

MANUAL OF ARMS

– weapons –

Eric Diaz



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Credits

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Introduction

What is MANUAL OF ARMS?

Manual of Arms is a series of booklets that enhance, change and reinterpret existing equipment and mechanics for non-magical combat. Each booklets deal with a single subject. If there is enough interest, they'll be collected in a single tome in the future.

What is this book about?

This book is a collection of ideas to make weapons more diverse, streamlined, balanced, varied, and fun.

Old versions of the game had many weapon options that were not used in the current one. Fortunately, they are easy to use, with a few adjustments to match the current rules. Many ideas in this book are updated and adapted from other iterations or other games.

In addition, I changed some weapons, added a few, created a few new rules and made notes on how to choose and create your own weapons.

Which game system?

This book contains ideas that are useful for many games. However, the main focus is the world's most famous role-playing game, in its latest version.

What did you change?

I've made a few changes in chapter I to make weapons more streamlined and interesting. I explain

these changes in chapter II. In these two chapters, I used asterisks to indicate what was changed. One asterisk (*) means I changed the traits of a weapon that already existed. Two asterisks (**) mean that the weapon or property are not in the original rules.

Must I use the entire book at once?

Not really. The chapters are modular. You can choose which ones to use, or even choose what paragraphs or single weapons to add to your game.

Chapters

Chapter I contains a list of weapons and their properties. If you want to use this book only to find new weapons, without any tinkering, or you don't care for designer's notes and analysis of the game mechanics, this is the chapter you're going to use.

Chapter II is a brief weapon-by-weapon analysis and description. It describes existing weapons and explains why I have made some of the changes I made in chapter I.

Chapter III is a melee weapon builder, made so that you can create your own weapons or change existing ones.

Chapter IV is a list of loose ideas to alter weapons further, or add even more weapons to your game. Unlike chapter I, however, chapter IV discusses significant changes to the game mechanics.

Chapter I: List of weapons

Simple Melee Weapons

	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Blackjack**	2 gp	1d4 bludgeoning	1 lb.	Finesse, special
Buckler**	5 gp	1 bludgeoning	1 lb.	Finesse, light, special
Club	1 sp	1d4 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Light
Dagger	2 gp	1d4 piercing	1 lb.	Finesse, light, thrown (range 20/60)
Greatclub	2 sp	1d8 bludgeoning	10 lb.	Two-handed
Greatclub, heavy**	5 sp	1d10 bludgeoning	15 lb.	Heavy, two-handed
Handaxe	5 gp	1d6 slashing	2 lb.	Light, thrown (range 20/60)
Javelin	5 sp	1d6 piercing	2 lb.	Thrown (range 30/120)
Knife**	2 gp	1d4 slashing	1 lb.	Finesse, light
Light Hammer	2 sp	1d4 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Light, thrown (range 20/60)
Mace*	5 gp	1d6 bludgeoning	4 lb.	Versatile (1d8)
Quarterstaff*	2 sp	1d6 bludgeoning	4 lb.	Two-handed
Scythe**	5 sp	1d8 slashing	10 lb.	Heavy, two-handed, trip
Sickle	1 gp	1d4 slashing	2 lb.	Light
Spear	1 gp	1d6 piercing	3 lb.	Thrown (range 20/60), versatile (1d8)

Simple Ranged Weapons

	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Crossbow, Light	25 gp	1d8 piercing	5 lb.	Ammunition (range 80/320), loading, two-handed
Dart	5 cp	1d4 piercing	¼ lb.	Finesse, thrown (range 20/60)
Shortbow	25 gp	1d6 piercing	2 lb.	Ammunition (range 80/320), two-handed
Sling	1 sp	1d4 bludgeoning	—	Ammunition (range 30/120)
Staff sling**	5 sp	1d6 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Ammunition (range 50/150), two-handed

Martial Melee Weapons

	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Battleaxe	10 gp	1d8 slashing	4 lb.	Versatile (1d10)
Falchion**	5 gp	1d8 slashing	2 lb.	—
Flail*	10 gp	1d8 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Trip
Glaive*	20 gp	1d10 slashing	6 lb.	Heavy, reach, two-handed, special
Greataxe	30 gp	1d12 slashing	7 lb.	Heavy, two-handed
Greatsword	50 gp	2d6 slashing	6 lb.	Heavy, two-handed
Halberd*	20 gp	1d10 slashing	6 lb.	Heavy, reach, two-handed, trip
Half-pike**	5 gp	1d10 piercing	6 lb.	Heavy, reach, two-handed
Lance	10 gp	1d12 piercing	6 lb.	Reach, special
Longsword	15 gp	1d8 slashing	3 lb.	Versatile (1d10)
Maul	10 gp	2d6 bludgeoning	10 lb.	Heavy, two-handed
Morningstar*	15 gp	1d8 bludgeoning /piercing	4 lb.	Versatile (1d10), special
Pike*	10 gp	1d10 piercing	18 lb.	Heavy, reach, two-handed, special
Pollaxe**	20 gp	1d10 bludgeoning	6 lb.	Heavy, reach, two-handed, trip
Rapier	25 gp	1d8 piercing	2 lb.	Finesse
Saber**	25 gp	1d8 slashing	2 lb.	Finesse
Scimitar	25 gp	1d6 slashing	3 lb.	Finesse, light
Shortsword	10 gp	1d6 piercing	2 lb.	Finesse, light
Trident*	5 gp	1d6 piercing	4 lb.	Thrown (range 20/60), versatile (1d8), trip
War Pick*	5 gp	1d8 piercing	2 lb.	Trip
Warhammer	15 gp	1d8 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Versatile (1d10)
Whip	2 gp	1d4 slashing	3 lb.	Finesse, reach, trip

Martial Ranged Weapons

	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Blowgun	10 gp	1 piercing	1 lb.	Ammunition (range 25/100), loading
Bolas**	10 gp	1d4 bludgeoning	2 lb.	Finesse, thrown (range 20/60), trip
Crossbow, Hand	75 gp	1d6 piercing	3 lb.	Ammunition (range 30/120), light, loading
Crossbow, Heavy	50 gp	1d10 piercing	18 lb.	Ammunition (range 100/400), heavy, loading, two-handed
Longbow	50 gp	1d8 piercing	2 lb.	Ammunition (range 150/600), heavy, two-handed
Net	1 gp	—	3 lb.	Special, thrown (range 5/15)

Weapon Properties

Many weapons have special properties related to their use, as shown in the Weapons table.

Ammunition: You can use a weapon that has the ammunition property to make a ranged attack only if you have ammunition to fire from the weapon. Each time you attack with the weapon, you expend one piece of ammunition. Drawing the ammunition from a quiver, case, or other container is part of the attack (you need a free hand to load a one-handed weapon). At the end of the battle, you can recover half your expended ammunition by taking a minute to search the battlefield. If you use a weapon that has the ammunition property to make a melee attack, you treat the weapon as an improvised weapon (see “Improvised Weapons” later in the section). A sling must be loaded to deal any damage when used in this way.

Finesse: When making an attack with a finesse weapon, you use your choice of your Strength or Dexterity modifier for the attack and damage rolls. You must use the same modifier for both rolls.

Heavy: Small creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls with heavy weapons. A heavy weapon’s size and

bulk make it too large for a Small creature to use effectively.

Light: A light weapon is small and easy to handle, making it ideal for use when fighting with two weapons.

Loading: Because of the time required to load this weapon, you can fire only one piece of ammunition from it when you use an action, bonus action, or reaction to fire it, regardless of the number of attacks you can normally make.

Reach: This weapon adds 5 feet to your reach when you attack with it, as well as when determining your reach for opportunity attacks with it.

Special: A weapon with the special property has unusual rules governing its use, explained in the weapon’s description (see “Special Weapons” later in this section).

Thrown: If a weapon has the thrown property, you can throw the weapon to make a ranged attack. If the weapon is a melee weapon, you use the same ability modifier for that attack roll and damage roll that you would use for a melee attack with the weapon. For

example, if you throw a handaxe, you use your Strength, but if you throw a dagger, you can use either your Strength or your Dexterity, since the dagger has the finesse property.

Trip:** This weapon can be used to trip a creature, knocking it prone. It uses the same rules as Shoving a Creature. However, you cannot use this weapon to push a creature away.

Two-Handed: This weapon requires two hands when you attack with it.

Versatile: This weapon can be used with one or two hands. A damage value in parentheses appears with the property—the damage when the weapon is used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Special Weapons

Weapons with special rules are described here.

Blackjack:** When you have advantage on your attack roll against a creature, the blackjack's damage die changes to 1d6.

Buckler:** When you take the Attack action and attack with a light or finesse melee weapon that you're holding in one hand, you can use a bonus action to defend yourself with a buckler that you're holding in the other hand. This grants you a +1 bonus to AC until the beginning of your next turn.

Glaive:** When you use this weapon against a creature that is Large or bigger, the glaive's damage die changes to 1d12.

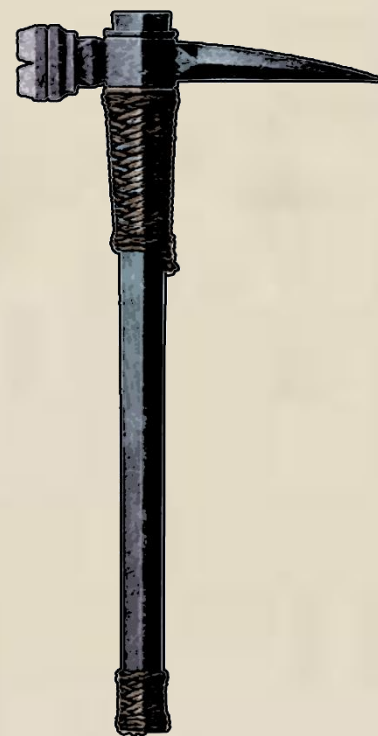
Lance: You have disadvantage when you use a lance to attack a target within 5 feet of you. Also, a lance requires two hands to wield when you aren't mounted.

Morningstar: This weapon deals both slashing and piercing damage. If your target has immunity, resistance or vulnerability to one of these two types,

the damage you deal is always the one that is worse for the target. A creature would have to be immune to slashing and piercing damage to have damage dealt by this weapon be ignored, for example.

Net: A Large or smaller creature hit by a net is restrained until it is freed. A net has no effect on creatures that are formless, or creatures that are Huge or larger. A creature can use its action to make a DC 10 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success. Dealing 5 slashing damage to the net (AC 10) also frees the creature without harming it, ending the effect and destroying the net. When you use an action, bonus action, or reaction to attack with a net, you can make only one attack regardless of the number of attacks you can normally make.

Pike:** This weapon adds 10 feet to your reach when you attack with it, as well as when determining your reach for opportunity attacks with it, instead of the usual 5 additional feet. You have disadvantage when you use a pike to attack a target within 5 feet of you.



Chapter II – Weapon Analysis

In this chapter, we analyze each weapon individually. Each paragraph starts with a brief description of what the weapon is like in the real world, if needed, followed by a description of its functions and my motives for adding or changing them, if any. Use them to choose weapons for your characters and decide which weapons you want to add to your game (or change, etc.).

Simple Melee Weapons

Blackjack

A very short, concealable, weighted club, often with a head made of lead. Added as a cool new toy for thieves and assassins.

Buckler

A buckler is a small shield gripped with the fist. A worthy addition for any game that contains swashbucklers! Mechanically, it works better as a light

weapon than as a new type of shield. It is useful both for defense and for moderate offense. Note that it can be used with a rapier, for example.

Club

This is just a very simple, cheap weapon, not much better than an improvised one. Use one only if you have no money or no options.

Dagger

A simple weapon for multiple occasions, although the damage is small.

Greatclub

If you can buy a quarterstaff (see below), this weapon seems useless in the original rules. Primitive tribes and intimidating thugs can choose this weapon anyway. Since I changed the mace and quarterstaff slightly, the greatclub becomes a cheaper, worse version of the mace. Also, see the heavier version below.

Greatclub, heavy

A bigger, heavier version of the greatclub. It is usually better for anyone who can use heavy weapons.

Handaxe

A good simple weapon with decent damage. You can use one in each hand and throw them at your enemies when needed.

Javelin

A light throwing spear. Great weapon for throwing, but also an excellent weapon to use in one hand (with a shield, etc.), since it is cheaper and lighter than a spear (and has more range if you need to throw it).

Knife

A short bladed weapon made for slashing. Similar to a sickle, but more weapon than agricultural tool.

New weapons and Weapon Proficiency

Some characters classes are proficient in few weapons. The wizard, for example, is proficient in daggers, darts, slings, quarterstaves and light crossbows. What about the new weapons described in this book? It's up to the DM to decide. We suggest comparing it to similar weapons (similar damage, properties, etc.). A knife is similar to a dagger or sickle, a saber is similar to a rapier or longsword, etc. When in doubt, check the next chapter to see if an existing weapon is mentioned in the description of a new one.

In any case, I recommend erring on the side of fun, and let players choose new weapons if the stats are similar enough.

Light hammer

Good for throwing, or using one in each hand, but the damage is small.

Mace

In the original rules, a (much) more expensive and less versatile version of the quarterstaff (see below). Unless you like its look, there was little reason to use one.

I gave the mace a Versatile (1d8) property, because it looks cool, makes sense, and it's balanced with other options.

Quarterstaff

The quarterstaff, as originally written, is an amazing weapon. Decent damage, simple, cheap, and versatile, with 1d6/1d8 damage (as much as a greatclub).

In my opinion, the idea of fighting with a quarterstaff in one single hand (maybe in combination with a shield, or even one quarterstaff in each hand if you have the right feats) is ludicrous. This is probably an honest mistake - remember, you do not need two hands to hold a two-handed weapon, just to attack with it (which was mentioned in an errata). In addition, there is no reason for the wizard's iconic weapon to be better than the cleric's one.

My solution is either improving the mace and greatclub, or making the quarterstaff less powerful. I did a bit of both, but specially nerfed the staff. However, I prefer to err in the side of fun. So if your players are having fun with the quarterstaff, let them; you can improve the mace or greatclub (if they are being used at all) instead. For example, add +1 damage to these two weapons if the wielder has Strength 13 or more, or use the variations described in this book.

Sickle

A farming tool adapted for combat. Similar to a quarterstaff or spear. A decent (but not great) weapon, usually chosen by druids and farmers. Added to this list because it looks cool.

Spear

A great simple weapon with multiple uses (one hand, two hands, thrown).

Simple Ranged Weapons

Crossbow, Light; Shortbow

A powerful ranged weapon. More damage than a shortbow, but a bit heavier, less range, and harder to use if you have multiple attacks.

Dart

These are not your usual bar darts, but something heavier and more dangerous (like the roman *plumbata*). A cheap, lightweight throwing weapon. You can buy and carry lots of them. Any strong character can benefit from this.

Sling

This is not a great weapon unless you need something cheap. Theoretically, you could use it in one hand, but you still need a free hand to load it, unless your DM allows you to load one with a shield (which seems plausible in real life).

Staff sling

A staff with a sling. This is added to make the sling a more viable weapon. A cheaper version of the shortbow, with slightly less range.

Martial Melee Weapons

Battleaxe, Longsword, Warhammer

Versatile weapons with 1d8/1d10 damage and not much to differentiate them, except for the fact that the warhammer deals bludgeoning damage.

Falchion

A one-handed sword with a heavy tip, somewhat similar to a machete. Added to have a cheaper, non-versatile version of the longsword.



Flail

Lighter than the battleaxe, but not versatile. I am not sure this is a great weapon in real life, but it looks cool! I added a trip effect to make it noteworthy.

Glaive, Halberd

These weapons are mechanically identical. I added a new property to each one to differentiate them.

Greataxe, Greatsword

The greatsword (2d6 damage) is better than the greataxe (1d12 damage) most of the time, especially if you have the Great Weapon Fighting style. The greataxe might be marginally better for barbarians, sometimes. The greatsword is also a bit more

expensive. The difference in damage is not great, but I think it would be nice to have additional reasons to use the greataxe (see chapter IV).

Lance

A special weapon, useful if you're mounted. In the context of this book, a heavier, shorter version of the pike with a bit more damage.

Maul

A cheaper, heavier version of the greatsword, causing bludgeoning damage. It might be a cheaper, heavier version of the greataxe, instead (change the damage to 1d12 if you want). Barbarians with mauls look cool.

Morningstar

A spiked mace, which is also a heavier, more expensive version of the war pick, so originally there was no real reason to pick it. I gave it the versatile property to make it more similar to other weapons, and a special property (from an older edition) to make it both piercing and bludgeoning (or it would be a terrible weapon against skeletons). It becomes a heavier but slightly more useful version of the Warhammer.

Pike

The heavy, inexpensive pike is not dissimilar to glaives and halberds, except for the piercing damage. However, real pikes could be a lot longer – and the incredible weight indicates that this weapon is, indeed, bigger than other polearms. This should also be treated as a "formation" weapon, not something you carry around in a dungeon.

I gave it longer reach but disadvantage when attacking some within 5 feet, with solves all these issues.

Rapier

An excellent weapon if you have high Dexterity and a shield (or need an empty hand).

Saber

A curved sword, lighter than the scimitar. Added as a slashing alternative to the rapier.



Scimitar, Shortsword

Similar weapons (1d6, light, finesse), only differentiated by damage type.

Trident

Originally, identical to spear, heavier, and five times more expensive. I gave it the trip property to make it more flavorful and useful.

War pick

Light, cheap, and without any special properties. Decent enough. I gave it the trip property; it is useful and fitting.

Whip

A special weapon. Little damage (1d4), but the only one-handed weapon with reach. I gave it the trip property for flavor; seems fitting.

Martial Ranged Weapons

Blowgun

Because of its small damage, the blowgun is almost useless (when compared to other ranged weapons) unless you can coat your darts with poison somehow. Still, if you have good Dexterity and really want to avoid carrying weight, it can be useful.

Bolas

A throwing weapon made of rope with weighted balls on the ends, used to trip opponents. Added to give make the most of the “trip” propriety.

Crossbow, Hand

Like the sling (see above), the hand crossbow seems useful because it only requires one hand. However, you still need a free hand to load it. In short, not an optimal choice for most characters.

Crossbow, Heavy

Great damage, decent range. The only downsides is that it is very heavy and you cannot ordinarily use it if you have multiple attacks.

Longbow

Great range, decent damage, light, fast. A great ranged weapon all around.

Net

While uncommon, the net is a great weapon to attack a creature that is outnumbered. Render it immobile and let your allies attack it with advantage.

Chapter III – Creating new weapons

The easiest way to create your own weapons is changing something that already exists.

If the properties of the weapon are identical to an existing one, use the existing stats. For example, if you want to create a katana – a martial, slashing weapon that can be used with one or two hands – use the stats of the longsword. If you want your katana to be exactly like the longsword but with higher damage, the longsword loses its usefulness (but see “masterwork weapons”, below). Slight changes of price and weight do not justify a new weapon; at most, give it a new name.

If you want to create something entirely new – for example, a one-handed simple weapon with slashing damage but without the “light” or “thrown” properties, you can start with a similar weapon (in this case, the handaxe) and use the suggestions below.



When introducing a new weapon make sure that all weapons remain useful. For example, the falchion (chapter I) is a one-handed version of the longsword. While the longsword has more properties, the falchion is better than the longsword if you are only using it in one hand (lighter and cheaper, but identical damage) and the greatsword beats the longsword if you are using two hands (heavier and more expensive, but more damage).

Weapon damage

Weapon damage can be divided in six steps: 1, 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, and 1d12/2d6.

Simple melee weapons start with 1d6 damage, and martial weapons start with 1d8. Ranged weapons do 1d4 and 1d6 damage, respectively.

You can add one positive propriety for “free” (but see “price and weight”, below), but if you add two or three properties damage is reduced by one step. Each negative propriety raises damage by one step.

Weapon properties

When giving weapons additional properties, consider balancing them by trading positive properties for other positive properties, and so on. If a weapon has no properties, you can add negative and positive properties to balance each other out, but avoid making weapons with more than three properties. Generally, positive properties give you more options.

Light. Light weapons are only good for dual-wielding, which anyone can do (positive).

Heavy. Heavy is a negative propriety, but it only hinders “short” characters.

Finesse. Finesse allow characters to choose between Strength and Dexterity. Therefore, it is positive.

Thrown. This is a positive propriety for melee weapon, but it can be ignored if the range is small (20/60). For ranged weapons, there is not much advantage (since you **MUST** throw your weapon), but these are rare so there is no general rule.

Ammunition. This is a positive propriety for ranged weapons, since it means it is not thrown.

Versatile. Since using one or two hands is your choice, this is positive.

Reach. A positive propriety usually reserved for heavy, two-handed martial weapons (with the exception of the whip).

Two-handed. Requiring two hands is a negative property, especially because it prevents you from using a shield. Remember that you need a free hand to use a one-handed weapon with the ammunition property, so the two-handed property is less important for ammunition weapons (you can count both as a single, negative propriety).

Loading. This is a negative property, but only affects characters with multiple attacks. In any case, the effect is clear: crossbows damage is usually one-step greater than bows.

Trip. A positive, if somewhat circumstantial, propriety I added to existing weapons.

Special. If you want to add a special propriety to your weapon, it should be something circumstantial. The net, for example, is useless against huge creatures, and the lance is suboptimal in tight spaces.

Combining properties

Some properties are not combined in the existing weapons – for example, versatile and two-handed are never combined with finesse. However, there is

nothing stopping you to make the combination if you want to.

The light propriety is not be combined with versatile or two-handed, since light weapons are meant to be used in pairs, and not with two hands. Obviously, a light weapon cannot be heavy.

All heavy weapons are two-handed, since they are big. All two-handed martial weapons are heavy, but in theory, you could have two-handed martial weapons that are not heavy.

Price, weight, and range

The best way to find these is comparing them to existing weapons. For example, thrown weapons have short range when compared to ranged weapons, and martial weapons are usually more expensive than simple weapons. Notice that simply altering price, weight or damage is usually not enough justification to give a weapon higher damage or more properties.

“Light” and “heavy” mean “small” and “big”

Notice that lightweight weapons do not necessarily have the “light” propriety, and vice-versa. If you read the rules carefully, you’ll see that the “light” propriety means that the weapon is small enough so that you can use one in each hand, and the “heavy” propriety means the weapon is too big for “shorter” races.

Some examples: the scimitar (3 lb.) has the light propriety while the rapier (2 lb.) does not, and the glaive (6 lb.) has the heavy propriety while the greatclub (10 lb.) does not.

Sounds a bit confusing, but changing it in this book would confuse things further, so these properties remained unchanged.

Chapter IV – More weapon options

This chapter discusses additional options and ideas for new weapon rules. Some of these options cause significant changes to the existing rules, including making combat more complex, so be careful when introducing them to your games.

Spears

Spears are incredibly versatile. The existing weapon list includes many types of spears – javelins, pikes, etc. However, there are a few iconic spear styles missing, especially two: the “finesse” spear from Kung fu movies, and the spear used by hoplites in combination with a shield (not an optimal choice in the current system).

One simple fix for this issue is allowing characters that are proficient in martial weapons buying “martial spears” for 20 gp with the addition of finesse, reach, or increased damage (see the examples below). Another option is adding a spear fighting style to the game to let characters pick one of these options with an existing spear.

Since there is only one reach weapon in the game that you can wield with one hand (the whip), you should consider if you want to give spear-wielders this perk. I don’t see any problems.

Two-Weapon Fighting

Two-Weapon Fighting is not a great style for fighters. Some people defend this decision, arguing that dual wielding is not a great fighting style in real life. Regardless of that, I see it as a matter of taste.

If you like this archetype, a simple rule (created by another game) is allowing a “free” attack with you

secondary weapon (provided it is a light weapon) every time that the d20 roll for an attack is a 2 (if you have advantage, this applies if any dice is a 2).

This small change will not make the game unbalanced, and can add many interesting possibilities. For example, it gives you a reason to carry a light weapon in your off-hand even when carrying a non-light weapon in your main hand, which is a common style of dual wielding in fiction, history, etc.

You can also allow an unarmed attack or improvised attack with your shield when the d20 roll for an attack is a 2, to make combat more dynamic, but if you do so consider imposing disadvantage, so dual wielding is still more useful.



Double weapons and quarterstuffs

Two-handed weapons that are meant to alternate quickly between both ends are absent from the weapon list (but maybe not from the game, since other mechanics may allow something similar). The realistic example of such a “double weapon” is the quarterstaff, but fiction and gaming also contain weapons that look like two swords connect by the hilt, for example. Fortunately, an older version of the game offers a simple solution: a character can fight with both ends of a double weapon as if fighting with two (usually light) weapons.

A quarterstaff, for example, can be turned into a “double weapon” that is equivalent to holding a club in each hand. Because clubs are light, you could gain all the benefits of two-weapon fighting. Likewise, you can create fantasy “double blades” by joining two scimitars.

Thrown weapons

If you want to allow characters to throw weapons quickly, you can allow a character to draw a light weapon as part of an attack. This is meant to allow all character with multiple attacks to throw knives, axes, etc., in quick succession.

Ranged weapons for strong characters

Most ranged weapons are not great for high-Strength characters, since they rely on Dexterity instead. This choice is deliberate, since strong characters are better when fighting with two-handed melee weapons, etc.

However, if you want to give your strong characters some better ranged options (and, specially, if you like the idea of strong archers – something common in real life, etc.), you can let characters commission custom-made bows to make use of their Strength instead of

Dexterity when calculating damage. The bow is two times more expensive than normal, or even more (three times if you want to apply a +3 Strength bonus, four times if the modifier is +4, etc.)

You still use Dexterity to hit, so dexterous characters keep their edge.

Older versions of the game called these bows “composite bows”. In real life, any bow may benefit from strength... but the name is good enough for our purposes. You can even allow “composite crossbows” and similar weapons. Conversely, you can limit this to longbows, the archetypical “strongman” bow.

Grappling with weapons

Many weapons can be used for grappling and all kinds of combat tricks, such as tripping, disarming, shoving, pinning, etc. Weapons that are flexible or contain hooks, chains, special spikes, etc., are especially suited for this task.

However, the game contains few rules for grappling, and they are not focused on weapons. Adding the trip propriety was easy enough, but there are no mandatory rules for disarming, for example. One way to go about is using similar mechanics for both things (i.e., “contests in combat”).

Ordinarily, you need a free hand to grapple. If you want to allow grappling with special weapons, use common sense: a whip could be used to trip or disarm a foe, but not to push or parry.

Some weapons are made specifically to grapple at a distance. One example is the man catcher, a pole weapon created to restrain targets instead of killing them.

Some characters have the ability to parry, trip, disarm, etc. with any weapon. In this case, you can establish small bonuses and penalties depending on the

weapon (for example, +2 to trip or disarm with a whip, but -2 to parry or push, and so on).

Grappling, with or without weapons, is an interesting and rich subject that deserves a book of its own. [Here](#) is one recommendation.

Masterwork weapons

Masterwork weapons are finely crafted version of normal weapons. You gain a +1 bonus to attack or damage rolls (but not both) made with this weapon. The bonus is chosen when the weapon is created (usually, by a great blacksmith taking a significant amount of time). The masterwork quality adds 300 gp to the cost of a normal weapon (or 6 gp to the cost of a single unit of ammunition).

All magic weapons are automatically considered to be of masterwork quality. The enhancement bonus granted by the masterwork quality doesn't stack with the enhancement bonus provided by the weapon's magic.

The enhancement bonus of masterwork ammunition does not stack with any enhancement bonus of the projectile weapon firing it. I suggest allowing ammunition weapons (bows, etc.) to gain a bonus to attack, not damage, and the opposite for projectiles (arrows etc.).

Masterwork weapons are worthy additions to low fantasy games where magical weapons are legendary, but not necessary if you are playing a high fantasy campaign where magic items are easy to find.

Exotic weapons

Exotic weapons are similar to masterwork weapons in that they might be simply better than existing weapons. Instead of getting bonuses, they might get more (sometimes unique) properties or bigger damage dice. The downside is that they require special training

to use (and might be hard to find), in addition to the usual proficiency (for example, using an exotic longsword requires longsword proficiency first). In mechanic terms, this might require a fighting style or other method of gaining proficiency with an exotic weapon.

Although exotic weapons are not strictly necessary, they can add some flavor to your campaign to portray the differences between elves, dwarves, half-giants, etc. These races can gain proficiency in certain weapons by default, provided these weapons are not significantly better than existing ones.

I described three examples below. The elven longsword and the dwarven battleaxe are weapons I would give to any character of these races, while the giant greatsword would require a fighting style to master giant weapons.

Damage types

There are few differences between bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage. The number of creatures with specific resistances or vulnerabilities is quite small. In theory, you could add more vulnerabilities to oozes, undead, automatons, etc., but that would require rewriting the game. You can use common sense instead: slashing is useful against flesh and blood, bludgeoning is useful against bone (or rock, metal, etc.), and piercing is useful against vital organs. If your foe lacks one or more of these things, it may have resistance.

An easier way of distinguishing damage types is to give each weapon special critical hits according to damage type (see "critical hits").

Finally, damage types are useful when adjudicating the effect of weapons on objects. Bludgeoning weapons are good against chests and doors, slashing weapons can cut ropes, piercing weapons can put holes on a sack or barrel, etc. Even in the same damage type,

you can make distinctions: an axe is useful to cut wood, a whip is not, and a sword can be ruined in the process.

Alternate damage

If you make damage more important in your campaign, some weapons could realistically have more than one damage type. For example, a longsword may deal slashing and piercing damage, while a polearm could have one head for bludgeoning and other for piercing or slashing (or even all three)!

Instead of analyzing each weapon in the book, use common sense. For example, you can give swords the ability to slash or pierce, axes the ability to bludgeon, etc. The alternative damage should be one step smaller than the original damage. For example, a shortsword can deal 1d4 slashing damage and a longsword, 1d6 piercing. Adding heads or points to weapons should have a small cost.

Critical hits

One way of making weapons different without adding significant complexity is making each critical hit unique. Since critical hits are less common than usual hits, you can add lots of details without making combat much longer.

The possibilities are endless. There are innumerable critical hit tables and critical hit decks online.

My own method is even simpler. When your attack is a critical hit, if both damage dice are the same number, a special effect is activated. This special effect depends on the weapon. You can make it really special and devastating, since in theory it will happen less than one percent of the time. You could also make it more limited to avoid giving critical hits too much power, but the classes that would benefit from it would not suddenly become overpowered in my opinion.

Some mild examples:

Martial axes, picks, bludgeoning weapons: double your Strength modifier when calculating damage (if you attacked with Dexterity, add both modifiers instead).

Swords, slashing weapons: get a “free” attack against the same target or another target within range.

Ranged attacks, piercing weapons: double your Dexterity modifier when calculating damage (if you attacked with Strength, add both modifiers instead).

Alternatively, add dramatic effects instead. The target gets to make a Constitution saving throw (the DC is 10 or half the damage caused, whichever number is higher). If it fails, the target is knocked prone (tripping weapons), stunned (bludgeoning weapons), incapacitated and disarmed (slashing weapons), gains a level of exhaustion (piercing weapons), etc.

Critical hit tables can be fun, but I find that for such a special event, coming up with something adequate and cool on the fly is even better.



Martial Melee Weapons

	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Spear, agile	20 gp	1d6 piercing	3 lb.	Thrown (range 20/60), versatile (1d8), finesse
Spear, war	20 gp	1d8 piercing	6 lb.	Thrown (range 20/60), versatile (1d10)
Spear, long	20 gp	1d6 piercing	5 lb.	Versatile (1d8), reach
Man catcher	20 gp	1d4 bludgeoning	10 lb.	Two-handed, special

Martial Ranged Weapons

	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Longbow, composite (+2)	100 gp	1d8 piercing	4 lb.	Ammunition (range 150/600), heavy, two-handed, special
Longbow, composite (+3)	150 gp	1d8 piercing	4 lb.	Ammunition (range 150/600), heavy, two-handed, special

Exotic Weapons

	Cost	Damage	Weight	Properties
Longsword, elven	50 gp	1d8 slashing	3 lb.	Versatile (1d10), finesse, exotic
Greatsword, giant	150 gp	2d8 slashing	18 lb.	Heavy, two-handed, exotic
Battleaxe, dwarven	30 gp	2d4 slashing	5 lb.	Versatile (1d10), exotic

Special Weapons

Weapons with special rules are described here.

Longbow, composite (+2): When making an attack with this weapon, you use your choice of your Strength or Dexterity modifier for the damage rolls. If you use Strength, however, the modifier is limited to +2.

Longbow, composite (+3): When making an attack with this weapon, you use your choice of your Strength or Dexterity modifier for the damage rolls. If you use Strength, however, the modifier is limited to +3.

Man catcher: You can use this weapon to make a grapple without the need of a free hand (see “grappling”).

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