

DUELING HOUSE RULES FOR SNAKES & SALOONS

Dueling has been a long standing tradition in many regions across the land. Duels were created in order to settle disagreements in a more civilized way than simply tearing at each other's throats. Duels are often called by individuals who seek retribution for an act of dishonor conducted against themselves or someone that they represent. Duels are not conducted in order to slay the accused, rather they serve as a means for the accuser to regain their honor. However, if someone expires as a result of the duel, so be it. Some areas have outlawed dueling, seeing the practice as uncivilized and barbaric.

CODE DUELLO

Duels are often conducted with opponents using matching weapons, however this is not always necessary. Individuals can choose to use whichever weapon they feel the most confident with, barring that their opponents agree. Each opponent must also agree to the duel's specific rules, called 'code duello'. It is in the establishing of the code duello that opponents can raise any rules that they wish to. These rules are boundless, but some of the common rules that are established are: matching (or not matching) weapons, the allowance of post-duel medical attention, the allowance of magical weapons, equipment, or effects, the number of paces that will be taken, and any prizes associated with the winner. Once the code duello is established and both opponents agree to it, they shake hands and proceed to the dueling grounds. Code duello may also be established any amount of time before a duel is to take place. Any violators of the code duello are seen as both dishonorable and criminals. Punishment for a violation of code duello can be as intense as murder, depending on how much honor is valued in the prosecutor's society.

CONDUCTING A DUEL

When opponents meet for a duel, they meet face-to-face and offer to have their weapons inspected by their opponents and anyone serving as a witness. If there are no problems in the weaponry, the opponents stand back-to-back. They take a number of paces agreed upon, making careful effort to match their opponent's pace. When both feet settle on the last pace, opponents are permitted to turn, draw, and attack.

If both opponents have gotten to this step without (noticeably) violating the code duello to their opponent or any witnesses, these special duelling rules take place:

- Both opponents make the following rolls (including modifiers) and total them:

An initiative roll + an attack roll with their dueling weapon + a damage roll with their dueling weapon

The opponent with the highest total score wins the duel. The loser is brought to 0 hit points, knocked unconscious, and immediately makes a death saving throw. At this point the duel is over and the loser may receive medical attention if the code duello allows it, otherwise the loser is left to their fate.

Individuals may duel with melee weapons against opponents with ranged weapons, however they must be swift and should take careful consideration when establishing the number of paces taken in the code duello in order to make sure they can close the distance. Every pace is 5ft of distance between opponents. Opponents who are dueling with melee weapons and take a number of paces which places them beyond their movement speed must make both their initiative roll and attack roll with disadvantage. If the number of paces they take exceeds double their movement speed, they automatically lose. Opponents who are dueling with ranged weapons and take a number of paces which places them beyond their weapons first range must make their attack roll with disadvantage.

If letting your Players or NPCs fall in one strike feels inconsistent with traditional combat in which these characters could normal take a few rounds and keep going, remember that when dueling opponents are making themselves purposely vulnerable for the tradition. This is emphasised by Armor Class not playing a key factor in duelling.

EXAMPLE DUEL

The gunslinger Winston Jackson calls a duel with the outlaw Maybee Sinclair to reclaim his sister after Maybee had kidnapped her. If Maybee agrees to the duel, they then proceed to establish the code duello, if not they settle things the old fashioned way.

Winston demands that if he wins the duel, Maybee's henchmen will release his sister back to him. Maybee accepts on the condition that if she wins, Winston will become her servant for the foreseeable future. Winston agrees and it is added to the code duello. Winston then states that he wants to take 5 paces which amounts to 25ft. Maybee argues for 6 paces, 30ft, they agree and it is added to the code duello. Then Winston argues that there will be no post-duel medical attention. Maybee agrees on the condition that they must also use matching non-magical revolver. Winston accepts and it is added to the code duello. Winston and Maybee have nothing more they wish to add to the code duello, they shake hands and exit the saloon which Winston had confronted Maybee in.

They step face-to-face onto the dirt road outside the saloon. They both produce revolvers and they inspect each other's. A sage who's been spectating the whole ordeal offers to ensure that both revolvers are non-magical. Both agree and the sage casts the Detect Magic spell and sees that neither are magical. The sage returns them, Winston and Maybee holster the weapons and stand back-to-back. They each take 6 paces, making a distance of 30ft between them. When the last step of the 6th pace is taken, both of them turn, draw, and fire.

Winston's dexterity modifier is +5 and his proficiency bonus is +3. Maybee's dexterity modifier is also +5 but her proficiency bonus is +4. Both make initiative rolls, attack rolls, and damage rolls simultaneously.

Winston will roll: $(1d20 + 5) + (1d20 + 8) + (1d10 + 5)$

Maybee will roll: $(1d20 + 5) + (1d20 + 9) + (1d10 + 5)$

While these opponents are at about the same dueling level, not all duelists will be and that plays an important factor into whether or not someone will accept a duel.

Winston rolled: $(21) + (27) + (8) = 56$

Maybee rolled: $(13) + (26) + (12) = 51$

With a bit of luck, Winston's rolls totaled higher and thus he was able to draw and fire faster and more accurately than Maybee. He won the duel. Maybee suffered a terminal shot and is knocked unconscious and immediately makes a death saving throw. Per the code duello, Maybee is not permitted any medical attention. Only the dice will tell her fate (unless someone violates the code duello and heals her, of course). Winston walks away knowing that, if all goes to plan, his sister will soon be returned to him. Optionally, Game Masters may allow the winner to kill the loser outright if it is dramatically or narratively appropriate (though we do not recommend you do this with Player Characters for obvious reasons).

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