

**Lamp:** An oil lamp will burn for about 6 hours on a pint of oil. It illuminates a 6-yard radius. It burns more steadily than a torch, but the flaming oil can spill easily.

**Looking glass:** A large piece of glass affixed to a similarly large piece of polished metal to provide a clear reflection.

| Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bed frame | 30 sp | Comb | 6 cp | Mug (metal) | 15 cp |
| Blanket (cotton) | 4 sp | Cup (clay) | 5 cp | Oil (pint) | 8 cp |
| Bowl (clay) | 3 cp | Cup (tin) | 10 cp | Pillow | 3 sp |
| Bowl (metal) | 20 cp | Cup (wooden) | 8 cp | Quilt | 10 sp |
| Bowl (wooden) | 6 cp | Lamp | 2 sp | Soap (1 pound) | 15 cp |
| Broom | 7 cp | Looking glass (full) | 70 gp | Stool | 25 cp |
| Brush | 12 cp | Looking glass (small) | 5 gp | Table (large) | 45 sp |
| Cauldron | 35 sp | Mattress (feather) | 45 sp | Table (small) | 10 sp |
| Chair (upholstered) | 25 sp | Mattress (straw) | 20 sp | Wineglass | 3 gp |
| Chair (wooden) | 10 sp | Mug (clay) | 8 cp | | |

## FOOD AND LODGING

| Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost | Gear | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ale (pint) | 10 cp | Lodging (1 week, private apartment) | 5 gp | Meal (inn; bowl stew) | 5 cp |
| Ale (pitcher) | 25 cp | Lodging (1 week, private house) | 20 gp | Pickled vegetables (1 serving) | 3 cp |
| Bath | 1 sp | Lodging (1 night, inn, common room) | 5 cp | Rations (1 week, travel) | 2 sp |
| Bread (1 loaf) | 5 cp | Lodging (1 night, inn, private room) | 2 sp | Tea (1 pound) | 6 sp |
| Candy (1 pound) | 8 sp | Mead (pint) | 15 cp | Vegetables (basket, fresh) | 25 cp |
| Cheese (1 pound) | 25 cp | Meal (inn; full) | 25 cp | Wash | 2 cp |
| Dried meat (1 pound) | 35 cp | | | Wine (bottle, cheap) | 20 cp |
| Fruit (basket, fresh) | 20 sp | | | Wine (bottle, fine) | 3 sp |

A small looking glass is often propped atop a table or other piece of furniture, while a full looking glass is as tall as a human and set in a freestanding wooden frame.

**Mattress:** After a time on the road, adventurers may fall into a deep and dreamless sleep on a good mattress. Decent mattresses are stuffed with clean straw, and the better ones are stuffed with feathers.

**Mug:** Taller than a cup, often with a hefty handle and thicker walls, mugs are typically used for drinking heated or chilled beverages, as well as ale since it can contain a full pint.

**Oil:** Burned for light in lamps and lanterns. A pint's worth can burn for about 6 hours.

Pillow: A small square stuffed with feathers, used to provide additional comfort in bed and elsewhere around the home.

**Quilt:** A heavy blanket pieced together from numerous pieces of fabric.

**Soap:** A cake of material that can be combined with water to clean people or objects.

**Stool:** A short, knee-high seat.

**Table:** Tables come in small versions that can be used by a single person as a desk, or larger versions that can seat up to six.

**Wineglass:** A delicate vessel carefully crafted and shaped by an expert glassblower, perfect for drinking similarly subtle and delicate wines or liquors.

# FOOD AND LODGING

As you'll find on the **Food and Lodging** table above, when on the road an adventurer can sometimes purchase the comforts of a home.

**Ale:** Alcoholic drink made using water, malted grain such as barley, bitter herbs or flowers such as hops, and yeast.

**Bath:** A full basin of hot water, soap, and sponges and brushes that can be used to scrub away the grime of adventure.

**Lodging:** The price of lodging varies not just as shown in the table, but also with the quality of the lodging, its furnishing, and its location.

**Mead:** Alcoholic beverage made from fermented honey. Stronger than ale.

**Meal:** A full meal includes fresh bread, cooked meat, and whatever stew, cheese, porridge, or pastry the innkeeper has prepared for the day.

**Rations:** Dried meats, nuts, and other simple foodstuffs that provide sustenance (but always pleasure) while traveling.

**Wash:** A small basin of clean water and a rag, suitable for basic (but not full) cleansing.

**Wine:** Fermented beverage made using grapes or other fruit.

# MAGIC

Magic is a powerful force in *Fantasy AGE*. It puts the sorcery in Swords & Sorcery, and is thus a key element of the game. *Fantasy AGE* does not dwell on metaphysics. That is something individual campaign settings can delve into. For the purposes of the game, the world has magical energy and with natural talent and training it can be manipulated. *Fantasy AGE* refers to those who can use magic as mages, though your campaign setting may have one or more different terms for them (cleric, warlock, witch, etc.). When a mage harnesses magical energy, the resulting effect is a spell. A mage can cast many spells one after the other, but there are limits. A mage can run out of power and must rest before being able to cast spells again.

## ARCANA AND MAGIC TALENTS

Magic in *Fantasy AGE* is divided up into arcana, which are thematic groups of spells. Mages gain their spells by learning magic talents, each of which corresponds to one arcana. A mage that wanted to learn shadow magic, for example, would take the Shadow Arcana magic talent. Only mages can learn magic talents. The *Basic Rulebook* includes 12 magic talents:

**AIR ARCANA, DIVINATION ARCANA, EARTH ARCANA, FATE ARCANA, FIRE ARCANA, HEALING ARCANA, HEROIC ARCANA, LIGHTNING ARCANA, POWER ARCANA, SHADOW ARCANA, WATER ARCANA, WOOD ARCANA**

With four spells per arcana, that means this book gives mages 48 spells to choose from. Other *Fantasy AGE* books introduce further arcana and spells.

## ARCANA FOCUSES

There is an Intelligence focus that corresponds to each arcana. They act like other focuses, but also apply to a very important secondary statistic for mages, Spellpower (see **Spellpower** later in this chapter).

## LEARNING SPELLS

A level 1 mage begins the game with the Novice degree in two magic talents. Each of these paths gives the mage two spells, so a starting character will begin with four spells total. If you are the only mage in your group, you should seriously consider taking Healing Arcana as one of your magic talents. Its spells will keep your allies alive in dire circumstances.

## MAGIC POINTS

A mage uses magical energy to cast spells. The amount of arcane power a mage has available at any given time is measured in magic points (abbreviated MP). The more you have, the more spells you can cast. If you run out of magic points, you can't cast spells until you get some back.

Level 1 mages start the game with magic points equal to 10 + Willpower + 1d6 and add Willpower + 1d6 more every time they gains a level, up to level 10. From levels 11 to 20, mages gain magic points equal to their Willpower only. Powerful mages can cast spells for a long time without running out of magic points. That said, magic points are a finite resource and a smart mage knows when to spend them and when to hoard them.

Each spell has a cost in magic points. This must be paid when the Cast action is taken, regardless of whether the spell works or not. Magic always has its price.

# SPELLS AND ARMOR

Although not trained in its use, mages can wear armor. However, doing so makes it more difficult for them to cast spells. When a mage in armor casts a spell, he must pay an additional amount of magic points equal to the strain of the armor type (see accompanying table). These extra MPs must be paid for each spell, which makes wearing heavy armor a losing position for mages in the long run.

| CASTING IN ARMOR | |
| --- | --- |
| **ARMOR WORN** | **STRAIN** |
| Light Leather | 1 |
| Heavy Leather | 2 |
| Light Mail | 3 |
| Heavy Mail | 4 |
| Light Plate | 5 |
| Heavy Plate | 6 |

### EXAMPLE

*The mage Varuker wears a suit of light mail as part of a disguise while infiltrating a castle. He had hoped to find somewhere to remove the armor before the action started, but he is discovered and must defend himself. He casts a Lightning Bolt spell at an approaching guard. This would normally cost him 7 magic points, but light mail has a strain of 3, so it costs him 10 magic points (7+3=10) to cast the spell instead. He will continue adding the strain to the MP cost of each spell he casts until he can remove the armor.*

# CASTING SPELLS

You can cast any spell you know by making a successful casting roll and spending the required number of magic points. A casting roll is simply an Intelligence ability test. There is an Intelligence focus that corresponds to each arcana, so add these to casting rolls as appropriate. A level 3 mage with the Intelligence (Fire Arcana) focus, for example, would add 2 to casting rolls when using spells from the Fire Arcana.

### CASTING ROLL = 3D6 + INTELLIGENCE + ARCANA FOCUS (IF APPLICABLE)

If your casting roll equals or exceeds the spell's target number (TN), you successfully cast the spell. If not, the spell fizzles

and has no effect. Either way, you must spend the required magic points.

Some spells make use of the Stunt Die, so it's a good idea to leave the dice as they fall until the spell is totally resolved.

# SPELLPOWER

For many spells, making a successful casting roll is all you need to worry about. Make it and the spell works as intended. Sometimes, however, you must overcome the natural resistance of the target before the spell takes effect. Spellpower is the measure of your arcane might. Certain spells allow the target(s) to test against Spellpower to resist or at least offset the spells' effects.

### SPELLPOWER = 10 + WILLPOWER + ARCANA FOCUS (IF APPLICABLE)

### EXAMPLE

*The mage Varuker has a Willpower 3 and the Intelligence (Lightning Arcana) focus. When casting most spells, his Spellpower would be 13 (10 + 3). When casting Lightning Arcana spells, however, his focus would apply, so the Spellpower would be 15 (10 + 3 + 2).*

# REGAINING MAGIC POINTS

A mage can regain spent magic points by resting. For each full hour of rest and/or meditation, you get back 1d6 + Willpower magic points. If you manage 8 hours of uninterrupted rest and/or meditation, you get all your magic points back.

# SPELL FORMAT

Spells in *Fantasy AGE* have the following format.

- **SPELL NAME:** What the spell is called. Of course individual wizards might call a certain effect something different to make their spells more personal or for psychological effect.

- **REQUIREMENTS:** You must meet the requirements listed here to learn the spell. For most spells, this is simply the right degree in the appropriate magic talent. Healing Arcana (Journeyman), for example.

- **SPELL TYPE:** There are four types of spell—attack, defense, enhancement, and utility—and each spell falls into one of these categories.

- **MP COST:** This tells you how many magic points (MP) it takes to cast the spell.

- **CASTING TIME:** It can take anywhere from a few moments to a few hours to cast a spell. This entry tells you how long it takes to cast this one.

- **TARGET NUMBER:** Your casting roll must meet or beat this number for you to successfully cast the spell.

- **TEST:** Some spells require tests from the target, often against your Spellpower. This entry details the type of test the spell requires, if any. The effects of the test are

## STANDARD SPELL STUNTS

| SP Cost | Spell Stunt |
|---|---|
| 1-3 | **POWERFUL CASTING:** Increase the Spellpower of your spell by 1 per stunt point spent, to a maximum of 3. |
| 2 | **SKILLFUL CASTING:** Reduce the magic point cost of the spell by 1. This can reduce the MP cost to 0. |
| 2 | **MIGHTY SPELL:** If the spell does damage, one target of the spell of your choice takes an extra d6 damage. |
| 3 | **LASTING SPELL:** If the spell has a duration beyond instantaneous, it remains in effect twice as long with no additional MP cost. Stone Cloak would last two hours instead of one, for example. Spells that last until the end of the encounter are extended by 1d6 minutes instead. |
| 3 | **MAGIC SHIELD:** You use the residual magic of the spell casting to set up a temporary protective shield. You gain a +2 bonus to Defense until the beginning of your next turn. |
| 4 | **FAST CASTING:** After you resolve this spell, you can immediately cast another spell. The second spell must have a casting time of a major action or a minor action. If you roll doubles on this casting roll, you do not get any more stunt points. |
| 4 | **IMPOSING SPELL:** The effect of the spell is much more dramatic than usual. Until the beginning of your next turn, anyone attempting to make a melee attack against you must make a successful Willpower (Courage) test. The target number (TN) is 10 + your Willpower ability. Those who fail must take a move or Defend action instead. |
| 4 | **SPLIT SPELL:** If the spell affects only one target, you can have it affect two, so long as the second target is within the spell's range and no more than 6 yards from the original target. There is no additional MP cost. Targets test against the spell separately. |
| 5 | **DISRUPT MAGIC:** In addition to its normal effects, your spell is so powerful that it may disrupt another magical effect (such as a spell) on the target. Roll an immediate test of your Intelligence (Power Arcana) vs. the Spellpower of any one effect on the target. Success removes the effect. Doubles on the test do not generate stunt points. |
| 5 | **LETHAL SPELL:** If the spell does damage, one target of the spell takes an extra 2d6 damage. Alternately, all targets of the spell take an additional 1d6 damage. |

specified in the description. Oftentimes a successful test has one effect and a failed test a different one.

- **DESCRIPTION:** This entry explains what the spell does in detail. Armor protects against any damage inflicted as normal unless it is noted as penetrating damage (in which case, it ignores armor altogether).

# SPELL STUNTS

Each spell has a standard effect, but if you do an exceptional job casting it you can manipulate it to get even more impressive results. This is known as a spell stunt.

If you make a successful casting roll and get doubles on any of the dice, you can perform one or more spell stunts in addition to the spell's normal effect. You receive a number of stunt points (SP) equal to the Stunt Die and must use them right away to perform stunts.

Once you have decided on what spell stunts you want to use, you can narrate their effects. You can perform the stunts in any order you choose. You can only perform a given spell stunt once in a round. The spell stunts on the **Standard Spell Stunts** table can be used by any character for the SP cost indicated.

# ARCANA AND SPELLS

The rest of this chapter is devoted to the arcana and their spells. They are organized alphabetically by arcana, with the magic talent given first and then the four associated spells following. This grouping should make it easy to find the spells you need during play.

# AIR ARCANA

The wind obeys your commands.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *protective winds* and *voices on the wind*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *wind blast*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Air Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *winds of flight*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Air Arcana spells.

### PROTECTIVE WINDS

**REQUIREMENTS:** AIR ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** DEFENSE   **MP COST:** 4
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
**TEST:** NONE

You summon up a whipping wind that circles about you and protects you from harm. You gain a +2 to your Defense vs. ranged attacks. Anyone adjacent to you (friend or foe) suffers a –1 penalty when making melee attacks. *Protective winds* last until the end of the encounter.

### VOICES ON THE WIND

**REQUIREMENTS:** AIR ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY   **MP COST:** 4+
**CASTING TIME:** 1 MINUTE   **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
**TEST:** NONE

You can focus in on any conversation happening within 100 yards of you that you can see. The wind carries the conversation to your ears and you can hear it as clearly as if you were sitting next to the participants. You can switch to a different conversation as a major action. *Voices on the wind* lasts for 10 minutes, and you can extend it for 10 minutes for each 2 MP you spend.

### WIND BLAST

**REQUIREMENTS:** AIR ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK  **MP COST:** 8
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION  **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
**TEST:** **STRENGTH (MIGHT)** VS. SPELLPOWER

You send a powerful gust of wind from your outstretched hands or arcane device. The *wind blast* is 6 yards long and 4 yards wide. Anyone caught inside it must make a Strength (Might) test vs. your Spellpower or be knocked prone. The wind will also send light objects flying, blow out candles, etc.

### WINDS OF FLIGHT

**REQUIREMENTS:** AIR ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY  **MP COST:** 10+
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION  **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
**TEST:** NONE

You summon winds that bear you aloft. You gain a flying Speed of 8 + Willpower. You must use the rules for flying found in **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**, though you retain your land speed while on the ground. *Winds of flight* lasts for 1 hour and you can extend it for up to 5 hours for a cost of 2 MP per hour.

# DIVINATION ARCANA

You can see what others cannot.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *bloodhound* and *blood mark*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *ill omens*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Divination Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *good omens*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Divination Arcana spells.

### BLOODHOUND

**REQUIREMENTS:** DIVINATION ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY  **MP COST:** 4+
**CASTING TIME:** 1 MINUTE  **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
**TEST:** NONE

You can divine the presence of an object you have put a *blood mark* on or a living creature whose blood you have a sample of. You can get a sample of blood from any weapon that has damaged the target in combat. When you first cast the spell, you will know if the target is within a mile of you and if so, what direction. This lasts for 10 minutes and you can keep it active for 2 MP per further 10 minutes. While the spell is active, you will know what direction the target is from you.

This acts like a beacon but the spell has no intelligence behind it. It can't tell you how to navigate a maze to find the target, for example—only that the target is "that way."

### BLOOD MARK

**REQUIREMENTS:** DIVINATION ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY  **MP COST:** 3
**CASTING TIME:** 1 MINUTE  **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
**TEST:** NONE

You inscribe an object with an arcane mark unique to you that remains until you dismiss it (a free action). It requires a drop of your blood, although the mark itself is invisible to the naked eye. Once an object has a *blood mark* on it, you can track it with the *bloodhound* spell. You can maintain a number of *blood marks* equal to your Willpower at any one time.

### ILL OMENS

**REQUIREMENTS:** DIVINATION ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK  **MP COST:** 8
**CASTING TIME:** 1 MINUTE  **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
**TEST:** **WILLPOWER (FAITH)** VS. SPELLPOWER

Your knowledge of the future makes one target vulnerable. When you meet the target in any type of encounter during the following 24 hours, you can choose to use *ill omens* as a free action. For the remainder of the encounter, the target suffers a –2 penalty on ability tests based on one ability of your choice (Communication, Dexterity, etc.). Stunts based on that ability also generate –2 stunt points. If the target makes a successful Willpower (Faith) test vs. your Spellpower, the ability test and stunt point penalties are only –1. *Ill omens* is only effective for a single encounter and it cannot be cast again on the same target until the full 24 hours have passed.

### GOOD OMENS

**REQUIREMENTS:** DIVINATION ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** DEFENSE  **MP COST:** 10
**CASTING TIME:** 1 MINUTE  **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
**TEST:** NONE

Your knowledge of the future provides good fortune to your party. In the next combat encounter, you and your allies gain two benefits. First, each of you can re-roll your Initiative tests and take the better result. Second, you and your allies gain a +1 to your Defense for the whole encounter.

# EARTH ARCANA

You are deeply connected to earth and stone.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *rock blast* and *stone cloak*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *earth speed*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Earth Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *earthquake*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Earth Arcana spells.

## ROCK BLAST

**REQUIREMENTS:** EARTH ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK   **MP COST:** 4
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
**TEST: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** VS. SPELLPOWER

A blast of small rocks burst from your hand or arcane device at a visible enemy within 20 yards. They inflict 1d6 + Willpower penetrating damage and the target is knocked prone. If the target makes a successful Constitution (Stamina) test vs. your Spellpower, *Rock blast* only inflicts 1d6 penetrating damage and the target remains standing.

## STONE CLOAK

**REQUIREMENTS:** EARTH ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** DEFENSE   **MP COST:** 3
**CASTING TIME:** 1 MINUTE   **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
**TEST:** NONE

Your clothing takes on the toughness of stone while remaining pliable. *Stone cloak* gives you an Armor Rating equal to your Willpower ability for 1 hour. If you are wearing regular armor, *stone cloak* has no effect. You can only cast this on yourself.

## EARTH SPEED

**REQUIREMENTS:** EARTH ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY   **MP COST:** 6
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 13
**TEST:** NONE

You let the earth swallow and transport you, re-emerging anywhere within 30 yards that you can see. You must be standing on dirt when you cast the spell and you must emerge from the dirt as well.

## EARTHQUAKE

**REQUIREMENTS:** EARTH ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK   **MP COST:** 11+
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 17
**TEST: DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** VS. SPELLPOWER

The ground bucks and rolls in an area with a 6-yard radius anywhere you choose within 30 yards. Anyone caught in the area suffers a –2 penalty to Defense and a –5 penalty to Speed for one round. They must also succeed on a Dexterity (Acrobatics) test vs. your Spellpower or fall prone. This spell normally lasts for one round but for 5 MP, paid at the start of your subsequent turns as a free action, you may extend the duration by an additional round.

# FATE ARCANA

You can see the web of fate.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *hands of fate* and *puppets of fate*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *strings of fate*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Fate Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *chosen of fate*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Fate Arcana spells.

## HANDS OF FATE

**REQUIREMENTS:** FATE ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** ENHANCEMENT   **MP COST:** 4
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
**TEST:** NONE

You can manipulate fate to help your allies. When you cast this spell, you get a total bonus equal to your Stunt Die +1. For the remainder of the encounter, you can give part or all of this bonus to an ally within 20 yards of you if it would make one of their failed ability tests into a success. If an ally failed a test by 2, for example, you could give them 2 of your total bonus to make that into a success. The GM must tell you the cost and you can then decide if you want to apply any of your bonus to the test. *Hands of fate* lasts until you've spent your total bonus, or the encounter ends. If your total bonus from casting the spell was 5, for example, you might give 3 of it to one ally and later give 2 to another. You can only have one *hands of fate* spell active at one time.

## PUPPETS OF FATE

**REQUIREMENTS:** FATE ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK   **MP COST:** 6
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 13
**TEST:** **WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)** VS. SPELLPOWER

You manipulate fate to discomfort your enemies. For the remainder of the encounter, you may force enemies within 12 yards of you to re-roll successful ability tests and take the worse result. You can attempt this a total number of times equal to the Stunt Die result of your casting roll. Enemies can resist Puppets of Fate with successful Willpower (Self-Discipline) vs. Spellpower tests (test for each attempt). You can only have one *puppets of fate* spell active at one time.

## STRINGS OF FATE

**REQUIREMENTS:** FATE ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** ENHANCEMENT   **MP COST:** 8
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
**TEST:** NONE

You pull the web of fate to favor your party. For the remainder of the encounter, you and your allies within 10 yards of you benefit as follows. Whenever one of the affected characters generates stunt points, that character gains +1 SP. If you rolled a 3 on the Stunt Die, for example, you would get 4 points instead of the usual 3.

## CHOSEN OF FATE

**REQUIREMENTS:** FATE ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** ENHANCEMENT   **MP COST:** 12
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 16
**TEST:** NONE

You weave the web of fate to favor you at a critical time. For the remainder of the encounter, you and your allies within 10 yards of you may re-roll your Stunt Die when generating stunt points and take the better result. *Chosen of fate* only takes effect if the original die roll qualified for stunt points (the test was successful and doubles were rolled).

# FIRE ARCANA

Fire is an old friend.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *arcane lantern* and *flame blast*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *burning shield*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Fire Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *firestorm*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Fire Arcana spells.

## ARCANE LANTERN

**REQUIREMENTS:** FIRE ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY   **MP COST:** 2 PER HOUR
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 8
**TEST:** NONE

You illuminate the area around you with a steady light similar to that of a lantern. The spell illuminates a 10 yard radius centered on you. *Arcane lantern* lasts for one hour, but can be extended for 2 MP per additional hour.

## FLAME BLAST

**REQUIREMENTS:** FIRE ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK   **MP COST:** 4
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
**TEST:** **DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** VS. SPELLPOWER

Gouts of blazing fire erupt from your outstretched hands or arcane device, burning nearby targets. The *flame blast* is 8 yards long and 2 yards wide. Anyone hit by the *blast* takes 2d6+1 damage. Targets that make a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) test vs. your Spellpower only take 1d6+1 damage.

## BURNING SHIELD

**REQUIREMENTS:** FIRE ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** DEFENSE   **MP COST:** 6
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
**TEST:** NONE

You surround yourself with an aura of fire. Any adjacent enemy that makes a melee attack against you takes 2 penetrating damage. *Burning shield* lasts for a number of minutes equal to your Willpower.

## FIRESTORM

**REQUIREMENTS:** FIRE ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK   **MP COST:** 11
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
**TEST:** **DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** VS. SPELLPOWER

You create an explosive *firestorm* with a 4-yard radius anywhere within 50 yards of you. Anyone caught in the area takes 3d6+Willpower damage and may be knocked prone. Those who make a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) test vs. your Spellpower remain standing.

# HEALING ARCANA

Your magic can heal with a touch.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *healing touch* and *revival*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *healing aura*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Healing Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *restoration*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Healing Arcana spells.

## HEALING TOUCH

**REQUIREMENTS:** HEALING ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY  **MP COST:** 1-3
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION  **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
**TEST:** NONE

Your touch seals wounds and restores vigor to one wounded target. You can choose to spend up to 3 MPs when you cast the spell. For each MP spent, the target gets back 1d6 Health. You can cast this on yourself.

## REVIVAL

**REQUIREMENTS:** HEALING ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY  **MP COST:** 5
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION  **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
**TEST:** NONE

Your touch helps restore the grievously wounded or fallen. A dying character adjacent to you immediately regains 10 + their Constitution + your Willpower in Health. Since dying characters cannot take actions, you cannot cast this spell on yourself.

## HEALING AURA

**REQUIREMENTS:** HEALING ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY  **MP COST:** 3-9
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION  **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
**TEST:** NONE

Waves of healing energy radiate from you and aid your nearby allies. You can pick a number of targets up to twice your Willpower, all of whom must be within 10 yards of you. All targets regain 1d6 Health per 3 MP you spend (to a maximum of 3d6 Health for 9 MP). You can designate yourself as one of the targets.

## RESTORATION

**REQUIREMENTS:** HEALING ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY  **MP COST:** 15
**CASTING TIME:** 1 MINUTE  **TARGET NUMBER:** 17
**TEST:** NONE

You can restore a gravely injured character to health, though this spell takes 1 minute to cast and is thus most useful outside of combat encounters. You must remain adjacent to the target throughout the casting. If successful, the target regains Health equal to your Willpower × 10.

# HEROIC ARCANA

Your magic inspires heroism and great deeds.

**Novice:** You learn the spells *hero's inspiration* and *hero's might*.

**Journeyman:** You learn the spell *hero's aegis*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Heroic Arcana).

**Master:** You learn the spell *hero's spirit*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Heroic Arcana spells.

### HERO'S INSPIRATION

**Requirements:** Heroic Arcana (Novice)
**Spell Type:** Enhancement   **MP Cost:** 3
**Casting Time:** Major Action   **Target Number:** 10
**Test:** None

Your arcane power gives confidence to a number of targets equal to your Willpower. They must be within 6 yards of you when the spell is cast but may then move freely and still enjoy its effects. Those with Hero's Inspiration gain a +2 bonus on the next ability test they take (whatever it is). If they have not used this bonus by the end of the encounter, the benefit is lost. You can designate yourself as one of the targets.

### HERO'S MIGHT

**Requirements:** Heroic Arcana (Novice)
**Spell Type:** Enhancement   **MP Cost:** 5
**Casting Time:** Major Action   **Target Number:** 12
**Test:** None

Your arcane power infuses a number of targets equal to your Willpower. They must be within 6 yards of you when the spell is cast but may then move freely and still enjoy its effects. Until the end of the encounter, those enhanced with Hero's Might gain a +1 bonus to damage when making melee and ranged attacks. You can designate yourself as one of the targets.

### HERO'S AEGIS

**Requirements:** Heroic Arcana (Journeyman)
**Spell Type:** Defense   **MP Cost:** 6
**Casting Time:** Major Action   **Target Number:** 13
**Test:** None

Your power protects a number of targets equal to your Willpower. They must be within 6 yards of you when the spell is cast but may then move freely and still enjoy its effects. Until the end of the encounter, those under the Hero's Aegis gain a +1 bonus to Defense. You can designate yourself as one of the targets.

### HERO'S SPIRIT

**Requirements:** Heroic Arcana (Master)
**Spell Type:** Enhancement   **MP Cost:** 8
**Casting Time:** Major Action   **Target Number:** 14
**Test:** None

You bolster yourself and nearby allies with arcane power. You and your allies within 10 yards of you get +1 SP when generating stunt points. Hero's Spirit lasts until the end of the encounter.

# LIGHTNING ARCANA

You are the storm's fury.

**Novice:** You learn the spells *jolt* and *shock blast*.

**Journeyman:** You learn the spell *lightning bolt*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Lightning Arcana).

**Master:** You learn the spell *chain lightning*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Lightning Arcana spells.

### JOLT

**Requirements:** Lightning Arcana (Novice)
**Spell Type:** Attack   **MP Cost:** 3
**Casting Time:** Major Action   **Target Number:** 11
**Test:** Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower

You jolt one visible character within 10 yards of you. The target takes 2 penetrating damage and must succeed in a TN 11 Constitution (Stamina) test vs. your Spellpower or become stunned. On his next turn a stunned character cannot take a major action; only a single minor action is allowed.

### SHOCK BLAST

**Requirements:** Lightning Arcana (Novice)
**Spell Type:** Attack   **MP Cost:** 4
**Casting Time:** Major Action   **Target Number:** 13
**Test:** Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower

Electricity arcs from your hands or your arcane device, shocking enemies in a 6-yard by 6-yard area. Anyone in this area takes 1d6 + Willpower penetrating damage. Targets that make a successful Constitution (Stamina) test vs. your Spellpower only take 1d6 penetrating damage.

### LIGHTNING BOLT

**Requirements:** Lightning Arcana (Journeyman)
**Spell Type:** Attack   **MP Cost:** 7
**Casting Time:** Major Action   **Target Number:** 15
**Test:** Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower

A bolt of electricity leaps from your outstretched hand or arcane device to strike a single visible target within 30 yards of you. The *lightning bolt* inflicts 2d6 + Willpower penetrating damage. A target that make a successful Constitution (Stamina) test vs. your Spellpower only takes 1d6 + Willpower penetrating damage.

### CHAIN LIGHTNING

**Requirements:** Lightning Arcana (Master)
**Spell Type:** Attack   **MP Cost:** 12
**Casting Time:** Major Action   **Target Number:** 17
**Test:** Constitution (Stamina) vs. Spellpower

This spell is similar to *lightning bolt* but it can affect multiple targets by arcing from one to the next. You pick a single visible character within 20 yards of you. It affects that target and an additional number of characters equal to the result of the casting roll's Stunt Die. They must all be within 10 yards of the original target. Chain Lightning inflicts 2d6 + Willpower penetrating damage. Targets that make a successful Constitution (Stamina) test vs. your Spellpower only take 1d6 + Willpower penetrating damage.

## POWER ARCANA

You work with the raw stuff of magic itself—power in its essential form.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *arcane awareness* and *spell ward*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *arcane abatement.* You also gain the focus Intelligence (Power Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *arcane circle*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Power Arcana spells.

### ARCANE AWARENESS

**REQUIREMENTS:** POWER ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY  **MP COST:** 2
**CASTING TIME:** MINOR ACTION  **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
**TEST:** NONE

You attune your senses to the flow of arcane power. For one minute, you can sense active magic within 10 yards of you and make Perception tests to detect details about it (usually with a TN equal to the effect's Spellpower or equivalent) including arcana, spell type, and affected area or point of origin. If you have the Power Arcana focus, you may add it to the Perception test.

### SPELL WARD

**REQUIREMENTS:** POWER ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** DEFENSE  **MP COST:** 4+
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION  **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
**TEST:** NONE

You can weave arcane energies for magical protection. You give yourself or one target within 4 yards of you a +2 bonus on all tests to resist spells until the end of the encounter. By expending additional MP, you can extend this benefit to more targets: 2 MP per additional target, up to a number of targets equal to your Willpower. If you have the Power Arcana focus, you can extend this benefit to two more creatures, or alternately increase the spell's bonus to +3.

### ARCANE ABATEMENT

**REQUIREMENTS:** POWER ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY  **MP COST:** SPECIAL
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION
**TARGET NUMBER:** TARGET SPELLPOWER  **TEST:** NONE

You attempt to end an ongoing spell or magical effect within 20 yards of you. Make a casting test against the Spellpower of the target spell. If it is successful, you can spend MP equal to the original cost of the spell or effect to negate it. If either the casting test fails or you do not have sufficient MP to cover the cost, then you cannot cancel the target effect.

### ARCANE CIRCLE

**REQUIREMENTS:** POWER ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** DEFENSE   **MP COST:** 10   **CASTING TIME:** 1 MINUTE
**TARGET NUMBER:** 12   **TEST:** SPECIAL

You create a glowing *arcane circle*, up to 4 yards in diameter, on the ground where you cast the spell. It is etched with symbols of power, and lasts for 1 hour. During that time, you and any allies inside the *arcane circle* have protection against spells cast from outside its confines. The casting roll of any such spells trying to affect the occupants must exceed the *arcane circle's* Spellpower to take effect. This does not cancel the spell entirely, just prevents it from affecting those inside the *circle*. Those outside the *circle* would be affected normally if in the spell's area of effect. You can be inside or outside of the *circle* when it is created and can cross it at will. An *arcane circle* is no barrier to your own spells.

# SHADOW ARCANA

Your magic lives in the shadows.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *shadow dagger* and *shadow's embrace*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *veil of darkness*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Shadow Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *shadow slip*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Shadow Arcana spells.

### SHADOW DAGGER

**REQUIREMENTS:** SHADOW ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK   **MP COST:** 3
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
**TEST:** NONE

A shard of darkness bursts from your hand or arcane device and speeds toward the target of your choice within 20 yards. It inflicts 1d6+1 penetrating damage.

### SHADOW'S EMBRACE

**REQUIREMENTS:** SHADOW ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** ENHANCEMENT   **MP COST:** 4
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
**TEST:** NONE

You deepen the shadows in a 6 yard by 6 yard area within 30 yards of you for 5 minutes. Anyone in the area receives a +2 bonus on Dexterity (Stealth) tests. There must already be some natural shadows present or the spell does not work.

### VEIL OF DARKNESS

**REQUIREMENTS:** SHADOW ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY   **MP COST:** 6
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
**TEST:** NONE

You create a wall of impenetrable darkness within 30 yards of you that is 10 yards long, 2 yards wide, and 4 yards tall. The wall does not impede movement in any way, but it does block all sight (even Dark Sight). Entering such total darkness is disconcerting, so those moving through it halve their Speed (rounded down) for the round.

### SHADOW SLIP

**REQUIREMENTS:** SHADOW ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY   **MP COST:** 8
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
**TEST:** NONE

Using this spell you can transport instantly from one area of shadow to another within 50 yards of you that you can see. To others it looks like you disappear into the shadows and re-emerge elsewhere.

# WATER ARCANA

Your magic surges and flows likes water.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *arcane spring* and *water whip*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *water wall*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Water Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *watery doom*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Water Arcana spells.

### ARCANE SPRING

**REQUIREMENTS:** WATER ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY   **MP COST:** 2
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
**TEST:** STRENGTH (MIGHT) VS. SPELLPOWER

You cause a number of gallons of water equal to your Willpower (minimum of 1; +2 gallons if you have the Water Arcana focus) to pour out of nowhere. This water can pour into a container (and is clean and safe to drink), onto a small fire to quench it, or even onto a target. Such a target must make a Strength (Might) test vs. your Spellpower to avoid being knocked prone, in addition to being wet for some time thereafter.

### WATER WHIP

**REQUIREMENTS:** WATER ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** ENHANCEMENT   **MP COST:** 4
**CASTING TIME:** MINOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
**TEST:** NONE

You create a long whip of water that appears in your empty hand. You can wield the *water whip* as a weapon, using your Intelligence (Water Arcana) to make attack rolls. You can attack targets up to 3 yards away and the Water Whip inflicts 1d6 + Willpower damage. You can also perform the Disarm stunt for 1 SP instead of 2 when wielding it, and you use Willpower instead of Strength to determine how far away the weapon lands. The *water whip* lasts until the end of the encounter, although you can end it earlier as a free action if you so choose.

## WATER WALL

**REQUIREMENTS:** WATER ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** DEFENSE   **MP COST:** 6
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
**TEST: STRENGTH (MIGHT)** VS. SPELLPOWER

You conjure a cascade of water, up to 3 yards long and 1 yard wide. It blocks all fire attacks from passing through it, and anyone trying to attack through it takes a –2 penalty on their attack rolls. Anyone attempting to cross through the Water Wall must make a Strength (Might) test vs. your Spellpower or be knocked prone. If you cast this spell more than once in an encounter, you can link together the sections into one continuous wall. The *water wall* lasts until the end of the encounter, although you can end it earlier as a free action if you so choose.

## WATERY DOOM

**REQUIREMENTS:** WATER ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK   **MP COST:** 9
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
**TEST: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** VS. SPELLPOWER

You cause a target's lungs to fill with water, drowning them even in the open air. The target must make a Constitution (Stamina) test vs. your Spellpower. On a success, the spell has no effect. On a failure, the target takes 2d6 + your Willpower penetrating damage and cannot speak. At the start of each their turns, the target must make another Constitution (Stamina) test vs. your Spellpower, taking 2d6 + Willpower penetrating damage on a failure. The spell continues until a successful test is made or 5 rounds pass. *Watery doom* has no effect on targets that do not breathe air (or do not breathe at all).

# WOOD ARCANA

Your magic draws upon the strength of nature and green, growing things.

**NOVICE:** You learn the spells *forest blend* and *regrowth*.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You learn the spell *ensnaring roots*. You also gain the focus Intelligence (Wood Arcana).

**MASTER:** You learn the spell *awaken tree*. You can also choose one spell stunt you can perform for –1 SP when casting Wood Arcana spells.

## FOREST BLEND

**REQUIREMENTS:** WOOD ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY   **MP COST:** 4
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
**TEST: PERCEPTION (SEEING)** VS. SPELLPOWER

You and a number of creatures up to your Willpower within 6 yards of you blend into natural or wooded surroundings. For the duration of the encounter, a successful Perception (Seeing) test vs. your Spellpower is required to spot anyone concealed by this spell. Making an attack gives away your position, negating the spell's benefits until the beginning of your next turn.

## REGROWTH

**REQUIREMENTS:** WOOD ARCANA (NOVICE)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY   **MP COST:** 3
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
**TEST: NONE**

You infuse wood with a burst of life-force. This causes a piece of dead wood to return to life, sprouting branches, roots, and even leaves. It twists and warps wooden objects like furniture, doors, chests, or even weapons or shields, making them unusable. Used on a seed, it matures into a hearty sapling in an instant, while a mature tree enjoys a year's growth, immediately giving forth fruit or seeds as appropriate.

## ENSNARING ROOTS

**REQUIREMENTS:** WOOD ARCANA (JOURNEYMAN)
**SPELL TYPE:** ATTACK   **MP COST:** 8
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
**TEST: DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** VS. SPELLPOWER

Tough, gnarled roots spring up from the ground to grab and entangle targets in a 4 yard by 4 yard area within 20 yards of you that you designate. Those affected must make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) test against your Spellpower. Failure means the target is trapped and rooted to that spot for the duration of the encounter (though they can fire ranged weapons, cast spells, and take other actions that do not involve moving). Trapped targets can make a Strength (Might) check against your Spellpower as a major action to tear free of the ensnaring roots. Anyone moving through the area affected by the spell has a –5 penalty to speed.

## AWAKEN TREE

**REQUIREMENTS:** WOOD ARCANA (MASTER)
**SPELL TYPE:** UTILITY   **MP COST:** 15
**CASTING TIME:** MAJOR ACTION   **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
**TEST: NONE**

You "awaken" a mature tree within 10 yards of you, giving it senses, awareness, and movement. It becomes the equivalent of an ogre (see **CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES**; use the maul attack to represent attacks from the tree's branches). It is friendly to you and obedient to your commands for the duration of the encounter. At the end of the spell, the tree reverts to its normal form, putting down roots wherever it is standing.

# STUNTS

CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES explained the concept of stunts and showed you how they work in combat, while CHAPTER 5: MAGIC introduced spell stunts for mage characters. Combat and spell stunts are easy to use because the results are cut and dry, and this is why they are a core part of the *Fantasy AGE* system. This chapter introduces two new types of stunts: exploration and roleplaying. Due to the nature of the encounters in which they are used, these types of stunts require more interpretation on the part of players and adjudication on the part of the GM. This can slow down play. For these reasons they are presented here as optional rules. Your group should decide if you want to use them in your campaign. One option to consider is starting the campaign using just combat and spell stunts. Then after a few sessions, when everyone is comfortable with the system, try adding roleplaying and exploration stunts and see if you like them.

## EXPLORATION AND ROLEPLAYING STUNTS

Using stunts during combat and spell-casting is one of the most fun parts of playing *Fantasy AGE*. When you pull off a stunt, it helps you feel like your character is a real hero, and it gives you choices about what you want to do. This chapter brings stunts outside the realm of combat, adding two new classes of stunts: exploration stunts and roleplaying stunts. It's no coincidence that there are three kinds of encounters in *Fantasy AGE*—combat, exploration, and roleplaying. With these two new classes of stunts, the stunt system is now fully rounded.

## THE BASICS

The basic system for generating and using stunt points to pull off exploration and roleplaying stunts is exactly the same as it is for combat stunts. Whenever you are successful at a test and you roll doubles on two of your dice, you can perform one or more stunts in addition to reaping the benefits of success on the test. You receive a number of stunt points equal to the result on the test's Stunt Die, and must use them right away to perform stunts. You can perform the stunts in any order you choose and you then narrate how your character pulls them off. As with combat stunts, except where noted in a particular stunt's description, you can only perform the same stunt once with the stunt points from a single test.

The exploration and roleplaying stunts available to everyone are listed in the **Exploration Stunts** and **Roleplaying Stunts** tables. As with combat stunts, encounter-, monster-, and class-specific exploration and roleplaying stunts are also presented in the appropriate contexts.

Roleplaying stunts must always be delivered along with a description of the interaction you're engaged in, and must be consistent with the description you give. You can't have your character deliver a scathing dressing-down via a Communications (Intimidation) test and then say that it turns out to be

funny (using the Jest stunt). Or, at the very least, you'd have to propose a really clever justification for why that would work.

GMs should be aware that, in general, exploration and roleplaying stunts will call for more on-the-fly decision-making than combat stunts. This is because of the simple fact that outside combat, there are fewer hard-and-fast rules and statistics to govern what characters can do, how they might feel or react to provocations, where they're standing, and so on. In this way, exploration stunts and roleplaying stunts aren't any different than exploration and roleplaying in the game overall—they're a little more flexible and open than situations where life and death hang in the balance, and so they require the GM's flexibility and interpretation.

To avoid bogging the game down with the need for GMs to make lots of minor, on-the-fly decisions about non-combat stunts, they can always decide that any particular non-combat test can't generate stunt points, for any reason or no reason. They can also rule that stunt points generated from any particular combat test can't be spent on exploration stunts or roleplaying stunts. They can even make either of those decisions *after* a test has been made. (Although a good GM will only very rarely "take away" stunt points that have already been rolled. It's usually better to let the players have their fun.)

Finally, GMs should be clear that the effects of exploration stunts, especially, do not call for them to invent new elements that weren't there before to add to the situation at hand. For example, if there's nothing additional in the encounter at hand

for a character who chooses the "that makes me wonder" stunt to learn, the GM isn't obligated to make something up to satisfy the effects of the stunt.

## WHICH STUNTS CAN I USE?

With the addition of exploration and roleplaying stunts it is possible to generate stunt points from any test. Outside combat, though, different kinds of tests and scenes can bleed into each other, their boundaries sometimes difficult to discern.

As a general rule—and always subject to the GM's decisions to the contrary—you can use stunt points from any test to generate any kind of stunt. Although you will most frequently want to use exploration stunts when doing investigation and use roleplaying stunts when dealing with NPCs because those stunts will make the most sense and be the most useful, you're not restricted that way. You can even use exploration and roleplaying stunts during combat, or use combat stunts outside combat.

After all, if a fight breaks out during a roleplaying encounter, you'll want to use combat stunts right away! If you're in the middle of an exploration encounter and manage to find a hidden NPC, a roleplaying stunt might be just the thing to cajole them out of their hiding place. If the rule worked any other way, it would be very important for the GM to demarcate the beginnings and ends of scenes with precision that would gum up the whole flow of the adventure.

## EXPLORATION STUNTS

| SP Cost | Stunt |
|---|---|
| 1 | **Advantageous Positioning:** You make your discovery from an advantageous position of your choice, up to 2 yards away from the place that would normally lead to your discovery with respect to the object of your test. You may wait until the GM describes what you've found, if relevant, before you choose your position. This stunt can be used multiple times on the same test if you have enough stunt points. |
| 2 | **Efficient Search:** If resources of any kind are typically consumed in the course of your test, you use only half as much as would be normal. |
| 2 | **Speedy Search:** You complete your test in half the time it would otherwise take. |
| 3 | **That Makes Me Wonder:** You may immediately make another Perception test, at no additional cost in time or resources, to discover more information about your surroundings, or the object of your test. This bonus test must use a different focus from the first test, however, and doubles on this bonus test do not give rise to stunt points. The two tests are assumed to transpire simultaneously, not one after the other. If there is nothing additional to discover the stunt is wasted, but the GM will not prevent you from choosing this stunt even when there is nothing additional to learn. |
| 3 | **The Object of Your Attention:** You receive a +1 bonus to further tests to examine or perceive additional aspects of the object of your test until the time or venue changes. |
| 4 | **The Upper Hand:** If your discoveries lead to combat within a moment or two you receive a +3 bonus on your initiative roll. |
| 4 | **Resources at Hand:** Choose a focus that you don't have, that falls under the same ability as the test you're making. You are considered to have that focus until the time or venue changes. The GM may require you to explain how this bonus arises from the environment and deny it if you can't make a reasonable suggestion. |
| 4 | **With a Flourish:** The manner of your success is impressive to those who are nearby to watch you. You have a +1 bonus to opposed tests against them until the time or venue changes. |

## ROLEPLAYING STUNTS

| SP Cost | Stunt |
|---|---|
| 1 | **Bon Mot:** You tag the perfect witty remark onto the end of your action, affecting all those who hear it that much more deeply. If you can't think of one, the rest of the players and GM quickly brainstorm options, and you choose among them. Word of your wit is likely to spread, for good or ill. |
| 2 | **And Another Thing:** You manage to weave a second thrust of conversation into the primary interaction that called for the test, if your description supports it. If relevant, you may make an additional test as part of your action, before anyone else has a chance to respond or make any tests or arguments of their own. |
| 2 | **Sway the Crowd:** Your interpersonal efforts are so effective that they spill over onto others in the area, and you affect one additional person of your choice past the original target. You may use this stunt multiple times on the same roll. However, if the test that gave rise to this stunt was an opposed test you may not expand the effect to anyone who has a higher ability + focus total than the original target. |
| 3 | **Stunned Silence:** You are so impressive that you leave all those who witness your display completely dumbfounded and unable to speak for at least a full round. Outside combat this lasts, at the very least, long enough for your character to begin to do something else. |
| 3 | **Jest:** You turn a phrase, twist your expression, or make some other comic motion that leads those nearby to laugh, or at least stifle their snorts. Anyone nearby who wishes to avoid laughing must make a TN 11 Willpower (Self-Discipline) test, with the exception—at the GM's discretion—of whomever you've made the butt of your joke. |
| 4 | **Flirt:** Choose one character who is present and immediately make an opposed Communications (Seduction) vs. Willpower (Self-Discipline) test. If you win, that character becomes enamored with yours. What exactly this means in the moment and how it might play out (or fall apart) in the long run are up to the GM, and depend on how you continue to act, but if you're successful, you've created an opening for romantic opportunities. |
| 4 | **Tower of Will:** Your success gives you a sense of your own brilliance and strength of character. For the rest of the current roleplaying exchange you gain a +1 bonus to any opposed tests where an opponent tries to put you at an emotional disadvantage, such as by intimidating you, impressing you, bargaining with you, and so on. |
| 5 | **Enrage:** You twist the knife, delivering a provocation or insult in such a way that a single target you designate must choose between either attacking you or storming away from the scene. If they choose to attack the assault need not be deadly, although that option is open to the enraged character. A slap or the throwing of the gauntlet may stand in as an "attack" just as well. |

# STUNT NOTES AND TEST RESTRICTIONS

With the addition of exploration and roleplaying stunts, a few restrictions and clarifications bear repetition, and a few new terms must be defined.

You can only roll a test when the GM calls for one. With the potential for great success in some of the new stunts, it will sometimes be tempting to roll for anything and everything in the hopes of generating stunt points that will provide broader-than-normal effects, enduring bonuses, and so forth. In cases where you're obviously fishing for stunt points, especially when you're attempting tasks at which you'd obviously succeed, the GM is well within their rights to disallow a test, and simply say that you've succeeded at your task.

For most tests, players will not know the target number they're rolling for on a given test. They simply roll the dice, generate a total, and tell the GM what it is. The new rules for exploration and roleplaying stunts don't change things by exposing tests' target numbers.

Some new stunt descriptions refer to an "object of your test." This refers broadly to an item or person being searched for, an NPC with whom a hero is interacting, or something similar. If an opposed test is being made, the object of the test is always the other party to the test. It will almost always be obvious what the object of a given test is, but whenever it's not, the GM is the final arbiter. And keep in mind that the object of a test may be obvious to the GM but not the player. Most Perception tests are examples of this.

Some stunt description say that some effect lasts "until the time or venue changes." This means that the effect lasts until the focus of play jumps forward in time by any significant amount, or the focus of play changes to some other place. This phrase is meant to approximate the duration of a single encounter but be a little clearer to players (since the GM is usually the only one who worries about when encounters begin and end). However, note that when the GM is jumping back and forth between two different groups of PCs who're doing different things in different places in order to create drama and excitement, the change of the game-table's focus on one sub-group of the party and then another sub-group, doesn't count as a change of time or venue. It's just clever technique.

Remember that all stunts are available to the GM's NPCs, too. Turnabout is fair play, after all. This can be awkward, however, when roleplaying stunts seem to take away the players' freedom to choose how their PCs behave. The GM should be circumspect in such cases, while players should also embrace the idea that good fun can arise from the adver-

sity of their heroes being psychologically and emotionally affected by the characters they interact with, even in ways that they wouldn't necessarily choose themselves. As always, the GM is the final arbiter of how things play out in whatever situations arise.

## EXAMPLE

*A baron has hired the rogue Najah to stop a secret society among the local populace from trying to oust him as their liege. Najah has infiltrated a clandestine meeting of the group but she still doesn't know who, among those assembled, is the agitator behind the movement. The GM asks Najah's player to make a Communication (Investigation) test to try to figure it out as she talks to those present and observes their body language.*

*The GM secretly sets the target number for this test at 13. Najah has Communication 2 and possesses the Investigation focus. She rolls 4, 4, and 3, with the 3 being the Stunt Die result. Her total is thus 15, which exceeds the target number. The GM confirms that Najah was successful. Since doubles were rolled, the test generates stunt points equal to the Stunt Die result of 3.*

*Najah's player has lots of options.*

*She considers using the That Makes Me Wonder stunt in order to try to learn something else about the members of the secret society or the place where they are meeting, while also on the lookout for the ringleader. However, she knows that the baron is very anxious to learn what Najah can find out as soon as possible. Given that, she decides to spend 2 SP on Speedy Search. Using her last 1 SP on Advantageous Positioning doesn't make a lot of sense in this context, so she decides to spend it on And Another Thing. She tells the GM that while she's talking to the conspirators to try to figure out who's in charge, she'll be interjecting the idea that she thinks the secret society should move slowly in opposing the baron, since taking action too quickly could result in half-baked schemes that will fall apart before they can come to fruition. Najah figures that slowing down the group's plots will make the baron happy and give him more time, and that these rationalizations will make sense to the plotters.*

*Because Najah was successful at the test, the GM reveals the identity of the shadowy individual who seems to be behind the society, a local cooper with political ambitions. The GM tells Najah's player that she manages to make that deduction before the meeting is even half done, giving her the option to slip away immediately, if she wants to. It will be up to the GM to figure out how to weave Najah's suggestions that the society should slow things down into the unfolding story, but since the stunt was paid for, the GM takes it as given that the idea was communicated effectively and without exposing Najah to suspicion.*

GAME MASTER'S
GUIDE
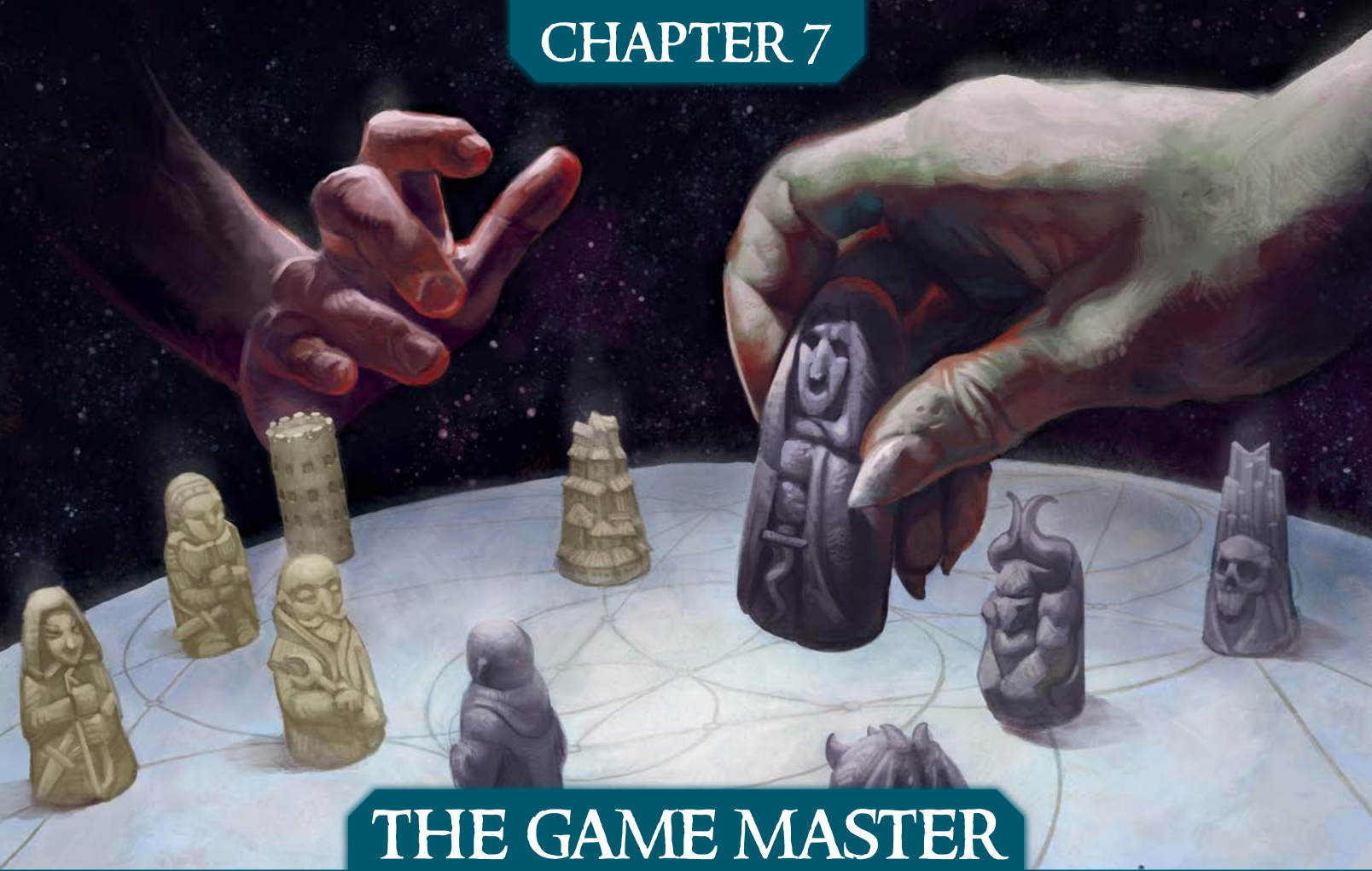
# THE GAME MASTER

If you are reading this chapter that means you are interested in taking on the role of Game Master for your group. This is an important and challenging job, and also a rewarding one. The Game Master, or "GM," is equal parts storyteller, referee, social director, and supporting actor. Chapters 7-12 of *Fantasy AGE* been designed to teach you how to run a game and support an ongoing series of adventures. Here you'll find advice, additional rules, adversaries, rewards, and an introductory adventure, *Choosing Night*, which you can use to kick off your campaign. If you are not planning to be a GM, you should stop reading now and stick with **Chapters 1-6**.

## THE GM'S JOB

While the players are responsible for keeping track of their characters and deciding on their actions, the Game Master is responsible for everything else in the game. A good GM tries to make sure the game runs as smoothly as possible and is enjoyable for all of the players. Many components go into creating a good *Fantasy AGE* game. The following sections give you all the basics, but experience is the best tool to help you become a better Game Master and get a feel for the job. The essential parts of Game Mastering are the following.

### PREPARING ADVENTURES

*Fantasy AGE* focuses on the heroic adventures of the main characters controlled by the players (the "Player Characters,"

or "PCs"). It is the Game Master's job to create the opportunities for adventure and to "hook" the characters, giving them a chance to meet new challenges. You can do this with pre-written adventures, adventures of your own design, or a mix of both. Even when using a pre-written adventure, a good GM often customizes it to better suit the player characters.

This is the most crucial task for the GM—without the GM to start things off, and describe how the actions of the PCs impact the world around them, the players have nothing to do. While it can seem daunting, it's not truly that complex a task. You never need to have an entire campaign planned at once. You just enough material to get the players through the next game session, and a rough idea what end goal they are moving toward. After running a few pre-written adventures, many GMs find adventure ideas flow naturally from the interests and actions of the PCs.

## ADJUDICATING THE RULES

Like all games, *Fantasy AGE* has rules, and those rules sometimes require some interpretation to determine an exact outcome during play. It is the Game Master's job to decide rules questions and make decisions regarding the implementation of the rules in the game. The rules provide a framework for you, but they cannot cover every contingency. You must be ready to make the call when the players do the unexpected. And they will!

That doesn't always mean you have to be the most knowledgeable expert on the rules in your group. If a player knows

the rules better than you do and can helpfully provide a quick answer to a question, take advantage of that. The important thing is to not allow the players to dictate how the game runs, or to get bogged down in a debate. If there's a disagreement, a quick statement from any player with an opinion is fine, but it's then your job to decide how to handle the situation and get back to the game. Even if you're wrong about how a rule is written, you're right about how it works in the game you are running.

## RUNNING THE GAME SESSION

The Game Master is much like the director of a play, coordinating all the various elements of the game to make it happen. So it is the GM's job to set up the adventure, introduce the events to the players, and narrate the story according to their decisions about their characters. It is also the GM's job to take on the roles of the various supporting and adversarial characters, describing their actions and interactions with the players' characters. All the while the GM must maintain the pace of the game, trying to keep things going at a good clip and moving the story forward.

In most cases the players only know what you tell them. The GM serves as the PCs' eyes and ears, and must describe the world well enough for players to be able to form a picture of it. You don't need to go into every excruciating detail, but hitting the relevant highlights is important. You also shouldn't try to describe what a PC feels or thinks. Don't tell a player, "You think the mayor is lying," unless they have an ability that actively detects lies. Instead say something like, "The mayor shuffles her feet as she speaks, and doesn't seem to be able to look you in the eye." It's up to the players to decide what's causing that behavior, and if they start looking for clues the adventure has begun!

## PLANNING THE CAMPAIGN

The Game Master plans out the overall "arc" of a series of adventures, creating what is known as a *campaign* (named for military campaigns, since early roleplaying games were derived from war games). Some GMs plan out a whole campaign in advance, working out a series of adventures taking the PCs from one place and challenge to another, while other GMs have a more open-ended approach, perhaps only planning one or two adventures ahead and seeing how the story unfolds through the players' choices and the characters' actions.

## ADJUDICATING THE RULES

The Game Master serves as referee when it comes to applying the rules of *Fantasy AGE* fairly and equally to help ensure everyone has fun. Part of this job involves knowing the rules. Prospective Game Masters should read through the entire rulebook book carefully and have a good working knowledge of the game. The rest of the job is applying the rules to events that come up during the game. This may be as simple as knowing which rule applies to a given situation and following it, or as complex as coming up with a new application of the rules on the spot or modifying an existing rule that isn't working for your group and is inhibiting everybody's fun. While Chapters 1-6 contains the core of the game system, there is more that the GM needs to know. This chapter, and those that follow, cover this additional material for you.

## SECRET TESTS

Sometimes it's a good idea to make certain tests secretly, so the players don't necessarily know the test result. This is usually the case for any sort of test where it isn't obvious to a character that they have failed a test. For example, you may want to make Perception tests secretly. If the test succeeds, the character notices something. If it fails, then the player doesn't know whether it's because the character failed to notice something or there just wasn't anything there to notice in the first place. The character has no hint they failed a test; they just don't notice anything out of the ordinary.

One easy way of making secret tests is to make a list of random rolls in advance. When there's a need for a secret test during the game, mark off one of the rolls from your list and use that for the test result. This way, the players don't even know you are making a secret test for them.

## GAME MASTER FIAT

On occasion the outcome of a particular die roll may result in anticlimactic or just plain dumb outcomes. In these cases, feel free to change things a little to make the outcome more interesting or more in line with how the game should go. This is called "Game Master fiat" since the judgment of the GM overrides the strict letter of the rules.

Isn't this cheating? Well, yes, in a manner of speaking it is, but it's "cheating" in order to make the game more interesting and fun for everyone involved. So long as you don't alter the outcome of die rolls unfairly or maliciously and you do it to help ensure the game is fun, interesting, and challenging, you shouldn't have a problem. Besides, the players don't have to *know* you change the occasional die roll behind the scenes. That's one of the reasons it's a good idea for Game Masters to roll their dice out of sight of the players and then announce the results.

If you have any concerns about skewing things too much in the player's favor, or too heavily against them, keep track of how often you employ GM fiat and which way you changed things. You certainly don't have to be balanced in such decisions, but it can be useful to know if you are regularly having to make things easier or harder to keep them interesting.

# CREATING ADVENTURES

An adventure is a single story in an ongoing campaign. Think of an adventure as a single chapter in a novel, or even a single novel in a grand series (for particularly long adventures). Sometimes adventures stand alone, with a clear beginning, middle, and end all in the same game session. Other times the adventure spans several game sessions before the entire story is wrapped up.

Creating a *Fantasy AGE* adventure is a fairly simple process. First, define the threat or challenge around which the adventure revolves. Then outline the overall plot, and describe the encounters the heroes are likely to have during the adventure. You'll also want to make sure you have statistics and character sheets for important supporting characters and foes in the adventure.

## DEFINING THE CHALLENGE

*Fantasy AGE* adventures typically focus on a particular challenge. It might be anything from an incursion of orcs into a border region, to a sensitive diplomatic mission to a nearby kingdom, or a quest for a mysterious artifact with the power to save (or destroy) the world. When the challenge presents itself, the heroes must figure out how to overcome it.

The threat in a *Fantasy AGE* adventure is often a villain with a scheme the heroes must thwart. It can also be a non-player character with an agenda the characters can aid, such as protecting a border region, clearing a notorious group of bandits from the forest, or arranging an alliance through marriage. Fantasy novels, comics, movies, and television shows have plenty of inspiration for adventures, and you'll find many suitable villains in CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES.

## OUTLINING THE PLOT

Once you have an idea for a challenge in mind, give some thought to how it manifests itself. Outline a series of events surrounding that challenge. This gives you the overall plot of your adventure, a sort of roadmap you can follow while you're running the game to know what is likely to happen next.

For example, you decide the challenge in your adventure focuses on a group of bandits attacking travelers along a major trade route, far from any city guards. Not only are they a threat to commerce, but they have also inflamed political tensions, as the neighboring nobility have accused each other of backing the bandits. If left unchecked, their depredations will eventually lead to a bloody skirmish, perhaps even a small war in the region, costing many lives.

Now, that's what would happen if the heroes *weren't* around. Odds are the players aren't going to just allow the bandits to get away with their crimes. They might have a friend who was the victim of a raid, or a small nearby village could hire them to deal with the problem. Their liege-lord might order them to investigate, perhaps even all of the above! The heroes can begin investigating, trying to learn about the bandits, and who they are and what they'll do next. The PCs might set a trap to lure the bandits out into the open, or try and follow them back to their hideout, or capture one for interrogation. Exactly how things go depends heavily on what the players choose to do.

Try to focus your plot on the actions of the opponents, letting the player characters react to things as they happen. It's hard to base the plot on what the heroes will do because you don't always know what that is. By focusing on the challenge, you give the heroes the freedom to do whatever they want in response, and you can then modify the villains' plans accordingly.

## SUBPLOTS

As you gain experience as a GM, you may want to weave in subplots to your campaign. They can be related or unrelated to the adventure and they serve to mix things up and keep the players guessing. Subplots are also a great way to use the goals and ties of the PCs and you should keep your eye out for opportunities to do so. Let's say a goal of one of the PCs is to find her missing brother. When investigating the bandit menace, she discovers that her brother is one of these outlaws. Worse yet, he has embraced the bandit life and does not want to give it up. Now the group as a whole must deal with the bandits, but that player must try to figure out what to do about her sibling. This makes the story more complicated and has the potential for great drama.

## ENCOUNTERS

Your plot outline gives you a number of potential *encounters* the heroes may have during the adventure. An encounter is a single challenge, interaction, or activity, such as a fight, the investigation of an area, a chase through the city, and so forth. Using your outline, you can get a good idea of the possible encounters during your adventure. In the previous example, the heroes may have encounters with the bandits on the road, at a settlement, or at their hideout. They may investigate the sites of previous bandit raids, or interact with survivors who might have useful information.

Outline the possible encounters and take note of the important details in each one. For example, when and where will the bandits' next raid take place, and can the heroes figure it

out in time to be there and stop it, or will they only learn of it after the fact? Who is the target of the raid and how do they react to the characters? Where can the survivors be found and what do they think of outsiders investigating? Can word find its way back to the bandits somehow? And so forth.

Then decide if the encounter is primarily about combat, exploration, or roleplaying, and note this accordingly. Try and set up a good mix of the three types of encounters, since they provide a variety of challenges and styles of play to keep the players involved in the game.

## THE GRAND FINALE

Then there's the big finish to the adventure, the grand finale. This is when the heroes finally confront the main challenge of the adventure and have a real chance to deal with it. It may be a final showdown with the villain, averting disaster, accusing a murderer in the throne room, or confronting an army in a climactic battle. Whatever the case, this is when events in the adventure come to a head and it's time for the heroes to step up and save the day.

The finale is the big payoff, what the players have been working toward, so you need to make it as exciting and fun as possible. That means the finale should be challenging. On the other hand, the finale shouldn't be so tough the heroes can't possibly win, or the adventure just ends in frustration. Give the characters a solid challenge, but you can tip the odds slightly in their favor by setting them up with a special resource or "ace in the hole" during an earlier encounter.

For example, perhaps the party is dealing with a demon about to be unleashed from a nearby ruin. They have dealt with most of the creature's cult of minions and are ready to finish off the evil wizard who is trying to free the monster. Along the way, they have learned the demon has a weakness: a particular spot where its otherwise near-impenetrable armor does not protect it. In other words, the creature is vulnerable to the Pierce Armor stunt, which in this instance ignores *all* of its armor, rather than halving it! If the heroes exploit this information, it makes the fight against the creature that much easier. Note, however, they should still have a chance even without this knowledge, since you cannot count on them learning it. The players might miss a vital clue along the way, and you don't want your adventure spoiled because of it.

## THE WRAP–UP

The wrap-up or epilogue is where you finish up anything after the climax of the adventure. It's where the heroes find out any remaining information, resolve the adventure's mysteries, claim their rewards, and so forth. There may still be some dangling plot threads left over—which you can spin out into later adventures—but generally things should be tied up and resolved by the end, just like the ending of any satisfying story.

You can play out the wrap-up, allowing the players to describe what their heroes do, or just sum things up for them in narration. For example, "After you slay the bandit chieftain, you're able to loot their lair, claiming what property cannot be restored to its owner. The village welcomes you back with a feast in your honor and your guild master is well pleased with your work in keeping the peace."

# RUNNING A GAME SESSION

In addition to preparing the adventure before a game session, you have to prepare a real-world location in which to run the game and manage things during the game. Some of these tasks can be delegated to players, but you must be aware of what's available and make sure everything gets done. These elements can be broken into three broad categories: the play environment, information management, and play styles.

## THE PLAY ENVIRONMENT

The success or failure of a game session can hinge on factors completely outside the scope of the game itself. When a good mood is established and players are enjoying themselves, things go more smoothly. Bad rules calls get ignored, poor rolls are laughed off, and conflicts between characters are viewed as heroic drama. When a bad mood is in place, the slightest setback can lead to complaints and annoyance. Similarly, a group of players may begin a game happy and excited, but become bored and disinterested before the game is over.

These are problems of environment, mood, and pacing, and are the most difficult elements to manage during a game session. A few tools can be used to encourage players to be relaxed and happy or to jog a group out of a bad mood, but for the most part the best you can do is create a good play environment and hope the players take advantage of it.

### CHOOSING A PLAY SPACE

Where a game occurs strongly affects its mood and often its longevity. Roleplaying games are a leisure activity, and players are more likely to stick with a game if doing so isn't a hassle. A good gaming space should be large enough to accommodate all players comfortably (hopefully with no one having to sit on the floor unless they want to), enough table space for books and die rolling, a place for miniatures if the group uses them, and space for you to hide things you don't want players to see. It should also be conveniently located for everyone to get to (easier if everyone is driving) and preferably have room for food and drink to be kept separate from game books and character sheets.

While many groups don't have access to a perfect play space, some things can be done to enhance what is available. First, don't assume you must play in someone's home or a game shop. Libraries, community centers, apartment clubhouses, and sometimes even utility co-ops often have rooms available either for free or a very small fee. The main limitation with such spaces is hours of operation, but a game played on a Saturday afternoon may be perfect for a public room. The things to look out for are privacy and noise restrictions. Games don't go as well if a group is constantly interrupted by

passers-by, and an area with bad sound baffling can result in a rowdy group of players being asked to leave.

If you do play at someone's home, consider periodically changing who hosts the game. A group of players can make quite a mess, and it's a bit much to ask one host to deal with that all the time. Even if the group does its best to clean up before it leaves (always a good idea), chairs get moved, stacks of paperwork stowed away, trash bins filled, and dishes used. A group that can share this burden is less likely to have stress or conflict over it.

## TAKING A BREAK

If a game session is going badly no matter what you try, it may be time to step back from the game for a bit. In the short term, a game session can break for everyone to stretch, get a drink, or even go get something to eat. Much like changing the focus within the game, getting everyone's attention off the game entirely can shake things up and allow a fresh start later on. The length of the break should be carefully considered—doing something that takes too long may result in the group not wanting to go back to playing the game with just a little time left.

Sometimes giving up on the game for a session is the best solution. If all other efforts to set a positive tone have failed and no one is having any fun, suggest putting the game on hold until the next scheduled session. This should not be done lightly—especially in groups that can't meet very often, many players are upset by not getting to play. Just asking if people would rather not play can sometimes change a group's dynamic enough to start having fun. Taking this step requires consideration, but if you seriously believe no one is having a good time, testing to see if they'd rather not play is worthwhile.

If a campaign consistently has problems with player disinterest and poor moods, it's time to discuss the matter with your players. They may be satisfied, but simply have an odd way of showing it. Other events in their lives may prevent them from enjoying the game to its fullest, and they need to postpone gaming for a few weeks. Some specific themes of the campaign may bother one or more players, in which case discuss making changes.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

One of the biggest hassles GMs face is keeping track of everything. While players must manage a single character and possibly a companion, you must literally keep track of a world. It's not hard to fall behind in the duties of a GM and discover you've lost track of treasure the party has won, information known by a friendly sage, the name of a leader of a small country, or even just whose turn it is in combat. Keeping track of things is a chore, but it's an important one. The players depend on you to know what's going on, both on a small scale during a fight and on a larger scale with the world around them.

The most important advice for GMs who are overwhelmed is to do as much as possible outside of normal game time. In between games, you don't need to worry about keeping players entertained or hoping you'll remember to write some-

thing down at the end of a combat round. Keeping one or more notebooks with tabs for different sections of information, or using a database program you are comfortable with can be extremely helpful. You can make quick notes on a pad of paper during a game and then transcribe your scribbled notes more completely after the game is over.

Spread out the bookkeeping work as much as possible, rather than trying to do it all at once. If you're writing an adventure and deciding what treasure will be found, mark that information as you come up with it. Then you can note what treasure the heroes actually got after the adventure runs.

Vigilance saves you a lot of headaches later on. If possible, keep notes at each game session. Whenever anything significant happens, make a quick note about it. Don't describe the whole event—just jot down who, where, and what in the simplest terms. Try to note both the real world date and the game world date. Doing so acts as a reminder when you update your bookkeeping after the game. It also serves as a reminder of what has occurred in the past, which is especially helpful if your campaign lasts a while. Being able to look back and see what date a group met a pregnant princess is great when you're trying to decide if she has a child yet when the characters return for another visit.

## QUICK REFERENCE SHEET

As Game Master, you have to reference a lot of information about different characters during play: Defense values, Health values, ability modifiers, and so forth. Rather than shuffling through papers or flipping pages in a book, it's a good idea to compile a quick reference sheet to all the essential information you need. The sheet lists characters and creatures, their combat values, and other essential scores, allowing you to see any of them with a glance.

Make sure to update your reference sheet at the start of each new session and on any occasion when the characters' abilities or scores may have changed.

## INITIATIVE CARDS

An important piece of information to keep track of during play is initiative order. Prepare a 3" × 5" index card for each character, including NPCs. When a combat begins, write the current initiative for each character on the upper right hand corner of the card (ideally in pencil) and place the cards in initiative order. Then simply start with the character on top of the stack. When that turn is done, flip to the next card, cycling through the cards until you reach the end of the round. This can be more effective than just listing the initiative order on a sheet of paper, since you can change the order, if need be.

Initiative cards are also a good place to put basic character information, since you usually use this information when that character's turn comes up. Defensive information, such as Defense and Health, should be kept on the separate quick reference sheet, since it's normally used when other characters or monsters act, and not shuffling through the index cards looking for a character's Defense is best.

The same cards can also be used to keep track of spell durations. If a character casts a spell that lasts 5 rounds, you can

give the spell its own index card. The card lists the name of the spell and its duration, and every time it comes up, mark off one round. Not only does this keep spells from being forgotten, it allows the spell's duration to end on the initiative it was cast even if the caster has changed initiative.

## STUNT SHEET

Stunts are an important element of *Fantasy AGE,* for the opposition as well as the heroes. One effective way of creating memorable foes is giving them fun and interesting stunts. Try and assign each major character or opponent in your game one fairly unique or "signature" stunt, and make note of it so you can easily reference it during play. In CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES you'll note that many of the monsters have unique stunts. You can use these for inspiration when coming up with your own.

You may also want to have a general "cheat sheet" of different stunts with a range of point costs you can use during the game for any impromptu stunt points your non-player characters may get. You tend to lose the freewheeling feel of stunts when you have to stop the game to flip through the rules looking for inspiration for how to spend a character's stunt points. Having a signature stunt helps alleviate this. Even if the character rolled more points than the stunt costs, just use it anyway; the players don't necessarily have to know a few stunt points were "wasted."

You may also find ideas for stunts coming up during the game. Jot them down in your notes (see **Game Notes**, following) and add them to your Stunt Sheet later on so you can use them in your next game!

## CAMPAIGN JOURNAL

It's a good idea to keep a "campaign journal" (or campaign log) as a record of the games you have run in the campaign. A good campaign journal should have the following information, organized so you can find it fairly easily and quickly:

- A summary of each adventure: the date(s) on which you ran it, and when and where it took place in the setting. It should include a brief description of the events, characters involved, and any victories or setbacks for the heroes, including experience point awards, treasures won, and so forth. It is easiest to write this summary in-between game sessions while the events are still fresh in your mind.

- A list of important characters in the setting and campaign to date, primarily just names and brief notes, so if the players want to know the name of that bandit chief who got away a couple of adventures ago, you can find it at a glance. Also consider highlighting (or otherwise calling out) the names of important characters and details in your adventure summaries, so you can find them quickly.

- Information on any ongoing plots, sub-plots, and developments in the game. With several main characters, there may be a lot going on in terms of individual stories. Keeping notes on their progress can help you keep track of them and ensure you don't lose a particular plot thread somewhere along the way.

## GAME NOTES

In addition to your campaign journal, have a separate place where you can jot down notes to yourself during play. You can

### QUICK REFERENCE CARD

| NAME | | HEALTH |
|------|--|--------|
| CLASS/LEVEL | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| ACCURACY | | |
| COMMUNICATION | | |
| CONSTITUTION | | |
| DEXTERITY | | |
| FIGHTING | | |
| INTELLIGENCE | | |
| PERCEPTION | | |
| STRENGTH | | |
| WILLPOWER | | |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE | SPEED |
|--------|-------------|--------|-------|
| | | | |
| | | | DEFENSE |
| | | | |
| POWERS | | | ARMOR |
| | | | |
| EQUIPMENT | | | |

### INITIATIVE CARD

| NAME | | SPEED | INITIATIVE |
|------|--|-------|------------|
| CLASS/LEVEL | | ◯ | ◯ |

| ACCURACY | COMMUNICATION | CONSTITUTION |
|----------|---------------|--------------|
| | | |

| DEXTERITY | FIGHTING | INTELLIGENCE |
|-----------|----------|--------------|
| | | |

| PERCEPTION | STRENGTH | WILLPOWER |
|------------|----------|-----------|
| | | |

*PDFs of the sample Quick Reference Card and Initiative Cards displayed above can be downloaded from greenronin.com.*

use these notes later when you put together a more detailed summary for your campaign journal. So you might note, for example, that the heroes met with a guard sergeant named Harrigan and left him with a poor impression, an unplanned event that might come up later, should they happen to pass through Sergeant Harrigan's jurisdiction again.

## WHITE BOARDS

A chalkboard or dry-erase board can be an excellent way to keep track of information for everyone at the table. The bigger a board you have room for, the better, and white dry-erase boards tend to be cheaper, easier to read, and less messy. Place the board at the side or behind the GM, where the most people can easily see it and the GM can easily reach it. When there's no fight, list all the PCs and major NPCs, along with the players running them and noteworthy features. Especially early in a campaign, doing so helps players and GM alike keep track of who's who.

A white board can also be used to keep track of things in action scene. Laid flat, it can have a map drawn out and miniatures or counters placed on it. If upright, you can draw out a map and mark character positions on it.

## MINIATURES, MAPS, AND PROPS

Roleplaying games are games of the imagination, so a "game board" is never required to play. However, having a map of a particular scene laid out, and counters or miniature figures to move around on the map can help players to visualize what is going on and track information like the relative positions of different characters, the placement of obstacles, and so forth. You'll find more info about using miniatures and other accessories in the Using Battle Maps sidebar in **Chapter 2: Basic Rules**.

## COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY

One option for tacking information is to use any of the numerous software programs or websites designed to easily organize RPG campaign notes. The advantages of this kind of set-up include being able to easily show your notes (or just part of your notes) to players, ranging from email reminders to websites with personalized archives for each player. Of course the higher levels of utility also require more work to set up, and some groups find recording and organizing the information in a format everyone can access slows gameplay and turns what is supposed to be a fun activity into something closer to homework.

Even without specialized options, a computer can be a simple way to record notes that you would otherwise jot down in a notebook. The important thing is to use what you're most comfortable with—there's no point in forcing yourself to type in campaign information if you're better at organizing things with index cards or a spiral notebook.

Beyond note taking, computers, smartphones, and similar devices can be useful for showing pictures of props you don't need to have in person, looking up quick questions that arise during play, and playing background music. There are even companies that make soundtracks and sound effects specifi-

cally designed for fantasy RPG sessions. The important thing is to make sure the addition of such technology either makes the game easier for you to run or adds to everyone's enjoyment.

Players may also want to use electronic devices to track their characters, look up rules, or take notes. If this doesn't cause any disruptions that's fine, but some groups find players with access to their social media and search engines are more likely to be distracted from the game and are regularly slowing gameplay. If everyone is having a good time, there's no reason to change things even if there are periodic breaks for cat videos. If one or two players are using online entertainment during game-time and making it more difficult for everyone else to enjoy themselves, the group should discuss it and try to find a solution that makes everyone happy. Like any other troublesome behavior this needs to be addressed calmly and politely. The objective of playing a game is to have fun, not to police your friends' behavior.

## STYLES OF PLAY

Two different *Fantasy AGE* campaigns can have the same rules, adventures, and even main characters, yet still have entirely different play styles. How you interact with the players and how the players view each other and the game world are matters of play style. Different styles produce different kinds of games. Understanding your own play style and that of your players provides a better chance of avoiding potential problems. Some narrative tools allow you to change the feel of a game by changing how scenarios are presented to your players.

These tools and descriptions can be helpful for figuring out why a game doesn't seem to work or why certain players are causing trouble or complaining about the game. None of these styles are "right" or "wrong" in an absolute sense, but some groups and even individual players don't mesh well with some styles. Anything a group enjoys is a good style, and anything that causes problems needs to be examined.

## GAME MASTERING STYLES

Different GMs approach their jobs differently. The following are a few common GM styles. Examine how and when you use these styles and how players react to them. Sometimes a game's main problem is players don't like the way you run things, which is something only you can change.

### ADVERSARIAL

The adversarial opponent GM is one who tries to get the heroes into trouble… a lot. Foes act with ruthless efficiency and are often designed specifically to overcome the characters. Adversarial GMs tend to play very much by the book. If this kind of GM has house rules, they're run how the GM interprets them, as are all core rules. Players are allowed to decide what actions their characters attempt but have little to no other input into the world. As well, the GM specifically arranges encounters and NPCs in such a way to put PCs at risk and doesn't back down from killing an entire party.

The number of players who enjoy a GM who's actually out to get them is extremely small. Logically, there's nothing a player

can do to "beat" a GM. No matter how tough the heroes are, a GM can always have them attacked by a massive pack of dragons, an arch-demon, or some other overwhelming threat. The idea that a GM would actually want to "defeat" players through any possible means is silly—the GM would always win, and the players would likely walk away and not want to play again.

Some players, however, enjoy games in which the GM *appears* to be out to get them. The sense of danger and risk is increased, and therefore the feeling of accomplishment is increased if the players succeed.

Adventures designed by this kind of GM must be within a reasonable power level of the player characters. Having the PCs all poisoned by a master-assassin when they're incapable of detecting or thwarting the danger is unfair, and more importantly, not fun. Making more dangerous adventures available is fine, but they should clearly be dangerous at the outset. The GM should stick to encounters that are within the group's ability to handle, or at least give the players the option to back down from the ones they cannot. A party that decides to attack an arch-demon right from the start chooses its own fate, but if an unbeatable monster simply appears out of nowhere and attacks, that's unfair.

Even the best and most even-handed adversarial GM can rub players the wrong way. It's too easy for this style to seem like having fun at the players' expense, and no one likes a bully. The only legitimate use of this game mastering style is to heighten the players' excitement, and that only works if they enjoy it. Many players are more interested in telling a good story or enjoying the fruits of their labors than constantly risking the loss of their characters to a never-ending gauntlet of dangers.

In most cases, the adversarial style should be reserved for only the most epic of climaxes, and then it must come with a warning. Fudging results and saving heroes through *deus ex machina* most of the time and then throwing them to the wolves is unfair. If changing tone for a dramatic moment, make sure the players receive warning that this time there won't be any divine intervention, sudden changes of heart, or second chances. Then let the dice fall where they may.

## BENEVOLENT

The benevolent GM is an arbiter of the rules who's trying to make sure everything is both fun and fair. Like the adversarial GM, the benevolent GM tends to play tightly to the game rules, but not to find ways to create greater challenges for the players or to take advantage when they do something stupid. Game rules can be modified or even ignored if they conflict with logic, but exceptions aren't made just to help along a good story.

Done well, this style of Game Mastering produces fun and flexible games in which everyone knows both how the world works (as there are consistent rules) and that the rules won't

be used to enforce an unreasonable outcome. Benevolent GMs often fall prey to assumption clashes (as covered later in this chapter) if they bend a rule once but refuse to do so under different circumstances. These GMs also sometimes give their players too much free reign, allowing a game to devolve into dead-end quests and aimless wandering.

## DIRECTOR

A director tries to get players to act as she feels is appropriate to given situations and storylines. Most adventures have a "right" course of action, and players are rewarded if they find it, but punished if they do not. This style of play often puts the needs of the story told ahead of the rules of the game.

A director who successfully guides players without limiting their freedom of choice and opportunity to have fun can produce the memorable story arcs and dramatic moments many roleplayers love. This type of game often has a very strong sense of style, setting it apart from less focused campaigns and allowing it to recreate dramatic moments from movies and other fiction. Heroic last-stands to guard bridges, redemption of foul villains, martyred heroes inspiring their comrades to success, and apparently unbeatable foes being brought low by underdogs are all easier in games in which the GM gives subtle hints and gentle nudges to direct the story.

On the negative side, a director can easily steamroll players who are just trying to have some fun in the game. A director-style GM's biases become much more obvious and can impact reactions to player character actions. Bad directors penalize players who take reasonable actions that simply don't fit into the GM's plans, or otherwise attempt to "railroad" the group into following a particular path, whether they want to or not.

# KNOWING YOUR GROUP

To create a world players enjoy exploring, you need to know your players. Understanding how they're likely to react to situations, what sorts of games they enjoy, and how they interact with one another allows you to tailor the game world and its challenges to match their preferences, giving them foes they want to seek out and causes for which they want to fight. If that sounds a lot like being a therapist, there's a reason. Knowing a group of gamers well enough to predict their reactions and build adventures they'll enjoy is both the hardest and most important part of being a GM. With understanding of the players, everything else gets easier.

There are no real short cuts for getting to know a group of players. Although a few types of player personality crop up a lot, every player is an individual with his or her own quirks and hot-button topics. You have to spend time with players before you really get to know them, leaving you with little to go on early in a group's history. The best route is to have initial games hit on common tropes—evil wizards, towns in need, apparent allies actually having the characters' best interests at heart—and save more complex plots for when you know your players better. Engaging in non-roleplaying game social activities together, such as seeing movies or getting together for a meal, can also be useful.

# PROBLEM PLAYER TYPES

The focus in the following list is on problem player types, because non-problem players are, by definition, easy to deal with. Problem players tend to fall into a few broad categories, and these categories can help you understand how to handle these kinds of players. However, this is just a starting point. Most players have a smattering of several different play styles. A player may be a rules-lawyer when paired with a character thespian, but become a motivator when in a larger group of hack-n-slashers. You may need to try different solutions before finding one that works with a particular player.

If one or more players are being disruptive, discuss the matter with them. You should not penalize PCs in-character for player transgressions made out-of-character. Instead, disruptive players should be talked to, possibly privately, depending on your feelings and your perception of the players' group dynamic. A player shouldn't feel ganged up on, but sometimes a group needs to discuss matters together.

Avoid bullying or intimidating a player. Outside the game world, you have no real authority. It's your job to talk to disruptive players because you're essentially the host of the game. If problems continue, involve the whole group. No one should be lied to, ostracized, or mistreated, but if a player is causing problems, the group should address them directly and maturely. Moving game nights and not telling the offending player may seem easier, but ultimately this just causes bad feelings and more problems. Some people aren't meant to play together, and a mature group is willing to say so and move on.

It's also worthwhile for you to see if *you* fall into any of these categories. Knowing your own biases and preferences can often allow you to see potential conflicts with players of other types before they even occur. A Game Master who is a hack-n-slash player can guess early on that a character thespian may be dissatisfied with the campaign unless the GM adds numerous opportunities to roleplay and act out scenes. A good GM finds ways to accommodate player's desires without sacrificing his own gaming style.

## CHARACTER THESPIAN

A character thespian is most interested in playing the role of their character to the hilt. They may insist on acting out their PC's actions, talking through every conversation of every day, and staying in character even when other players don't. If a character thespian isn't being disruptive, leave them alone—they're getting into the role and can add flair and detail to a game world. Sometimes, however, these players take things too far. A player who insists on responding to someone asking if the group wants pizza with an in-character query about what this strange thing called "pizza" is is just being a problem. So is one who's unwilling to skip through an uneventful ten-day trek through the woods because "something important might be discussed," and the player wants to talk through every possible conversation.

You can sometimes reach a character thespian by putting things in movie or television terms. Rather than stating a journey will not be played out, say the scene cuts to ten days

later. Explain minor events must be skipped not to get to the fight, but to allow for the scenes of important drama. A player who acts out everything may need boundaries about how much time is appropriate to describe a single action. Demonstrating how a fencer draws his sword with a flourish is fine, but taking two minutes to detail an attack that is not a stunt and may not even succeed is not.

## GRIEFER

A griefer just enjoys upsetting other players and the GM. Thankfully, such players are rare. If you realize you have a griefer, a polite but firm talk is needed. If the griefer can moderate their ways to no longer aggravate other players, allow them to stay, but be wary for griefers who proclaim a willingness to change (and declare their aggravating actions are not intentional) but don't actually moderate their behavior. If a griefer can't stop being a problem, the gaming group as a whole should disinvite them from playing.

## HACK-N-SLASHER

The hack-n-slash player is most interested in killing things. Every challenge is likely seen in terms of what needs to be killed and how best to kill it. This player often gets bored with roleplaying and exploration encounters. The upside is the hack-n-slasher enjoys something the game naturally focuses on, fighting, and they're easy to please. The downside is they may grow disinterested with anything else, talking to and distracting other players or even complaining about any action that delays the next fight.

Sometimes the hack-n-slasher can be drawn into non-combat sequences by discovering what's important to both player and character. An up-front and honest conversation between GM and player about what sorts of non-combat events interest the player can be fruitful, as can appealing to their character's history or having NPCs talk in terms of how great a warrior the character is. If information must be given in such a way the player pays attention, try having a foe slip into witty banter during a fight.

Ultimately, if nothing but fighting interests the player, simply be sure to provide plenty of fights. Most players understand the game is for the enjoyment of all, so interspersing combat encounters with other types can generally keep the hack-n-slasher from being disruptive and keep his interest level high enough to stay in touch with the campaign. Don't expect the hack-n-slasher to negotiate with NPCs, solve riddles, or get involved in great romances unless the player has indicated an interest in doing so. Encourage roleplaying gently, but don't try to force it.

## HANGER-ON

A hanger-on isn't really interested in the game; they're just there to spend time with one or more other people. Hangers-on are usually the friend or significant other of another player. As long as a hanger-on isn't disruptive, simply leaving them alone is normally best.

You may occasionally try to get a hanger-on more deeply involved with the game, but if such efforts regularly fail, there's no point in trying harder. Check-in with a hanger-on to be sure they're not actually a wallflower who'd *like* to be more involved; otherwise, hangers-on are beyond your ability to get involved. Roleplaying games aren't for everyone, and some people are willing to play for convenience but just won't get deeply involved. There's no need to spend the time and energy trying to change your campaign to draw in these players if they just aren't interested.

## MOTIVATOR

The motivator just wants to get things done. *Now.* As long as the PCs are on track to accomplish some goal, the motivator is happy, but side-treks, down time, and goofing off all annoy them. Some motivators restrict themselves to keeping the PCs on track, while others want the players and GM to stay focused on the game as well. A motivator can be useful when a group strays too far from a game's plot (or gets distracted from gaming in general). If too demanding, however, motivators are often perceived as bossy, clashing with other players.

A bothersome motivator may be handled by scheduling some down time, both in character and as a group of players. If you state you intend for a band of PCs to winter in a given city, the motivator knows there's no need to encourage everyone to get moving. If a group of players decides to begin actually playing within an hour of getting together, and the GM announces periodic breaks, the motivator may be satisfied. Failing that, make sure the motivator isn't annoying other players and encourage them to remain polite and cordial when suggesting it's time to get a move on.

## RULES LAWYER

The dreaded rules lawyer is one of the most common problem player types. The rules lawyer uses the rules of the game as a bludgeon to beat other players and even the GM. They abuse loopholes, design characters to take advantage of them, and correct others when they make mistakes. The rules lawyer often quotes rules and "official" interpretations of them as justification for their behavior, and argues with rules decisions they disagree with.

A player familiar with the rules of *Fantasy AGE* can be useful, helping you find relevant rules quickly and possibly even answering basic rules questions from other players to save you time. The problem comes when a rules lawyer takes up game time arguing, abuses rules to get away with something unreasonable, or ruins the fun of playing by bickering about the quality of other players' rules knowledge.

Often, a rules lawyer's motivation is one of fairness. If a player has been in games run by a GM who favored one or two players, the rules lawyer may see the equal application of rules as the only way to keep a game fair. In this case, an even-handed treatment of all players, even when deviating from the rules, is a good first step to dealing with the rules lawyer.

Other rules lawyers see knowledge of the rules as a way to compete with the GM. By pointing out your mistakes, these players try to score points and control the flow of a campaign. A roleplaying game is a cooperative effort, and you must work with players, but as the referee, you have final say on how the rules are interpreted. If a rules lawyer attempts to control how rules are applied take firm actions to establish your authority without being rude or tyrannical.

The best way to do this is to establish guidelines for handling rules disagreements before they come up. Inform players you will run your game based on the rules, but not enslaved to them. A rules call should be made quickly to keep the action of a game going. Allow anyone who disagrees with a rules call a moment to explain the objection. If you agree, there's nothing wrong with changing a ruling; if not, state that the discussion is tabled, and re-examine the matter after the game. If you later decide to run the rule differently, inform the players of it at the beginning of the next session.

If a rules lawyer continues to be a problem, you are well within your rights to insist *all* questions about rules wait until the end of the session, when they can be handled without making everyone wait. The rules lawyer can write down any questions, and the two of you can hash them out on your own time.

## SPOTLIGHT HOG

A spotlight hog wants to be the one doing whatever is being done. Spotlight hogs often want to play more than one character or play characters with something that sets them apart. These players crave attention, both for themselves and for their characters. Spotlight hogs can be useful because they get excited and involved in a campaign, and that excitement can positively affect other players. A spotlight hog that actually manages to garner significantly more time "on-screen" may be a problem, however, preventing others from enjoying the game fully.

There's not much that can be done with a spotlight hog who's a problem other than talk to them. If necessary, you can carefully craft plots to focus on other players' characters, but doing so is fair only if the spotlight hog gets their time in the sun too. It's also worthwhile to check with other players to see if they mind the spotlight hog's actions—a group of hack-n-slashers and wallflowers may be fine with a spotlight hog doing all the talking, for example.

## WALLFLOWER

A wallflower is the opposite of a spotlight hog. This player doesn't seem at all involved, barely speaks, and allows others to plan everything. Wallflowers are only disruptive if they stall a game's pacing by refusing to answer questions, make initiative checks, or take their turn. The most frustrating thing about such players is they often claim they greatly enjoy a campaign even though they hardly seem present when it's run.

If you can discover the cause of a wallflower's silence, most wallflowers become active participants. Some wallflowers simply don't know the game rules well (especially in a game with many alternate rules). In that case assigning another player to help the wallflower plan actions and respond to your input can be helpful (this may be a great way to use a rules lawyer's talents). Other players of this type simply need time to become comfortable with a campaign or a particular group of players, while some never get more involved. Check periodically to see if wallflowers feel something is missing from a campaign, but failing that just leave them alone and make sure they don't slow down a game.

# ASSUMPTION CLASHES

One of the greatest risks any Game Master can face is an assumption clash. This happens when a player assumes one thing and you another. For example, if a GM notes that five tough-looking NPCs threaten a PC, the character's player may assume the NPCs are unarmed thugs—that the description "tough-looking" means they look like "tough" unarmed thugs. But maybe the GM actually means the NPCs look tough, like they will be hard to defeat, and is envisioning them in heavy armor and carrying weapons. Because neither GM nor player realizes a miscommunication has occurred, the player may make a decision about how to react that seems baffling to the GM and may lead to a bad game event.

The reason assumption clashes are so dangerous is they often aren't recognized until after the fact. Sometimes assumption clashes *never* get ironed out, leaving hard feelings on both sides. In the case above, if a fight doesn't break out, the player may leave the encounter without ever realizing they had mis-evaluated their opponents. They discover the group is part of a large cartel of thugs holding the town hostage, but continue to see the NPCs as unarmed toughs. The player convinces their adventuring group to attack the thug stronghold, since they're sure the fight is winnable. The group plans and maneuvers for three game sessions before attacking the stronghold, only to find it manned by warriors in heavy armor. The player cries foul, only to be told the gang members have always been well armed and equipped. The player feels the GM changed the reality of the game, and the GM feels the player just hasn't been paying attention.

## GENRE CONVENTION CLASHES

Assumption clashes can happen on a larger scale as well. If a GM describes a campaign as "sword-and-sorcery" in style, players may envision a game in which powerful spellcasters are common, and most towns have a capable wizard to cast spells for them. If you were actually thinking in terms of classic pulp fantasy stories, you may have decided spellcasters are actually quite rare, and most are evil. Players who have designed their characters around the idea that wizards are common may not realize their error until many games have passed, and be surprised and irritated when they can't just hire a spellcaster in any town they visit.

## COMMUNICATION IS KEY

There's no perfect way to avoid assumption clashes. Giving examples whenever possible and checking to see if your players understand the example helps. Also helpful is to know that assumption clashes occur and to keep a high degree of patience when a player seems to assume something other than what you meant. An occasional assumption clash can be fixed by allowing players to change past actions when a reasonable assumption is proved false. For minor issues, you can even change the game reality to match the false assumption (especially if you realize an assumption clash has occurred before the players do). If such clashes become common, find a way to communicate more clearly, possibly including using illustrations, distributing handouts, describing things in different ways, and having a recap of events at the beginning of each game session.

# PLANNING A FANTASY AGE CAMPAIGN

A campaign is a series of adventures, much like an adventure is a collection of encounters. In this way, a *Fantasy AGE* campaign is much like an adventure writ large, and much of the advice on creating adventures applies to the campaign as a whole. Creating a campaign includes some larger issues as well, which we'll touch on here.

## CONSULTING THE PLAYERS

The first thing to do when planning on ongoing *Fantasy AGE* campaign is to talk with your players about the sort of campaign that interests them. It may be a good idea to try out the game—perhaps playing through the adventure in this set—and then talk about long-term plans if everybody agrees they had fun and would like to see the game continue.

What sorts of things are your players interested in? What kind of fantasy elements intrigue them? Where do they see their characters going? The answers to these sorts of questions give you invaluable information to help ensure your campaign is tailored to fit the players and their characters in a way that a purely pre-packaged game could never be. This is one of the great advantages of roleplaying games like *Fantasy AGE,* so do not pass up a chance to use it.

## CAMPAIGN STYLE

One of the questions a GM should determine and communicate to the players is, what kind of campaign is the GM going to run? Is it a dark fantasy game where unicorns and rainbows don't exist and the best option is rarely the most moral one? Is it a swashbuckling adventure where as long as they face danger with a laugh and a quip the PCs are likely to pull through? The style of a campaign helps determine the tone of adventures, the kinds of PCs that are likely to work, and what the players' expectations are.

There are scores of different campaign styles, and *Fantasy AGE* can handle most of them easily. A few common and popular styles are briefly detailed below, but don't feel limited to these. You can model a campaign on a favorite show or novel series, see what your players are most interested in, or strike out and create a new style of campaign unique to your game.

### DARK FANTASY

A dark fantasy setting avoids black and white answers, and the shades of gray it delves into are often very dark gray. This is a setting in which weaker races are oppressed and exploited by stronger ones, many groups are feared and mistrusted, and even the good guys have dark secrets. The biggest threats may be disasters brought on by mortal hubris, not the master plan of some cartoonish mad overlord. Evil comes from the hearts of men (and elves and dwarves), and it can be checked but never defeated forever.
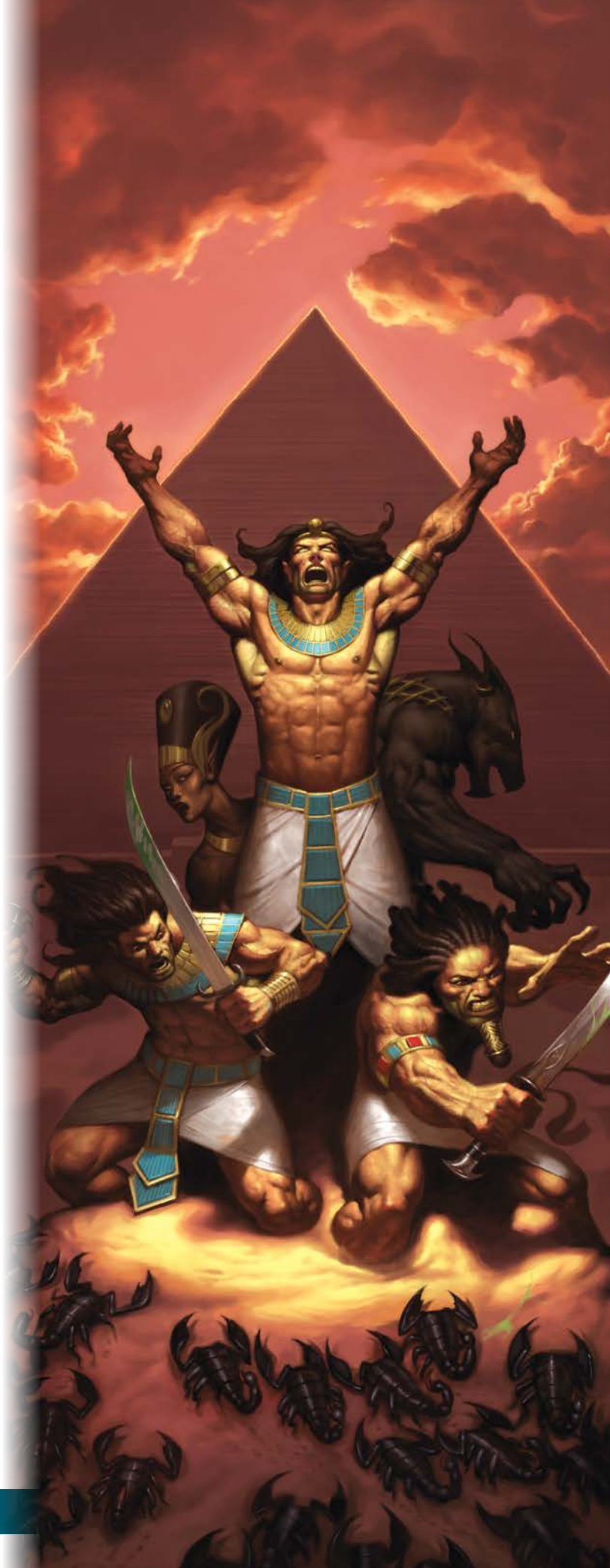
## HIGH FANTASY

In high fantasy, magic is plentiful and often used for the greater good. Elves ride unicorns, knights take to the air on pegasi, and wise kings with good hearts do what's best for their people all the time. Threats are usually forces from outside peaceful society that wish to destroy or corrupt everything good and pure. Often this is for no other reason than to spread the power of pure evil. The dark forces are typically supernatural threats which can, with a long quest, be overcome permanently. Making the world a better place is within the reach of heroic adventurers.

## HORROR

A horror-themed game is designed to frighten both players and their characters. Threats are often unspeakable monsters from beyond human experience, and may well be beyond the ability of any PC to overcome. The most important element is a threat that cannot be defeated, regardless of its source. Action often revolves around discovering just what the threat is and how to prevent it from coming about (since it's beyond defeat once it has fully materialized). Horror games may include gruesome details and disturbing descriptions of bloody events, or they may try to heighten fear by keeping details off-stage to allow the players' imaginations to fill in any details.

## LOW FANTASY

In low fantasy magic is rare (though very real), threats kept personal, and life is generally nasty, brutish, and short. There isn't the broad scope of fantastic creatures found in many fantasy worlds, with just a few-well known exceptions which are often creatures borrowed from prehistory rather than fantasy, such as dinosaurs or saber-toothed tigers. In some low fantasy stories the stakes are kept low, focusing on a single town or the tribulations of one mercenary company, though the genre can also include events that happened in real-world history, such as crusades, plagues, and continent-sweeping religious schisms.

## SWASHBUCKLING ADVENTURE

Swashbuckling games focus on daring deeds and dashing protagonists, often favoring bold actions over realistic consequences. These often take after the themes and tropes of pirate films and Three Musketeers stories, though that isn't necessary. The protagonists are generally scoundrels with hearts of gold, and the villains prone to mustache-twirling. The plots are as likely to center on saving the honor of a noble ally as on defending a beloved tavern. The important thing is to move fast, try wild stunts, and let the witticisms fly.

## DEFINING THE ARC

Once you have an idea of what interests you and your players, consider the broad "arc" of the campaign—that is, the over-arching story defining it. Is the campaign about a struggle against the rising darkness in a small valley the PCs call home? Is it a story of heroes seeking an ancient artifact able to bind an arch-demon? Is it a story of political ambition and king making—the battle for power and dominion?

Try and summarize the overall story in a paragraph or two, like: "The heroes are drawn into the political ambitions of a rising war-chieftain, become his trusted lieutenants, then must choose whether to support his plans to unite the nearby lands under his banner to resist the rising darkness or oppose his ambitions and support another candidate, perhaps even one of their own."

## OUTLINING THE CAMPAIGN

Once you have defined the arc of the campaign, start breaking it down into individual adventures, roughly game-session long chunks you can plan out.

In the beginning of a campaign, your adventures should have more detail and offer more hooks to get characters involved. Early on, the player characters are still developing their initial personalities and histories. They're not great heroes, and the players may need opportunities to "get their feet wet" and try out different things, getting a feel for the game and how it is played. It's a good idea to provide variety and try out different encounters to see what works best and provides the most fun. You may even decide to modify later parts of the campaign based on it.

Once you have outlined at least the first part of the campaign, you can start looking at planning out the first adventure in detail (see **Creating Adventures**, earlier in this chapter). Many GMs like to use published adventures and these can save you a lot of time and prep work. Even when using published adventures, though, it's worth taking some time to customize them for your campaign and your group. By changing or adding even a few details, you can make these adventure better fit your planned campaign and the specific PCs in your group.

## SKETCHING THE ENDING

While a *Fantasy AGE* campaign can go on for quite some time, lasting many game sessions, all good stories eventually come to an end. It is a good idea to have at least a *general* ending in mind for the arc of the campaign's story, so you can begin moving events towards it as it becomes clear the characters are reaching the end of their game careers, or the players are getting restive and want to wrap things up, and do not just want the game to go "on hiatus" for a while.

Do not become too attached to a particular ending for your campaign, as you might find things change quite a bit over the course of the game. One of the great things about role-playing games is they are a co-creative process; rather than just playing out a pre-determined story, you and your players are *creating* a story about their characters you'll be able to tell when it is all over and done. Sometimes that story goes off in unexpected directions, so you have to remain flexible and open to the possibility of different outcomes and endings.

Note also that the ending of a campaign does not necessarily mean the end for a group of characters. It is always possible to start a new *Fantasy AGE* campaign with existing characters, a further story of their adventures, with a fresh new focus and an all-new arc. This sort of thing is detailed further in later *Fantasy AGE* sets dealing with more advanced and experienced heroes.

# GM DOS AND DON'TS

To wrap things up, here are some good general principles to keep in mind when it comes to being a *Fantasy AGE* Game Master.

## DO...

### ...PLAN AHEAD

Take the time to prepare adventure notes and game materials like those in the **Information Management** section. Keep a campaign journal and take notes during the game, copying them over into your journal after an evening's adventures are done. Keep track of character awards and advancement. The better you are at preparing and organizing your information, the easier it is to run a smooth, well-paced game without the need to shuffle papers or fumble for facts that should be at your fingertips.

### ...DESCRIBE THINGS

It's your job to paint a picture of the world and the story for your players, and encourage them to do the same for each other. Your imaginations can be the best "graphics" in the world, but only if you exercise them! Use vivid language and make your descriptions clear and evocative without getting too heavily bogged down in pointless detail.

### ...CHALLENGE YOUR PLAYERS

Give the characters challenging, but manageable, encounters in terms of their game abilities, but also challenge your *players* with opportunities for roleplaying, intrigue, interaction with non-player characters, riddles, investigations, and so forth. Keep them engaged and trying to get one step ahead to figure out what's coming next or how they are going to overcome the latest problem you have posed for them.

### ...BE FLEXIBLE

Roleplaying games seldom follow a pre-written script. There is no telling what will happen when the players encounter your plot and choose their own direction. You have to be ready and willing to improvise and to change your plans on a moment's notice to deal with an unexpected decision or idea. Try not to force the players down a path of your choosing, but instead shift to accommodate them and the direction of their characters, while still offering challenges along the way. Sometimes the best adventures result from unexpected choices.

### ...FOCUS ON THE CHARACTERS

The player characters are the main characters of your story, just like the main cast of a novel, film, or television series. Focus on them: their goals, their challenges, their story, rather than making it all about the non-player characters you control. The antagonists and supporting cast are there to highlight the actions of the main characters, not to overwhelm them. The story should be *about* the player characters, rather than them simply happening to be in it.

## DON'T...

### ...MAKE IT ALL ABOUT FIGHTING

While combat encounters and action are a big part of an adventure game like *Fantasy AGE*, don't make *every* encounter a combat encounter or have every interaction end in a fight, and don't let the players make it that way, either. Allow room for investigation, exploration, interaction, and some transitions between encounters to break up the action and provide players interested in other aspects of the game to enjoy them. Allow for the possibility of avoiding some fights, or solving some problems by means other than fighting.

### ...ARGUE

You are expected to referee the game, so avoid getting into extended arguments with players over things. If there is a dispute over a rule or some other elements of the game, briefly hear all sides and make a decision, telling anyone who objects that you can discuss it *after* the game, then move along. Don't bring the game to a screeching halt just so you can have an argument out there and then. It's not fair to everyone else in the group.

### ...BE MEAN

While you should certainly challenge the players and their characters, and play the roles of the most evil villains and monsters to the hilt, don't ever be mean about it. That is, don't be unfair when it comes to providing challenges, and certainly don't gloat or take personal delight in a character's failures. Don't step on the players' personal issues or bring them into the game as a way of manipulating or, worse yet, punishing them. In short, you're in charge of the game, so don't be a jerk about it.

### ...BE BORING

The only exciting visuals and special effects you have for your *Fantasy AGE* game are what you can inspire in your players' imaginations. So try to keep your descriptions rich and your tone exciting, maintaining a brisk and enjoyable pace. Don't drone, or go on about details nobody cares about. Don't let the game get bogged down in minutia or side-tracked into dull encounters nobody enjoys. One of the key advantages of roleplaying is your ability to edit and direct the story, so use it to keep things interesting.

### ...WORRY ABOUT IT

Lastly, and most importantly, remind yourself "this is only a game and it is supposed to be fun." Don't worry too much about whether or not you're doing things "right," so long as everybody is having fun. If you make a mistake, fix it and resolve to do better next time. If you forgot some vital piece of information, make something up that fits and keep on going.

The key thing is that the game, like the show, must go on, so you're generally better off keeping things moving than worrying about some detail that will be forgotten during the next exciting encounter. Best of all, if you're not tense or worried about it, your players generally won't be either. Remember, it is *your* game, so have fun with it!
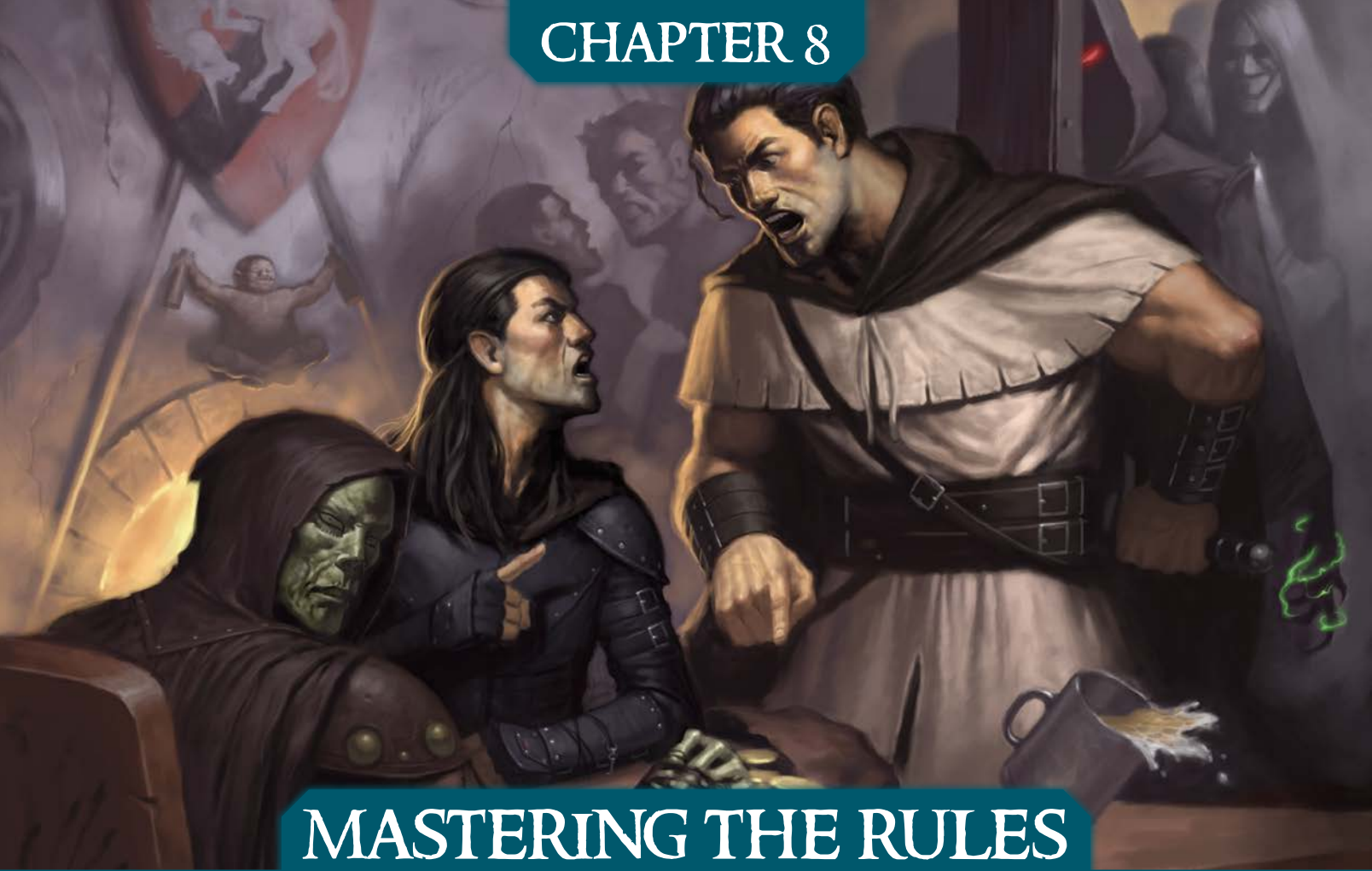
# MASTERING THE RULES

Now that you've had a general overview of the GM's role in the game, it's time to give you some practical advice about using the rules. This chapter builds on the material in **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**, expanding it while delving more into the sorts of decisions you must make when running a game of *Fantasy AGE*.

## MASTERING ABILITY TESTS

Ability tests are the heart of the *Fantasy AGE* system. Most dice rolls during play are ability tests, so one of your main tasks as GM is to adjudicate them fairly while keeping the adventure moving along. Rather than provide you with huge lists of approved actions and modifiers for every occasion, *Fantasy AGE* gives you a simple but robust system that you can use as a tool when running the game. This means you'll be making judgments frequently, but the system is flexible enough to handle most situations easily.

You'll find a general overview of ability tests in **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**, but to review: An ability test uses three six-sided dice (3d6). Two of the dice should be one color and the third a different color. The off color die is known as the Stunt Die. The three dice are rolled and added together, and then 2 more is added if the character has an appropriate focus (3 if the character has taken the focus twice). The final number is the test result.

**TEST RESULT = 3D6 + ABILITY + FOCUS**

The test result is compared to a static target number (TN) in the case of a Basic Test or the test result of another character in an Opposed Test. A character wins a Basic Test by meeting or beating the target number and an Opposed Test by beating the opponent's test result. The results of the Stunt Die can be used to determine the degree of success and to break ties in the case of an Opposed Test.

When adjudicating any ability test in *Fantasy AGE*, there are four key decisions that you have to make as GM:

- Which abilities and focuses apply?
- How much time does the test take?
- What are the stakes?
- What are the consequences of failure?

Let's take a look at these questions one by one.

## WHICH ABILITIES AND FOCUSES APPLY?

When a player tries to do something that has some chance of failure, you should call for an ability test. Extremely easy or everyday tasks (reading a broadsheet if literate, walking to the tavern) do not require dice rolling. The player should describe the attempted action. You then have to decide what ability is relevant and what focus applies. If a character is trying to force a door open, for example, you'd call for a Strength (Might) test. There are only nine abilities, so picking the right one should be intuitive. Remember that abilities are quite broadly defined.

Picking a focus may require more thought. Sometimes it's obvious. If a character is trying to sneak through an alley, that's a Dexterity (Stealth) test. Other times, the right focus is not as clear and indeed it may be that no focus applies. In that case, it's just a straight ability test. You should try to be open to player suggestion though. If a player can give a credible explanation for why a particular focus should apply to the test, you should allow its use.

The other important thing to remember is that sometimes characters will use different abilities and focuses when making Opposed Tests. For example, a merchant may try to convince an adventurer to spend more money than they should on a new shield. The merchant would make a Communication (Bargaining) test while the adventurer would make a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test.

Usually any character can attempt to take an ability test. However, some tests require specialized knowledge or skill. When that's the case, you can make a specific focus a requirement to even attempt the test. You might call for an Intelligence (Arcane Lore required) test, for example. A character trying the test without the required focus automatically fails.

## HOW MUCH TIME DOES THE TEST TAKE?

An ability test can represent mere seconds or hours or even days depending on what the character is trying to achieve. During narrative time, the increments will tend to be larger. If the PCs try asking around town after a villain they are hunting, for example, you might decide that a test represents an hour of walking around and talking to different people. In action time, however, tracking exact time is more important. Remember, each round of action time is 15 seconds and within that time a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. When deciding on how long a test takes during action time, you should express it using these action types. A long action might take a major action and a minor action, or two of each for something that would stretch across two rounds.

Lastly, there are ability tests that are reactions. Many spells, for examples, require their targets to make a test to resist certain effects. Such tests are considered to take no time, as they usually take place when it's not the testing character's turn.

## WHAT ARE THE STAKES?

If the character succeeds, what happens exactly? These are the stakes. Usually, the result is obvious. A character trying to jump over a chasm will get across, for example. You'll find it easiest to make many tests binary: either a character succeeds or fails. Sometimes, however, more nuance is required. That's where the Stunt Die comes in. You can use the result of the Stunt Die to determine a character's degree of success. A 1 means the action was barely pulled off while a 6 means the results were impressive. Going back to the chasm example, you could use the Stunt Die to determine how the character landed. A 1 could mean hanging from the opposite edge with the possibility of falling, a 2-3 could mean a crash landing that leaves the character prone, a 4-5 could mean the character

landed on their feet, and a 6 could mean the character landed so skillfully that they fly over the chasm and land on their feet two yards beyond the edge.

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE?

Bad rolls happen and often at the most inopportune time. So when a character fails an ability test, what happens? Sometimes there are no consequences but the obvious. A character trying to find information on an ancient king makes an Intelligence (Historical Lore) test and fails. There are no consequences to this other than not finding the information. A character that fails to jump across a chasm, however, will be plummeting down and taking damage. You must decide how much and whether the character can do anything to mitigate the situation. You might allow, for example, a Dexterity (Acrobatics) test to land on nearby ledge instead of falling into the river far below.

You may also have to decide if characters can try failed actions again. You can say yes, yes with conditions, or no to this depending on the circumstances. If a character has time to spend and the action seems reasonable, another attempt can be made. You may say yes, but require a new approach or assistance. Or you can rule that the task is too daunting and the character cannot try again. As always, you should try to be fair, but you don't want the game to bog down into an endless series of re-rolls.

## BASIC TESTS

Basic tests are the easiest to resolve because a character is testing against a fixed target number. Unless a character is actively opposed by another character or monster, you should use basic tests. What's nice about them from the GM's point of view is that they require only one judgment and that's an overall assessment of the action's difficulty. The following table provides benchmarks for basic test difficulty and you'll probably consult more than any other table in the game.

| BASIC TEST DIFFICULTY | |
| --- | --- |
| TEST DIFFICULTY | TARGET NUMBER |
| Routine | 7 |
| Easy | 9 |
| Average | 11 |
| Challenging | 13 |
| Hard | 15 |
| Formidable | 17 |
| Imposing | 19 |
| Nigh Impossible | 21 |

When setting the target number, you should try to take all the various circumstances into consideration. In an Intelligence (Research) test, is the library well-stocked? In a Dexterity (Stealth) test, are the floorboards squeaky? In a Strength (Climbing) test, does the wall have abundant handholds? In short, how hard is the task at hand?

You don't need to agonize about this. Make a quick assessment and then let the dice fall where they may. You can tell players what TN they are shooting for or keep that information to yourself. A plus of keeping it secret is that it reduces arguments with the players. They tell you their test result and you tell them if they succeed or fail.

## OPPOSED TESTS

Opposed tests work a little differently than basic tests. A character is not trying to meet or beat a fixed number but beat the test result of an opposing character. This makes things a bit more complicated. First, it means there is more than one dice roll involved. Second, it means that you can't distill everything in the test down to a target number. If there are circumstances that affect one or more characters involved in the test, you'll have to determine those and assign the bonuses and/or penalties that affect the final test result. Generally speaking, you should grant bonuses or impose penalties of 1-3 to reflect the circumstances of the test. You might, for example, give a character trying to jump in muddy ground a –2 penalty to the Strength (Jumping) test.

Factors you may consider for bonuses and/or penalties to ability tests includes equipment available, weather conditions, time constraints, distractions, assistance from others, lighting conditions, and good roleplaying where appropriate. You should let players know any bonuses or penalties before they roll so the test result can be determined accurately.

## ADVANCED TESTS

Most tests are determined by one roll of the dice. There are times, however, when a task is complicated and resolving it with one roll wouldn't feel right. Known as advanced tests, these types of tasks generally take a lot of time and/or planning, such as running a long race or doing research. Advanced tests are basic or opposed tests that use what's known as a Success Threshold to track completion over time. The task is complete when the total of the Stunt Dice from all successful tests is equal to or greater than the success threshold.

As the example illustrates, the length of time and difficulty of each test are important. Since the Stunt Die is only counted for successful tests, the harder you make it the more dice rolls will be required. If more than one character pitches in, this is best reflected by modifying the test difficulty or giving the testing character a bonus. This will result in more successful tests, and so the task will be completed faster.

You sometimes want to use an advanced test to determine how much time something takes, but you can also use to it to find out who finishes first. The first character to meet or beat the success threshold is the winner. This can be used to simulate all sorts of conflicts, from debates to horse races.

The following table provides some basic benchmarks for success thresholds, though there is no theoretical limit on how high they can get. Practically speaking, however, you don't want players rolling dice forever, so consider carefully before setting thresholds above 25.

| ADVANCED TESTS | |
|---|---|
| TASK DIFFICULTY | SUCCESS THRESHOLD |
| Easy | 5 |
| Average | 10 |
| Challenging | 15 |
| Hard | 20 |
| Formidable | 25 |

# ROLEPLAYING AND THE RULES

In a session of *Fantasy AGE*, both you and the players will spend a lot of time talking in character. This interaction is one of the key differences between roleplaying games and other sorts of games. Groups can spend hours just roleplaying and never once touch a die. There are, however, points where the roleplaying part and the gaming part of RPGs must meet. People have been arguing about where they intersect since the beginning of RPGs.

A central issue is the social skills of the player vs. the social skills of the character. When is it appropriate to roleplay an interaction out and when is it appropriate to roll dice? And what if you do some roleplaying but also roll dice? What if a character has a lousy Communication ability but the player is

glib? Or what if the player who's tongue-tied in real life wants to play a character who's a great orator?

These issues don't come up during combat or exploration encounters for the most part. No one expects a player to actually be able to fight or decipher an ancient script. People are content to let dice rolling handle such things. When it comes to roleplaying, however, players can talk and interact. They are doing so in character but it is the players using their social skills to roleplay.

So let's imagine a scene in which the PCs have to convince a local noble that a man was wrongly imprisoned. There are four ways you can run this scene.

- Everyone can just roleplay. You play the noble and the players their characters. If their verbal arguments are convincing, you decide the noble relents and frees the man.

- You could resolve the whole thing with ability tests, with the players making Communication (Persuasion) tests vs. the noble's Communication (Leadership) tests.

- You could mix the first two approaches, letting the players roleplay and then having them take tests with bonuses or penalties based on their arguments and delivery.

- You could run the scene as an advanced test. You tell the players they have five minutes of game time to convince the noble and each Communication (Persuasion) test takes one minute. You then set a Success Threshold based on the noble's attitude towards the PCs and the prisoner. Before each test, the players can make an argument. If you find it convincing, you can reduce the difficulty of that test. The players can take turns making arguments and rolling or have a spokesman with the best Communication (Persuasion) do it. The dice are the final arbiter in this approach but good roleplaying makes successful tests more likely.

None of those techniques are wrong, though the second one (just rolling dice) does reduce the roleplaying to a minimum. You need to decide how you want to handle scenes like this in your game and it's fine to mix and match approaches. You can do a quick and dirty ability test to cover haggling with a merchant and later roleplay out a feast with no dice rolling at all. The important thing is to discover which approach works for your group and is fun for everyone.

# COMBAT CONSIDERATIONS

When the game switches from narrative time to action time, it's time for combat. This is when *Fantasy AGE* becomes the most rules intensive and you'll have many decisions to make in a short time. It's up to you to control all the NPCs. You have to roll initiative for them and decide on their actions when their turns come up. You'll need to keep track of the resources of the various NPCs as well, such as Health and magic points. The core rules for combat are in **Chapter 2: Basic Rules,** but as the GM there are a few more things you need to know about adjudicating a fight. The following section provides additional advice and rules that will help you run combat encounters in *Fantasy AGE.*

## MAJOR AND MINOR NPCS

Non-player characters in *Fantasy AGE* are divided into two types: major NPCs and minor NPCs. Major NPCs are prominent characters in the story and often have a reoccurring role. Minor NPCs have a support role, be it as local color or spear carriers. Many minor NPCs won't even have names.

The rules treat major and minor NPCs the same way with two exceptions.

First, in combat encounters, you should roll initiative for each major NPC separately. Minor NPCs you can break up into groups by type and then make an initiative roll for each group. If you had three orcs and four goblins in a combat, for example, you'd roll initiative once for the orcs and once of the goblins. When initiative for the orcs came up, all three of them would take a turn. Each one could take different actions, but they'd all happen on the same initiative. Then when the goblins' initiative came up, the four of them could take their turns.

Second, you may, at your option, apply the rules for dying PCs to major NPCs. If you do, a major NPC dropped to 0 Health will die after a number of rounds equal to 2 + Constitution unless healing is received. A dying character can talk but cannot take any other actions. The NPC dies at the start of their turn on the final round, so their allies have until then to save them.

# SURPRISE

In combat, attacking first is often the key to victory, which is why ambush is an age-old tactic. At the start of a combat encounter, you must determine if one side gets the drop on the other. Characters that are surprised will not get a chance to act the first round of combat. Determining surprise is a three part process:

- **Consider the Situation:** First, determine the basic situation. Is one side concealed or hidden in some way? Is the other side wary or oblivious? Did both sides just blunder into one another by accident?

- **Test or No Test:** Next, you must decide if one or both sides get a chance to detect the other before contact is made. In some situations, you may decide there is no test. In that case, one side automatically gets the drop on the other. If you decide there is a chance of detection, you can have characters make Perception tests with focuses as appropriate (though **Perception (Seeing)** is most common). This can be a basic test, in which case you assign a TN based on circumstances, or you can make it an opposed test of Perception vs. **Dexterity (Stealth)**. It is possible that some characters will be surprised while others on the same side will not.

- **Combat Begins:** Everyone rolls for initiative as action time begins and the combat starts. Any characters who were surprised do not get a turn during the first round of the fight. On the second round, everyone gets to act as normal.

The easiest way to deal with surprise is with basic tests. If an enemy is trying to ambush the PCs, for example, choose a TN based on the site they picked and their level of concealment and let each player make a Perception (Seeing) test. Those that fail the test are surprised; those that make it are not. If the PCs are trying to ambush an enemy, roll a Perception (Seeing) test for each major NPC and group of minor NPCs.

## EXAMPLE

*The warrior Brigitte, the rogue Najah, and the mage Varuker are trying to ambush an ogre and three orcs in a mountain pass. They have hidden themselves amongst the rocks at either side of the pass. The orcs are not expecting trouble here, so they have no one scouting ahead. The GM decides it will take a TN 13 Perception (Seeing) test to notice the ambush. The Game Master rolls once for the ogre and once for the orcs (since the three of them are a group). The ogre gets a 14 and the orcs a 10. Now everyone rolls initiative. During the first round of combat, Brigitte, Najah, and Varuker—and the surprisingly aware ogre— can take turns as normal, but the orcs are confounded by the ambush and they do not get to act at all.*

# ATTACK ROLLS AND CIRCUMSTANCE

An attack roll is the most common ability test in combat. It is a basic test, but the target number is equal to the opponent's Defense. The attack roll is modified by a focus if applicable and

any other relevant bonuses (such as aiming, charging, magic items, talents, etc.). You can also assign bonuses and penalties to the attack roll to reflect the circumstances of the encounter, just as you do in opposed tests. In general these bonuses and penalties should range from 1 to 3. They can take into account anything that would affect the attacker's ability to hit the target, such as lighting, terrain, tactics, and concealment. Here are some example modifiers based on common circumstances. Use them as a guideline when assigning bonuses and penalties to attack rolls.

## ATTACK ROLL MODIFIERS

| Modifier | Circumstance |
| --- | --- |
| –3 | Defender in heavy cover, such as a building or stone wall. Melee attacker in heavy snow. |
| –2 | Defender in light cover, such as a hedge or the woods. Melee attacker in the mud. Ranged attack vs. defender engaged in melee combat. Combat at night. |
| –1 | Rain, mist, or smoke obscures the defender. Combat in low light conditions. |
| 0 | Normal circumstances. |
| +1 | Attacker is on higher ground. Defender is prone. Melee attacker and allies outnumber defender 2 to 1. |
| +2 | Melee attacker and allies outnumber defender 3 to 1. Defender is drunk. |
| +3 | Defender is unaware of the attack. |

## MORALE

In many games combat is an all or nothing affair. Opponents fight until one side or the other is wiped out. War is indeed bloody but it would be infinitely more so if it was prosecuted in this way. In truth most combats end when the morale of one side breaks and its combatants flee. Now in fantasy you will, of course, find monsters who will fight on regardless of circumstances, but most NPCs have some sense of self-preservation. You can simulate this with Willpower (Morale) tests when it seems appropriate. Characters will fight on with a successful test or attempt to break off from combat or even surrender on a failed test.

When is it appropriate to test? That is for you to determine based on the circumstances of the combat and the perception of the combatants. You should consider, however, calling for a test under the following conditions:

- When more than half of the side's combatants are out of the fight (dead or incapacitated).

- When the side's leader or champion is defeated.

- When fighting on will mean being trapped or surrounded.

You can handle this one of two ways. Your first option is to make one Willpower (Morale) test for the side using the Willpower of its leader (or best available if there is no clear cut leader). This has the advantage of being simple and can end a combat with one die roll. Your other option is roll once for each major NPC and group of minor NPCs. This can mean that some combatants flee while others stay and fight.

In general you want to use morale tests with NPCs only. Players should have the choice for their character to fight or flee.

# HANDLING HAZARDS

You should have a good handle on how to deal with combat encounters now. The combat rules are the most detailed part of *Fantasy AGE* since the nature of action time requires a certain amount of precision. Swords and arrows are not the only threats PCs face in a dangerous world, however. They must also contend with traps, falling, fire, and other perils. All of these things fall under the general header of "hazards" and this section explains how to deal with them. They are most commonly found in exploration encounters but sometimes appear in combat encounters or (more rarely) roleplaying encounters.

Rather than come up with a raft of special rules for each individual type, *Fantasy AGE* handles hazards with a simple system that can be used to simulate everything from pit traps to drowning. Published adventures will define hazards for you, but when you need to adjudicate them on your own, you must answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of the hazard?

- Can it be avoided?

- How dangerous is the hazard?

- Does it have any special effects?

- How long does it last?

## WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE HAZARD?

The first step is to describe the nature of the hazard in a general way. It could be a treacherous pathway leading up the side of a mountain, a raging forest fire, or a tripwire that triggers a dart attack. You may tweak your idea as you define the hazard, but for now just broadly define the parameters.

## CAN IT BE AVOIDED?

Some hazards, particularly traps, are a hidden danger. You must decide if the PCs have a chance to detect it beforehand.

- They may sometimes be avoided with appropriate ability tests.
- Determine damage using the **Hazard Category** table.
- Ability tests may allow characters to mitigate the damage. A successful test usually means half damage (rounded down).
- Some hazards have special effects.
- Some hazards are one offs but others reoccur.

This is usually a Perception test, with a focus appropriate for the hazard. You might use Seeing to give the PCs a chance to notice a patch of disturbed earth over a pit trap or Hearing to see if the PCs notice a telltale clicking noise. If there is a chance of detection, simply set the TN for the ability test as usual. PCs that make a successful test can avoid the hazard, or at least get a clue that may help them do so. Those that fail walk right into it.

## HOW DANGEROUS IS THE HAZARD?

Just as you assess difficulty for ability tests, so too must you assess the danger of hazards. Consult the **Hazard Category** table and pick the one the best suits the nature of the hazard. This determines the base damage the hazard inflicts. You might decide, for example, that falling from the top of a guard tower is a major hazard, so that would inflict 3d6 damage. There can be hazards that inflict more damage than 6d6 but they should be rare.

You can also allow an ability test to mitigate the damage. A good standard is that a successful test means the character only suffered half damage (rounded down). The PC falling from the tower, for example, could be given a chance to make a TN 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test to halve the damage.

You also need to decide if armor protects vs. the hazard. If it does not, make it penetrating damage (and realize this makes it nastier). Common sense should dictate whether armor is a help in a given situation. You can see, for example, how armor could protect a character from a fire but not from falling.

### HAZARD CATEGORY

| Category | Damage |
|---|---|
| Minor Hazard | 1d6 |
| Moderate Hazard | 2d6 |
| Major Hazard | 3d6 |
| Arduous Hazard | 4d6 |
| Harrowing Hazard | 5d6 |
| Murderous Hazard | 6d6 |

## DOES IT HAVE ANY SPECIAL EFFECTS?

Some hazards do more than just damage. They might impose a temporary penalty to an ability or to Speed. They could reduce the number of actions a character can take in a turn. They could leave a character prone or even unconscious. Try to remember that Health is fairly abstract in the first place, so many hazards require no special effects. When you do use a special effect, try to make it simple and sensible. It would be fair to say, for example, that the character that fell off the tower could take no actions on their next turn (presuming they survived). It makes sense that the survivor of such a fall would not leap back up and get back into the action immediately.

## HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

Many hazards happen once and then end. A dart trap, for example, will fire once when triggered. Other hazards can be ongoing. Characters running through a blazing forest will take damage each round until they escape. Again, use common sense as your guide to determine whether the hazard is a single incident or reoccurring.

# PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here are three sample hazards. You'll find more in published *Fantasy AGE* adventures.

### THE BURNING INN                                    HAZARD

During the night, unknown villains pour oil all over the lower floor of the inn where the PCs are sleeping, and set the place alight. The characters wake up to the smell of smoke as fire quickly engulfs the inn. They can try to escape down the stairs and through the common room. However, each round they take 3d6 damage (a major hazard), and their Speed is halved because the smoke makes it hard to see where to go. They could also leap from the window of their room but the distance and the fire on the lower floors makes this an arduous hazard that inflicts 4d6 penetrating damage. A successful TN 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test halves the damage. Do the PCs dash through the inn, potentially taking damage over several rounds but enjoying the protection of their armor, or do they make the jump to freedom and hope the penetrating damage isn't too bad?

### PIT TRAP                                           HAZARD

A section of corridor falls away when enough pressure is put upon it, dropping the unlucky victim into a pit 15 feet deep. If the triggering character makes a successful TN 12 Perception (Touching) test, they feel the floor starting to give away and can step back before falling in. Otherwise, they fall and take 2d6 penetrating damage (a moderate hazard). A successful TN 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test halves the damage.

### THE RUSHING RIVER                                  HAZARD

A PC must swim across a rushing river to deliver a vital message. The river is swift and there are rocks beneath the surface that make the crossing more perilous. They must make an advanced test with a Success Threshold of 7 (see **Advanced Tests**, earlier in this chapter). Each round the character must take a TN 13 Constitution (Swimming) test. If they succeed, the result of the Stunt Die counts towards the success threshold. If they fail, they take 2d6 damage from the rocks and/or inhaled water. They keep making tests until they make it across or are reduced to 0 Health.
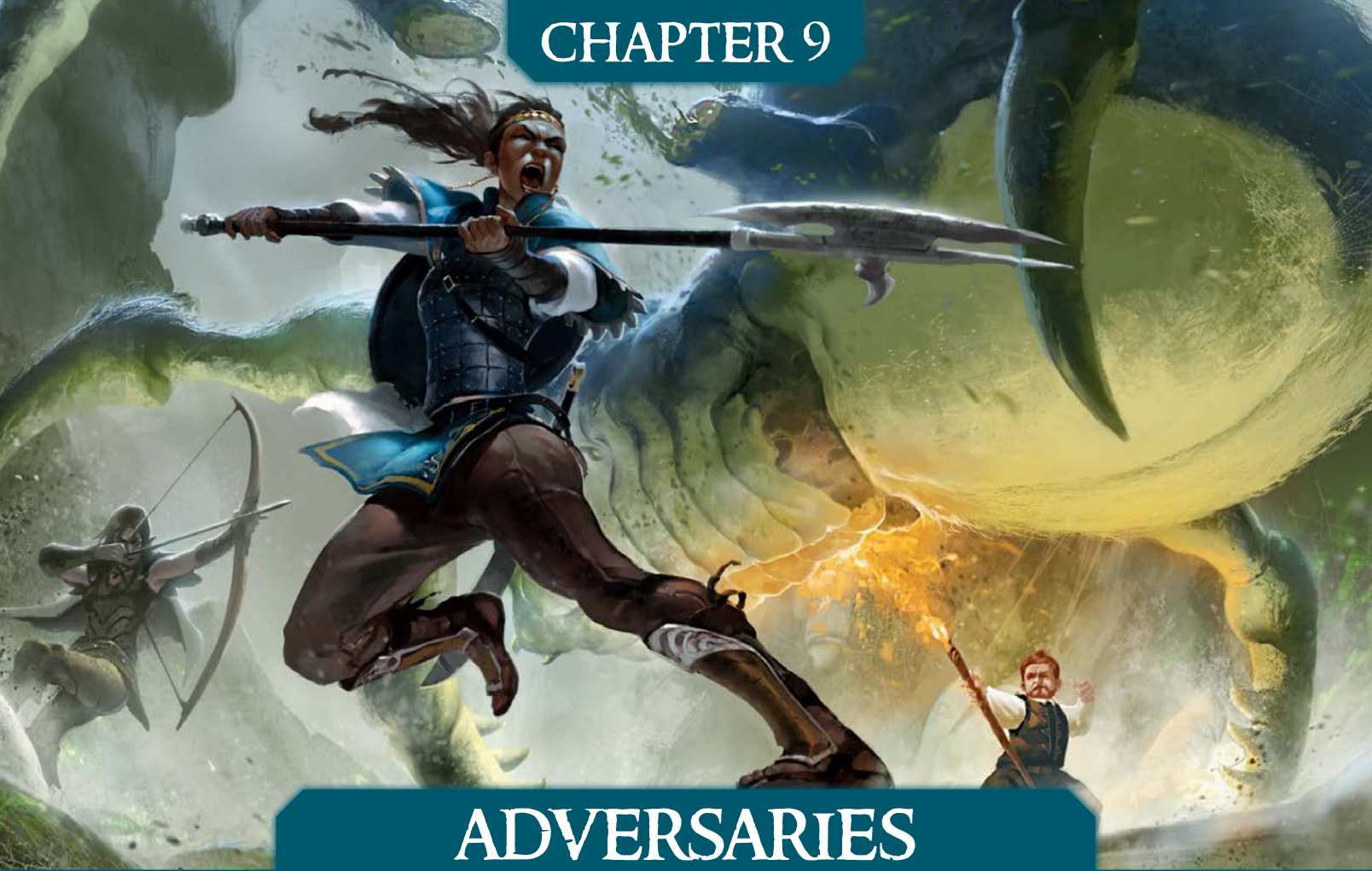
# ADVERSARIES

Conflict is the heart of drama, so every *Fantasy AGE* campaign needs adversaries. Many of these will be monsters of various types, but a knight with the ear of the local duke can be just as much of a threat. This chapter contains a starting selection of adversaries for your campaign, and you'll find more in other *AGE* books and PDFs.

## STATISTICS FORMAT

Adversaries are presented in a common format. First, there is a description and then the game statistics, sometimes referred to as a "stat block" because it's a block of text. If you've read this far into the book, the statistics should be fairly self-explanatory. You will note that each adversary has an entry for favored stunts. These are the most commonly used stunts for that adversary, but don't feel compelled to use them exclusively. Favored stunts are provided as a suggestion but as always use your judgment when running the adversaries in combat. Also note that many adversaries have unique stunts to give them flavor and make fighting one enemy different than fighting another.

## NPCS AND CLASSES

At this point you may be wondering, do Non-Player Characters have character classes? The answer is that they *can*, but they don't have to. Classes provide a framework for

advancement that is necessary for the Player Characters, but not for NPCs. If you want to use the rules in **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION** to build NPCs, you certainly can do that but you are equally welcome to give NPCs whatever abilities, focuses, talents, and so on that seems appropriate. This chapter is full of examples that you can use and modify as needed.

## ADVERSARY FOCUSES

For the most part, adversaries use the same ability focuses listed in the **CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER OPTIONS**. There are a few more required, however, to deal with creatures and animals, mostly relating to their natural attacks. Player Characters cannot take these focuses unless their race description specifies otherwise. These additional focuses are:

- **ACCURACY FOCUSES:** Bite.
- **FIGHTING FOCUSES:** Claws, Gore, Kick.

## ADVERSARY THREAT

While almost any creature is potentially dangerous with proper planning, wild luck, or the right circumstances, it's generally the case that certain adversaries work better against PCs of certain levels. Creatures are organized roughly into Threat categories based on the level of PC they are generally a suitable danger to. Check out the **Adversary Threat Level** table for some guidelines.

| ADVERSARY THREAT LEVEL | |
|---|---|
| **Threat Level** | **PC Level Range** |
| Minor | Levels 1-4 |
| Moderate | Levels 5-8 |
| Major | Levels 9-12 |
| Dire | Levels 13-17 |
| Legendary | Levels 18-20 |

Also note that Threat is a general indicator, it's not a perfect measure of how dangerous a particular adversary is to all characters. For example, a heavily armored, healthy 3rd level warrior might do better against a Moderate threat than an injured 7th Level Mage who's mostly out of Mana Points. Likewise, Threat is a range not an exact ranking; Goblins are generally less dangerous than Orcs, but both are comparatively Minor threats when compared to tougher adversaries. Also, monsters are generally assigned Threat based on how they generally operate. Thus goblins are assumed to appear in a group equal to or larger than a party of PCs, while dragons and similar monsters are assumed to appear alone or in very small numbers.

As always, GMs should be aware of the PCs' individual capabilities and any significant things that might make them more

or less effective against a particular adversary. Impressive magical items, a larger than normal group, special knowledge of an adversary, and numerous other factors can cause the actual Threat to shift from its baseline.

# BEEFING UP ADVERSARIES

The stats presented are average for an adversary of that type but you can change them for individual encounters. It's a simple matter to modify the weapons and armor of many adversaries to create different tactical challenges. If you want a tougher adversary (one you want to be a major NPC, for example), you can also modify the stats. You can change the stats as you like, but here are some basic guidelines for making more challenging adversaries.

- **Elite:** To make an adversary who is a little tougher than average, add 1 to any three abilities, add two focuses, and increase Health by 5. You can also make the NPC an Novice in a new talent or add a degree to an existing one.

- **Heroic:** To make an adversary who is very tough indeed, add 2 to any two abilities, add 1 to any three other abilities, add four focuses, and increase Health by 15. You can also make the NPC an apprentice in two new talents or add two degrees to existing ones.

- **Epic:** To make an adversary who is extremely potent, add 3 to one ability, 2 to any two other abilities, and 1 to any three others. Add five focuses, increase the adversary's Health by 20, and increase armor rating by 3. You can also add three degrees to new or existing talents

# OTHER NPCS

Not all NPCs are adversaries. The PCs will meet many people in the travels and you needn't provide full stat blocks for all of them. Oftentimes NPCs will only appear in the game for a single roleplaying encounter. Many of them don't need stats at all, but it is often useful to know some basics about the character. In these cases you can use an abbreviated stat block, which simply lists the abilities and focuses. This innkeeper is an example of the format.

| INNKEEPER |
|---|
| **Abilities (Focuses)** |
| **Accuracy** 1, **Communication** 3 (Bargaining, Persuasion), **Constitution** 2 (Drinking), **Dexterity** 0, **Fighting** 1, **Intelligence** 1 (Evaluation), **Perception** 2 (Seeing, Tasting), **Strength** 1, **Willpower** 1 (Morale) |

# NON-COMBATANTS

Some NPCs are labeled as non-combatants. They have no skill whatsoever in combat and they almost certainly seek to avoid such situations. Non-combatants can be children, the elderly, the idle, draft animals, or other passive NPCs. A non-combatant's attack roll is always +0, regardless of Strength or Dexterity. Other bonuses and penalties apply as normal.

## BANDIT

| | ABILITIES (FOCUSES) |
|---|---|
| 2 | ACCURACY (LIGHT BLADES, BOWS) |
| 1 | COMMUNICATION |
| 2 | CONSTITUTION |
| 1 | DEXTERITY (STEALTH) |
| 2 | FIGHTING (HEAVY BLADES) |
| 0 | INTELLIGENCE |
| 1 | PERCEPTION (SEARCHING) |
| 1 | STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION) |
| **1** | **WILLPOWER (MORALE)** |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | 15 | 11 | 3 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| SHORT BOW | +4 | 1D6+2 |
| LONGSWORD | +4 | 2D6+1 |
| **DAGGER** | **+4** | **1D6+2** |

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Skirmish, Knock Prone

**TALENTS:** Armor Training (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Bludgeons, Bows, Heavy Blades, Light Blades

**EQUIPMENT:** Light Leather, Dagger, Longsword, Short Bow

### THREAT: MINOR

# ADVERSARIES

In the following pages you'll find statistics for some common foes that PCs might fight.

# BANDIT

### AKA: MERCENARIES, ROBBERS, THUGS

The bandit is similar to many armed fighters willing to trade violence for coin. These adversaries may be actual bandits and criminals, or they could be hired guards or soldiers. In many cases, the weapons and armor used by these foes varies more than their skills, though a unique or well-trained individual could have additional focuses, talents, and higher ability scores.

# DEMON-SOLDIER

### AKA: FIENDS, INFERNALS, DEVILS

This demon is commonly summoned to serve evil sorcerers or members of various demon-worshipping cults. They are only one of *many* such extradimensional entities, who vary greatly in power and ability. The soldier demon usually serves an evil god or demon lord, beings of incredible power who command armies of lesser fiends. Demons can't usually enter normal reality from the hellish realms they call home without being summoned by magic or sent by more powerful entities.

## DEMON, SOLDIER

| | ABILITIES (FOCUSES) |
|---|---|
| 1 | ACCURACY (BITE) |
| 0 | COMMUNICATION |
| 5 | CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) |
| 1 | DEXTERITY |
| 3 | FIGHTING (CLAWS) |
| 1 | INTELLIGENCE |
| 1 | PERCEPTION |
| 5 | STRENGTH (INTIMIDATE) |
| **2** | **WILLPOWER** |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | 40 | 11 | 5 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| BITE | +3 | 2D6+5 |
| CLAW | +5 | 1D6+6 |

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Dual Strike, Mighty Blow

**ARMORED HIDE:** The soldier demon's hide provides a natural Armor Rating of 5. Due to the mystic nature of the demon, this protects against all damage, even that not normally stopped by armor.

**DARKVISION:** The soldier demon can see perfectly in total darkness.

**TOOTH & CLAW:** The soldier demon can make a bite and claw attack with a single attack action. Each attack check is rolled separately and can generate stunt points.

### THREAT: MODERATE
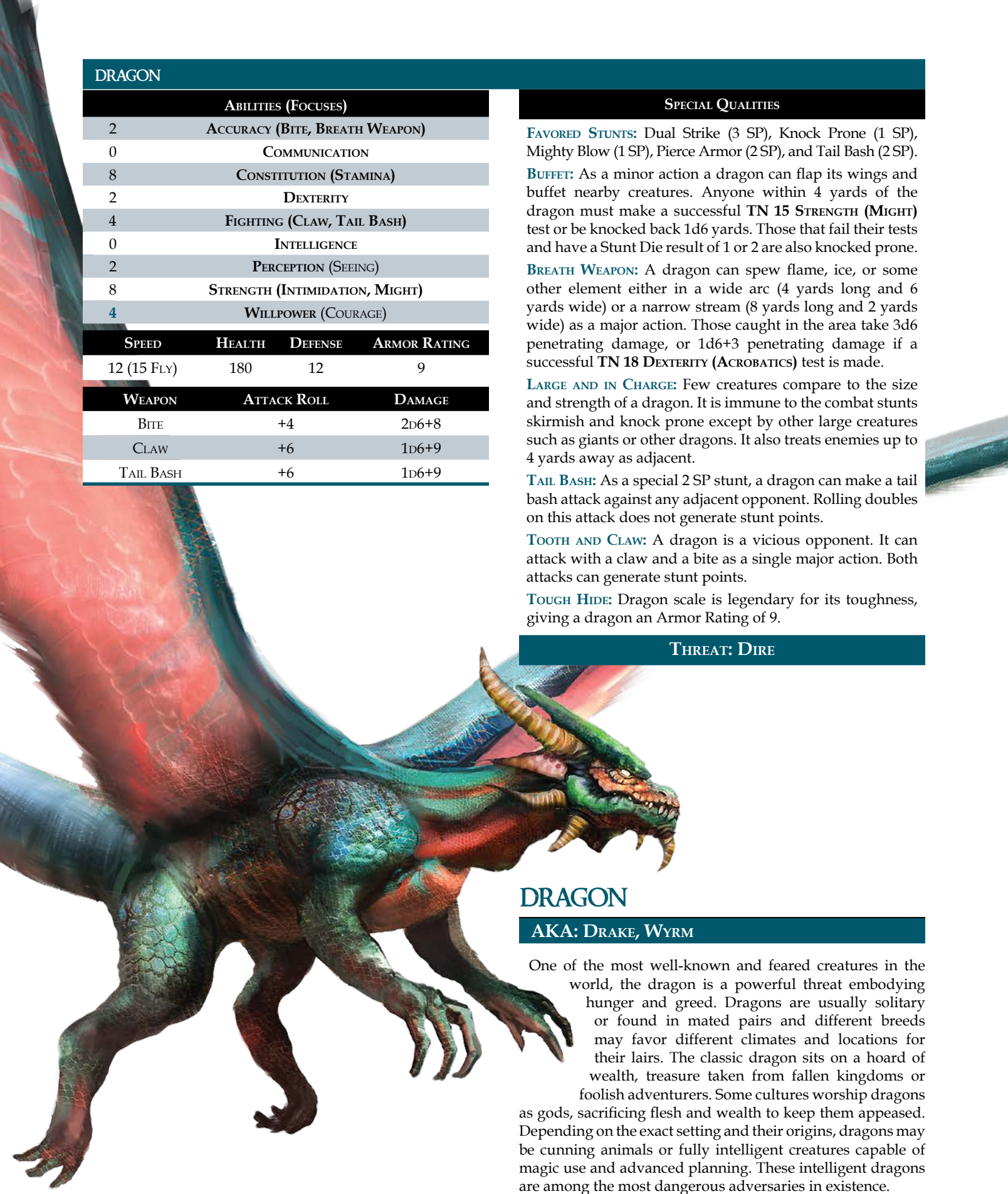
## DRAGON

| ABILITIES (FOCUSES) | |
|---|---|
| 2 | ACCURACY (BITE, BREATH WEAPON) |
| 0 | COMMUNICATION |
| 8 | CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) |
| 2 | DEXTERITY |
| 4 | FIGHTING (CLAW, TAIL BASH) |
| 0 | INTELLIGENCE |
| 2 | PERCEPTION (SEEING) |
| 8 | STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION, MIGHT) |
| 4 | WILLPOWER (COURAGE) |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 (15 FLY) | 180 | 12 | 9 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| BITE | +4 | 2D6+8 |
| CLAW | +6 | 1D6+9 |
| TAIL BASH | +6 | 1D6+9 |

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Dual Strike (3 SP), Knock Prone (1 SP), Mighty Blow (1 SP), Pierce Armor (2 SP), and Tail Bash (2 SP).

**BUFFET:** As a minor action a dragon can flap its wings and buffet nearby creatures. Anyone within 4 yards of the dragon must make a successful **TN 15 STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test or be knocked back 1d6 yards. Those that fail their tests and have a Stunt Die result of 1 or 2 are also knocked prone.

**BREATH WEAPON:** A dragon can spew flame, ice, or some other element either in a wide arc (4 yards long and 6 yards wide) or a narrow stream (8 yards long and 2 yards wide) as a major action. Those caught in the area take 3d6 penetrating damage, or 1d6+3 penetrating damage if a successful **TN 18 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test is made.

**LARGE AND IN CHARGE:** Few creatures compare to the size and strength of a dragon. It is immune to the combat stunts skirmish and knock prone except by other large creatures such as giants or other dragons. It also treats enemies up to 4 yards away as adjacent.

**TAIL BASH:** As a special 2 SP stunt, a dragon can make a tail bash attack against any adjacent opponent. Rolling doubles on this attack does not generate stunt points.

**TOOTH AND CLAW:** A dragon is a vicious opponent. It can attack with a claw and a bite as a single major action. Both attacks can generate stunt points.

**TOUGH HIDE:** Dragon scale is legendary for its toughness, giving a dragon an Armor Rating of 9.

### THREAT: DIRE



## DRAGON

### AKA: DRAKE, WYRM

One of the most well-known and feared creatures in the world, the dragon is a powerful threat embodying hunger and greed. Dragons are usually solitary or found in mated pairs and different breeds may favor different climates and locations for their lairs. The classic dragon sits on a hoard of wealth, treasure taken from fallen kingdoms or foolish adventurers. Some cultures worship dragons as gods, sacrificing flesh and wealth to keep them appeased. Depending on the exact setting and their origins, dragons may be cunning animals or fully intelligent creatures capable of magic use and advanced planning. These intelligent dragons are among the most dangerous adversaries in existence.

| GIANT | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ABILITIES (FOCUSES)** | | |
| 0 | **ACCURACY (BRAWLING)** | |
| –1 | **COMMUNICATION** | |
| 6 | **CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** | |
| –1 | **DEXTERITY** | |
| 2 | **FIGHTING (AXES, BLUDGEONS, HEAVY BLADES)** | |
| 0 | **INTELLIGENCE** | |
| 2 | **PERCEPTION (SMELLING)** | |
| 9 | **STRENGTH (MIGHT, INTIMIDATION)** | |
| 3 | **WILLPOWER (COURAGE, MORALE)** | |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | 80 | 9 | 5 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| LARGE CLUB | +4 | 2D6+9 |
| UNARMED | +2 | 1D6+11 |

**SPECIAL QUALITIES**

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Dual Strike (3 SP), Mighty Blow (1 SP), Slam (3 SP). Threaten

**GIANT-SIZED:** Due to their large size and reach, giants are immune to the combat stunts Skirmish and Knock Prone except by other large creatures such as dragons or other giants. It also treats enemies up to 3 yards away as adjacent. Also, weapons scaled to a giant's size do an additional 1d6 damage compared to their normal-sized counterparts (their fists do 1d6+2 base damage).

**NATURAL ARMOR:** Giants' large size and thick skin gives them a natural Armor Rating of 5.

**SLAM:** For 3 SP, giants can pound the ground with earth-shattering force, knocking over those nearby. All targets within a 5 yard radius of the giant must make an opposed test of their **DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** vs. the giant's **STRENGTH (MIGHT)** or suffer 1d3 penetrating damage and be knocked prone.

**WEAPON GROUPS:** Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades

**THREAT: MAJOR**

# GIANT

## AKA: ANAKIM, DAITYA, JOTUN

Often believed to be one of the first humanoid races, giants are sometimes credited with building the first cities and monuments. Alternatively portrayed as enemies or servants of the gods, giants are often hostile to other humanoid races. The gentlest among them desire solitude and avoid others, but the more dangerous are flesh-eating tyrants who use their great size and power to oppress and destroy. Giants are usually somewhat clumsy compared to smaller humanoids, but they are incredibly strong and can kill or maim with a single blow.

The statistics above are for a relatively small giant, somewhere between 12′ and 20′ tall. For larger, more powerful individual giants or larger races of giantkind, apply the elite, heroic, or epic templates.

| GIANT SPIDER | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ABILITIES (FOCUSES)** | | |
| 3 | **ACCURACY (BITE)** | |
| –2 | **COMMUNICATION** | |
| 2 | **CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** | |
| 4 | **DEXTERITY (STEALTH)** | |
| 2 | **FIGHTING** | |
| –2 | **INTELLIGENCE** | |
| 2 | **PERCEPTION (TOUCH)** | |
| 3 | **STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION, JUMPING)** | |
| 2 | **WILLPOWER (MORALE)** | |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | 35 | 14 | 4 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| BITE | +5 | 2D6+3 |

**SPECIAL QUALITIES**

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Knock Prone, Poison Bite (2 SP)

**EXOSKELETON:** The tough exoskeleton of a giant spider gives the creature an AR of 4.

**POISON BITE STUNT:** A giant spider can inject poison as a special stunt costing 2 SP. The poison debilitates the victim, who suffers a –2 penalty to Dexterity, Fighting, and Accuracy until the end of the encounter or until they receive magical healing.

**WALL CRAWLER:** A giant spider can walk up walls and even on ceilings.

**WEB:** As a major action a giant spider can shoot a web at a visible enemy within 12 yards. The target must make a successful **TN 11 DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test or become immobilized. The target or an ally can free the victim by taking a major action and making a successful TN 13 **STRENGTH (MIGHT)** test. This is the only action the immobilized character can take until freed.

**THREAT: MINOR**

# GIANT SPIDER

## AKA: CAVE SPIDERS, DEEP CRAWLERS

Poisonous arachnids of exceptional size, giant spiders range from the size of a large dog to that of a horse. These creatures dwell in caverns, deep forests, and other dark places where they can spin their huge webs and ambush unsuspecting prey. A giant spider's poisonous bite is relatively weak, but the poison can be delivered in large quantities due to the creature's size, and is used to incapacitate a target so it can be devoured or dragged off for later consumption.

Some giant spiders possess exceptional intelligence and are capable of communicating with each other and some other creatures, particularly those linked to evil gods or dark magic. Such variants generally have Intelligence 1 and Communication 1. Rare intelligent giant spiders may also have special talents, focuses, or even magical powers.

# GOBLIN

Small and quick with an oft-deserved reputation for cunning and cruelty, goblins are most dangerous in large numbers or when they possess the element of surprise. They favor traps, sabotage, and stealth to direct conflict whenever possible. In some settings they are a corrupt offshoot of dwarves or twisted fey creatures; in other worlds goblins are their own unique species. Weaker than many humanoids, they rely on numbers and speed to overwhelm foes. Goblins often serve as foot soldiers and cannon fodder for other creatures, though they will sometimes unite under a charismatic leader among their own kind. Elite or Heroic goblins are actually often their own subrace, sometimes called hobgoblins or redcaps.

## GOLEM

| ABILITIES (FOCUSES) | |
|---|---|
| 1 | ACCURACY (BRAWLING) |
| –1 | COMMUNICATION |
| 8 | CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) |
| –1 | DEXTERITY |
| 2 | FIGHTING |
| 0 | INTELLIGENCE |
| 3 | PERCEPTION (SEARCHING) |
| 6 | STRENGTH (MIGHT) |
| 4 | WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 60 | 9 | VARIES (SEE BUILT TOUGH) |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| FIST | +3 | 2D6+7 |

| SPECIAL QUALITIES |
|---|

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Knock Prone, Mighty Blow

**CONSTRUCT:** Golems don't need to eat, breathe, or sleep.

**BUILT TOUGH:** A golem has an AR depending on the materials used in its construction: Rope & Straw: AR 2; Wood: AR 4; Earth & Clay: AR 6; Stone AR 8; Iron AR 10.

**HARD-HITTING:** Golems do 2d6+1 damage with their bare hands due to their bulk, mass, and the enchantments which animate them.

**RESISTANCE:** A golem takes half damage (before applying AR) from any nonmagical weapons and attacks. The golem also gains this resistance against natural elemental attacks which the materials used in its construction are strongly resistant to (stone resists fire, earth resists electricty, and so on).

**VULNERABILITY:** A golem tales double damage (before applying AR) from any attacks, natural or magical, that the materials used in its construction are especially vulnerable to (rope, straw, and wood is vulnerable to fire, stone is vulnerable to intense vibrations, and so on).

**THREAT: MODERATE (OR HIGHER DEPENDING ON MATERIALS USED)**

## GOBLIN

| ABILITIES (FOCUSES) | |
|---|---|
| 3 | ACCURACY (BRAWLING, BOWS, LIGHT BLADES, THROWN WEAPONS) |
| 0 | COMMUNICATION |
| 1 | CONSTITUTION |
| 4 | DEXTERITY (STEALTH) |
| 1 | FIGHTING |
| 0 | INTELLIGENCE |
| 1 | PERCEPTION |
| 0 | STRENGTH |
| 1 | WILLPOWER |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | 15 | 14 | 3 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| SHORT SWORD | +5 | 1D6+2 |
| THROWING SPEAR | +5 | 1D6+3 |

| SPECIAL QUALITIES |
|---|

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Lightning Attack, Skirmish

**DARKVISION:** Goblins can see in the dark as if it were daylight.

**PACK TACTICS:** If a goblin is attacking with at least three other goblins, they may perform stunts for 1 less SP than normal.

**EQUIPMENT:** Light Leather, Throwing Spear, Short Sword

**THREAT: MINOR**

# GOLEM

## AKA: Animated Statues, Caryatids

Animated statues or carvings, golems are created using a mix of craftsmanship and magic. Extremely hard to destroy, golems are often nearly mindless beings who follow a pre-programmed set of instructions (such as, attack anyone entering here who doesn't give the password, or allow no one to take the treasure from this room). Golems are usually expensive and time-consuming to construct and may require specialized mystic knowledge.

The statistics presented here are for a roughly human-sized or slightly larger golem. Golems larger than that apply the elite, heroic, or epic templates to make them stronger and tougher. Some golems may use weapons, though most simply pummel their foes with their large fists and superior might.

# MANTICORE

## AKA: Mantyger, Montegre, Manticora Satyral

A ravenous monster that favors deserts and wastelands, the manticore possesses a lion's body, a scorpion's tail, and a humanoid head with three rows of sharklike teeth. Some manticores also have leathery wings allowing flight (see **Special Powers** at the end of this chapter); others are strictly land-based. Despite their humanoid facial features, the manticore is largely unintelligent and lives only to hunt, feed, and reproduce. Captured manticores are sometimes used to guard value treasures or as battle beasts in gladiatorial contests.



| MANTICORE | |
|---|---|
| **ABILITIES (FOCUSES)** | |
| 3 | **ACCURACY (BITE, STING)** |
| –1 | **COMMUNICATION** |
| 5 | **CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** |
| 2 | **DEXTERITY** |
| 3 | **FIGHTING (CLAW)** |
| –1 | **INTELLIGENCE** |
| 2 | **PERCEPTION (SMELLING)** |
| 5 | **STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)** |
| 2 | **WILLPOWER (COURAGE)** |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | 70 | 12 | 6 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| BITE | +5 | 1D6+6 |
| CLAW | +5 | 1D6+6 |
| STING | +5 | 2D6+6 |

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Knock Prone, Mighty Blow, Poison Sting (2 SP)

**POISON STING STUNT:** A manticore can inject poison as a special stunt costing 2 SP. The poison slows and partially paralyzes the victim, who suffers a –3 penalty to Dexterity, Fighting, and Accuracy until the end of the encounter or until they receive magical healing.

**TOOTH & CLAW:** A manticore can make one bite and one claw attack as a single attack action. Both of these attacks can generate stunt points.

**TOUGH HIDE:** A manticore's tough hide gives it a natural AR of 6.

### THREAT: MAJOR

## MEDUSA

| MEDUSA | | |
|---|---|---|
| **ABILITIES (FOCUSES)** | | |
| 3 | **ACCURACY (BOWS, LIGHT BLADES, BRAWLING)** | |
| 1 | **COMMUNICATION** | |
| 4 | **CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** | |
| 3 | **DEXTERITY** (STEALTH) | |
| 1 | **FIGHTING (SPEARS)** | |
| 2 | **INTELLIGENCE** (HISTORICAL LORE) | |
| 3 | **PERCEPTION** (SEEING) | |
| 3 | **STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)** | |
| 3 | **WILLPOWER** | |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | 50 | 13 | 4 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| LONGBOW | +5 | 1D6+6 |
| SHORT SWORD | +5 | 1D6+5 |

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Lightning Attack (2 SP), Petrifying Gaze (2 SP), Poisonous Snakes (2 SP)

**PETRIFYING GAZE STUNT:** For 2 SP per target affected, a medusa can catch a character's eye during a battle or other encounter. A medusa must be able to see each target directly to use this stunt. Anyone locking eyes with a medusa must succeed in an opposed **WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)** test vs. the medusa's **PERCEPTION (SEEING)**. Failure results in 4d6 penetrating damage. Any target reduced to 0 Health by this attack is turned to stone. Any target who survives this effect is partially petrified and suffers a –2 penalty to all actions until they can rest for at least 8 hours as their body slowly and painfully reverses this effect.

**POISONOUS SNAKES STUNT:** The Medusa's poisonous snake-hair can strike a target in melee as a 2 SP stunt. The target must make a TN 13 **CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** test or suffer 1d6+1 penetrating damage and a –1 penalty to all attacks until the end of the encounter or healing magic is used on the target.

**TALENTS:** Archery Style (Journeyman), Dual Weapon Style (Journeyman).

**TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY:** A character with access to a mirror or other reflective surface can reflect a medusa's Petrifying Gaze back onto it as a 3 SP stunt. The medusa must be able to see its reflection for this to work and must resist the effect normally.

**WEAPON GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Spears

**EQUIPMENT:** Long Bow, 2 Short Swords

### THREAT: MAJOR

# MEDUSA

## AKA: GORGONS

Snake-haired and with a gaze that can turn mortals to stone, the medusa is a terrifying adversary. Cursed by the gods, these creatures are doomed to destroy all around them and the isolation has driven many of these creatures mad. In some settings there are only a handful of these creatures which usually are elite, heroic, or epic in power; in other worlds they are capable of reproduc-

tion and spread throughout the world. Medusae don't age normally due to their cursed existence; those not killed by violence can be very old and privy to numerous secrets and arcane lore.

In many stories the medusa's head can still petrify after the creature is dead. Heroes who slay the creature may be able to use this to their advantage, though they must be very careful not to ever look into the creature's eyes, or they will suffer its gaze. There are many rumors on how to reverse the medusa's gaze, but they all require a great quest, a powerful artifact, or the favor of the gods.

# OGRE

## AKA: Oni, Grendels, Trolls

Between 8′ and 15′ tall, ogres are brutish, simple, and extremely violent. They often operate in small clans, though

| OGRE | |
|---|---|
| **ABILITIES (FOCUSES)** | |
| 0 | ACCURACY (BRAWLING) |
| –1 | COMMUNICATION |
| 6 | CONSTITUTION |
| 0 | DEXTERITY |
| 2 | FIGHTING (AXES, BLUDGEONS, HEAVY BLADES) |
| –1 | INTELLIGENCE |
| 2 | PERCEPTION (SMELLING, TRACKING) |
| 6 | STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION, MIGHT) |
| 1 | WILLPOWER |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | 60 | 10 | 2 (7 WITH ARMOR) |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| MAUL | +4 | 2D6+9 |
| UNARMED | +2 | 1D6+6 |

| SPECIAL QUALITIES |
|---|

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Lethal Blow (4 SP), Knock Prone, Mighty Blow (1 SP), Threaten

**BIG:** Knock Prone and Skirmish stunts used against ogres require 1 additional SP than normal to work. Also, ogre-sized weapons do an additional 1d6 damage over their human-sized counterparts (their fists do 1d6 base damage).

**SAVAGE KILLERS:** Ogres can perform the Mighty and Lethal Blow stunts for –1 SP. They also gain a +2 attack and damage bonus against any target who doesn't succeed in a contested **WILLPOWER (COURAGE)** vs. the ogre's **STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)** at the beginning of an encounter.

**TOUGH SKIN:** Ogres have a natural AR of 2, though most wear hides, patchwork armor, and other protection that increases this to AR 7.

**WEAPON GROUPS:** Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades

| THREAT: MODERATE |
|---|

solitary ogres may carve out a territory. Though capable of scavenging, they prefer fresh meat and will attack large animals and armed humanoids if hungry or their territory is invaded. They tend to operate close enough to civilization to provide themselves with ample prey but not so close as to draw the attention of local militaries. Some ogres keep captives as slaves, many of whom end up as emergency food sources during lean times. Ogres often use crude weapons, though their great strength makes them a danger even if unarmed.

Trolls are a common variant of the normal ogre. Some are functionally identical, differing only in coloration or appearance. Others have the ability to regenerate or cannot bear the sun without turning to stone.

# ORC

## AKA: Greenskins, Orks

Savage, strong, and cunning, the orc is believed by many other races to be evil and corrupt, possibly twisted versions of dwarves, elves, or humans transformed by evil gods or dark magic. This may be true in some settings, while in others orcs are no more inherently evil than any other race. Usually green or gray-skinned with stooped gaits and broad frames, orcs often organize into tribal or clan-based societies ruled by the strongest and smartest among them. Evil mages, powerful supernatural beings, or powerful warlords among their own kind sometimes gather great hordes of orcs to do their bidding.

| ORC | |
|---|---|
| **ABILITIES (FOCUSES)** | |
| 2 | ACCURACY (BOWS) |
| 0 | COMMUNICATION |
| 3 | CONSTITUTION (DRINKING, STAMINA) |
| 0 | DEXTERITY (STEALTH) |
| 2 | FIGHTING (AXES, BLUDGEONS, HEAVY BLADES) |
| 0 | INTELLIGENCE |
| 1 | PERCEPTION |
| 3 | STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION) |
| 1 | WILLPOWER |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 30 | 10 | 5 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE AXE | +4 | 2D6+3 |
| LONGSWORD | +4 | 2D6+3 |

| SPECIAL QUALITIES |
|---|

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Mighty Blow, Skirmish

**TALENTS:** Armor Training (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUP:** Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades

**EQUIPMENT:** Battle Axe or Longsword, Light Mail

| THREAT: MINOR |
|---|

# SERPENTFOLK

## AKA: Lizardmen, Reptile Men, Snakemen

Lizard- or snake-like humanoids, serpentfolk are often humanoids that have survived since prehistoric times in a setting. They usually live in primitive societies in modern times, but often their ancestors built great cities and civilizations that now lie in ruin. Some serpentfolk are magically active, possessing shamanistic magic or mystic powers granted to them by their gods. Typically suspicious, isola-tionist, and driven by their own archaic beliefs and ideologies, they are not usually automatically hostile to other humanoids. However, past conflicts, raids on settlements, and cultural misunderstandings can easily turn them into grave threats to other races. Their unsophisticated nature also leads to a nasty habit of falling into the worship of bizarre and twisted gods, which can make them agents of great evil in certain circumstances.



| SERPENTFOLK | |
|---|---|
| **Abilities (Focuses)** | |
| 2 | **Accuracy (Bite, Bows, Brawling)** |
| 0 | **Communication** |
| 3 | **Constitution (Stamina, Swimming)** |
| 2 | **Dexterity** |
| 3 | **Fighting (Bludgeons, Axes, Spears)** |
| 0 | **Intelligence** |
| 2 | **Perception (Smelling, Tracking)** |
| 3 | **Strength** |
| 2 | **Willpower (Morale)** |

| Speed | Health | Defense | Armor Rating |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | 30 | 12 (14 w/ Shield) | 4 |

| Weapon | Attack Roll | Damage |
|---|---|---|
| Mace | +5 | 2d6+3 |
| Short Bow | +4 | 1d6+3 |
| Spear | +5 | 1d6+6 |
| Bite | +4 | 1d6+3 |

| Special Qualities |
|---|

**Favored Stunts:** Bite (2 SP), Skirmish

**Quick Bite Stunt:** Serpentfolk can deliver a bite attack as a special stunt costing 2 SP. This bite attack must be taken against the same target as the original attack. Doubles on the bite attack roll do not generate more stunt points.

**Scaly Hide:** Serpentfolk have a natural AR of 4.

**Talents:** Scouting (Novice), Weapon and Shield Style (Novice)

**Weapons Groups:** Bows, Axes, Brawling, Bludgeons, Spears

**Equipment:** Mace, Medium Shield, Short Bow, Spear

## Threat: Minor

## CIVILIZED SERPENTFOLK

Not all serpentfolk have fallen so far from the glory of their ancient times. If you want to represent more advanced cultures, like the civilized serpentfolk of the Freeport campaign setting, you can increase their Intelligence to 2 and give them one or two lore focuses. Those cultures may also have traditions of sorcery and/or priestly magic. You can represent such a character by adding mage levels to the base serpentfolk stats or simply adding 30 magic points and two magic talents at Novice or Journeyman degree.

# SPECTRE

Spectres are evil or corrupted spirits who cannot pass on properly to the afterlife. Instead they haunt the dark corners of the world, seeking to torment, terrorize, and destroy the living. Some spectres have particular tasks they are bound to perform or specific prey they prefer. Others simply hate all life and attack any who enter their domains. Spectres of great heroes, master mages, and other important characters will be elite, heroic, or epic threats, often with additional powers relating to their mortal lives.

| SPECTRE | |
| --- | --- |
| **Abilities (Focuses)** | |
| 2 | Accuracy (Brawling) |
| 1 | Communication |
| 2 | Constitution |
| 4 | Dexterity (Stealth) |
| 1 | Fighting (Claw) |
| 2 | Intelligence (Spirit, Entropy) |
| 2 | Perception |
| 0 | Strength |
| **4** | Willpower (Self-Discipline) |

| Speed | Health | Defense | Armor Rating |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 14 (Fly) | 35 | 14 | 0 |

| Weapon | Attack Roll | Damage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Chilling Touch | +4 | 2d6+4 |

| **Special Qualities** |
| --- |

**Favored Stunts:** Dual Strike, Pierce Armor

**Chilling Touch:** The touch of a spectre drains the life force from any living thing, causing 2d6 plus Willpower damage (2d6+4). This attack uses the **Accuracy (Brawling)** and the target's shield bonus is ignored. Beings without a soul, such as raised corpses or golems, take half damage from these attacks.

**Incorporeal:** Spectres are incorporeal, having a tenuous existence in the mortal world. They ignore the effects of terrain. Normally only magical attacks (spells or hits from magic weapons) can harm them, other attacks pass through their forms without effect. A character attacking a spectre can perform a special stunt called Spirit Bane for 3 SP, however. The character then inflicts normal weapon damage but substitutes Willpower for Strength or Perception.

**Terror:** As an attack action, by emitting a terrifying shriek a spectre can cause all targets within 30 yards to experience supernatural dread. Targets must succeed in a **TN 14 Willpower (Courage)** test. All targets who fail must either flee from the spectre or suffer a –2 penalty to all attacks and their Defenses for the rest of the encounter.

## Threat: Moderate

# WALKING DEAD

Corpses animated by necromancy, evil spirits, or some other arcane force, walking dead are nearly mindless reanimated skeletons and corpses. If left to their own devices they will wander in search of living beings to attack, ripping them to shreds or devouring them. If controlled by someone, they will follow commands simply and directly. Not much of a threat individually, they can be extremely dangerous in large numbers. Depending on their specifics of how they were animated, those killed by walking dead may rise as walking dead themselves.

Zombies have become ubiquitous in our culture, so your players are unlikely to have much of a reaction when facing the walking dead. If you want these monsters to have more impact, consider making the zombies NPCs the characters knew. It's one thing to be attacked by an anonymous corpse, but it's quite another to have Eliza, the barmaid you've known for years, try to eat your brains.

## WALKING DEAD

| ABILITIES (FOCUSES) | |
|---|---|
| 0 | ACCURACY |
| –2 | COMMUNICATION |
| 5 | CONSTITUTION |
| –2 | DEXTERITY |
| 1 | FIGHTING |
| –2 | INTELLIGENCE |
| –1 | PERCEPTION |
| 2 | STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION) |
| 1 | WILLPOWER |

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 25 | 8 | 4 |

| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
|---|---|---|
| BITE | +0 | 1D6+2 |
| CLAW | +1 | 1D6+2 |

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Knock Prone, Swarm Tactics (3 SP)

**DEATHLY FORTITUDE:** Walking dead have a natural AR of 4 and do not need to breathe, sleep, rest, eat, or drink normally.

**MINDLESS AGGRESSION:** Walking dead never flee from battle unless commanded, though they can be tricked or manipulated.

**SWARM TACTICS:** Walking dead can perform Swarm Tactics as a special stunt costing 3 SP. This stunt allows any other walking dead adjacent to the target to make an immediate attack. Rolling doubles on these bonus attacks does not generate stunt points. Walking dead that haven't taken their turns yet this round can still take their actions as normal even after benefiting from Swarm Tactics.

### THREAT: MINOR

The statistics here are for animated corpses of peasants, civilians, and other noncombatant NPCs. Walking dead created from the bodies of warriors could have armor, weapons, and retain some of their training and combat skills. Treat such animated corpses as elite, heroic, or epic adversaries and add weapons and armor as necessary.

# SPECIAL POWERS

Some creatures have variants that possess unique or strange abilities. These variations may be unique monsters or represent different breeds of similar creatures. While not every option is detailed here, some special abilities are presented to customize and alter the base monsters provided. For example, adding the Regenerate power to an ogre creates the variant often referred to as a troll. GMs should note that adding powers to a monster will likely increase its Threat Rating.

## ARMORED

The monster's normal Armor Rating is increased by 2.

## AGILE

The monster is exceptionally agile and quick for its type. It has +2 Dexterity and can go prone or stand up as a free action.

## AQUATIC

The monster gains the ability to breathe underwater and can swim equal to its normal Speed. It also suffers no penalties for moving, attacking, or otherwise operating underwater.

## BLENDING

The monster can blend into its surrounding. This gives the monster a +2 bonus to any Dexterity (Stealth) checks based on hiding or avoiding being seen.

## MAGIC RESISTANCE

The monster gains a +2 bonus to resist spells or other magical effects. It possesses an Armor Rating against magical damage equal to its Willpower +2. Such monsters can often not be healed magically.

## MIGHTY

The monster is exceptionally strong for its type. It has +2 Strength and the Might focus. If it already has the Might focus, it now has improved Might (+3 bonus instead of the usual +2).

## REGENERATE

The adversary's flesh knits itself back together even as you endeavor to slay it. The monster can heal Health equal to its Constitution (Minimum 2) as a 2 SP stunt. This stunt may be used multiple times in the same roll if enough SP are available, increasing the healing effect. Wounds of a certain type cannot be healed with Regenerate—this varies depending on the monster but is typically fire or acid-based damage.

## SHADOW

The monster is attuned to the mystical realms of darkness and shadow. It takes half damage from all non-magical attacks and can use the Regenerate and Blending powers in darkness or dim light. In sunlight or other bright light it takes damage normally and all light-based magical attacks do an extra 1d6 damage to it that ignores Armor Rating.

## VULNERABILITY

This isn't a power so much as a special weakness. When attacked with a substance or element to which the monster is vulnerable, the creature takes an additional 1d6 damage and its Armor Rating is halved, or is completely eliminated if the attacker used the Pierce Armor stunt.

## WINGED

The monster gains flying movement equal to its normal speed and can use flying actions.

# REWARDS

The Player Characters risk life and limb on a regular basis and they deserve some reward for their efforts. This is one area that really requires use of your judgment as GM. The type and frequency of rewards you give out sets a tone for the campaign. Treasure, prestige, accomplishment of life goals, magical or temporal power—all these are part of the spectrum of recompense you can offer them for their (presumably) noble deeds. This chapter discusses the various types of rewards and gives some advice on their use. It also includes a selection of magic items for your campaign.

## LEVEL ADVANCEMENT

The most important and most common reward for players is increasing a level, or "leveling up." This represents the way characters hone their abilities and talents over time, learning from their successes and their failures. As characters gain experience through their adventures, they go up in level and this is how they gain new class powers and raise their abilities. Players are responsible for leveling up their characters, but you should help them if they have questions and review their choices so you know what the characters are now capable of.

There are two basic ways for characters to level up: they can earn experience points (XP) from their deeds, or they can be awarded a level advancement directly. Neither way is inherently better. They both have their own advantages and disadvantages.

## LEVEL REWARDS

The easiest option is simply to reward PCs with a level when they do something significant, such as finishing an adventure or achieving a major campaign or personal goal. To exercise this option, don't worry about tracking the details of every encounter. You just award levels as you see fit. This gives you a lot of freedom to control the overall pace of the campaign and it is fast and easy to implement, requiring no XP tracking. However, it can be tricky to work out a balance between stagnating PCs or advancing them too quickly. Also, if you have PCs of different levels, unless you grant lower level PCs extra levels along the way, they'll never catch up to their higher-level companions.

That's essentially all there is to level rewards; they can take some getting used to for GMs and players accustomed to XP-based advancement, but they're fast, plot-driven, and easy.

### EXAMPLE

*Steve has been running a* Fantasy AGE *campaign and the PCs are currently level 2. The last four sessions have been dedicated to an adventure in which the PCs ferreted out a sinister cult that had secretly taken over a nearby town. In the final session, the PCs defeat the cult leaders and liberate the town. This is a major victory for the PCs, so Steve decides this is an appropriate moment to level up the characters. He tells the players to advance their characters to level 3.*

# EXPERIENCE POINT REWARDS

If you prefer, you can control the pace of the campaign with experience point rewards. This requires you to decide on rewards for each encounter and for the players to track their XP individually. It's a bit of bookkeeping but it does let the players have a good sense of when they will level up. They can see exactly how much XP is required to hit the next level, and many players like have concrete numbers to work from.

Guidelines for experience point rewards follow, but you have some latitude in how you apply them. If you are generous with XP, characters will go up levels quickly and gain new class powers regularly. If your rewards are more measured, the characters will have to really work to level up. Each group is different, so there is no "right" pace, but you don't want to frustrate your players by being too stingy or bore them by being overly generous.

The key to handing out experience points is the encounter system. At the end of each play session, even if it's as short as one encounter, review each encounter and rate it based on how it played out. How challenging was this encounter to the party? Did they have to expend resources like money, favors, Health, or magic points to resolve it? After giving the encounter due consideration, assign one of the following ratings and then reward each participating character with the XP indicated on the **Experience Point Rewards** table.

## ROUTINE

Nothing special happened in this encounter. Most everyday scenes fall into this category. Characters don't get XP for things like supply shopping, uneventful travel, or casual conversions.

## EASY

The characters overcame any difficulties quickly and efficiently. They were in little danger of failing and expended few resources to be successful.

## AVERAGE

The characters were not taxed to their utmost, but the encounter was a real challenge. It took some skill to resolve and may have required the expenditure of significant resources.

The characters had a tough time of it. It may have taken significant time and the expenditure of many resources. The characters may have been in mortal peril, and there may even have been character death.

| EXPERIENCE POINT REWARDS | |
|---|---|
| ENCOUNTER | REWARD |
| Routine | 0 XP |
| Easy | 100 XP |
| Average | 250 XP |
| Hard | 400 XP |

## BONUS XP

You may also want to hand out bonus experience points in certain situations. The most appropriate time for bonus XP is at the end of a successfully completed adventure or long term story arc. It's a little extra something to tell the players they've done a good job or accomplished something of note. The size of the award is up to you but it usually shouldn't be more than you give for a hard encounter unless the PCs' achievements are truly remarkable. Similarly, you can grant level rewards for certain milestones or achievements; you can even do this if you're usually awarding XP. This is a bit more of an advanced option than using only one method of level advancement, but it allows for the most finely-tuned control of PC advancement.

Also, some GMs like to give out bonus XP to individual players for good roleplaying, such as staying true to their character's personality through adversity and helping sustain the whole group's enthusiasm. Others do not because it can create squabbling among the players. If you do give out roleplaying awards, it's a good idea to keep it around an Average encounter's worth of XP per player per session.

## REPUTATION

As the Player Characters complete adventures, word of their deeds is likely to spread. As they go up in level and face down larger threats, the chatter will only increase. PCs will find that having a good reputation is a boon to them most of the time. An inn might not have a room available for an unknown adventure, for example, but would certainly find a way to accommodate the warrior that slew the local bandit chief. Through their deeds PCs might also earn flattering nicknames, such as the Sly, Shield-hewer, or Firehand. Consider awarding honorifics like this after heroic actions and impressive stunts are done in front of many witnesses.

## GOAL FULFILLMENT

During character creation each PC should have made a list of goals for his or her character. When you weave these goals into the campaign, that in itself is a reward for the player. When the character achieves the goal, particularly after a long, hard struggle, it will certainly be more meaningful than getting another 100 silver pieces. No matter what the specifics of the main adventure going on at the moment, you should look for ways you can use the PCs' goals as the campaign moves forward. Many goals should be suitable for full adventures in their own right as well.

## TREASURE

Money can be power in *Fantasy AGE,* so treasure is another common reward. You'll want to be careful not to overdo it, though. If the PCs bring home a hoard of coins, it can reduce their motivation to go on further adventures. Of course, wealth attracts unwelcome attention, so treasure can also be the source of adventures as well.

When you want to give treasure as a reward, you can consult the **Treasure Category** table. This provides a rough guideline that you can use or modify as you see fit. The value is given in silver pieces, but the actual treasure can be in other denominations of coins or in the form of gems, jewels, and the like.

| TREASURE CATEGORY | |
|---|---|
| CATEGORY | VALUE |
| Trifling Treasure | 1d6 silver pieces |
| Paltry Treasure | 3d6 silver pieces |
| Middling Treasure | 2d6 x 10 silver pieces |
| Substantial Treasure | 2d6 x 100 silver pieces |
| Abundant Treasure | 4d6 x 100 silver pieces |
| Lavish Treasure | 6d6 x 100 silver pieces |

# MAGIC ITEMS

Perhaps the greatest rewards characters can receive are magic items. They are rare and prized by those lucky enough to have them.

In general there are two broad categories of magic items: temporary and permanent. Temporary items have enchantments that fade over time or are good for a single use. Potions are a good example of temporary items. Since they last for a short time and often use tried and true recipes, they tend to be generic. Permanent items are different; each one is special. As such, permanent items tend to have unique names and histories. If you create new magic items for your campaign, try to make each permanent item unique. It may provide the same bonus as another item, but its origin and appearance should be different.

## RARITY OF MAGIC ITEMS

Magic items come in increasing levels of rarity:

- **COMMON** items are almost always temporary magic, fairly easily made and acquired, and may even be found for sale in some places.

- **UNCOMMON** are generally acquired as treasures or the result of a quest. They're rarely ever offered for sale and, when they are, they tend to be expensive.

- **RARE** items are not often seen and draw attention when they show up. They are almost never offered for sale and are usually acquired from adventures, hidden treasure troves, and the like.

- **LEGENDARY** items are truly one-of-a-kind and a character is lucky to acquire even one over the course of a career. Such items are the subjects of great quests, and many may have sought and failed to find them in the past. A legendary item is worth a king's ransom.

### AVAILABILITY OF MAGIC ITEMS

If you want to adjust the availability of magic items in the game, just shift their rarity up or down a level. For a "high magic" game, common items become very common, almost everyday, items of regular equipment, and even legendary magic items are only rare, and characters might well have more than one. For a "low magic" game, even common items are uncommon and rarely offered for sale, rare items become truly legendary, and legendary items do not even exist—at least so far as anyone has ever seen. They're nothing more than legends.

You can also modify the availability of specific types of magic items based on their benefits (following). You might decide that armor, attack, and damage bonus items have their usual rarity, but that immunity items are high magic and more rare, while talent bonus items do not exist in your game at all, because you don't want items "trumping" the benefits of characters' chosen talents. Changing the availability of various magic items can influence the style of your game by emphasizing the things that are important in it.

# MAGIC ITEM BENEFITS

Magic items can provide a number of benefits. Most items provide only one or two benefits, temporary items in particular usually provide only one. Single use items, due to their limited nature, are typically one class more common than permanent items. For example, an effect that would normally be uncommon would be common in a temporary item.

- **ABILITY BONUS:** While the item is in use, you gain a bonus to a specific ability (and therefore to all tests of that ability, and any secondary traits based on it). A +1 ability bonus is uncommon, +2 is rare, and +3 is legendary.

- **ARMOR BONUS:** While the item is in use, you gain a bonus to your Armor Rating. A +1 bonus is uncommon, +2 is rare, and +3 is legendary. Alternately, this benefit might reduce the armor penalty by 1-3 instead..

- **ATTACK BONUS:** The item grants a bonus on attack rolls. A +1 bonus is uncommon, +2 is rare, and +3 is legendary.

- **DAMAGE BONUS:** The item grants a bonus to damage rolls. A +1 bonus is uncommon, +2 is rare, and +3 is legendary.

- **DEFENSE BONUS:** While the item is in use, you gain a bonus to your Defense. A +1 bonus is uncommon, +2 is rare, and +3 is legendary.

- **FOCUS BONUS:** While the item is in use, you either gain a focus you do not already have, or increase the bonus of a focus you do already have by +1.

- **IMMUNITY:** While using the item, you gain immunity from a specific hazard or effect, such as: one spell arcana, a specific form of damage (such as poison or lightning), a specific hazard (such as disease or demonic possession), and so forth. The GM sets the parameters of the immunity granted by the item.

- **SPELL BONUS:** The item grants you the use of a particular spell you don't already know.

- **STUNT BONUS:** The item grants you the ability to perform a particular stunt at a reduced cost in Stunt Points, or to perform a unique stunt normally unavailable to you.

- **TALENT BONUS:** When in use, the item grants you the benefits of a talent you do not already have (usually at the Novice level) or an additional level in a talent you already do have, up to Master level.

- **UNIQUE BONUS:** This is a catch-all category for benefits not fitting into any of the previous categories, chosen and defined by the GM for a particular item. Use the guidelines of the other magic item benefits to set the effect and define its rarity, although items with a unique bonus are uncommon, at least.

## USING MAGIC ITEMS

A magic item generally requires an Activate action to use, although, once activated some items continue providing their bonuses until they are specifically deactivated. This is particularly the case for magic items that are worn, such as armor or items or clothing or jewelry; the Activate action is the process of putting the item on, and it is deactivated when

it is removed. Likewise, items such as potions are activated by drinking them (an Activate action) and then have their effect, which may last for a predetermined amount of time.

Other magic items, particularly magic weapons, are activated by taking a melee or Ranged Attack action with the item. Magic items granting a spell bonus are generally activated with a Cast action.

## MAGIC ITEM RESTRICTIONS

Some magic items have restrictions on their use, including the following.

- **ABILITY, TALENT, OR CLASS:** If an item requires a particular talent or training to use, such as a type of armor or weapon, characters without the necessary talent cannot use the item effectively. Likewise, if the item grants a bonus to a trait the character does not have, such as a class-specific talent or stunt, it is ineffective for that character. Some magic items granting spell bonuses require users be at least capable of casting that spell, whether they know the spell or not.

- **BENEFIT THRESHOLD:** Some items have a threshold of skill the item's user must meet in order to benefit from some or all of the effects of the item. This reflects that a Novice does not have the necessary understanding to wield the item effectively. This threshold is expressed as a number that describes the unmodified test bonus (threshold = ability bonus + focus bonus) the user must have to gain the benefits of the item. For example, an item requiring great martial prowess might have a threshold of 5, requiring at least a Strength of 3 and a focus in the appropriate weapon group, while an item requiring a measure of arcane might could have a threshold of 4, met by a combination of Intelligence and an arcana focus.

- **BACKGROUND REQUIREMENT:** Additionally, some magic items may have restrictions as a part of their nature or enchantment, limiting them to users of a particular background. So a dwarf-made hammer or axe, for example, might only exhibit its bonuses in the hands of a dwarf, while a holy weapon or item could only function for a devout believer in a particular faith, and so forth. These restrictions are imposed as the GM sees fit based on the nature and description of the magic item.

## TEMPORARY MAGIC ITEMS

| ARCANE LIGHT | COMMON |
|---|---|

A palm sized crystal, an arcane light glows as brightly as a torch with an Activate action and a touch, and can be extinguished with an Activate action as well. They are often mounted in lantern housings or torch holders, or at the end of a staff or walking stick. An arcane light lasts for 28 days of continual use before its enchantment dims and fades altogether.

| ARCANE TENT | COMMON |
|---|---|

When this small crystal orb is planted firmly on the ground and an Activate action is used to invoke its magic, it provides the following benefits. The crystal glows, providing light and warmth equivalent to a campfire, although the crystal itself is safe to touch and does not burn. An invisible dome 10 feet high at the center and 10 feet in radius surrounds the crystal; this keeps out precipitation, wind, and small insects and other vermin. The dome also makes the light from the crystal invisible to those standing outside of it, and provides shade to those within it, although they can see out through the dome. Lastly, the light of the crystal pulsates for 5 seconds when any creature larger than a cat comes within 50 feet of the dome. An arcane tent can be activated 30 times for up to 8 hours each time before its magic is exhausted. The arcane tent can be dismissed back to the crystal with an Activate action.

| ARROW OF ACCURACY | UNCOMMON |
|---|---|

This arrow (or crossbow bolt, sling stone, or other missile) is enchanted for greater accuracy. The character who fires an arrow of accuracy gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll. The arrow is good for only one attack.

| ARROW OF PIERCING | UNCOMMON |
|---|---|

This arrow (or crossbow bolt, sling stone, or other missile) magically penetrates armor. An attack from this arrow halves the target's Armor Rating (rounded down). The arrow is good for only one attack.

| ARROW OF WOUNDING | UNCOMMON |
|---|---|

This arrow (or crossbow bolt, sling stone, or other missile) is enchanted to inflict more damage. The character who fires an arrow of wounding gains a +2 bonus to the damage roll. The arrow is good for only one attack.

| HEALING POTION | COMMON |
|---|---|

This elixir of healing herbs is infused with magic. A character who imbibes the potion as an Activate action immediately regains 3d6 + Con in Health. This does not provide extra Health, it merely restores that which has been lost.

## MAGE'S ELIXIR                                    COMMON

This potion is a fizzy liquid that seems to almost glow with an inner light. A character who drinks it as an Activate action immediately regains 1d6 + Willpower Magic Points. If the character has no Magic Points, the potion has no effect. The potion does not provide extra MP, it only restores those expended.

## POTION OF MIGHT                                  UNCOMMON

Consume this spicy elixir with an Activate action and feel power thundering through your veins. You gain a +2 bonus to damage with all melee attacks for one minute after drinking the potion.

## RESTORATIVE BALM                                 UNCOMMON

This jar of restorative herbal ointment is infused with healing magic. Applying it as an Activate action immediately restores 6d6 + Con in lost Health. A single application of restorative balm can be used in smaller amounts, if desired—either two restoring 3d6 Health each, or three restoring 2d6 Health each. A jar usually contains 1d6 applications when found.

## SPELL STONE                                      COMMON

This small precious or semi-precious stone or crystal contains or stores a particular spell. If you are a mage, while touching the stone, you can use the Cast action to cast the spell it contains as if you know it, with no Magic Point cost (the energy of the spell is contained in the item). Once the stored spell has been cast, it cannot be used again, although you can recharge a spell stone by casting the spell it is meant to hold upon it while the stone is empty.

## WARDING AMULET                                   UNCOMMON

This protective amulet is inscribed with arcane symbols and worn close to the skin, often on a necklace, ring, or charm bracelet. A warding amulet provides immunity to one spell arcana. A spell from the arcana automatically has no effect on the amulet's wearer. After stopping a single spell, the amulet breaks and is no longer effective. Rare (and more potent) amulets stop from two to six total spells before becoming ineffective.



## WARDING DUST                                     UNCOMMON

Usually found in sealed jars or paper packets, this glittering powder made from a combination of arcane ingredients can create a barrier against magic. One packet of warding dust is enough to create a line 10 feet in length (or a circle roughly 3 feet in diameter, enough for a person to stand inside) as a major action. A mage's casting roll must be 20+ to successfully cast a spell across a line of warding dust. On a failed test, the spell fizzles, just like a failed spellcasting test. Additionally, incorporeal creatures cannot cross the line of dust or use their powers on any target on the other side of it. Neither magic nor incorporeal creatures can move or affect the line of dust itself, although mundane things can brush or blow it away normally. Warding dust lasts for up to 1 hour.

## WAR PAINT                                        COMMON

If used to paint and decorate the face and body before battle, these magical pigments filled with protective enchantments provide a +1 bonus to Armor Rating with no additional armor penalty. The bonus lasts until the war paint is washed off, usually the length of a single battle, although careful preservation could allow it to last longer.

# PERMANENT MAGIC ITEMS

## ADEPT'S WAND                                     UNCOMMON

This slim baton of carved and polished wood, ivory, bone, or even metal is magically aligned with a particular arcana of magic. If you are a mage wielding an adept's wand, you gain +1 Spellpower with all spells of its aligned arcana.

## DRAGONWALL                                       LEGENDARY

A medium kite-shaped shield depicting the head of a roaring dragon, Dragonwall's magic makes it indestructible by ordinary means. It provides a magical +2 bonus to the wielder's Armor Rating and additionally makes the wielder immune to the fiery breath of dragons.

## ELVEN MAIL                                       RARE

This fine suit of chain mail is as light as gossamer, but as protective as regular mail, having an Armor Rating of 5, but no armor penalty. It is light enough to wear under ordinary clothing without being noticeable.

## HELM OF INVISIBILITY                             RARE

This is an ornate metal helm to accompany a suit of mail. While you are wearing it, a helm of invisibility grants you the power to become invisible at will as an Activate action. You remain invisible until you take an attack or Cast action, whereupon you immediately become visible. You cannot take an Activate action to become invisible again until the beginning of your next turn.

## HUNTER'S BOW                                     RARE

Magical bows of this sort were originally crafted by the elves. When wielding a hunter's bow, if you take an Aim action, the subsequent attack roll receives a +3 bonus rather than the

usual +1 bonus. You can also perform the Lightning Attack stunt with the bow for only 2 SP.

## MAGE'S FONT                 UNCOMMON

A magical precious or semi-precious gem able to fit easily into the palm of the hand, a mage's font is infused with pure arcane energy. A mage's font can contain up to 20 Magic Points, though one usually contains only 3d6 when found. If you are a mage holding a font, you can draw upon it with an Activate action, using the stone's Magic Points to fuel a spell, rather than your own. Any excess over the amount contained in the font comes from your Magic Points, as usual. A mage holding a mage's font can also infuse Magic Points into it with an Activate action, refilling the font up to a maximum of 20, using the mage's available MP. Magic Points infused into a font remain there until used.

## MAGISTER STAFF                 LEGENDARY

The Magister or "Master" Staff is a legendary item of power, wielded by the mightiest of mages. It is a gnarled and polished wooden staff some six feet in length, topped with a crystal or gemstone, and has the following properties: The gem acts as both a mage's font (storing up to 20 Magic Points) and an arcane light with an unlimited duration. The staff extends the mage's touch, such that touching something with the staff counts as touching it with a hand for the purposes of spell-casting. While wielding the staff, a mage gains a +2 bonus to Spellpower. Used as a striking weapon, the Magister's Staff does 2d6 damage, and 1 point of its damage is penetrating.

## ROGUE'S PURSE                  RARE

This ordinary looking battered leather satchel contains potent magic, making it larger on the inside than the outside. Although only about the size of a backpack, it can hold up to 500 pounds of cargo, while never weighing more than one-twentieth of the weight it contains. Additionally, you can withdraw an item contained in the purse with an Activate action by placing your hand inside it. The desired item always comes to hand (provided it is contained within).

## SCOUT'S BOOTS                 UNCOMMON

Magical leather boots or shoes of dark leather, this footwear makes you impossible to track, as you leave no footprints or other traces of your passage. Additionally, you gain a +2 bonus to **Strength (Climbing)** and **Constitution (Running)** tests.

## SCRYING STONE                  RARE

These enchanted crystals range from fist- to head-sized. They are sometimes faceted, rough, and cloudy, and sometimes polished and perfectly clear. A mage whose Intelligence + Arcane Lore focus is 4 or higher can use a scrying stone to view distant places, seeing and hearing all that occurs there, as if physically present. You can specify a place to view based on general description, such as "Near the ruins on Dunmara's Isle" or "At the entrance to the Swalegate." Those observed by means of a scrying stone can make a **Perception (Empathy)** test vs. a TN of 10 + the scrying mage's **Intelligence (Arcane Lore)**. If they succeed, they have a powerful sense of being watched. A scrying stone cannot view into a place warded against magic, including anywhere with all of the entrances sealed with warding dust.

## SHADOW CLOAK                 UNCOMMON

Magically woven of silk and shadow, this dark cloak grants its wearer a +2 bonus on **Dexterity (Stealth)** tests while it is worn with the hood draw up.

## THUNDER AXE                  LEGENDARY

An ancient creation of dwarf master smiths, the Thunder Axe is a heavy, double-bladed battle-axe, etched with runes of thunder and lightning. Its fine heft, balance, and perfect sharpness grant a wielder a +2 bonus on attack rolls and a +2 bonus on damage rolled with the weapon. In the hands of a dwarf whose Strength + Axes focus is 4 or higher, the axe crackles with blue-white lightning around its blades. Its wielder can perform the Knock Prone stunt for only 1 SP and the Lighting Attack stunt for only 2 SP. The wielder can throw the axe as if it were a throwing axe, and it returns to the wielder's hand. Additionally, the user can perform the special stunt Axe Storm for 4 SP. With a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder, the Thunder Axe inflicts an extra 1d6 damage and all of its damage for the attack is penetrating.

## WYRMSLAYER                  LEGENDARY

Wyrmslayer is a longsword featuring a gilded hilt in the shape of a dragon's neck, with the head as the pommel and spreading wings as its cross-guard. The blade provides a +2 bonus on attack rolls, which increases to +3 against dragons and dragon-like creatures. Additionally, Wyrmslayer inflicts +1d6 damage to dragons and dragon-like creatures and allows its wielder to perform the Pierce Armor and Mighty Blow stunts against them at a cost of only 1 SP each. Lastly, Wyrmslayer's blade glows with a fiery reddish light when a true dragon is within a mile of it, the light growing in proportion to the closeness of the beast: from a faint glimmer to as bright as a lantern within 100 feet.

# THE CAMPAIGN SETTING

Much of this rulebook is dedicated to the creation and development of the Player Characters. Their histories, personalities, and abilities take center stage. If you think about your campaign as a movie or TV show, the players are your cast and the PCs the characters they portray. Those characters are not islands, however. They have a native environment—a place to live and have adventures. The PCs' world is known as a campaign setting and it is a crucial ingredient in your game. This chapter gives you some advice on picking or creating your world.

## USING A PRE-BUILT SETTING

There are many roleplaying game settings that already exist and can be easily adapted for use with *Fantasy AGE*. The easiest way to get started is simply to pick one of these that most appeals to you and use it. The advantage is that a lot of work has been done for you already. There are likely useful books and maps with ready to go setting material, and that makes planning a campaign a simpler affair. Some existing campaign settings are system neutral (they aren't designed for any particular game system, in other words). Others are designed to be used with a specific game system, but it is often the case that gamers will like a setting but want to use different rules than those provided (because as gamers we are finicky and love to tinker!).

## FREEPORT

Green Ronin's Freeport setting is an example of both of these styles. Freeport is a city setting that mixes classic fantasy elements with piracy and Lovecraftian horror. It was originally designed as a setting for the *d20 System.* Later, Green Ronin published a system neutral sourcebook called *The Pirate's Guide to Freeport* (2007), which could be used with any fantasy RPG and included expanded world information. In 2015 a new sourcebook called *Freeport: The City of Adventure* was published that brought it back to its d20 roots by pairing it with the *Pathfinder* RPG. If you want to use Freeport with *Fantasy AGE,* you thus have two options. You can get *The Pirate's Guide to Freeport,* which is a pure setting book but slightly outdated. Alternately, you can get *Freeport: The City of Adventure,* which has more information and a full length adventure but also a bunch of *Pathfinder*-specific rules material that you would not need for your *Fantasy AGE* campaign.

## INSPIRATIONAL HISTORY

Another option is to use an alternate history as your setting. Assuming you want to feature magic in the campaign (because this is *Fantasy AGE,* not *Historical AGE*), this is usually a matter of picking a historical period you like and adding magic to it. This gives you a lot of history books and atlases to draw inspiration and campaign details from. The downside is that those were not written with roleplaying games in mind, so they are not as user-friendly as purpose-

written campaign settings. There are some RPG books that turn historical periods into campaign settings and those can be quite useful. Green Ronin published a book in 2003 called *Testament,* for example, which was a great resource for those who wanted to run RPG campaigns set in the ancient world.

Whichever world you pick, you will still have some customizing to do. You'll need to decide exactly where the campaign starts, create needed NPCs and locations that don't exist already, and just generally make it your own. You will likely need to create game stats for various characters and monsters as well. Much of the advice presented later in this chapter applies when customizing a pre-built setting too, so be sure to look that over even if you aren't creating your own world.

# BUILDING A SETTING

If you don't want to use an existing RPG campaign setting, that means you have to adapt or build your own. This may seem daunting, but it can be fun and rewarding. There's a reason there are so many published worlds out there. Many began as the designer's home campaign setting, and they created so much info they decided to publish it.

There are many ways to build a world for your *Fantasy AGE* campaigns. The five most popular are covered here, along with the advantages and disadvantages of each.

## ADAPT A FICTIONAL WORLD

One way to create a world for your *Fantasy AGE* games is to adapt one that already exists in fiction (novels, comics, movies, etc.). PCs can take the roles of heroes in an established setting with lots of backstory and history already in place. This approach allows players and GMs familiar with the setting to jump right in and play, but it has its downsides as well. Players who aren't as familiar with the source material might feel left out or confused, and the GM will likely have to do a fair amount of work adapting monsters and some rules to fit the fictional world they're using.

## EXAMPLE

*After discussing with his players what they're interested in playing, Jack decides to base his Fantasy AGE game on the legends of King Arthur, in particular as presented in Le Morte D'Arthur by Thomas Mallory. The game will be set in mythical England during Arthur's rise, reign, and fall with the PCs being important knights, nobles, and other heroes. This decided, he looks to create Arthurian-appropriate monsters and NPCs for the first session.*

### PROS

- Already established and fleshed out.
- More widely known than other worlds.
- Players can get familiar with the setting by reading or watching the source material.
- PCs get to interact with favorite characters from the setting.

### CONS

- Some mechanics and rules customization likely required.
- Players might feel as if their heroes aren't important to a setting where many big events are already resolved.
- The setting may limit some character options.
- Only familiar to those who know the source material.

# CREATE YOUR OWN SETTING

Instead of using an existing setting, GMs can go completely the other way and create their own world from scratch. These settings allow for maximum customization and creative freedom, but they can be a lot of work. At the very least, the GM must have a solid concept and fleshed out locations for several adventures before play starts. Players will find this approach both helpful and challenging: everyone is on the same level of familiarity with the setting but they also won't know anything the GM doesn't tell them.

## EXAMPLE

*Steve has decided to create his own game world completely from scratch. He envisions a fairly standard "humans, elves, and dwarves" fantasy kingdom, but one whose cultures and traditions are mostly drawn from non-European sources. He writes up some notes and details various important nations, creatures, deities, and historical events in the world. He also creates some important NPCs and influential institutions that the PCs can interact with in their first adventures. He doesn't necessarily fill in every possible setting element right now, but he still has a sizable chunk of the world developed before the first game.*

### PROS

- Total control over the elements and content.
- Able to tailor the setting to the interests of GM and players.
- All the players are on an equal playing field when it comes to setting knowledge.
- It can be really fun to make your own world.

- A lot more work required than other options.
- Runs the risk of filling in the setting too much and making it hard for PCs to find their own place in it.
- You have to write or otherwise record important setting elements for the players to enjoy and effectively play in the world.
- Since no one knows the setting outside the Game Master and their players, it's harder to get effective help if stuck for ideas.

# COLLABORATIVE WORLD BUILDING

Collaborative world building is a process where the Game Master and the players work together to build a unique setting. This can be fun and fulfilling, but it requires cooperation and coordination beyond simply getting together and playing. Collaborative worlds can also be disjointed or lead to disagreements if players want vastly different things from the game setting. Generally, the best way to handle creating a world in this fashion is to have a "world building" session where the GM guides the players through creating the major elements of the setting. Email or other electronic communication can be used to assist in this process. In many cases, the setting will be filled out more through play and GMs going this route may wish to come up with a way for players to define or suggest new setting elements during or after game sessions.

### EXAMPLE

*Nicole wants to run a* Fantasy AGE *game in an original setting but doesn't have the time or inclination to flesh out everything herself. She gathers the players together and asks them what they'd like to see in a fantasy world. Everyone contributes their ideas, discussing which ones work together and which ones don't. After a few hours of brainstorming and note-taking, Nicole has enough details to begin to plan her first adventure in a world that includes pirate kingdoms, lost cities and tombs filled with ancient treasures, an army of demon-worshipping birdmen, and a special wood that can be used to construct ships that can fly.*

### PROS

- Everyone gets to inject the elements of the setting most exciting or important to them
- Everyone has some familiarity with the world created
- Increased diversity of outlooks and ideas.
- Less work for the Game Master.

### CONS

- Can be challenging to coordinate
- "Too many cooks" can weaken the world
- Players who come to the group later can feel left out, since they are not as connected to the setting.
- Some players may not be interested in world building.

# IMPROVISED EVOLUTION

With this method, a GM comes up with a bare bones starting point and develops the rest of the setting as play goes. Much of the setting doesn't exist until the characters and their adventures need to interact with it. Such games often begin in a single village or region created by the GM, who then expands and adapts based on what the group enjoys the most. A group who wants to wander around and fight monsters could see the setting grow into a collection of troubled villages and towns, while another group might delve deep into the intrigue and politics of one region.

### EXAMPLE

*Jamie has agreed to run a* Fantasy AGE *game on short notice. He creates a small village that all the PCs grew up in that will form the basis for the first adventure, as well as a threat in the form of a band of goblins led by an evil mage. He doesn't have much other information about the game world except some broad concepts. During the adventure, a player asks about nearby towns. Jamie fills in these details on the fly, mentioning the provincial capital is five days ride away. Once the PCs defeat the goblins and capture the mage, they decide to turn their prisoner over to the authorities at the capital. Jamie begins to prepare the next adventure by filling in some details about the capital and important groups and NPCs the group will encounter there.*

### PROS

- Easy to get started.
- Can adapt easily to new ideas or adventure concepts.
- Easy to add elements that GMs and players want to see.
- Can build world in response to player questions and PC actions, focusing on where they're interested.

### CONS

- Can feel inconsistent or incomplete.
- Requires keeping good records of improvised changes and additions to prevent inconsistencies.
- Often harder to keep a thematic focus in the setting by inserting cool ideas without considering if they fit well overall.
- Unless recorded somehow, can be confusing for new players who haven't seen the setting evolve through play.

# MIX AND MATCH

There is no one true way to design a world. Some of the best and most rewarding settings to play in are created by mixing the four methods described earlier and using them to create something fun and unique. A GM might take an existing setting and add a new region there that was never previously described. Or a world might be built collaboratively, but improvised by the GM and players as they go. In the end, do whatever works best for you and your group and don't worry about following an exact process if that's not working as you want. Note that mixing and matching world building methods will introduce the strengths and weaknesses of each method, but in smaller proportions.

Some groups engaging in collaborative world building can simply sit down and hash out the major game world details without any need for special processes or procedures. Others will want or need some sort of structure to keep world building sessions from breaking down into confusion or chaos.

One of the easiest ways to organize a collaborative world building session is to give all the players a number of points and have them assign these points to things they want to include. The number of points doesn't matter, though too many runs the risk of *a lot* of fiddly world elements assigned a few points each. The GM can have points as well, or simply fill in whatever the players don't.

Using this method, the more points someone assigns to a part of the world, the more say they have in how it develops and how important it is in the game world, but the less say they'll have in other elements of the world where they assigned fewer or no points. For example, a player with 5 points to assign might put 3 points into "undead former heroes from long ago" being a major threat in the world, and split their remaining 2 between two fun but less important ideas. Also, if all the players and GM agree on a setting element, no one should have to assign points to it. If everyone wants it then it's clearly something you should be doing.

*Jon is creating a new world for his weekly* Fantasy AGE *group. He decides he wants to run something in a popular fantasy novel series he knows the whole group enjoys. However, he doesn't want to have to worry about competing with his players for setting knowledge or being bound to following the series' plot too closely. He thus sets the campaign on a continent across the sea from where the main action of the novels occurs. Then he fills this continent with his own creations and history, taking inspiration from the novels in terms of style and world-wide phenomena.*

### PROS

- All of the advantages of the component methods, but on a smaller scale.

### CONS

- All of the disadvantages of the component methods, but on a smaller scale.

# GOOD RULES OF WORLD BUILDING

The following rules and guidelines are general advice to consider for wherever the game is set. They cover most of the common setting related pitfalls and problems that can interfere with fun play and fulfilling campaign development.

## STEAL FROM THE BEST

Originality is great. It's also at times greatly overrated. Derivation and familiarity provides context for GMs and players alike and classic character types, plots, monsters, and concepts are classics for a reason. This isn't to say you should rip off something from a book, movie, or TV show completely — though you can. However, taking a popular or well-known concept and using it for inspiration for your own creations in a game world often appeals to fans of the original and makes it easier to populate a setting than insisting that every part be completely original — an arguably impossible goal anyway.

## EXAMPLE

*Pressed for a fun adventure for this week's game, Nicole borrows the plot of the Akira Kurosawa film The Seven Samurai, and sends the PCs to a village beset by a marauding horde of bandits. The villagers don't have much in the way of rewards to offer, but they are doomed without the PCs' help. This provides the PCs an opportunity to grow their reputation as defenders of the weak and as powerful heroes capable of defeating a force many times their size.*

## BE NOVEL

Even if using an established and well-defined setting, it's good to mix things up. A new monster or unique threat can spice up the campaign and shake up games that have fallen into routine. Taking an established group or character and giving them a new goal or direction can lead to new campaign arcs and provide opportunities for PCs to prevent or enable significant changes to the world.

## EXAMPLE

*While running in his established setting based on Arthurian legends, Jack feels the campaign's adversaries are getting stale with too many robber knights and Saxon raiding parties. Having recently re-watched Jaws, he creates an adventure where the PCs are attacked at sea by a gigantic shark-like beast while escorting an important dignitary to broker a peace with the Saxons. This freshens up the campaign with both a memorable encounter and a chance for the PCs to turn an overused enemy into a new ally.*

## DON'T BE NOVEL FOR ITS OWN SAKE

It's great to do something fresh or different with a world. However, take care you aren't being different just to be different. Making a strange monster or NPC with a unique power or role can be fun and surprising, but it can also disrupt play if this special element has no purpose in the world. This can become even more of a problem if the special or unique element involves powers or abilities the PCs might wish to have for themselves.

## EXAMPLE

*Having recently watched a lot of British science fiction television, Joe thinks it would be cool to give an eccentric NPC wizard the ability to travel through time. However, Joe quickly realizes that he doesn't have a particular adventure or encounter that requires time travel and is concerned that giving such a power to an NPC might make the PCs feel like guest stars in their own game, so he shelves the idea for use in a more appropriate campaign.*

## BE FAIR AND CONSISTENT

When adding elements to a world, make sure you aren't hurting a particular type of PC or changing an established and accepted part of the setting in ways that will turn off your players. You should be placing new challenges in the group's way, but these changes should make sense within the setting and be the result of logical actions and not your whims. Also, don't be afraid to change established parts of the setting if you later discover they accidentally create inconsistencies or frustration for the players.

## EXAMPLE

*Chris adds an order of knights to his world who go into battle riding great bear-like creatures called Ursuks. When a PC later earns the opportunity to join this organization, Chris sets up an adventure where the PC acquires and trains her own Ursuk mount. This might make certain adventures or encounters easier for this PC in the future, but to do otherwise would create a situation where NPCs in the same position as the PCs have access to cool things the PCs don't.*

## DON'T OVERPOPULATE

Everyone needs room to work. If you fill every corner of the world with NPCs, threats, and groups that already have an established and functioning system, there's no place for the PCs to come in and shake things up or make a difference. For a world to need adventurers and heroes like the PCs, there should be places that are lacking such characters and desperately need them. If you find out you've overpopulated or developed a region of the world, consider a calamity or crisis that disrupts the status quo and requires PC intervention.

## EXAMPLE

*Steve realizes that he overdid his development of the Machiavellian-style intrigue city-state of Kota-Pedang in his latest campaign. There are too many checks, balances, and power brokers for the players to keep track of, and logically it's very hard for the PCs to gain a foothold in the city with so many forces levied against them. Needing to thin the ranks of NPCs and wanting to tie it to a cool adventure, Steve crafts an adventure where one of the more bloodthirsty factions in the city pushes to eliminate various rivals through a string of assassinations. The PCs will have an opportunity to help those targets they want to save and space will be created for them to grow and expand.*

## SAVE YOUR HITS

Keep track of the world elements your players and their PCs love and keep using them. These can be major NPCs, monsters, and organizations, but they can also be small but colorful additions to your world the PCs come to care about. A favorite minor NPC or location can become a valuable source of roleplaying opportunities. A recurring villain the PCs love to hate can fuel many adventures. Most groups will be at least as inclined to help a beloved old friend as an important stranger they don't know.

## EXAMPLE

*After watching a couple pirate movies, Nicole introduces Captain Kate Blackmoon, a tough young smuggler with a crew of rough and tumble rogues, during an adventure. The PCs react well to the NPCs, roleplaying with them enthusiastically during the adventure. Taking note, Nicole makes sure to have Captain Kate and her crew available the next time the PCs need to travel by sea or smuggle something into a forbidden area.*

## BURY YOUR BOMBS

On the other hand, pay attention when part of the world just doesn't interest your players or their PCs. You might think that a group would love to oppose an evil warlord but if they all decide they just find the guy boring and want to leave the area it might be best to let them. This might result in occasionally scrapping or reworking an encounter, adventure, or even an entire campaign arc, but doing so when necessary increases player investment and keeps everyone having fun. Forcing your players into fighting battles with stakes they haven't bought into is just going to leave everyone unfulfilled. Note that this doesn't mean getting rid of tough or occasionally frustratingly antagonists—just the ones no one wants to put the effort into defeating.

## EXAMPLE

*Despite thinking that his PCs would "love to hate" Bulgrok, the demon-worshipping Orc warlord he introduced last session, Jon discovers that nobody in his group is all that excited about the prospect of facing down Bulgrok and his horde, preferring instead to look into rumors of magical influence among the local nobles. Taking note, Jon quietly pushes the villain to the side and tries to again with Ninaria, a sultry sorceress who favors brains over brawn.*

## IT NEVER HURTS TO ASK

Even if you're designing the whole world yourself, it can sometimes be useful to get a fresh perspective. Even if you don't want to consult with your players to avoid spoiling them on some part of the setting, you can ask others to help you come up with cool ideas. Whether it's an old gaming buddy who's too busy to play right now or the posters on an online message board, you can usually find someone willing to provide some new ideas or a fresh perspective. Not every idea may be to your taste, but even ideas you don't like might help spark those you do.

*Steve finds himself stuck for ideas involving some recently discovered lost elven kingdoms in his setting, which he plans to introduce in an adventure soon. He knows he wants them to be mountain-dwelling and be skilled with magic, but he's not sure about their government or religious structure. He puts up a thread on Green Ronin's AGE System message boards asking for input. One of the posters there suggests modeling these elves after the Tibetan Empire circa 7th Century AD. Thinking this sounds like an awesome idea he hasn't seen before, Steve does a bit of research and is soon ready to go for next session.*

## RECYCLING IS GOOD FOR YOUR ENVIRONMENT

While you don't want to overuse anything, using certain monsters, groups, and organizations across multiple adventures gives your world a sense of continuity and permanency. Variants, offshoots, and new breeds of existing creatures and institutions can also be useful in this regard, making the world seem diverse, organic, and yet somewhat familiar. This practice also benefits GMs, who otherwise have to come up with brand new creations constantly. While this can be fun, it is also time-consuming and unnecessary. Save your energy for really dynamic and fun new creations while still getting use out of old favorites. Also, building off of existing elements gives a sense of history, evolution, and ecology, making your game world seem more alive and developed.

## EXAMPLE

*Needing a "dragon like" threat for an upcoming adventure, Jaime decides his best approach is to just use the Scandinavian mythology-inspired linnorm monsters he's already introduced—monsters the PCs have encountered before and will immediately consider a serious adversary. He takes the basic stats he's created for this giant serpent monster and alters it a bit to make a new variant breed of the creature. This not only will provide a few surprises for the PCs, but it also suggests many such linnorm breeds could exist throughout the world—an idea that will no doubt comfort the PCs not at all.*

## IF IT'S NOT FUN, THERE'S NO POINT

Fictional worlds and ecosystems aren't like real ones. They won't fall apart if every little part of the world isn't defined.

Thus, if creating part of the world becomes a slog and none of the players or their PCs are going to enjoy interacting with that aspect of the setting, just skip it and move on. Focus on fleshing out the setting in ways that are fun for you and the group. If you have a detail oriented group, you'll need more to keep them entertained, but even here you can focus on the types of details that truly engage and entertain. GMing can be hard work, but the payment for it is fun for you and your group. If you're not enjoying part of it, move on to a part you like.

## EXAMPLE

*After watching a documentary on Adam Smith, Joe decides to work out the economic systems in place in his fantasy world. He spends a few hours working out the various coins and detailing some of the merchant guilds and their leaders. About that time he stops, realizing that it's unlikely the PCs will interact much more deeply with the economics of the setting. The work he's done will add some nice depth to his setting, but anything more would likely get boring. He moves on to something else.*

## FOCUS ON THINGS THAT TOUCH THE PCS

Think of a fantasy world like another character in your game. Where it interacts and interfaces with the PCs, and to a lesser extent important NPCs, is the best place to focus world building efforts. It's not a very effective use of game prep time and energy to spend days working up the complex ecology of a continent in you world, if the PCs will never travel to it. Such development can be personally interesting and fun for the GM, but the major parts of the world everyone is going to care about are the parts that their PCs see, fight, talk to, and otherwise interact with.

## EXAMPLE

*Jack's Arthurian fantasy world has been focused on courtly affairs, knights and lords in conflict, and major wars. He's developed a lot of material on the famous knights and nobles in the world. He's also introduced many monsters and threats for the PCs to fight. However, he hasn't bothered to develop much of the seedier side of his world— bandits, criminal organizations, and similar elements. He may end up doing so if the PCs are disgraced, exiled, or forced to pose as criminals and bandits for an adventure. However, for now he sticks to developing the characters, locations, organizations, and events his group interacts with frequently.*

# ADVENTURE IN HIGHFALLS SWALE

<span style="font-variant: small-caps;">F</span>*antasy AGE* provides a lot of tools for realizing your own setting, but the process of creating your own adventure world can be a daunting one. There are so many choices to make, where do you even start? This chapter provides a self-contained setting called Highfalls Swale that's easy to use, and an introductory adventure called *Choosing Night* set there. This gives you a quick way to start a *Fantasy AGE* game, and Highfalls Swale can be easily worked into many existing settings, or expanded outward if you want to make your own. We hope this will give you the jumping-off point you need for your own *Fantasy AGE* campaign.

## HIGHFALLS SWALE

Situated two or more weeks travel from the nearest civilized lands, Highfalls Swale is a deep valley tucked away in the Inundar mountain range. Surrounded by high cliffs, Highfalls Swale gets its name from the many streams and rivers flowing into it. There are four large waterfalls, and any number of smaller cascades tumbling down the cliff faces into the isolated valley. The Swale itself extends some twelve miles across.

Although Highfalls Swale has been inhabited for hundreds of years, only its northern and western portions are cultivated. Small towns are scattered through the Swale, and its people live simply, farming, logging, and fishing the lakes and rivers. Swalefolk are reclusive and somewhat suspicious of strangers, but they take the responsibility of hospitality seriously.

## SWALEGATE

The entry to Highfalls Swale is guarded by Swalegate, a great stone wall some sixty feet high. In its center is Swalegate Keep, a small three-story defensive structure that spans the Old Road. The Old Road continues directly through the keep. Its ground story is a great tunnel, as wide as the Old Road itself, with sturdy portcullises on either end of it. Wagons coming or going with goods to trade are taxed at the gate, and other travelers are taxed a small gate fee as well.

Those who travel in and out of the Swale regularly are known to the keep's guardians, while strangers new to the Swale are detained at the gate for questioning by the captain of the watch, accompanied by a scribe who takes meticulous notes.

The walls themselves are anchored into the cliffs bracketing the passage into the Swale. A set of stairs is cut into the cliff-faces, extending some two hundred feet up. Crowning the cliff-tops on either side of the wall is a watch-tower, where watchmen take three-day rotations before the arduous climb back down.

## ROAD'S END

Road's End is, properly speaking, the name of the keep at the heart of this community, but it is also applied to the town that has grown up around it. Road's End is the largest town in the Swale, and a trading hub for merchants. Most visitors don't see any need to go further into the Swale than Road's

There are a few notable events in the history of the Highfalls Swale and its people, summarized here.

**THE COMING OF DUNMARA (500 YEARS AGO):** The sorceress Dunmara found the valley and built her tower as a secluded sanctuary. Her willingness to protect others with her powerful magic brought settlers into the valley. Dunmara disappeared mysteriously, leaving the ruins of her tower behind on the island named for her.

**THE KNIGHTS OF THE TOR (400 YEARS AGO):** The last of Dunmara's defenders founded the Knights of the Tor, dedicated to the continued defense of the folk of Highfalls Swale. Eventually, the knights' influence extended outside of the Swale, with some of its leaders entering into political arenas in lands well-removed from the Swale.

**THE ADRIGAL CRUSADE (150 YEARS AGO):** Eventually, the political aspirations of the Tor-knights roused the ire of the Great Church, prompting its patriarch to declare the Knights of the Tor anathema, and offering benedictions and worldly rewards for those who undertook his crusade to see them destroyed. The violence eventually came to the Swale, and an invading army lay siege to the Torkeep and destroyed it. The Swale has known relative peace since then.

End, as most of what it has to offer outsiders is brought to its markets to sell.

Lady Khera holds the seat of Road's End. She is the only daughter of old Lord Wyrand, and though Lady Khera spent most of her active youth as a mercenary far from the Swale, when her father died five years ago, she returned to take his place. She is a firm ruler, content to let the guilds operate as they always have, but she is not so swayed by flattery or bribery as her father was. Her military background shows in that regard, and many of the guild-masters have cause to regret the death of old beloved Lord Wyrand. The defense of Road's End Keep is given over to the Lady's Swords, a small cadre of former mercenaries who returned to the Swale with Lady Khera and now defend her. Some of the locals resent the imposition of these outsiders between themselves and the lady, but it's clear she regards her Swords as boon companions.

Road's End is largely run by its guilds, a dozen or so organized groups of craftsmen. Though their influence does not extend far beyond Road's End, they have managed to ensure that only guilds-trained craftsmen are allowed to practice their myriad trades in Road's End. They also handle a great deal of the city's bureaucracy and general upkeep, leaving the Lady Khera to oversee its defense and diplomacy.

## TAEN'S RIDE

The flat, long-cultivated lands around Road's End are called Taen's Ride, after one of the first Knights of the Tor. This land comprises rolling pastoral and agricultural fields. It is sprinkled with small hamlets made up of up to a dozen homes, plus a large communal barn and manor house where a knight sworn to Lady Khera maintains a household of guards to see to the defense and lawful administration of those communities.

## ADRANHAM

A village on the Adranlake, Adranham is a fairly wealthy community, thanks to the silver mines in the mountains to their north. A fair portion of its folk—including a larger-than-average dwarven population—either work in the Silverdelve Mines or at the attached smelter, processing ore into ingots of fine silver prized for its purity and luster. Adranham also has a number of fine smiths and jewelers—gnomes among them—who work the occasional semiprecious and precious stones pulled from the mine, most notably, rare blue sapphires.

## HIGHFALLS LAKE

The terrain of the Swale dips down toward the center of the valley. The waters of the Adranlake, Twofalls, and the Hollows all feed into Highfalls Lake at the center of the Swale. The lake itself is deep and crystalline blue. The fishing here is excellent, with large specimens routinely pulled from the deep cold waters. The northwestern edge of the lake is dotted with fishing hamlets, made up of five to ten small houses clustered around a fish-market and a set of docks. Many of the Swale's merchants make daily trips to these lakeside communities to buy their catches and sell them in the other communities.

The southern tip of the lake has the only outflow of water from the Swale, a river flowing south, cutting a wide canyon, separating the Cliffside Downs from the Feldenwood. This flow is constant and strong, and the river wider and stronger than any of the others in the Swale. The further from the lake one goes, the stronger the current, with white-water rapids along the river's course. At the southern edge of the Swale, the watercourse as a whole plunges into a passage under the mountains. Stories say this passage reaches down into the deep, dark places beneath the world—assuming one can survive the subterranean rapids and parts of the tunnel filled entirely with water.

## DUNMARA'S ISLE

The island in the middle of Highfalls Lake was the demesne of the sorceress Dunmara, and has borne her name since. It is about a mile from Watcher's Hill to its southern point, and a mile lengthwise as well. It consists of three large hills, and low-lying lands mostly covered in trees. The other parts of the island tend to be marshier, with muddy ground and tall grasses and reeds.

There is a set of docks on the island, maintained by the Swale-folk. Most of the year, the docks go unused, save by fisherfolk who come to pick blackberries on the island. At midsummer, the docks are used by the youth of the Swale, who visit the

island for the annual Choosing Night ritual marking their passage into adulthood.

The northern spur of the island is home to Watcher's Hill, crowned with some old stones that used to be a building of some kind used by Dunmara's guardians. The woods beneath the hill are thin in trees, but rich in blackberry brambles. Many of the trees along the path to the hill bear carvings from lovers past, generations of young love documented in their bark.

The ruins of the sorceress' tower still stand on the island's central hill. Dunmara built her tower as a stronghold, and it shows. It has a wide base, with tall sorcerously-wrought walls now covered with ivy and thorny blackberry vines. Its top, some eighty feet above the base, is ridged with merlons in which roost families of wild hawks.

The tower's interior wooden flooring and oak beams have long since rotted, collapsing and leaving the ground floor choked with debris. Likewise, the stairs that once led to the front doors (located on the second floor of the tower, for defensibility) have fallen into ruin as well.

On the western side of the central hill is a cleared area used as a campsite on Choosing Night. Those who spend Choosing Nights on the isle say that sometimes they can see a luminous figure passing by the narrow windows of the tower's upper reaches, where no floors remain. The Ghost of the Sorceress is a favorite story and figures in any number of local tales.

The southeastern hill of the isle ends abruptly, forming a twenty-five foot cliff above the lake. The waters are deep here, and those who come to the isle for Choosing Night can often be found here during the day, climbing the cliffs to leap off of them into the cool, deep waters below.

## THE TOR

A solid outcropping of rock rises from the valley floor to the east of Highfalls Lake, forming a wide cliff-curtain of stone overlooking the lake. Atop this spire of rock stand the ruins of the Torkeep, ancient seat of the Knights of the Tor, destroyed some hundred and fifty years ago. The pathways that once rose up the northern side of the Tor are long since crumbled away, taking the connecting bridges with them.

There are many tales of what lies within the ruins. It is common knowledge in the Swale that not only did the Adrigal Crusade lay

waste to the keep and its inhabitants, but the crusaders also laid a curse on the place, ensuring the Knights of the Tor would never rise again. A rare few make the treacherous climb to visit the Torkeep in each generation. The ones who actually return often have stories of terrifying visions, inexplicable wounds, or are wholly mad, so most folk with any sense avoid the place.

## THE HOLLOWS

In the east of the Swale lie the Hollows, a damp marshy area bracketed between the western cliffs and the Tor. Though a small stream flows around the Tor and into Highfalls Lake, the Lake of the Hollows seeps out into the surrounding soil, creating a small marshland. Toads, turtles, and waterfowl are abundant here, as are tall, moss-draped trees. Most folk avoid traveling to the Hollows, although the marsh has played home to more than one outcast or witch over the centuries.

At least one tribe of serpent-folk dwells in the Hollows. They primarily hunt and fish in the marsh and keep to themselves, but have been known to occasionally attack boats on Highfall Lake or even make their way further inland. These isolated incidents have never given sufficient cause to raise a force to invade the Hollows. This would be a fool's errand anyway, given the treacherous terrain.

## TWOFALLS

Against the backdrop of two towering waterfalls cascading into Twofalls Tarn, this community has a reputation for the beauty of its stone houses, and the magnificence of its temples. Both of these are due to the Whitestone Quarry, the source of the white stone valued throughout the Swale and used in abundance here. Twofalls is also well-known for its stone-masons and sculptors.

## CLIFFSIDE DOWNS

The breadbasket of the Swale, Cliffside Downs is the highest and flattest portion of the valley, with a steep slope downwards to Twofalls, and cliffs separating it along the waterways to its north and east. This sunny expanse of fertile land has been put to good use, with more robust agriculture here than anywhere else in the vale. Cliffside Downs also provides a
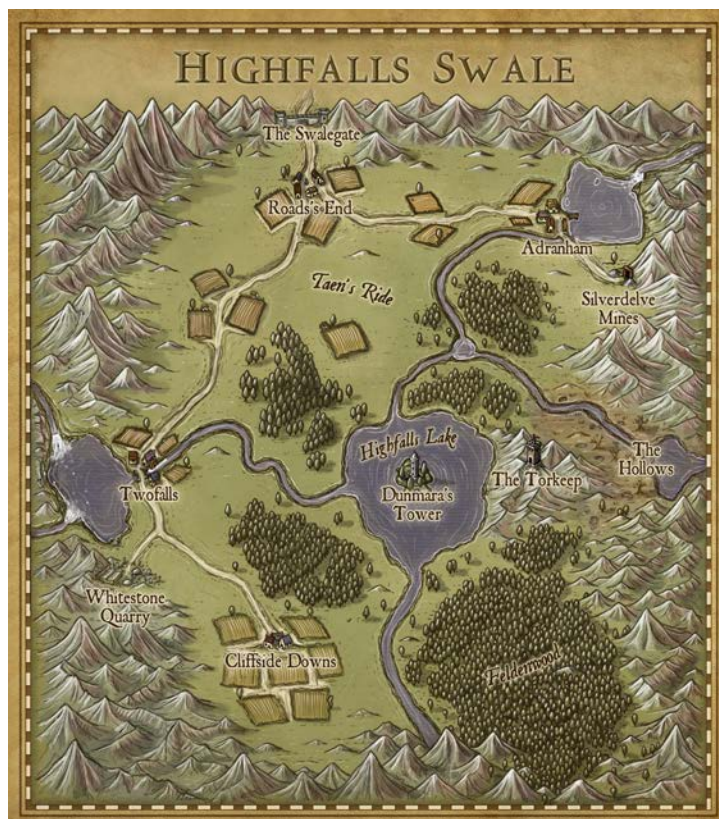


HIGHFALLS SWALE

Though most of the Swalefolk are human, other races live in the Highfalls as well.

**DWARVES:** A few cadet branches of the larger dwarf clans have settled in Adranham, lured there by its fine silver and sapphires. A smaller population can be found in Twofalls, many of them attached to the quarries there.

**ELVES:** The long-lived elves are seen rarely in the Swale, keeping to the small hamlets in the wooded areas between Cliffside Downs and Taen's Ride. Out-Swale elves occasionally travel down the Old Road to visit their kin in these communities, as well. According to elven stories, they were the first inhabitants of the valley, living in the great Feldenwood before the arrival of Dunmara.

**GNOMES:** There is a small community of gnomes in Adranham. Most are jewelers and silversmiths, enjoying Adranham's silver and sapphires. They have a friendly rivalry with some local dwarf artisans.

**HALFLINGS:** Halflings are the second most common of the Swalefolk, with one halfling for every dozen or so humans. Most halflings prefer the smaller agricultural communities, particularly the rolling green pastures of Taen's Ride.

**ORCS:** Orcs are rare in the Swale, tracing their lineage to the servants Dunmara brought with her, but freed after a healer-wife among them nursed the sorceress through a near-fatal fever. Though the Knights of the Tor regarded orcs with distrust, the nobility of the Swale does not. Most of the orc families of the Swale live and work in Road's End or Cliffside Downs.

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great deal of the timber used in the Swale, with a logging operation in the woodlands along the northern edge of the Downs, and an impressive cliff-side pulley system that lowers timber down its northern cliff-face to barges in the stream below, for sale at the other communities throughout the Swale.

## FELDENWOOD

The last wilderness in the Swale, the Feldenwood is several miles of old growth forest, filled with trees and plants that thrive in the shadows of the cliffs overhead. The Feldenwood is difficult to reach, bounded by a deep-canyon river to its west, the combination of Highfalls Lake, the Tor, and the Hollows to its north, and tall, cliffs everywhere else. The most reliable way of accessing the Feldenwood is by boat across the lake.

Generally speaking, the Feldenwood is Lady Khera's domain, and only she may authorize hunting within it. In contrast to many similar areas outside the Swale, no one seems to mind this overmuch, as the Feldenwood is home to any number of wild and dangerous creatures. The hunting is good here, however, so once or twice a year, Lady Khera leads hunting expeditions. The fine boar and stags they bring back pale only in comparison to those in the stories she and her hunting party tell afterward.

From time to time, folk on the Cliffside Downs spot humanoid figures lurking in the shadowy depths of the Feldenwood. Swalefolk stories talk about elves or faerie-folk in the forest depths, while experienced hunters think they are likely goblins or other creatures, but there has been no proof of either as yet.

## THE INUNDAR PEAKS

The Inundars are a cluster of mountains in a larger range. Dwarven clans never established any substantial dwarf-holds in its nearby expanses, so they remain largely untamed. The peaks do bear the ruins of ancient towers and structures here and there, signs of attempts to settle them long ago. They are also rumored to harbor a ruined temple to dark gods, rooted out by the Knights of the Tor centuries ago.

The Peaks are home to many savage creatures, and honey-combed with caves and tunnels providing them with shelter. Ogres, goblins, savage orcs, and more may dwell there, enviously eyeing the prosperity of the fertile Highfalls Swale. Creatures from the Inundars sometimes brave the high cliffs to enter the valley and raid nearby settlements, but the Swalefolk quickly raise an armed force—led by the Lady's Swords—to repel them.

**ADVENTURE**

# CHOOSING NIGHT

The long history of the Highfalls Swale does not rest easily. In *Choosing Night,* the heroes are young Swalefolk celebrating their passage into adulthood in the traditional way: camping overnight in the shadow of the ruins of the Tower of Dunmara. Centuries ago, the sorceress Dunmara first settled in the Swale on this island, in this tower. The ritual is known as Choosing Night.

But unlike so many previous Choosing Nights, this one is different. A lunar eclipse and an alignment of arcane forces unleash a terrible threat to the young people on the island, and potentially to all the people of the Swale itself.

## A SWALEFOLK TRADITION

Though few remember, Choosing Night has its roots in a tradition stretching back to Dunmara's time. When settlers came to the Highfalls Swale for the sorceress' protection, she chose retainers and apprentices from their number. These she called, one night each year, during the coming-of-age rites, and the near-adults presented themselves at Dunmara's Tower for testing. The best and brightest she chose as chamberlains, guardians, and apprentices. The rest she sent back to their homes and families.

In Swalefolk tradition, Choosing Night is an opportunity for youth on the verge of adulthood to gather and camp out away from authority figures. It's an old tradition, as everyone knows, and most Swalefolk have distinct memo-

ries about their own Choosing Nights: some good, some bad, most somewhere in between. While the young are away, it's common for their elders to get together in local taverns and tell tales about their own Choosing Night experiences.

There are explicitly no authority figures along for the trip because the candidates are embarking on adulthood, with full decision-making on their own. Of course, this has resulted in some difficult situations over the years, but that's to be expected and indeed, is partially the point: Let Choosing Night lay bare who these young folk will be as adults, so their neighbors might know as well. But for every unpleasant experience, far more deep bonds and fond memories are formed on these nights. Choosing Night participants often bring alcohol, food, games, and musical instruments, and while away the hours telling ghost stories and tales of the ancient sorceress Dunmara and the legends of their home.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

On midsummer day, as in many years past, a group of young Swalefolk—the player characters among them—sail out to Dunmara's Isle for their Choosing Night. The vale is abuzz with news about how auspicious this particular night will be, with a rare lunar eclipse forecast to coincide with midsummer night.

The young people have the opportunity to meet, socialize, and enjoy themselves, but, as night falls on the island, strange incidents reveal sinister forces at work. Some of the characters' companions disappear or suffer terrible "accidents" and it becomes clear something is happening on the island.

At midnight, arcane forces are unleashed, the manifest spirits of Dunmara's scattered arcane powers, seeking to destroy the "intruders" on the island and to sunder the sorceress's lingering spirit to obtain their freedom. The young adventurers must confront these uncontrolled arcane spirits and lay Dunmara's ghost to rest if they are to save themselves, their

friends, and perhaps all of the people of the Highfalls Swale from terrible danger.

## THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

*Choosing Night* assumes the player characters are young Swalefolk of any race and background on the verge of adulthood. Create 1st-level characters according to the guidelines in **Chapter 1: Character Creation**. Although they might not necessarily intend on a life of adventure prior to Choosing Night, the player characters are certainly extraordinary (in that they are 1st-level characters). They might be undergoing training as soldiers, hunters, rangers, or even magical apprentices, among other callings.

Of course, not everyone wants to necessarily play a young character, so you can allow for some alternatives. At least half the PCs should be playing one of the young Swalefolk on the verge of adulthood, however. The rest might include protective older siblings or parents who come out to the island secretly to watch over their loved ones, an older and more experienced local protector or hunter on the island, a curious visitor observing this quaint local custom, or a troublemaker looking to play a practical joke on the candidates and ending up with far more trouble than expected. Even if a PC is older or younger than most, they should still be created at the same level as their companions. This adventure is about when someone comes into their own as a hero, and that happens during play.

Dunmara's Isle is unsettled wilderness, so it's not unusual for the Choosing Night candidates to bring along a knife (a common tool in the Swale) or a weapon or two like a hand axe, bow, or sword, especially if such things are marks of the character's adult responsibilities. It is not customary to wear or bring armor, however, so characters are likely without any in this adventure, unless its specifically their job to be ready for combat. Keep this in mind when handling the combat encounters.

**PART 1**

## A FATEFUL NIGHT

*In which the characters arrive, and strangeness abounds after nightfall.*

In the first act, the player characters arrive, along with the other youth come to the isle for their Choosing Night getaway. This will be your opportunity to introduce the characters to one another, and to introduce some of the non-player characters (see **The Other Campers** for more on them). As they settle in for the night, the campers find strange things happening all around them, some of which seems like pranks at first, but eventually become something much more sinister.

### THE OTHER CAMPERS

Though any given Choosing Night trip has as many as two dozen participants, you should focus on just a few named non-player characters in this adventure. Having a smaller cast makes it easier for the players to get involved in the story

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### CHOOSING NIGHT YOUTH

Should it be necessary, you can use the following statistics to represent any of the characters here. If you like, customize them by giving each camper two appropriate ability focuses.

Most Choosing Night Youth are noncombatants (see **Chapter 9: Adversaries**), but a rare exception might have some combat skill or other exceptional skills if their family background warrants it. These exceptional youths might wield a makeshift club or small weapon to aid a PC if necessary, with an attack bonus of +2 and doing 1d6+1 damage.

### CHOOSING NIGHT YOUTH

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 1, CONSTITUTION 1 (STAMINA), DEXTERITY 1, FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 0 (CULTURAL LORE), PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 1

| SPEED | HEALTH | DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING |
|-------|--------|---------|--------------|
| 15 | 11 | 11 | 0 |

without feeling like they're forced to memorize a huge list of names. For your convenience, you might want to jot down names and details about the other characters onto index cards, to let you see them all at a glance.

The following is a selection of names and personalities who arrive on Choosing Night. You should use as many or as few of them as you wish; the exact appearances of these characters is left up to you. These characters are referenced throughout the adventure. Should you elect not to use them, make sure to substitute other characters in their place.

**DELDA MASON OF TWOFALLS:** The daughter of a prominent stonemason in Twofalls, Delda is here with her twin Croemar. She is bright and bubbly, playfully sarcastic, and flirtatious. Delda is quite social, and tends to get to know strangers quickly.

**CROEMAR MASON OF TWOFALLS:** Delda's twin Croemar is quiet where she is social, and suspicious of others' motives. He's protective of his sister, but not prone to conflict. He warns his sister away from someone before he ever butts heads with that person. He is an apprentice mason who shows some promise.

**RAVAST UNNUNDAL OF ROAD'S END:** A merchant's son, Ravast is nervous around new people, though he hides it under a veil of rakishness. He brings the best alcohol with him and flirts with everyone outrageously, but would be left a stammering mess if someone were to take him up on his innuendo.

**WULDRA OF ADRANHAM:** A dwarven daughter of a fine smith in Adranham, Wuldra begged her strict parents to let her come to Choosing Night, having heard about it from friends who've gone in previous years.

**PARIA MILLER OF CLIFFSIDE DOWNS:** The halfling daughter of one of the wealthiest families in the Swale, Paria plays the role of the spoiled daughter to the hilt. In truth, she's a canny judge of character and quick to shove away those she can't stand, with the noxious preening others seem to expect of her.

**GAEGE DARVIS OF TAEN'S RIDE:** A big farmhand, Gaege is here only hesitantly. His parents insisted that he come, even though there is still work to be done with the family herd. They met at a Choosing Night, and are unaware of the pressure they've been putting on their children all these years to meet their future spouses on this night. Gaege enjoys new friends one-on-one, though he doesn't do well in large groups.

# ARRIVAL

### *Roleplaying Encounter*

To begin, read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

> *As young Swalefolk on the verge of the midsummer adulthood rites observed by your people, you have a singular opportunity: the Choosing Night excursion. Held once a year, it is a camping trip out to the island in the middle of Highfalls Lake – Dunmara's Isle, on which stands the ruins of the tower once ruled by the mad sorceress Dunmara. This trip is an old tradition in Highfalls Swale, one that stretches back as far as anyone can remember.*
>
> *At first light, the young lads and maids of the Swale take rowboats out to the island. You all look forward to a day of swimming, exploring the old island, and getting to know other folk of your age from all the communities of Highfalls Swale – and all away from the guardianship of the adults. You've heard stories from other Choosing Nights: tales of revelry and pranks, and the beginnings of love affairs and life-long rivalries alike.*
>
> *But now it's your turn. You come, with a small pack of your gear (and probably a treat or two tucked away in the bedroll), either on your own boat, or riding along with someone else in theirs. The sun is shining high in the sky, and the lake beneath your boat glitters brightly. It is a brilliant summer day, and one that is about to be all yours to enjoy.*

Playing through the trip to the island is a great way of introducing the characters to one another, and to the non-player characters you have planned for the adventure. Here are some scenes to play through to help do just that.



| DELDA MASON | CROEMAR MASON | RAVAST UNNUNDAL | WULDRA | PARIA MILLER | GAEGE DARVIS |

**DIMMIA AND MALKIRK:** Overprotective and very concerned for the well-being of their dearest child, Dimmia and Malkirk hover nearby, casting suspicious glances at the other youths here (sure that they're ruffians and hooligans!) and giving a litany of annoying advice on how to "survive the wilderness" as only those who dwell away from wild places can.

**LANDIS:** An older brother with fond memories of his own Choosing Night. Landis is supportive, assuring his sibling that their parents wish they could be there to wish them well. He is full of suggestions, suggesting going swimming out at the Cliffs as soon as the tents are set up, and advising at least one trip up to Watcher's Hill to watch the sun set, collecting blackberries along the way.

**AMERLIA AND KELDIN:** Short-tempered and judgmental, Amerlia and Keldin are only here because they don't trust their kid not to get in trouble along the way. They've both got work to do today—unlike some people, they don't have the luxury of running off with a gang of other brats to waste time getting into trouble.

**ROBARD AND SELNIS:** An older couple, the two fathers wouldn't miss seeing their child off for the world. They met at their own Choosing Night and have been inseparable ever since, and can't resist teasing their child about the possibility of finding their own beloved there!

## THE SEND-OFFS

Roughly half of the player characters are at the docks with their parents who are seeing them off, waiting for their boat ride with some of the local fishermen to the island. Play through some of the interactions between the characters and their families. Some example family members are included in Family Members sidebar. Feel free to "assign" them to the player characters (or let them choose), and use any left over family for non-player characters.

All the youths are thrilled when the boat arrives, and their families wave good-bye, promising to be back here tomorrow morning for tales of how Choosing Night went. All the adolescent non-player characters are well and truly humiliated, of course.

Once all the characters are loaded into the boat (piloted by a cranky fisherwoman named Pala who doesn't say much past her corn-cob pipe), give them a chance to interact and introduce one another. Use a non-player character to start off if you like, having them introduce themselves and inquire after the others.

## THE PLAYER CHARACTER'S BOAT

Give one of the other player characters his own boat. Maybe one that he owns if he is from Twofalls, Taen's Ride, or Adranham, or one borrowed from a family friend who lives along the lake. The player characters not part of The Send-Offs above have already made arrangements with the character who has the boat to get a ride in.

Have the boat-pilot character pick the others up (maybe rounding out their number with another non-player character or two) one at a time, giving them an opportunity to meet one another. Again, if necessary, use a non-player character—someone chatty like Delda, Ravast or Paria—to strike up conversations with the player characters.

## A TROUBLED CROSSING

If you like, a little trouble along the way can keep things interesting. A felled tree has gotten away from the lumber works along the Twofalls river, and a massive oak has floated off into the lake, forming something of a dangerous obstacle. As one of the boats nears the island, a character may make **TN 11**

**PERCEPTION (SEEING)** test to realize that there are thick branches sticking up among the reeds, connected to a tree that threatens to tear the bottom out of the boat if it's not avoided. This big of dodging requires a **TN 9 INTELLIGENCE (NAVIGATION)** test by the boat's pilot. Success indicates they veer off with a loud scraping sound, but no real damage. Failure indicates a thick branch punctures the bottom of the boat, ripping through it thanks to the boat's forward momentum. In moments, the boat is sinking!

Fortunately, the boat with the other player characters is near enough to see this. If the pilot successfully avoids damage to the boat, old Pala takes her pipe out of her mouth long enough to holler *"Well piloted, young'n!"* and the non-player characters react varying with horror (at the awful scraping sound and what could have happened), encouragement (a *"Woo! Well done!"* yelled across the water), or humor (laughing uproariously at everyone's reaction).

If the pilot does not avoid the hazard, old Pala quickly paddles over to them to help rescue them. Everyone ends up wet, their gear soaked, but no true harm is done. Non-player characters react with humor, sympathy, or annoyance at having to divert from their course.

## ON THE DOCKS

The various boats arriving at the docks is the chance for all of the player characters to meet one another, plus the characters they came with. Old Pala gives a wave and a salute with her pipe before leaving the docks, and everyone gets a chance to meet everyone else.

This is also a perfect opportunity to introduce another non-player character, someone who comes down from the camp site, having noticed newcomers show up. Perhaps they already know one of the characters, offer to help carry gear (especially those whose belongings are now soaked with chilly lake water), or are just here to flirt with attractive newcomers.

## SETTING UP CAMP

When the characters arrive, various campsites have already been claimed, though there is still plenty of room. A small campfire has been built in the large stone ring that will host the bonfire that evening, and the young Swalefolk are chatting and meeting one another as they set up tents and lean-tos.

# A DAY OF LEISURE

### *Roleplaying/Exploration Encounter*

A typical Choosing Day usually involves a pack of the young swarming all over Dunmara's Isle, enjoying their freedom and spending time with old friends and new. Everyone has their own notions of the sort of fun they're there to have, away from responsibilities and their childhood guardians. The GM should either describe the activities below (as they're the sort of things most characters grew up hearing about) or have non-player characters extend invitations to them. Each set of excursions includes some suggestions for events that might play out there.

There are several scenarios that seem as though they were the entry point into "typical" adventures. Though you may turn them into such if you like, the adventure works best if they are harmless pranks or misunderstandings. If your players are looking for danger at every turn, this emphasizes how generally harmless Choosing Night and Dunmara's Isle usually are.

The events can be played through by the group if your play style is inclined toward "day to day" style of play, getting to know the personalities of characters, or can simply be narrated, allowing everyone to describe what their character does that day.

### THE DOCKS

A small number enjoy the fishing to be had here, either from the docks themselves, or in small groups in the boats. Others use the docks as a starting point for small boat tours around the island. Events here might involve an impromptu fishing competition, someone stealing away someone else's boat to go joy-boating, or someone sighting something big and shadowy in the deep waters nearby.

### THE CAMP SITE

During the day, the Camp is mostly inhabited by those resting between excursions, or who have no interest in them. Thus, it is scattered with folks resting (maybe wet from swimming, or scratched up from gathering blackberries), others reading or making art of some kind, lazing about with friends or paramours in the shade, and so on. Events are few and far between, consisting mostly of social interaction.

### WATCHER'S HILL

The hill is a central destination during the day, the path between it and the campsite relatively free of deadfalls or mud-traps. Lovers often go on walks up to the Hill, groups take picnics there, and there are multiple excursions to pick



Dunmara's Isle

blackberries from the brambles at the foot of the hill. Events might include running across some quarreling or affectionate lovers, playing hide-and-seek among the trees, or pranks in which a few tricksters come running out of the foliage, shrieking as though there is something chasing them and seeing how many others they can get to also flee.

### DUNMARA'S TOWER

Those with an interest in such things often make the climb to the top of the central hill, following the hiking path winding around the base of the tower to the south and then curving sharply back up the side of the hill. There is some effort involved getting up there, though it's nothing arduous for healthy Swalefolk youth. The top of the hill is carpeted in beautiful red and cream-colored flowers, including thick climbing vines of rare roses lovers sometimes come up to collect for their beloved. More than one Swale marriage has started with a proposal here. Events here might include a suitor collecting flowers for someone they fancy, a pair who've retreated here so one of them can ask the other to wed them, or a cry for help when someone has stumbled off the path and become hurt, stuck, or otherwise in need of rescuing.

### THE DIVING CLIFFS

A place of wild fun where the young go to dive off the rough cliffs into the deep waters below, this site probably sees most of the raucous behavior. There is roughhousing aplenty, and more than a few rowdier young candidates come prepared with flasks and bottles of some alcohol. The top of the hill is usually a spot for socializing, lazing about on blankets, and welcoming those that make the short climb back up the hill after diving off. Events include a small group of pranksters snatching up and throwing someone else over the cliff into the water, challenges between boisterous climbers to see who can reach the top of the cliffs first from the water level, someone suddenly starting to drown, and someone crying out that something just *touched* them while they're in the water!

# NIGHT TERRORS

### *Exploration Encounter*

In this scene, the spirits of Dunmara's arcana begin to exert influence on the environment of the Isle. See **Appendix: Arcane Spirit**s at the end of this chapter for their goals. Ideally, it will be player characters who are motivated to fulfill the conditions that let them take possession of bodies at midnight, but don't hesitate to have a few non-player characters stumble into doing so.
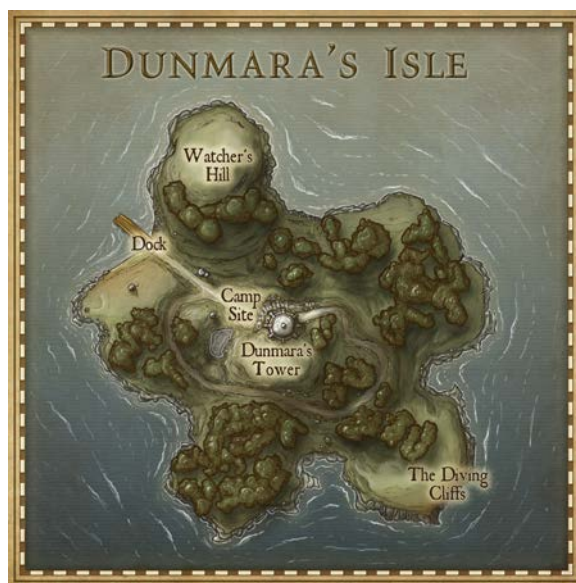
This section is more free-form than the above section. Simply allow the player characters to lead the action, interacting with non-player characters: flirting, making friends, furthering rivalries. As they have these interactions, however, the GM should start making small mention of the weird things that some of them notice, and have certain non-player characters start wandering off.

## THE ISLAND'S BOUNTY

The influence actually starts even before the sun actually sets, for those who have gathered and enjoyed the blackberries or blooming flowers on the isle are already primed for the influence of the wood arcana spirit. However, there is a catch—its influence only applies to those who enjoy them once the sun has set.

If none of the player characters have interacted with those in any way, have the NPCs do so. Someone has set aside a small cache of the day's blackberry gathering, or has dropped them in to mull with some sour red wine by the fire, those who consume it are considered to have fulfilled the criteria, as do those still holding onto and smelling flowers picked that day. Those who do so must pass a **TN 12 Constitution (Drinking or Stamina)** test or become intoxicated, stumbling off into the darkness on a wondrous high, becoming lost until midnight comes and the things that result find them in the dark.

## THE RISING MIST

Once night falls, it gets noticeably colder. A thick bank of fog rises on the water, almost completely obscuring it. It engulfs the docks, and anyone trying to find the boats cannot see them.

If none of the player characters go investigating out into the mist, it is easy enough to have non-player characters do so. Perhaps some of the campers become spooked by the strange mist and want to leave, but can't find the boats, or those who venture out into the darkness become lost in the fog. They do not find their way back to the campsite or docks, and become easy prey for what happens at midnight.

## THE WILL O' WISPS

Once the sun sets, those at the periphery of the firelight see something odd: sparks of dancing light a short distance away. The lights blink and dance like fireflies, but brighter. If more than two people venture out into the darkness, the lights wink out and do not return until there are fewer folk about. As the observers move deeper into the wilderness, the wisps start to appear larger and more luminous, like lanterns. They bob and dance around those who chase them, zipping along merrily…until they lead someone into a mud-pit by the water or a bramble-fall in the woods.

If none of the player characters investigate, then a pair of lovers follow the lights, or some of the campers begin daring one another to go out and try to see what's making the light. Anyone venturing out in small groups may fall victim to the guidance of the will o' wisps. Those following the wisps must pass a **TN 11 Perception (Seeing)** test or be led into a covered deadfall or hidden mire that inflicts 2d6 damage. Those trapped cannot be heard from the camp, and they are easy prey for what comes at midnight.

## THE SHADOWS DANCE

As the night wears on and folk start to get sleepy, individuals begin to see strange movement out of the corner of their eyes. Strange shapes they've been seeing all night, which they assumed to be the silhouettes of tall brush or trees suddenly *move* at the edge of their vision. Shadows cast by the firelight shift subtly and sinuously, and the shapes at the edge of the firelight just don't seem to line up quite right with the things that ought to be casting those shadows.

Once again, youthful bravado is likely to lead one or more of the characters into the darkness to investigate. Anyone who ventures more than a yard or so outside of the safety of the firelight must pass a **TN 12 Intelligence (Navigation)** or **Perception (Tracking)** test or become lost in the dark. Though they can see their immediate environs by the light of the moon, everything else is pitch darkness, and the campsite's fire is lost to them. Those who go searching (for the shadows or the lost) in groups larger than two are safe, and can actually find those who end up lost in the darkness by passing a TN 9 **Perception (Tracking)** test. Those lost can't seem to get warm, however, and sit chilled and shivering for the rest of the night.

## NIGHTMARE OMENS

Those who fall asleep after dark begin to have terrible dreams of being hunted by brutal men in masks wielding terrible curved blades that drip with venom. The hunters slice them over and over again, showing no mercy. Sleepers wake from the nightmares drenched in sweat that smells of the acrid venom on the knives. The dreams are terrible nightmares, and ensure a fitful sleep at best. Those who wake from the dreams can't help but glance upward at the tower in fear, and most refuse to talk about what they've dreamed. The GM should make sure to take note of who does talk about the dreams, whether non-player character or player, for what happens when midnight comes.

# GATHERING MISTS

*In which the spirits gain power to manifest.*

Then, at midnight, it happens. The spirits manifest, gaining power through the actions and emotions of the young Swalefolk to materialize fully in the world.

# MIDNIGHT COMES

*Roleplaying Encounter*

The big reveal is the payoff in this scenario, so feel free to build some tension. As it nears midnight, determine which of the characters are awake, and who has turned in already. Then, follow the progression of events to build the tension as things become increasingly strange and then threatening.

- **The Strange Silence:** The first sign is the sudden cessation of all previous strangeness. The shadows moving out beyond the fire cease, the will o' wisps wink out. Then there is silence.

- **The Rot Takes Hold:** Any flowers or berries picked from the isle suddenly wilt and rot, disintegrating into a horrible-smelling slime.

- **A Sudden Shriek:** A shrieking wail suddenly sounds from directly above the heads of the campers—it sounds like a woman, keening in pain, and then it comes again from Dunmara's Tower.

- **The Restless Wild:** Then, the sound of a slithering can be heard—something sliding sinuously through the grass and trees. It is followed by the sound of cracking tree branches and the moaning and creaking of whole tree trunks being pushed aside coming from the woodlands to the north of the campsite. The sounds then die out, again too quickly for anyone to reach them.

- **Screams in the Dark:** Terrible shrieks emerge from the darkness. The screams continue for a few seconds, each louder and more agonized than the last, and then they simply stop. They do not last long enough for anyone to reach their source.

- **Thunder on the Water:** A crack of thunder sounds from the direction of the docks, and a great splash of water is heard, like something rising from it. The thick mists continue to enshroud the island.

### SCENE 2

# THE SHADOW ATTACKS

### *Combat Encounter*

Once the silence settles in again, another scream is heard. If a non-player character was found in the darkness from **The Shadows Dance** and returned to camp, it comes from them—the person is doubled-over, writing in agony. Their eyes go all black and then they begin to convulse and vomit a black mist, which forms the shadow arcana spirit.

If no one was found from **The Shadows Dance** then the screaming stops somewhere out in the dark before the shadow spirit lunges out of the darkness to attack. The creature snatches someone up and drags them away into the darkness. Once the shadow spirit loses half its Health, it flees into the night, seeking easier prey.

### SCENE 3

# DUNMARA'S VISION

### *Roleplaying Encounter*

When the shadow spirit departs, the ghostly figure of a tall, dark-haired woman appears, crying in pain and anguish, holding out a pleading hand. This terrifies most of those who see it. A shout of "*Dunmara's ghost!*" goes up among the campers, and causes further panic. If a player character reaches out to take the ghost's hand, they experience Dunmara's Vision:

*Your hand finds purchase in the cold grip of the ghostly sorceress' imploring reach, and you feel your eyelids flutter and your eyes roll back into your head as strange visions flood your mind.*

*You see the sorceress standing atop the tower, watching through mystical means as her knights battle the outlanders who have attacked. They wear the holy sigil of some far-off faith, and they cry "abomination" and "sacrilege" against her. They slay her warriors and slowly work their way to her tower. She assails them with the most potent gifts of her Art: with fire and with storm, with darkness and nature, and with terrors called forth from nightmares.*

*It is not enough. They come on, ever on, to the base of her tower, and there they work their own rite. At its height, searing power lances upward, tearing into her. She can only scream as her power—the arcana she has spent generations honing—are torn from her soul like living things, and scattered to the winds. She falls limply from the top of the tower to lie, gasping and broken, at its base. They speak pronouncements of doom over her and she tries to call on her arcane arts to strike them down, but her magic has fled and is gone.*

*Your vision ends, as she fades away, still weeping. "You must stop them," she says. "These spirits, they are my magic, given form. They sense invaders here and now seek to slaughter as many of you as they can. Then they will come to my tower for the last of me. If they can tear my spirit apart, nothing will bind them here any longer. They will be free of this island, free to wreak havoc in the world beyond. You must stop them. If not for me, then for those you love who wait at home."*

After the character experiences the vision, the PCs notice that their weapons now glow with an unearthly light. Dunmara has used what little magic remains to her to temporarily enchant them. For the rest of this adventure, they count as magical weapons. This solely provides the ability to damage incorporeal creatures such as the fire spirit.

### PART 3

# THE SORCERESS' TOWER

### *In which those who remain must prevent the destruction of the sorceress' ghost.*

As far as most of the character's companions are concerned, death has come for them all. Anyone who stands and defies the monsters and defends themselves and their fellow Swale-folk becomes a rallying point. Those who see the player characters stand up to the monsters quickly follow their lead and do as they're told.

### SCENE 1

# FLIGHT FOR SAFETY

### *Combat/Exploration Encounter*

Much of what happens after **The Shadow Attacks** in **Part 2** depends on the decisions of the player characters. They might receive Dunmara's vision, or shy away from the ghost, leaving her unable to communicate. They might go looking for other campers to save, make a run for the docks hoping to get away on boats (a fruitless effort, as the boats are all missing, thanks to spirit mischief), or come up with other plans. Three situations follow for the rest of this scene:

## MORE SPIRITS ATTACK

Whether the spirits attack the main group of player characters or small groups of panicked non-player characters, there should be more encounters with them, individually or in pairs. Each time an attack occurs, the ghost of Dunmara appears once again, reaching out to the characters, until she can communicate her vision to them.

## MORE SWALEFOLK DIE

The goal of the spirits is simple: to slaughter the "invaders" of "their" island. The spirits quickly learn who the dangerous ones are, and seek to pick off those who are less dangerous and reliant on those with combat skill first, or even use them to lure the more dangerous foes into traps or ambushes.

## DUNMARA'S PLEA

It is clear Dunmara's shade is desperate and distraught whenever the characters encounter her. She does not attack, or even makes threatening gestures, just reaching out to them, imploring them to approach her and receive her vision in order to give the characters a chance of surviving the night and stopping the spirits. Play out **Scene 3: Dunmara's Vision** whenever this occurs.

# THE TOWER BATTLE

*Combat Encounter*

The last encounter of *Choosing Night* takes place at the ruins of Dunmara's Tower. When the characters arrive, they find any remaining arcana spirits working to clear debris away from the tower to reach Dunmara's interred remains within. They have a number of turns left of work equal to three times the number of spirits present.

The spirits do not turn from their work to bother with the player characters, save for the shadow spirit, which can't do anything to excavate. If it is present, it attacks the characters. If they are attacked, the other spirits turn to destroy those attacking them. The spirits are powerful, but they don't cooperate or assist one another.

This final battle continues until all of the arcana spirits are defeated, until they manage to excavate Dunmara's remains, or until the sun rises (assuming the characters did something to stall the spirits in some way).

If the spirits manage to get to the burial site, it is a single major action to push aside the cover of the stone sarcophagus, and then another five major actions total to destroy the remains. As the spirits attack her remains, Dunmara's ghost appears and shrieks in pain, as her spectral self is rent apart.

# EPILOGUE

Exactly what happens at the end of this adventure depends on the end of **Part 3**.

## THE SPIRITS ARE STOPPED

If the player characters destroy the arcane spirits before they can obliterate Dunmara's shade, she sobs in relief and gratitude. They watch as the spirits discorporate and their energy returns to her. She becomes something more than merely a ghost—transforming into a vision of magical power, blessing

the characters for their efforts and granting them a reward in the form of a magic chest that appears before them, before she herself disappears.

The chest contains a number of mystic trinkets and 50 ancient silver coins per PC. Magic trinkets found in the chest include: a stone necklace that glows faintly on command, a small rod that causes a spark to light small fires, a cloak that never gets waterlogged and cleans itself when shaken out, a bedroll that feels as comfortable as a featherbed when slept on, and anything else the GM thinks is appropriate.

If you wish, Dunmara may further communicate with the characters in their dreams or through visions to convey additional information, making her a useful means of involving them in further adventures.

## DUNMARA'S GHOST IS DESTROYED

If Dunmara's ghost is destroyed, she shrieks one final time before being torn apart, her ephemeral body unravelling. The arcane spirits are now free, and they do not stay around to fight. They flee immediately for the edges of the island and depart into the Swale.

They go to ground and rest, consolidating their power, and possibility even recruiting worshippers or minions. It is likely that the player characters are the only ones who understand enough about the threat they pose to stop them. Indeed, even if the player characters don't wish to confront the spirits further, the spirits that survive remember them and come after them eventually, seeing the characters as the foremost threat to their existence.

Exactly what the spirits want is up to you. Perhaps they become rivals, each seeking to conquer and rule the Swale. Perhaps they wish to gain worshippers and supplant the gods worshipped by the Swalefolk. Or they may become the agents of a greater and more ancient power.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES

*Choosing Night* is just the beginning of what could be a whole series of adventures set in the Highfalls Swale. Win or lose, the player characters are certain to become part of the most famous Choosing Night story in living memory, and they may well be heroes to their peers, their families, and the whole of the Swale for their deeds.

Such achievements do not go unnoticed, earning the characters a summons from Lady Khera to an audience at Road's End Keep. Her Ladyship wishes to meet these young heroes, and may well have additional quests requiring their skills. They can encounter danger along the way, and fall into intrigue in Road's End between Khera and those merchants who long for the corrupt bad old days before her rule.

From there, the characters might go off exploring various corners of the Swale, from the ruins of the Torkeep to the depths of the Hollows or the Feldenwood. They could delve deep below the ruins of Dunmara's Tower, or into the Inundar Peaks, which might hold arcane secrets of interest to their enemies as well as their allies. The possibilities are as wide as your imagination and the rules in this book can create for you and your players!

# APPENDIX: ARCANE SPIRITS

The arcana torn from Dunmara's soul took part of her essence with them. Each became a spirit, a being of pure magic, half-real and incapable of achieving true existence, but also incapable of passing beyond awareness into oblivion. As a result, the arcane spirits are mad and driven to achieve full manifestation on the midsummer night of the eclipse at all costs, so they can finally escape the island that has become their prison.

You should use caution when deploying the spirits. The PCs shouldn't face more than two at once, as they are only level 1. If you find they are having trouble, you may consider reducing the Health of each spirit by up to 10.

**INNATE ARCANA:** The spirits can each cast spells of their particular arcana. They do so automatically, without need for a spellcasting test or spending Magic Points. The spirits' effective Spellpower is 14.

## THE FATE SPIRIT

When it manifests, the fate spirit flows into the burrow of a hibernating Giant Spider (see **CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES**) hidden in a hollow beneath the tower's cellars. It comes to life, its eyes becoming strange and opalescent. Instead of its usual effects, the spider's poison causes anyone who fails a **TN 11 CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)** test to fall into a deep, nightmare-filled slumber until the end of the encounter. The fate spirit can cast the *hands of fate* and *puppets of fate* spells.

## THE FIRE SPIRIT

The fire arcana spirit takes the form of a specter (see **CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES**) that inflicts fire damage instead of cold with its Chilling (Burning) Touch. The spirit may cast the spells *arcane lantern*, *flame blast*, and *burning shield*.

## THE SHADOW SPIRIT

The shadow spirit is a humanoid shape of pure darkness with the abilities of a specter (see **CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES**) but with the Shadow power replacing the specter's Incorporeal power. It can also cast the spells *shadow dagger*, *shadow slip*, and *shadow embrace*.

## THE WATER SPIRIT

The water spirit takes the form of a serpentfolk with night-black scales, rising from the waters of the lake. It has the abilities of a serpentfolk (see **CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES**) and may cast the spells *arcane spring*, *water whip*, and *water wall*.

## THE WOOD SPIRIT

The wood spirit manifests as one of the walking dead, its bones wrapped in vines that push and pull to animate it. It has the abilities of a normal Walking Dead (see **CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES**) except it has the Regeneration power and may cast the spells *ensnaring roots* and *forest blend*.

**ABILITY:** One of nine core benchmarks that define a character's physical and mental prowess. The abilities are Accuracy, Communication, Constitution, Dexterity, Fighting, Intelligence, Perception, Strength, and Willpower. They are used most commonly in ability tests.

**ABILITY FOCUS:** An area of expertise within an ability. A character who has an appropriate focus when making a test adds +2 to the test result. Only one ability focus can add to a test. Also known simply as focus.

**ABILITY TEST:** The most common dice roll in the game, an ability test is used to resolve actions and reactions. Test result = 3d6 + ability + focus (if applicable).

**ACTIONS:** During action time, a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. Free actions do not count toward this limit.

**ACTION TIME:** When it becomes important to track time precisely and know who did what when, the game switches from narrative time to action time. Time is tracked in 15-second rounds during action time, and characters take turns in initiative order. Action time is used most commonly to handle combat.

**ADJACENT:** When characters are within 2 yards of each other, they are said to be adjacent. You can only make melee attacks against adjacent targets.

**ADVANCED TEST:** Basic or opposed tests that use a Success Threshold to track completion over time. The task is complete when the total of the Stunt Dice from all successful tests is equal to or greater than the Success Threshold.

**ADVENTURE:** A series of encounters that tells a complete story. Sometimes called a scenario. An adventure may take a single session to complete, or several.

**ARMOR PENALTY:** Each armor type has a penalty that represents its weight and bulk. The penalty applies to Speed if a character is trained in the armor's use, but to Dexterity (and thus also to Speed) if the character is not.

**ARCANA:** A themed group of four spells, each of which corresponds to a magic talent.

**ARMOR RATING:** Each armor type has a numeric rating. When a character takes damage in combat, subtract the armor rating from the damage before deducting Health. Penetrating damage ignores armor rating, however.

**ATTACK ROLL:** The roll made when a character wants to attack in combat. This is an ability test with a target number equal to the opponent's Defense.

**BACKGROUND:** Each Player Character has a background that represents their upbringing and training. Available backgrounds depend on social class.

**BASIC TEST:** The most common ability test in the game. A test is made and the result compared to a target number determined by the GM. If the test result meets or beats the target number, the test is successful. Test result = 3d6 + ability + focus.

**CAMPAIGN:** This is the continuing story of the Player Characters, as experienced through a series of adventures. If an adventure is a short story starring the PCs, a campaign is a novel.

**CASTING ROLL:** A mage can cast any known spell by making a successful casting roll and spending the required number of magic points. Casting roll = 3d6 + Intelligence + focus (if applicable).

**CASTING TIME:** The amount of time, usually expressed in actions, which it takes to cast a spell.

**CLASS:** Each Player Character has a class that represents their path in life and provides a framework for advancement. There are three classes: mage, rogue, and warrior.

**CLASS POWERS:** A class provides a character with a variety of special powers, such as ability focuses and talents. Known collectively as class powers, they are listed out by level in the class descriptions.

**DAMAGE ROLL:** A damage roll is made when a character successfully hits an opponent in combat. Damage total = weapon damage + Strength – opponent's armor rating. The opponent deducts the damage total from their Health. Weapons from the Bows and Black Powder Weapon Groups add Perception instead of Strength.

**DEFENSE:** Defense measures how hard it is to hit a character in combat. The higher the Defense, the better. Defense = 10 + Dexterity + shield bonus (if applicable).

**DEGREE OF SUCCESS:** When it's important to know how well a character performed on an ability test, the Stunt Die is used to determine the degree of success. The higher the Stunt Die, the greater the degree of success.

**DICE:** *Fantasy AGE* uses only one type of dice, the six-sided die. Usually abbreviated d6.

**ENCOUNTER:** An encounter is a scene in an adventure. There are three types of encounters: combat encounters, exploration encounters, and roleplaying encounters.

**EXPERIENCE POINTS (XP):** Player Characters receive experience points after completing encounters during an adventure. A running total is kept and when they accrue enough XP, characters gain a new level.

**FREE ACTION:** An action that takes a negligible amount of time. It does not count toward a character's usual limit of actions on a turn.

**GAME MASTER (GM):** The Game Master runs the game and acts as a referee.

**HEALTH:** This is a measure of a character's fitness and well-being. Class choice determines starting Health and characters gain more each time they level up. A Player Character whose Health drops to 0 will die in Constitution + 2 rounds unless they receives healing.

**INITIATIVE:** At the start of action time, each character rolls for initiative. This is a Dexterity (Initiative) test. The GM arranges the test results from highest to lowest; this is the order in which characters take their turns during a round. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Stunt Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.

**LEVEL:** Player Characters and some Non-Player Characters have a level. This is a measure of the character's prowess and ranges from 1-20.

**Major Action:** An action that takes most of a round to complete. If you take a major action, you can also take a minor action in the same round.

**Magic Points (MP):** Magic points are used to power spells and each mage has a number of MP based on level. A mage who wants to cast a spell must spend the required number of magic points and make a successful casting roll.

**Minimum Strength:** Some weapons are heavy and/or difficult to wield. A character must have the minimum Strength listed to use a weapon effectively. Otherwise the weapon counts as an improvised weapon (even if the character is trained in its use).

**Minor Action:** An action that takes only part of a round to complete. You can take two minor actions in a round, or one major and one minor action.

**Narrative Time:** The periods of play during which it is not important to track time precisely. Most roleplaying encounters and exploration encounters take place during narrative time.

**Non-Player Character (NPC):** Any character portrayed by the GM.

**Opposed Test:** When characters vie against each another, an opposed test is made. This is like a basic test, but the characters compare test results instead of trying to meet or beat a target number. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Stunt Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.

**Penetrating Damage:** Armor offers no protection against penetrating damage. Armor ratings are considered to be 0 against it.

**Player Character (PC):** The heroes of a *Fantasy AGE* campaign. In a typical game, each player controls one PC.

**Primary Abilities:** Each class has four abilities that are most important to it. They are known as primary abilities and a Player Character can increase one of them by 1 each time an even-numbered level is gained.

**Range:** Each missile weapon has a short and long range. If a target is within short range, attack rolls are made as normal. If a target is within long range, but farther away than short range, attack rolls suffer a -2 penalty.

**Round:** A 15 second increment of time used during action time. During a round, each character in the encounter gets one turn to act.

**Secondary Abilities:** Each class has five abilities that are less important to it than primary abilities. They are known as secondary abilities; a Player Character can increase one of them by 1 each time an odd-numbered level is gained.

**Shield Bonus:** A character using a shield is harder to hit and adds the shield bonus to their Defense.

**Social Class:** All Player Characters come from one of four social classes: outsider, lower class, middle class, or upper class. Social class helps determine a character's background.

**Specialization:** A class power that lets characters focus their class. PCs gain specializations at level 4 and 12. This is the only way to gain specialization talents.

**Speed:** Speed measures a character's gait and quickness of foot. A character can move up to a number of yards equal to Speed when taking a Move action, or double that with a Run action.

**Spell:** When a mage harnesses magical energy to create an effect, the result is a spell. Mages gain spells through magic talents. Casting a spell requires the expenditure of magic points and a successful casting roll.

**Spellpower:** This is the measure of a mage's might; certain spells allow the target(s) to test against it to resist or at least offset their effects. Spellpower = 10 + Willpower + focus (if applicable).

**Spell Stunt:** A special enhancement a mage can make when doubles are rolled on a casting roll. This generates a number of stunt points equal to the result of the Stunt Die.

**Spell Type:** There are four types of spell—attack, defense, enhancement, and utility. Each spell falls into one of these categories.

**Strain:** When a mage wearing armor casts a spell, they must add the strain of the armor to magic point cost. Strain ranges from 1 for light leather to 6 for heavy plate.

**Stunt:** A special move a character can make when doubles are rolled on a test. This generates a number of stunt points equal to the result of the Stunt Die. There are combat, exploration, roleplaying, and spell stunts.

**Stunt Die:** In an ability test two dice of one color and one of another are rolled. The Stunt Die is the off colored die and it is used to measure degrees of success in ability tests and to generate stunt points (SP) during action time.

**Stunt Points (SP):** These are used to perform stunts. A character must spend the stunt points immediately and no stunt but skirmish can be performed more than once on your turn.

**Success Threshold:** A character making an advanced test must meet or beat this number to successfully complete the task. Each successful test allows the character to add the result of the Stunt Die to the total.

**Talent:** An area of natural aptitude and/or special training. Each talent has three degrees: Novice, Journeyman, and Master. A Player Character gains talents primarily through class.

**Target Number (TN):** You must meet or beat this number to make a successful ability test. The higher the target number, the more difficult the test.

**Turn:** During action time, each character gets one turn to act each turn. On a turn a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. A character may opt to take fewer actions on a turn if desired.

**Weapon Damage:** The base damage a weapon inflicts on a successful hit.

**Weapon Groups:** Weapons are divided into groups, each of which usually consists of three weapons. A Player Character receives training in weapon groups through their class. Characters using weapons they are not train in suffer a –2 penalty on attack rolls and inflict half damage (add Strength and then divide by two, rounding down).

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