

Reward Stars & Candy XP



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Colophon

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Introduction

What is This?

This document introduces a new alternative in rewarding **experience points** (XP) to players and their PCs in the course of a pen-and-paper desktop roleplaying game. There's also some background / history, and some crunch-based, numerical tools and reference to help facilitate the incorporation of this approach into your own gaming group if you wish to do so.

Although the nuts and bolts and language of this document have been constructed to correspond to the **Pathfinder Roleplaying Game** (PFRPG) system, this approach will work similarly for any

roleplaying game system—so long as there is some sort of concept like **experience points** to which you can create your own mapping from **Reward Stars**.

This approach is provided free of charge, for two reasons. First, I genuinely feel that this is a useful, interesting alternative to other methods, and it's worked really well for me over the decades as a GM myself.

Second, as a means of introducing GMs and players alike to the concept, since it's used heavily throughout all **Infinium Game Studio** RPG products.

Enjoy!

Experience Points and Reward Stars

There are many ways of calculating, dispersing, and accounting for experience points (XP) in a **Pathfinder** gaming group. What follows is a method that I have used over the decades, and it's been a lot of fun. Although it may not be for every gaming group—your mileage may vary—it's an

interesting spin on traditional methods, and the approach may work for you.

Reward Stars and Infinium Game Studio

Whether this approach works for you or not, it's worth reading through this approach, if you intend to use any **Infinium Game Studio** products: All of the Quests in such material denote **XP** awards using this method.

I Want Candy

In the author's early days as a GM, I tossed out candies as rewards to the players when their characters did a good job. Hershey's kisses, Jolly Ranchers, Starburst—ideally, each candy would have an individual wrapper, and be somewhat bite-sized.

Candy could be distributed for defeating a kobold, picking a lock, dodging an attack, convincing the castle guard to look the other way, or any of the ordinary actions whose consequence typically involve experience points.

However, I also gave out candy for good roleplaying: convincing dialogue, outstanding (or horrid) emulation of accents, meta-jokes about the circumstances of the game that were truly hilarious, suggesting things to me as the GM or other players that took the story in a new direction, or—and I have to be honest, here—helping me as a GM.

My general rule was, if I forgot a rule, and you pointed it out (in a way that didn't make you seem like a jerk), then you got rewarded. This could be something as innocuous as reminding me that your elf ranger's longbow was firing *+1 arrows*, or as significant as reminding me that a certain piece of equipment granted a reroll to a critically-failed outcome.

Generally speaking, candy rewards were given out in my games for anything—literally, **anything**—that made the gaming experience *more fun*. Doorbell rings, and the pizza's here, and your character is tied up in the cyclops' cave: you know you won't be doing anything for a few minutes, and so you go and grab the grub, and tip the delivery guy—that's worth a candy.

Tell a funny joke—that's worth a candy. Save the life of your comrade, only to drug him unconscious and use him as a prop, in the manner of *Weekend at Bernie's*—okay, that's a little ghoulish, but it's in character, and amazing, so, yeah, that's *three* candies right there.

Candy as XP

Candy is awesome, though for one of my gaming group, who was a diabetic, it was a slightly more controlled and mindful awesomeness. But even the most free-wheeling player wants their character to level up eventually. I get it.

At the end of each gaming session, my players would “turn in” their candy wrappers (or uneaten candy, for those who didn't wish to indulge). Each wrapper represented something gone right, a good deed done—and therefore it was converted to XP.

Generally speaking, no matter what the PCs' levels, no matter what the adventure, **10** candy wrappers meant you advanced to the next level. If you fell short—let's say, you only got **6**—then it meant you were closer for next gaming session (i.e., **4** needed in this example).

As years went on, it became a bit less practical and/or healthy to urge my friends to consume at least ten pieces of candy every time we got together, and so the approach was tweaked. Instead of candy wrappers, gold stars, or spare dice in a particular color, or Warhammer 40,000 figurines. The point was, you got a token, a “nugget” of reward, which was later converted into XP.

Rules lawyers hate this method, and I respect that. But even the most hardened min/maxer eventually recognizes that this approach, despite its drawbacks, keeps play flowing quite quickly, and keeps everyone focused on what I believe should be the goal of any roleplaying game session.

Namely: **to have fun!**

Reward Stars: The Formalized Approach

As with, I believe, everything in every RPG product ever published, a particular GM is encouraged to completely ignore or change this approach if you feel it would make it work better for your gaming group.

The following represent opportunities to gain an experience point rewards in adventures published by **Infinium Game Studio**:

- ♦ Defeating **monsters** and **NPCs**.
- ♦ Avoiding **traps**, picking **locks**, or otherwise overcoming **obstacles**.
- ♦ Succeeding in **skill challenges** or **checks**.
- ♦ Fulfilling other objects in pursuit of a **Quest**.

Monsters and NPCs might still list an explicit **XP** reward the PCs should obtain for defeating them in

combat. Other challenges or accomplishments list the number of “**Reward Stars**” players should receive for success. This is denoted like this: 🌟 +2.

Think of a **Reward Star** as an abstracted (and sugar-free!) version of a piece of candy from the earlier anecdote: players receive one or more most times that they achieve something in the game.

Using this approach, **Quests only list Reward Stars**. This is because Quests should be fun, interesting, and above all, useful to the PCs, but shouldn’t be game-breakingly powerful or ignorably impotent. A simple delivery quest, for example: what should that be worth? **500 XP**? For a level one character, that can be almost halfway to levelling up; for a level 19 character, that makes for a completely worthless diversion. Using **Reward Stars** solves this problem, by automatically scaling the reward to be significant regardless of character level.

If you follow the approach I’ve used, then at the end of each gaming session (or in between sessions, or at the start of the next session, whatever works best for your schedule), convert the **Reward Stars** to traditional **Experience Points**.

The GM is heavily encouraged to augment the rewards documented with additional rewards, for perhaps-less-tangible contributions: good jokes, helpful behavior, playing fair and nice, being a good sport, paying for or even just ordering dinner, that sort of thing.

Such “intangible rewards” should be general in nature: a good, timely joke should be rewarded with a chunk of XP that’s meaningful and helpful to the PC in question, whether they’re level 1 or level 19.

Stay In Character... Or Else

In rare cases, or with certain gaming groups, the GM should reserve the right to **remove** or **revoke** the **Reward Stars** a particular player, or the group entire, has earned.

Such penalties should not be applied in a discouraging manner, or against players who are genuinely trying, but whose luck is simply poor, or for whom things just aren’t working out. Indeed, successful roleplaying in the face of dire circumstances should be rewarded **more!**

Reward Stars should only be revoked if the player is detracting from play, distracting others, making inappropriate jokes not appreciated by the rest of

the group, not paying their fair share... or just generally being a jerk.

Converting Reward Stars to XP

Each **Reward Star** represents different XP depending on what your current level is.

If you’ve assigned **Reward Stars** to a particular PC, use the character’s current **level** on the table below to convert to an **XP** reward.

On some occasions, you may instead have granted **Reward Stars** to the party as a whole. In this scenario, calculate the **Average Party Level (APL)** as you normally would, and use that on the table below to convert the reward to standard **XP**.

If a PC has more than the minimum sufficient **Reward Stars** to advance in level, they may continue to advance! In such a scenario, count **Stars** using the PC’s current level, until they level up. Any remaining stars are converted to **XP** using the character’s **new level**. In exceptionally rare circumstances—or with exceptionally indulgent GMs!—this may involve a PC levelling up multiple times between sessions, though such power-levelling is generally discouraged.

Finally, in addition to different methods of determining rewards, gaming groups tend to have different theories as to how rapidly characters should level up. **Slow**, **average**, and **fast** tracks are shown here, which scale to the corresponding **Character Advancement** experience point totals in the **Pathfinder Core Rulebook**.

For purposes of **Reward Stars**, the following standard has been used:

- **Slow** advancement requires **15 Reward Stars** to advance.
- Advancement with the **Average** progression demands **10 Reward Stars** per level.
- Only **5 Reward Stars** are needed to advance following the **Fast** track.

Table 1: Converting Reward Stars to XP

Level, CR, or APL	Slow	Avg	Fast
1	200	200	260
2	300	300	400
3	433	400	540
4	600	600	800
5	800	800	1,000
6	1,200	1,200	1,600

Level, CR, or APL	Slow	Avg	Fast
7	1,600	1,600	2,200
8	2,533	2,400	3,200
9	3,000	3,000	4,200
10	5,000	5,000	6,800
11	6,333	6,500	8,000
12	9,667	9,500	13,000
13	12,667	13,000	17,000
14	19,333	19,000	26,000
15	26,333	25,500	35,000
16	36,667	41,000	50,000
17	53,333	50,000	70,000
18	76,667	75,000	100,000
19	100,000	105,000	140,000
20	n/a	n/a	n/a

Converting Existing Gaming Products to the Reward Star Format

This is pretty simple. Take anything in the adventure you're converting that explicitly gives an **XP** reward. For each such occurrence, consider the value and challenge of the obstacle faced. Assign a number of **Reward Stars** based on that.

It's suggested that most Quests, obstacles, or challenges probably merit zero, or just  **1, Reward Star**. Significant, complex, or time-

consuming tasks might justify  **1-2 Reward Stars**. Awarding  **3** or more **Reward Stars** should be reserved only for the completion of a major task, an entire-gaming-session challenge, or some other elaborate or truly brutal challenge.

You can do this on the fly, as well—which might be preferable, really, as it allows you to assign a reward based on how hard the challenge **turned out to be** for the PCs. For example, if the Dice Gods are truly not with your players in a given session, what should normally have been a simple encounter with a handful of low-level monsters might have ended up being a horrid, life-threatening affair. In such circumstances, it doesn't matter if it was just a group of **Giant Rats**: chuck some candy at your players, for goodness sake.

Conclusion

Some veteran GMs might read this with a slight bemusement, shake their heads, and discard it, moving on with their lives. In that case, I hope this has served as an interesting diversion.

Novice GMs, or those who wish to run **Infinium Game Studio** products in particular, may see some value in this alternate approach.

In truth, this was written primarily for GMs who have been seeking a means of formalizing... okay, semi-formalizing, a reward system that incents not just slaying dragons and looting corpses, but in-character behavior, thoughtful reminders, and just generally speaking, a good time.

Regardless of which category you might fall into... thanks for reading! And remember to look for the **Reward Stars** concept in future **Infinium Game Studio** products!

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