

Dragonsfoot - First Edition AD&D;

By Tony Reeves.

I've met many odd and wonderful people during my tenure as Dungeon Master and as a player. During this time, I've seen the very best and worst of both DM's, and players too. Herein are a set of "unwritten" rules, that I enforce in every campaign I run. Following these simple "rules" means that you run a campaign where even though there are disagreements, no one screams, yells or even raises their voice to any of the other troupe, except when they're in character. We just don't have arguments like other gamers I've been around, disagreements do occur but they're settled quietly. This lack of bickering increases our enjoyment and makes for a very relaxing game. To be real honest with you, one of my long term players, whom I've known for years, asked me to write this as a help for new players. I agreed since there just aren't many things out there of this nature. So here it is , Mizzen! Thanks for the idea! May all of you enjoy it, and find at least one small thing to help you, or your gamers.

The DM is always right!

The DM is final moderator, judge, referee, or whatever you want to call him (or her). This individual is ultimately responsible for making certain that the game you have is pleasing, and enjoyable. He or she is the creator of your campaign, or adventure. This extraordinarily talented, individual has spent a massive amount of time, and effort making your world realistic, impartial, and fun for everyone in your group. Give him or her the thanks that they deserve by playing in a smart manner. When a rule has to be made, don't argue at the top of your lungs. If you feel the need to point out what you feel is an error, let him or her know, but be calm and polite. Be very specific, and tell the DM why you think he's wrong and use

real life examples if possible as a comparison, if it's feasible for the situation. Just give your opinion in a rational manner. If the DM didn't explain why he made a certain edict ask him, or her, to explain more clearly. I've sometimes heard DM's make a rule without any explanation; but this is not fair to the player who not only has a right to know - but needs to know to prevent mistakes in the future!

Sometimes a DM will know of other outside influences that effect a decree, or may have other reasons that player just isn't aware of. This is because the DM sees the 'entire picture' and the gamer doesn't always see it the same way. Give your Dungeon Master a chance and most will readily admit a mistake when they're wrong. Above all, remember that it's a game, and chances are your DM loves the game just as much as you do, and will do whatever is necessary to be fair to all.

Have your supplies ready.

What you need as a player tends to differ a bit between the various gaming groups. There are some basics though. I'd recommend pencils, scratch paper (or note pads), character and spell sheets, a set of dice, the player's handbook, and miniatures if you use them. It isn't absolutely necessary to have every book that's available. Books can be shared between the players, but it's always better if you have your own.

If ever you notice, whenever there are only a couple of books in a group, they're always being used just when you need them most. If you do happen to forget something, make sure you ask either another player, your host, or the DM if they have what you need.

DM's always have paper and dice, so that's generally never a problem. No matter what you should never forget your character sheet. Other players have a tendency to get irritated when they have to stop everything to wait for someone to build a character. That's not all! It's too hard to rely on your memory to recreate the same character perfectly, the DM isn't going

to be ready for a new PC, and even if you do know all the stats, it's a sure bet that some of his equipment, or treasure will be missing. If you have equipment missing, this can be crucial to the adventure, and also can hurt the character. It halts the progress of the game immediately!

In my group, the other players get irritated by this kind of stuff and chances are they'll say something nasty to you! Forget your dice or pencil, that's forgivable. Forget your character sheet, and expect the other players to be upset because you've taken away their valuable game time, and now they've got to wait for you to get your stuff together.

Seating arrangements

Some DM's prefer to arrange their players in a certain manner around the table to make combat a bit easier. Others arrange players so that experienced players sit next to new gamers. This is a very smart idea. An experienced player who's willing to help out the DM and a rookie is a blessing in more ways than one! This helps stop a lot of the interruptions in the middle of the game, and allows the DM to concentrate more heavily on the adventure, while the experienced person helps the rookie. The entire scenario will run much smoother. As DM, sometimes it's hard to shift mental gears back and forth in the midst of a combat round or other times when interruptions are frequent or unexpected. This slows down the pace of the game that Dungeons Masters work so hard to achieve. So as a player do whatever you can to help the DM, as well as the new players. After all, you were a rookie once too, so you know how much it's appreciated! Besides the sooner your new player can comfortably find and use everything on their character sheet and otherwise fit in, the sooner you'll really begin to have fun role playing with them with them. Any experienced player knows that it takes time to proficiently learn all the mechanics of the game, let alone learn the art of role playing!

Know your character!

Your character sheet should be completely finished whenever you sit down to play. It should have all the 'to hits', saves, modifiers and equipment listed in such a manner that you can find it quickly and easily. This cuts down on the long interruptions during the game which can lead to frustration for the other players and the DM. For some new players, it's hard to remember where everything is. There are several methods to help jog your memory though. For THACO, or to hit rolls, I always recommend a THACO chart. THACO means "To Hit Armor Class zero. I even do this whenever I play on my character sheets too; because it's easier for me to look at a chart and see the number I need to roll than it is for me to calculate the THACO. Please note that I hate math of any sort! Also, if there's any modifier I can add or subtract it right on the chart very quickly and easily without much thought. If you use this method, I recommend that you have the newbie make the chart, so they'll always remember where it is. Typically, I put melee, missile weapons, and one for magic weapons so it's as easy as you can make it. I've also found that the very bottom of the character sheets is the best location for the chart, since it's so blatantly visible. More players are apt to find it here, than any other place else on the sheet. Other folks keep a spare piece of paper for notes or for hit points and some like to put their THACO chart there. Use whichever method works for you. For a player who can't remember whether to roll high or low on their saving throws, try placing an upwards pointing arrow next to the saves. This will represent that the player needs to roll higher than the score listed. Do the same for attributes or ability checks, only place a downwards facing arrow next to them. This is so the player knows to roll less than their dexterity score on a dexterity check, etc. Little things like this help new players immensely. If there's something you need to get clarified, try to consult your referee before the session actually begins. This helps the DM focus on your question and allows him a bit more time to give you some personal attention that otherwise you might not get in the midst of the game. If you're in the middle of the game, go ahead and ask an experienced player that you

trust, who's hopefully sitting next to you. Most are more than happy to help you, after all your actions or lack of them can severely impact their characters too.

Where's your equipment?

Have all of your equipment listed someplace on your character sheet. Make sure that you list everything that your character finds, or otherwise has in his/her possession, or located elsewhere. My gamers take this a step further and list where a specific item is located as well. They do this because it helps them create a better mental picture of the character, and also helps them to keep track of their encumbrance. Also in my campaign, if it isn't on your character sheet where either you or the DM can find it, you do **not** have it! This is a very hard, quick lesson to learn, and although it sounds overly harsh, my players like it because it makes things more realistic. As Referee, I like it because it keeps my players from arguing that they have something that they simply do not have. Very simple, very easy, and effective. Even if you don't play in the same manner though, you should treat your stuff in the same manner. The more you have listed, the better off your character is, for obvious reasons. This isn't all the information you need to keep though. You should also keep notes on any of the creatures, or NPC's who pass you information, as well as their names, any rumors, activation words, portal keys, or any maps you find. This is over and above standard mapping for the dungeon you're in, you need to keep it too. Don't rely on the other players either! What happens if your mapper is absent? Then you don't have a map! As a player I can tell you that this makes things real difficult and at time may mean the death of your character! If you can, you want to keep a map of the dungeon too or at least make sure more than one person is. All this data helps the player to keep things straight in the game. Keep a note or list of anything that you feel that you might be necessary to know later in the game. Some Dungeon Masters won't tell you an NPC's name, if you don't remember it. Remember if you have a particularly devious DM then there

are a great many ways for him or her to make your character miserable if you don't remember the information. Some DM's will also take great pleasure in this! A lack of information can very easily lead to a PC's death. So use the data to **YOUR** advantage, even if it's not to another pc's advantage.

Role playing 1 character.

This is the single most fun, and important feature of the game. I've known players who've played for years who could not role play the simplest character. To me this is absolutely amazing, because it's so simple! Personally, the way I set up my characters does take a little more of my attention, but by the time I am finished, not only do I know everything the character has, but I also know precisely what his or her personality is like too. I prefer one of two methods, which I will detail. In the first method, it's necessary to have all of your class, race, alignment, and attributes filled out entirely. Choosing alignment is very critical, because it will help you to set your character up. I say this because either having morals or lacking them is crucial to the way the character will lead his life. Playing alignments is likely one of the hardest things for new players to learn too. DM's should always make sure that the players know about alignments. If you don't know them, then take the time to learn their nuances. I generally peruse my attributes, and consider what they mean to that particular class of character. Is he weak, strong, sickly, healthy, smart, stupid, nimble, ugly, or handsome? Use your imagination, and list a few of the characteristics you immediately know, and like. For instance, why is the character ugly? Does he have a large wart on the end of his nose? See what I mean?

At first, use only the things that are easy for you to pick out and remember. Make the characters' personality fit the attributes, and alignment, then role play the PC that way. Later, after you've mastered this technique, you can try the more difficult personalities. Remember

that everybody has little peculiar habits too, regardless of alignment. Use this to your advantage! Is your character a drunkard, nose picker, clean freak, habitual liar, pig, or stuck up boor? Make your character that way and bring him or her to life! You can also use people you have met in real life for examples, too! Don't tell me you don't know any bullies, braggarts, timid, outgoing, or shady people! Use them as shining examples when setting up your character! When you're finished knowing your characters' idiosyncrasies, determine your characters history, and alignment strictly based on the ideas you have for role playing him (or her!). Buy items that appeal to that character, but **not** necessarily to you! Ultimately, what you're trying to create is a character that acts different, and thinks differently than you do. Is the character a cleanliness nut? If so buy a brush, soap, towels or wash clothes AND USE THEM! Are you a drunkard and a pig? Then remember that when you role play! Tell the other players what they see! Tell them that, you've got wet ale all over your jerkin, and your breath smells terrible! When the character first speaks, belch out loud, and ill-manneredly! Make it real! BECOME THE CHARACTER! You are NO LONGER YOU! You are now the character. Begin to think like the character would, not like yourself. If I can do this, and make it work so others believe it, then you can too. All it takes is an extra five minutes. Now considering your class, write down, or otherwise know a brief history about the PC. Write down any goals you have for the PC on you character sheet so you can recall this data easily later. I also write down all of the habits, or unusual things my PC may do, so I can recall these things the next time I play. I also might write down a few odd sayings that my character might say!

A second method is very similar to the first. Think of what you want the character to be, *before* you roll, and ask the DM to help you out on the rolls. The way to do this is to know what the habits the PC has before hand and furthermore know the PC's background, and history. Almost the same as the method above only in a little different order. DM's generally are willing to help you make your character into something you want to

play, *especially* if they're certain you are serious about role playing it. Either way you do it, once you start role playing on a consistent basis, you'll reap all the rewards. Not only is it more fun than just hacking and slashing, but most DM's also reward extra good role play with extra experience points! If your DM does this, then consider those as free points that are yours for the taking. Finally, I have a couple other things to add. Never play a character you don't like. Why create the character, if you're not going to enjoy playing it? Also if you're DM, try not to coerce your players into playing classes that they don't especially like, or want to play. They won't enjoy it. It may be okay if you have an experienced player doing it, and he's surrounded completely by new players, but as soon as the rookies get to the point where they are capable of playing well, then you'll need to make sure the experienced player gets to choose what he wants to be. If you don't do this, then you could end up losing good players fast. The last thing to tell new players is not to feel embarrassed by role playing. After all is said and done, all they have to do is look around to see other people who don't mind acting like a bunch of lunatics, and are having fun doing it! Usually once a new player sees things in this way then they don't feel embarrassed and soon they'll be acting as wacky as your other players.

Playing two characters.

Generally, there are several reasons why players are allowed to have two characters. Maybe some of the players couldn't make the session, so you're short a cleric, or mage. Perhaps there are only 2 players, besides the DM. Some players even prefer to play two PC's for many reasons. The most common complaint I've heard from players, is that they're playing one character that doesn't have enough to do, so they run two of them. What does this mean? This means they don't know how to play the character class, their character isn't detailed enough, or they don't know how to role play the character or class properly to begin with. Every class of character has a multitude of things to do! Remember it's up to **YOU** to make the

character work, and **find things to do!** Believe me, if you're in my campaign, there's more than enough to go around for everybody. Gamers should never play something they don't like in the first place, but occasionally this does happen because of circumstances beyond control. Some players just can't role play two PC's at the same time. Or maybe one of their characters follows, and helps out their other character constantly. This is frustrating for the other players, and the DM, and unfortunately very common. Sometimes, when a player has two PC's, no one else but he or she knows which character is speaking, and this can become very confusing even to the DM! The list of drawbacks could go on forever and ever, so I'll stop here and try to help solve some of these dilemmas. Foremost, if you are going to play two characters, you need to remember that they are not joined at the hip. (Unless you're an ettin, and then you're joined at the neck!!) Think about what your characters are doing *constantly* to avoid this. Initially, your two characters need to be created such that neither are alike in personality, attitude, or even class. This makes it even easier to role play them both. Go a step further, and make their alignments differ too. This gives them an entirely different outlook on life, and makes their backgrounds altogether different. The more opposite your characters are the better, and easier you make it for yourself later. Make one evil, and the other good! So what if they dislike each other? No problem. It doesn't mean that they'll immediately kill each other. Just because they don't like each other naturally will only mean that they won't hang out, or be best buddies. Instead they will avoid each other, making friends elsewhere in the party among the other players generally among those with similar interests or alignments. It'll mean that they will interact with the other PC's to the benefit of all.

Even evil characters will get along with good PC's for a common goal and vice versa. Another thing to avoid is having conversations between your two characters. At best, most players hate to do this anyway, since it feels awkward. One way to avoid this is for your first character to mention that he dislikes your 2nd character to another PC. Always force another, or

have another PC talk to your first character, mention that you going to do something else, or go a different place with the second PC. You could mention you don't like the 1st PC because you don't trust him; he's a zealot, nut, lazy, goody-goody, or a bully! Use your imagination to find excuses **NOT** to talk to him! This works extremely well if you happen to be running two characters of similar alignments. Works even better with differing alignments! Irregardless, you'll always find another PC who will sympathize with your character. Further, separate the characters in your own mind and the other players too. To that end, every time you move, speak, or perform any actions make sure that the other players (and DM!) know exactly who is doing what. For example, don't say "both my characters draw their weapons." instead say one characters name and actions, then say the second characters name, and actions. Every time you speak as a PC, clearly say the PC's name before you start talking. Go a step further, and make one characters voice a bit different. Use slang as one character, or an accent. Utilize a deeper or higher voice with one character. These two steps alone immediately cut down on confusion, and they also make it fun for you and the other players as well. Once again, I'd recommend setting up the characters in the fashion I gave above, and remember the more detail you add the better and more fun running that character will be. Hard work always pays off!

Distractions

A distraction can be anything from a cell phone ringing, to bringing a small child to the session. Stopping in the middle of the game to answer the phone can really be annoying particularly in the middle of melee or other actions. Nothing against kids, (I have three teens!) but some children can be a major distraction, or otherwise annoying, since they need attention constantly and interrupt. Some gamers use adult situations, or may allow gestures, or language that you might not want your offspring to hear anyway! Also it's difficult to concentrate in both of these scenarios, and this can lead to you not playing like you should and

others not enjoying the interruptions. Please try not to bring anyone, or thing that inhibits the others enjoyment of the game...

Don't cheat.

This takes away part of the DM's fun. DM's love making battles interesting, and would much rather make a player *think* he's going to die, than to actually kill them. (Don't tell your Dungeon Master I told you this!) If your dice are all coming up ones then either borrow somebody else's dice, or announce it to the Dungeon Master. Then, at least he can compensate for it. Most DM's prefer not to kill off PC's indiscriminately anyhow. Don't take matters into your own hands by cheating, because not only will the other players be mad if they find out about it, but there's nothing like a DM's revenge. That's one battle you can't win as a PC. Some DM's might even kick you out of the group! Besides, the referee may be extremely busy, but sooner or later you'll get caught, especially if the other players see you do it, because they'll notice and most will tattle, since they don't think it's fair! Most DM's start watching very closely, if they suspect someone of cheating. Some will even ask the other players to begin watching you. Most if not all, are very harsh when it comes to cheaters. I've seen people thrown out games entirely, and also seen players who were made utterly miserable while playing for just this reason, ***so don't do it!***

Respect your host.

Your host, out of the goodness of their heart, has most graciously allowed you to invade their premises, and provided you a place to play, all in the name of friendship, and entertainment. Make sure you clean up any messes you make, and offer to help put things away after the game. Don't invite others to the game that your host doesn't get along with, or doesn't know without his or her permission. After all, this is your host's home. If there's someone you'd like to join with your group, or even wants to just watch, ask your host if it's okay first. Some hosts feel obligated to feed the

masses, but this can be very expensive. In my group, all of us bring something to drink or snack on, and we always make sure that there's enough to share with everyone else that's there, including the baby sitter! Most sessions we'll all pitch in and order pizza, tacos, or even make a burger run. Keep your host happy and you'll always have a good place to game!