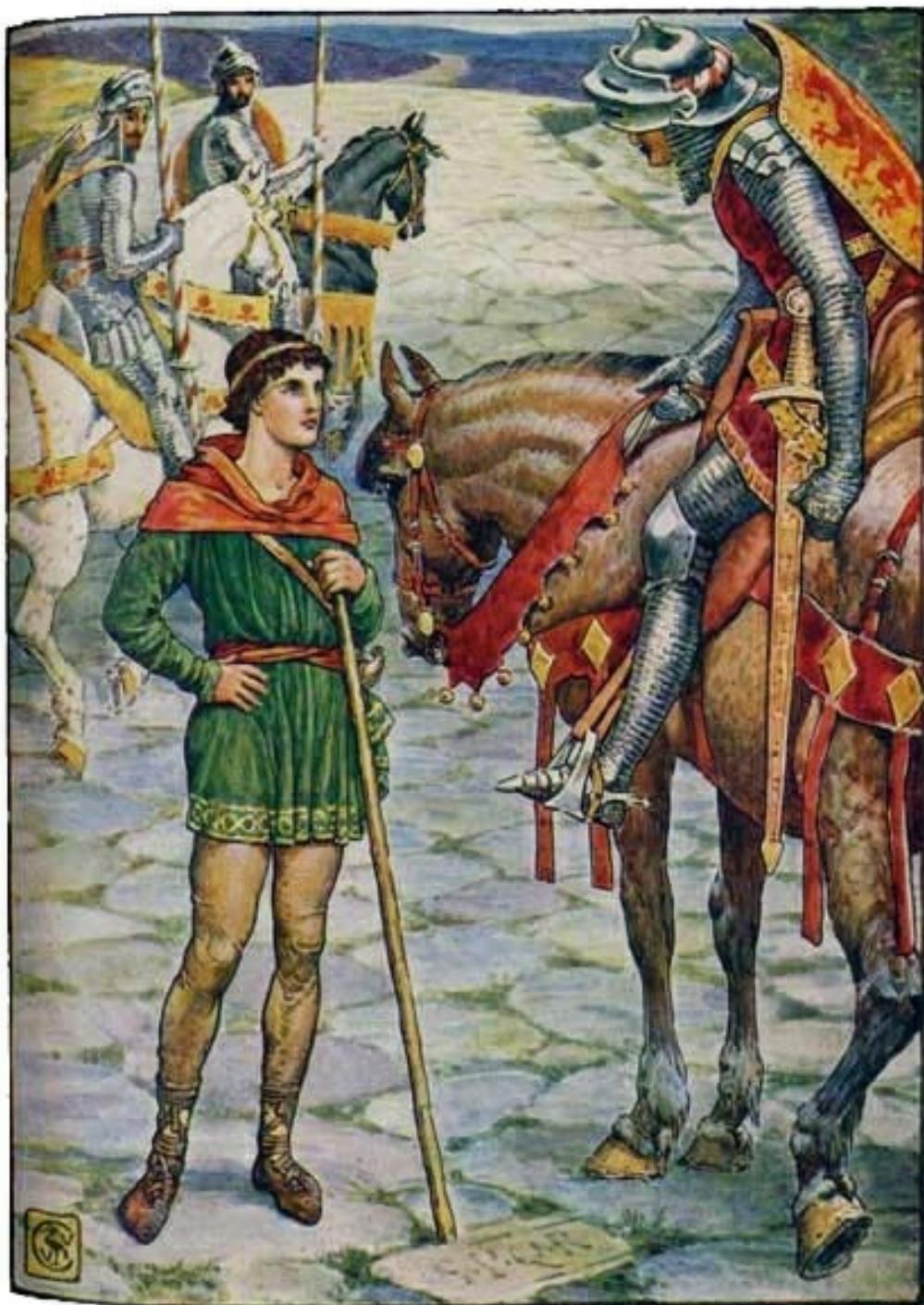


NPC Ideas



Follow Me, And Die!

Larry Hamilton

NPC-01

NPC IDEAS

Ideas for creating NPCs plus some NPCs.

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Introduction

A Non-Player Character (NPC), are all of the people and creatures the players encounter in the world presented by the GM. The GM must portray all of the NPCs. This PDF aims to help with various ideas for creating NPCs.

Different GMs do this differently. Some merely portray them by the way the NPC describes things and using a standard vocabulary for a given type of NPC, like town guards.

Other GMs go all out and get into doing voices and facial expressions and the whole nine yards, much like a parent does when reading a bedtime story.

There is no right way for the GM to portray an NPC. As long as the players know which NPC they are talking to and everyone is having fun, you are doing it right.

QUICK NPC IDEAS

If you need an NPC quickly here are a couple of ideas.

Do you need a classed NPC?

Use one of your old characters from back in the day. This works best if you have played a character of the type you need. However, you can easily transfer names and traits onto any class. As an example, I have included all of my player characters from back in the day for which I still have character sheets.

You can also steal a classed NPC from another GM's world. You may not know their stats, but you know how to present them.

Do you need a generic NPC?

Steal one from one of your GM's campaigns. Tavern owner, shop keeper, etc.

Do you need a trait for a monster?

Take examples of how the past GMs you have played with expressed their orcs, ogres, giants, etc.

The beauty of taking characters from one game to another is that it doesn't have to be rule specific or genre specific. For example, a greedy merchant can be a robber baron, Wall Street investment banker, space corporation executive, etc. The main thing you are after is the portrayal of the character; the class, race, and abilities are secondary.

Pay Attention

The key to acquiring new NPC concepts is to pay attention to the repertoire of other GMs. Playing in other games whether in person, online, or at conventions, is a great way to get exposed to NPC "templates." The more memorable the portrayal, the easier to recall. However, not all memorable NPC's are over the top, larger than life personas. Many are regular people, and can be bland or generic.

Reviewing lists of character traits in the AD&D Dungeon Master's Guide is a good way to be on the right wavelength to pull out a believable persona.

Friends, family, wait staff, work colleagues, basically anyone you have ever interacted with have something to offer to help build NPCs.

Movies, TV, books, magazines, etc. all have characters who have traits that are memorable. All

of them are fair game to help you make the next town's tavern owner different from the last. Street urchins can have traits and manners of speaking like the characters from *The Little Rascals* (I prefer the originals from the B&W shorts).

Build Templates

If you struggle with on the spot development of NPCs, build templates that emphasize a major trait flavored with minor traits. For example, a greedy merchant template could take the used car salesman trope and flavor it based on your own experience buying used cars. Some talk fast, some dress gaudily, others dress sharply, some dress slovenly. Greed can take different forms. One is honest so does not lie to gain the sale, while others have no scruples other than whatever it takes to get the sale.

You can also sit with the 1e DMG and roll on the tables to build random NPCs. They can just be collections of traits on index cards, and you just grab the next one when it is needed. You can also script them in a spreadsheet, power shell, bash, or programs like [Inspiration Pad Pro](#). Then you can generate hundreds and pull one out when you need it, or even create them on the fly at the table.

Conclusion

Find a way that works best for you. Build a mental catalog as you go on a long walk or drive, or mow the lawn. Create a card catalog or lists on the computer. Whether you speak in different voices, or just describe their mannerisms and tone, you should always be able to come up with a new NPC's characteristics on the fly.

OLD CHARACTERS AS NPC'S

You might be thinking that the characters get to a certain level in the game and retire to become famous NPC's for future players and their characters to encounter or hear tales of them.

However, what I want to think about for a bit, is using YOUR old characters as the NPC's in YOUR campaign/world. How many of us have had perfectly good characters that you roll up and get to playing and maybe get to play in only 1 or two sessions before the group falls apart? Perhaps you manage to play in a lot of sessions and only gain a few levels. I still have several of my more well-liked character's sheets.

I have long thought of using them in my game. Some of them could make a cameo appearance, as their personalities would make for an interesting encounter in a town, dungeon, or other odd situation. Others might be NPC's that have information the players can use, or might take advantage of or rob the characters.

Some of them could be thrown across the dimensions and just make a quick appearance as window dressing or a maguffin/red herring.

Some of my past characters did not have well-defined qualities, or only certain qualities that can still be useful for NPC's. Why not take the creative energy you used to create those characters and use them to bring in whole cloth a new NPC, or borrow bits and pieces to make similar NPC's. It can't hurt to borrow NPC's from all the GM's you've ever experienced. I know I borrow the way my brother portrays hill giants. "*Aw'rite, what ya got, we'e here ta loot ya.*" As they menacingly tap a huge club in their hand.

Being a good GM is taking ideas from all your experiences from TV, movies, books, and the rest of life to add a sense of life to the game. Why not include your past characters in the mix?

At the end of this document, I will share my old PCs from back in the day, for which I still have character sheets.

FORGIVENESS FACTOR

While I was doing my dishes one evening after supper, my thoughts wandered and for some reason, people from my past whose reactions to minor slights came to mind. I thought of those who had a negative reaction to something minor (in my perception), and some had a strongly negative reaction that colored how we interacted from then on.

RPG Angle

What if we classified NPCs based on their reactions to slights, errors, and failures? This could apply to any NPC, but it would be more interesting to use it for pre-selected NPCs so you can plan out how a negative reaction manifests.

More simply, those who hire PCs to do a job might be offended by some cultural gaffe that is generally considered inappropriate. The leader of the town takes it personally and from then on only turns to the PCs for help when there is no other choice. Reneging on payment, setting them up to fail, and outright vengeance, such as hired assassins. The reactions some people have to things can come across as flat out insane.

It could be that only one character has earned the ire of the NPC, and the NPC tries to convince the others to leave the offender out of their business dealings.

Rough Tables

Here are some rough tables to outline what I'm thinking. Keep in mind that these are for individuals who have a petty mind and make lemons seem sweet. They will be abrupt, just the facts, get the offender(s) out of their presence ASAP.

Some of the behaviors will be actively avoiding the offender(s). For example, never using the same door as the offender(s), pretending to not be home, pretending they don't see or hear the offender, etc.

Minor Slight & how perceived by the offended:

Minor – No big deal (This doesn't belong here because you didn't make it to *THE LIST*.)

Minor but it rankles to their dying day. They tell everyone about it, and when the offender is present will point them out to all who will hear. Look down their nose at the offender(s).

Medium – The offender has caused great grief and inconvenience.

Major – The worst thing ever! They see the offender as their nemesis.

Disposition to the Player(s):

Neutral – What can the player(s) do for me? Won't voluntarily aid the player(s), without some great compulsion.

Negative, Minor – Will throw up red tape, delays, and generally unhelpful. Player(s) will sit in the waiting room and will always go in last, unless there is for some reason, another person or group higher on *THE LIST*.

Negative, Medium – Will instruct underlings to not help the player(s). Some underlings will be apologetic for their superior's behavior. No guilt about sending player(s) on a suicide mission.

Disappointed if they survive, even if a success.

Negative, Major – Underlings are instructed to actively delay, hinder, annoy, and seek to damage the offender(s). Damage may be to reputation, relationships, or life.

Negative, Ridiculous – Will hire others to maim or kill the offender(s).

Can it be rectified?

Is there anyway to remove the animosity? For some, they may just drop a notch on their disposition to the offender(s).

- Charm Person and Suggestion can temporarily resolve it.
- Forget if cast close enough in time to the affront.
- Only a Wish, or similar could do it.
- Divine intervention.
- Saving their life.
 - For some not even saving their life will make them change their mind.
- Saving a loved one's life.
 - For some this too is not enough.
- Taking out someone higher on *THE LIST* than the offender(s).
 - May not work for some.

Conclusion

The above is only a rough idea of what can be done with this idea. A similar exercise with other traits of people you have encountered in life can be used to build a similar set of tables. Not all tables need be rollable tables. They can be idea tables that you read to get a jumpstart for brainstorming your own ideas.

MOTIVATIONS

Motivations are what "makes" us do the things we do?

The [Wikipedia article](#) on motivation goes into great detail on the psychological study of motivation. While it is helpful and might spur one to have an idea that can be applied to an RPG, it gets into too much detail for most of us.

Motivations are filtered through many different categories that someone falls into, plus the means available to act on that motivation.

Basic needs drive us, such as food, clothing, shelter, sexual desire, etc.

It is our ability to act on fulfilling these needs that shades our actions. That is, our means to achieve the desired end. A poor person who can't hunt or fish, will resort to theft or begging. A person who is not destitute, will have other means available to them. One's culture and background will influence what is acceptable for food. A cannibal who is poor might resort to murder in order to eat. Cultural norms around cannibalism might prevent eating anyone in your own tribe or ethnic group, motivating one to find some other type of food.

Higher order "needs" might be the desire for power, whether it is magical, religious, political, etc.

Depending on the alignment of one seeking power, it might be sought and achieved in a way that is a benefit to a large number, thus getting "buy-in" from others. For example, a strong orc chief that unites the tribes and becomes a king, will have support from others because they all get a shot at the increased loot, etc. A powerful evil wizard who is manipulating this orc king for her own ends sees the orcs as only a tool and could care less how the common orc benefits.

With the passage of time and other events that occur, the motivation may change. It may be redirected to a new motivation, or the original motivation may be strengthened or weakened. For example, if the evil wizard acquires the item she was looking for, how does this change the motivation? If the item is not the all powerful thing it was supposed to be, does that result in seeking a different item, renewed efforts to seek the real or a better item, or cause them to give up on their quest for power?

The changing situation can result in a reversal. We all know that once we get something we think we really want, that all too often, we realize that having it is not what we thought it would be. Our initial excitement about finally having a long desired item falls flat. Do we then stop seeking such things, or do we move on to acquiring the next new thing?

Below are some ideas for tables to help craft motivations for NPCs.

Circumstances

- Social Status – peasant, noble, monster, etc.
- Economic Status – rich, poor
- Cultural Status – How does the culture view something?
- Religious Status – Religious/non-religious and to what degree? Is there some goal that one's religion places in high regard, like a pilgrimage to a specific destination?
- Current Events Status – How does the present state of the world influence the ability to act on a motivation? If there is a war, how does that change things?
- Alignment – How does one's adherence to good/evil, law/chaos affect their motivation? For example, good would not do something evil without a “good” reason, even if it is self-justification.
- Means

What is needed to make this happen, and does the individual or group have what they need, or the ability to make or acquire it?

Fishermen without a boat and nets can't fish. Can they build, buy, or steal the needed equipment? If they know how to make their own boats and nets, do they have the tools and enough food to last them until they are ready to start fishing again?

Why are they motivated?

For example, a hungry person is motivated to seek food due to hunger. But why are they hungry?

Normal biological process

Lack of food due to war, famine, crop failure due to floods, hail, etc.

There are lots of reason why a person is motivated to do something. Revenge, desire (physical, mental, emotional- love/hate/greed, economic, social), justice (could be colored by revenge).

What is the object of their motivation? This could be a who.

- Food is the object of the hungry.
- Money, power, magic, etc. is the object of the greedy.
- Fame, glory and wealth is the object of the adventurous.

Apply the 5 H's of Journalism to an NPC's motivations:

- Who wants it? Which NPC or group?
- What do they want?
- When do they want it? When will they get it? (If the PC's or other circumstances don't stop them. Does the time of year, phase of the moon, presence of a legendary comet matter?)
- Where is the thing they want? (Distance, difficulty, challenge, feasibility, etc.)
- How will they get the thing they want? (Is it even possible to get it? Is a required ritual one that can be interrupted?)
- Why do they want it? *This is their motivation.*

For some hill giants robbing travelers on the road, it might look like this:

- Who – A group of 4 or 5 hill giants.
- What – They want loot.
- When – Whenever they see travelers on the road.
- Where – On the road, in a likely spot.
- How – Carrying big clubs, and saying, “Aw’rite, what ya got, we’re ‘er ta loot ya.” Those who do not comply get thumped with the clubs.
- Why – It’s what they do, you might call it their job.

There are some interesting list of motivations that seek to boil down motivations into a “standard” list, like for stories. They can help inform the adventure of the week, or writing a module or campaign setting, or story.

NAMES

All places need a name that fits and evokes a sense of belonging to the setting. Tables for streets, roads, bridges, squares, fountains, etc.

Will their be signposts for streets, names carved on bridges, temples and other civic buildings? If not, how will a party know how to find a square in the butcher's market for a fallen city?

In a living city, one need merely ask the right person, perhaps for a price.

In the practical realm of actual play, I find that as a GM the players are always asking about the name of this or that person, place, or thing. As a player, if the GM does not supply it, I find that I too ask about these things.

I find it helpful to have a pre-generated list of names that I can turn to for various random NPCs. The same goes for taverns, villages, streets, geographic features, etc. Every shopkeeper, farmer, peasant, soldier, humanoid, etc. needs a name. If the players capture a kobold, you know that they are going to ask its name. Just like today, there will be popular names, like that of the king, local ruler, family member, etc. It is OK to reuse names.

Make a table, find a table, or a program and generate ridiculously long lists to avoid having to stop play and think of a new name. I find that sometimes, my mind goes utterly blank in the midst of play. I end up with a lot of Sam's or Bob's or Jim's when that happens. If it is an NPC that will be encountered again, make a note of it.

NAME GENERATOR

This table uses a couple each of d6's, d10's, and d20's. If you have multiple dice of different colors, you can roll your own.

This table is based on English and treats Y a little differently, giving 20 consonants to choose from. I would mix X and Y, or Q and Y. I am a visual person, so seeing the two letter consonant and vowel combinations helps me to come up with names just by looking at this chart.

One could also make card decks of different letter/syllable combinations and deal out random names that way.

There are also a lot of good online generators. I find it easier to have a long list of names and mark when I have used a name. I then circle back through the list. However, I like certain NPCs to be more memorable and have more unique names.

One could have a town where all the men are Jim, and all the women are Sally, and it is one's occupation or other feature that distinguishes them. Jim the barber, Jim the butcher, or they just call them Barber or Butcher. Sally the Sorceress, or Sally the Scullery maid, etc. Jim the dark is the farmer with dark hair, and Sally the fair is his wife, for example. I am reminded of everyone named Johnson in the town in *Blazing Saddles*.

NAME GENERATOR

A	Two Letter Prefix or Suffix
B	d10 for column, d20 for row
C	1-2 3-4 5-6 7-8 9-10
D	1 ab eb ib ob ub 1 b
E	2 ac ec ic oc uc 2 c
F	3 ad ed id od ud 3 d
G	4 af ef if of uf 4 f
H	5 ag eg ig og ug 5 g
I	6 ah eh ih oh uh 6 h
J	7 aj ej ij oj uj 7 j
K	8 ak ek ik ok uk 8 k
L	9 al el il ol ul 9 l
M	10 am em im om um 10 m
N	11 an en in on un 11 n
O	12 ap ep ip op up 12 p
P	13 aq eq iq oq uq 13 q
Q	14 ar er ir or ur 14 r
R	15 as es is os us 15 s
S	16 at et it ot ut 16 t
T	17 av ev iv ov uv 17 v
U	18 aw ew iw ow uw 18 w
V	19 ax ex ix ox ux 19 x/y
W	20 az ez iz oz uz 20 z
X	
Y	
Z	

d20 for initial or ending consonant of 3 letter cluster		d6 to include
Combine with two letter cluster.		d10 for ending vowel
1-2	a	1
3-4	e	2
5-6	i	3
7-8	o	4
9-10	u	5
	y?	6

Number of Syllables (d6)

Decide if you want a two syllable name to have an initial two letter cluster followed by a three letter cluster, or each syllable to be three letter clusters, etc.

For example, on a d6 roll you get a 4, two syllable name.

You decide initial syllable will be two letters, followed by a three letter syllable.

Next, on a d10, you roll a two for the first column.

Then on a d20 you roll a 1, for the initial syllable of "ab".

Roll a d20 to determine the initial letter for the three letter syllable.

A 10 is rolled, for "m".

Another d10 is rolled, and on a roll of 2, again the first column.

A final d20 is rolled for 14, "ar", so the second syllable is "mar".

This makes the name "Abmar".

You can then decide which syllable gets the emphasis.

is it "AB-mar", or ab-MAR"?

You can also roll a d20 for an ending consonant.

A result of 8 gives "k", making it "abmark".

You can have an ending vowel instead of or in addition to an ending consonant.

Where a 'c' or a 't' is involved you can decide to add 'h'.

Feel free to modify how you come up with the number of syllables, use a d8 for up to 8.

If you know how to pronounce words with 5 initial vowels, be my guest.

I like it simple so I don't have to think how a name is pronounced.

I am sure that this is similar to how other name/word generators out there work.

Some combinations can be quite odd, like "Isodig" or "Isocoj". They work great for really foreign/strange sounding names.

GROUP NAME GENERATOR

Some groups of players like a name for their group. The online group I play in had a hard time coming up with a cool name, so we ended up using the name of the guard dog of our wizard. The dog's name is Starchy. Some of us were in the first group of players and by association all of us were referred to by NPCs as "Baldric's Boys", since we recovered a gem with significance for the followers of an admiral who died hundreds of years ago. We merged the two into "The Starchy Boyz".

It can be used for groups of NPCs, the bad guys, allied good guys, mercenary groups like *The Black Company* from the book series or *The White Company* from European History.

TYPE OF GROUP

Clan
Sept
Tribe
Order
Fellowship
Company
Brigade

PET/FAMILIAR/MONSTER

[Name]
[Species]
Hawk
Dragon

DESCRIPTOR

Slayers
Killers
Seekers
Destroyers

COLOR

Black
White
Red
Blue
Green
Yellow
Plaid

WEAPON/ARMOR/OBJECT

Staff
Sword
Scimitar
Cudgel
Bow
Shield(s)

Helmet(s)
Arrow(s)
Idol

PICKING A NAME

Picking a name for my characters, i.e. that I play when not a GM, seems to be tough. I have come up with a few good ones over the years, some I still remember without having to try to find old character sheets.

I start in a new Google+/Roll20 game in 2014. We had a main character and a backup to use when the other is in training/unavailable/dead. I have a dwarf fighter and a human ranger. For the dwarf fighter, I used the name of my *Lord of The Rings Online* dwarven champion, Thorfus Ironhand. As an aside, I started playing LOTRO so I could get a D&D feel on my own. It is not the same as D&D, and is far too repetitive. The dungeons, rescues, wars, and quests in D&D may have repetition, but the interaction of players and GM with the chaos of players running around the GM's sandbox is rarely repetitive, except for some meme that develops among the players and recurring NPCs.

Yes, there are lots of random name generators online and I have some of my own, and lists of names. Sometimes, you just want to be creative, but often it is like only the sound of crickets is found....

SHIP NAMES

I needed a good ship name during a convention game, and didn't have a good one, so I asked the players, and got a great one, the *Storm Witch*.

I then decided that I could make a table to come up with other usable names.

The most basic such table is a list of adjectives and a list of nouns and roll a die for each column.

Of course, with adjectives you have colors and other descriptors. Powerful action oriented descriptors are cool, like the *Flying Dutchman*, or the *Red Witch* (*Wake of the Red Witch*). Ships have the idea of motion and speed. A name that foreshadows a very fast ship is only fitting if the ship is fast. A slow merchant would tend to have a name evoking reliability or stability, or perhaps a humorous name. A pirate ship would most likely be renamed to something more suiting. a naval ship would have something indicating power, like Dreadnought, Dauntless, Intrepid, etc.

Certain colors tend to give an image of ferocity, danger, dread, etc.

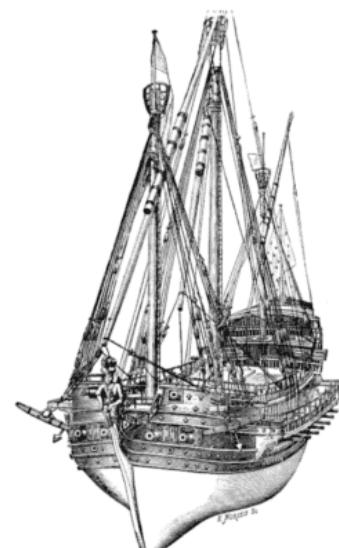
Use the name to draw forth a description for the figurehead. For example, when the player suggested the *Storm Witch*, I immediately had an image in my head and could describe the figurehead to the others. A woman with hair blown about by the winds of storms.

Some ships might have a single name, like the Dragon, and others could have longer names. Come up with naming conventions by different nations or races. Elves might name their ships after stars or trees. Different human nations might emphasize something different with their ship names.

Below are some tables to mix and match and give ideas for naming ships. This could apply to naming water borne ships or spaceships.

Adjective/Noun (d10)

1	Flying
2	Soaring
3	Sea
4	Dusty
5	Red
6	Fast/Quick
7	Sun
8	Flaming
9	Smoldering
10	Smoking



Noun (d8)

1	Witch
2	Waif
3	Spirit
4	Sprite
5	Dragon
6	Kraken
7	Merchant
8	Maid

Crew Related Words (d8)

1	Hand/Sailor/Crew
2	Mate
3	Captain
4	Owner
5	Carpenter
6	Rigger
7	Master
8	Chief

Sea Related Words (d20)

1	Sea/Ocean/Waters
2	Mist
3	Wave
4	Surf/Surfer
5	Surge
6	Storm/Tempest/Thunder
7	Foam
8	Deep/Depths/Abyss
9	Whirlpool/Vortex/Eddy
10	Maelstrom
11	Aurora
12	Wind/Squall
13	Calm/Becalmed/Stagnant
14	Shore
15	Isle/Island
16	Murky
17	Shallows
18	Reef
19	Shoal
20	Fathom

Navigation (d14)

1	Star
2	Sun
3	Moon
4	Compass/Sunstone
5	Sextant
6	Astrolabe
7	Eclipse
8	Twilight
9	Dawn
10	Dusk
11	Midnight
12	Morning
13	Evening
14	Spyglass

Type of Ship (d12)

1	Merchant
2	Galley/Bireme/Trireme/Longship
3	War
4	Pirate/Buccaneer/Privateer
5	Escort
6	Whaler
7	Trawler
8	Cruiser
9	Caravel
10	Corvette
11	Ironclad
12	Galleon

Ship Related Words (d8)

1	Sail
2	Oar
3	Deck
4	Plank
5	Keel
6	Mast
7	Anchor
8	Hull

Sea Creatures (d16)

1	Squid
2	Octopus
3	Turtle
4	Whale
5	Kraken
6	Barracuda
7	Shark
8	Eel
9	Ray/Manta/Mantaray
10	Crab/Lobster/Crustacean
11	Clam/Oyster
12	Snake
13	Crocodile
14	Manatee
15	Dolphin/Porpoise
16	Trout/Bass

Other Creatures (d16)

1	Harpy
2	Hag/Nag
3	Witch
4	Dragon
5	Wolf
6	Chameleon
7	Lizard
8	Bird/Sparrow/Eagle/Hawk/Buzzard/Gull/Albatross
9	Mermaid
10	Nymph
11	Horse/Mule/Pony/Stallion
12	Cow/Bull/Bison/Buffalo
13	Sheep/Ewe/Ram
14	Deer/Buck/Hind/Roe
15	Camel
16	Hippopotamus/Behemoth

Weapons (d8)

1	Spear/Javelin
2	Sword
3	Lance
4	Dagger
5	Trident
6	Net
7	Shield/Buckler
8	Bow/Arrow/Archer/Bolt

Things (d12)

1	Skull
2	Rock
3	Bone(s)
4	Timber(s)
5	Sand
6	Fire/Flame
7	Jewel(s)/Jeweled/Bejeweled
8	Silver
9	Gold
10	Copper
11	Quartz
12	Opal

Colors (d10)

1	Blue/Azure
2	Green/Verdant
3	Red
4	Yellow
5	Violet/Purple
6	White
7	Black
8	Grey
9	Brown
10	Orange

Patterns (d12)

1	Plaid
2	Striped
3	Barred
4	Dotted
5	Variegated
6	Changing
7	Pale
8	Dark
9	Scattered
10	Hidden
11	Mystery
12	Geometric

Descriptor/Modifier

1	Flying
2	Soaring
3	Sailing
4	Fast
5	Unvanquished, Undefeated, Victorious
6	Indefatigable, Untiring, Persistent, Patient
7	Fearless, Dreadnought, Dauntless
8	Mighty
9	Powerful
10	Reliant



BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

One of my many interests is genealogy. I find it interesting to see when and where my ancestors were in relation to history, another interest – I have a BA in History.

There are many free genealogy programs that make it easy to generate a family tree for printing. If you are interested in a family tree for the rulers of a kingdom, or how a tight-nit extended family in a village tie together, or a major NPCs family, or even for players to chart their characters and how they might be related.

One thing I saw posted online was about a Biographical Outline. There is both a PDF for printing, and a Doc file for editing.

It may not be something you use as a GM for more than a few NPCs, but as a player, it might be helpful to chart the events and places your character was involved in.

Such tools can also be helpful if you want to write a novel with a lot of characters that are related, or a historical novel, or a nonfiction biography.

OLD AGE AND TREACHERY

An old saying, “Old age and treachery beat youth and skill.” I didn’t spend enough time on Google to find who said that originally. I did see that there is evidently a Waylan Jennings song either by that name or with that line.

My boys and I have wrestled since they were little. It has been a long time since I could wrestle them both at once, but one at a time I can also still out wrestle them. Not bad for a fifty+ year old bald fat man who once broke his back. Although my youngest is built like a linebacker and probably equals my weight, he’d be a challenge. My oldest is a bean pole that I have at least 50 pounds on him, so I can move him and pick him up as needed.

I haven’t taught them all my moves, and they didn’t really wrestle and get into the fights like my brothers and I did. What’s the other saying, “I taught you everything you know, I didn’t teach you everything I know.”

Magic users and sages will guard their information jealously. Sages are more likely to part with their

knowledge for mere coins, but more likely for more information to add to their knowledge. Wizards and illusionists will want to add to their spell books or acquire items that will help them. If mages need money, they will make that seem like they are making an exception to take a larger chunk of coin since the character(s) don’t have any magic they want or can use. Wizards and their apprentices would not be on equal terms until the apprentice nears parity with the master. If the player characters become wizards, will the former 7th level master also advance? In my campaign, I have the classed NPCs gain levels unless I have determined they have retired from adventuring, and their earning of experience is very slow.

Thieves, assassins, monks, druids, and some fighters might have techniques and skills that they reserve for use when they are moving up the hierarchy, assuming 1e or OSRIC.

Rangers and Paladins would tend to guide and train each other, but could hold back some skills for personal or personality reasons.

Good Clerics would only hold back mysteries that their fellows were not ready for. Evil or chaotic clerics might hold back information that threatens them being the most powerful cleric of X in the land, world, or universe.

I don’t know specifics of how I would use this idea in my game, so far, not a table or some mechanic like that. I have vague ideas of personality quirks, like the guy at work who won’t share what he knows because he thinks he’ll lose his job if others know how to do it.

JERK

Jerks are a common theme in RPGs. Whether the GM is a jerk or a given player is a jerk, can ruin a session or a game. If the GM is always a jerk, they will have a hard time finding and keeping players. If a player is a jerk, they will have a hard time finding a GM and group of players that will put up with them.

Back in the old days, it was usually the nerds getting away from the jocks who were jerks, but there were some players who could fill that role all too well.

Within role playing, a character or NPC can be a jerk. It adds to the realism when the NPC with information is a jerk and you have to play “that game” as you role play the interaction between the player character(s) and NPC(s).

May all the jerks in your life be only in the context of role playing and all in having fun; and not the kind that suck the joy out of life.

HALF-ELF

Half-elves were rare in Tolkien’s world. Unlike RPG half-elves, in Tolkien’s world they had to choose between being an elf or a human. If they chose to be elves, they had the same immortality as any other elf. Elrond and his brother were the first with this choice. Elrond chose to be an elf. His brother, Elros, chose to be human, although with triple or more the normal human lifespan. Elros led to the Kings of Numenor and later of Gondor and Arnor. Most people know the later tale of Aragorn and Arwen, if not from the books from the Hollywood take on it in the Lord of the Rings movies.

In RPGs, half-elves are not described this way. I don’t know if it was D&D or something else that gave rise to the idea that elves have pointy ears. They are obviously much more common in RPGs than in Tolkien’s world, and also have about three times the lifespan as humans. They have some of the advantages of elves and are often the best choice for getting the most options out of a character in OSRIC. My favorite and longest played character, Griswald, is a half-elf with slightly above average ability scores, but not exceptional. His highest ability is a 14. He is a Cleric/Fighter/Magic-User which lets him wear armor, heal himself and others, and do great damage to enemies. Such a character

also takes more time to prepare spells at his level, and there is a lot of information to keep straight, so such a character is hard to play without having built up to that over time. I know that as a GM I could run an NPC with similar abilities without too much trouble, but a GM who has never played such a character will miss out on a lot of the possibilities.

ARTIST

I had an idea for a missing NPC. An artist, Trebor, who works odd jobs to support his wife and kids and allow free time to work on his art. He goes out south of town seeking pigments and items to make his paints, dyes, and glazes, and clay for his pottery. He is also planning to scout the ancient quarries for rock suitable for making statues. He goes out and is usually not gone more than one night. However, he has gone missing and had been gone two nights.

His wife is frantic and seeks out someone to find him.

This fit in with the direction the players planned to travel.

They had an encounter along the way, but managed to find him trapped atop a rock surrounded by kobolds. The players managed to defeat the kobolds and get the artist back home. His wife has promised to make them a good home-cooked meal.

This was just something that came to me off the top of my head and I added for some more flavor in the game. I didn’t need to do that, as in a prior session, my youngest son’s character started a riot.

I still have one more NPC and family in the mix of NPCs in town.

Adding NPCs to the town to help flesh it out and bring it to life are difficult to just do, but when an idea comes up and I put it to use, they always seem to work well. Even dumb ideas I have, or I think are dumb, tend to work out when the players encounter the idea for an NPC, adventure, etc.

MY OLD CHARACTERS AS YOUR NPC'S

Each of my past characters for which I have a character sheet. First, OSRIC compatible stats, along with Swords & Wizardry stats.

NOTE: ONLY the mechanics of their stats will be OGL. Names and descriptions are all rights reserved. Permission granted for personal use.

Kad Staglar

Halfling Fighter/Thief

5th Level Fighter/12th Level Thief

Three feet high 60 pounds

50 years old

Raised on a farm.

HP: 69

AC: 7 [12]

ST: 16 (24), IN: 16, WS: 18, DX: 18, CN: 15, CH: 16

+1 Dagger, +2 Short Sword, Short bow, Sling (+3 to hit with bow & sling)
Leather Armor, Helmet

Magic items: Gauntlets of Ogre Power, Girdle of Storm Giant Strength, Ring of Regeneration, Bag of Holding, Ball of warmth (small enchanted ball that keeps bearer warm), 2 Paired Teleportation Boxes. Each are 2 cubic feet. Whatever is placed in one will teleport to the other.

Potions: Healing Potion, ESP Potion



Family crest of Griswald Stewart
by Robert J. Hamilton

Fasbold Torion

Human Fighter 4th level

HP: 30

AC: 4 [15]

6'4" Age: 20 (90)

ST: 13, IN: 12 (10), WS: 10 (11), DX: 9 (13), CN: 10 (9), CH: 3

Long bow, Longsword (+1 Sword of Sharpness), 3 daggers (1 on shield, 1 right boot, 1 right side), Battle Axe

Chain mail, shield, helmet

Ioun Stone +1 HP

Retainer:

Flaessan Os Fasbold's Retainer

Human Fighter 2nd level

Age: 20 (60)

HP: 7 AC: 4 [12]

STR: 15 (14), IN: 14 (15), WS: 13 (15), DX: 12, CN: 9 (8), CR: 13

Short sword, dagger, spear, sling 22 bullets.
Chainmail, Shield, Helmet

Loyalty: Over 100% since Fasbold has save his life so many times.

¤



Shield Device of Griswald Stewart
by Robert J. Hamilton.

Griswold Stewart, Duke of Stewart

Half-Elf Clerc/Fighter/Magic-User 10th/10th/11th

Chaotic Good

HP: 70 AC: 1

ST: 13, IN: 13, WS: 14, DX: 12, CN: 14, CH: 13

+3 Longbow 12 +1 arrows, +2 Longsword, +1 command dagger - command up to 10 hit dice command word "obey", +1 Spear

+2 Chainmail, +1 Shield, Helm of Comprehend Languages.

Magic Items: Crystal Ball, Eyes of Eagle, Wand of cold, Ring of Levitation

Potions: Holy Water, Ogre Strength, Improved Invisibility, 2 extra healing.

Scrolls: He regularly carries scrolls he has made with various spells he knows. Usually defensive and utility spells, and a few offensive spells.

Magic Holy Symbol:

1st level Spells: 4 Cure Light Wounds, 2 Detect Evil, Remove Fear, Sanctuary, 2 Detect Magic, Bless, Protection from Evil.

2nd level Spells: Know Alignment, 2 Slow Poison, 2 Spiritual Hammer, Detect Charm, Chant.

3rd level Spells: Dispel Magic, Locate Object, Prayer.

Spell Books: 1st level: Read magic, Sleep, Dancing Lights, Unseen Servant, Find Familiar, Push, Burning Hands, Magic Missile, Shield.

2nd level: Invisibility, Levitate, ESP, Mirror Image, Wizard Lock, Knock, Detect Invisibility, Strength, Stinking Cloud.

3rd level: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Suggestion, Tongues, Gust of Wind, Clairvoyance, Clairaudeince, Fly, Protection from Normal Missiles.

4th level: Dig, Dimension Door, Enchanted Weapon, Polymorph Self, Mnemonic Enhancer, Wall of ice, Minor Globe of Invulnerability, Wall of Stone, Ice Storm.

5th level: Teleport, Cloudkill, Transmute Rock to Mud.

How to Make a Magical Holy Symbol

When a cleric reaches sufficient level to cast 3rd level spells, they may elect to create a magical holy symbol. It requires a period of prayer and fasting. The material components are the holy symbol out of a material appropriate to the religion. It must be precious and finely crafter. This becomes the holy symbol for the cleric. A font of precious metal, either copper, silver, gold, or platinum is consumed by the creation of the holy symbol.

The more valuable the metal of the font, the more time one has to cast spells.

With a copper font, the cleric must cast into the holy symbol all of the cleric (druid) spells that they can cast in 24 hours. Silver, gold, and platinum allow for slightly more time. Whether it is 12 hour increments or full days is up to the GM. The type of font also determines the maximum spell level that may be used.

Higher level clerics can create a holy symbol with higher level spells.

Once a cleric creates a holy symbol, they may not create another while an earlier one still exists. It must be destroyed in service to one's deity. If the symbol is used to touch a creature of diametrically opposed alignment, it will drain one spell slot from the holy symbol causing 1d6 damage per level of the slot. This method takes time. **NOTE:** Only magical or extra planar creatures count. A normal person of opposed alignment will only suffer punching damage.

It is not allowed for a cleric to destroy an older symbol just to create a more powerful symbol.

Symbols destroyed by spell damage and failed saving throws do allow for the creation of a new one.

The cleric must work alone and can only use spells cast from memory. It is up to the GM whether magical devices that allow the caster to memorize more spells are allowed in crafting a holy symbol.

The symbol must be recharged. Once a spell is cast, the cleric has 24 hours to rest, relearn spells, and recharge that spell. Additionally, if no spells are cast in the prior 24 hours, one hour of prayer each morning along with normal spell preparation is required to maintain the divine magic contained within.

NPCs:

Griswold ran around with 18 of his elvish cousins for a time. They all had longbows and longswords, but no magic items. They are the ones who presented him with a new shield device of a wolf half black and half gray with red eyes. It was presented to commemorate his slaying of a wolfwere since he was the only one with a magic weapon, his +1 spear. This symbol gave rise to being called *The Wolf*. Those who know his reputation often flee or surrender when they see his shield device.

Griswold's Younger Brother, Baron Corwin Stewart

Half Elf Fighter 8th Level

Lawful Good

HP: 73 AC: 3 [16]

ST: 16, IN: 11, WS: 11, DX: 14, CN: 12, CH: 13

Longbow, Broadsword, Dagger, Handaxe, Spear, Halberd, Light Lance
Banded Mail, Shield, Helmet

Retainers:

Sir Albert Brown

Human Fighter 6th Level *Griswold's Retainer*

6 feet 8 inches tall

HP: 50 AC: 3 [16]

ST: 16, IN: 14, WS: 13, DX: 12, CN: 7, CH: 13

Longbow, Broadsword, Heavy Lance, Dagger
Banded Mail, Shield, Helmet

Albert died on an adventure but is presented here for completeness.

Sir William Stewart Clan Stewart, no relation.

Human Fighter 8th level *Griswold's Retainer*

HP: 61 AC: 2 [17]

ST: 14, IN: 13, WS: 14, DX: 10, CN: 14, CH: 6

Longbow, Broadsword, Heavy Lance, Spear, Dagger, Handaxe, hammer, Spear
Plate mail, Shield, Great Helm
Heavy Warhorse

Alim

Human Magic-User 10th level *Griswold's Retainer*

HP: 36 AC: 8 [11] (+1 Ring of Protection)

ST: 11, IN: 16, WS: 12, DX: 12, CN: 11, CH: 12

Staff, Dagger

Spell Books: 1st level: Magic Missile, Sleep, Shield, Read Magic, Push, Spider Climb, Find Familiar, Unseen Servant, Dancing Lights, Identify, Write.

2nd level: Invisibility, Stinking Cloud, Levitate, Wizard Lock, Detect Invisibility, Knock, Strength, Web, Audible Glammer

3rd level: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Protection from Normal Missiles, hast, Invisibility 10 foot radius, Monster summoning I, Slow

4th level: Minor globe, Polymorph Self, Dig, Mnemonic Enhancer, Extension I, Fire Shield, Wall of Fire, Stoneskin.

5th level: Cloudkill, Teleport, Cone of Cold, Wall of Fire, Wall of Stone, Transmute Roc to Mud.

Familiar Black Cat excellent night vision and superior hearing.

Scrolls: scroll with two spells of tongues.

Potions: Extra healing Potion

Griswold's Alter Ego:

Donal The Black

Griswold once went undercover after the Stewarts had reclaimed the kingdom from the Buchanans. He died his hair black and wore an eye patch over one eye. He infiltrated the remnants of forces loyal to the Buchanans and defeated them.

To join the enemy forces, he had to get a black arrow tattoo on his upper arm. This was symbol against The Red Arrow, the forces loyal to the Stewart King, whose arrows used red fetchings.

Follow Me, And Die!

Griswold is the namesake of “Follow Me, And Die!” That was the taunting from my brother, the GM when Griswold couldn’t find more mercenaries to hire for his fight against the orc tribes.

Eileen Woodhome

Human Magic-User 9th level *Griswald's Retainer*

HP: 39 AC: 9 [10]

ST: 12, IN: 14, WS: 11, DX: 13, CN: 16, CH: 8

+1 Dagger, Staff

Spell Books: 1st level: Shield, Magic Missile, Sleep, Burning Hands, Mending, Spider Climb, Identify, Alarm

2nd Level: Invisibility, Levitate, Stinking cloud, Mirror Image, Strength, Knock, Detect Invisibility, wizard Lock, Locate Object

3rd Level: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Protection Normal Missiles, Hast, Slow, Water Breathing, Fly, Dispel Magic

4th level: Minor Globe of Invulnerability, Dimension Door, Dig, Mnemonic Enhancer, Fireshield,

5th level: Cloudkill, Teleport, cone of Cold, Wall of Stone,

Scrolls: 1 with 7 spells of Magic Missile at 9th level, 1 with 2 fireballs at 9th level

Douglas Delvin

Human Magic-User 9th level *Griswald's Retainer*

HP: 30 AC: 9 [10]

ST: 12, IN: 15, WS: 9, DX: 9, CN: 13, CH: 12

Dagger, Staff

Spell Books: 1st level: Shield, Magic Missile, Sleep, Read Magic, Enlarge, Jump, Write, comprehend Languages, Hold Portal

2nd level: Invisibility, Levitate, Stinking Cloud, Strength, Web, Mirror Image,

3rd level: Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Protection from Normal Missiles, haste, Slow, fly

4th Level: Minor Globe of Invulnerability, Confusion, Mnemonic Enhancer, Dig, Wall of Fire,

5th level: Cloudkill, Teleport, Cone of Cold, Wall of Force, Wall of Stone

Scrolls: all at 9th level: Teleport, Cloudkill, Wall of Stone, Protection Normal Missile, Fireball, Shield, Hold Portal, Magic Missile, Lighting Bolt

Elrad Q. Huddleston

Human Magic-User 5th level

HP: 23 AC: 9 [10]

ST: 11, IN: 17, WS: 11, DX: 13, CN: 13, CH: 13

Familiar: Hawk, sharp vision. AC: 6 [13] HP: 4

Dagger

Spell Books: 1st level: Read Magic, Friends, Dancing Lights, Mending, Shocking Grasp, Affect Normal Fires, Comprehend Languages, Sleep, Charm Person, Protection from Evil, Write, Find Familiar, Spider Climb, Detect magic, Ventriloquism.

2nd level: Invisibility, knock, Wizard Lock, Web, Fool's gold, magic Mouth, Strength, continual light, Forget, Mirror Image, Audible Glamour, Levitate, Shatter, Locate Object.

3rd level: Fireball, Lightning bolt, Clairaudecence, Fly, Protection from Normal Missiles, Suggestion, Tongues, Water Breathing, Phantasmal Force, Gust of Wind.

Owes a small merchant ship with a captain and crew of 20.

Wife: Dana daughter of the chief of the Nom Tribe

Fraternal twin sons age: 3 Elamar and Elramir

Retainers:

Alaric Elrad's Retainer

Half-Elf 4th Cleric/3rd Magic-User

HP: 23 AC: 4 [15]

ST: 12, IN: 16, WS: 17, DX: 14, CN: 16, CH: 14

Familiar: Toad AC: 7, HP: 4 wide angle vision, can see underwater

Mace, flail, dagger
Chain mail, large shield, Great helm

Spell Books: 1st level: Read magic, Push, Shocking Grasp, Affect normal fires, comprehend Languages, Find Familiar, Magic Missile, Shield, Sleep, Enlarge, Burning Hands.

2nd level: ESP, Invisibility, Mirror Image, Scare, Strength, Web, Shatter.

Ilid Lightstep

Human Illusionist 1st level *Elrad's Retainer*

HP: 4 AC: 9 [10]

Loyalty:

ST: 11, IN: 17, WS: 11, DX: 13, CN: 13, CH: 16

Dagger

Spell Book: 1st level: Read Illusionist Magic, Detect Invisibility, Wall of Fog, Color Spray.

Alfred Longspear

Human Fighter 3rd level *Elrad's Retainer*

HP: 29 AC: 4 [15]

ST: 16, IN: 12, WS: 12, DX: 13, CN: 14, CH: 11

Shortbow, Dagger, Handaxe, Short Sword (Cursed Beserker)

Chainmail, Shield, Helmet

Flute (very good, can play alone and can compose a new song in 1-6 days)

Fedda Blueboots

Human Fighter 2nd level *Elrad's Retainer*

HP: 17 AC: 4 [15]

ST: 12, IN: 5, WS: 12, DX: 15, CN: 11, CH: 14

Longbow, Longsword, Halberd, Dagger

Chainmail, Shield, Helm

MISCELLANEOUS CHARACTERS

Kalio

(Finnish for rock, cliff, mountain) he is 7 feet tall.

His goal from his culture is to do a great deed and earn his name.

His people are often at war with the *liontaurs*..

Human Fighter 1st level

HP: 10 AC: 7 [12]

ST: 18/77, IN: 12, WS: 15, DX: 17, CN: 16, CH: 11

Long bow, long sword, Spear, Dagger

Leather armor, small wooden shield, helmet

Hunting Dog

George

Human Fighter 1st level

HP: 10 AC:

ST: 17, IN: 12, WS: 9, DX: 12, CN: 12, CH: 13

Long bow, Battle axe, Spear, Dagger

Studded leather armor, small shield, helmet

Guard Dog

Andoran

Human Cleric 1st level

HP: 8 AC: 4 [15]

ST: 13, IN: 11, WS: 18, DX: 13, CN: 15, CH: 11

Mace, Staff

Chain Mail, shield, helmet

Light Horse

Alomar the Bold

Human Barbarian 1st level

7 feet tall 300 pounds

HP: 12 AC: 4 [15]

ST: 16, IN: 11, WS: 10, DX: 14, CN: 14, CH: 13

Broadsword, dagger, Spear, battleaxe, handaxe

Chainmail, shield, helmet

Medium Horse

Earil Orian

Elf Fighter/Magic-User/Thief 1st level in each class

HP: 6 AC: 7 [12]

ST: 14, IN: 14, WS: 11, DX: 17, CN: 12, CR: 11

Longsword, Shortbow, Dagger, Staff

Leather armor, shield, helmet

Spell Book: 1st level spells: Magic missile, Light, Detect Magic, Hold Portal, Push, Write, Find Familiar, Comprehend Languages, Charm Person

Alimbar

(April 15, 1982 is date created.
From Phil Kilgore's campaign.
Phil own *Tabletop Game & Hobby*)

Elf Fighter/Magic-User 3rd/3rd level

HP: 10 AC:

ST: 14, IN: 17, W: 13, DX: 17, CN: 17, CH: 13

Long bow, Longsword, Dagger, Spear

Spell Book: 1st level: Read Magic, Enlarge, Dancing Lights, Comprehend Languages, Burning Hands, find Familiar

2nd level: Friends, Invisibility, Knock, Magic Mouth, Pyrotechnics

Arbolan the Grey

Human Magic-User 2nd level

HP: 11 AC: 9 [10]

ST: 12, IN: 14, WS: 6, DX: 15, CN: 16, CH: 14

Dagger

Spell Book: 1st level: Read magic, sleep, Hold Portal, Find Familiar, Detect magic, Unseen Servant, Affect Normal Fires, Dancing Lights, Light

Recent Characters from Roll20:

Thorfus Ironhand

(1st Wed. Night Roll20 Character)

Dwarven Fighter 8th level

Lawful Good

HP: 34 AC: 0 [19]

ST: 16 (18), IN: 11, WS: 8, DX: 8, CN: 11 (9), CH: 5

Probability Longsword: +2 special ability with an ancient battery that holds up to 3 charges, when activated does 20 attacks on one target.

+1 **Battle axe** battery with 3 charges for 3d6 lightning bolt with 30 foot range, dagger, shortbow.

+2 Platemail, +2 shield, Helmet (Also +2 chainmail.)

Magic items: Liar box, bones of a liar rattle in the box whenever anyone tells a lie, Anti-ESP Ring.

Golden control circlet: Allows control of up to 8 automata and the lesser silver circlets. Subject to the master Crystal Circlet.

See our GM's first PDF on DriveThruRPG about this: [Automata Run Amok](#) [Affiliate link]

Rallion of the Wode

(2nd Wed. Night Roll20 Character)

Human Ranger 8th level

Chaotic Good

HP: 42 AC: 0 [19]

ST: 13, IN: 13, WS: 14, DX: 11, CN: 14, CH: 11

Magic: Before ancient dwarven magic destroyed: +2 Longsword, +2 Longbow and +1 arrows, Dagger, Staff, Sling, ESP Blocking Ring, gold Control Circlet, Liar Box, Ring of Protection.

Remaining AFTER: gold colored feather glows, light 10 foot radius.

Special Ability: Shadow Step once per level per day to any point he can see.

Urman of the Black Staff

(From Sunday Roll20 game)

Human Magic-User 7th Level

HP: 19 AC: 5 [14]

Alignment: LN

ST: 14, IN: 14, WS: 14, DX: 12, CN: 13, CH: 11

Magic Items: The Black Staff: affects low level undead as if turned by a cleric - slam on ground and all undead in area must make a save or be turned (up to ghast), **Wand** of magic missiles and lightning bolts - 35 of each, **Sunstone, Horn of Fear, Orb of Illusory forest, necklace of teleportation** back to tower, **White Dragon Cape** equal to studded leather armor, +2 **Bracers of Defense**, **Blue Robes** give additional 1st level spell, **silver ring** with 10 feet infravision, **Bear Amulet** - allows wearer to assume bear form once per month, **Ring with a Ram's Face** - Push Back once per day 5 feet wide 20 feet distance d8 damage, ring of force wall - create wall of force 5 feet wide max 6 charges recharges at 1 chargé per day. **Silver ring** with a compartment with Continual Light.

Four vials of mini stinking cloud: save at +2 half sized. Can be thrown 30 feet. 10 feet diameter.

Spell Books: 1st level: Charm Person, Detect magic, Feather Fall, Light, Magic Missile, Shield, Sleep, Read Magic, Unseen Servant

2nd level: Audible Glamer, Continual Light, Forget, Web, Wizard Lock, Knock, Stinking Cloud, Invisibility

3rd level: Fireball, Protection from Normal Missiles, Lightning bolt, Dispel Magic

4th level: Dimension Door, Polymorph Self, Wall of Fire, Wizard Eye,

Morpheus Phantasos

(From Occasional Roll20 game)

Human Illusionist 3rd Level

HP: 13 AC: 9 [10]

Alignment:

ST: 14, IN: 14, WS: 17, DX: 18, CN: 16, CR: 14

3 Darts, Dagger, Staff

SPELLS: 2 - 1st, 1-2nd

Cantrips: Colored Lights, Dim, Haze, Mask, Mirage, Noise, Rainbow, Two-D'Lusion

1st Level Spells: Change Self, Color Spray, Detect Illusion, Detect Invisibility, Gaze Reflection, Hypnotism, Phantasmal Force, Phantom Armor, Spook

2nd Level Spells: Hypnotic Pattern,

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