

Pits & Perils III:
Infernal Realms

Still More Rules for 1:1 Scale Role-Playing in a World of Medieval Fantasy

by
James & Robyn George



White
House
Rules

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Always and forever, to my lovely
wife Robyn, who created some dark things lurking herein
and lined their hoards with fabulous magic
she made for that purpose, included here just for you!

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INTRODUCTION

The following is another supplement to the Pits & Perils game, providing additional rules for fantasy campaigns. Once again, it requires the original rulebook to fully utilize, but also the Fear! Fire! Foes! supplement when introducing its variant classes and new magic items, although everything here remains optional and subject to referee approval.

OLD-SCHOOL BASICS

This game is geared towards providing an essential old-school experience, noting that this is far more than just amateur production or a carbon copy of whatever people used to play:

First, characters were adventurers, even if they were also warriors or powerful magicians. Everyone had the same opportunity to make decisions and solve problems, regardless of their class.

Powers and abilities, although clearly important to a fantasy game, were secondary to the challenge of making sound decisions, and even powerful magic was only helpful if used properly.

The referee rewarded good strategy even as they punished poor choices and sloppy decision-making, and the finest always did so in a way that was reasonable and easily defended. This approach emphasized the people actually playing the game and put their choices first.

Most of the time, it was friends sitting around a table describing their exploits, much like the imaginative play of children, but with dice and rules to resolve the unexpected. Everything else was left to the players, who probably negotiated as much as they strategized, using all they had to survive the many challenges set before them.

THE CAMPAIGN AS DIALECT

A defining attribute of "old-school" is that each campaign is a game unto itself, even if the same rules are being used, such that the best of these are more like a regional dialect, still recognizable, but with its own accent and colloquialisms (much like a southern drawl). This is the intangible factor that makes old-school games unique. It captures the amateur origins of the hobby and underscores everything we know old-school to be.

This game offers little that others do not except, perhaps, a set of rules approximating the breadth of its inspirations while simultaneously staying out of the way and leaving more for the referee to do on their own.

Everything about Pits & Perils is written to provide this experience, and observant readers will notice this. For instance, the attack and damage rules are structured to allow even magicians to participate in combat, although fighters are still better. This overlap ensures that everyone has the same chance to contribute while preserving niche protection and forcing players to work together and compensate for any weaknesses.

BARONS OF BRAUNSTEIN

In the beginning, there were fewer games available and considerably more overlap between systems. This created an environment where individual referees were totally free to incorporate whatever they wished. For instance, the LUCK mechanic from Barons of Braunstein can be adapted for use in any fantasy campaign with very little effort:

Total hits (except from armor) is first converted to LUCK, a measure of general survivability. These can be spent during play in the following ways, although referees can add more:

First, LUCK can be spent to survive bodily harm, this being treated like ordinary hit points. This assumes that any given attack is potentially fatal unless skill and/or fate somehow intervenes.

Otherwise, 1 point of LUCK can be spent adding +1 to any die roll, noting that players can always roll first before deciding to use this.

Falling to zero LUCK is not necessarily fatal unless the character is subsequently injured. Furthermore, spent LUCK is recovered through rest or magic and miracles in the usual fashion.

Finally, armor and shield use the variant rules provided later in this supplement, noting that the referee is totally free to imagine something else, perhaps a house rule. This is the very essence of old-school play!



I. PLAYER RULES

This section introduces more new rules for referees wishing to grow their campaigns, adding variant classes and introducing special equipment designed to improve the party's chance of survival.

CLASS AND RACE

The following new rules apply:

CLERICS may now work the equivalent of a Null spell, but only against those effects from demons and/or devils, etc.

DWARVES can be the Hill or Mountain type:

HILL DWARVES stand 3' tall, being shorter than their cousins and not so greedy and violent. Like their mountain-dwelling kinfolk, they get +1 to all saving dice, +2 against disease or poison. Having long since abandoned the mountains of their race, they can no longer see in total darkness and/or detect old or unsafe construction. However, their small size allows them to hide, even heavily armored, with only a 1 in 1d6 chance of detection if they remain perfectly still and make no noise.

All others are MOUNTAIN DWARVES, per the basic rulebook, noting that both learn combat maneuvers in the regular fashion.

ELVEN FIGHTERS should be allowed the use of plate mail, owing to their strength and fighting skill. This is especially true if the referee decides to use the specialization rules for magicians.

MAGICIANS enjoy additional spells and savants acquire new abilities as well, described in the magic rules following this section.

THIEVES might be allowed to employ a wider variety of weapons, provided these are small and easily concealed:

WEAPON	NOTES
Club, nightstick*	small and lightweight
Dagger, knife, stiletto	can also be thrown
Dart (blown), sling#	bullets, darts, or stones

*Does not include hammers, maces, or staves

#Poisoned darts can be delivered using a blowgun

The referee might allow others, taking care to preserve game balance.

CLASS VARIANTS

The following variant fighter (barbarian) and thief (corsair) is included, expanding the total classes available, each having unique powers and special abilities as per the following:

CLASS	ARMOR	WEAPONS	SPECIAL ABILITIES
Barbarian	none	any	berserking, fighting ability
Corsair	leather	small blades*	stealth, sword-fighting prowess

*Includes daggers, one-handed swords, and thief weaponry

BARBARIANS are northern warriors. As such, they are fierce and wild, venturing south to raid and/or seek their fortunes while swelling the ranks of many a king's army. Despite their reputation as uncouth savages, they possess real cunning and use both strength and their wits. Barbarians cannot be lawful, although neutral types are honor bound to keep any sworn oath, mainly for superstitious reasons. They mistrust most magic, but grudgingly work with spell casters in a party setting.

Given their beliefs, barbarians shun the use of armor and shield, but can fight with any weapon and get the fighter's attack bonus. Furthermore, they begin the game knowing the berserk maneuver and always get this for the maximum duration by level, resisting all but magical attacks and adding +1 to damage scored. Being fearful of magic, barbarians may not use those items having visible spell effects. At 9th level (champion), they get 2 attacks per combat round like normal fighters.

CORSAIRS are privateers and pirates, although some will operate on land, acting as highwaymen, etc. Unlike thieves of the normal sort, they are more willing to show themselves and fight openly. Thus, corsairs make skilled swordsmen, using their talents to deadly effect and fighting ambidextrously in close combat with dangerous foes. While not always evil, corsairs are never lawful and usually live on the fringes of society.

Dashing rakes, corsairs are limited to leather armor (no shields), and are otherwise treated as thieves, having dexterity, but not improving with level, being a different sort of robber. Unlike ordinary thieves, they have no training in locks or traps, but may use one-handed swords and get the dodge and parry maneuvers when facing or evading enemies. Corsairs prefer to steal through coercion. At 9th level (robber baron), they get 2 attacks per combat round like the swashbucklers they are.

Note that even if combat moves are not part of a campaign, the above-listed maneuvers might still be used as special, class-specific abilities.



HILL DWARF



MOUNTAIN DWARF



VARIANT CLASSES: HUMAN FIGHTER (BARBARIAN) AND THIEF (CORSAIR)

EQUIPMENT

The following (optional) equipment may be useful as a campaign moves beyond simple dungeon raids to a wider context:

ARMOR	PROTECTION	COST	MOUNTS	NOTES	COST
Buckler	special	10	Boat#	--	30
EQUIPMENT	NOTES	COST	SERVICES	NOTES	COST
Component*	special	special	Fence	special	special

*Bat wings, crushed diamonds, and dragon's bone (or similar)

#These hold 6 fully laden characters and travel 20' per round

BUCKLERS are small shields worn on the arm that grant +1 to all blocking attempts, but no bonus hits or cover.

FENCES can be found in any large city, although 3d6 GP in bribes may be necessary to locate one. These buy stolen goods (half actual value), discretely liquidating such items and asking a 20-30% share based on the circumstances and/or urgency of dispensing with things quickly.

SPELL COMPONENTS

Material components include rare and unusual things, like bat's wing or powdered dragon's bone, all of them difficult and expensive to acquire, that can be used to increase a spell's power. The magician (elven or human) must buy each separately per the enhancement desired:

TYPE	COST	SPECIAL EFFECT
Physic	5 GP	increase radius and/or range by +10'
Ingredient	15 GP	add +1 damage to any Bolt spell
Element	10 GP	extend spell duration by +1 round/turn*

*Where applicable, does not apply to instant spells

No more than one such component can be used with any given spell, each providing a different benefit. For example, a 1st level magician could employ magical ingredients, casting a Lightning Bolt for +1 damage as if used by a higher-level character, although the component is spent and must be obtained anew at full price when returning to town.

Note that components can also be won as treasure from rival magicians, these being highly sought after and easily resold in the larger towns.

Given their rarity, spell components may not be available everywhere, although most cities have them. As previously stated, these make excellent rewards for magic-using characters.

STARTING EQUIPMENT

As a rule, starting characters have access to all equipment, although the referee can always rule otherwise. Thereafter, availability may vary greatly by location, making captured gear an important source of armor, mounts, and superior weaponry, etc. These might also be sold for profit, and the referee may assess availability per the following:

LOCATION	ARMOR	OTHER*	WEAPONRY
City	yes	yes	yes
Fortress	1-2 in 1d6	no	1-2 in 1d6
Town	1-3 in 1d6	yes	1-4 in 1d6
Village	no	1-4 in 1d6	no

*Includes mounts and all other equipment

Military fortresses have smiths, but may be reluctant to part with such provisions, including armor and weaponry vital to their missions, making these difficult to obtain. Where applicable, the referee may roll for the desired items, including spell components.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

Adventuring is hard on equipment, and the referee may require periodic repairs be made when back in civilization, with costs and consequences for not doing so provided on the maintenance table below:

ITEM	PENALTY
Armor*	no protection afforded
Tools	1-2 in 1d6 chance of breakage
Weaponry#	minimum damage delivered

*Includes magic armor (half protection)

#Magical weapons deal full damage, no bonus

Maintenance is 10% of any treasure taken, 5% for magicians, thieves, and anyone foregoing the use of armor. Those who die and/or, in the estimation of the referee, suffer significant damage, like from dragon's breath or falling from a great distance, will pay additional fees. For simplicity, normal repairs may only be required upon return to civilization, however long that may be, noting that the referee might impose penalties well before then.

To minimize referee burden, maintenance can be restricted to only those situations where gear is subject to extreme punishment, again, like dragon's breath and the like. Furthermore, found armor and/or weaponry may need maintenance and repair before being useable again, based on the item's age or circumstances, especially the long-forgotten.

SECONDARY SKILLS

Players might wish to know what their characters did prior to adventuring, rolling 2d6 (or choosing) as follows:

2d6	SKILL	NOTES
2	Beggar	avoid guards or thieves in the city*
3	Blacksmith	create simple tools at no cost
4	Bowyer	produce 1d6 arrows per game week
5	Carpenter	carry 1 additional (small) item
6	Farmer	anticipate coming weather (next day)
7	Fisherman	navigate by the sun and stars
8	Gambler	win 1d6 GP per game week in town#
9	Hunter	find/procure safe food and water
10	Merchant	appraise the value of various items
11	Performer	get free lodging by entertaining
12	Town crier	hear latest news/gossip when in town

*This is not the same as hiding or sneaking

#No experience points earned for money made this way

Beggars are street people, for all that might imply. They avoid unwanted attention by knowing where to be (or not to be) or by deftly presenting themselves as being one of the locals. Town criers are simply good listeners, but must return to civilization for new gossip.

Craftsmen, like blacksmiths and bowyers, must return to civilization to resupply at no extra cost, although they can make or repair items anywhere if conditions otherwise permit. The maximum value for any such items cannot exceed 5 GP, although the referee can make exceptions.

Additionally, characters may possess knowledge related to their secondary skills, like merchants knowing where trade goods originate. This will always require some roll of the dice, however.

There are no class or side restrictions. Beggars can become faithful priests and blacksmiths learn magic, and players must be free to work this out on their own, subject to input from the referee. Non-humans are culturally very different from men. Even so, they should enjoy similar options.

INHERITANCE

Slain characters might bequeath some of their possessions to a designated friend or relative, this being a replacement created by the player and given an inheritance to help them survive:

LEVEL*	MONEY	MAGIC ITEMS
1-3	25%	Full number (1st level) or any 2
4-9	50%	Any 5 chosen by the player
10+	75%	Complete selection of items inherited

*Denotes replacement artificially advanced in level

VARIANT ARMOR RULES

A variant armor system is provided here. This can either supplement or totally replace the current system with no other changes to the armor rules, making this an easy transition:

Should a character take enough damage to die, they fall unconscious for a number of rounds equal to their armor's value and then die unless helped by their companions through whatever means. For instance, a dwarf clad in chainmail (+2) and shield (+1) will die after 3 rounds unless aided by their friends within that timeframe. This takes a full round and requires nothing more than a simple cleaning or binding of wounds.

Note that this should not apply to death from poison, spells, or special attacks, like dragon's breath. Furthermore, the referee can limit protection to full frontal or flanking blows, as the wearer must be able to react and/or raise their shields against such attacks.

When this happens, armor is damaged and grants no further protection until repaired by a non-player blacksmith at 10% of total value (or 50 GP for magic armor and shield). Such repairs take 1d6+1 game days to complete.

