Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

2nd Edition

Player's Handbook

Rules Supplement

The Complete Ranger's Handbook

by Rick Swan

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TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva,
WI 53147
U.S.A.

TSR Inc.

TSR Ltd.
120 Church End,
Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom

Table of Contents

Introduction **4**
Overview 4
How to Use This Handbook 6
Before We Get Started 6

Chapter 1: Character Creation **7**
Ranger Requirements 7
Level Advancement 8
Spell Use 9
Armor and Weapons 9
Thief Abilities 10
Primary Terrain 12

Chapter 2: Ranger Abilities **14**
Tracking 1
Hide in Shadows 1
Move Silently 1
Species Enemy 1
Animal Empathy 21
Nature Lore 24
Survival 25
Strongholds 26

Chapter 3: Followers **27**
Gaining Followers 27
General Behavior of Followers 35
Training Animal Followers 37
Parting Company 42
Humans and Demihumans 43
Notes on Falconry 44

Chapter 4: Ranger Kits **45**
Acquiring Kits 45
DM Decisions 45
Kit Subsections 45
List of Kits 47
Beastmaster 47
Explorer 49
Falconer 51
Feralan 52
Forest Runner 55
Giant Killer 56
Greenwood Ranger 59
Guardian 62
Justifier 63
Mountain Man 65
Pathfinder 67
Sea Ranger 69
Seeker 71
Stalker 73
Warden 75
Abandoning Kits 77
Creating New Kits 78
Demi-Rangers 78
Dual-Classed Rangers 79
Multi-Classed Rangers 79

Chapter 5: Proficiencies **80**
Compiled Proficiencies 80
Clarifications and Modifications 80
New Proficiencies 82

Chapter 6: Magic **87**
New Spells 87
New Magical Items 92

Chapter 7: Equipment **94**
Clothing 94
Transport 95
Miscellaneous Equipment 95
Weapons 98

Chapter 8: Role-Playing **101**
Demographics 101
Becoming a Ranger 102
Common Traits: the Classic Ranger 103
Daily Life 104
The Ranger's Personality 108
Experience 111

Sample file

Table of Contents

Chapter 9:
Rangers and Religion **113**
Aspects of Faith 113
Types of Faith 113
Expressions of Faith 114
Rangers and Druids 115
Rangers and Clerics 116

Chapter 10:
Forgatherings **118**
Attending a Forgathering 118
Types, Sites, and Dates 118
Physical Layout 120
Activities and Events 121

Appendix: AD&D® 1st Edition Ranger **122**
Ranger Kit Record Sheet **124**
Ranger Character Record Sheets **125**

TABLES

1: Class Qualifications 7
2: Pregenerated Ability Scores 7
3: Experience Levels 8
4: Level Improvements 9
5: Spell Progression 9
6: The Ranger's Armor 10
7: Ranger Attacks Per Round 10
8: Base Thief Abilities 10
9: Racial Adjustments 11
10: Dexterity Adjustments 11
11: Armor Adjustments 11
12: Kit Adjustments 11
13: Optional Armor Adjustments 11
14: Random Primary Terrain 13
15: Terrain Tracking Modifiers 15
16: Illumination Modifiers 15
17: Special Tracking Modifiers 15
18: Movement While Tracking 15
19: Identification Check Results 17
20: Arctic Species Enemy 20
21: Aquatic Species Enemy 20
22: Desert Species Enemy 20
23: Forest Species Enemy 20
24: Jungle Species Enemy 20
25: Hill Species Enemy 20
26: Mountain Species Enemy 21
27: Plains Species Enemy 21
28: Swamp Species Enemy 21
29: Underdark Species Enemy 21
30: Animal Attitudes 23
31: Animal Empathy Modifier 23
32: Nature Lore 25
33: Arctic Followers 31
34: Aquatic Followers 31
35: Desert Followers 32
36: Forest Followers 32
37: Hill Followers 32
38: Jungle Followers 32
39: Mountain Followers 33
40: Plains Followers 33
41: Swamp Followers 34
42: Underdark Followers 34
43: Human/Demihuman Followers 34
44: Follower Training Ratings 42
45: Feralan Spell Progression 55
46: Justifier Spell Progression 65
47: Crude Weaponsmithing (Mountain Man) ... 66
48: Mountain Man Spell Progression 67
49: Terrain Costs for Pathfinders 68
50: Parliament of Fishes Results 71
51: Seeker Spell Progression 72
52: Sacred Animals 73
53: Demi-Rangers 79
54: Demi-Ranger Spell Progression and Dexterity Modifiers 79
55: Nonweapon Proficiencies 81
56: Ranger Spells 91
57: Clothing, Transport, and Misc. Equipment 99
58: Weapons 100
59: Ranger Experience 111
60: Optional Individual Experience Awards 111
61: Experience Levels (1st Edition) 122
62: Attacks Per Round (1st Edition) 122
63: Underground Tracking Chances 122
64: Outdoor Tracking Modifiers 123
65: Spell Progression (1st Edition) 123
66: Giant Class Creatures 123

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CREDITS
Design: Rick Swan
Editing: Elizabeth Danforth
Black and White Art: Terry Dykstra
Color Art: Julie Bell, Clyde Caldwell, Fred Fields, Keith Parkinson
Icon Art: Tony Diterlizzi
Typography: Nancy J. Kerkstra

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Introduction

The ranger is one of the most popular character classes in the AD&D® game. A woodsman and tracker, as well as a dangerous fighter, he combines good combat skills with a few extra abilities that give him many options and decisions during play. He boasts the courage and strength of a warrior and the stealth and self-reliance of a thief. He combines the druid's affinity for the outdoors with the devotion and magical aptitude of a priest. He's a hunter, a tracker, and a survivalist. By temperament and by choice, he's a loner, often preferring the company of animals to people. Without question, he's one with nature, sworn to protect the inhabitants of the wilderness and preserve the integrity of the land.

The ranger's origins can be traced to the time when isolated human settlements were first founded in areas of unclaimed wilderness, or in areas occupied only by savage humanoid tribes. Those who were at first hunters, trappers, and guides were turned by the necessities of survival into canny wilderness warriors; and ultimately into the principle protectors of the scattered settlements of humans and demihumans, which had to fend off countless humanoid raids.

Few in number, but effective far beyond the power of local militias or the occasional military patrol of a ruling lord, the rangers have kept a protective watch on the forward frontier of human expansion. There are seldom more than one or two to be found in any place, but somehow, as a group, they manage to cover huge areas of the frontier. Where the tide of expansion has been turned back, they are the last to fight a desperate rear guard action against encroaching hordes of evil humanoids.

In more civilized areas, it is common for kings and wealthy nobles to annex large tracts of forests for personal use. Some are maintained as private game preserves, others are harvested for the valuable timber. As a king's wilderness holdings grow, so does the need to protect them. But suitable candidates are hard to come by. Often, from among local woodsmen and hunters, able-bodied and trustworthy retainers are recruited as forest justices or wardens. Skilled in the management of land, wilderness survival, and natural lore, the forest justices are charged with guarding the king's holdings, preserving his game from poachers and his subjects from outlaws and brigands.

In other places, the local authorities have either lost control or become tyrannical. Perhaps the local order has broken down and the land is overrun by bandits or robbers. Perhaps a bad ruler has taken over and driven the peasantry beyond all possible tolerance. At such time a hero may arise, striding out of the wilderness, setting right the wrongs, returning a just overlord to power, and then disappearing back into wild and unknown lands. Such is the stuff of legends. Such is the legacy of the ranger.

Overview

The ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide* contain all the basic information you need to create and play ranger characters. But for players wanting to go a bit deeper, *The Complete Ranger's Handbook* provides a wealth of detail that expands on that basic information, adding more options and rules to make your rangers come alive like never before.

For instance, we'll examine the ranger's talents for tracking, animal empathy, and nature lore, suggesting methods for using these abilities in ways you might not have considered. If you've wondered what a ranger does with his followers or exactly how he acquires them, you'll find the answers here. If you're tired of playing ordinary rangers, there's more than a dozen new character kits for your perusal, including the Giant Killer, the Pathfinder, and the Stalker. There are also plenty of new spells, proficiencies, and equipment to expand your ranger's horizons. Use what you like and ignore what you don't.

Though much of this material will be of interest to the Dungeon Master, particularly the clarification of old concepts and the introduction of new rules, *The Complete Ranger's Handbook* is a supplement to the *Player's Handbook*. Every word is intended for the players. Note, however, that all of material is optional, and none may be incorporated into a campaign without the express permission of the DM. These caveats aside, feel free to turn the page and enjoy.

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How to Use This Handbook

If you're a casual player, or have only a passing interest in the ranger character, begin by looking over the table of contents and noting any topics that catch your eye. Read the most appealing sections, skim over the rest, and consult with your DM about any new ideas you'd like to try. Later, you can read the entire book at your leisure, or keep it on the shelf as a reference, along with the previous handbooks in this series (including *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, *The Complete Priest's Handbook*, *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*, *The Complete Thief's Handbook*, *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, and *The Complete Bard's Handbook*).

Players who take their rangers seriously are advised to read the entire book. You'll discover a host of new ideas and character options, expanded tables, and tips for fine-tuning your role-playing techniques. As mentioned, all of the rules in this book must be cleared with the DM before you can use them in a game.

Players of all persuasions should take a look at the new ranger character sheets located in the back of the book. The sheets have been custom-designed to record virtually every detail about a ranger character, and also feature a number of helpful notes to minimize the amount of time spent referring to the rulebooks. And speaking of the rulebooks, we've also compiled all of the key rules from the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide* and *Player's Handbook* relevant to rangers; you'll find most of them in the first three chapters. We've also made every effort to elaborate on the most interesting concepts from the *DMG* and *PH*.

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Before We Get Started...

...here are a few more points to keep in mind:

First Edition Rules

The ranger has undergone several changes since the publication of the 1st Edition AD&D® rules. For that reason, those using the 1st Edition rules may find the ranger character described in these pages all but unrecognizable. Our suggestions: (1) take the plunge into the 2nd Edition rules, and become familiar with the 2nd Edition *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* and *Player's Handbook* before considering the ideas in this handbook, or (2) ignore the chapter references in this book, as they all refer to the 2nd Edition rulebooks. Find the relevant material by consulting the indexes or contents pages of the original books, then carefully adapt the handbook rules of your choice to the style of your campaign. For reference, a summary of the 1st Edition ranger rules can be found in the Appendix of this book on page 122.

Proficiencies

The ideas in this book lean heavily on the concepts of weapon and nonweapon proficiencies introduced in Chapter 5 of the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*. If you haven't been using proficiencies in your campaign, we suggest you review the rules before proceeding with this book. (And if you're not using the proficiency rules, you ought to reconsider—they're not that hard, and they make the game a lot more fun!).

A Note About Pronouns

For convenience and clarity, masculine pronouns are used throughout this book. This in no way implies favoritism towards the male gender; in fact, males and females are equally represented in the ranger population. In all cases, read *he* as *he or she*, and *his* as *his and her*.