

THE ARCANE ALMANAC

These are The Arcane Library's house rules for keeping 5E fast, dangerous, and fun. These rules were inspired by 5E Hardcore Mode, Dungeon Crawl Classics, and Index Card RPG. Herein, you'll also find an adventure-starting primer.

CHARACTER CREATION

- Roll 3d6, in order, for each ability score.
- Roll on the **Character Background** table. Add your proficiency bonus to rolls related to expertise gained from your background (subject to GM approval).
- Roll on the **Character Fate** table to determine your unique ability.
- Roll on the **Character Race** table to determine your race.
- Choose from one of the four base **classes**: cleric, fighter, rogue, or wizard.
- Roll your hit die at first level and add your Constitution bonus. That's your starting HP.
- There are no feats or skills.
- Rogues are proficient in sneaking, hiding, climbing, opening locks, sleight of hand, and disabling traps. These Dexterity-based talents are referred to as **Thieving Skills**.
- If you're not proficient in a task that requires training, such as administering first aid, roll your ability check with disadvantage.
- Characters can **carry** a number of items equal to their Strength scores. Yes, that includes candle sticks. Items that fit in a small bag or pouch count as one item. Coins in increments of 100 count as one item.
- Wizards begin play knowing two cantrips of their choosing, one 1st-level spell of their choosing, and four **random** 1st-level spells.
- Clerics begin play knowing a mix of four cantrips and 1st-level spells of their choosing.



SPELLCASTING

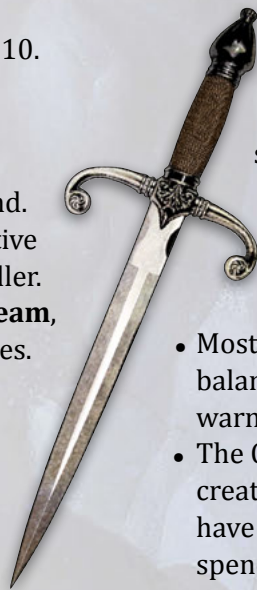
- Clerics learn one spell of their choosing of a level they can cast each time they level up.
- Wizards learn one **random** spell of a chosen level they can cast (not including spells learned from scrolls or spellbooks, see below) each time they level up.
- Wizards can **permanently learn** a spell of any level from a scroll or spellbook by spending one full day studying the spell.
- Deities may grant clerics higher-level spells as rewards for great deeds.
- Characters who gain spellcasting after first level learn two spells of their choosing and then one spell each level thereafter.
- There are no spell slots and no spells per day. You may cast any known spell until you fail at a spellcasting check to cast it (see below). On a failed spellcasting check, you can't cast that spell again until you complete a long rest.
- To **cast a spell**, roll an INT or WIS check with your primary spellcasting ability. Add your proficiency bonus. If you beat a DC equal to 10 + the spell's level, the spell succeeds and you hit your targets, if relevant. On a failure, nothing happens (not even half damage).
- A cleric may have disadvantage on a spellcasting check if it displeases his or her deity, such as healing a creature of an opposing alignment.
- A cleric may gain disadvantage on casting spells after angering his or her deity, such as refusing to heal a worshipper of the same god. This effect lasts until the cleric atones in a manner determined by the GM.
- If a wizard rolls a 1 on a spellcasting check, he or she must roll on the **Spell Misfire** table for the spell's level.
- If a cleric rolls a 1 on a spellcasting check, he or she cannot cast that spell again, even after a long rest, until **atoning** to his or her deity in a manner determined by the GM. This could include material sacrifice or performing a deed or quest.
- If you roll a 20 on a spellcasting check, the spell's effects are doubled.

EXPLORATION AND XP

- Characters act in initiative order rolled at the beginning of the session. Initiative starts with the highest roll and moves clockwise (or left to right) from the highest roller.
- You may move once and make one roll to do an action on your turn.
- Spending **hit dice** takes one action.
- **Conversation** with NPCs can encompass a few sentences or exchanges before moving to the next player. Not all conversations will be resolved in one turn.
- Since there is no Wisdom (Perception), characters can't make rolls to discover what's in a room. Players must describe what specific actions their characters take to find hidden things.
- If a character performs the **exact same action** again after failing the previous turn, he or she may roll with advantage (this is also true in combat).
- Characters gain between 1-4 XP per successful encounter as awarded by the GM.
- Characters need 10 times their current level in XP to attain the **next level**.
- Character advancement caps at level 10.

COMBAT

- When combat begins, the GM determines if there is a surprise round. Then, everyone rolls initiative. Initiative moves clockwise from the highest roller.
- Optionally, **all PCs act at once as a team**, and the GM acts at once for all enemies.
- The GM might impose a real-world timer on the players' turns.
- Ranged attacks and spells can target any enemies in sight within the battle area. No need to measure.
- There are no **opportunity attacks**.
- On your turn, you may move your speed. You may also choose one of the following: attack, cast a spell, or move again. Using an item or making an ability check is a bonus action. The GM will make rulings on other actions.



- There are no **status** effects. The GM will determine whether someone can move, see, cast spells, or anything else based on common sense. The disadvantage/advantage system covers most situations.
- In combat, fighters may attempt a **Heroic Feat**. With a Heroic Feat, you try an unusual combat action, such as pushing an enemy or attacking several foes at once. The GM has final say on what's possible. Make a Strength check + your proficiency bonus with a DC of 10 + the target's CR (or the highest CR among a group of targets). If the target's CR is higher than 10, the DC is 20. If the Heroic Feat does not include a target, the DC is 13. On a success, the Heroic Feat succeeds.
- In combat, you may use an action to **spend any number of hit dice** to regain HP. You can't do this while unconscious or dying.
- When reduced to 0 HP or below, your character is **dying**. Roll a d4. Your character dies in that many rounds unless healed or stabilized with a relevant DC 15 check.
 - **Morale** (does not apply to PCs): When a monster is below half its HP or the battle has turned against it, it might run. The GM rolls a d20. If the result is below the monster's Wisdom score, it flees or surrenders. Some zealous or unintelligent enemies are immune to morale rolls.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Most encounters are not designed to be balanced or level-appropriate. You have been warned, adventurer....
- The GM might award you a **Luck Token** for creative or impressive actions. You can only have one Luck Token at a time. You may spend your Luck Token to reroll any roll you or an ally has just made. You may also expend it to turn any hit you just made into a critical.
- There are many scenarios in 5E that aren't covered in this document. The GM will work with you to make a determination in the spirit of these rules as needed.

THE UNKNOWN WORLD

THE EDGE OF ALL THINGS

- Humans, dwarves, and elves cluster in their enclaves and city-states. They fear the fell creatures and ancient races lurking outside their walls in the ruins of lost civilizations.
- You live on the edge of all things. The edge of civilization, the edge of discovery, the edge of death. Legends were not made within the walls of safety and comfort.
- The known world is small, and it is behind you. You seek the unknown world beyond.

THE BEGINNING

- You're seated with your companions around a table carved with a crude map of the lands outside the keep. It is the work of many different adventurers and expeditions.
- Your gear is packed. The time to decide your destination has come. Where will your group stake its claim?



RUMORS

- **The Red Keep of Ekmara:** Haunted! If you somehow survive the barbarians roaming the Ashen Plains, you'll die on the claws of the horrors stalking the keep's halls. But they say anyone who manages to claim Ekmara's sword, *Bloodlasher*, will go down a legend.
- **Tal-Yool, the Cyclopean Citadel:** The citadel's towering, overgrown halls guard the arcane secrets of the cyclopes who once walked the jungle. The giants are no more, but dark shadows are said to flit between the silent, crumbling columns.
- **The Tomb of Deridia:** Harpies leer from the crags overlooking the blasphemous tomb of an ancient chaos knight. Whatever treasure Deridia took with him in death remains unknown; none have returned to tell of it.
- **Monastery of Dhalpurna:** Kyzian bandits rove the steppes and mountain passes leading to the fabled monastery of the elephant-men. Those who survive the journey may participate in the Trial of the Crescent Moon. Death awaits those who fail, but what is the prize for triumph?
- **The Caves of Raghbat:** In the desert wastes, a demonic wind howls from the Caves of Raghbat. The lost Jewel of Barbalt is said to lie deep within, but who — or what — is its keeper?

TABLES

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

D20	Detail
1	Farmer
2	Sailor
3	Street urchin
4	Hunter
5	Blacksmith
6	Scribe
7	Church acolyte
8	Mercenary
9	Socialite
10	Herbalist
11	Artist
12	Merchant
13	Fisher
14	Scout
15	Minstrel
16	Soldier
17	Outlaw
18	Wizard's apprentice
19	Actor
20	Noble

CHARACTER FATE

D20	Detail
1	Born under the blood moon. +2 damage on melee weapon attacks

2	A blind witch predicted your birth. +1 point of Wisdom
3	Gift of gab. You are proficient in rolls to persuade and deceive others
4	Born under an aurora borealis. You can cast <i>dancing lights</i> using Wisdom
5	Your ancestor did a great, holy deed. You have resistance to necrotic damage
6	Survived a snake bite. Advantage on saving throws against poison
7	Born on the summer solstice. You have resistance to fire damage
8	Gift of athleticism. You are proficient in rolls to climb and do acrobatics
9	A fairy kissed your forehead while you slept in your crib. +1 point of Charisma
10	The Three Sisters hesitate to cut the strands of your fate. Your death timer is always 4
11	Born on a leyline. You can cast <i>eldritch blast</i> using Wisdom
12	Your ancestor was a legendary hero. You start each session with a Luck Token
13	Born on a ship. +1 point of Dexterity
14	Gift of alertness. You may reroll an initiative roll once per day
15	Born on the winter solstice. You have resistance to cold damage
16	A spirit whispered stories and secrets to you. +1 point of Intelligence
17	Death took your shadow rather than your soul. You can cast <i>darkness</i> using Wisdom
18	Born with elf-sight. +2 damage on ranged weapon or spell attacks
19	Overcame childhood sickness. +1 point of Constitution
20	A god noticed your birth. Add +2 points to any stat

CHARACTER RACE

D12	Detail
1-4	Human
5-6	Elf
7-8	Dwarf
9-10	Halfling
11	Half elf
12	Half orc

SPELL MISFIRE LEVELS 0-2

D8	Detail
1	You take 1d6 necrotic damage. You suffer painful welts (disadvantage on spellcasting checks) for 1d4 hours
2	Your spell has a completely inverse effect as determined by the GM
3	Your shadow animates and attacks you
4	You smell strongly of manure for the next 1d4 days
5	A hostile, annoying imp appears and harasses you for 1d4 hours
6	Roll 1d4. A feature on your face becomes snakelike. 1: pupils, 2: nose, 3: skin, 4: ears
7	Your spell targets a random ally instead
8	Surging energy makes you fall unconscious for 1d4 rounds

SPELL MISFIRE LEVELS 3-6

D8	Detail
1	You summon an angry bone devil
2	One of your limbs petrifies. You lose 2 points of Dexterity
3	You shoot a lightning bolt in a random direction

4	You take 4d10 force damage in a concussive blast
5	You forget one random language
6	Roll 1d4. You sprout horns of the corresponding type. 1: ram, 2: bull, 3: stag, 4: devil. They regrow if removed
7	Any time you touch metal with your bare hands going forward, you take 1d6 lightning damage from static shock
8	You are banished to a demiplane as per the maze spell. A minotaur occupies it and hunts you

SPELL MISFIRE LEVELS 7-9

D8	Detail
1	1d4 members of the party polymorph into random beasts for 1d4 rounds
2	A random magic item in your possession is irrevocably destroyed
3	You forget how to cast this spell and all traces of it are lost in your spellbook, notes, and scrolls
4	Your bones become birdlike and hollow. You lose 2 points of Constitution
5	You open a gate to a random plane. Everything within the battle area that is not anchored is sucked through in 1d4 rounds. Then the gate closes
6	Your eyes become opaque and you are blinded
7	One of your limbs turns into a giant crab claw. Reduce your Charisma score by 2 points
8	Death itself marks you with a curse. A black symbol appears on your forehead and you suffer 1d10 necrotic damage each day that cannot be healed. Only great magic can end these effects

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