

Foreword to the 2nd Edition

A foreword is normally the place where the author of a book expresses thanks and gratitude. I'm not going to do that here. It's not that everyone involved doesn't deserve congratulations and praise, it's just that I already said all those things in the foreword to the AD&D™ *Player's Handbook*®. Everything I said there is true for this book, too. On to other things.

Let's assume that since you're reading this, you are, or plan to be, a Dungeon Master. By now, you should be familiar with the rules in the *Player's Handbook*. You've probably already noticed things you like or things you would have done differently. If you have, congratulations. You've got the spirit every Dungeon Master needs. As you go through this rule book, I encourage you to continue to make these choices.

Choice is what the AD&D game is all about. We've tried to offer you what we think are the best choices for your AD&D campaign, but each of us has different likes and dislikes. The game that I enjoy may be quite different from your own campaign. But it is not for me to say what is right or wrong for your game. True, I and everyone working on the AD&D game have had to make fundamental decisions, but we've tried to avoid being dogmatic and inflexible. The AD&D game is yours, it's mine, it's every player's game.

So is there an "official" AD&D game? Yes, but only when there needs to be. Although I don't have a crystal ball, it's likely that tournaments and other official events will use all of the core rules in these books. Optional rules may or may not be used, but it's fair to say that all players need to know about them even if they don't have them memorized.

The *Player's Handbook* and the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*

give you what you're expected to know, but that doesn't mean the game begins and ends there. Your game will go in directions not yet explored and your players will try things others think strange. Sometimes these strange things will work; sometimes they won't. Just accept this, be ready for it, and enjoy it.

Take the time to have fun with the AD&D rules. Add, create, expand, and extrapolate. Don't just let the game sit there, and don't become a rules lawyer worrying about each piddly little detail. If you can't figure out the answer, MAKE IT UP! And whatever you do, don't fall into the trap of believing these rules are complete. They are not. You cannot sit back and let the rule book do everything for you. Take the time and effort to become not just a good DM, but a brilliant one.

At conventions, in letters, and over the phone I'm often asked for the instant answer to a fine point of the game rules. More often than not, I come back with a question—what do you feel is right? And the people asking the questions discover that not only can they create an answer, but that their answer is as good as anyone else's. The rules are only guidelines.

At the beginning of the first *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*, Gary Gygax stressed that each of us, working from a common base, would make the AD&D game grow in a variety of different directions. That is more true today than ever. Don't be afraid of experimentation, but do be careful. As a Dungeon Master, you have great power, and "with great power comes great responsibility." Use it wisely.

David "Zeb" Cook
2/9/89

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Hundreds of players assisted us in playtesting the AD&D 2nd Edition game. Their efforts were invaluable in improving the manuscript. The list that follows is not complete, but we would like to thank Mike Abraham, Jeff Albanese, Roger Anderson, Susan Anderson, Walter Bass, Scott Beck, Doug Behringer, John Bennie, Andrew Bethke, Don Bingle, Linda Bingle, Aaron Boaz, Teresa Boaz, Ray Booth, Rick Brewer, Jeff Broemmell, Dan Brown, Frank Cabanas, Bill Ciers, Robert Corn, Dennis Couch, Bill Curtis, Scott Daily, Phillip Dear, Frank and Terri Disarro, Errol Farstad, John Fitzpatrick, Bill Flatt, Cheryl Frech, Dewey Frech, John Gamble, Vince Garcia, Kyra Glass, John Goff, Peter Gregory, Greg Handleton, David Hansom, Gordon Holcomb, Rob Huebner, Ed Issac, Larry Johnson, Reynold C. Jones, Jeff Kelly, Jeff King, Jim Kirkley, Peter Kokinder, Dan Kramarsky, Ed Kramer, Paul Krausnick, Jon Kugath, Michael Lach, Todd Laing, Len Lakofka, Randall Lemon, David Machim, Jeff Martin, Theron Martin, Scott Mayo, Milton McGorill, Kevin Melka, John Mendez, Bill Mercer, Frank and Mary Meyer, Neal Meyer, Mark Middleton, Jim Milam, Frank Miller, Jim Moeller, Mike Mullen, Lance Murphy, Scott Needham, Stance Nixon, Kevin Norton, Steve Null, Ray Ouellette, Rembert Parker, Nathan Patronksy, Ed Peterson, Keith Polster, Bruce Rabe, Norm Ritchie, Kip Romaine, Tim Royapa, Marc Rush, Michael Ruzza, Paul Schmidt, Eugene Schumaker, Mark Schumaker, Greg Schwarz, Michael Simpson, Warren Snider, Michael J. Somers, Hal St. Clair, Jeff Stevens, Justin Stevens, Paul Stevens, Dorence Stovall, Brad Stump, Lourdes Sullivan, Ellen Terra, John Terra, Mark TeTai, William Tracy, Jay Tummelson, Robert Unglaub, Carl Van Devendeer, Steven Vaughn-Nichols, Virginia Vaughn-Nichols, Bryan Villareal, Mark Wallace, Mike Wahl, Peter Walker, Doris Wells, Kevin Wells, Colleen Wetzel, Dave Wetzel, Josh Whitmer, Jett Wherry, Skip Williams, James Williams, Peter Zinda, and the following groups: DragonCon Gaming Staff, Ellfords of Eriador, Excalibre Gamers Association, Games Unlimited, and MACE.

Finally, credit must also be shared with anyone who has ever asked a question, offered a suggestion, written an article, or made a comment about the AD&D game.

This is a derivative work based on the original *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS™ Players Handbook* and the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* by Gary Gygax and *Unearthed Arcana™* and other materials by Gary Gygax and others.

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ISBN: 978-0-7869-6447-2
620A357600001EN.

First Printing, May 2013. Original Publication April 1995.
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 13 14 15 16 17 18

PRINTED IN THE USA

Foreword

One of the toughest challenges facing a DM (and I can only assume that everyone reading this either is, or wants to be, a DM) is keeping his game sessions fresh and exciting.

Those of us who produce new material for the AD&D game as a whole have a more or less similar task, although on a larger scale. We are constantly searching for ways to make adventures and game accessories *unique*, or at least original and distinctive. Like Sir Isaac Newton, we've learned from experience that when faced with multiple choices, the simplest alternative is often the best.

Hence the book you hold in your hands.

After six years, it was time for the *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*, the two most important AD&D rule books, to get freshened up. What could be better and simpler than a new coat of paint? Products that we publish today don't look like products we published in 1989, or even in 1993. We haven't changed the game in any substantial way (aside from the usual clarifications and corrections that go along with any reprint). But we have let these books catch up to our new standards. They're larger, more colorful, and more readable, all with an eye toward making your DMing job easier.

Bringing this project together rekindled a lot of memories. In particular, one day from 1987 stands out in my mind. I remember it vividly because it was the day when Dave Cook and I drew up the very first outline and schedule for the 2nd Edition of the *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game. What needed to be done, and how it should be done, looked clear and simple on our neat, four-page report. In fact, that massive undertaking occupied almost two years of our lives, and I've spent most of my time since then caring for the AD&D game.

That's a job that we enjoy, or we wouldn't be doing it. Most of us feel that we have a stake, to one extent or another, in every AD&D campaign out there. When you and your players get together, the months (often years) of designing, discussing, playtesting, redesigning, arguing, editing, sketching, and head scratching disappear into the background. But no matter whether you play by the books or with a binder full of home rules, we're all in this together, united by the common thread of the AD&D game.

Steve Winter
February 6, 1995

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Introduction

You are one of a very special group of people: AD&D game Dungeon Masters. Your job is not an easy one. It requires wit, imagination, and the ability to think and act extemporaneously. A really good Dungeon Master is essential to a good game.

The *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* is reserved for Dungeon Masters. Discourage players from reading this book, and certainly don't let players consult it during the game. As long as the players don't know exactly what's in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*, they'll always wonder what you know that they don't. It doesn't matter whether you have secret information; even if you don't, as long as the players think you do, their sense of mystery and uncertainty is maintained.

Also, this book contains essential rules that are not discussed in the *Player's Handbook*. Some of these rules the players will learn quickly during play—special combat situations, the costs of hiring NPCs, etc. Others, however, cover more esoteric or mysterious situations, such as the nature of artifacts and other magical items. This information is in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* so the DM can control the players' (and hence the characters') access to certain bits of knowledge. In a fantasy world, as in this world, information is power. What the characters don't know can hurt them (or lead them on a merry chase to nowhere). While the players aren't your enemies, they aren't your allies, either, and you aren't obligated to give anything away for nothing. If characters go hunting wererats without doing any research beforehand, feel free to throw lots of curves their way. Reward those characters who take the time to do some checking.

Introduction



Besides rules, you'll find a large portion of this book devoted to discussions of the principles behind the rules. Along with this are examinations of the pros and cons of changing the rules to fit your campaign. The purpose of this book, after all, is to better prepare you for your role as game moderator and referee. The better you understand the game, the better equipped you'll be to handle unforeseen developments and unusual circumstances.

One of the principles guiding this project from the very beginning, and which is expressed throughout this book, is this: The DM has the primary responsibility for the success of his campaign, and he must take an active hand in guiding it. That is an important concept. If you are skimming through this introduction, slow down and read it again. It is crucial you understand what you are getting into.

The DM's "active hand" extends even to the rules. Many decisions about your campaign can be made by only one person: you. Tailor your campaign to fit your own style and the style of your players.

You will find a lot of information in this book, but you won't find pat answers to all your questions and easy solutions for all your game problems. What you will find instead is a discussion of various problems and numerous triggers intended to guide you through a thoughtful analysis of situations that pertain to your campaign.

The rules to the AD&D game are balanced and easy to use. No role-playing game we know of has been playtested more heavily than this one. But that doesn't mean it's perfect. What we consider to be right may be unbalanced or anachronistic in your campaign. The only thing that can make the AD&D game "right" for all players is the intelligent application of DM discretion.

A perfect example of this is the limit placed on experience levels for demihumans. A lot of people complained that these limits were too low. We agreed, and we raised the limits. The new limits were tested, examined, and adjusted until we decided they were right. But you may be one of the few people who prefer the older, lower limits. Or you may think there should be no limits. In the chapter on character classes, you'll find a discussion of this topic that considers the pros and cons of level limits. We don't ask you to blindly accept every limit we've established. But we do ask that before you make any changes you read this chapter and carefully consider what you are about to do. If, after weighing the evidence, you decide that a change is justified in your game, by all means make the change.

In short, follow the rules as they are written if doing so improves your game. But by the same token, break the rules only if doing so improves your game.

A Word About Organization

Everything in this book is based on the assumption that you are familiar with the *Player's Handbook*. To make your job easier, the *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* have parallel organization. Chapters appear in the same order in both books. That means if you know where to find something in the *Player's Handbook*, you also know where to find it in this book.

Also, the index in this book also covers the *Player's Handbook*. You can find all the references to any specific topic by checking this index.

The Fine Art of Being a DM

Being a good Dungeon Master involves a lot more than knowing the rules. It calls for quick wit, theatrical flair, and a good sense of dramatic timing—among other things. Most of us can claim these attributes to some degree, but there's always room for improvement.

Fortunately, skills like these can be learned and improved with practice. There are hundreds of tricks, shortcuts, and simple principles that can make you a better, more dramatic, and more creative game master.

But you won't find them in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*. This is a reference book for running the AD&D game. We tried to minimize material that doesn't pertain to the immediate conduct of the game. If you are interested in reading more about this aspect of refereeing, we refer you to *DRAGON*® Magazine, published monthly by TSR, Inc. *DRAGON* Magazine is devoted to role-playing in general and the AD&D game in particular. For more than 16 years, *DRAGON* Magazine has published articles on every facet of role-playing. It is invaluable for DMs and players.

If you have never played a role-playing game before but are eager to learn, our advice from the *Player's Handbook* is still the best: Find a group of people who already play the game and join them for a few sessions. If that is impractical, the best alternative is to get a copy of the *Introduction to ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Game*. It covers all the basics of fantasy role-playing with the AD&D game, but in a much simpler presentation which teaches as you play. It includes several introductory role-playing adventures. These will show you what goes on during the game and give you step-by-step instructions on how to set up and run a game with your friends.



Chapter 1: Player Character Ability Scores

Each player is responsible for creating his character. As the DM, however, your decisions have a huge impact on the process. You have final approval over any player character that is created. This chapter outlines what you should consider about character creation and gives guidelines on how to deal with some of the common problems that arise during character creation.

Players in most AD&D games use the same character over many game sessions. Most players develop strong ties to their characters and get a thrill from watching them advance, grow, and become more successful and powerful. Your game's success depends on how much your players care about their characters. For these reasons, it is important to let them create the type of characters they really want to play.

Giving Players What They Want

At the same time, watch out for a tendency in some players to want the most powerful character possible. Powerful characters are fine if that's the sort of campaign you want. A problem arises, however, if players are allowed to exploit the rules, or your good nature, to create a character who is much more powerful than everyone else's characters. At best, this leads to an unbalanced game. At worst, it leads to bored players and hurt feelings.

Therefore, before any player in your game creates his first character, decide which dice-rolling method to allow: Will you use method I, any of the five alternate methods, or a seventh method of your own devising? Be prepared with an answer right away, because this is one of the first questions your players will ask.

Ability Scores



Choosing a Character Creation Method

The following methods are different from one another. Some produce more powerful characters than others (although none produces extremely powerful characters). For this reason, every player in your game should start out using the same method.

If, at some later point in your campaign, you want to change methods, simply announce this to your players. Try to avoid making the announcement just as a player starts rolling up a new character, lest the other players accuse you of favoritism. You know you aren't playing favorites, but it doesn't hurt to avoid the appearance.

The advantages and disadvantages of each dice-rolling method are described below (also see Chapter 1 of the *Player's Handbook*). Five sample characters created with each method illustrate typical outcomes the different methods are likely to produce.

Method I (3d6, In order):

This is the fastest and most straightforward. There are no decisions to make while rolling the dice, and dice rolling is kept to a minimum. Ability scores range from 3 to 18, but the majority fall in a range from 9 to 12.

Typically, a character will have four scores in the average range, one below-average score, and one above-average score. A few lucky players will get several high scores and a few unlucky ones will get just the opposite.

Very high scores are rare, so character classes that require high scores (paladin, ranger, illusionist, druid, bard) are correspondingly rare. This makes characters who qualify for those classes very special indeed. The majority of the player characters will be fighters, clerics, mages, and thieves. Characters with exceptional ability scores will tend to stand out from their comrades.

Method I Disadvantages: First, some players may consider their characters to be hopelessly average. Second, the players don't get many choices.

Table 1:

Method I Characters

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Strength	10	8	13	6	16
Dexterity	8	7	8	15	10
Constitution	12	8	9	10	14
Intelligence	13	8	14	9	12
Wisdom	12	10	11	9	13
Charisma	7	12	14	7	8
Suggested Class	Ma	Cl	F/Ma	Th	F

Using method I, only luck enables a player to get a character of a particular type, since he has no control over the dice. Most characters have little choice over which class they become: Only one or two options will be open to them. You might let players discard a character who is totally unsuitable and start over.

Method II (3d6 twice, keep desired score):

This method gives players better scores without introducing serious ability inflation. It also gives them more control over their characters. The average ability is still in the 9 to 12 range, and players can manipulate their results to bring the characters they create closer to the ideal characters they imagine.

Exceptional player characters are still rare, and unusual character classes are still uncommon, but few characters will have below-average scores.

Method II Disadvantages: Creating the character takes slightly longer because there are more dice to roll. Despite the improved choices, a character might still not be eligible for the race or class the player wants.

Table 2:

Method II Characters

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Strength	12	11	9	9	15
Dexterity	10	15	12	13	14
Constitution	11	11	16	14	14
Intelligence	13	11	12	13	14
Wisdom	16	13	13	11	13
Charisma	10	11	14	9	12
Suggested Class	Cl	Th	Cl	Ma	F

Method III (3d6, arranged to taste):

This method gives the players more choice when creating their characters yet still ensures that, overall, ability scores are not excessive. Bad characters are still possible, especially if a player has several poor rolls. The majority of characters have average abilities.

Since players can arrange their scores however they want, it is easier to meet the requirements for an unusual class. Classes with exceptionally strict standards (the paladin in particular) are still uncommon.



Ability Scores



Table 3:

Method III Characters

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Strength	15	13	14	15	14
Dexterity	11	12	9	10	12
Constitution	15	13	13	12	14
Intelligence	7	8	8	9	11
Wisdom	8	7	7	6	9
Charisma	7	12	7	7	11

Method III Disadvantages: This method is more time-consuming than I or II, especially if players try to “minimize/maximize” their choice of race and class. (To minimize/maximize, or min/max, is to examine every possibility for the greatest advantage.) Players may need to be encouraged to create the character they see in their imaginations, not the one that gains the most pluses on dice rolls. The example below shows fighters created using this method.

Method IV (3d6 twice, arranged to taste):

This method has all the benefits of methods II and III. Few, if any, characters are likely to have poor scores. Most scores are above average. The individual score ranges are still not excessively high, so truly exceptional characters are still very rare. However, the majority of characters are significantly above the norm.

Method IV Disadvantages: This method tends to be quite slow. Players spend a lot of time comparing different number combinations with the requirements of different races and classes. New players can be overwhelmed by the large number of choices during this process. The examples below are arranged for fighters.

Table 4:

Method IV Characters

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Strength	15	14	15	16	15
Dexterity	13	10	13	15	13
Constitution	13	12	15	13	13
Intelligence	13	9	13	12	13
Wisdom	13	9	11	13	12
Charisma	10	9	11	13	12

Method V (4d6, drop lowest, arrange as desired):

Before choosing to use this method, think about how adventurers fit into the population as a whole. There are two schools of thought.

One holds that adventurers are no different from everyone else (except for being a little more foolhardy, headstrong, or restless). The man or woman down the street could be an adventurer—all that’s required is the desire to go out and be one. Therefore, adventurers should get no special bonuses on their ability rolls.

The other school holds that adventurers are special people, a cut above the common crowd. If they weren’t exceptional, they would be laborers and businessmen like everyone else. Player characters are heroes, so they should get bonuses on their ability rolls to lift them above the rabble.

If you choose method V for creating player characters, then you agree with this second view and believe that adventurers should be better than everyone else.

This method creates above-average characters. They won’t be perfect, but the odds are that even their worst ability scores will be average or better. More scores push into the exceptional range (15 and greater). It is easy for a player to create a character of any class and race.

Method V Disadvantages: Like other methods that allow deliberate arrangement of ability scores, this one takes some time. It also creates a tendency toward “super” characters.

Unless you have a considerable amount of experience as a DM, however, beware of extremely powerful characters. They are much more difficult to challenge and control than characters of moderate power. On the plus side, their chance for survival at lower levels is better than “ordinary” characters. (See “Super Characters,” below, for more on this subject.)

One last point about method V: High ability scores are less exciting under this method, since they are much more common, as the fighter characters below indicate:

Table 5:

Method V Characters

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Strength	15	14	15	16	15
Dexterity	13	10	13	15	13
Constitution	13	12	15	13	13
Intelligence	13	9	13	12	13
Wisdom	13	9	11	13	12
Charisma	10	9	11	13	12

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Table 6:

Method VI Characters

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Strength	17	15	16	17	18/71
Dexterity	12	11	11	13	12
Constitution	12	9	12	18	14
Intelligence	11	9	10	11	11
Wisdom	9	9	10	8	10
Charisma	8	8	9	9	13

Method VI (points plus dice):

This gives players more control over their characters than the other methods. A points system makes it quite likely that a player can get the character he wants—or at least the class and race. However, in doing so the player must make some serious compromises.

It is unlikely that his dice are going to be good enough to make every score as high as he would like. In all likelihood, only one or two ability scores will be exceptional, and miserable dice rolling could lower this even further. The player must carefully weigh the pros and cons of his choices when creating the character.

Method IV Disadvantages: This method works best for experienced players. Players who are not familiar with the different character classes and races have a hard time making the necessary (and difficult) decisions. Table 6 shows fighters constructed using this method.

Super Characters

One of the great temptations for players is to create super characters. While this is not true of every player all the time, the desire for power above everything else afflicts most players at one time or another.

Many players see their characters as nothing more than a collection of numbers that affects game systems. They don't think of their characters as personalities to be developed. Players like this want to "win" the game. These players are missing out on a lot of fun.

If players are creating new characters for your campaign, you probably won't have to deal with such super characters. Players can start with ability scores greater than 18 only if the race grants a bonus, but this is extremely rare. Later in the campaign, magic might raise ability scores higher.

The greatest difficulty occurs when a player asks to bring in a character from another campaign where characters are more powerful. Unless you are prepared to handle them, super characters can seriously disrupt a campaign: Players with average characters gradually become bored and irritated as the powerful characters dominate the action. And players with powerful characters

feel held back by their weaker companions. None of this contributes to harmony and cooperation among the characters or the players.

Cooperation is a key element of role-playing. In any group of player characters, everyone has strengths to contribute and weaknesses to overcome. This is the basis for the adventuring party—even a small group with diverse talents can accomplish deeds far greater than its size would indicate.

Now, throw in a character who is an army by himself. He doesn't need the other characters, except perhaps as cannon fodder or bearers. His presence alone destroys one of the most fundamental aspects of the game—cooperation.

Identifying Too-Powerful Characters

There are no absolute rules to define a too-powerful character, since the definition will vary from campaign to campaign. Characters who are average in your game may be weaklings in your friend's campaign. His characters, in turn, could be frail compared to other groups. Some experience is required to strike the right balance of power, but characters created using the same method should, at least, be comparable.

When someone brings a character from a different campaign and wants to use him in your game, compare the proposed character to those already in the game. You don't want him to be too strong or too weak. Certainly you should be wary of a character whose ability scores are all 18s!

Dealing with Too-Powerful Characters

If you decide a character is too powerful, the player has two choices. First, he can agree to weaken the character in some fashion (subject to your approval). This may be as simple as excluding a few magical items ("No, you can't bring that *holy avenger sword* +5 that shoots 30-dice *fireballs* into my campaign!"). Second, the player can agree not to use some special ability ("I don't care if your previous DM gave your character the Evil Eye, you can't jinx my dice rolls!"). If this sort of change seems too drastic or requires altering ability scores or levels, a better option is simply to have the player create a new character. Remember that just because another DM allowed something is no reason you have to do the same!

Hopeless Characters

At the other extreme from the super character is the character who appears hopeless. The player is convinced his new character has a fatal flaw that guarantees a quick and ugly death under the claws of some imaginary foe. Discouraged, he asks to scrap the character and create another.

In reality, few, if any, characters are truly hopeless. Certainly, ability scores have an effect on the game, but they are not the overwhelming factor in a character's success or failure. Far more important is the cleverness and ingenuity the player brings to the character.