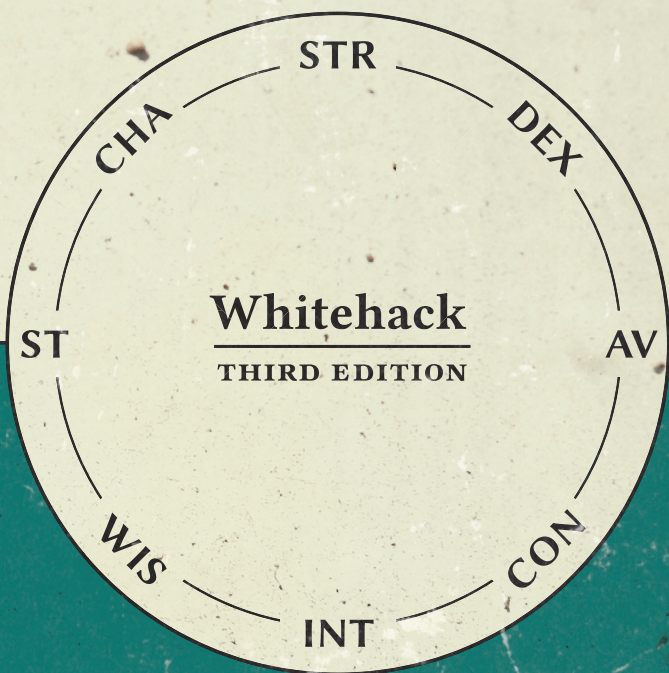


Christian Mehrstam



Quality Rules

Whitehack Third Edition

Christian Mehrstam

Games by Christian Mehrstam:

The *Whitehack* series

Whitehack Third Edition

Whitehack Third Edition Notebook

The White Curse (forthcoming)

Whitehack Second Edition (out of print)

Whitehack First Edition (out of print)

The *Suldokar's Wake* series

#1: *Æonic Evil Returns*

#2: *Anatomy of a Zira-Kaan Character*

#3: *Rules of Inverted Reality*

#4: *Depths of Devnull*

#5: *The Screen That Wasn't*

Suldokar's Wake is a science fiction game with mechanics similar to those of *Whitehack* in some respects, only much more extensive. If you like *Whitehack*, you may like *Suldokar's Wake* too, or want to borrow tools from it for your *Whitehack* game.

The *Oktoberlandet* series (in Swedish)

*Oktoberlandet: Magisk ångpunk i Tsarens välde**

Lintovaffären och andra oktoberländska texter

*Den sista najaden** (Nils Hintze, game world by Mehrstam)

Oktoberlandet (out of print)

*Published by Free League Publishing

twitter.com/whitehackrpg

whitehackrpg.wordpress.com

suldokar.wordpress.com

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For my family, always.

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Preface

Most games that survive this long are produced by teams, have a publisher and a distributor, contain art, are cleverly marketed, offer PDF alternatives, or, at the very least, use a bold typeface now and then! But not *Whitehack*. Nurtured by its player community, it thrives against all odds—including, I am sometimes told, a stubborn designer who doesn't care about what is best for his own creation.

I object to that last bit. I *do* care! But in its own quiet way, a spartan book is a statement, claiming a value without ornaments and trusting its readers to see it. I have been hesitant to move even slightly from this position.

However, the world does not stand still around my game. When I made the first two editions, *Whitehack* was the only “-hack” game on the market. The previous ones—*Red Box Hack* (2009) and *Old School Hack* (2010)—were sinking into Internet oblivion. But after 2015, the hobby has seen an influx of new players, and some of them have their eyes set on the expanding horizon of light-weight alternatives.

Whitehack was always “brief and complete.” But it also had an ultra-dense layout and some very terse text. In retrospect, I believe these things worked *against* the game by making it harder to learn and by giving it a deceptively low page count. Third edition is still concise—about a third of the B/X text, for example—but it is an easier read. The *White Curse* setting and adventures have been omitted. They need more room to reach their full potential and will get a separate publication.

This time, there is also an official PDF. I still like to get away from screens when I can, but I am also curious about the growing community for online play. And when I look at the new PDF, I get that distinct “there she is” feeling, like when recognizing someone you know in a crowd. And that has always been my one and only criterion for releasing anything.

I hope you will like *Whitehack Third Edition*!

An Old Friend



“Fear not, young adventurer!
I shall be right next to you
each step of the way.”



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Where new and veteran players and Referees are introduced to the game.

WHITEHACK is a complete role-playing game with its roots in the original rules tradition. It is designed to run just about any material from 1974 onwards with little or no conversion. This is the third edition, in which the game has been carefully revised based on years of community input. It has also been extended and edited to better welcome new and returning role-players.

The whole of the book is for players and the Referee alike. The information about monsters and magick in the last chapter can be skipped by players, or seen as rumors and lore that an adventurer might have come across. The book is designed to be read from cover to cover, but it also has an index and an extensive table of contents to help you quickly find your way. Sometimes a word or phrase has been put in **bold** to mark something that experience has shown is easy to miss.

If You Are New to *Whitehack*

Whitehack is the kind of game where you create a character in a fictional world. The Referee will present a game world situation that the character is in, telling you what she can see, hear, smell etc. The game may start with your character finding a strange ship in the frozen wastes of Gan-Gala, with a murder mystery in a dagonite enclave, or with something else, somewhere else. That is up to the Referee.

But you choose how your character reacts to that situation, where she goes and what she does. Perhaps she sends her homunculus ahead to scout the ship, or visits an outcast family to see what they have to say about the enclave? You control your character's feelings and choose her words when she talks to other characters belonging to co-players or the Referee. As a result of your choices, the Referee presents a new situation—the character encounters a frozen doppelganger at the helm, she is ambushed by enemies of the family she visited, etc.

The rules challenge you by telling you how to handle certain events. They deal with combat, but also with important tasks, experience, damage, magick and many other things. There are also areas where the rules don't nail everything completely shut. Sometimes you will be negotiating the outcome of an action with the Referee. This isn't very different from any other game where the Referee is allowed to set a difficulty for your character's actions, but it creates a shock absorber between the hard coded rules and what your group considers fair and reasonable. It also lets you collaborate a bit on game world creation, either as something new that you build together from the ground up, or as part of an existing world that you settle in. When you use your character's groups (her species, affiliations and vocation), you create or add to what is already known about the setting.

Dice are an important part of the game. They let you resolve actions, and sometimes they introduce complications and opportunities that neither you nor the Referee have thought of in advance. However, the choices of your co-players are just as important in this regard. What the Referee tells you is equal parts pre-written material and improvised responses to character actions and random table results.

You are telling a game story on the setting's conditions, where each agreement serves as a precedent for the next. Even during the course of a single session, you will develop your own borders and content for the open spaces, making this *your* game in *your* world.

If You Are a *Whitehack* Veteran

Thank you so much for your feedback and support! This third edition isn't very different from the previous one as far as rules go. Some changes are in the form of stability improvements, clarifications, support lists and other minor additions, often based on some remark made by a veteran such as yourself. You are recommended to discover those as you go along, referencing this new book instead of your old one.

Other differences are major additions. You can now exchange the attributes for a set that suits your setting or even the individual character. There are rules for bases and leaders. Adventure phases, factions and modern genre rules have been developed, and there is now something called "modus rolls." These changes are mostly for longer campaigns but work for shorter games too.

Conversions

To convert a first edition character to the new rules, recalculate AC and read the class table to get the AV and a new ST. Strong characters with an ability that is no longer in the game get a new ability from the new list.

No actual conversion is needed for second edition characters. Just move them onto the new character sheet. Pay special attention to encumbrance, as this edition uses the alternative system found in the Troubleshooting section of the second edition.

A Few Words About Setting

Game examples, equipment lists, particular rules, monster descriptions etc. contribute to shaping your conception of the game world. They imply a setting. If there are revolvers in the equipment lists (there aren't, but *if*), you know that you aren't dealing with the traditional medieval/renaissance fantasy mix. If there are references to vampiric elves (there are!), you know that something

happened in the world that turned some elves into vampires. And so on—there is no avoiding it (and it isn't a bad thing).

But a good game setting also requires some thought. For a longer campaign, it needs to resist exploitation and promote varied adventures through its conflicts, resources and environments. It must also be open to different characters and avoid excessive use of worn stereotypes. These are all *game* qualities. They won't automatically be there in the sum of the setting's parts, nor are they guaranteed in fiction or historical truth. And even if bits benefit greatly from being procedurally generated, dice can only take you so far. The setting needs a grain of intention and direction, and it should be supplied with some precision.

Whitehack makes sure that the setting elements presented in this book fit well together and work toward the above goal. The Referee chapter also has more to say on the matter. But you still need to take the last steps yourself. If you want something more comprehensive, you can turn to the *White Curse*, which is a forthcoming separate publication in which the implied setting has been made explicit.

How to Roll & Read the Dice

Whitehack uses two twenty-sided dice (d20) and three six-sided dice (d6). If you need to roll and add several dice, it says for example 3d6, where 3 is the number of dice. If something is subtracted or added to that, it says something like 2d6+4 or d6-1. **In all such operations, however, 1 is the minimum result.**

If the rules say to make a **positive** or **negative double roll**, roll two separate d20s and pick the one that is best or worst, respectively.*

* Note that this isn't the famous advantage/disadvantage rule, whose popularization *Whitehack* predates. As you will see, the double roll ties into the group and attribute mechanisms and is used when the character has specific training in some area.

A Quick Run-Down for Experienced Role-Players

- ◆ This is a “roll under” system. You will be rolling under or equal to the character’s attributes, saving throw value or attack value in order to do things. The higher you roll while still successful, the better. There are fumbles (20) and crits (hitting your value exactly). Sometimes you roll two dice and pick the best or worst.
- ◆ Characters are defined by groups and class, **which are different things**. Groups are the character’s background in terms of species, training and social connections. For example, an Elven Fighter who is a member of a Secret Council is an elf, fighter and member through her groups, **not** through her class. Class is separate—how you resolve things mechanically. You could make your elven fighter in any of the game’s classes, and each would give you a different take on the concept. Traditionally, character concept = class. But in *Whitehack*, character concept × class.
- ◆ Forget long stat blocks and detailed lists of spells, feats and abilities. In *Whitehack*, you only use their titles. Together with the rules and the character class and groups, they will let you triangulate what can be done with them. For example, if your character is a Wise Wizard and has a miracle named “Identify,” you don’t look up and read a specific rules text telling you exactly what that magick does. The title says what it is, and everyone knows what it might look like when coming from a wizard. So unless you want it to do something out of the ordinary or something very powerful, the character will just pay 1 or 2 HP and learn about the identified item. Then you move on. This doesn’t mean that *Whitehack* is a system of “anything goes” entailing a lot of hand waving. It just means that it makes use of group consensus on small free form patches, circumscribed by rigid rules. Each class has something similar to the above example.

- ◆ Players have more influence over game world creation than what is common in mainstream gaming. This is both due to those free form patches (above) and due to the fact that the Referee is encouraged to ask for player input. In a high level game, player control over game world aspects can also be formalized.
- ◆ *Whitehack* encourages the use of procedurally generated content. This works as usual but is also safe-guarded by **minimum** collective adaptations of rolled content, in the cases where it would otherwise appear shallow and artificial. Also, sometimes you generate Referee *input* rather than output.
- ◆ Characters and monsters have less HP than what is common, enhancing the feel of “living on the edge.” However, there is an extra option for player characters: They can reduce incoming damage by d6 once per battle if they save **or** succeed at constitution roll. This means that a character who starts the game with a single HP may still have chance of surviving. Also, when characters die, the Referee has the option of letting them stay in the game in “ghost form” for the remainder of the session or until they are resurrected.
- ◆ There are optional rules for different play styles. This includes various things such as old school rules, the use of grids and miniatures, genre adaptations, playing with adventuring party bases and using modus rolls (a randomized game world change to the prepared material). These rules come into play selectively.
- ◆ In most other aspects, *Whitehack* is traditional. But it isn’t a retro-clone. You will quickly run into trouble if you expect everything to work like you are used to, and you may not always be able to predict how the rules play out before trying. *Whitehack* is notorious for having more nuance than you would believe from such a short book. This edition is better organized than the ones before, but a careful, slow reading approach may still be advisable.

Terminology

Ability: Some kind of trait that lets a character do something unusual. Each class has special abilities.

AC: Armor Class. How hard the character is to hurt.

Adventure: The Referee's play material.

Affiliations: The character's contacts, such as organizations or powerful beings.

Attack rolls: Rolling dice to attack someone in combat.

Attribute: A character attribute. There are six attributes in the game—strength, constitution, dexterity, intelligence, wisdom and charisma.

Auctions: Longer contests where you make bids. They can be used for many things, from chases to cinematic fights against hordes of lesser enemies.

AV: Attack Value. Roll under or equal to AV, but over AC, in order to hit an opponent.

Base: A headquarters, larger vehicle or leader.

Campaign: A series of adventures that are more or less related.

CL: Corruption level. In some campaigns, you may be subject to radiation, insanity, the influence of chaos etc.

Class: The character type and player-world interface.

Contests: Contests, such as when arm-wrestling, are resolved through opposite task rolls.

Crits: Rolling your value exactly in a task or attack roll means a spectacular success.

Double rolls: Sometimes you roll two dice and pick the best or the worst of the outcomes (positive or negative double rolls, respectively).

Fumbles: Rolling 20 in a task or attack roll (and some saves) means a terrible failure.

Groups: Each character belongs to groups that define her. There are three kinds: species, vocations and affiliations.

HD: Hit Dice. Roll the hit dice to obtain HP. Player characters roll at each new level. If you get a lower number than the last time, you may keep the previous result.

HP: Hit Points. A measure of a character's ability to stay alive and to perform miracles.

HP Cost: The cost in HP for performing a miracle.

Inactives: Abilities you have but cannot currently use.

Initiative: Roll a d6 and modify for high dexterity in order to go first in combat.

Level: The character's level of experience, 1–10.

Miracle: A magick effect.

Miracle Wording: A phrasing of a miracle, such as “Magick Light” or “Voice of Doom,” that is the basis of what you can do with it.

Modus roll: When the adventure enters a new phase, the Referee can roll for unexpected circumstances.

MV: Move. The amount of feet or grid squares the character moves in 10 seconds.

Quality: The face value of the die in a successful roll.

Phase: A standard section of an adventure.

Rare Class: A class that you can only pick under certain circumstances.

Round: A 10 second period of time.

Saving Throw: Roll under or equal to the saving throw number (ST) in order to avoid things like traps.

Setting: Where the adventures take place.

Slots: Spaces for a character's class abilities. An ability is usable when it is in a slot (“slotted”).

Special attacks and combat options: Special ways of attacking, such as Feint or Trip.

Species: Dwarf, elf etc. Without an explicit species group, the character is in the game world norm group.

Species as Class: A species with predefined characteristics, often with restrictions of class.

ST: See Saving Throw.

Task rolls: Roll to succeed at a challenging task.

Trained roll: Task rolls that require training.

Turn: Your turn in the initiative order.

Vocation: What the character does in the game world.

XP: Experience Points to rise in level.

Examples of Play

Anyone can imitate, and the principles of role-playing are probably easier to learn from examples than from rules! The following sections demonstrate core mechanisms, the rules of which will all be described in the following chapters. Aside from the occasional in-paragraph specimen, these are the only examples of play in the book. Take a look now to get a feel for how the game plays, then come back to them later, as needed.

An Exorcist Performs a Miracle

Referee: *When you step into that corridor, you hear a moaning sound, and as you look up, a green light is spreading from the end of the corridor. You hear scraping sounds too.*

Player (playing a Wise Exorcist): *I hold my holy symbol firmly in one hand and my short sword in the other, but I don't back down.*

Referee: *Three creatures emerge from the shadows. Two of them are obviously zombies—you've seen that kind before. The third, however, doesn't have the same slowness about her. Her clothes are in rags, sure, but her skin has a greenish hue and her eyes shine with undead power.*

Player: *Ouch. Well, this is it. I'm gonna use my miracle "Banish undead" on them.*

Referee: *That sounds like an appropriate miracle for an exorcist to use here. What do you want it to do?*

Player: *I want my miracle to destroy them, you know, like turn them to dust or something.*

Referee: *Ok, but pulverizing monsters is considered to be major magick. I will let you destroy the zombies if you insist, but you'll have to pay d6 HP and likely pass a save to avoid doubling the outcome. Since you're only level two, that's not a great idea. Even if you succeed, you would only have a few hit points left and the third undead would still be free to act.*

Player: *What if I just scare the zombies off? Would that work better?*

Referee: *That sounds more sensible, and it is aligned with both wording and vocation. If you use some holy water and they get to save to avoid it, it's a single hit point. Ok?*

Player: *Sure! I sprinkle some holy water, brandish my symbol and shout: "In the name of the Bleeder, return to your evil shadows!"*

Referee: *[Rolls zombie saves.] Their moans take on a different pitch, and they shy away from the power in your words. Only the third creature continues to approach. She seems to be grinning.*

Player: *Oh crap. Well, I'm gonna charge her!*

Referee: *You're about fifteen feet away, so that's fine. Roll initiative!*

Being Attuned to Your Bow

Referee: *I'm sorry but you are too late. As you jump the last of the tower stairs and run to the window, you can see your friend already dangling in the hangman's noose. She will be dead in moments!*

Player: *Nooo! I take my bow and nock my last arrow. I am attuned to the bow, so I am going to use my Deft ability. I want to shoot the hangman and cut the cord.*

Referee: *The distance alone makes hitting anything very hard. But the crucial point here is that the hangman and the rope aren't aligned for a shot like that. The limit of your ability is the **nigh** impossible. You need a proper miracle for the impossible.*

Player: *Then I want to cut the noose with my arrow.*

Referee: *The rope is an inch thick and the distance is a bit over 300 feet. I will allow it, but only if you succeed at a standard attack roll. I'll also include the rules for shooting into melee. If you miss the noose, you might shoot your friend or someone else.*

Player: *"Hold on Taria!" Still panting from the exertion, I try to focus and say a quick prayer to the Huntress. Then I let the arrow fly. [Rolls.]*

Referee: *I'll be damned! At the last second, your arrow cuts the noose. Taria, still alive, drops to the ground!*

Belonging to the Wrong Species

Referee: *Ok, so your plan is to jump onto that wyvern taxi, dispose of the driver and then continue flying until you can find a good hiding place someplace near Stone End—the southern part of Ode?*

Player: *Yes, that's exactly right!*

Referee: *I'm am invoking your species group negatively. Wyverns aren't particularly fond of twisted riders to begin with, and twisted elves are even worse. In this case, the wyvern driver also happens to be a member of the Fish Haters. They despise dagonites but are suspicious towards anyone who's not an uncursed human. He spots you and eyes you suspiciously from the beginning, so if you try to pull your stunt he will be ready for it. You need to make a negative double roll for strength.*

Player: *Ok. But now it is established that wyverns don't get along with the twisted and that Fish Haters are generally ... like racist?*

Referee: *Yes and yes. Every time you invoke a group, it will say something about the game world. Sometimes you suggest things, at other times I do. This way we collaborate on game world creation.*

Fighting Suits of Armor

Referee: *Lucky saves! You both avoid the pit trap, just barely! You land on the other side, weapons drawn. In front of you lies the throne room, but so far the throne is empty. The tapestries are moldy rags, and the floor is covered with a layer of thick dust. It may have some decoration beneath, but it is hard to tell. Nobody's been in here for centuries, it would seem. By the walls stand four suits of armor, holding halberds. You can hear your own hearts beating and, faintly, the wind howling outside. Other than that, the room is completely still and quiet.*

Player 1: *Completely? Are you sure? None of those awfully suspicious suits of armor move even a tiny itty bit? I was the one who lent you that comic with animated armors, remember?*

Referee: *[Grins.] Funny you should mention that! All of a sudden, the armor suits turn their helmets toward you, simultaneously. You can see red eyes lighting up. Anyone wanna parley?*

Player 2: *Yeah, right! [Rolls initiative, adding 1 for Dexterity 13.] I act on 5. I'm gonna shoot!*

Referee: *My my, aren't you in a good mood! [Rolls initiative once for the animated armors.] They act on 5 too, but they have heavy halberds, so with your pistol you go first. The closest two are about 25 feet away.*

Player 1: *[Rolls initiative.] I act on 1.*

Player 2: *Ok. So I fire my pistol at one of them. That's beyond close range, so I've got AV 12, not 13 like usual. [Rolls 3.] I guess that's not enough to beat their armor, huh?*

Referee: *Plink! The bullet bounces off the armor or misses, what ever makes you feel better.*

Player 2: *Um. Just in case, I'm gonna back off ten feet into a corner of the room if I can.*

Referee: *You can. And good call. Because now it's their turn. They aren't super fast, but they aren't slow either. And the halberds give them reach. They move about 20 feet, which is enough for the two closest ones to attack.*

Player 1: *What? Attack me?*

Referee: *Yup. The sound of them rushing straight at you is deafening, like CLOINK! CLOINK! CLOINK! And then they just swing.*

Player 1: *Can I at least fight defensively?*

Referee: *You could with a better initiative. You freeze for a second—in fear, from the surprise, or maybe you are simply admiring the tapestries! [Rolls 18 and 10.] One of them misses you, hacking splinters from the floor, but the other one hits. [Rolls d6+1.] That's 6 damage.*

Player 1: *Ouch! I'll only have 2 HP left!*

Referee: *Not necessarily. You can save to shrug off d6 damage from one attack per battle, remember? Or roll for constitution if that's better.*

Player 1: *[Rolls 13, over her Constitution 12.] Nooo! That means I'm knocked out for two rounds!*

Player 2: *Uh oh.*

Auction in the Alley

Referee: *So you chase the thief into the alley. I think it would be suitable to run this as an auction.*

Players: *Do we bid separately or together?*

Referee: *Separately. Either bid higher than the last bidder, stay or make a one-bid as your first and only bid.*

Player 1: *Weird! That means that one of us may ruin things for the other. Where's the advantage of being two? And why would I lower my chances by bidding anyway?*

Referee: *Your chance isn't your own score but a function of all the numbers involved. It is certain that **someone** will win, but your individual cut of that certainty changes constantly as your bids make others bid or stay. As for being two, if one of you wins, you both do. That is all the advantage you get. Should you really screw up, well, then I guess you got in each other's way. Since you are running, we use dexterity. Now roll your hidden d6s.*

Player 2: *[Rolls a d6 but hides the result.] I bid 5. I rush to get to her quickly and try to tackle her to the ground.*

Player 1: *[Rolls a d6 but hides the result.] I bid 8. I take a shortcut through another alley, trying to surprise her.*

Referee: *[Rolls a d6 but hides the result.] Hm. I think I would do best to rest with a one-bid. After all, this woman knows the twisted alleys better than you do, so she is careful and turns things over in your way rather than trying to outrun you.*

Player 1: *So, obviously no need to bid more. Time to reveal the d6s?*

Referee: *Yes. I rolled 1.*

Player 1: *Well, I rolled 6 and have dexterity 17, so that's 23. If I roll 19 or less, I get to add 3 to the quality from the surplus! [Rolls 4.] I can't believe it!*

Player 2: *I kinda bluffed. I have dexterity 7 and rolled a 1. So I have to roll 6–8 to win. [Rolls 15.] No! She gets away.*

Referee: *She does. Instead of catching up, you run into one another when you come out of that shortcut. The thief stands a few feet away, grinning at you two lying on the ground. Then she turns, runs into a side alley and is gone.*

Using a Base

Referee: So all of you are escaping down the tunnels from Ode's museum, including Serpathia, your frail but powerful arch wizard leader. The jinga mask is in your possession, but you have snuffers right on your heels. I'll remind you that a snuffer is a rat the size of a large hound, with razor sharp teeth and an extremely good sense of smell.

Player 1: Dude, you do **not** have to remind us about snuffers. I had an actual nightmare after the last time we encountered them. And my character lost the left ear. Crap! I seem to have already used my ability slots. Can we please use Serpathia?

Player 2: Well, I'm certainly not looking forward to facing them alone, so yeah. As a good leader, she could tell us to run ahead while she erects a force barrier in this tunnel? That should slow the snuffers down.

Player 1: Good idea!

Referee: That would be well within her abilities, of course. I'd say that's a standard service. She might be saving your lives, but you're not facing absolutely certain death either. So you need to raise Serpathia's stress by two, for a total of what?

Player 2: [Checks the Base Sheet.] She's at three, so that's five.

Referee: Pressure is rising! Are you going to save?

Player 1: I think we should. If we're lucky, she'll have her stress reduced to zero.

Player 2: Ok, here goes! [Rolls a d20 for a result of 11.] No!!!

Referee: She's compromised. I'll have to think about how, but for now, your leader catches up with you a few tunnels ahead. Her face is ashen gray, and her age is showing even more than usual. The force barrier has clearly sapped her strength. "Move on, fools! There is a great and malignant force driving those beasts!"

Player 1: [Rolls a d6 for a result of 5.] At least when she recuperates from all this running, her stress will be down to zero.

Creating a Miraculous Set of Glasses

Player: *I want to create a pair of glasses for seeing invisible things. I'm a Pseudo-Scientist with the miracle wording "Optical Wonders." I want it to be a permanent object.*

Referee: *Well, the wording is ok, if a bit general. For no special ingredients or anything, I would say 2d6 permanent HP. Remember that if the cost ends up higher than your level, you also have to save or have it doubled.*

Player: *Ouch. What if I limit the use to once per day? I could also get some children's eyes from the black market, and maybe interview Blind Dog Zarkov in the Asylum?*

Referee: *Great ideas! You will need a proper lab too, though. Hm. If you add some negative side effect, like ten minutes of poor vision after using the glasses, I'll lower it to d6+1 HP. How far are you from the next level?*

Player: *I still have about 4,000 XP until level 6.*

Referee: *Ok. So tell me about that Asylum!*

The Task of Climbing a Wall

Player: *I want to climb the castle wall, but I have no rope. Perhaps I can look for something to grip on the actual wall?*

Referee: *That would be climbing a sheer surface. I'd say that's a trained roll, meaning you have to have a relevant group somewhere on your sheet, or you will have to make a double negative roll.*

Player: *Hm. I do have the Black Hats thieves' guild, but it's an affiliation group, and I have it written under intelligence.*

Referee: *How do you suppose it comes into play?*

Player: *Maybe there is someone in the guild who once climbed this wall and told me about a good spot to try and maybe also a climbing route.*

Referee: *That is actually a very clever idea. I won't allow for a double positive roll, because you're not climbing it with your brain, but you sure can make a regular roll—equal to or under your dexterity.*

Player: *Ok. [Rolls 7 under her dexterity 14.] Yay! I'm over the wall!*

Referee: *What's the name of that thief who had climbed before?*

Player: *Umm ... that would be Old Horge. He used to be a burglar back in the day.*

Referee: *Ok. He thinks you owe him one.*

Making a Modus Roll

Player 1: *Ok, we accept the mission. I guess it's time to buy some equipment and pay a visit to the library. I know Kvura is somewhere up on Vålsviddur in the north, but I want to know more before we set out!*

Referee: *[Makes a Modus Roll for the Preparation Phase.] Hm. Well, you can go ahead and look for stuff on the lists in the Character Generation chapter, but the library is going to be a bigger problem. It seems that there is "a matter of law" stirring things up. The place is swarming with city guards, which isn't good for you as you have an affiliation with the Black Hats.*

Player 1: *I hate the city guard. What's the crime?*

Referee: *Umm ... I'm not sure. [Makes an extra roll on the Events table]. Burglary! I guess someone stole important books?*

Player 2: *What if I use my affiliation with the Order of S:t Heopt to find out? They're constantly hanging around the library!*

Referee: *Please do! And feel free to help me out with suggestions!*

Player 2: *Well, my friend ... err ... Siddel knows all about it. One of the tomes about the Witch King has been stolen, and a late visitor was killed in the process.*

Referee: *Cool! So anyway, the place is crawling with guards. Are you still going to try to do research?*

Player 1: *Damn right I am. I'm going to get myself a guard disguise, of course. And then I'll just walk right in, find the right books and maps and sit down in a quiet corner.*

Referee: *Let's start with the disguise, and we'll see how quiet it gets!*



CHAPTER II

CHARACTER GENERATION

Where we explore the choices involved in creating a new character.

GENERATING a character in *Whitehack* can be very quick, as this edition has lists to make some important choices easier. But some players enjoy dwelling on things and like to try many different options, and for them it can of course be a longer process. If you are in a hurry, just transfer a pre-generated character to a copy of the character sheet (p. 56). If you have a few more minutes, follow the below steps:

1. Start by rolling dice for your character's basic attributes.
2. Pick a character class. If you are making a new character because your last one died, your Referee may offer a *rare* class, as described in the chapter on Optional Rules (p. 89).
3. Roll hit points.
4. Add species, vocation and affiliation groups. If you want a species group, you need to pick it now—the other groups can actually wait.
5. Buy equipment.
6. Give the character an identity (name, age, gender etc.).

Now you are ready to find adventure! If you are the Referee, you have a bit more to do—but we will cover that later (starting on p. 104).

The Attribute Scores

The basic attributes are numbers which represent the strength, dexterity, constitution, intelligence, wisdom and charisma of the character. Roll 3d6 for each attribute. The scores are raised as the character progresses, but low scores can also be beneficial (p. 44).

Later in this book (p. 88), you will also learn an optional process to exchange the traditional attributes for a set customized to a specific genre, setting or play style.

- STR** Strength lets the character move with more weight and is helpful in any situation that depends mainly on muscle. Characters in the Strong class get melee bonuses from high strength.
- DEX** Dexterity is a combination of coordination, nimbleness and quickness, useful in a great many situations in the game. A score of 13 or more gives you a +1 bonus to initiative in battle. A score of 16 or more gives you +2.
- CON** Constitution is the health and endurance of the character. High constitution gives a better chance of surviving and recovering from damage, a bit more so for characters in the Strong class.
- INT** Intelligence represents memory, reasoning and the ability to understand difficult concepts or read scrolls. You gain one extra language if you have an intelligence of 13 or more. You gain two for 16 or more.
- WIS** Wisdom determines a character's insight, perception and good judgment. Characters in the Wise class get extra magick abilities if they have high wisdom.
- CHA** Charisma gives a character a chance of influencing other people, which is useful in many social situations in the game. Charisma also affects retainer morale and the reactions of non-player characters.

Character Class Descriptions

There are three basic character classes in this game: the **Deft**, the **Strong** and the **Wise**. Each has its own description as well as a class table.

- ◆ **Lvl.** This is the character's Level of experience.
- ◆ **XP.** This is the number of Experience Points needed to advance to that level.
- ◆ **AV.** This is the Attack Value, representing the character's prowess in combat.
- ◆ **HD.** This is the number of d6 Hit Dice at that level. Players **re-roll** their characters' HD each level to obtain a number of Hit Points (HP). If you roll poorly, you can keep the result from the previous level.
- ◆ **ST.** This is the Saving Throw number, used to avoid all sorts of hazards and terrible things.
- ◆ **SI.** These are Slots for some of the class abilities.
- ◆ **Gr.** This is the number of Groups that the character gets mechanical benefits from.
- ◆ **Ra.** You can Raise one attribute 1 point at even levels.

The Deft

Deft characters rely on superior technique and skill. They may for example be thieves, wandering monks, spies, marksmen, rangers or assassins. The Deft must choose a vocation (p. 45) at level 1. When properly equipped, and when rolling for a task or an attack that is in line with the vocation, they always use a positive double roll. For this reason, deft characters don't mark the vocation group next to a specific attribute. Additionally, when they try to do damage from an advantageous position in combat ("combat advantage," p. 72), deft characters may switch this double positive roll benefit for double damage, *if* their vocation is relevant to the situation. For example, a trader might do this when defending her cargo, and an assassin when striking from the shadows.

As they advance, the Deft get slots, each of which they permanently associate with *two* attunements. A deft attunement must be a teacher, an item, a pet or a place. For example, a ranger could have a well trained dog or be attuned to her ancestral lands. A monk could have a famous master or be attuned to her bow. For each slot, one attunement is active (i.e. *in* the slot) while the other is inactive. Switching them takes a day spent in practice.

Active attunements can be invoked for a related action once per day to give the Deft **special rules for difficulty**: A hard task succeeds automatically, while a *nigh* impossible one requires a regular task roll (cf. p. 60). For example, the ranger attuned to her ancestral lands could track on bare rock with a regular roll, while the monk attuned to her bow could hit a sentry at 200 feet automatically. Truly impossible feats remain impossible.

If a deft character wears a shield or armor heavier than studded leather, she loses her slot abilities and the option to switch positive double rolls for double damage. She has -2 AV with non-attuned two-handed melee weapons, but gets +1 to damage and AC from an off-hand weapon if she has a combat oriented vocation. Characters with non-combat oriented vocations may save to turn a successful *task roll* into a critical success, once per session.

Lvl	XP	HD	AV	ST	Sl.	Gr.	Ra.
1	0	1	10	7	1	2	–
2	1,500	2	11	8	1	2	1
3	3,000	2+1	11	9	1	3	1
4	6,000	3	12	10	2	3	2
5	12,000	3+1	12	11	2	4	2
6	24,000	4	13	12	2	4	3
7	48,000	4+1	13	13	3	5	3
8	96,000	5	14	14	3	5	4
9	192,000	5+1	14	15	3	6	4
10	384,000	6	15	16	4	6	5

◇ *Deft Advancement* ◇

A Knight



“What counts as a memorable battle?
Well, in the Leaf Order we like things clear.
So we made a rule: Only matters of honor
are memorable. Careful there, young sir!
You almost stepped on that leaf!”

The Strong

Strong characters rely on combat skills and physique. They can for example be warriors, guards, brigands, knights, bounty hunters or barbarians. They get the same, single basic attack per round as the other classes, but whenever they put an enemy at zero or negative hit points, they may use the momentum of that action to attack another, adjacent enemy. This requires a separate attack roll but does not count towards the number of free attacks (next spread).

Strong characters may loot keywords from enemies, if they deliver the killing blow in a memorable battle. The keywords may be called upon for tricks, special attacks or abilities in one of the following *categories*, decided at the time of looting:

- ◆ **Memorable enemy.** If the enemy type and the keyword relates to an action, the Strong may take +2 for one round to either AC, AV, ST, HP, an attribute, damage, healing, MV, quality or initiative. For example, a banshee-like war cry could yield +2 to initiative.
- ◆ **Substance.** The Strong extracts a rare and potent substance (poison, acid, something flammable etc.) from the corpse.*
- ◆ **Supernatural.** The killing act transfers a non-violent supernatural ability that the monster has (it should work the same), such as a wyrm's *sense gold* ability.

The Strong can only hold a single keyword at any one time, but it can be exchanged as new monsters are killed (unused substances are then considered spoiled). Each keyword is usable a number of times equal to the character's level. It does not occupy a slot, but if it is a substance, it may need a place in the character's inventory, where it counts toward her encumbrance.

*Some creatures may yield substances to any character examining their remains. Such findings aren't keyword based and don't fall under these rules.

The Strong can use any special combat option (p. 73), but each of their slots also holds one stronger alternative. As they advance, the Strong choose permanently from the below list. Unless otherwise noted, effects last **one round** and can be activated **any number of times**.

1. As a full round action, the Strong may protect an adjacent character by letting all attacks directed at her until their next turn target them instead. Each enemy is allowed a save against this effect.
2. After a successful attack, the Strong may push an opponent backwards ten feet *and* move into the space formerly occupied by the opponent. The target of this effect is allowed a save to negate it. Note that the target may be subjected to free attacks from someone else as a consequence of this maneuver.
3. When fighting big opponents,* the Strong can use one action to cling onto and even climb them with a successful dexterity roll, gaining double combat advantage (+4 AV and damage, see p. 72) in the next and any subsequent round as long as they hang on. New dexterity rolls may be required at the Referee's discretion, but don't require separate actions.
4. The Strong may work up a battle frenzy that gives them +2 AV and damage, but also -3 AC. This requires 1 round of concentration but lasts the entire battle, blocking their other slotted abilities. After combat, they must save or continue their attacks for another round, picking whomever stands closest as target.
5. The tactical skill of the Strong lets them bestow a +4 AV bonus on an ally, once per battle and for a single attack made right away or later in that fight. This requires a *related* small verbal action, such as "strike when she raises her wings!"

* Anything that is clearly bigger than the character's *species*—like a human compared to a halfling—may count as a big opponent, at the Referee's discretion.

Lvl	XP	HD	AV	ST	Sl.	Gr.	Ra.
1	0	1+2	11	5	1	2	–
2	2,000	2	11	6	1	2	1
3	4,000	3	12	7	1	2	1
4	8,000	4	13	8	2	3	2
5	16,000	5	13	9	2	3	2
6	32,000	6	14	10	2	3	3
7	64,000	7	15	11	3	4	3
8	128,000	8	15	12	3	4	4
9	256,000	9	16	13	3	4	4
10	512,000	10	17	14	4	5	5

◇ *Strong Advancement* ◇

- By taking a small verbal action, the Strong may encourage their friends who stand close enough (15 feet radius), giving them +1 AV and +1 ST. This ability can be inverted to put fear in enemies in the same radius, giving them –1 AV and ST.
- The Strong can forsake their move and make a one-handed melee attack and a one-handed ranged attack in the same round, provided they have suitable weapons. For example, you could do this with a broadsword and a throwing knife.
- The Strong can parry and wait instead of attacking. They get +2 AC in the parrying round, then double combat advantage in the next round against an enemy they have parried. They can parry two consecutive rounds to get *triple* combat advantage. If damaged in a parrying round, they must save or lose the effect.

The Strong get +1 AV for a strength of 13 or higher and +1 damage too for 16 or higher. They get +1 to HP at 13 constitution and another +1 at 16. They can make a number of free attacks (p. 72) equal to their level and may use all armors and weapons. They have ST bonuses vs. poison and death (+1) and special melee attacks (+4).

The Wise

Wise characters perform **miracles** through arcane negotiations with powerful forces in their environment. They may for example be cultists, chemists, meta-mathematicians, exorcists, druids, bards, rune-carvers or wizards. When they gain a slot, they permanently tie two miracles to it—one active (in the slot), and one inactive. Switching takes a day of preparation. The level 1 slot gets an extra inactive miracle for a wisdom of 13+, two for 16+.

Each miracle is given a descriptive or evocative **wording**, as in “Telekinesis” or “Patrok, Demon of Passage!” The wording, the character vocation and the desired effect are used to triangulate a **cost** in HP for dealing with the supernatural: The player says what the miracle should do and the Referee suggests the cost. The player may lower it with drawbacks and ingredients. Costs increase the further they are from the wording, the vocation and what can be achieved without magick. You can deliberately pick precise wordings for low costs or vague wordings for versatility.

There are cost guidelines based on **magnitudes** on the next spread and a reference table of traditional effect–level correlations. But costs tend to vary a bit with time and place. The Wise may save once per day and spend 10 minutes to detect and use a local energy concentration, making a single effect of a certain type one magnitude cheaper. Check the save quality against the table on the next spread.

The Wise can’t attempt miracles with an *initial* maximum cost above their current HP, and if the cost is set or rolled above their level, they must save or have it doubled (which can be lethal). The Wise supernaturally recuperate from any HP loss at twice the natural rate, but that is the **only** way they heal (they may need treatment, potions etc. for other things, though).

Crafting potions, bombs, scrolls etc. works just like any other miracle, but the first charge, dose or disposable item costs double. Permanent magick lowers HP until you

re-roll your HD at the next level. It also requires a steady mind. At the Referee’s discretion, it can’t be attempted on the verge of leveling.

Any character can use scrolls (p. 78), but once the magick in one has grown sufficiently ingrained and deeply set in the glyphs that bind it, the Wise can slot the effect with a successful trained roll for intelligence. Their level must exceed its HP cost, and the scroll must be **at least a decade old**. The process spends the scroll and ruins any previous wording in the slot, but lets the Wise reproduce the scroll’s *static* effect once per day at *zero* HP cost. The slotted effect counts as a miracle and, as such, can be switched into and out of the slot it is tied to.

The level 3 slot may hold a magick item—a blackstaff, a talking sword, etc.—instead of miracles. This extends the character’s HP by an amount equal to her level. When chosen, any previous wordings tied to the slot are ruined. The slot can be freed *for another item* if the previous one breaks, which lowers both maximum and current HP.

While wearing shields or armor heavier than leather, the Wise get a +2 penalty to all HP costs (*before* any doubling due to a failed save). They have –2 AV when using two-handed weapons, except if the weapon is slotted as per above. They get +2 ST against magick and mind influencing abilities.

Lvl	XP	HD	AV	ST	Sl.	Gr.	Ra.
1	0	1+1	10	6	1	2	–
2	2,500	2	11	7	1	2	1
3	5,000	2+1	11	8	2	2	1
4	10,000	3	11	9	2	3	2
5	20,000	4	12	10	3	3	2
6	40,000	4+1	12	11	3	3	3
7	80,000	5	12	12	4	4	3
8	160,000	6	13	13	4	4	4
9	320,000	6+1	13	14	5	4	4
10	640,000	7	13	15	5	5	5

◇ Wise Advancement ◇

HP	Magnitudes
0	Zero , trivial effect, slotted scroll or simple effect boosted by a limiting condition.
1	Simple , can be achieved without magick. For example: Light, Unlock, Cure/Cause Light Wounds, Read Language.
2	Standard , just beyond the possible. For example: Force Armor, Breathe Water, Minor Telekinesis, Invisibility.
d6	Major , a major breach of natural law. For example: Teleportation, Animate Dead, Locate Object/Being, Dispel.
2d6	Powerful , use of raw power. For example: Raise Dead, Alter Weather, Stop Time, Petrify, Open Portal, Clone Shell.
+	Costly . Peripheral to vocation and/or wording. Extra duration, range, effect area, victims, damage. No save. Craft item (Cost × 2). Adding another charge (Cost × 1). Expensive magick type. Crafting a permanent magick item (Cost × 2 permanent HP).
–	Cheaper . Very close to vocation and/or wording. Rare/costly ingredients. Bad side effects for the Wise. Wise save (fail negates). Boosting but addictive drugs. Cheap magick type. Extra casting time. Time or place requirements.

Qu.	Energy Concentration
1	Conjuration (summoning)
2	Evocation (controlling the elements)
3	Necromancy (healing and damaging)
4	Abjuration (protecting, banishing)
5	Illusion (creating illusions)
6	Divination (getting information)
7	Transmutation (altering material things)
8	Enchantment (affecting the mind)
9+	Player choice

Lvl Traditional Magick Effects

- 1 Charm Person, Cure (Cause) Light Wounds, Detect Chaos (Law), Detect Magick, Hold Portal, Light (Dark), Protection from Chaos (Law), Purify (Putrefy) Food and Drink, Read Languages, Read Magick, Sleep.
- 3 Bless (Curse), Continual Light, Detect Invisibility, Detect Thoughts (ESP), Find Traps, Hold Person, Invisibility, Levitate, Locate Object, Open Locks (“Knock”), Phantasmal Force, Speak with Animals, Web, Wizard Lock.
- 5 Alter Time, Continual Light (Dark), Crystal Ball, Cure (Cause) Disease, Darkvision, Dispel Magick, Fireball, Fly, Invisibility, Lightning Bolt, Locate Object, Protection from Chaos, Protection from Normal Missiles, Remove Curse, Water Breathing.
- 7 Charm Monster, Confusion, Cure (Cause) Serious Wounds, Dimension Portal, Hallucinatory Terrain, Massmorph, Neutralize Poison, Plant Growth, Polymorph, Protection from Chaos (Law), Remove Curse, Send Invisible Eye (“Wizard Eye”), Speak with Plants, Sticks to Snakes, Wall of Fire or Ice.
- 9 Animal Growth, Animate Dead, Cloudkill, Commune (With Higher Power), Conjure Elemental, Contact Other Plane, Create Food and Drink, Dispel Chaos (Law), Feeblemind, Hold Monster, Insect Plague, Passwall, Possess (“Magick Jar”), Raise Dead, Send on Quest (“Quest”), Telekinesis, Teleport, Transform Rock–Mud, Wall of Stone or Iron.
- 10+ Anti-Magick Shell, Control Weather, Death Spell, Disintegrate, Invisible Stalker, Move Earth, Move Water, Project Image, Quest, Reincarnation, Transform, Stone–Flesh.

◇ *Top left: Miracle HP Guidelines. Bottom left: Energy Concentrations. Top right: Traditional Magick Effects.* ◇

Creating Miracle Wordings

Writing miracle wordings is a lot of fun but can seem hard the first times you try. Here are four steps that you can try to follow:

1. Check the Energy Concentrations table (previous spread) and pick one concentration to decide what the miracle is mainly about.*
2. Decide if your wording is to be broad and costly but often useful (like “Flames”), or if it is to be specific and cheaper (like “Summon Dire Animal”).
3. Your wording can be the name and title of a summoned creature, as in “Jor, the Knower.” It can be a description of its main use (Identify), or a flamboyant expression named after your character (“Saffron’s Magnificent Divination Ritual”). Another option is to choose the name of an object (“Pendulum of Answers”) or body part (“All-Seeing Eye”), or a corny rhyme or exclamation, as in “Rise, Sage Ghost, Thou Who Knowest More Than Most!”.
4. Use the oracle on the next page if you have a hard time coming up with good words.

The Referee is encouraged to allow for minor adjustments of a wording that you choose until the character reaches the next level. This makes the initial choice easier and often a bit faster. But after that, you are stuck with your wording at least until after level 10 (p. 97).†

* If you want to randomize it, you can use a d20, read the units number and re-roll on a 9 or 0.

† This may sound harsh, but the point of miracles isn’t that your character should be able to do anything she likes. Your character has contours and an identity, and each miracle wording is a part or an extension of who she is. From a game point of view, it is also important that the possibilities of the Wise are limited through the “triangulation” of wording, vocation and effect, so that it becomes a challenge to solve in-game problems with magick. Thus, the only way you can get rid of a wording is by replacing it with something else, i.e. a scroll or an item.

Miracle Wording Oracle

The below oracle can be used in part or in full, as you choose. Roll and collect four words and then use the ones you want either as inspiration, an indication of miracle purpose or directly as components in the wording. Words with asterisks have useful opposites.

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 1. Hex | 8. Sleep* | 15. Hymn |
| 2. Mutation | 9. Surge | 16. Barrier |
| 3. Flesh | 10. Wave | 17. Source |
| 4. Spirit | 11. Ray | 18. Void |
| 5. Seal | 12. Cure | 19. Call |
| 6. Gift | 13. Siphon | 20. Smoke |
| 7. Orb | 14. Bond | |

- | | | |
|---------------|------------|-------------|
| 1. Familiarus | 8. Nature | 15. Monster |
| 2. Passage* | 9. Metal | 16. Secret |
| 3. Ice* | 10. Energy | 17. Shadow* |
| 4. Element | 11. Bombs | 18. Insect |
| 5. Earth* | 12. Wound | 19. Matter |
| 6. Death* | 13. Scroll | 20. Crystal |
| 7. Animal | 14. Blood | |

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Lock | 8. Servant | 15. Language |
| 2. God | 9. Shield | 16. Stair |
| 3. Secret | 10. Trap | 17. Rope |
| 4. Elixir | 11. Water | 18. Hole |
| 5. Arrow | 12. Potion | 19. Tree |
| 6. Cloak | 13. Thought | 20. Ground |
| 7. Veil | 14. Symbol | |

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. Detect | 8. Heal* | 15. Remove |
| 2. Summon | 9. Create | 16. Dispel |
| 3. Learn | 10. Bless | 17. Hold* |
| 4. Evoke | 11. Find | 18. Transform |
| 5. Trick | 12. Hide | 19. Obscure |
| 6. Enchant | 13. Protect | 20. Induce |
| 7. Alter | 14. Speak | |

Groups

Though you do not have to choose right away, each character belongs to at least two groups and will eventually belong to more. Groups are broad definitions of traits, skills, contacts and information that the character possesses. Having a relevant group when attempting tasks that require training, means that you don't get the same penalties that characters without such a group do.

Each group is written next to an attribute on the character sheet. This means that the group has an even greater weight (you get a positive double roll) when making task rolls using that specific attribute—again *if* the group has any relevance for the roll. As deft characters get this advantage for all task rolls relative to their vocation group, they do not mark it next to any attribute.

When a character reaches a new level, one group may be moved to another attribute.

An attribute can have two groups, but for each attribute with a score of 5 or less, the character gets one extra affiliation group (see below). For each attribute that is raised above 5, one affiliation group is lost.

In the game world, a character may side with or be in many groups. But she will not belong to them in a game mechanical sense until they are written next to attributes.

Species

The first type of group is the character's species. It must be chosen at character creation and is defined by physical and broad cultural traits. Species groups are relative to the norm of the game world—if you don't have a species group, it means that the character is the most common species, usually human. Common fantasy species groups are dwarves, elves, halflings and goblins. Choosing one of those would mean that the character has some of the physical and cultural traits of that species. It does *not* mean that the species as a whole is culturally the same. Further group choices can delve deeper into cultural and sub-cultural variations.

Species groups are special. You note them after two attributes, but they can also be used negatively at the Referee's discretion, as in "dwarves aren't built to swim fast—make a double negative roll." If only one of the character's parents was another species than the norm, mark the species group next to a single attribute.

Vocations

The second type is the character's vocation. This can be wizard, barbarian or something similarly adventurous. But it can just as well be plumber or swine herder—literature is full of ordinary people becoming heroes.

Often, a player will want to choose a vocation in line with the character's class, but it isn't necessary. Creating a deft wizard would effectively give you a character whose own magick is petty (it does the *nigh* impossible), but who is knowledgeable about magick in theory and good at reading spells from books and scrolls. Conversely, a wise knight would be physically weaker than her peers, but still a good tactician with magick to back her up in battle.

Vocations aren't mere occupations. A character can only have one vocation but may supplant or develop it as part of her career, if there is an in game opportunity.

Affiliations

The third type is the character's affiliations. Such groups can be guilds, schools, tribes, companies, secret societies, cults or some other social structure. They may provide friends, knowledge, languages, equipment, refuge and aid, and, in rare cases, even specific skills (as in "the Black Hats jealously guard the secret of weird explosives"). They will also give the character enemies. Affiliation groups can be exchanged but must always be plausible in the game world.

In certain campaigns, affiliation groups such as Good, Evil, Lawful etc. designate moral attunement to gods and other powers. Characters without such groups are simply ambiguous and complex in their morals.

Group Generator

Choose, roll or let the below lists serve as mere inspiration for your choice of species, vocation and affiliations. Note that the Referee may limit your choice of species severely depending on the setting. Some species may also be reserved for rare species-as-class characters (p. 94).

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Thief | 8. Hypnotist | 15. Warrior |
| 2. Ranger | 9. Scribe | 16. Knight |
| 3. Shaman | 10. Bard | 17. Noble |
| 4. Trader | 11. Barbarian | 18. Alchemist |
| 5. Bodyguard | 12. Wizard | 19. Marksman |
| 6. Druid | 13. Assassin | 20. Grave |
| 7. Apothecary | 14. Engineer | Robber |
| 1. Physician | 8. Cultist | 15. Smuggler |
| 2. Spy | 9. Herbalist | 16. Beggar |
| 3. Miner | 10. Guard | 17. Monk |
| 4. Agitator | 11. Exorcist | 18. Sailor |
| 5. Student | 12. Brigand | 19. Entertainer |
| 6. Pit Fighter | 13. Prospector | 20. Bounty |
| 7. Gambler | 14. Rune-carver | Hunter |
| 1. Elf | 8. Ratling | 15. Half-orc |
| 2. Dwarf | 9. Crow | 16. Half-elf |
| 3. Goblin | 10. Marionette | 17. Ghost |
| 4. Halfling | 11. Duck | 18. Insectoid |
| 5. Old Blood | 12. Mutant | 19. Plantoid |
| 6. Giant | 13. Monkey | 20. Fungoid |
| 7. Dagonite | 14. Kobold | |
| 1. Guild | 8. School | 15. Fans |
| 2. Company | 9. Society | 16. Secret Oath |
| 3. Cult | 10. Clientele | 17. Collegium |
| 4. Gang | 11. Prisoner | 18. Hunted |
| 5. Church | 12. Club | 19. Crew |
| 6. Minority | 13. Outcasts | 20. Noble |
| 7. Order | 14. Bank | House |

The Whitecloaks



“Before I joined the Whitecloaks,
I didn’t feel my life had a purpose.
Now I am busy hunting the twisted,
and I have so many friends.”

Gold & Equipment

Roll 3d6 and multiply the result by 10. This is the number of gold pieces (gp) that your character gets to buy starting equipment. One gold piece is worth 10 silver pieces (sp) or 100 copper pieces (cp). Your game world may use other coin, use different rates or have a silver rather than gold standard. Equipment lists can't be comprehensive—add to the ones below as you see fit.

Equipment Weight

The character is allowed ten regular objects, plus five in a backpack, sack or similar container. Heavy objects count as two, while minor objects count as half. Coins, gems and very small things are no-size items—100 of them count as one regular object. Use common sense to settle what is what. Weapons have regular/heavy/minor designators. Armors, unless magickal, count as per AC (next spread).

For every completed uneven number of regular objects exceeding the character's limit, she moves down a category in the Movement Rates table (p. 64). Strength can temporarily alleviate the consequences.

Gear	Cost
Backpack	5
Bandages (5)	2
Boat	60
Bottle (wine), glass	1
Cart	50
Case (map or scroll)	3
Checkers (game)	5
Compass	50
Crowbar	5
Dice	2
Flint & steel	5
Grappling hook	5

◇ Gear (A–G) ◇

Gear	Cost
Hammer & Wooden stakes	3
Hatchet	10
Holy symbol, wooden	2
Holy symbol, silver	25
Holy water, small vial	15
Horse (riding)	60
Horse (battle trained)	120
Laboratory (portable)	130
Lantern	10
Lock picks	20
Map	20
Mirror (small steel)	5
Mule	20
Oil (lamp), 1 pint	2
Pole, 10 ft	1
Raft	10
Rations, dried (day)	3
Rations, trail (day)	1
Rope, elven (50 ft)	70
Rope, hemp (50 ft)	1
Sack	1
Saddle bags	10
Saddle	25
Scroll, empty	5
Shovel	5
Skiing gear	15
Sled	20
Sleeping bag	2
Snare	1
Spell book (blank)	100
Spike, iron	1
Tent	15
Tinderbox	10
Torch (bundle of 6)	1
Water skin	3
Wolfsbane & Garlic	10

◇ *Gear (H-W)* ◇

Weapon	Damage	Wgt [*]	Rng	RoF [†]
Axe/Sword	1d6+1	R		
Club	1d6–2	M		
Crossbow	1d6+1	H	70	1/2
Dagger	1d6–2	M	15	1
Darts	1	N	20	3
Flail	1d6	R		
Gr. sword/axe	1d6+2	H		
Pole arms	1d6+1	H		
Javelin	1d6	M	40	1
Longbow	1d6	R	70	1
Mace	1d6	R		
Warhammer	1d6	R		
Morning Star	1d6	R		
Musket [‡]	1d6+2	H	30	1/4
Pistol [‡]	1d6+1	R	20	1/3
Quarterstaff	1d6–1	R		
Scimitar	1d6	R		
Shortbow	1d6–1	R	50	1
Shortsword	1d6–1	M		
Sling	1d6–2	N	30	1
Spear	1d6	R		
Thr. Knife/Axe	1d6–2	M	25	1
Unarmed	d6–3	–		

◇ *Weapon Stats* ◇

Creating Your Own Weapons

You can create your own weapons. For game balance purposes, stick to a maximum of d6+2 base damage and 1 attack per round unless it is a super-weapon with a limited number of uses. Remember that the weight of the weapon is also used as a speed indicator when settling initiative ties. Use the Special column to balance the weapon so that it doesn't ruin the setting. If your weapon is clearly better than anything else, then logically, everyone will use it, only and always.

Weapon	Special	Cost
Axe/Sword		10
Club	Knock-out, Improvised	–
Crossbow	Two handed	30
Dagger		3
Darts		1
Flail	Ignore shield AC	8
Gr. sword/axe	Two handed	15
Pole arms	Two handed, Reach [§]	10
Javelin	d6–2 damage in melee	2
Longbow	Two handed	40
Mace	+1 AV vs. metal armor	5
Warhammer	+1 AV vs. metal armor	5
Morning Star	As above, ×3 crit dam.	8
Musket [‡]	Two handed	150
Pistol [‡]		100
Quarterstaff	Two handed, Reach [§]	1
Scimitar	+1 AV while riding	8
Shortbow	Two handed, Use mounted	25
Shortsword		8
Sling	Use with regular stones	2
Spear	Reach [§]	2
Thr. Knife/Axe	–1 AV in melee	2
Unarmed	Knock-out, Grapple	–

◇ *Weapon Specials & Costs* ◇

*Wgt stands for Weight. R = Regular item (1 slot). M = Minor item (half slot). N = No size item (100 for 1 slot). H = Heavy item (2 slots). See p. 48.

[†]RoF stands for Rate of Fire, measured in shots/round(s). This means that you fire in the first round and then need to spend any remaining rounds reloading before you can fire again. You can't reload a weapon with a fraction RoF (crossbow, black powder pistol etc.) while moving.

[‡]Firearms do not fit in every campaign. The examples given represent a pre-industrial level of technology. For modern weapons, see p. 84.

[§]Reach means that enemies within 10 feet are within melee range. This is particularly important when dealing with free attacks (p. 72).

Calculating Armor Class

Note the AC value of the character's armor with any bonuses (like from a shield or a magick object) or penalties factored in. For example, a character wearing chainmail and a shield has AC 5. Unarmored characters have AC 0.*

For magick armor, AC doesn't have to correspond to weight and bulk. The Referee decides how the magick affects encumbrance.

Armor	AC	Cost
Helmet	Special [†]	10
Shield	+1	5
Cloth	1	10
Leather	2	15
Studded leather	3	20
Chainmail	4	30
Splint mail	5	40
Full plate	6	50

◇ *Armor* ◇

Languages

All characters are able to understand and speak the most common language as well as the most common language of their own species *in the campaign region* of the game world. Usually, this means that humans speak a single language, while characters with a species group also speak a language common to that species. Unless the player has chosen a group that makes it inappropriate (like “barbarian”), all characters are considered literate. If the game world is an early historic setting or simply a bit gritty, the Referee may decide that general literacy counts as a language.

* You may be used to other, legacy armor systems in this tradition. The Attack Roll section (p. 69) deals with them, but unless you are running an official module with legacy AC values, you should switch—*Whitehack's* armor system is simply better.

[†] If the character wears any kind of helmet, results of 16+ on the crits table (p. 71) may be re-rolled *once*.

Additional languages that a character knows come from two other sources:

1. A group that the Referee decides comes with a limited language, like Thieves' Cant for a thieves' guild or some sacred language for a church.
2. Bonus languages from high intelligence. Common choices for bonus languages are Draconic, Goblin and one or more dead languages ("High Imperial," "K'thonian," etc.) found in old scrolls and books. In both cases, the Referee can decide that a language acquired after level 1 requires time to learn.

150 Character Names

Gobbo Dar, Silva, Ulsak, Elbet, Thunder Foot, Regin, Snuffit, Oddo, Horst, Ugga, Uno Saar, Haxander, Stravka, Saffron, Edelhart, Galvina, Beryl Chard, Rapokes, Thorne, Elwydd, Clivia, Laveri, Raffle, Adelina, Hrain of the Ice, Apok, Gonk, Leander, Lebert Creth, Mercutio, Rathid, Adursi, Furio, Reekwin, Charah, Cletus, Elbaran, Alehir, Beppo, Luena, Morne, Restar, Blind Renly, Alibede, Arznak, Lugan, Aima, Cogius, Tunka Jinn, Ruberg, Nan the Black, Aleigh, Eyemash, Madon, Graline, Satis, Mahuda, Skira-Na-Nog, Grimare, Makim, Malavac, Segon, Amoryn, Ana, Corsan, Malla, Shadh, Curmia, Shamona, Shrike, Walks-With-Mountains, Arannas, Spero, Dearn, Harah, Argone, Medori, Hirra, Spire, Hobail, Strahe, Holdus, Horge of Ode, Milyn Bel Fara, Ealla, Mogus, Huran, Moire, Teonor, Bavelyn, Edrax, Edred of the Woods, Morcan, Imnel, Moredi, Thiana, Belus, Zork, Tiarlyn, Mohab, Solar Quex, Myrvyn, Torix, Nardil, Bladeg, Blain, Nimroin, Junit, Niniks, Kalynna, Odham, Unfela, Kathall, Ogius, Faleah, Fitz, Donne, Caliban, Finrim, Obura, Yrin, Jar, Drak, Ben-Sarah, No Nose Jennie, Magg, Taria, Ishtur, Mardahal, Droog of Three Willows, Solu, Xotav, Flavio, Agrippa, Rufus, Shalla, Kord, Iribeth, Walla, Geriat, Wholetown, Merrypuck, Diggle Swanson, Tusk, Season, Dik-Dri-Barra, Oslava, Telmakon, Avalanche, Serpathia.

Example Characters

Nine Dogs, level 1 Strong Pit Fighter

Str 13, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 7 (Pit Fighter), Cha 6 (Bleeder Cult); ST 5, HP 8, AC 4, MV 25, AV 12; Melee Special 8; Common; Flail, Gauntlet (Off hand), Chainmail, 42 gp.

Ogil, Level 1 Deft Twisted Antiquarian

Str 15 (Twisted Dwarf), Dex 11, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 5 (Twisted Dwarf, Trade & Barter); ST 7, HP 5, AC 1, MV 25, AV 10; Attuned: Library, (Axe); Twisted Ability: "Identify"; Common, Dwarven, Goblin; Axe, Leather Armor, Small Library, Chest, 10 gp.

Saffron, Level 1 Wise Black Hats Alchemist

Str 6, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 13 (Alchemist, Black Hats), Cha 13; ST 6, HP 6, AC 1, MV 30, AV 10; Miracles: "Weird Bombs," "Crow Familiarus," "Mysterious Elixir!"; Common; Quarterstaff, Cloth Armor, Black Hat, Tame Crow, Book of Recipes, 1 gp.

Faleah, Level 1 Strong Watcher Bard

Str 10, Dex 9, Con 8, Int 17 (Watcher), Wis 11, Cha 11 (Bard); ST 5, HP 7, AC 5, MV 25, AV 11; Melee Special: 6; Common, Draconic, Elvish; Greatsword, Longbow, 10 Arrows, Splint Mail, 11 gp.

Howl, Level 1 Deft Kobold Assassin

Str 6, Dex 12, Con 15 (Kobold), Int 8 (Kobold), Wis 13, Cha 10; ST 7, HP 1, AC 3, MV 25, AV 10; Attuned: Dog, (Crossbow); Common, Draconic; Studded Leather, Dog, Crossbow, 9 Bolts, Poison (2 doses, d6 after 2 rounds, save for half), Mask, 10 gp.

Kalynna, level 1 Strong Paladin

Str 16, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 7, Wis 13 (Evil), Cha 8 (Paladin); ST 5, HP 8, AC 7, MV 20, AV 12; Melee Special 1; Common; Sword, Full Plate, Shield, 7 gp.

Reekwin, Level 1 Wise Twisted Thief

Str 12, Dex 8 (Thief), Con 7 (Twisted Elf), Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 11 (Twisted Elf); ST 6; HP 5, AC 3, MV 30, AV 10; Twisted Ability: “Super Hearing”; Miracles: “Patrok, Demon of Passage,” “Winged Feet”; Common; Short Sword, Lock picks, Studded Leather, 32 gp.

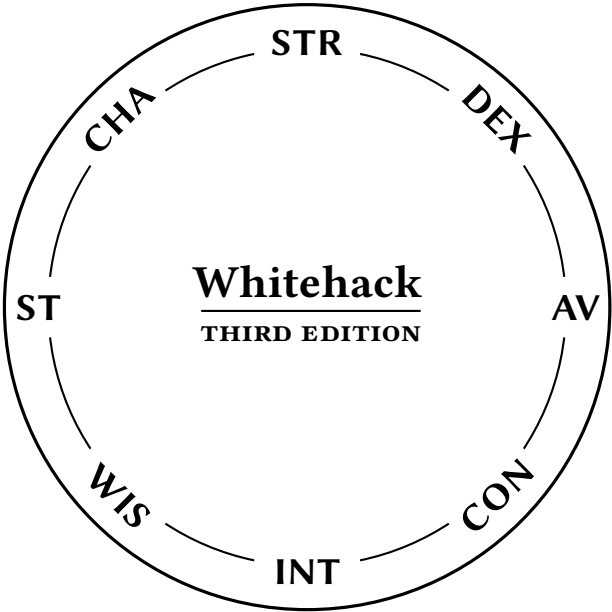
Myrvyn, level 1 Deft Impostor

Str 11, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 12 (Cultist), Wis 6, Cha 11; ST 7, HP 4, AC 0, MV 30, AV 0; Attuned: Makeup Box, (Pistol); Common; Pistol & Ammunition, Cloth Armor, Makeup Box, Wardrobe, 12 gp.

Higher Level Example Characters

If you need to use an example character at a higher level, read the class table entry that corresponds to the level you want. First note the new AV and ST. Then raise attributes in accordance with the Raises (Ra.) column and pick new groups and slot contents if the character gets new slots. For HP, you should **not** just roll the new HD. You need to roll for HP **each new level** that the character gets. Otherwise, you are likely to end up with a lower score than you should. Finally, give the character 100 gold for each new level and buy new equipment if you want. Ask the Referee if the character has any magick items.

Name	Level
Class & Vocation	XP



AC	MV	Slots	HP
Character Identity			

Abilities, Languages & Miracles	Weapons, Armor & Gear
------------------------------------	--------------------------

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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CHAPTER III

CORE RULES

Where we look at the process of playing and the core rules of this game.

WHILE essential, checking die outcomes, adding and subtracting hit points or reading table results are all peripheral game activities compared to thinking, using your imagination and interacting with your co-players and Referee. Before diving into the details of the system, it should be stressed that knowing when to not use the dice is as important as knowing when and how to use them. To get the proportions right, think of the dice and the rules as another participant, one that also has a say in how things play out but who doesn't get more spotlight than anyone else at the table.

For example, if your character comes to a dead end and starts looking for the hidden door that her map says is there, the solution is *not* to just roll to see if she finds something. Instead, tell the Referee where she looks, and if it is the right spot, she finds it. Or if the party happens upon a narrow ledge that will require some climbing, you and the other players should describe how the characters go about it—tools, safety measures, etc.—so that the Referee can let that affect the characters' chances in a die roll.

Doing this makes it possible for a you to be or get good at the game. If you just roll dice, none of your skill (or lack of it) can come into play. Then again, you should be able to play a character who is good at things that you are bad at, too. For example, if you like riddles but can never figure them out, a die roll for your Wise Explorer's intelligence could give you a solid clue.

In *Whitehack*, the space between dice and player skill is where the Referee rules on difficulty and where the characters' groups, abilities and miracle wordings come into play. It is also where an emergent game world can grow. This does *not* make the game "loose." The increasing number of precedents will pull system, setting and gaming group together, like when tightening a screw.

Gaining Experience

Characters are awarded experience points (XP) for killing monsters, accumulating treasure and completing quests. Monsters have XP values, and one gold piece is equal to one XP. These two XP categories represent the experience the character gets from staying alive and getting ahead—by force or through cunning—in a dangerous fantasy world.

Quest XP represent the experience characters get from achieving specific goals, not just staying alive. Discovering the force behind the incursion of kobolds might be a quest goal. To topple a queen and put someone else on her throne might be another. In an adventure, there are often a few smaller quests to complete, as well as a major quest. In a typical low level adventure, the quest part is about half of the total XP gained. As the characters advance in level and take on harder missions, this quota may increase. But sometimes you fail and get no quest XP at all. At other times, quest XP may be all you get.

Saving Throws

A hostile miracle, a trap or some other hazard can allow a saving throw, to see if the character is lucky or experienced enough to avoid it. Roll a d20. If the result is equal to or below the character's ST, the save is a success. Otherwise it is not (some saves can also be "fumbled" or have a relevant "quality," see Task Rolls on the next page). Anyone resistant or vulnerable to a certain hazard uses positive or negative double rolls, respectively (p. 17).

Task Rolls, Skills & Quality

When a character deliberately takes on a risky and challenging task, the Referee tells the player to roll a d20. If the result is equal to or under the appropriate attribute, the task is successful. Otherwise it is not. The Referee can take the face value of a successful die as an indication of the **quality of success**. The higher the successful value, the better. Rolling your attribute score exactly counts as a critical success—“a crit.” Conversely, rolling 20 is the worst possible failure, a fumble.

Difficulty, Help & Extreme Scores

If the Referee decides that a task is more difficult than what is normal for its type, like moving silently up a very creaky stair, or if it is easier, like when a character gets help from others, she may tell the player to subtract or add two or more to the attribute used.*

Sometimes, this or some other modification will result in extreme attribute scores. You may not roll for scores below 1. From 20 and up, rolling 20 counts as a normal failure. Any points above 20 may be added to the quality of success. You crit on 19.

Skills & “Trained Rolls”

The attributes do not tell everything about a character’s ability to complete a task. Her species, vocation and even affiliations indicate what predispositions, experiences and special knowledge she has. When a group is written next to an attribute, the character gets to make positive double rolls for that attribute—if the group seems relevant for the task. For instance, a wise character with the vocation “priest” written next to charisma would get a

*You may be tempted to use the AC mechanism (p. 69) or double rolls (p. 17) for difficulty. The first solution only works for harder actions, not for easier ones. The second solution can’t differentiate between hard/harder or easy/easier. This makes player skill less important. In both cases, you get into trouble when you need to combine difficulty with AC and groups. Using modifications for difficulty solves this problem.

positive double roll when trying to calm an angry crowd. A character with no groups or “assassin” written in the same spot would not, as assassins aren’t trained to talk to crowds. A wise character with “priest” written next to intelligence wouldn’t either, because that is not the relevant attribute (an angry crowd usually doesn’t listen to reason).

Some tasks require a **trained roll**, because they are of a type that makes it less likely that anyone without proper training can complete them. Picking a lock, scaling a sheer surface, knowing details about some summoning ritual, guessing the value of an ancient weapon, tracking an animal etc. could be such tasks. Check the groups. If a character has a relevant group written *somewhere* on her sheet, the player rolls a d20 just like for a regular task. If that group is written next to the relevant attribute, she gets a positive double roll. But if none of those cases are true, the task requires a negative double roll.

Pairs

Getting a pair in a successful positive double roll means that the character manages to get some additional benefit other than succeeding. Getting a pair in an unsuccessful negative double roll means getting some additional detrimental effect other than failing.

Contests

In contests, the parties roll and compare their results. The better result category wins, while being in the same category counts as a tie. The order from best to worst is: successful positive pair, crit, success, failure, fumble, failed negative pair. For a more granular comparison, you can let the higher roll win within each category.

Note that contestants may have or lack groups and can have different difficulty modifications depending on the situation. Sometimes they don’t even roll for the same attribute. Two parties trying to convince a third might for example use logic (intelligence) or charm (charisma).

Auctions

Longer contests like chases or games of checkers can be played as auctions:

- ◆ All participants roll a d6 each. They hide the die, but add the result to the attribute that their characters will use in the contest. Which one depends on what the individual character does, like in a regular contest.
- ◆ The first participant can now make a bid that she promises to *beat* in a successful task roll for the modified attribute from above. For instance, someone in a chase with dexterity 12 and a d6 roll of 3 might bid 2, meaning that she promises to roll 15 or below, but also more than 2.
- ◆ The next participant, and anyone after her, has to either make a higher bid than the last bidder *or* a bid of 1, a “one-bid.” Note that a one-bid can only be made as your **first and final bid**. You can’t for example bid 6 and then later bid 1.
- ◆ Once nobody wants to bid higher, the d6s are revealed and the player with the highest bid rolls first. If she succeeds, her character has won the auction, but if she fails, the second highest bidder has to roll, and so on. Like in any other task roll, there may be groups and difficulty modifications involved.
- ◆ The person with the lowest bid does not have to roll in order to win if everyone else fails.
- ◆ You have to make a bid to participate, and you have to have a theoretical chance of beating it. If there are several people with a one-bid, they roll like in a regular contest (p. 61).

The auction mechanism can be made chaotic (everyone calls out their bids in any order), or more organized (the Referee or some dice roll decides in what order the participants get to make bids). Auctions can also be role-played, by adding a description to each bid: “I take a short-cut over the crumbling bridge—7!”

Tactics in Auctions

Auctions are tricky, because there are hidden numbers and player psychology involved. Even if each participant could know everyone's stats and hidden d6 rolls, calculating the optimal bid would be no trivial task. This is not to say that it can't be done: Every auction has a mathematical point of equilibrium. Whoever bids it first has an advantage, and any additional bid is even more disadvantageous for the one who makes it. Consider the below tactics:

- ◆ Bid in small increments—perhaps the opponent stops prematurely?
- ◆ Make a higher bid early, because you believe you know the approximate point of equilibrium.
- ◆ Bluff by making a really high bid. Then if someone bids higher, stop.
- ◆ Double bluff by making a high but not too high bid. Opponents might wrongly decide to make a one-bid.

You can't see your chances in an auction by thinking about it as a regular contest or by only looking at your modified attribute—often, you win by someone else failing. The psychology of auctions is that most players want to be “in control” by being the first to roll, and it is always more fun to make a proper bid instead of a one-bid. If the Referee demands quick bids because the characters are pressed for time, keeping your cool is very hard. Over time, you may also learn the behaviors of your co-players and Referee (and they may learn yours).

Extended Auction Use

Auctions are fun and time-saving! Consider using them for non-lethal battles like duels to first blood. You can also use them for harmful battles, maybe with groups of lesser enemies, by deciding beforehand on a (randomized) amount of damage that the losers will take. Other than the regular attributes, you can base auctions on ST and AV, and sometimes even on HP.

Time & Movement

The Referee can rule that minutes, hours or months pass in the game world, but there are two important terms: round and turn. A round is about ten seconds, and the turn is a character's place to act in that round. When the rules say "until her next turn," it means until the character acts in the next round. (In some older modules, though, "turn" designates a time unit—see p. 81.)

- 1 round** Combat round actions (p. 70). Quaff a potion. Begin first aid (stops dying). Perform a quick miracle. Kick in a door.
- d6 rounds** Listen at a door. Get something from a backpack. Pick a normal lock.
- 10 min** Fight—loot—rest. Pick a hard lock. Search a room. Examine a potion. Finish first aid. Bash a chest. Search a door, item or spot for traps.
- 60 min** Burn out a regular torch.
- d6 hours** Search a library. Gather rumors. Figure out an artifact. Advanced medical aid.
- 6 hours** Minimum full night's sleep. Switch abilities or miracles into slots. Travel "a day's journey" on foot or on horse.

Movement rates are on the next page, and optional rules for dungeon and hex crawling can be found in the next chapter (p. 81).

Straining

The Referee can demand a strength roll to see if a character can move at all with very heavy burdens. Any character with a heavy or worse load can choose to **strain** herself to move as per the burden category above the one she is in. Make a standard strength roll. If it is successful, the character gets the current time unit (round, 10 min, hour, 6 hours) of boosted movement. If it is a failure, the character gets tired and can't move in the next time unit.

Total Burden	MV (ft/sq) for Human*	MV (ft/sq) for Smaller*
Normal	30/6	25/5
Heavy	25/5	20/4
Severe	20/4	15/3
Massive	15/3	10/2

◇ *Average Movement Rates* ◇

Total Burden	Crawl[†] (ft/10 min)
Normal	120
Heavy	90
Severe	60
Massive	30

◇ *Crawling Rates* ◇

Terrain Type[‡]	Max Rate	Bad Weather	Night Travel
Plains	24	12	18
Mountains	12	6	6
Forest, Desert	18	12	12
Sea, Lake, River	48	24	36
Under ground	6	6	6

◇ *Typical Miles per Day Travel Rates* ◇

* Humanoids of human and somewhat larger size (like ogres) use the Human column, while halflings, goblins and other smaller humanoids use the Small column. The rates can be modified **–10/–2 if you move carefully**, and **×2 if you run**.

[†]The “Crawling Rates” are used when the party moves through a dangerous environment, such as a dungeon, while mapping the environment and checking for traps and hidden passages.

[‡]Waterways require ships. Vehicles, unless exhausted, normally do nothing for the other terrain type rates, but can make traveling safer and more comfortable.

Common Special Cases

- ◆ **Picking a lock.** The character needs lock-picks. Make a trained roll for dexterity. Locks vary widely in quality—a modification is commonly assigned (as in “a +2 padlock”). A new, quality lock is -2. Exceptionally hard locks, such as a vault lock system, may be more exciting to run as auctions. An average vault system uses 15 as a base value.
- ◆ **Stealth.** Sneaking or hiding is a granular contest dexterity vs. wisdom if someone is actively on guard. Otherwise just use a dexterity roll. In a group, everyone rolls, but if someone with a relevant group helps the rest, they get +2 to their attributes. Ties are re-rolled.
- ◆ **Searching.** There is no set attribute for searching. It depends on what, how and where you seek. If you are precise enough, no roll is needed. Detecting a trap, hidden door or a distant sound is a wisdom roll. Searching a library is an intelligence roll. Sometimes, a search roll can give you a much needed clue.
- ◆ **Dealing with traps.** Traps can be handled like locks—i.e. roll dexterity to disarm one. The difference is that fumbling sets off the trap, and you get no save to avoid the consequences. Some traps can be handled without a roll, simply by telling the Referee exactly what the character does to disarm them.
- ◆ **Bashing a chest or door.** This normally requires no roll, but you do need some kind of tool that can wear down the chest or door material. It makes a lot of noise and takes time (10 minutes). Fragile items, such as vials, flasks or brittle figurines, invariably break when you bash the container that they are in.
- ◆ **Pushing a stuck door.** First roll a d6 to see how many rounds the attempt takes. Then roll for strength to see if you succeed. A crit always does it in one round. If you fail you may attempt again, but unless you have altered your chances significantly—such as getting someone to help out—the next attempt takes 10 minutes.

The Trap Expert



“Obviously, you can’t just *open* a chest.
Pah! You’d get blinded by trapped boglight
or have your face eaten by a grue.
No. Drilling is the way to go.”

Combat

When the party comes into contact with potential enemies, you should first determine their reaction (below). If either side wants to fight, the combatants act and results take effect in order of initiative (also below). When everyone has acted, a new round begins with the same order. This continues until the battle is resolved, through the order may be changed as part of combat.

Reactions

Make a charisma roll for the character who is the most noticeable in the party. Usually, this is the most active character, the one who does the talking or simply the one who is first in the marching order. The quality of success indicates how favorable the reaction is. A failed result indicates open or hidden hostility. The reaction roll should be modified by the Referee depending on the circumstances and the type of creatures involved. A modification is frequently given in official modules. The lack of a mutual language always makes things harder: you get -6 to charisma for the roll.

Initiative

At the beginning of combat, everyone rolls initiative with a d6—high roll wins, modified by high dexterity (p. 31). The Referee can choose to roll once for groups of creatures, who then act on the same turn. If two combatants have tied initiatives, missiles go before melee and lighter weapons go before those that are heavier or need to be drawn. This is usually only relevant if at least one of the tied combatants is attacking the other.

Any combatant that does nothing but wait during a round gets to change her initiative to 6 in the next and all consecutive rounds.

Anyone can choose a lower initiative instead of the one rolled. In the first round after this choice, she can let her actions happen just before others' on that initiative.

Surprise

The Referee may rule that someone is surprised when the battle begins, for example due to a failed detection roll. The surprised can only move and ready weapons last in the first round. They don't roll initiative until the second round. Others have combat advantage against them.

The Attack Roll

To attack, you add or subtract any bonuses or penalties to the character's AV and make a task roll. In order to hit, the roll must be successful *and* have a quality above the opponent's armor class. For example, someone with AV 14 and a +1 sword fighting an AC 3 goblin will hit on 4–15. Modifiers for equipment can be factored in on the character sheet, making the operation even simpler.

All rules for task rolls apply, including fumbles, crits and the opportunity to use surplus points (i.e. for a modified AV above 20) to raise quality. Fumbles and crits also have additional rules which are presented on the next spread. Deft characters sometimes use two dice in attacks: A successful pair means a hit *and* combat advantage in the next round.

For modules with legacy AC, use the below table to determine what you can hit. Sometimes there is also a module specific AV bonus (p. 80).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	–1
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

◇ *Legacy AC Conversion** ◇

*The top line is the *Whitehack* AC values. The first regular line is the early system for descending AC, the second is the later system for descending AC. The last line is the system for ascending AC. The formula is to take the *Whitehack* AC and subtract it from 9 or 10 to get the descending values. Alternatively, add 10 to get the ascending values.

Actions During a Round

In a combat round, you may attack, make an average move (sometimes modified) and take a small action like dropping or readying a weapon.

These actions are interchangeable from left to right, but not the other way. You can, for example, sacrifice your attack to make two moves and a small action, but you can't sacrifice a small action to get an extra attack. Some actions and abilities require a full round, at the Referee's discretion.

Melee Attack

A melee attack is made either with a close combat weapon like a sword or dagger, or with a natural close combat weapon such as a fist or claw. Two enemies within five feet of each other are considered to be **engaged** in melee combat. Some weapons have **reach**, which extends this distance to ten feet.

Missile Attack

Missile attacks are attacks with ranged weapons such as a bow or a throwing axe. The weapon ranges on p. 50 are the *close* ranges. The attack gets -1 AV for each exceeded increment of the close range value, up to a maximum of -4 (longer shots are impossible).

When firing into a melee, you must beat the AC of your target by 4 or more in order to hit it. If you beat it by less, you hit someone else in the melee, at the Referee's discretion. A miss is still a miss, though.

Some missile attacks target areas. Hitting a certain spot is a task roll. Hitting a moving target's spot is a missile attack against AC 0. Anyone in the target area gets to save to avoid damage. The area of effect is normally 15×15 feet, or 9 grid squares. The squares can be arranged into a cone for breath weapons, or spread differently in a tight space. For ray weapons, count the number of squares crossed in the line of fire (9 squares = 45 ft).

Crits & Fumbles

Crits and fumbles require rolls on the below tables. Targets wearing helmets re-roll results of 16+ *once*, and you can save against fumbling to just fail instead. Crits always do double damage, stacking with the deft double damage.

d20 The target('s) ...

- 1 Weapon flies 10 ft away.
- 2 Shield drops 5 ft away
- 3 Weapon breaks. It can be mended.
- 4 Shield is ruined.
- 5 Armor loses 4 AC. It can be mended.
- 6 Is hurt and gets halved movement.
- 7 Speech is impossible for 10 minutes.
- 8 Is blinded for 10 minutes. All actions are –10.
- 9 Is laid flat on the ground a few steps away.
- 10 Must try to flee.
- 11 Is deaf for 10 minutes.
- 12 Starts to bleed. +1 damage every round.
- 13 Takes an additional d6 damage.
- 14 Is stunned. No actions for 2 rounds.
- 15 Is confused. Save or attack the nearest ally.
- 16 Dies in 5 rounds.
- 17 Dies instantly.
- 18 Meets a gory death. Allies check morale.
- 19 Attacks an ally, then dies. Roll to hit.
- 20 Re-roll to get *two* crit effects.

◇ *Attack Crits* ◇

d6 The character('s) ...

- 1 Weapon breaks. It can be mended.
- 2 Armor or shield breaks. They can be mended.
- 3 Drops her weapon, or it gets stuck.
- 4 Staggers and gets 2 rounds of halved movement.
- 5 Attacks the nearest ally (make an attack roll).
- 6 Hits herself—roll damage!

◇ *Attack Fumbles* ◇

Free Attacks & Disengaging

A fighting character or creature needs to be on guard. Casting a spell, quaffing a potion, taking something out of a backpack and similar actions give every ready enemy within melee range a free regular attack, regardless of turn. You can only make one free attack per round, no matter how many opportunities you get. The strong class is excepted. The Strong can make a number of free attacks equal to their level (p. 37).

To disengage in combat, you must move backwards for this purpose at a careful pace (p. 65n), still facing your opponents, or you will give away free attacks.

Combat Advantage

Some situations and positions in battle will give the character or her enemy combat advantage in the form of +2 AV and +2 damage. The Referee decides when this occurs, but in general, flanking gives the flanking attackers this advantage, as does higher ground, sure footing vs. loose footing, striking from behind or attacking a surprised enemy. Sometimes, the Referee may even grant a double or triple combat advantage in the form of a +4 or +6 bonus to both AV and damage.

Deft characters can switch their positive double roll for double damage when they strike with combat advantage in a way that relates to their vocation.

Conditions & Concentration

Magick, abilities or situational circumstances can daze, stun, blind, hold, deafen, confuse etc. a character or monster. Positive effects can be cover, invisibility, blurring, increased speed etc. The Referee interprets conditions using combat advantage, free attacks and penalties or bonuses to AC, damage, move, initiative or AV.

If a miracle worker takes damage while producing magick, she must save or have her concentration broken, which ruins the miracle completely.

Special Combat Options

The Referee makes rulings over whatever the players want their characters to do, but a few formalized options are suggested below:

- Charge** Charge 15 feet in a straight line to attack with combat advantage. You get -3 AC until your next turn.
- Defense** Take -2 AV or -2 damage, or -1 AV *and* -1 damage, to get $+2$ AC.
- Offense** Take -2 AC and get $+1$ AV and $+1$ damage. All effects last until your next turn.
- Grapple** Make a regular unarmed attack, but forsake your damage to hold your opponent. The opponent must win a contest against your strength to break free.
- Trick** Attack and exchange your damage roll for one of the following effects, each negated by an enemy save: **Push** the enemy five feet backwards or diagonally backwards, and follow into her former space if you like. **Feint** to make two attacks with combat advantage in the next round. **Disarm** the enemy so that her weapon drops 2d6 feet away. **Trip** the enemy so that she loses one move in the next round, giving you combat advantage.
- Protect** Make a *task roll* against your AV (i.e. not an attack). If you succeed, the next attack on an adjacent friend targets you instead. Enemies may save to avoid it.
- Press** Take a penalty to your AV when using a special combat option. Give your opponent the same penalty to her save. If you fail or if the save succeeds, the enemy gets combat advantage against you in the next round. (Note that this option only makes mathematical sense for a (modified) AV of 20+, or against very high ST.)

Damage & Death

When a character is hit, you roll damage and subtract it from her current hit points.

HP	Consequence
0	Knocked out until healed to positive HP.
< 0	Knocked out as per above but must also save or die in d6 rounds. -10 HP means instant death.

◇ *Zero & Negative HP* ◇

A successful first aid attempt stops bleeding as well as dying, but if it is interrupted (it takes 10 minutes to complete), the dying process starts again without another save. A character who has negative HP but isn't dying must save again and follow the above rules if she is subjected to further damage.

Player characters also have the option to **save against incoming damage** once per battle. This is an important lifeline, which can make a character playable even if she starts with a single HP:

- ◆ A successful save reduces the damage by d6 points, representing an adrenaline rush that enables the character to shrug off some damage from a single attack (it does *not* heal any previous damage).
- ◆ If the save fails, however, the character takes full damage from the attack. At zero HP, she is knocked out as per above. **But if she has HP left, she is still knocked out for two rounds.**
- ◆ If the save fails and/or the damage takes the character to negative HP, she dies in d6 rounds, as per above, without another save.

When you would save against damage or death, you can make a **constitution task roll instead**, to the same effects. This can be better at lower levels, but at higher levels, the chance to save is greater for all but the hardest of characters.

Healing & Injuries

In addition to the various magickal means of restoring hit points, a character who has **not gone below zero HP** will restore all hit points completely with 48 hours of rest. The following rules apply when the character does not have time to rest:

- ◆ The character recovers 1 HP every evening and morning, 2 HP if she succeeds at a constitution task roll.
- ◆ The Referee can allow a character to bind 1d6–3 HP worth of wounds immediately following a battle, with a **trained** task roll. Fumbling means that the patient loses 1 HP instead. *Note that the character can only recover hit points lost during that battle.*

If, on the other hand, the character has reached negative HP, she is **injured**. She will heal at her usual rate, but **only to HP 1**. The condition is also equivalent of carrying five additional regular items.

- ◆ To remedy this condition and recover more hit points, she must be treated by someone with a healer vocation—a physician, a healer, an old crone, etc.
- ◆ When a healer is hard to find or the character needs to get back on her feet fast in order to survive, the player can remove the injured condition by giving the character a **permanent disadvantage**, noted next to an attribute on the character sheet. The disadvantage can be something like two lost fingers, a limp or a disfiguring scar, and the Referee can use it to demand negative double rolls or to nullify the positive double roll benefit of a group for a particular task.
- ◆ When someone uses a weapon’s **knock-out** special ability, the resulting damage can’t kill but only knock out (this is sometimes called “subdual” or “non-injuring” damage). This means that you heal normally even from negative HP.

Ghost Form & Resurrection

Death is not necessarily absolute and permanent. The Referee is advised to allow a player to continue playing her character in ghost form at least for the remainder of the session where the character died, giving advice to her comrades (“it’s as if I could still hear Ulsak, even though he’s dead!”) and even fighting undead and incorporeal opponents.

In ghost form, the character retains all her abilities and full hit points, but she can’t affect anything directly in the world of the living unless she pays HP for it. Similar to the miracles of the Wise, and at the Referee’s discretion, minor things such as picking a lock or lighting a torch cost a single HP, while major things such as making an attack or giving first aid cost d6 HP. Such HP loss is permanent until the character is resurrected. You only pay for successful actions, and if you want, you may roll for wisdom instead of another attribute.

Ghost forms may not pass through walls and closed doors—that is an advanced ability available to monster ghosts only. The ghost form can only be hit by things that can hurt the undead (exorcism, certain magick weapons, incorporeal attacks etc.). Should the ghost form be destroyed or reduced to zero or less hit points, the character is lost and can’t be resurrected.

In a fantasy world filled with magick, there are many ways of bringing back the dead. This shouldn’t be just a ritual miracle from a high level Referee character, but an adventure with great risks, spanning at least a session. Perhaps some important ingredient needs to be brought back from the Realm of the Dead?

The above mechanism puts a limit on how long you can play in ghost form. Very high level characters can be played longer as they have a lot of hit points, while low level characters don’t last long until they get very boring to play (as you have no HP left to affect the physical world). The player always has the choice to willingly let the ghost form pass on and make a new character instead.

A Quest Ingredient



"For this resurrection ritual, I will need
the Lost Skull of Ahalbad the Wicked.
Where? I have no idea. That is the point.
A lost soul requires a lost ingredient."

Using Magick Items

Scrolls, potions, wands and many other magick items can be used by everyone. Some require activation—like a word or gesture—and weapons and ray wands require attack rolls to hit a target. All magick items can draw HP. An examination takes d6 hours and requires a trained intelligence roll, but can reveal what an item does and how much it costs to use. An identification miracle does the same but is immediate.

Magick Potions & Powders

Potions can be quaffed, which requires no skill, or thrown at someone, which is a missile attack or missile area attack roll (p. 70). The same goes for attacks with powders. Crushing a vial up to five feet away is an automatic success. Known substances can be carefully sampled and recognized in 10 minutes.

Cursed Objects

Cursed objects are magickal, but with wholly or partially negative effects. They are harder to identify—a secret modification can be included by the Referee in the player's trained identification task roll. For powerful cursed objects, a secret extra HP cost can be added to any identifying magick. Characters can be killed this way.

Cursed objects often require a save to be rid of. Some of them have bleeding hit point costs, meaning that you may all of a sudden have to pay extra HP, hours or even days after using them.

Reading Scrolls

Magick scrolls are formalized, singular ways to trigger specific miraculous effects. Everything is set—the effect, its parameters and its cost in HP. In order to use a scroll, you must know the language and succeed at a trained roll for intelligence, **modified by the scroll's HP cost**. For example, if you are trying to read a 1 HP Scroll of Identify,

Roll	Result
Fail	The miracle doesn't work. You only pay 1 HP and can try again later.
Fumble	The miracle doesn't work. You pay full HP anyway and ruin the scroll.
Success	You pay full HP, and the miracle works as intended.
Crit	The miracle works without HP cost, and you may use the scroll again.

◇ *Reading Scrolls* ◇

you have to make a trained roll for intelligence -1. If you don't understand but can pronounce an unknown language, you get an additional -10. Many scrolls are however written in ancient versions of the languages that the characters know. Suitable groups for the trained roll could for example be the Scribe, Wizard, Monk, Scholar or Scientist vocations, the Order of the Quill or Witch Cult affiliations or even the Mime or Ur-Elven species. Unless otherwise noted, any scroll takes 10 minutes to use.

Poison & Drugs

Poisons and drugs don't have to be magick but do unique things that benefit from *not* being standardized. There are some parameters below and examples on p. 147.

- ◆ **Primary Effects** may be partly or wholly avoidable through a save. Beneficial effects usually have no save.
- ◆ **Secondary Effects** usually entail a save regardless of what they are.
- ◆ **Remedies** are what is needed to avoid one or both of the effects. Not all poisons and drugs have remedies.
- ◆ **Addiction.** If you use a drug more than once, it is common to have to save to avoid addiction.
- ◆ **Withdrawal.** This is what happens when you are addicted and don't get your accustomed dose.



CHAPTER IV

OPTIONAL RULES

Where we look at rules that aren't always required but which let you run different adventures and settings.

WHITEHACK's versatility as a game system is due to the dissociation between classes and vocations and the way abilities and miracles work. In addition to traditional fantasy, the first and second editions have been used for such disparate things as Imperial space opera, nineteenth century grand tours, cosmic horror and the gritty struggle against chaos in alternative Renaissance Europe—just to name a few examples!

This chapter gives you some extra tools to make this even easier. It also contains additional classes that should be used with moderation, as well as rules for bases, modus rolls, modern weapons and play beyond level 10.

A Traditional Toolkit

The game can run any material in the original rules tradition, old or new, *without actual conversion*. All you have to do is read the material in a somewhat different manner. Ignore hit point entries, attack bonuses, skill values and damage designations. Instead, read the monster **HD entries** in any module and simply use them with *Whitehack* monster rules (p. 130). Treat the names of spells and special abilities as miracle wordings. If you think the legacy AC values seem extreme, give all characters a module specific AV bonus (+1 or +2 is usually enough). In modules for levels 11 and up, you may also want to lower monster HDs a bit.

Crawling Dungeons & Hexes

The term “turn” has a different meaning in old school modules. In dungeons, a turn is the time it takes to search a room, pick a lock, disarm a trap etc., i.e. 10 minutes (cf. p. 64). You are generally supposed to roll for random encounters every second turn. A 1 or 1–2 (depending on the circumstances and the party’s actions) on a d6 means an encounter takes place. You also move a certain distance in the dungeon during a turn, as shown in the Crawling Rates table (p. 65). If you want to get the most out of such a module, **you need to track 10 minute periods**. You should also take special care to emphasize player skill as described in the Core Rules chapter (p. 58).

In the wilderness, however, a turn can be a varying amount of time. For longer travels or exploration tours, many old school modules have maps with overlays of numbered hexagons. The Referee has the full map with a key telling her what the characters may encounter in each hex (or she can use random tables), while the players have an incomplete map that they fill in as they go. To move between hexes, the players tell the Referee the travel direction (N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW). The amount of hexes you can move in one go depends on the means of transportation, the terrain, the scale of the map and, finally, the length of the wilderness turn. For example, on a map where the hexes are 6 miles, and the characters move at a maximum rate of 12 miles per day’s journey (p. 64), a wilderness turn of three hours is a solid choice. Like in dungeons, random tables play a great role and are often time triggered. You need to track wilderness turns.

If the party doesn’t have a guide or some other aid, the Referee can make a hidden, trained roll for the party’s highest intelligence or wisdom, to see if the characters get lost. In such a case, the Referee chooses an adjacent hex to the one where the characters would have ended up on a success. The discrepancy between the “player route” and the actual route may increase further, or be corrected, in future wilderness turns.

Miniatures & Terrain

Though it is by no means required in order to play, *Whitehack* has full rules for the use of miniatures and grids (1 inch = 5 feet). For many players, especially if they are into collecting and painting miniatures, such game aids contribute a lot to the fun and variation of the game.

There is a traditional tool-kit that you may want to consider. Use a battle mat as your grid, and domino tiles to quickly outline the terrain. Let each character and major villain or monster have her own miniature, but use coins for lesser minions. This tool-kit has the advantage of being comparatively cheap, and it is very fast in play. It is, to a degree, three-dimensional, and it is easy on the Referee. Don't make it your job to handle the dominoes. Just say: "Give me a room of about 20 × 20 feet with an altar in it," and let the players create it.

Morale Checks

In *Whitehack*, the Referee rules on fight or flight for her characters, but she may use a *morale check* to decide. Roll a d20 against the monster or monster group's morale value (p. 130) at the first "monster side" casualty and again when their numbers are halved. A failure indicates flight or surrender. For retainers (below), the *player* rolls for her character's charisma.

Hirelings & Retainers

Hirelings and retainers that the characters bring along for different purposes like holding torches, carrying gear or fighting by their side, play a greater role in traditional modules. In *Whitehack*, you get that kind of help through affiliation groups (p. 45), and it is the Referee who decides—based on a charisma roll for the character with the affiliation group—how many will come, if they require some kind of compensation and how loyal they are in the face of death. All such hirelings and retainers are HD 1 Referee characters (but see p. 92).

Traditional Magick

Magick in the original game tradition is rigid, while in *Whitehack*, the boundaries for a certain miracle wording are never completely set. Though the rulings on HP costs and the increasing number of precedents within the gaming group will soon develop into something steady enough, some modules may become too easy or too hard when you play them with characters that know other magick than the modules were written for.

If you intend to play a lot of such material, consider using the level entry in the traditional magick effects table (p. 41) as a guidance for HP costs. A low level character will not have the HP to interpret her miracle wordings in a high level way, at least not to the point where it will ruin the module. This way, you can have both the freedom of *Whitehack* and some of the rigidity of traditional magick.

True Miracles

Another way of dealing with traditional magick is to emphasize the use of scrolls over the use of miracle wordings:

- ◆ Give each wise character an extra slot, from the start.
- ◆ Use scrolls as written and allow for the wise to cram an extra use per day out of each slot, at the cost of d6–2 corruption levels (next spread).
- ◆ All miracle wordings are **true**. Players only get to invent the wise character's first wording. The rest are reserved for the Referee. Each true miracle can only be known by a single wise individual at any one time. It can be *stolen* in a wise mental struggle using either wisdom or intelligence, played out as an auction (which you can embellish as a magick duel).

At the loss of some niche protection, you can let the Deft slot scrolls that have a 1–2 HP cost and then use them once per day at that cost. You can also let the Strong use their class ability to acquire scroll magick from victims.

Other Traditions

There is a lot of material written for games in later traditions which you can play with a minimum of effort using *Whitehack* rules.

- ◆ For any system, use class/occupation/skill designations as Referee character keywords (p. 129) and treat the names of spells and special abilities as miracle wordings. When a monster is similar in *Whitehack*, just re-skin it (i.e. use the stats but change the description). Find an equivalent armor in *Whitehack* and use its AC.
- ◆ Many percentile systems have 3d6 attributes and HP scores in the *Whitehack* range. As those systems lack HD, you can use the values directly instead.
- ◆ When a percentile system *lacks* 3d6 attributes, divide any percentage with five, rounding down, to get a value that *Whitehack* can use. Bring whatever is used for HP down to an approximate 1–20 range.
- ◆ Dice pool systems are usually based on 1–8 pools, sometimes resulting from a attribute + skill addition. Add another 10 to get a 11–18 value, but use double negative rolls for everything where the character lacks skill and regular rolls for when she has skill. If the system lacks a HP value, use the most appropriate dice pool, modified as per above.

Modern & Future Weapons

For modern and future settings, set the base gun damage to d6 and a two-handed rifle or powerful gun to d6+1. Stick to one attack per round, but automatic weapons get **Burst** for an additional +1 and **Full Auto** for an additional +2 damage (i.e. maxing out at d6+3 damage).

Don't track individual shots. Instead, make a d20 **ammo roll** *after* combat, vs. 10 if you didn't burst and vs. 5 if you did. Failure means the current clip is used up. You can give small and large clip sizes double rolls. Full auto empties any clip immediately. Modern weapons take 1 round to reload.

Exchange the Strong ability 4 for a **Spray** ability. With a full auto weapon, you can make a regular area attack. Your attack roll counts against all involved ACs, dealing base damage to all that you hit. If you want to exclude someone in the area, a success must exceed that person's AC by at least 4, or you hit her anyway.

Add a general **Suppressive Fire** attack option. You can cover up to three squares in suppressive fire. Anyone wanting to act or pass those squares must roll in a contest with their wisdom against the attack roll, and not lose. The Brave (p. 90) are unaffected by suppressive fire.

Building, Code-Breaking & Hacking

Building, code-breaking and hacking in a modern or future world can of course be handled as simple task rolls—in particular if the build, code or hack is simple and straight forward. But you also have two additional options:

- ◆ Use an auction. Give the challenge a base value to represent its difficulty (cf. p. 66), and then use the auction rules. If the player wins, it is a success. If the player loses with a failed roll, it is a failed attempt. If the player loses through a fumbled roll or if the Referee makes the highest bid and rolls a success, apply a drawback—perhaps a ruined part, an alarm sounding or even ICE doing damage to the hacker character.
- ◆ Use a dungeon map. (This is much more involved, and you may need to cut between scenes to give players that aren't involved something to do.) Let the building process, the vault code lock or the cyber system be represented by a more abstract version of a dungeon, where the engineer, thief or hacker has to make decisions about the best path, avoid traps and overcome resistances. The principles for good dungeon design presented in the next chapter apply (p. 114).

With the exception of hacking, the above techniques can be used in a regular fantasy world too, of course.

Tracking Corruption

Corruption in the form of madness, radiation, the influence of chaos etc. is a key part of several popular settings. In *Whitehack*, this handled through *corruption levels (CL)*. Characters get one or more CLs when a game world condition is met. Getting trapped in high radiation or getting bit by a chaos creature could be such conditions. After CL has been raised, the player has the **option** of saving. Failing or fumbling the save means that the character's CL has noticeable consequences. Radioactivity can cause a character to mutate, chaos or madness can give her some sort of phobia, and so on. The gravity of the effect depends on the current CL when the save is failed, as per below. CL is reset to zero after failing, but not after fumbling. If the save is successful, however, there is no effect, and CL is lowered by 1d6. The player also has the option *not* to save, provided CL isn't too high. In that case, nothing happens and CL remains as it is. The player cannot save until CL has risen further.

Corruption may also be advantageous. Some creatures, objects and places react to a stigma or high CL. Imagine a portal that only works for the sufficiently corrupt, or a demon sorcerer who will only trade knowledge with characters under enough chaotic influence.

CL	Effect
1–3	A minor effect, either in behavior or looks. It can be hidden from cursory examinations and goes away after a day or two.
4–6	A major effect that cannot be hidden, but goes away after a day or two.
7–10	A major effect that goes away after d6 weeks. The player is obliged to save at this level.
10+	A major effect that is permanent. The player is obliged to save at this level. If CL exceeds 10+level, the character is lost to corruption. Roll a new character.

◇ *Effects of Corruption* ◇

The Beast



“Of course I can give you what you want.
In return? Well, it is the smallest favor:
I want you to look into my left eye.”

Combat in Ships & Other Vehicles

In some worlds, combat with vehicles like ships, mechas or something similar can be very important parts of the game. The simplest way to handle this is to allow each vehicle to have hit points, movement, AC, ST and weaponry just like a character, and maybe also special attack or repair options.

Each character is allowed control over one or several of these things. For example, one character may be steering, another may be shooting and a third may be in control of some secret weapon and the repair system. The respective players make the executive decisions for their characters' parts: Where does the vehicle go? Who does it attack? When does it use the secret weapon or start the repairs? For some things, the characters' stats can be used. For example, unless the description of the vehicle says otherwise, any character shooting can use her AV and any character steering can use one of her attributes (usually intelligence or dexterity).

Customized Attributes & Implants

If you want, you can customize the character attribute list to better suit the setting, campaign, group or even individual player. This is best done for new characters, but with a bit of fiddling it can be done for existing ones, too.

First remove any rule from the game which tells you to roll for a specific attribute. The general rule is now instead to **always roll for the most appropriate attribute for the task at hand**. Also remove automatic bonuses for anyone having an attribute score of 13+ or 16+.

Then decide on a new set of attributes* (5–7 ones is a solid choice), roll 3d6 in order and pick character class and groups. Each player now gets two regular task rolls against one or two of the character's attributes. On a success, the player picks a bonus from the below list.

* Perhaps you can get some inspiration from the evocative traditional saves. How about Breath, Death, Morph, Spell and Tech?

On a crit, the bonus is doubled. (It is possible to give a -1 penalty for fumbles, but not recommended.) The Referee may decide to allow positive double rolls for “aligned” characters, like rolling for strength with a Strong Strongman. Each time a character raises an attribute due to leveling, a new attempt can be made for that attribute, but you can only pick each bonus kind **once**.

- +1 AV (can’t be doubled)
- +1 HP
- +1 Damage (only for the Strong, can’t be doubled)
- +1 Initiative
- +1 ST (can’t be doubled)
- +2 ST (for a particular kind of save)
- +1 Inactive miracle (only for the Wise)
- +1 Inactive ability (only for the Deft)
- +2 Inventory spaces.
- +2 Languages

A future setting may use implants, which complicates attribute matters. The above bonuses can be used as minor implants. You can also use implant keywords that work like very limited groups (i.e. can yield double rolls). Major implants *replace* an attribute score altogether.

Rare Character Classes

When a loved character dies, the Referee may offer the player a special choice: Either make a new character using the regular rules, or a character in one of the *rare classes*.

The rare classes play differently and make for characters that are uncommon in the game world. The Referee may restrict character creation a bit. For example, if a level 7 character dies in an epic battle with troglodytes near the end of the adventure, instead of telling the player to run her character in ghost form (p. 76), the Referee may offer to let her create the party’s guide in the Brave rare class, the minstrel they just saved in the Fortunate rare class or the frozen giant in the sarcophagus in a rare Species as Class based on frost giants.

The Brave

Any character may show courage, but the ability to stand fast in the face of despair defines the Brave and makes up for their lack of skills and prowess. They are underdogs and unlikely heroes: failed apprentices, gardeners dreaming of dragons and elves, wannabe bards, peasants taking up arms against an oppressive ruler, or something similar.

Every time a brave character loses an auction or fails at a task roll or a save (not attacks), she gains a “comeback die”—a d6. This die can be added to any attribute, to ST or to AV, or to supplant a damage die, in a later situation when rolling for something else. If more than one comeback die is used, only the best one counts, and if a roll fails despite comeback dice, those dice are lost and the roll generates no new ones.

Brave characters also have the power to say “no,” denying an enemy a successful attack, miraculous effect or fear effect directed at them. This power may be used once per session, and effectually turns a Referee roll into a failure or nullifies a power of one of her monsters. The player must explain how it is plausible in the situation, and what her character does to avoid or resist the enemy.

Brave characters’ slots can hold a special quirk each. There are eight quirks to permanently choose from as the character levels:

1. The Brave always make double positive strain rolls (see p. 64) to move fast despite being encumbered.
2. They heal normally from negative HP and can use comeback dice for the damage shrugged off on a successful save (p. 74).
3. Choose a party member at the beginning of the session. When the character acts to protect that party member, use one free comeback die for the roll.
4. They have +4 ST against cursed objects and may use comeback dice to reduce HP costs from using cursed objects.

5. Enemies always choose to attack someone else first, at the start of a battle—if there is anyone else to attack! This ability can be inverted if and when the player wishes.
6. Once per session, their courage can fill any use requirements that an object, place or passage may have in the form of class or vocation, species and affiliation groups.
7. A god of the Referee's choosing will hear one prayer once per session. Most of the time (but not always), it should be the god the character prays to, and the Referee decides in what way the prayer is heard. This does not result in divine debts (p. 96).
8. Improvised weapons—a stone, a branch etc.—do at least 1d6 damage, and actual weapons ignore target resistances (but not immunities).

Brave character may raise *or* lower attributes at even levels. They can use any weapon, but armor heavier than cloth incurs a -2 attribute penalty on all task rolls. The Brave also get two rolls for HP at levels 1–3 (marked with asterisks in the table), and the player picks the best roll. Finally, they emit a distinct aura: Very perceptive people and creatures will always sense their courageous quality.

Lvl	XP	HD	AV	ST	Sl.	Gr.	Ra.
1	0	1*	10	9	1	2	–
2	1,200	2*	10	10	1	2	1
3	2,400	3*	10	11	1	2	1
4	4,800	4	11	12	2	2	2
5	9,600	5	11	13	2	3	2
6	19,200	6	11	14	2	3	3
7	38,400	7	12	15	3	3	3
8	76,800	8	12	16	3	3	4
9	153,600	9	12	17	3	4	4
10	307,200	10	13	18	4	4	5

◇ *Brave Advancement* ◇

The Fortunate

Fortunate characters are born with the advantages of nobility, fame, destiny, wealth or a combination thereof. The Fortunate can for example be royal heirs, rich and influential merchants, star performers or religious icons. Once per game session, they may use their good fortune in a major way, like hiring a large ship, performing the will of a god, getting a personal audience with the queen or being hailed as a friend by a hostile tribe.

Fortunate characters have a defining standing that is noted in the Identity section of the character sheet and works like an occasional group booster. For example, a Fortunate Flower Monk with a “Reincarnated Master” standing might have unique tattoos, training and physical traits that boost the role of her groups in a number of situations. When the Referee thinks that the standing is relevant to a situation, affiliated factions are a bit more helpful (and their enemies a bit more vengeful), vocations are beneficial regardless of what attribute is used, and the character’s species gives benefits or drawbacks regardless of attribute.

As the only class, the Fortunate are also allowed to have retainers that can grow in strength, like a chambermaid, a cook, an apprentice or a squire. The Fortunate start the game with one retainer and gain slots for additional ones.

◆ Apprentice	◆ Relative	◆ Maid
◆ Squire	◆ Student	◆ Secretary
◆ Cook	◆ Guide	◆ Accountant
◆ Butler	◆ Medic	◆ Assistant
◆ Guardian	◆ Chronicler	◆ Taster
◆ Lover	◆ Fan	◆ Jester
◆ Teacher	◆ Bodyguard	◆ Priest
◆ Thief	◆ Thug	◆ Interpreter
◆ Ward	◆ Aide de Camp	◆ Librarian

Lvl	XP	HD	AV	ST	Sl.	Gr.	Ra.
1	0	1	10	6	1	2	–
2	1,500	2	10	7	1	2	1
3	3,000	2+1	11	8	1	3	1
4	6,000	3	11	9	2	3	2
5	12,000	3+1	12	10	2	4	2
6	24,000	4	12	11	2	4	3
7	48,000	4+1	13	12	3	5	3
8	96,000	5	13	13	3	5	4
9	192,000	5+1	14	14	3	6	4
10	384,000	6	14	15	4	6	5

◇ *Fortunate Advancement* ◇

At the Referee's discretion, retainers are loyal unless mischievous by nature (like a trapped evil spirit) or severely mistreated. They do their best to carry out the orders of their masters, sometimes within the confines of a written or otherwise established contract. They are Referee characters with HD, AC, keywords etc. (see next chapter). As such they are played by the Referee, but the player may switch into the retainer role for part of an adventure: "As D'bra lies unconscious from that illsprout attack, I'm going to play her cook instead."

Fortunate characters may give XP gained from acquired gold to their retainers in order to raise the retainers' HDs. The cost follows the fortunate XP curve. For example, a HD 3 Squire needs 6,000 XP to reach HD 4. The Fortunate may however *not* use their class power to get experience or give XP to others (like buying and then selling a ship).

The Fortunate may use any weapon or armor without penalty. They have +4 to charisma when checking retainer morale and +2 in reaction rolls. They also get a single signature object. At the Referee's discretion it may be of special material, superior quality or even magick, but the only obligatory special ability is **plot immunity**: It can never be lost, destroyed or be made irretrievable by the Referee unless the player wishes it to happen.

Species as Class

Some species are very different from humans or staple humanoids like elves or dwarves. They may for example have immunities, not need food and sleep or be able to breathe water. In addition to using the species as a group, you need to create a written “species as class” concept:

- ◆ List any advantages beyond the regular group rules.
- ◆ List any drawbacks beyond the regular group rules.
- ◆ Apply a multiplier to XP requirements, to account for any imbalance between the two previous points.

Use a simple point system to assess advantages and drawbacks: 1 point for something limited and two for something major. For example, not needing air, being blind or only getting a selection of vocations are major, while immunity to gas poisons, poor eyesight or being barred from a class are minor. For each resulting point of imbalance, apply a 20% modification to the XP requirements.

Species-as-class concepts do *not* imply that all of that species are the same—merely that a certain type of individual is suitable as a character in your campaign.

The Dagonite

Dagonites are amphibian refugees from a collapsed deep sea empire, far away from the campaign region. They generally look like fish-humans or walking frogs, and are somewhat taller than dwarves. Dagonites worship Dagon, an ancient sea god of prosperity. Their culture is technologically more advanced than the fantasy world average, capable of such wonders as breech-loaded pistols, glasses, chronometers and typewriters. It is taboo for them to talk about their lost home.

Dagonites breathe both air and water. They are vulnerable to cold and drought and have poor but near 360° vision. Prejudice against dagonites is a huge problem for affiliation groups. Dagonites have normal XP rates.

The Marionette

Marionettes, sometimes called “scarecrows,” are man sized, servant puppets infused with souls from dead humanoids. They were originally made to serve as adjutants or field medics in war, but in times of peace, butler and worker versions have also been produced for the rich.

Marionettes have bodies made of cloth, leather and wood, strengthened with powerful runes. Their carved masks are often immobile works of art, and as marionette technology also requires eyes made out of gemstones, marionettes are precious targets for thieves. They speak through a “ghost box” (p. 143) behind the face mask.

Marionettes don’t require food, sleep or air and are immune to poison and disease. They are also resistant to cold. However, marionettes are subject to exorcising miracles (they get a +4 save) and have no or fragmented memories from their earlier lives. They are also under heavy magick restrictions as to what they can do: 1) They can only hurt humans in self defense. 2) They must obey orders from their contracted master. 3) They must try to survive, unless it conflicts with (2). The magick restrictions weaken over time, however. A marionette is allowed a –4 save to temporarily break them.

Marionettes follow the same rules for healing as Wise characters (p. 38), but their bodies must also be mended to function properly. Marionettes are only allowed to take the Deft or Strong classes and the Butler, Medic, Slave, Agent and Adjutant vocations. The XP penalty is $\times 1.5$.

The Frost Giant

Lesser remnants of an ancient species, frost giants are 8–9 ft tall. They live remotely or with humans, who often shun and sometimes ridicule them.

Giants have cold immunity and reach. They get a base +7 to HP and Strength and a +2 to melee damage. After combat, they must save or attack someone within melee range for one more round. They may only take the Strong, Brave or Fortunate classes and require XP $\times 2$ to level.

Beyond levels

What happens beyond level 10? Does the game have to end? Of course not! First of all, taking a character from level 1 to level 10 is no small feat, so you needn't worry about it for a good while unless you specifically want to start a high level campaign. But for characters that do reach the highest level and fight on, there are a few extra rules that you may use.

Divine Aid & Debts

At level 10, the gods themselves start to take notice of the characters, if they haven't done so before. A character may "lock" an affiliation group to a specific god or power, in exchange for some kind of divine aid. The god will require service in return, and until that debt is paid, the group remains unusable. Failure to obey a god when you are indebted may result in more groups or even ability slots being locked in the same manner, at the Referee's discretion.

Basically, this mechanic means that the character is able to perform incredible feats, more than she could before, but at a cost that constantly creates more trouble and adventure for her. The Referee can allow bargaining for the services and debts. This bargaining may include writing blank checks though—"the god will require you to act on its behalf later on, in some way to be disclosed at a proper time and place." Remember that gods rarely play nice.

Playing with Aspects

Starting at level 10, players may control limited aspects of the game world. Aspects can for example be Inns, Bureaucracy, Books, Weather, Guards, Passageways, Spies, Politics, News—or some subset of either! There are endless possibilities. Everyone can make suggestions for that they are particularly interested in, but it is the Referee who decides what is available and what isn't.

Being in control of an aspect means that the character has some significant attachment to it, like having a position in politics, owning a lot of inns or being in charge of a major library. It also means that before each game session, the player is responsible for preparing something—an interesting inn, a new law, a piece of news etc.—that she can introduce at a point of her choosing in the adventure. The rule is that the player introduces it in a manner that relates to her character, but the Referee handles it from there, the way she sees fit. For example, the player might say that a character's spies bring news of a new mountain pass being discovered, which could facilitate the party's travels significantly. The Referee has to accept what the player says as a fact, but she is still the Referee if the party tries to go through that pass.

You may be tempted to let aspects translate to characters getting a lot of advantages and showing off their power. In the long run, it is however much more fun to create interesting challenges for the group. Aspects let players into Referee territory and keep everyone alert! As advised in the next chapter, they can be combined with the rules for randomized faction reactions, and they work well with bases and modus rolls (p. 98 and p. 125).

Advancement After Level 10

Characters can continue earning XP after level 10. For each 300,000 additional XP (regardless of which class the character belongs to), you can:

- ◆ Move groups amongst the character's attributes.
- ◆ Exchange one class ability or miracle for another.
- ◆ Move a previous attribute raise to another attribute.
- ◆ Re-roll the character's hit points.

The character's level remains at 10, though. If you are playing with aspects, you may also exchange an aspect, add a new aspect or bring an additional piece of material each session for an aspect that you already have.

Bases

Some parties may be in possession of a time-traveling vehicle or have a sentient underwater headquarter. Others may have a powerful leader, like a wandering demigod incarnate, or a fragile protégé, such as a child of destiny. In *Whitehack*, all of these cases are called **having a base**. The characters simply share something fundamental and important which is both a resource and something that would be devastating to lose.

This can be handled without the use of specific rules, and it may occur from the start or much later in a campaign—maybe also for a limited part of one. But if or when it happens, there are optional rules that can be used and a simple two-step generation process:

1. Choose a base identity.
2. Define a zero state for the base.

Base Identity

The identity of the base is up to the group as a whole, and there really aren't any limits to what you may come up with. The initial examples can be used as categories to give you some ideas, though:

- ◆ A building or place (fortress, shoppe, hiding place).
- ◆ A vehicle (ship, rock snail, eternal train, octopod).
- ◆ A leader (innocent ruler, aged guide, mutual love).

The identity will technically function as a miracle wording (p. 38), but on a different scale. Where a Wise character would perform a miracle, a base can do something larger, like moving the group to a different time, heal all characters fully in a short period of time or let the fools fly that shadowy foe which is beyond any of them. The base is under the control of the players, and if it does steal some spotlight now and then, or duplicates a player character ability, it is their choice.

Just like with miracles and miracle wordings, the group decides what the base should do, and the Referee rules if what they want is plausible relative to the base identity. For example, if the group's base is a demigod wizard leader, she may take on a shadow giant while the rest of the party flees. But the same feat wouldn't be plausible for a base which has the identity "infant destined to become king," because infants don't fight. Instead, the infant might inspire impossible courage in the party of adults protecting it. Perhaps this could shield them from the shadow giant's horror effect, so that they can fight it after all?

Base identities set some limits both to what the bases can do and how they do it. Start with a single line, and check your idea against the below list to test it. How could your base provide:

- ◆ Equipment or resources?
- ◆ Knowledge (history, arcane lore, legends, gossip ...)?
- ◆ Protection (both short and long term)?
- ◆ Healing or rest?
- ◆ Martial power?
- ◆ Transportation, removal of obstacles?
- ◆ Social status, reputation?

No idea for a base will be able to do all of the above, and some things will be more obvious than others. But usually, what seems like a far stretch may become plausible after all, on second thought—just like the shadow giant example above. Bases foster and reward creativity, because they are used in times of need.

Fill in your single line on the base sheet, and then flesh it out a little bit based on your initial answers to the above questions and your knowledge of similar bases from fiction in other media. You don't need to overdo this, as the point of bases is that they develop over time. Don't use more space than the sheet allows.

The Zero State

Next, all bases have a Zero State where the base works fine, is under no stress and has all its resources intact. In the examples above, the vehicle has all its fuel and an intact hull, the headquarter is completely operational and has full provisions and the leader is focused, rested and with favors left to call in. It is usually very obvious what zero state means, but you need to write it out on the base sheet.

What happens once the game starts is that all the things that the players have the characters' base do put stress on it—vehicles get worn, resources are used, the leader becomes preoccupied, etc. The zero state is there to provide a point from which this starts and to which the base may return. Note that the zero state may well be defined as something very agitated and chaotic, like having a bustling shoppe or a choleric leader.

Intervention Costs & Stress

The feats that the base performs have costs, and they use the same scale as the miracle HP costs. But contrary to those, there isn't much room for negotiation—the costs are simply listed on the Base Sheet (next spread).

Also, the base doesn't have a pool of points. Instead, the costs increase the base's **stress value**, which works similar to corruption levels (p. 86). Every time this happens, the group may choose to make a **base save against 10**, to see if the increased stress has consequences.

- ◆ If the save is successful, the stress is reduced by d6 points and has no consequences at this time.
- ◆ If the save fails, the stress has consequences as per the table on the next page, but is also reduced by d6 points.
- ◆ If the save is fumbled, the cost that preceded the save is doubled before having consequences, and stress isn't reduced afterwards.

Stress	Consequence
1–3	Minor consequence. The base cannot provide service for the next day.
4–6	Standard consequence. The base is clearly stressed. It cannot perform service for the next two days, and the Referee may compromise the base.
7–9	Serious consequence. The base is weakened and cannot be used for a whole week. The Referee may threaten the base. A save is obligatory.
10+	Deadly consequence. The base is depleted, and the Referee may destroy it. A save is obligatory. Fumble means the base is lost. The base must transcend before use.

◇ *Consequences of Base Stress* ◇

Unless the stress value is too high, the group may also choose **not to save**. In that case, the cost is just payed without any consequence at this time, but a new save isn't allowed until stress has risen further.

The Referee options in the consequence table (compromise, threaten, destroy) are further discussed in the campaign section of the next chapter.

Transcendence

There are many things that the group may do to alter, strengthen, repair or redefine their base—perhaps as a consequence of a successful adventure, a lucky find or in the aftermath of a major base crisis.

At any such time, a re-write of the base identity is allowed, and the stress level may be reset or diminished, at the Referee's discretion. For example, the guide may return from the dead, the child of destiny may become a young prince or the time traveling vehicle may get a new part, allowing it to also travel dimensions.

WHITEHACK

Base Identity

Zero State

Current State

Cost	Example Effect
1	Minor service. Call in a small favor, get past a minor obstacle, halve healing times, provide short transport, fight a simple foe.
2	Standard service. Call in a substantial favor, remove or provide an obstacle, perform surgery, provide longer transport, give important but not crucial information.
d6	Major Intervention. Relocate headquarters, save character's life, give crucial information, fight (but not defeat) major foe.
2d6	Last Resort. Sacrifice crucial base elements, use a lot of resources, save the party.

Base Notes



CHAPTER V

HOW TO RUN THE GAME

*Where rookie and veteran Referees may find advice,
tools and useful ideas.*

RUNNING a game of *Whitehack* means relying, to a degree, on your knowledge of the fantasy genre and making your own decisions for things that aren't in the rules. Sometimes, you may have to invent the description of the dragon yourself, and decide whether she attacks or rests on her treasure. Will this be a chore? No, but it requires a bit of confidence. Just relax. Nobody ever comes "clean" to a game or a genre. *Whitehack* is embedded in the abundance of fantasy and RPG tropes in the collective consciousness of our time. So are you.

While the rules provide structure and means of resolution, their main purpose isn't to help. Children learn to make things up together long before they can read, playing games of make-believe. You may need a reminder, but you don't need written rules for that.

On the contrary, the rules are mainly there to make things more challenging. The game text imposes restrictions on story telling and purposely presents oppositions for the gaming group to handle. Tell the players that in *Whitehack*, the goal is still to tell a story (of sorts), but now you are deliberately risking failure by abiding by the written rules, the dice and the internal logic of your game world. Tell them also that the participants in this game don't hold the same kind of power over the story. You are the Referee, and you prepare the outlines

of the story in the form of a written adventure. They, on the other hand, are players with the power to make their characters discard or follow your ideas. Tell them that the fun in this play style is to succeed in telling something together, *despite* these restrictions and oppositions. You can fail trying, but you can also get better at it.

Whitehack is for those who like to balance Referee power and player freedom, but just as much for those who like to prepare adventures, to get into the mind of their characters, to engage in strategic combat, to collect and paint miniatures, to hang out with friends or to sit by and watch others do most of the playing! The game is meant to bring people together, not set them apart.

Referee Barebones

There is no mystery to being a Referee. Without much consideration for style, here are the bare-bones:

1. Write an adventure using this chapter or read one someone else has made (also see p. 148).
2. Using the adventure, present a situation that the characters are in and ask what they do.
3. Use the rules, dice and if need be common sense to adjudicate the results of the characters' actions and present it as a new situation. Again, ask what the characters do. Repeat this until the session is over.
4. Strive to be *fair*. If you are unsure, ask a player who isn't involved in the situation what she thinks is fair.
5. When a player wants to use one of her character's groups, ask her how the group suits the situation. Let the explanation rest in the collective memory of the group (don't take notes) and serve as a precedent.
6. Be a guardian *of* player choice, not one against it. For player choice to matter, you can neither improvise everything, nor force your written material upon the players. When events are covered, follow the dice and material. When played events move into unknown territory, follow the dice and the game world logic.

Some Referee Finer Points

The finer points of refereeing depend a lot on your play style. *Whitehack* is written in the original tradition, but that tradition was never *one* style, even in the earliest days, and this game also has a reputation for being somewhat of its own beast. Look at the examples of play (p. 22), consider the below points and then settle on something that works for you and your group!

- ◆ Player skill plays the greatest role when dealing with things such as traps, hidden things and social interactions. Heed the previous advice and ask what the character does, rather than rolling dice. If the character cuts the right string, looks in the right spot and says something smart, let her succeed.
- ◆ Then again, you shouldn't have to be savvy with traps, perceptive or socially apt yourself in order to play a witty thief. Again, heed the previous advice and use what the player says to place a modification on a roll, or roll to give the player a solid hint.
- ◆ Treat your Referee characters as real people who want something, are afraid of things, plan ahead, get revenge etc. You can add some notes in this regard to their stat blocks, as suggested in the section on mind maps (p. 116).
- ◆ It is all right to place really dangerous things in your world, but it isn't good form to go "ha! I bet you had zero idea that the Goddess of Beheadings was hiding in this drawer!" Hint subtly at danger and at the features of those dangers.
- ◆ Talking in and out of character are different styles, suitable to different players. Allow both, always.
- ◆ Roll dice openly where this is at all possible. For the other cases, consider showing a hidden result to a player that it doesn't concern, or leave a hidden die untouched until it can be shown. The dice are there to take away some control over the narrative, and they should be respected.

- ◆ Then again, the dice aren't smart. Sometimes you get a random result that makes the game world seem really artificial and incoherent. Explain this to the group and agree on the **minimal** adjustment required to avoid this effect.
- ◆ Meta-gaming and chit-chatting are essential for some player types, just as staying in a strict character perspective is essential for others. Aim for a middle ground here, or you will lose players and get a less dynamic game where everyone thinks alike.
- ◆ Foster your players' expectations when it comes to your own rules and setting knowledge. In *Whitehack*, it is all right to look things up, to take your time and break for a short discussion. Often, you have some kind of game material that you use. Let it show, rather than pretending you can hold it all in your head.
- ◆ Like anything with some story-telling in it, the original role-playing game tradition makes use of tropes. You will likely find some of them unwanted but still hard to play without. In such a case, try adding a setting counter-weight (p. 109) and presenting the trope as an issue to act upon rather than simply reproducing it. Be aware that some of your players may deal with that issue in real life. They might want it completely purged from your game, or—oppositely—feel a very deep need to tackle it in fiction. Pay close attention to your players' reactions and don't overemphasize. When something goes wrong despite your best efforts, acknowledge it and do better next time.
- ◆ Nobody can go into a session and expect to be entirely untouched by what happens in the game fiction. *Whitehack* isn't aiming for "bleed," but occasionally, an event may hit closer to home than you can handle. You or a player can always say so, and everyone should work to wrap things up and move on, no questions asked. Those who know their sore spots can warn ahead, and if the concerned participant is up to it, you can of course discuss afterwards, too.

Settings

The typical fantasy campaign setting has vast stretches of wilderness hiding ancient ruins and terrible monsters roaming dungeons that sometimes connect with deeper, underground realms. There are usually some struggling villages, monasteries, castles and communities scattered at enough distance to make it dangerous traveling between them. Further off lies at least one city, filled with intrigues and all sorts of conflicts, and ships and caravans depart from that city towards distant and exotic lands. People believe in a vast array of gods, who are at odds with one another and struggle for influence over mortals. When you die you end up in a place filled with shadows and undead, but you can return if your friends find some means to bring you back. The whole thing is usually post-apocalyptic—the world is old and has seen many civilizations rise and crumble—and the starting situation is fragile. What little order exists risks being destroyed by evil or chaotic forces, like warring orc tribes or a returning witch king.

A setting such as this provides strong purposes for adventuring and a wealth of opportunities for varied play.* This, and the chance to play warriors, wizards and thieves (maybe as an elf, dwarf or goblin), is enough reason to play for a lot of people. You don't need to come up with something else to make *Whitehack* work. In fact, as long as everyone agrees to this approximate backdrop, you don't need to describe anything about your setting in advance. You can simply prepare an adventure. A setting unique to your group will develop anyway, over time, as you play with *Whitehack* rules.

* Consider the traditional heist or treasure hunt adventure cycle. It doesn't have to be played as a conquistador expedition, where the explorers go into the unknown, hire local henchmen, steal the riches from a culture they don't understand, kill the resistance and return to civilization. Against the above fantasy backdrop, you can play it like a riff on folklore or ancient myth instead: the heroes must learn or acquire something in the underworld before they can progress toward their goal. This also makes it easier to combine and vary with other adventure types.

Hacking Your Notion of Normal

The expression “normal fantasy” may sound contradictory, but it really isn’t. Like many other popular genres, mainstream fantasy relies on things being familiar. Any player has a number of components—like dwarves having beards and living below ground—that she feels need to be in the world, or she is not getting what she came for. For the game to feel fresh, you should aim to hack *your* group’s notion of what is normal. This is best done with precision and moderation. If nothing is recognizable, nothing sticks out, either. Concentrate on a select few important aspects of the setting and leave the rest!

Try hacking things like common foes or humanoids, how death works, the nature of gods, magick, the general technological level, the climate or means of traveling. For example, a curse that has left dwarves, elves and halflings looking like marred deviations in the human gene pool and brought a new ice age upon the world (hacking humanoids and climate) can give you a grim mutant campaign about prejudice, persecution and survival. An invasion by insectoids with advanced technology (hacking technology level and common foes) could make a campaign with a colonial theme inspired by history and science fiction.

Using a Literary Setting

Another interesting option is to place your adventures in a fictional world created by the author of one of your favorite fantasy books. Most such books have maps, and the feel of the world and the details are already there. If you can find a book that everyone has read or is willing to read, this can be a great idea! The fact that you love some book series doesn’t automatically make it a good world to play in, though. Can it provide enough variation in its environments, encountered foes and adventure types? Does it provide strong purpose for adventuring? Will the books’ storylines constrict or enrich gameplay? Consider your books carefully from a *game* perspective first.

Switching or Mixing Genres

The Optional Rules chapter contains rules that can help you play *Whitehack* in other genres than fantasy, such as horror, science fiction or urban fantasy (p. 84). But genres aren't mere containers for stereotypes, tropes and typical trappings. Turning a crossbow into a ray gun or letting the adventurers travel space instead of the sea doesn't necessarily make your game science fiction, and the inclusion of a few tentacled monsters won't turn it into cosmic horror, either. Genres run much deeper. They are formalized answers to historical social needs. If you want to play horror, you need a setting that can focus encounters with the truly unknown and malevolent. If you want to play science fiction, you need a future setting that serves as a critique of the present. Otherwise you will remain in the realm of fantasy, albeit with a few deviant genre markers as seasoning. Of course, *there is nothing wrong with that!* Anything you bring into the game will have some kind of genre connotation, and you can create very interesting mixes by deliberately picking elements and weighing them against one another. It isn't the full truth, but you could say that tabletop role-playing was invented by cross-breeding fantasy with war games!

Playing with History

Instead of letting present day or future technology "invade" traditional fantasy, you may consider letting fantasy invade history. What if the plague in Sicily in 1347 has supernatural causes (in reality it arrived from Crimea), and the adventurers try to put an end to it? What if an unknown deep sea empire collapses during the Napoleon Wars, and its scaled, amphibian inhabitants end up in Northern Europe with the knowledge of magick? There is a huge advantage in combining the freedom of fantasy with historic background, especially when you can use as much or as little of that background as you want. Also, history is a very common interest that you are likely to find in your gaming group to some extent.

Adventures

There are many ways to write adventures. Although neither may exist in “pure” form, you may find it useful to distinguish between three basic ideas:

- ◆ **The predefined story.** This format looks like a finished story. It uses a limited set of adventure phases and can *play out differently* from how it is written.
- ◆ **The dungeon map.** This format consists of a map with keyed rooms and a nearby location where the characters can get provisions and medical aid.
- ◆ **The mind-map.** This format lays out the Referee characters, factions and agendas, with some trigger events.

Each adventure format has advantages. The predefined story is evocative to read or write. The dungeon map is easy to use. A mind-map with agendas is essential for a city adventure or sandbox campaign. Some techniques are described on the following pages, but there is no reason to be dogmatic. Mix them and find your own style!

Another helpful distinction is the one between **use** and **process**. It is common to value material that you can use directly at the table over a story-like structure, under the assumption that the latter leads to rail-roading. But reading or writing are processes which prepare you for improvisation, *in particular* if it is a single track story with a predefined end. A readerly mind is used to the evocative narrative and may explore alternative character actions and game world reactions that aren't in the text.

You can enforce this as a method. When you come to an adventure crossroads, stop to think: What will happen next? What if the characters do something else? What if someone resets that trap? Compare it to a whodunit crime novel, where your mind is busy figuring out who the murderer is before the end. Just remember not to get too attached to your own answers. What you are experiencing is the potential of something that has yet to be created. You never get to dictate player choices.

Building with RPG Story Phases

In *Whitehack*, you can use phases to build your adventures and to better time play. There are seven kinds:

- ◆ **Prelude**, or “**Hook**,” as in how the characters get involved and accept (or reject) a mission. Unless this phase contains a true choice, you can usually skip it, jump right into the action and let the players explain why the characters are there.
- ◆ **Preparation**, as in getting equipment, doing some preparatory research, gathering gossip, doing recon trips, arranging transportation, etc.
- ◆ **Travel**, as in journeying to the main location of the adventure, hexcrawling, staying at a way temple or inn and meeting fellow travelers.
- ◆ **Exploration**, as in exploring a labyrinth or dangerous place, dungeon crawling, breaking and entering, storming a castle, investigating a crime scene, etc.
- ◆ **Confrontation**, as in a *major* one, usually with a boss enemy or monster at the end of a larger battle.
- ◆ **Aftermath**, as in how to get home, dealing with the repercussions of what has happened, recuperating, spending loot and getting training.
- ◆ **Socializing**, as in a **recurring phase** for resting, socializing and character development.

The phases don't have to come in the above order, and they don't have to have an equal focus. You can rearrange or exclude some phases to get different kinds of adventure. For instance, the mystery adventure is mostly about gathering information (i.e. preparation and exploration), while the dungeon crawl is about exploration and confrontation. City adventures often end up being about intrigues, factions and chain reactions to character actions. This puts most of them in a perpetual socializing phase. The aftermath adventure begins after the lord of the dungeon is dead—now you have to get home alive and figure out how to get rid of the cursed loot!

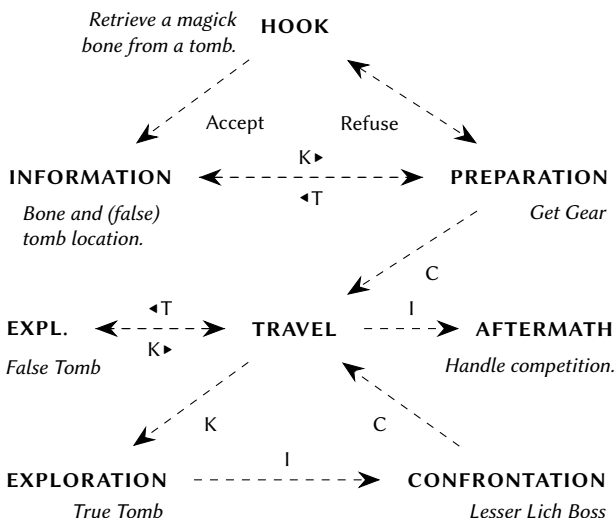
Phases, Bases & Time Limits

For a bit more control, you can state that base interventions have double costs after the first time they are used in a phase, and that any re-writes must be done in the preparation or aftermath phases.

You may also set real world time limits for each phase. This is very useful at conventions. In such a case, any remaining time when a phase is finished is added to the next, and any extra time required to finish one is deducted from the next. If things drag on, you may as the Referee decide to take over and quickly narrate the end of a less crucial phase, to get enough time for a more crucial one.

Mapping Phases

Finally, it can be useful to create a simple phase map before diving into the actual writing. Mark the phases you want on a piece of paper and **link** them based on what the characters can or must do to move between them. Consider using combat (C), task (T), knowledge (K), social (S) and item (I) links, as shown in the example below:



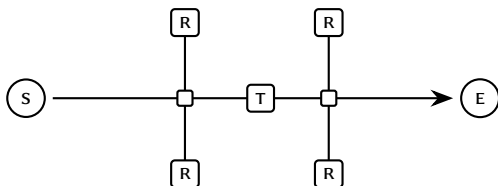
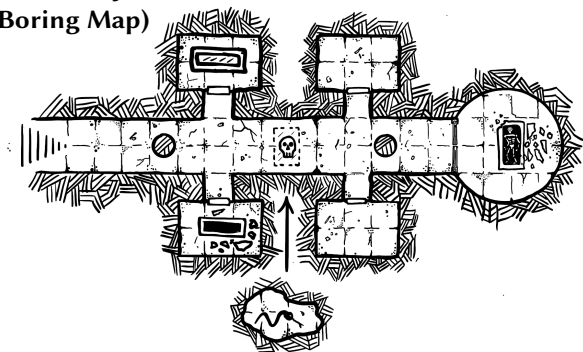
Constructing Dungeons

Draw an entrance, a corridor and a few rooms, then key the rooms and fill them with monsters, traps and a treasure. Call this “The Tomb of Tunka Jinn” and give the characters a mission to go there. Done! Just change the title and the back story to suit your needs. This is simple, but there are also a few tricks to good dungeon design:

- ◆ Your dungeon doesn’t have to be huge, but it should have **several entry points**, at least one of which is **hidden**. If the dungeon has **levels** (a good idea), put one of the entrances at a lower level. This allows for tactical choices and rewards characters who research and examine the dungeon before going in. Perhaps the above tomb connects to an older cave system that the locals know about?
- ◆ Draw **several ways to get about** in your dungeon, not just one corridor to each room and one passage to each level. Let your corridors **connect** and run in **circles**, and let there be several **stairs** and **chutes** leading down and up, some of them **by-passing a level** or two. Let there be **secret passageways** for the characters to find. Put **chasms**, **crumbling bridges**, **elevators**, **slopes** and **elevation shifts** in the dungeon, but also some **landmarks**, so that the players don’t get too confused. Apply a tactical perspective: Where can the characters rest in relative **safety**? What points are defensible if they need to retreat?
- ◆ A good dungeon has its own **ecology**. Whatever lives there normally needs to sleep, eat and see to other basic needs. Larger dungeons usually have **factions** that are at odds with one another, and clever players let their characters take advantage of such situations. Remember that not everything in a dungeon needs to be killed, and that the “dungeon mode” of the game benefits from being interspaced with a “city mode”—otherwise it doesn’t stand out and stops being exciting.

- ◆ **Traps** can be simple, like “the stair has a d6 damage arrow trap, save negates,” or be more complex with exact descriptions. As previously suggested (p. 106), a good Referee finds ways to subtly indicate that traps may be ahead. You should also think about traps in relation to the dungeon residents and competing adventurer parties: Some traps are likely **inactive or sprung** already, and some traps may be **reset**.
- ◆ A good idea when designing your dungeon is to **draw its structure** before putting anything else in there. If the structure is poor, resembling a straight line like in the example below, it is likely not much fun to play.

FALSE TOMB OF TUNKA JINN (A Boring Map)



S = START, R = ROOMS, T = TRAP, E = END

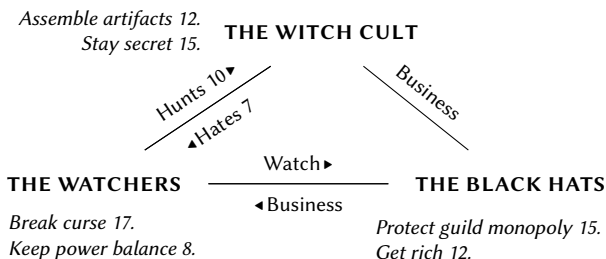
◆ *Poor Dungeon Design* ◆

Mind Maps, Agendas & Events

Handling city intrigue and other adventure types that hinge on multiple party agendas is easy if you use a mind map. Make a node each for the agendas of all major characters and organizations that play a part in your plot. As you will see, the Referee statblocks are really short in *Whitehack*, so you can put such information in each node as well. Connect the nodes and note the type of connection. For example, one node may be “employed by” another node, who in turn is “afraid of” a third node. Nodes may be connected differently in opposite directions, like when one node thinks of another as a friend, while she is in fact an enemy. (The numbers in the below example are explained on the opposite page.)

Once you are done with the mind map, make a list of events that you think both the player characters and your factions and individuals could react to. Try to find events that require response without constricting the characters to a single acceptable choice. For example, if the characters are knights with a strict chivalric code but also in need of gold for some higher goal, a huge reward for a dubious or villainous deed will give the players an interesting moral choice, since there are others who are sure to collect the reward if the characters don’t.

Now you are done. All you need to do is to put things in motion using one of your events. As the party responds, it will trigger one or several nodes, and their actions will in turn affect other nodes, urging the party to respond again. If things slow down, use your events.



Randomized Events & Reactions

If you want, you can randomize what happens in the game world, both as a consequence of the characters' actions and as a consequence of the events that you bring into the world. Doing this takes some of the onus of decision making off your back, and it can create a very strong sense of the game world having a life of its own.

Mark agendas and relations with numbers similar to attribute scores, in order to indicate their importance for the faction or individual. For example, on the previous page, the Witch Cult has “Stay secret 15,” indicating that staying secret is very important to them (average would be 11).^{*} Then mark your events too, but with modifications to indicate their severeness. “Black Hat thief identifies a cultist, -2” could be an example of a less than medium event. Now, if you want to get an indication as to what happens, make a modified d20 roll for the Witch Cult's agenda to stay secret, i.e. $15 - 2 = 13$.

- ◆ A success means that they react, and you can use the quality to indicate how strongly.
- ◆ A crit means that they have a huge but not disproportionate reaction.
- ◆ Failure means that they don't react, and a fumble means that they misunderstand the situation and react disproportionately.

If you want, you can turn the reaction into an event, assessing its severity and giving it a modification. Now other factions can react too, and you get a chain reaction. Naturally, you can assess what the player characters do too, and use it in the above manner.

^{*} An advanced use of this mechanism would be for players to act as their own Referees in regard to their characters. They can mark the character's beliefs and convictions just as with Referee characters, and then assess events themselves, rolling to see how their characters react. This can be useful at times where you don't want to or can't choose for your character.

Random Tables

Random tables are very prominent in the original rules tradition and essential if you are aiming for an old school play-style. The point of them is to take away some of the Referee's control over the game world and make it less vulnerable to her whims and biases. It is common to randomize things like loot, which monsters are encountered, weather, which stores are in a town and many other things. If you randomize part of an adventure, you also give it a higher replay value.

However, creating random tables for everything is an arduous task, especially considering that many entries don't ever come into play. The random tables are also tied in with the game world, and unless you play in a very generic world or are happy with whatever world gets created by your rolls, you need to either use a pre-generated world or do the work yourself.

- ◆ Make short random tables. When you roll on one, use the result you get, but also remove it and write a new one. You can keep a backlog to reuse old entries with a few modifications, perhaps in another game.
- ◆ Nestle your tables. Settle a matter by rolling on a few short tables rather than on a single one. This way, you can combine tables differently for different things.
- ◆ Use imbalanced tables. For example, on a loot table, there may be a great chance for something mundane, but a tiny chance for something exceptional.
- ◆ You don't have to let the table entries be "complete." You can allow yourself of players to fill in the details of an entry once it has been rolled. This will go a long way to avoid the situation where an entry simply doesn't make sense in the situation where it is rolled, and it will make the tables much more useful.
- ◆ The random tables found in this book can be useful when you make ones of your own, as explained on the opposite page.

Randomizing Input Rather Than Output

By randomizing what goes *into* your creativity as a Referee, you may find it easier to get things *out*—on the fly, during your preparations or when creating other tables. In addition to the tables on the next spread, you also have the group generator (p. 46) and the wording oracle (p. 43). The former is good for coming up with Referee character concepts and factions, while the latter is good for some fine-tuning.

1. Use 2–4 tables on the next spread and force yourself to include *all* the words that you got in a basic idea.
2. Use another 1–2 tables and again, force your mind to use the new words to give some more detail to the initial idea.
3. Now drop the requirement to include the words and finish what you have started on your own.

Sometimes, the words that you get can be used **metaphorically**. You don't even need the tables for this. As long as you are prepared to move from a literal to a metaphorical understanding, you could flip any book and use the first and last word on the page that comes up.

The metaphorical approach is particularly good for dealing with a randomization of **weather**. You can't make weather completely random anyway, as it depends on the climate, the location, the season and quite simply what the weather was yesterday, so putting an extra filter between the dice and your imagination is a good idea. For example, if you roll for Personality and Drama and you get the words “confused” and “struggle,” perhaps the weather that day is shifty, making it hard for people to know what to wear and what equipment to bring.

Finally, the tables can be used to come up with an adventure concept. Following the above process, use the Group Generator (p. 46), Items, Origin and Drama for a basic concept of the adventure's problem or issue. Then use Locations (any of the two) and Events for fleshing out the basic concept.

A Item

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Weapon | 8. Device | 15. Glasses |
| 2. Potion | 9. Note | 16. Key |
| 3. Scroll | 10. Container | 17. Ingredient |
| 6. Map | 11. Letter | 18. Poison |
| 5. Book | 12. Amulet | 19. Drug |
| 4. Armor | 13. Ring | 20. Pet |
| 7. Jewel | 14. Promissory | |

B Trait (*reversible)

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Hunted | 8. Blooded | 15. Hated* |
| 2. Cursed* | 9. Magick | 16. Smelly* |
| 3. Expensive* | 10. Divine* | 17. Broken |
| 4. Evidence | 11. Historic | 18. Odd* |
| 5. Guilty* | 12. Brutal* | 19. Raw* |
| 6. Last* | 13. Healing* | 20. Fake* |
| 7. Unique* | 14. Missing | |

C Origin (Ages, Eras, Places, Cultures)

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Æonic | 8. Orcish | 15. Sea |
| 2. Imperial | 9. Ancient | 16. Cataclysm |
| 3. Witch King | 10. Elven | 17. City |
| 4. The Black | 11. Dwarven | 18. Country |
| 5. Meteorite | 12. Goblin | 19. War |
| 6. Glacier | 13. Dagonite | 20. Future |
| 7. New | 14. Unknown | |

D Drama

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Theft | 8. Duty | 15. Revolt |
| 2. Betrayal | 9. Poison | 16. Ambition |
| 3. Struggle | 10. Plague | 17. War |
| 4. Greed | 11. Treason | 18. Taboo |
| 5. Heresy | 12. Lie | 19. Ideal |
| 6. Death | 13. Vengeance | 20. Rivalry |
| 7. Wound | 14. Flight | |

E Personality (all are reversible)

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Mysterious | 8. Superior | 15. Shallow |
| 2. Truthful | 9. Cool | 16. Conceited |
| 3. Dull | 10. Friendly | 17. Doubtful |
| 6. Seductive | 11. Awkward | 18. Tough |
| 5. Obnoxious | 12. Confused | 19. Quiet |
| 4. Choleric | 13. Intense | 20. Brave |
| 7. Slimy | 14. Stupid | |

F Wilderness Locations

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Megaliths | 8. Glade | 15. Fortress |
| 2. Peak | 9. Ruin | 16. Heath |
| 3. Pass | 10. Chasm | 17. Territory |
| 4. Grave | 11. Lone tree | 18. Lake |
| 5. Glacier | 12. Crossroads | 19. Crater |
| 6. Cave | 13. Rapids | 20. Burial |
| 7. Vale | 14. Swamp | grounds |

G City Locations

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Prison | 8. Market | 15. Arena |
| 2. Harbor | 9. Tower | 16. Canal |
| 3. Temple | 10. Park | 17. Storehouse |
| 4. Gates | 11. Library | 18. Graveyard |
| 5. Museum | 12. Shoppe | 19. Well |
| 6. Morgue | 13. Court | 20. Water |
| 7. Bridge | 14. Slums | reserve |

H Events

- | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Burglary | 8. Peace | 15. Strike |
| 2. Break-up | 9. Election | 16. Arrival |
| 3. Fight | 10. Coup | 17. Legislation |
| 4. Deal | 11. Famine | 18. Arrest |
| 5. Execution | 12. Revelation | 19. Invention |
| 6. Accident | 13. Escape | 20. Disappea- |
| 7. Outbreak | 14. Purchase | rance |

Campaigns

A campaign is defined by a series of adventures that are connected. Some campaigns are strong stories with a clearly defined start, middle and end, while others are little more than episodes in the lives of a bunch of adventurers. Since *Whitehack* is powered by the collision between collective narration and game world simulation—heroes tend to die more often than not!—the former is what many players dream of while the latter is by far easier to achieve. Then again, can't a strong story be appreciated by the players, even though no single *character* lives through it from start to finish? And conversely: Will a loose set of episodes not connect in the minds of the players, forming a (kind of) monomythic story where their characters progress from having little skill to becoming strong enough to take on tremendous monsters?

Plots, Sandboxes & Dramatic Curves

A campaign plot requires more thought than the individual adventure. Not all ideas can sustain a series of adventures. Consider *The Journey*, *The Mystery*, *The Event* (preparing for or stopping one) and *The Fellowship* (or company, guild etc.—the fate of some coalition). They are all classic, easy-to-use campaign plots with many examples in other media. You can use the adventure phases on a campaign level to organize the individual adventures. For example, in a journey campaign, there may be one or two preparatory adventures to assemble the necessary information, like stealing a map or breaking out a guide from prison.

The opposite of having a plot is to run the campaign as a sandbox. This means that you create a map and populate it with places, organizations and individuals. Heed the advice for random tables, and also prepare a few events. Then you let things play out according to the players' choices and the dice. If you go down this road, try the rules for randomized events and reactions, and make sure that you prepare most of the sandbox *before* starting the game. The most common fallacy from an

orthodox perspective on sandboxes is probably to prepare dungeons, villages etc. but place them on the map *after* the characters have decided on a route. This means that the players didn't actually have a choice in where the characters were going.

In both approaches, use strong events to intensify as you near some kind of ending. This will give the game story a semblance of dramatic curve and allow for you to build a climax without scripting how it goes down.

Linking Adventures Together

Adventures can be linked by more than plot. Let the characters return to places they have been before. Let them meet Referee characters more than once during different parts of their careers. If a vanquished enemy flees, let her return in an adventure later on. Let the characters own houses and businesses. The sense of a meaningful story in a role-playing game is very much reinforced by game world consistency (not to be mistaken for status quo). But you don't have to plan everything ahead. Save your notes as you play, and re-use them later on. Nothing shouts "CAMPAIGN!" as much as a player choice having consequences twenty session later, *but you don't have to know which consequences in advance.*

Arch Enemies & Great Friends

Almost all campaigns have an arch enemy and one or more great friends.

Arch enemies are singular, higher level bosses with one or more additional stages (p. 131). They should be fairly obvious, have signature items, minions, behaviors, smells and ways of speaking, and they tend to *thwart and humiliate* the characters rather than killing them.

Great friends can but don't have to be bosses. They can be fragile and need the characters' protection. They can provide timely help of a kind similar to that of affiliation groups, but only if the relationship is reciprocal. Mistreated great friends don't stay great, or even friends.

Compromise, Threaten, Destroy

Bases take time to develop, and the players tend to get more and more attached to them. They also serve as adventure generators and as campaign stabilizers that work in conjunction both with material that you have written yourself and with material that someone else has made. For these reasons, the Referee parts of the base rules are a campaign matter more than something for the individual adventure.

The way the player parts of bases work (p. 98), you as the Referee can't mess with the base until it fails a save. The consequences give you one out of three options:

- ◆ **Compromise.** The base is no longer intact, so you may give it a weakness or problem in a manner and at a time of your choosing. For example, the vehicle may have a hidden leak. Someone who shouldn't have made an extra key to the headquarters. The leader starts seeing someone without realizing that this person is an instrument of evil.
- ◆ **Threaten.** You may introduce a major problem that needs to be dealt with right away. Perhaps the vehicle's demon drive is dying. The headquarters may be under direct attack. The leader can have been captured by the enemy.
- ◆ **Destroy.** You may destroy the base. The vehicle has crashed. The headquarters has been taken over or laid in ruins. The leader is dead or has been turned. As the Referee, you present this as a climactic event, but you do it so that it becomes clear what the characters must do to make the base transcend (p. 101).

Each of these options can lead to an adventure in itself, or tie into what you have already planned. Sometimes, the problem you introduce in the game fiction is left unattended by the player characters. In such a case, you are allowed to let that problem run its course. This may very well entail moving from compromised to threatened to destroyed, without any failed base saves.

Modus Rolls

You can give the campaign a will of its own. A *modus roll* can reconfigure a phase slightly as the characters enter it and potentially cause them to approach things differently. Normally, the confrontation phase is excepted, and there can only be one successful modus roll per session.

First roll against 10. On a success, also roll on the below table and add a circumstance to the phase. For example, if the party arrives at the dungeon (enters the exploration phase), the roll could say “innocent bystanders.” You as the Referee must include this in a **plausible** way. Perhaps you add an archæologic dig near an entrance, or let a family of mutants use the first level as a home. Unless it happens near the end of a session, you must do this by improvising and using the resources in the rules.

The formula for interpreting a successful modus roll is [adventure + phase + roll], i.e. a result may be interpreted differently depending on the adventure and the phase. Aim for a combination of complication and opportunity that can make the characters re-evaluate their modus operandi. You can use the below table many times, but you may also update it like previously discussed.

The tables for generating Referee input are useful if you run into trouble coming up with something good. Naturally, you can also ask your players for help.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Innocent bystanders | 11. An improbable find |
| 2. The flu | 12. Infestation |
| 3. Local tyrant | 13. Major news |
| 4. Landslide | 14. Shortage |
| 5. Flooding | 15. An accident |
| 6. Religious cult | 16. Power fluctuations |
| 7. Festivity | 17. Someone else's fight |
| 8. Protests | 18. Caravan |
| 9. A matter of law | 19. Famous entertainer |
| 10. Extreme weather | 20. Notorious prisoner |

Campaign Troubleshooting Techniques

System quality only really shows in the long run. In games with short cycles or in one-shots, most game mechanical problems never appear, don't repeat or can simply be disregarded ("oh well, my guy will die soon anyway"). Not so in a long campaign. Campaigns can easily end prematurely due to system related issues—for example if the Referee role becomes overwhelming or if having too many or too few player options makes the game less fun.

Whitehack has been reported to work well in many campaigns of 50–100 sessions each. But in case you still run into a problem, here are some possible solutions.

The characters seem weak or die too often.

Give the passages on damage, death, healing and injuries on pp. 74 ff. an extra read-through. If you are playing a module for another system, remember that you can add a module specific AV bonus (p. 80). In some modules, characters and monsters also have more HP. Make sure you are **not** using those values directly—you should plug the **HD** values into *Whitehack*.

If the problem persists, it may be a matter of play style. Raise HP for all characters by adding their respective class HDs for level 1 to each level HD. For example, a level 3 Wise Druid gets HD 3+2, instead of HD 2+1.

It is hard to agree on things.

Read the rules closely. Are you trying to agree on things that are actually hard coded? If there are still arguments after a close reading, try different ways of agreeing. You can take turns deciding, do rock-paper-scissors, vote, roll dice, etc. If the problem persists, give the players an "override marker" each. If someone dislikes a ruling, she can override it using a marker, but you as the Referee may use that marker later on, against any player, to force a re-roll of any kind. This will soon result in a group discussion about what is reasonable. Listen carefully!

Magick is too open-ended.

First make sure that you have used the rules as written. Miracle wordings are chosen *once each*, and every use and cost serves as a **precedent for future uses**. If the problem persists, make a more extensive version of the miracle HP guidelines (p. 40), adapted for *your* setting.

Fights are static or take too long.

Fights can become static if the Referee characters don't use of the system fully, especially free attacks, charging, pushing and combat advantage. Also make sure that you don't fight in places that completely lack interesting features—if there are advantageous positions and danger zones, you *will* see movement. For more dynamic boss fights, throw a few minions into the mix. If fights take too long despite you correctly plugging third party HD instead of direct HP values into *Whitehack*, you may add a simple escalation mechanic: For every round after the third, **any** damage done gets an incremental +1 bonus.

The characters have too much or too little gold.

Modules from different eras vary vastly in the amounts of available treasure. If the characters level too fast or too slow, you can adjust the rate with quest XP. If the characters lack incentive to go on adventure because they are too rich, have them *pay* their gold to use it as XP. They may pay for training, rare tomes, tutors, membership in affiliation groups, etc.

The open spaces require too much of the Referee.

You may be trying a bit too hard. There isn't that much open space, and as the Referee you aren't supposed to use all of it. Have the players do most of the filling as you play, rule on it and then let your rulings rest in the gaming group's **non-written** collective memory. It is all right if things aren't perfect. And don't be afraid of not having an answer when a player asks you something. Just ask them back for a suggestion instead!



CHAPTER VI

MONSTERS & ARTIFACTS

Where we encounter foes and their rules, as well as the why, what and how of magick artifacts.

A MAJORITY of the text in the original tradition is dedicated to the detailed descriptions of iconic spells, creatures and magick artifacts. Very little of that is in *Whitehack*, for the simple reason that it already rests in the RPG megatext—the collectively and approximately known canon of fantasy game elements.

In this chapter, you will find rules and stats for monsters as well as a list of seeds for magic artifacts. Both are for you to flesh out as you see fit. Should you only recognize a few or even none of the table entries that are based on the megatext, **whatever you imagine from the names and keywords will be fine.** *Whitehack* has been successfully run by first time Referees who never heard of kobolds or an elven chainmail before.

In this chapter are also some already fleshed out examples of non-canon creatures and items.

Playing Monsters as a Referee

A monster in this context is a catchall for any non-player character. But the creatures that *are* monsters and can have some sort of opinion about it usually don't consider themselves as such. Goblins and orcs (for example) won't win Miss Congeniality awards, but they have their own cultures, norms and factions and should be played accordingly.

Monster Table Entries

- ◆ **AC.** This is the monster's armor class with standard armor factored in. For example, a dwarf has AC 5 because she is expected to use protection equivalent to a shield and a chainmail. If you want to equip a humanoid differently, you would start at AC 0 unless there is natural armor involved. See Chapters I (p. 52) and II (p. 69) for more information on AC.
- ◆ **HD.** This is the number of hit dice (**d6**) used to determine a creature's hit points. If there is a positive modification, you apply it *once only*. If there is a given range, you choose any HD within that range. For example, the HD 1–7+7 Frost Giant means that you would roll 1–7 hit dice depending on the giant's experience, and then add another 7 HP. "<1" means HD 1, but the creature has a single hit point.
- ◆ **MV.** This number is the monster's movement rate. It is handled just like movement rates for characters, except the expected encumbrance has already been factored in. If there are alternatives, like 25/40, it means that the creature has multiple ways of moving. The first number is its land movement, the second its water or air movement (which should be self explanatory for the particular creature).
- ◆ **Special.** This is the place for monster **keywords**. They can be used as characteristics (immunities, traits, abilities etc.), as miracle wordings or as abilities that you either script in advance or improvise on the fly. In the latter case, a good idea is to have the monster pay a few HP for miracles and abilities alike. This lessens the impact of any accidentally over-powered keyword uses. Remember, a monster that has "Acidic," "Paralyze" or something else listed doesn't have to be exactly the same as another member of its species. It is all right to interpret the keywords differently for two individuals—it provides variation and keeps your players on their toes! All non-human creatures can see better in the dark than humans.

Monster STs, AVs, Damage & XP

Monsters have STs equal to HD+5 but always fail on a roll of 20. Those with resistances or vulnerabilities use double rolls for those saves (positive or negative, respectively).

Monsters have AV equal to HD+10. With natural weapons, they do a base d6 damage, though very deadly monsters may get a damage bonus at the Referee's discretion. Normal rules for misses, crits etc. apply, but higher HD monsters get the choice of additional attacks: HD 5+ monsters can make two attacks per round, HD 10+ get three and HD 15+ get four. Whenever a monster makes multiple attacks, her last attack during that round is made at AV 10, and she must forsake her move.

The base experience points awarded for monsters are listed below, but can be adjusted by the Referee. For higher HDs, simply multiply by 200.

HD	XP	HD	XP	HD	XP
<1	15	6	1,200	12	2,400
1	30	7	1,400	13	2,600
2	75	8	1,600	14	2,800
3	150	9	1,800	15	3,000
4	300	10	2,000	16	3,200
5	600	11	2,200	17	3,400

◇ *Monster XP* ◇

Monster Attributes, Task Rolls & Morale

Monsters and non-player characters don't have attribute scores. For task rolls, auctions and contests, use AV for what you think should be the monster's good attributes and ST or even raw HD for what you think should be the poor ones. Do the same for high and poor morale values. Some monsters can have one or more extremely low attributes compared to a human. How smart are Rocs or Black Puddings? Set such attributes to 1.

Boss Monsters

What can be considered a “boss fight” need not depend on a specific enemy species, but can just as well depend on the game story structure. For example, fighting a dragon as a result of rolling poorly on a random encounter table may be a “regular” fight, while the goblin shaman at the climax of the adventure may be considered a boss fight—despite the obvious fact that the dragon’s default stats (p. 136) make her a much worse foe than any goblin.

Bosses emit a certain aura of danger that triggers an extra reserve in player characters. They each get a recharge when going into a boss battle, either in the form of a previously “used up” slot or class ability, or in the form of a 2d6 HP recharge (which can’t take HP above the character’s current maximum).

Any character whose HP would be reduced to a negative number by a boss must save to stay at **1 HP** or take the damage and start dying. Unless healed, *any* further damage during the boss fight, even if it is a single point, means instant death, without save.

Bosses get an extra move, special action or extra attack at full AV each round. They may put it **in any place in the initiative order, except first**. After this extra action they may designate who acts next, which may be an ally or an enemy. After that character or monster has acted, initiative returns to its regular order.

Boss Stages

In addition to these special rules, bosses may have *stages*, which are conditioned and designed by the Referee. A stage is a version of the boss with its own HD, AC, MV, keywords, appearance and XP value. The most common condition for a change of stage is that the HP of the previous stage have been reduced to zero. For example, a boss necromancer may have a second shadow stage that only appears after its human stage has been vanquished. A boss is not truly dead until all its stages have been defeated.

Example Monsters

Here are a few examples of how to flesh out monsters. They are all used in the *White Curse* setting, but can be moved into something of your own design.

First Tribe Orc

AC: 5 HD: 4 MV: 25

Great climber, stealthy, all-round resilient. Two strong abilities.

The First Tribe is an ancient mountain orc tribe, now all but extinct. Legend has it that their bite caused the orc equivalent of lycanthropy: Bitten enemies would turn into orcs each new moon and eventually permanently, adding to the tribe numbers. The fact that the tribe has very few remaining members puts the truth of this in doubt.

First Tribe orcs are tough and experts at stealth and climbing. They fashion their armor from hardened leaves, wooden chips and enemy ears, resulting in a half weight equivalent of chainmail. They can eat humanoid meat and prefer to use shields and spears in battle. Their tribe symbol is a white new moon.

Rock Snail

AC: 4 HD: 10+15 MV: 30

Special: Cold immunity, spit hot slime, tunnel through almost anything, shell can be excavated, can be trained.

Rock snails are gargantuan snails, measuring up to 60 feet from tail to head and with huge stone shells. They are tamed young and trained not to use their shells, which are carefully excavated by stone masons to house up to two dozen travelers for weeks. Rock snails are the most reliable and safe way to travel glaciers and the snowy wilderness, as they are powerful enough to best white dragons and hostile orc tribes. They are practically immune to cold and can be trained to let their slime (which can also be spit) melt through ice and all but the hardest of rocks.

Spike Rat

AC: 0 HD: <1 MV: 10

Special: Terrifying scream, can explode spikes, poisonous.

Spike Rats are the peaceful hedgehogs of the Shadow Realm. When threatened, they curl up into balls, and if hit, their spikes explode, doing 1 HP damage—save negates, normal area of effect. The spikes are poisonous to a varying degree and to various effects, at the Referee's discretion (see p. 70 for area attacks and p. 79 for poison). Spike Rats make loud, bone-chilling screams as their spikes explode.

Talking Head

AC: 3 HD: 1+1 MV: 25/20

Special: Understand all languages, split gaze, shoot beams, tool-set, vulnerable to energy attacks. Can be played as a species-as-class character.

The Talking Head is magick construct trying to find its way out of the Shadow Realm. It is made of metal, etched with runes, and has a conical shape that vaguely resembles a head. It hovers a foot above ground and has shining, yellow crystal eyes whose gaze can be directed as searchlights in simultaneous separate directions. It has a way of speaking that is hard to understand and sounds like the chirrups of a strange bird. Dirt and pieces of shadow vegetation cover it.

The Talking Head is not overly intelligent (as ST, which is 8) but understands and “speaks” any language, spoken or written. It has a built in tool-set that it can use to manipulate objects and mend itself, and it can fly short distances. It also has a built in wand that can shoot magick rays of d6–1 damage every other round. Should it get out of the Shadow Realm, The Talking Head can be played as a species-as-class Deft Explorer character. Its odd nature gives it multiple drawbacks in any humanoid society, which is why it can be played without any XP penalty.

The Twisted

This is a template that can be applied to any monster, human or humanoid.

The twisted are victims of a terrible curse. Most have been disfigured, a lot or just a little. Some seem to have been changed on the inside instead, becoming indifferent, cunning, ingenious or suspicious. Ordinary people and animals fear, exile, enslave, persecute or even kill the twisted. It is a powerful social stigma that some say is the true nature of the curse.

Elves, dwarves and halflings change more than others. Their typical traits deteriorate so that they can barely be separated from each other or from twisted humans. Elves call it “the elven plague,” and it is rumored that some of them resort to vampirism to arrest the transformation.

Twisted characters mark their stigma as a negative group on one attribute. It counts towards the maximum group total: If the character has already reached her maximum number of groups, a vocation or affiliation group must be removed. In the case of twisted elves, dwarves and halflings, the twisted group supplants the species group, which means that it is marked next to two attributes. In return, they get a supernatural ability equivalent of simple magick (p. 40). Each use raises CL by the amount that the ability has been previously used that day.

Other twisted beings are altered at the Referee’s discretion, gaining weaknesses, strengths or both.

Unzel (White Dragon Boss)

AC: 4 and 0 HD: 6 and 3 MV: 30/40 and 5

Special: Boss rules, two stages, speaks Draconic only.

Unzel is special white dragon. She has the ability to cover herself in a thick coat of magick ice when she feels her life is in danger. She does this if her HP goes below 10. When in the ice stage, she can only use breath attacks, loses her flight ability and moves very slowly. Her breath attacks

change from the regular cone of cold into ice projectiles that hit a single target for d6+2 damage. Unzel's ice stage must be killed (i.e. 3 HD worth of HP must be hacked away) before you can get back to attacking her normal body. The ice can also be removed instantly if submitted to a lot of fire, like from an attack with lit lamp oil. Unzel will try to flee rather than fight once her ice form is killed.

A Strong character who kills Unzel may sample some White Dragon saliva to put on her blade, arrow heads or needles. She gets her level number of doses. Each dose is enough for a single hit, adding 3 points of cold damage. Optionally, the character can get a *sense gold* ability, sensing the direction of gold within 300 ft.

Whitecloak

AC: 0/5/1 HD: 1 MV: 30/25/30

Special: 1 strong ability (knights), 1 miracle (priests) or nothing (missionaries).

The Whitecloaks is a religious order with political ambitions. The members believe that the curse (see "The Twisted" above) is a test of perseverance. Those who endure shall be rewarded by the God of Law in the afterlife. They organize correction camps for the twisted, who they consider morally corrupt, and sometimes show off "cured" individuals. But the camps are closed for outsiders, and many of the twisted never return.

The Whitecloaks are growing in numbers fast, recruiting mostly among the poor. They offer their services as peacekeepers, work to outlaw any but their own beliefs and want all magick users to be tested for the curse.

There are three types of Whitecloaks: The **missionaries** are unarmed and unarmored. The **knights** are armed peace-keepers equipped with chainmail, shields and swords. The **priests** are learned and sometimes wise. They wear cloth armor and daggers. Knights and priests wear variants of the white cloak that has given the order its name.

Monster	HD	AC	MV	Special
Amphibian	1–4	3	25/40	Breathe air and water, fast swimmer.
Basilisk	6	5	20	Petrifying gaze.
Bear	5+10	3	30	–
Black Pudding	10	3	15	Acidic, cold imm., magick splits in two.
Boar	4	2	35	Charge attack.
Bugbear	3+1	4	25	Stealthy.
Carrion Creeper	2+4	2	20	Paralyzing bite.
Cockatrice	5	3	15/40	Petrifying bite.
Demon	3–9	2–7	30/40	Magick res., 1–3 miracles, fire breath.
Dog	<1	1	30	Great sense of smell, pack runner.
Doppel-ganger	4–7	2–5	30	Change appearance, magick resistance.
Dragon	6–12	5–6	30/40	Black: Acid immunity and breath.
	8–14	7–9	30/40	Red: Fire immunity & breath, miracles.
	4–10	4–6	30/40	White: Cold immunity and breath.
Dryad	2	4	30	Charm ability.
Dwarf	1+1	5	20	Stonework insight.
Elemental	8	6	40	Elemental miracles.
Elf	1+1	4	30	Exceptional hunter, innate miracle.
Floating Skull	3	6	30	Intelligence, languages, bite attack.
Fungus	3	2	5	Tentacles, induce rot disease.
Gargoyle	4	4	20/40	Statue disguise, claws, hunt in pairs.
Gelatinous Cube	4	1	15	Acidic, paralyze.

◇ *Monster Stats (A–C)* ◇

Monster	HD	AC	MV	Special
Ghast	4	5	25	Paralyzing bite.
Ghoul	2	3	20	Mind magick imm., paralyzing touch.
Giant	1–7+7	0–5	40	Cold imm., berserk.
Gnoll	2	4	25	Pack runner.
Goblin	1	3	20	Dirty fighting, im- proved weapons.
Golem	12	0	20	Imm. normal weap., fire & cold.
Grey Ooze	3	1	1	Acidic, only slash. or pierc. can damage.
Griffon	7	6	25/40	Cunning.
Harpy	3	2	10/25	Charm ability (song).
Hive Rat	<1	0	15	Hive mind, miracle ability in swarms.
Hobgoblin	1+1	4	25	–
Homun- culus	2	3	15/40	Sleep bite, convey vision and hearing to master.
Human Fighter	2	5	30	–
Hydra	7	4	15	Regenerate head.
Illsprout	1	5	25	Evil plant creature, poisoned thorns, plant bad seed.
Insectoid	3	6	30	Hive mind.
Insect Swarm	<1	0	20	Must be killed with area damage.
Invisible Stalker	8	6	25	Invisibility.
Kobold	1	3	30	Omnivore.
	2	1	30	Mage: Omnivore, miracles.
Kraken	12	5	40	Eight tentacles.

◇ *Monster Stats (G–K)* ◇

Monster	HD	AC	MV	Special
Lich	9–15	9	25	Miracles, paralyzing touch (no save), fear.
Lizardman	2+1	4	25/30	Hold breath.
Lurker	10	2	5/10	Climb, hide, smother.
Mimic	7–10	2	20	Imitate object, sticky grasp, bludgeon attack.
Minotaur	6+4	3	30	Never lost in labyrinths, berserker.
Mummy	5+1	6	20	Disease, fire vulnerability, normal weapon immunity.
Ochre Jelly	5	1	15	Acid strike, dissolve dead victims.
Ogre	4+1	4	25	–
	5+4	5	30	Mage: Miracles.
Orc	1	3	25	–
	3	2	25	Shaman: Miracles.
Piercer	1	6	1	Drop from ceiling.
Morlock	1	1	25	Heat detection, light vulnerability.
Rust Monster	5	7	20	Rusts non-magickal metal upon touch.
Roc	12	5	50	–
Sea Serpent	17	7	60	–
Shadow	3	3	25	Draw strength.
Shrieker	3	2	–	Scream when you come near.
Skeleton	1	2	25	–
	5	2	35	Giant.
	3	1	25	Mage: Miracles.
Spectre	6	7	30	Incorporeal, drain levels.

◇ *Monster Stats (L–Spe)* ◇

Monster	HD	AC	MV	Special
Spider, giant	2+2	3	30	Poison, web.
Troll	6+3	5	30	Regeneration.
Vampire	8	7	30	Transformation, enslaving bite, resurrection.
Werewolf	3	4	30	Lycanthropy, only hurt by silver.
Wererat	3	3	25	Lycanthropy, control rats.
Wight	3	4	25	Draw levels, normal weapons immunity.
Will-o-Wisp	<1	9	30	Only hurt by magick weapons, shock.
Wolf	2	3	40	–
Worg	4	3	40	Cunning.
Wyvern	7	6	25/40	Poisonous sting.
Zombie	1	1	15	Rot disease.

◇ *Monster Stats (Spi–Z)* ◇

Importing Monsters

Sometimes you may want to import monsters from other resources into something you write yourself. In the original tradition, look at the HD, AC and Move values. Transfer them to *Whitehack* as they are, but pay attention to the AC value, as you may want to lower it a bit (1 or 2 points is usually enough). Then look at the monster description. You can transfer immunities, resistances and defining knacks directly. Special attacks, spells etc. are keywords. As *Whitehack* has a 1–10 level range, you may want to lower the HDs for high HD monsters that come from resources with a 1–20 level range (or in some cases even 1–36). You don't *have to*, though—some monsters are just a really bad idea to attack!

For the other traditions, look at the advice for playing such material (p. 84) and use it to import the monster.

Monster Talk



“Listen, Number Three! It’s *my* turn to eat Number Four, not yours! And stop slithering. We don’t want to end up in a knot again!”

Magick Artifacts

As the Referee, constructing a magick item can be a simple matter of enhancing some ordinary thing, like a +1 sword or lock pick. There is nothing wrong with such ideas, but you may be better off saying that “plus things” are items of exceptional quality—not magick. Make them available for an appropriate amount of gold and adjust your foes and obstacles accordingly. Maybe you can change the magick lock in your adventure into a *superior* lock that requires a superior lock pick?

When magick objects are rare, they become desirable. On the following pages are some fleshed out examples and then a list of concepts to develop further. Some are traditional, some are not. Remember that an item may draw HP from the user, and that cursed objects are dangerous to use and hard to identify or discard (p. 78).

Artifact Questions & Examples

The “why?” of a magick artifact comes first. For example, for a theme of sacrifice and gain, you could introduce a powerful weapon with some nasty drawback. Once you have a reason and a general idea, try answering a few questions: Where is the object and how to get there? Who and what is guarding it? Who else wants it? Who knows how it works? What must be sacrificed to use it? Are there long term effects of using it? Does it have a quirk (for comic relief)? How may the artifact affect the game world on a larger scale?

The first questions will make the artifact memorable and provide the Referee with places, characters and events, but the last question is where the true power lies. Artifacts can be important inventions. They can kill gods, spawn alien species or bring about new means of transportation or communication.

The examples on the next spread focus mostly on the last question, leaving the other questions for you to answer as you adapt them for your own adventures.

Archibald, the Eternal Torch

The Eternal Torch is an ancient artifact made by the engineers of a powerful witch king. A will-o-wisp (p. 139) has been magickally chained to a rune covered bone “torch.” It emits an eerie light from a blue flame at the top. The flame is quite cold and can be covered in cloth without damaging the fabric.

This torch is a faulty prototype, though. His name is Archibald (HD <1 Will-o-wisp). He is in fact not entirely bound to the runes—he can escape them and run free for short periods of time. He speaks an archaic dialect of Common, but he will only talk if his true nature is revealed or if he finds an “owner” he likes. Owners that he dislikes run the risk of getting betrayed and attacked when they are at their weakest. Archibald is a bad to the bone genius of crime. He loves blue cheese.

Kvo Crystal

Kvo crystals look like amber and are magick by nature. When cut and set in elaborate jewelry, they get a distinct, deep glow that a miracle worker may recognize.

The crystals have the ability to store thoughts and memories of a bearer who has learned to open her mind to them. Once filled, the crystals can only be read. Writing or reading a crystal takes a trained roll for wisdom and d6 hours for any memory than is longer than a brief thought or experience (which you can do in 10 minutes). Some crystals are polluted and require a save for the user to avoid insanity or other negative mind effects of a failure:

1. You fall asleep for 24 hours.
2. You are blind, for d6 hours, due to mental blockage.
3. Put “unknown mind fragment” as an injury on wisdom but use it for good and bad, like a species group.
4. You vomit and take d6 damage, which may kill you.
5. You lose the last month to the crystal.
6. You are insane. Mark it as an injury on wisdom.

Dagonite Needle Pistol

The Dagonite refugees (p. 94) brought a couple of important inventions with them, one of which is the needle pistol. It isn't magick, but it seems like magick to all but the smartest human engineers. The weapon is quite heavy, breech-loaded and powered by air that compresses as you open and close the gun. It doesn't pack the same punch as a bow, crossbow or black-powder gun, but the ammunition can be poisoned. Damage 1d6-2, Weight 5, Range 20, RoF 1/2.

Ghost Box

A ghost box is a dead voice transmitter. Each box has one or several spirits bound to it. As physical distance means little to the dead, two ghost boxes bound to the same spirits produce the exact same sound, even if they are many miles apart in the world of the living.

Ghost boxes are usually beautiful wooden cubes with the side of one foot (somewhat smaller boxes are used in marionettes). They are used for pleasure by the very rich—singing or reading spirits being the most popular. But they can also be used for all sorts of communicative purposes. A single box is worth thousands of gold pieces.

Shadow Mark

A Shadow Mark is a palm-sized, ebony colored and randomly shaped mass of fossilized parasites from the Shadow Realm. It has a 1 in 20 chance to form when an infected host dies, and glows with an intensity proportional to the proximity of a shadow portal, starting at 300 ft.

The parasites are incorporeal when alive. Whenever a humanoid character bleeds in the Shadow Realm, she must save or be infected. The cure for shadow affliction is hitherto unknown. As far as anyone knows, the parasites are mostly benign. All they do is to color the blood of their hosts black.

Item (* = Cursed)	Concept
Amulet of the Scroll	Understand any non-cursed scroll.
Antidote Potion	Allow an extra, double positive save against poison.
Bag of Holding	Can hold 50 regular items, but always counts as 1.
Bolt of Armor Piercing	Disregard non-magickal armor.
Boots of Age	Old wearers appear young. Young wearers appear old.
Boots of the Bard	No magick can hold you. The boots hum softly.
Circlet of Leadership	Make double positive rolls when dealing with crowds.
Crow Hat*	Owner is constantly followed by 3d6 crows.
Dead Language Quill	Can write any dead language regardless of writer knowledge.
Disease Transfuser	Cure one person by transferring the disease to another.
Door Detection Device	Apparatus with a glass bulb that blinks 3 ft from doors.
Dragon Armor*	AC 8. Save or stop for close examination when you see gold.
Dust of Appearance	Sprinkle to reveal all invisible creatures or objects.
Elven Chainmail	Disregard extra HP costs for performing miracles in armor.
Endless Water Flask	Contains an infinite amount of water.
Flute of Withering	All plants within 100 ft wither. Knocks out plant creatures.

◇ *Magick Item Concepts (A–F)* ◇

Item (* = Cursed)	Concept
Gauntlet of the Ram	4d6 unarmed damage against constructs only.
Glove of Iron Control	Control movement of up to 12 HD in sight that wear plate mail.
Gloves of the Ogre*	You get Str 18 and Int 6.
Guiding Sphere	A hovering sphere of soft light that moves towards an exit.
Healing Potion	Heal d6+1 damage.
Helmet of Telepathy	You can hear the thoughts of others—and they can hear yours.
Instamagick Reflector	Point it at something to create an image on paper. 24 charges.
Jaded Figurine*	Save each day or be totally blasé about everything.
Krugal's Map*	Treasure map. A rain storm follows the owner.
Light Eater	Cricket construct, eats light in 20 ft radius, can spew it out.
Potion of Gigantism*	Save or gain an inch of height every day.
Potion of Liquid Floor	Crush on floor to turn it liquid for 1 round.
Potion of Monster Love	The first monster you see follows you around for 3 days.
Potion of No Shadow*	Your shadow disappears into the Shadow Realm.
Ring of Possession	Possess target for 10 minutes, save negates.
Scarab of Protection	Crawls into ear to give magick resistance for 10 minutes.
Scroll of Demon Binding	Read to bind any demon for 10 minutes.

◇ *Magick Item Concepts (G–Sc)* ◇

Item (* = Cursed)	Concept
Shadow Goggles	Put on to see into the Shadow Realm. d6 charges.
Silver Spear*	4d6 vs. werewolves, all dogs within a mile bark at the wielder.
Spider Climb Gloves*	These gloves stick to <i>everything</i> .
Smoke Elixir	Turns the imbiber into smoke for 10 minutes.
Staff of Humility*	1 HP cost for miracles, but save or fail any miracle.
Sword of Fear	All, including wielders, must save or cower at the start of battle.
Tiara of Divine Adulation	Wearer attracts the love of a random god (Referee's choice).
Torque of Divine Debt*	Wearer takes on an ancient divine debt (p. 96).
Tome of History*	Gives historical expertise, which you cannot stop talking about.
Troll Sword*	+2 AV and damage, but the sword emits an incredible stench.
True Holy Symbol	Scares d6 regular skeletons and/or zombies.
Wand of Resurrection*	The resurrected turns into a vampire after three days.
Wand of Sound	Transforms victim into a sound for 10 minutes. d6 charges.
Watcher Steel Weapon	Dispels magick if a contest damage vs. HP cost is won.

◇ *Magick Item Concepts (Sh–W)* ◇

Substance

Quicksilver. Liquid metal from koth cores (named after the explorer Shovo Koth) found in rock creatures. It is legal and commonly sold for 1–10 gp per dose, depending on availability. 1 dose = –1 HP miracle cost. Save or become addicted to the same number of doses that you have used that day. Roll 20 and take that number of d6s as overdose damage. Abstain and save three days in a row to get clean. Addicts pay double for miracles when in withdrawal.

Truth Serum. This miraculous substance can be a potion, a powder or even carrier larvæ inserted into the victim's nose. The effect is considered to be of standard (2 HP) magnitude. Save or be compelled to answer all questions truthfully for 10 min. If successful, the truthful time is reduced to 3 rounds. Fumble and take d6 points of damage.

Sleeping Gas. This is a miraculous area sleep effect in gaseous form, commonly distributed by crushing a fragile glass container in vicinity of the victims. For some reason, the gas tends to have a hue of green. The strength of the gas, the duration of the effect and the negative modification on the victims' saves vary, with a corresponding variation in buyer price or HP costs for the Wise making it. The baseline is to save or fall asleep for 10 min. It is possible to wake a sleeping victim.

Goblin Flu. This is mistakenly known as a disease. It is in fact a poison from the gomba plant, a seaweed found in underground ponds. It can be concentrated with a trained intelligence roll and distributed in liquids for a dangerous effect (save or take 2d6 damage), but the dried weeds are known to be used by goblins in tea or as tobacco for a mildly refreshing effect. Long term use leads to watery eyes and a running nose, which is probably why this poison has gotten its name.

◇ *Substance Examples* ◇



APPENDIX

Is There an Adventure in this Book?

Almost, or at least there can be! Everything in the book is intended for players as well as Referees. If you are the Referee and want an adventure, you must fill in the last bits and details yourself. Follow the below steps:

1. The adventure is called “Tomb of Tunka Jinn.” It follows the phase map on p. 113. Begin by fleshing the phases out with a few sentences each.
2. The false tomb has already been drawn (p. 115). Somewhere in there are instructions or a key for how to get to the true tomb. Decide where.
3. Using the instructions found on the same spread, draw the **true** tomb as a more complex and interesting dungeon. Pick a base monster to inhabit it.
4. Using the instructions found on p. 116, replace the three factions in the bottom triangle mind map. You can use player character affiliations if they fit.
5. Create three events (p. 117) that can trigger at least two of the factions.
6. Create a “Lesser Lich” boss monster. Lower the HD and AC values of the Lich to 5, change “paralyzing” to “slowing” and add a second stage yourself.
7. Using the Magick Item Concepts tables (p. 144), add a secondary treasure to the true tomb, as well as some valuables. Use quest XP to double the amount earned from killing monsters and acquiring treasure.

This is really all you need to do, but you can of course work more on it if you want. Don't forget to roll for Referee input (p. 119) if you get stuck! You can also use the below questions:

- ◆ Who was Tunka Jinn?
- ◆ Why is there both a false tomb and a true tomb?
- ◆ Where can they be found?
- ◆ What do Tunka Jinn's relics do?
- ◆ Who are the competition?
- ◆ Do you want to set this in the implied setting or somewhere else?

The Reviewer & Community Rules

Whitehack has been fortunate in getting a lot of reviews and in a community whose members host games, moderate discussion fora and generally help new players out. These things are essential for spreading the game and making it better. To encourage it further, here are two bonus rules that those who do these things may legitimately use (don't cheat!).

- ◆ **The Reviewer Rule.** Add a double edged descriptor between class and vocation, as in Strong Quixotic Knight. The descriptor is a group placed on **ST**. You get a positive double roll when the descriptor could be beneficial and a negative double roll when it could be detrimental. For example, a quixotic character could get the benefit against fear and the penalty against illusions.
- ◆ **The Community Rule.** A special breed of magick white mice inhabits your world. Once per session, when *the party* needs it, the Referee or a player may have it bring a **minimum** of help, such as a clue, a distraction, a piece of wire or a crumb of elven bread. Nobody knows why or how these mice do this, but many believe it is by the will of the Creator.

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