

Game System

“But as it becometh disciples to obey their master, so also it becometh the master to dispose all things with prudence and justice. Therefore, let all follow the Rule as their guide in everything, and let no one rashly depart from it” - The Holy Rule of St. Benedict

Since Cthulhu Dark Ages is a supplement to the Call of Cthulhu rulebook, character generation and the game system remain basically the same. However, life in the tenth and the eleventh centuries was quite different from life in the nineteenth or the twentieth. This chapter discusses Dark Ages “adventurers”, their occupations and available skills, and focuses on specific rules for that era, like disease and insanity.

Characteristic Rolls

Apart from men of Church, clerics and a few nobles, nobody possessed any formal education in the Dark Ages, since there was no proper schooling system. For that reason the game concepts of Education (EDU) and Knowledge measure in the first place *factual* knowledge in Cthulhu Dark Ages: an adventurer with a high Education may not be schooled, but still might be studious and observant. We note that our definition of Education does not contradict the Call of Cthulhu rulebook – only in Cthulhu Dark Ages the “school of life” has equal status as formal schooling.

New additions to the characteristic rolls are the Dexterity roll and the Charisma roll:

DEXTERITY ROLL (DEX x5). The Dexterity roll allows manipulation skills to be judged for which no game skill exist. It could decide for instance, if the adventurer was able to pick that lock (Dark Ages locks were simple), or was able to grab the vine at the edge of the cliff.

CHARISMA ROLL (APP x5). The Charisma roll allows communication skills to be judged for which no game skill exist. Did he make a good impression? Did she catch everybody's attention?

Name

Most people in the Dark Ages had no surname: John is just John. To further describe an adventurer, give a birthplace, as in John of Hereford, or an occupation, as in John Smith, or a distinguishing feature, as in Erik the Red. Classical French, German or English first names are ideally suited for Dark Ages adventurers.

Birthplace and Language

Choose the adventurer's nation of birth and own language: the German empire (Old High German dialects spoken), the kingdoms of France, Burgundy or Italy (Old French dialects spoken), the kingdom of England (Old English dialects spoken) are good starting points - see the Dark Ages section for more details.

Sex of the Adventurer

Most Dark Ages societies were unfortunately very sexist. Men held almost all positions of power, and women of low rank were usually assigned to menial tasks and had few rights.

In order to enrich playing experience however, we decided to stretch historical correctness, and opened most occupations to female adventurers (avoid cleric, priest, guard, and warrior). It is up to the keeper to consider audacious women as exceptions in a hostile male society, or to bend the medieval mentality towards gentle integration.

Adventurer Occupations

The occupations listed below are well suited for a beginning Dark Ages adventurer.

In the Dark Ages, most people were tied to a clergy or a lay lord. Whenever possible, we suggest “freeman” or “high-status” versions of common occupations, which give the player more autonomy.

All occupations allow at least one free choice of skill among those in the skills section and weapon tables. Remember that the Cthulhu Mythos skill cannot be chosen, only learned during play.

Money and Equipment

In the Middle Ages the question of currency is a complex one, since every siege of power minted its own coins. For the sake of playability Cthulhu Dark Ages adopts a standardized monetary unit: the silver *denier* or *penny*. One denier represents the minimum amount necessary to survive one day in a city.

All occupations endow the adventurer with an amount of deniers. The proportions granted loosely represent roughly one year of earnings. “Buy” weapons, clothing and other effects fit for your adventurer's occupation.

Magic

A few occupations (healer, hermit/heretic, and exorcist-priest) allow the adventurer to select Old Grimoire spells instead of skills. Such choice is always subject to keeper approval – count 50 skill points for every *targeted* spell, and 100 skill points for others (see Casting Spells section). Men of Church have in principle no access to magical lore, but may be granted miraculous powers by divine intervention. In a Christian context, the craving for divine powers should be regarded as a mortal sin.

Occupations

You can learn more about these people and the society they lived in, from the Dark Ages section. Spells are found in the Old Grimoire chapter.

BEGGAR

As a beggar you devote your life to niggling food and money from passers by.

Skills: bargain, conceal, fast talk, insight, listen or spot hidden, and three other skills as personal specialties.

Money: 240 deniers.

CLERIC

You were the child of a rich family, or a brilliant peasant boy once noticed by a man of Church. You received a formal religious education in a bishopric or a monastery. Now you are a secretary, an administrator, a jurist or an architect at the service of a count or a bishop.

Skills: Latin, persuade, library use, own kingdom, status, write Latin or the local chancery language, and two other skills as personal specialties.

Money: 2400 deniers.

CRAFTSMAN/SHOPKEEPER

You might be a smith, a baker or a weaver. Choose a craft. You live in a village community or in a city.

Skills: (craft), bargain, fast talk, insight, natural world, own kingdom, status, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 1200 deniers.

(FREE) FARMER

You are the salt of the earth: well-to-do farmer or colonist, the Dark Ages society depends on your crops, and you work like a horse.

Skills: (craft), bargain, drive horses, listen, natural world, track, and two other skills as personal specialties.

Money: 600 deniers.

GUARD

You work in a cathedral city for the burgrave or the bishop. You have little to do but practice with your weapons and keep you in shape.

Skills: fist/punch or head butt or kick or grapple, own kingdom, sneak, spot hidden or listen, status, throw, one weapon skill, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 1800 deniers.

HEALER

To foreigners, you look like a villager. But villagers know better: your mentor granted you powers of the invisible world. Now villagers come to your hut for a cure or a potion, or for advice about love, the promise of rain and the evil eye. Be wary of the ever-suspicious village priest!

Skills: first aid, insight, natural world, occult, potions, spot hidden or listen, and two other skills as personal specialties (spells allowed).

Money: 900 deniers.

HERMIT/HERETIC

You are an outcast, a drifter, a person plagued by dreams and visions. You grasp at strange clues and bewildering notions. You either hide in the woods or live in a secret community.

Skills: hide, insight, natural world, occult, persuade, spot hidden or listen, and two other skills as personal specialties (one spell allowed).

Money: 240 deniers.

HOUSEHOLD OFFICER

You serve your lord in his urban palace or his *castrum*. Select one of the following functions: seneschal, constable or marshal. You spend much of your day bullying lesser servants to do their work.

Skills: (craft), conceal, fast talk, hide, insight, listen or spot hidden, sneak and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 900 deniers.

JUGGLER/MINSTREL

You're witty and interesting looking, and you love to get attention. You might be adept with "chansons de geste", musical instruments, poems and stories that everybody already knows, tumbling, juggling, rope walking, animal training, or some other entertaining craft.

Skills: (art), bargain, fast talk, insight, own kingdom, persuade, and two other skills as personal specialties.

Money: 1500 deniers.

MERCENARY/BRIGAND

As a mercenary you fight for the highest bidder and then scavenge battlefields for trophies. As a brigand, you may have been the victim of some natural catastrophe or some heinous injustice that changed your life forever. Now you hide deep in the woods and rob traveling monks or traders.

Skills: fist/punch or head butt or kick or grapple, natural world, navigate, track, sneak, throw, one weapon skill, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 2100 deniers.

MERCHANT

You are a Jew living in a port city or in the outskirts of a cathedral city. You make a living from accounts and agents. You import wine, exotic spices and silks from heathen countries and sell them to arrogant nobles. Not being a Christian, you are allowed to be a moneychanger and a moneylender.

Skills: accounting, bargain, fast talk, own kingdom, other kingdoms, other language, write language, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 9000 deniers.

MONK/NUN

You live in a monastery, in silence and in prayer. When you don't pray, you perform domestic tasks, or copy arcane manuscripts from the monastery's library.

Skills: (craft) or (science) or (art), Latin, library use, listen, occult, sign language, write Latin, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 240 deniers. Caveat: since monks and nuns should not *own* anything, spend the money to buy personal effects, and donate the rest down to a few deniers.

PILGRIM

You live from the charity of other people. You accomplish a pilgrimage to a holy place, e.g. Jerusalem, a monastery or a cathedral city housing holy relics. You have your own reasons to be a pilgrim, maybe for the expiation of some crime, the wish to elevate your soul, or simply the desire of adventure in its noblest sense. You could be headed to Santiago di Compostela in Spain, Mount Saint Michel in France, Jerusalem or Rome.

Skills: bargain, own kingdom, natural world, navigate, sneak, and three other skills as personal specialties.

Money: 240 deniers.

PRIEST

You are on a mission from Church to enlighten lay men and women in the ways of God. You are an exorcist or a full-fledged priest who is bound to a parish and collects the tithe from the farmers, most of which goes to your greedy lord anyway. Although celibacy is strongly recommended, some of you have a concubine and have children!

Skills: fast talk, insight, Latin, occult, persuade, status, and two other skills as personal specialties (religiously correct spells allowed for exorcists).

Money: 600 deniers.

SAILOR

You're skilled with sails, boats and ships, and know tides, the wind, and the stars. You have seen Hamburg, Venice or Constantinople. Life is glorious, except for storms, pirates and the terrors of the deep.

Skills: climb, fast talk, natural world, navigate, other kingdoms, pilot boat, and two other skills as a personal specialties.

Money: 1500 deniers.

SCHOLAR

You belong to a monastic or cathedral school. You are the recipient and the dispenser of godly knowledge. You spend your time reading classical authors, writing manuals, and teaching. When you don't teach, you're involved in political intrigues for some good cause.

Skills: (science), library use, Latin, own kingdom, persuade, status, write Latin, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 1200 deniers.

SERGEANT/MAYOR

You are employed by a lord or a monastery to supervise the administration of the domain. Your main task is to collect tax money and dues in kind.

Skills: bargain, fast talk, insight, sneak, spot hidden, status, one weapon skill, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 3000 deniers.

SMALL TRADER

You own a few pack animals or a small ship. You circuit inland, up river or along the coast for the benefit of your master. You know a lot about that route and its dangers.

Skills: bargain, drive horses or pilot boat, fast talk, insight, own kingdom, other language: common trading speech, navigate, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 3600 deniers.

(FREE) WARRIOR

You are a proud *miles*, a professional warrior. You are a bold adventurer on his own or hired by a warlord. Your only possessions are a horse, a long sword and a chainmail.

Skills: grapple, natural world, own kingdom, ride, status, track, one weapon skill, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 9000 deniers.

WOODSMAN/FISHERMAN

As a woodsman you exploit the forest: you might be a hunter, a honey gatherer or a woodcutter that produces charcoal. As a fisherman you are living in a fishing community by a lake or by the sea.

Skills: (craft), natural world, navigate, pilot boat or track, spot hidden or listen, swim or sneak, throw, and one other skill as a personal specialty.

Money: 240 deniers.

Skills

Many "modern" skills didn't exist in the Dark Ages. Conversely, some Dark Ages skills were typical of the era. Importantly, a number of skills have been renamed or redefined to honor the peculiarities of the era. Beware: a few Dark Ages skills have different base chances.

Training: formal training in a skill, as opposed to progression from experience, implies access to a master. Such access, in the Dark Ages, should come as a reward for some outstanding deed or after great perseverance. Remember that there were no public schools or universities! An experience check comes automatically upon completing six months of game time training.

Skill Classes

Diseases, drugs or spells might affect a skill class, typically halving skill chances for a few hours:

COMMUNICATION: (Art), bargain, fast talk, insight, other/own language, persuade, status.

MANIPULATION: (Art), conceal, craft, first aid, missile weapons, pilot boat, repair/devise.

PERCEPTION: Listen, spot hidden, track.

PHYSICAL MOVEMENT: (Art), climb, dodge, drive horses, fist/punch, grapple, head butt, hide, jump, hand-to-hand weapons, kick, ride, sneak, swim, throw.

THOUGHT: Accounting, Cthulhu Mythos, library use, natural world, navigate, occult, other/own kingdoms, potions, (science), spells, write language.

Skills Base Chance

Dark Ages skill	Base %	Modern equivalent
Accounting	10%	Accounting
Art	05%	Art
Bargain	05%	Bargain
Climb	40%	Climb
Conceal	15%	Conceal
Craft	05%	Craft
Cthulhu Mythos	00%	Cthulhu Mythos
Dodge	DEX x2%	Dodge
Drive Horses	20%	Drive Horses
Fast Talk	05%	Fast Talk
First Aid	30%	First Aid
Fist/Punch	50%	Fist/Punch
Grapple	25%	Grapple
Head Butt	10%	Head Butt
Hide	10%	Hide
Insight	05%	Psychology
Jump	25%	Jump
Kick	25%	Kick
Library Use	EDUx2%	Library Use
Listen	25%	Listen
Natural World	10%	Natural History
Navigate	10%	Navigate
Occult	05%	Occult
Other Kingdoms	01%	History
Other Language	01%	Other Language
Own Kingdom	20%	History
Own Language	EDU x5%	Own Language
Persuade	15%	Persuade
Pilot Boat	01%	Pilot Boat
Potions	01%	Pharmacy
Repair/Devise	20%	Mechanical repair
Ride	05%	Ride
Science	01%	Astronomy, Medicine, etc.
Sneak	10%	Sneak
Spot Hidden	25%	Spot Hidden
Status	15%	Credit Rating
Swim	25%	Swim
Throw	25%	Throw
Track	10%	Track
Write Language	01%	Own/Other language

Skills with different names, base chances, and scope than in modern times are shaded. Please refer to the Skills Definition section and to the Weapon Tables.

Skill Definitions

ACCOUNTING (10%)

Basic knowledge of arithmetics, calculus, and the usage of an abacus to understand and manage inventories, accounts and crop registers.

ART (05%)

Specify acting, dancing, musical instrument, jewelry-making, juggling, singing, sculpting, illuminating manuscripts, etc. The adventurer sheet contains blank spaces for different versions of this skill.

CRAFT (05%)

Crafts are skills used to make practical things. Specify armorer, boat-builder, carpenter, leather-worker, mason, potter, shipwright, weaver, woodworker, etc.

INSIGHT (05%)

The adventurer can learn another person's character and motives with this skill. Skillful deceit cannot be penetrated.

LIBRARY USE (EDU x2%)

Same as the rulebook skill of the same name, only the base chance is bounded by EDU – not everybody in the Dark Ages was literate enough to apply this skill!

NATURAL WORLD (10%)

General knowledge of animals, plants, sea life, and climate in an environment with which the adventurer is familiar. The keeper should halve the skill ability in unfamiliar lands. Use Natural World to know and care for domesticated animals.

OCCULT (05%)

The Occult skill is to non-mythos Old Grimoire magic and Limbo creatures, what the Cthulhu Mythos skill is to Mythos magic and monsters. Allows the user to recognize occult symbols and paraphernalia, and provides knowledge of astrology and (Arabian) alchemy concepts. This skill does not apply to Mythos magic. Any evidence of Old Grimoire magic and of Limbo creatures calls for an Occult roll. Succeeding, the adventurer is able to recognize the occult significance of the occurrence. The Occult skill also helps to identify major occult texts like the Emerald Tablet or the Sibylline Books.

OTHER KINGDOMS (01%)

With this skill, the adventurer knows something about the peoples and the lands other than his own.

OTHER LANGUAGE (01%)

This skill represents the user's chance to speak and understand a particular given language. The skill includes rudimentary ability to read the language, but not to write it (see Write Language). Local dialects may be understood at half chance.

OWN KINGDOM (20%)

The adventurer knows something about the peoples, the lands and the legends of his native kingdom. This information comes from gossip and broad traditions. Identification of a dialect is an excellent test for this skill.

OWN LANGUAGE (EDU X5%)

The skill includes a rudimentary ability to read (if the language has a written form). This skill does not allow writing (see Write Language).

POTIONS (01%)

With this skill, recognize, compound, and dispense the infusions, poisons, antidotes and hallucinogens of the Dark Ages. Finding ingredients may require considerable Natural World skill. Preparing a plant potion takes 1-3 days. Preparing poison for a weapon takes 1 day if using animal venom, and up to two weeks if using infectious agents. Beware! A fumbled infusion or antidote may be a poison.

REPAIR/DEVISE (20%)

Every adventurer can fix or devise simple equipment, boats, and so forth. With Devise, an adventurer can create pit-falls and other clever traps to catch animals or humans. Tools and special materials may be needed.

SCIENCE (01%)

Only monks, clerics, scholars, and possibly a few nobles may be trained in one of the “sciences” of the Dark Ages: specify music, astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, medicine, theology, canonic law, etc. The adventurer sheet contains blank spaces for different versions of this skill. See Spot Rules section for applications of the medicine skill.

STATUS (15%)

In the narrow communities of the Dark Ages, Status amounts to an index of personal reputation as well as monetary worth. This is the adventurer's chance to get a loan from a Jewish merchant, or to bluff his way past the count's guards for a private audition.

WRITE LANGUAGE (01%)

In the Dark Ages, writing was a different skill from reading, and was taught separately. This skill gives the user the rudimentary ability to write the specified language, provided he or she has proficiency in reading it, and provided the language has a written form! In the Dark Ages, the principal languages that had a written form were Latin, Syriac or Greek, Arab, German, English, French, Norse, and Slavonic.

Spot Rules

For the main part, the rules of the Call of Cthulhu rulebook are valid in the Dark Ages. However, some emphasis, adjustments and additions are necessary.

Medicine

Medical science was pretty basic in the Dark Ages, especially in the Occidental parts of the world. Monks and scholars still relied on profane books right out of Antiquity to exercise this skill. The most common treatments of illness consisted of bleeding and special diets. For that reason a successful Medicine roll restores only 1D3 hit points per week of observation and "treatment" (instead of 2D3 using modern medicine). Successful application of Medicine may require additional Potions roll to prepare necessary healing potions. The keeper may rule that a fumble causes a further loss of 1D3 hit points, as a result of bad treatment. Arabs were much more skilled in Medicine, and also performed simple surgery. An adventurer successfully treated by an Arab physician heals at 2D3 hit points per game week.

POISON¹	Dose	POT²	Onset	Duration	Symptoms, in time
Adder, aspic	1 bite	8	few min	hours	Pains, anguish, collapsus, necrosis, edema.
Bees/Wasps	50 stings ³	1	few min	2 days	Pain, shock, collapsus, lung edema.
Belladonna	1 fruit	1	few min	varies	Excitation, spasms, phobia of light, thirst.
Bittersweet	1 fruit	1	instant	varies	Sickness, diarrhea, agoraphobia, cold.
Death cap	1 cap	10	8-16 h	2-5 days	Sickness, colic, collapsus.
Hemlock	2-3 grams	10	few min	varies	Vision loss, sickness, diarrhea, paralysis.
Yellow scorpion	1 sting	8	few min	10 hours	Pain, anguish, lung edema.
Spurge	contact	6	instant	2-3 days	Anguish, fever, paralysis; blindness if sprayed in the eyes. Used by Spanish crossbowmen.
Wolfsbane	contact	10	10-20 min	varies	Cold sweat, pains, vomiting, colic, failure.

¹Preparation time is 1 day for animal poisons, 1-3 days for vegetal poisons.

²The potency of the poison is proportional to the dose, e.g. 10 fresh belladonna fruits have a potency of 10. Prepared poisons, as opposed to fresh ones, generally work at half the listed potency.

³The number of stings delivered each round to a single victim depends on the size of the wasp nest or the beehive: count 25 wasp stings per round for very large wasp nests, and 50 bee stings for very large beehives.

Medicine also covers rudimentary surgery, but since anesthetics were not known, every operation should be treated as a wound inflicted by a knife (small or large depending on the operation, see weapon tables); a fumble doubles the damage done, and a critical success halves the damage done. The keeper may also rule that an amputation, like torture, calls for a Sanity roll, with a potential Sanity loss of 0/1D3 to 0/1D10. For more details about Dark Ages medical practices, see the Utilities chapter.

Insanity

Psychoanalysis was not available in the Dark Ages, and there were no insane asylums. Every village had its village “fools” who were part of the community and were entrusted with simple duties in exchange for food. The insane were often believed to be possessed and therefore qualified for an exorcism! Insane people were generally not held responsible for the damage they could cause.

If not taken care of in a monastery or at home, insane adventurers are assumed to be wandering derelicts. Without modern treatment, the indefinitely insane's only hope is private care at home or in a monastery, safe from further upset and harm. After 1D6 game months, he or she may reenter the world.

Poison

Most poisons are slow acting, and their symptoms intensify over hours. In game terms, hit point loss due to poisoning should be applied at the pro-rate of the effects' duration (e.g. 1 HP per hour during 8 hours for the aspic bite, if the resistance roll was failed). Like diseases, poisons might affect one or more skill classes.

The table below lists common poisons, their potency for a given dose and their effects. Many more poisons exist, e.g. the African strophantus, the Asian upas-antiar, the Slavic honey-that-drives-mad, and mineral poisons based on arsenic, mercury or red lead (minium). The latter are easily found in the scriptoria of monasteries, since they enter the composition of inks used to illuminate manuscripts.

Ingesting the right antidote (requiring successful Potions rolls to identify the poison and to prepare the antidote) will stop the poison's effects and the ongoing hit point loss.

Disease

In the Occident illness was often interpreted as the outer sign of a sick soul, a godly punishment, and called for intensified prayers.

Under no circumstance should the keeper *arbitrarily* expose the adventurers to infectious diseases. In the absence of proper medication all diseases are debilitating, and many are deadly enough to kill half the adventurers within weeks.

A minor disease, such as a bad cold or a mild flu, could be contracted after a failed CON x5 roll once exposure has been proven. It should merely cost a hit point or two over a few days. A major disease like leprosy or the Holy Fire might also attack any characteristic and the associated skill

class, typically halving the effective skill percentages for the duration of the disease. Serious diseases like blood poisoning, rabies and Lockjaw should be powerful, about 1D3 hit points per day, enough to kill an average human in a week.

Note that it is possible to prepare “poisons” using infectious agents. Infectious poisons take 2 weeks to prepare and a successful Potions roll. They are applied onto sharp weapon edges and infect the wounded victim. Failing a Luck roll *and* a CONx5 roll to avoid infection, the victim suffers blood poisoning and loses 1D3 hit points every day for a few days - keeper’s discretion.

Bed rest, potions and/or Medicine are the best treatment against diseases. In desperate cases, only curative magic or divine intervention truly helps.

DISEASE ¹	Cause ²	CON ³	Onset	Duration	Symptoms, in time
Blood poisoning (septicemia)	Unclean wound	CONx4	4-16 hours	Few days	Spiking fever, chills, feeling of doom, <i>shock, confusion, rash, gangrene, death.</i>
Consumption (tuberculosis)	Unclean air	CONx9	Weeks-years	Chronic	Sweating, fatigue, malaise, weight loss, <i>cough, fever, respiratory failure.</i>
The flux (epidemic dysentery)	Unclean food/water	CONx9	Days	Weeks	Diarrhea, abdominal cramps, fatigue, weight loss, <i>fever, vomiting, death by dehydration.</i>
Frenzy (typhoid fever)	Unclean food/drink	CONx9	1-2 weeks	4-6 weeks	Headache, fever, rash, bloody stools, <i>hallucinations, intestinal bleeding, death.</i>
Holy fire (ergotism)	Unclean food	See note ⁴	1-2 days	Weeks	Rash, fever, <i>scarring, gross deformations (mainly legs, some facial), gangrene, death.</i>
Leprosy	Leper	CONx10	6-10 years	Indefinite	<i>Skin lesions, disfigurement, hand and feet numbness, and muscle weakness.</i>
Lock jaw (tetanus)	Wound	CONx7	5d–15w	1-7 days	Spasms, stiffness, <i>seizures, fever, death.</i>
Pocks (smallpox)	Unclean air	CONx7	10-17 days	1-2 weeks	High fever, fatigue, headache, malaise, rash, <i>delirium, vomiting, diarrhea, death.</i>
Rabies	Rabid animal bite	CONx1	3-7 weeks	7 days	<i>Fever, hydrophobia, confusion, numbness, drooling, insanity, asphyxia, death.</i>
Spotted/ship fever (typhus)	Cold unclean place	CONx5	10d-2w	2-3 weeks	Headache, high fever, muscle pain, chills, <i>stupor, delirium, rash, light phobia, death.</i>
Swamp fever (malaria)	Swamp, river	CONx8	10d–4w	Chronic	Chills, fever, headache, nausea, <i>bloody stools, yellow skin, convulsion, coma, death.</i>

¹Disease names vary greatly with location, time, and circumstances. The modern name is given within brackets.

²This is the most accurate cause of the disease that can be inferred by observant people lacking modern medicine knowledge!

³Once exposure is proven, a failed CON roll with the specified multiplier indicates that the disease will follow its course to the end, unless the infected receives successful Medicine treatment *before* the end of the incubation period (next column). A successful CON roll means that after incurring the least severe symptoms, the infected victim recovers.

⁴The holy fire “disease” functions in game terms like a poison. The “disease” is caused by the ingestion of fungus-contaminated rye end products like bread and porridge, sometimes ale. The poison potency is left to the keeper’s discretion: it depends on the level of rye contamination and the quantity of contaminated products ingested.

Movement

In Dark Ages Europe, forests covered about 75% of the land, and moors the remaining 25%. A party keeping to a road can travel 15 miles per day with oxcarts, 20 miles on foot and 40 miles on horseback. Halve the movement rate for off-road travel, and halve again if passing hills or mountains. When crossing marshlands or tracts of deep snow, divide the movement rate by 4. Unless bridged or fordable, each major river takes an entire day to cross. The above movement rates can be sustained indefinitely with adequate food and drink and night rest. Desperate people

can move twice as fast, but need one full day (24 hours) of rest for every day of sustained effort.

By daylight and under favorable conditions, a coasting ship can sail about 60 miles in 10 hours.

ROWBOAT

10 ft long, 4 ft wide

Cargo: ½ ton

1 rower

Draft: 1 foot

RAFT/BARGE

15 ft long, 10 feet wide

Cargo: 2 tons

1 poleman

Draft: 1 foot

VIKING DRAKKAR

72 ft long, 15 ft wide 40 rowers
 Cargo: 16 tons Draft: 3 feet

NORSE KNORR

36 ft long, 10 ft wide 4 sailors
 Cargo: 8 tons Draft: 3 feet

MERCHANT BOAT

50 ft long, 15 ft wide 6 sailors
 Cargo: 50 tons Draft: 10 feet

BYZANTINE MERCHANT SHIP

72 ft long, 20 ft wide 12 sailors
 Cargo: 100 tons Draft: 12 feet

Spot Rules for Combat

Special cases for hand-to-hand fighting, hurling or firing missiles should be solved by common sense. Here is a summary of pertinent combat rules excerpted from the Call of Cthulhu rulebook (“more spot rules for combat” and “spot rules for firearms”), and in one instance from Elric (“spot rules for combat”):

DARKNESS

Lower relevant skills by an appropriate factor, e.g. half in moonlight. In total darkness lower skill thresholds to 01 or rely on luck.

KNOCK-OUT ATTACKS

First/Punch, Head Butt, Kick, Grapple and some weapons (see Weapon Tables) can be used to render a target unconscious rather than to do physical harm. Roll for damage as usual, but match the result against the target’s hit points on the Resistance Table. A success knocks-out the target for several minutes and the target only takes one third of the damage. If the roll fails, the target takes full damage!

BIG TARGETS

For things of SIZ 30 or more, every 10 SIZ above SIZ 30 adds 5% to the chance to hit with a missile weapon or a thrown object.

EXTENDED RANGE

A character may fire at up to double a weapon’s base range at half-normal chance to hit.

POINT-BLANK

The shooter’s or thrower’s chance to hit is doubled at less than DEX feet.

PRECISION AIM

Taking an extra round to aim doubles point-blank and base ranges for missile weapons.

UNAIDED SHOTS

Unaided fire allows twice the number of attacks per round. Reduce the shooter’s chance to hit to one-fifth of normal.

WEAPON LENGTH (CLOSING)

On the weapon table, all hand-to-hand weapons include an entry for the length of the weapon. The longer the weapon, the more likely the wielder of it is able to get in the first blow in a fight, or to hold off an opponent armed with a shorter weapon and prevent him from making his own attack. On the other hand, the longer the weapon, the clumsier it is to wield effectively.

- ❑ A fighter armed with a long weapon attacks first against a target using a medium or short weapon, despite DEX rank.
- ❑ Armed with a medium or short hand-to-hand weapon, the opponent cannot attack until successful dodging. The player then should state that the adventurer is slipping inside the guard of the long weapon user.
- ❑ Now that the attacker is inside the guard of the long weapon user, the long weapon user cannot attack. To re-establish his distance, the long weapon user can Dodge to disengage, or drop the long weapon.
- ❑ Remember that a character attempting a Dodge in a combat round may also parry, but not attack!
- ❑ Personal attacks (Fist/Punch, Grapple, Head Butt, and Kick) are considered “short weapons”. Staffs and long swords may attack at any of the three lengths.

What’s in a hit point?

This section answers the basic question: does a hit point really represent something? The table below allows the storytelling keeper to give a dramatic twist to game-speak like “you lost 4 hit points”. There is more drama in telling a 10 hp adventurer that the arrow pierced his lung (a serious wound) and that the hole is *blowing* blood (without further consequences for game-play, but the player needn’t know), than in saying “you lost 4 hit points, 6 to go”. And how much more satisfying for a player to hear that his or her blow not only killed the brutish ghoul, but also wrecked its skull beyond recognition!

h.p. loss in one hit	Injury
10%	Light wound/bruise
25%	Deep wound/minor fracture
50%	Serious wound/major fracture (shock) Roll less than CON x5 to remain conscious
100%	Terminal wound/bone crushed Death in 1 round if not First Aid or Medicine
250%	Organ or bone destroyed Instant death

The fraction of hit points lost is always measured against the base amount (SIZ+CON)/2, not against the current number of hit points. Also mind that light weapons may actually hit several times in a single round, so that damage done in one round is distributed over several small injuries rather than a big one.

Weapon Tables

Weapons listed in a single shaded row are considered to be similar, and a skill increase with one increases the rest.

Hand-to-hand Weapons

Other matters being equal, the fighter with the longer weapon gets to attack first and may be able to hold a foe at bay. People below minimum STR/DEX can still fight with a weapon, but at half their effective skill. All hand-to-hand weapons get one effective attack per round.

Hand-to-hand	base %	damage per attack	1/2 hands	HP	Length	impale	parry ¹	knock-out	min STR/DEX	cost ²
Fist/Punch	50	1D3	1H	-	Short	No	Special	Yes	-	-
Head Butt	10	1D4	0H	-	Short	No	Special	Yes	-	-
Kick	25	1D6	0H	-	Short	No	Special	Yes	-	-
Grapple	25	Special	2H	-	Short	No	Special	Yes	-	-
Ax	15	1D6	1H	15	Medium	Yes	No	Yes	9/9	40
Ax, Frank.	20	1D6+1	1H	20	Medium	Yes	No	Yes	8/8	50
Ax, Great	15	2D6	2H	25	Long	Yes	Yes	No	11/9	50
Club	25	1D6	1H	15	Medium	No	No	Yes	7/7	-
Flail	10	1D6	1H	10	Medium	No	No	No	9/7	?
Knife, Small	25	1D4	1H	10	Short	Yes	No	No	4/4	5
Knife, Large	15	1D6	1H	20	Short	Yes	No	No	4/4	15
Lance	15	1D8 ³	1H	15	Long	Yes	No	No	9/8	40
Mace	25	1D6	1H	20	Medium	No	Yes	No	7/7	20
Scimitar	15	1D8	1H	20	Medium	Yes	Yes	Yes	8/8	?
Spear, Short	15	1D6	1H	15	Long	Yes	Yes	No	7/8	20
Spear, Long	15	1D10	2H	15	Long	Yes	No	No	11/9	25
Staff	25	1D6	2H	15	Long ⁴	No	No	Yes	8/6	-
Sword, Short	15	1D6	1H	20	Medium	Yes	Yes	No	5/5	50
Sword, Long	20	1D8	1H	20	Long ⁴	Yes	Yes	Yes	8/7	70
Sword, Frank.	25	1D8+1	1H	25	Long ⁵	Yes	Yes	Yes	7/6	?

¹For weapons not designed to parry, accumulate damage if used to parry. If a weapon designed to parry blocks a very strong blow, the rolled damage of which exceeds the weapon's hit points, then the weapon breaks.

²Price in deniers. A question mark in the price box indicates a rare weapon. Price varies depending on availability and quality.

³Damage bonus of the horse if charging, of the adventurer if standing still.

⁴Staffs and long swords may attack at any of the three lengths.

Missile Weapons

The number of attacks per round assumes careful aiming.

Missile	base %	damage per attack ⁵	base range ⁶	attack per round	HP	impale	parry	min STR/DEX	cost
Ax	05	1D6	5	1	15	Yes	No	9/11	40
Ax, Frank.	10	1D6+1	10	1	20	Yes	No	8/10	50
Bow ⁷	10	1D8	60	1	10	Yes	No	9/9	30
Crossbow ⁷	20	2D6	100	½	15	Yes	No	11/7	?
Knife, Small	10	1D4	10	1	10	Yes	No	4/4	5
Rock, Thrown	throw	1D2	20	2	20	No	No	5/5	-
Sling	01	1D4	60	1	-	Yes	No	7/11	5
Spear, Short	15	1D6	25	1	15	Yes	No	7/8	20
Spear, Long	10	1D10	15	1	15	Yes	No	11/9	25

⁵Roll the normal damage bonus and divide the result by two. Round up fractions.

⁶Range in yards. When using missile weapons, an adventurer may attempt to hit a target at up to double the base range. Halve the normal chance to hit. Double the normal chance to hit at less than DEX feet.

⁷Arrows and bolts do the damage of course. An individual arrow has 1 hit point, a bolt 3.

Armor

Rounds-to-put-on assumes the adventurer has laid out the armor, and has practiced putting it in the dark.

Armor	damage defl. ⁸	burden	fits other SIZ?	rounds to put	cost
Leather, Soft	3	Light	±2	2	25
Leather, Boiled	4	Light	no	2	75
Leather and rings	5	Light	±1	2	150
Leather and scales	5	Light	±1	4	150
Chainmail	6 ⁹	Moderate	±2	4	1200

⁸Add +1 if wearing a helm.

⁹Deflects 4 damage from thrusting weapons (spear, bow and crossbow), and 3 from crushing weapons (fist/punch, head butt, kick, club, flail, mace, staff, rock, sling).

Shields

Powerful blows damage shields. Each time the blow exceeds the hit point rating of the shield, the points of damage in excess of the rating lower the rating.

Shields	base %	hit points	min STR/DEX	cost
Improvised	10	±15	7/10	-
Small	15	20	9/9	25
Medium	15	25	11/9	40
Large	15	30	12/8	40

War Engines

Siege engines are bulky constructs and it can take minutes up to an hour to realign one. Therefore siege engines can only hit objects in the line of sight. The balista shoots missiles along a more or less straight path like a crossbow, whereas the catapult and the trebuchet “lob” their payload. For these, range is a question of projectile weight: the lighter, the farther; damage remains the same.

Engine	base % ¹⁰	damage ¹¹	base range ¹²	time to reload	impale	crew	cost
Balista	20	6D6 (21)	150	2 minutes	Yes	3	180
Catapult	10	30D6 (105)	100	5 minutes	No	3	900
Traction trebuchet ¹³	01	4D6 (16)	75	2 rounds	No	50	120
Hybrid trebuchet ¹³	05	50D6 (175)	50	10 minutes	No	10	1500

¹⁰Chance to hit assumes targets of SIZ 30 or more. Reduce chance to hit by 5% for every 10 SIZ below SIZ 30.

¹¹The missile does the damage of course (average damage indicated within brackets). The catapult launches 60-pound rocks. The traction trebuchet can lob 10-pound heavy stones. Our hybrid trebuchet flings anything weighting up to 200 pounds! The balista shoots missiles resembling spear-sized bolts.

¹²Range in yards. When using war engines, the crew may attempt to hit a target at up to double the base range. Halve the normal chance to hit.

¹³Note that the trebuchet was not used in the Occident until the twelfth century. The Byzantines and the Arabs however had been using the engine for three centuries already.