

Magic Swords for Swords & Wizardry



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Putting the *Unique* back in Unique Magic Swords

Magic swords played a principal role in the Original Game. Among all magic items found in gleaming treasure hoards, magic swords accounted for a full twenty percent.

The significance of magic swords in the white box version of the Original Game was even greater because only fighting-men could use them. The ability to wield such powerful and prevalent magic items made fighting-men as interesting to play as magic-users and clerics.

Swords & Wizardry lists twenty different Unique Magic Swords. Results from multiple tables of Original Game's peculiar subsystem combined to generate a much larger and stranger variety of magic swords.

Use the tables below instead of those in *Swords & Wizardry* to generate magic swords for your game. Give any treasure roll indicating a magic melee weapon a 3 in 6 chance of being a unique magic sword.

In Dave Arneson's early games, some magic swords were usable only by magic-users. Gary Gygax replaced them with magic Staves (e.g.—the Staff of Wizardry and the Staff of Power).
You could use these tables to generate staves for magic-users.

Cursed Swords

Any magic sword found has a 1 in 10 chance of being cursed. Cursed swords are -d3 to hit, and always find their way into their possessor's hand until rendered inert by a *Remove Curse* spell. Cursed swords have no alignment, intelligence, or helpful powers. In addition to the to-hit penalty, 3 in 6 cursed swords bestow one of these:

- 1. -3 penalty on reaction rolls
- 2. Never surprise enemies
- 3. -1 penalty to saving throws
- 4. Move as if carrying double actual encumbrance
- 5. Gold turns to lead when wielder touches it
- 6. For traps with a chance to trigger or not (e.g.—pit traps spring on 2 in 6), the wielder *always* triggers the trap
- 7. Natural healing rate halved
- 8. -2 penalty to magical healing
- 9. Wielder suffers -10% penalty to XP earned
- 10. Wielder must rest twice as frequently or twice as long
- 11. All wielder ability scores reduced by three points (restored by *Remove Curse*)
- 12. Chance of whole party getting lost during wilderness travel doubles

Magic Sword Alignment

Magic swords strongly align with either Law, Chaos, or Neutrality.

d8	Sword Alignment
1–5	Lawful
6–7	Neutral
8	Chaotic

Characters who pick up a sword of the opposite alignment suffer 2d6 damage. NPC's, henchmen, or monsters forced, tricked, or cajoled into picking up such a sword suffer half damage.

As an optional rule, instead of dealing damage, a magic sword simply refuses to use any powers beyond its basic to-hit bonus for a wielder of the wrong alignment. The wielder may never know he possesses a powerful and unique magic item!

Sword Intelligence, Commutative Ability, Powers, and Ego

Int (2d6)	Communication	+To-Hit	Motivation	Powers	Ego
2-4	None	+1	None	None	0
5-6	Empathic	+1	Renown only	None	1d3
7-8	Telepathic with wielder	+1*	Roll for Motivation	1 minor	1d6
9	As above and speaks 1 language out loud	+1*	Roll for Motivation	1 minor	1d6
10	As above and speaks 3 languages out loud	+2**	Roll for Motivation	2 minor	2d6
11	As above and reads magic as per the spell	+2**	Roll for Motivation	2 minor, 1 major	2d6
12	As above and telepathic with anyone within 30"	+3	Roll d10+10 on Sword Motivation table	2 minor, 2 major	2d6

* +2 versus special foe, if any

** +3 versus special foe, if any

Sword Motivation

All magic swords crave renown. Some have an additional motivation: the slaying of a special type of foe.

d20	Sword Motivation
1-9	Renown only
10	Kill evil types (devils, demons, elementals, etc.)
11	Kill swimmer types (nixies, sea monsters, dragons turtles, etc.)
12	Kill flyer types (rocs, maticores, balrogs, etc.)
13	Kill undead types (zombies, ghouls, spectres, etc.)
14	Kill lycanthropes (werewolves, werebears, etc.)
15	Kill dragon types (dragons, basilisks, hydras, etc.)
16	Kill giant types (goblins, trolls, giants, etc.)
17	Kill fighting-men
18	Kill clerics
19	Kill magic-users
20	Kill any of opposite alignment

When a magic sword confronts its special foe, apply its bonus to both to-hit and damage rolls.

In the Original Game, an elf armed with a magic sword added +1 to damage rolls against any enemy. Elves are just cool like that.

Forged By

d20	Forged By
1	Ancient aliens
2–10	Mad wizard
11	Demon
12	Godling
13–15	Dwarfs
16	Elves
17–18	Technomancers of a lost continent
19	Visitors from the future
20	An extra-dimensional entity of pure energy/thought

Blade Made Of

d20	Blade Made Of
1	Obsidian
2	Iron
3	Bronze
4	Ceramic
5	Flint
6	Gold
7	Glass
8	Wood
9	Energy
10–20	Steel

Grip Made Of

d8	Grip Made Of
1	Bone
2	Emerald
3	Copper
4	Bronze
5	Ruby
6	Wood
7	Horn
8	Stone

Minor Powers

1–12	Detect within 30':
1	Gems or jewelry
2	Gold
3	Undead
4	Invisibility
5	Shifting rooms or passages
6	Traps
7	Secret doors
8	Opposite alignment
13–14	Damage dealt counts as cold damage against enemies sensitive to cold damage
15–16	Damage dealt counts as fire damage against enemies sensitive to fire damage
17–18	Damage dealt counts as lightning damage against enemies sensitive to lightning damage
19–20	Emits <i>Light</i> on command, as per magic-user spell
21–22	Never accidentally dropped (during surprise, for example)
23–24	4 in 6 chance to chop down a missile in mid flight
25–26	Wielder immune to Charm and Hold spells
27–28	Breaks opposing (non-magical) weapons on a to-hit roll of 18–20
29–40	Place sword on the ground for 1 turn, and it will point in the direction of the nearest:
1	Party member
2	Stairway
3	Dungeon exit
4	Secret door
5	Treasure
6	Potable water
7	Town, village, or city

- 8 The lair (treasure) of the wandering monster it most recently killed
- 41–42 It floats unharmed in any liquid
- 43–44 When drawn, lightning strikes the blade (descending from the heavens or the ceiling) with a deafening ZWAK! This causes a morale check in creatures of 2HD or less, but also triggers a wandering monster check.
- 45–46 Casts a glow under which wielder can *Reads Languages* as per the spell
- 47–48 Every time the sword kills an opponent, a random opponent (including those who are *already dead*) will start muttering uncontrollably about how much the magic sword terrifies them ("That Maxkillibur is *so* terrible and awesome! Maxkillibur's going to kill all of you. There's no help for it. Oh, Maxkillibur. The spatter! The gore!"). An enemy spellcaster so targeted can't cast while muttering. This incessant verbal cowering may trigger a morale check.
- 49–50 A successful hit severs the target's shadow
- 51–52 The sword knows what's around the next corner (clairvoyance 30')
- 53–54 Can project brief auditory illusions up to 60'
- 55–56 Control one animal at a time
- 57–58 Wielder takes half damage from fire-based attacks
- 59–60 Wielder takes half damage from lighting-based attacks
- 61–62 Wielder takes half damage from cold-based attacks
- 63–64 Sword exists invisibly in a pocket dimension until called forth by its apparently unarmed wielder
- 65–66 Wielder need never rest
- 67–68 Wielder movement rate doubled during combat
- 69–70 Sword can be set against a charge to deal damage like a pike
- 71–72 Any ESP attempt directed at the wielder detects only the thoughts of the sword
- 73–74 Silence 10' radius whenever drawn from scabbard
- 75–76 Once per week, sword can reveal whether a rumor known to the wielder is *true* or *false*
- 77–80 *Cure Light Wounds* once per day
- 81–82 Sword warns against cursed magic items (for items already identified as magical by *Detect Magic* or similar means)
- 83–84 Never get lost in the wilderness
- 85–86 Reveal ninja types hidden within 60'
- 87–88 Tip of blade glows *hot* enough to brand flesh or ignite flammable liquids
- 89–90 Wielder immune from level/energy drain
- 91–92 Sword swims like an eel, and can pull its wielder through the water at the wielder's normal land-based movement rate
- 93–94 De-active robot-types for d6 turns (Save allowed)
- 95–96 Affinity for dwarven wielder (dwarfs get extra +1 to hit)
- 97–98 Affinity for elven wielder (elves get extra +1 to hit)
- 99-00 The breath of a lie never condenses on this sword's blade (i.e.—a lie detector)

Major Powers

- 1–2 Continuous *Protection from Evil* for wielder, as per magic-user spell
- 3–4 *Dispel Magic* up to 3 times per day as a 6th level magic-user
- 5–6 Continuous *Detect Magic* within 30'
- 7–9 +3 bonus on reaction checks to the wielder
- 10–15 Wielder gains *Strength* once per day, as per magic-user spell
- 16–19 Renders wielder invisible once per day, as per magic-user spell
- 20–22 Causes *Fear* once per day, as per magic-user spell

- 23–25 Dragging the point of the sword in earth leaves a trail of mud (with slightly lesser effect than *Transmute Rock to Mud*). The trail remains muddy, reducing travel of anyone following wielder to 10% of normal, for d6 days.
- 26–29 Up to 3 time per day, dragging the point of the sword across the ground leaves a wall of fire up to 60' long (as per *Wall of Fire*) that lasts as long as the sword is unsheathed, up to 6 turns
- 30–33 Makes wielder immune to paralysis and petrification
- 34–38 On a damage roll of 1, opponent is bisected (to death, typically)
- 39–41 Turns undead up to 3 times per day as a 6th level cleric
- 42–45 Grants a *Wish* at the cost of the wielder's permanent loss of one Strength point
- 46–49 Teleport wielder once per day, as per the spell
- 50–53 Sword unfolds in to a (1d6)HD monster (stickman or mantis) that fights on its own [for some period of time... check dancing sword].
- 54–58 Any living thing cut apart by this blade (beheading, limb lopped off, trunk bisected, etc.) can be stuck back together, unharmed.
- 59–62 Any living thing cut apart by this blade (beheading, limb lopped off, trunk bisected, etc.) will grow into an auto-homocidal clone/doppelganger of the original in d6 days.
- 63–65 Sword pits its ego against any other magic sword it encounters, causing the other magic sword to attack its wielder if successful
- 66–69 Reincarnates as per the magic-user spell, but requires the sacrifice of one of the creatures listed on Reincarnation by Magic-Users table
- 70–72 On a successful hit, target is *Slowed* (move and attack a half usual rate) for d6 rounds
- 73–77 Sword bats out of the air any (non-magic!) missiles aimed at the wielder
- 78–81 Shoots dragon breath once per day, for damage equal to half the sum of the sword's Intelligence + Ego (Saving Throw allowed)
- 82–86 Flying swordsman. Wielder can "fly" (leap) up to 20', over the heads of up to two ranks of enemies. Those enemies can't attack the leaping wielder, unless armed with missile weapons or long polearms.
- 87–90 Hit opponents must Save or be envenomed for an additional d6 damage.
- 91–93 *Confuses* wandering monsters of 3 HD or fewer for 1d6 minutes, with the effect re-rolled every minute (see Confusion table for the Magic-User spell of the same name)
- 94–96 Tracing a circle in sand with the sword's tip open a portal to another world
- 97–00 A successful hit has a 1–2 in 6 chance of permanently *withering* part of the target's body (effects reversed by *Remove Curse*). Roll for body part and effect:
- 1 Shrunken head reduces Intelligence by d6 points
 - 2 Withered left leg halves movement rate
 - 3 Withered right leg halves movement rate
 - 4 Withered left arm can't carry anything or use a shield
 - 5 Withered right arm can't carry anything or swing a weapon
 - 6 Wasted torso reduces Constitution by d6 points

True Names (Optional)

There are no non-unique magic swords. However, any power beyond the basic +1/+2/+3 bonus requires knowledge of the sword's true name.

d6	The Sword's True Name Is
1–2	Inscribed or inlaid on sword blade in known language
3	Inscribed or inlaid on sword blade in forgotten or enciphered language (requires <i>Read Languages</i> or consultation with sage)
4	Lost to mortal men (requires successful <i>Contact Higher Plane</i> or <i>Wish</i>)
5	Revealed under special condition (e.g.—under light of full moon, when bathed in blood of righteous, sensible to the touch of a maiden, etc.), which may be indicated by the decorative motif on the sword or only discovered by accident/experimentation
6	Revealed after completion of a <i>Quest</i> laid upon the wielder by the sword itself

Ego Checks

First, sum the sword's Ego and Intelligence.

Next, sum the wielder's Strength and Intelligence. Reduce this number by the ratio of the wielder's current hit points to their total hit points. For example, a fighter with a Strength of 16, and Intelligence of 8, and 10 current hit points out of a maximum of 20 hit points, ends up with 12 ($(16 + 8) \times 10/20$).

Finally, the higher total prevails on a roll of 1–5 in 6, and imposes its will on the other.

Ego Check Triggers

The Referee decides when a sword chooses to assert itself by overriding the will of its wielder. Some of these actions may trigger an ego check:

- Wielder uses another magical melee weapon
- Wielder acquires another magic melee weapon
- Wielder runs away from a fight

- Wielder attempts to discard, sell, or give away the magic sword
- Fight against another magic sword
- A more desirable wielder is at hand, as is a means of disposing of the current wielder

Ego Burnishing

After a major victory, treasure haul, or from time to time at the discretion of the Referee, a magic sword demands one of the following:

1. Commission of jeweled scabbard worth 10% of wielder's XP in gold
2. Composition and public performance (in front of a sizable audience) of ballad glorifying sword
3. Strop made from the hide of extremely rare and dangerous beast
4. A trapped storage place
5. A magically protected storage place
6. To always be introduced as a member of the party
7. A magical tune-up (of no appreciable value in terms of game mechanics) by a Magic-User of 6th level or higher, costing $d6 \times 1,000$ gp
8. To be extensively polished by d6 doxies of the highest caliber, at double their nightly rate

Failure to suitably sooth the sword's ego *enrages* it, giving the sword a +2 advantage during its next Ego check (which will be triggered at the next inopportune moment).

Chronically unhappy swords may seek to change owners (to a more powerful character more suitable to the sword's magnificence, or to a weaker-willed and more easily controllable character) by leading the wielder into danger.

Rumors

Your players should hear rumors about other magic swords—both those lost swords they might seek as treasure, and the exploits of actively wielded swords. For example:

1. Maxkillibur has been found in the Depths of Disagreeableness after five centuries.
2. Maxkillibur tasted the flesh of the dragon Fearsome Fred.
3. Maxkillibur can behead a man at 60'.
4. The magic sword Shizona is offering its share of the Gublun Mines treasure in exchange for the present whereabouts of the Treacherous Wizard Scrollshanks.
5. Lately, Shizona's wielder has been heedless of danger, even reckless.
6. On the 5th level of Crawling Canyon, the Merry Bravoes adventuring company were cut down to a man, including the wielder of Shizona. The fate of this storied blade is unknown.

Discovering Sword Powers

How much do players initially know about the sword? Some powers might be discoverable through experimentation, but the sword may only reveal its powers little by little, as the situation and its mood dictate. In some cases,

the wielder must willfully trigger the sword's powers, but in other cases the sword automatically uses its powers at an appropriate moment.

Handling Ego

Swords are fickle, and want renown above all else. If the sword is not happy (i.e.—not getting its share of treasure), a more controllable or high profile potential wielder is present, and grave peril is at hand, then a sword should make an attempt to kill off the player character.

The Original Game has the Referee should take control of a character that loses an ego test. That may not be fun for the player. Keep the take-over brief, just long enough to change or make one decision. If you think the player would dig acting against his own character's interests as a megalomaniacal magic item, let the player run the sword.

If neither of these ideas work for you, and you can't think of a more fun way to handle ego take-overs, just drop it. Have the sword brag and make demands, but don't totally remove player agency.



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