

Sample file



EPIC LEVEL HANDBOOK

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Introduction

The rules in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® core rulebooks are not enough for you. Your game promises more than what the rules can contain. Your plots run deeper and your imagination burns stronger. Twenty levels of power are too few, character options are too limited, and the monsters are too weak. Until now.

Welcome to the next level of power.

WHAT IS AN EPIC CHARACTER?

Put plainly, an epic character is one who has achieved 21st character level. Though the *Player's Handbook* describes character progression up to 20th level, legend and literature are replete with heroes and villains who have gone beyond normal limits. Now your character gets to join them and assume a role in legend.

THE EPIC LEVEL HANDBOOK

This book gives you everything you need to create and play epic characters, including epic items, epic spells, and even epic foes. It features the following chapters:

Characters, Skills, and Feats (Chapter 1): This chapter provides instructions for developing epic progressions for nearly any class or prestige class. It also provides specific epic progressions for the classes in the *Player's Handbook*, as well as the prestige classes found in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* and the psion and psychic warrior from the *Psionics Handbook*. Chapter 1 also reveals epic tasks for many of the skills in the *Player's Handbook*, offering skill check Difficulty Classes (DCs) only an epic character could hope to make. Finally, Chapter 1 provides more than 150 new epic feats—enough feats to provide well over one hundred levels of advancement for any character.

Epic Spells (Chapter 2): Chapter 2 reveals how to leave the standard levels of magical power behind and begin to cast epic spells. A few dozen epic spells are provided as a sample, but Chapter 2 gives player characters (PCs) the ability to create their own epic spells. Sample epic spells include *damnation*, *time duplicate*, *eidolon*, and *contingent resurrection*.

Running an Epic Game (Chapter 3): This chapter discusses how epic characters and creatures can best be handled in the game. Advice ranges from specifics such as information on walls of epic strength to general tips on how to structure your campaign and handle characters who accumulate significant wealth. The Encounters and Rewards sections provide tables for constructing epic encounters and awarding experience points to characters who overcome the epic challenges you set for them.

Epic Magic Items (Chapter 4): The difference between epic magic items and artifacts is that artifacts are unique items generated by a one-of-a-kind event or forging. Many epic magic items are just as powerful as artifacts, but epic characters know how to make them, and

such items have established prices in epic markets. Epic magic items include armor, weapons, scrolls, rods, rings, staves, and wondrous items. And because epic characters often find themselves in the presence of artifacts, Chapter 4 includes more artifacts to use in your epic campaign.

Monsters (Chapter 5): Here you will find monsters of sufficient power to challenge, awe, and perhaps even scare epic characters. Favorites from earlier versions of the D&D® game include the demilich and the winter-wight. Mostly, new monsters are provided, including many abominations (a new grouping of outsiders), bigger dragons, stronger golems, and creatures born directly of nightmare. A few templates such as the paragon are also provided so you can create epic monsters from their lesser kin in the *Monster Manual* and other sources.

An Epic Setting (Chapter 6): To help start up an epic campaign, you'll find epic organizations that develop the prestige classes from Chapter 1; the city of Union, which provides a base of operations; an adventure starting in the city; and several other adventure ideas.

Appendices: If you include epic rules in your game, you'll want the nonplayer characters (NPCs) from your campaign to be likewise enhanced. That's why we've done the work for you and provided versions of such illustrious figures as Elminster (from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS* campaign setting) and Mordenkainen (from the *GREYHAWK* campaign setting) in all their epic level glory. Finally, NPCs from all the classes in the *Player's Handbook* are provided from levels 21st to 30th in the style of the NPCs in Chapter 2 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

WHAT'S NEW?

There's no ceiling to the levels you can attain anymore, and no limits on the power of the foes you face. You'll find enough feats, spells, items, and abilities to provide endless play. Now no matter how good your character gets, there's always something more. There's something more for your character to strive for, and something more to stand in your way.

That said, you'll find a lot of the *Epic Level Handbook* familiar. Epic feats work like regular feats, and epic magic items work like their more ordinary counterparts. They're just better. Likewise, the experience and treasure tables look like the ones you're already using. The biggest departure from the D&D rules you're familiar with is the Spell Seeds section in Chapter 2.

If you've played high-level rules for previous editions of the D&D game, you may notice a few elements from previous systems. Most notably, the section on epic spells was inspired in part by true dweomers in the *High Level Handbook*. D&D is such a vital, resilient, and versatile system that we discovered that we could go further than we ever could before. The rules inherent to the D&D game provide the essential ballast for the *Epic Level Handbook*, ensuring balance no matter how wild or crazy the epic abilities become.

Do not fear the *Epic Level Handbook*. Rather, embrace it and all the power it offers.

This ancient bow
has an inset gem
for each creature
it has slain

2 lich

Gem encrusted
pommel and
grip

Many arcane
runes mark this
magical blade

3 Dragons

This spellbook
radiates an aura
of sheer power.

Portable
hole

These magical
items can be used
as storage areas
as well as a

Baba Yaga. Conan the Barbarian. Cu Chulainn. Elminster of Shadowdale. Elric of Melniboné. Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser. Gandalf. Gilgamesh. Hiawatha. Odysseus.

These are names of power. Names of glory. Epic names.

These heroes are examples of epic characters: heroes who have gone beyond the normal limits of skill, battle prowess, and magical might. While still mortal beings, these individuals—and those like them—wield powers that other characters (even 20th-level ones) can only dream about.

Epic characters can cast spells that kill without a gesture or sound, wield their weapons so superbly that whole schools try to emulate their techniques, slip into and out of impenetrable fortresses, challenge a god's moral authority, and write songs that will be sung a thousand years hence. Epic characters set their feet upon the road of omnipotence. Given time, they rival the powers of gods.

This book is about those powers, and now your character can do more than dream about them.

ON BEYOND 20TH!

When a character reaches 20th level, your normal progression ends. However, this is by no means the end of the character's career. But how can a character achieve

21st level? Some Dungeon Masters (DMs) might simply allow a character to reach 21st level by gaining the 210,000 XP indicated on Table 1–2: Experience and Level-Dependent Benefits. However, this option may be too mundane for some players and DMs, who prefer that the transition to epic gaming be accompanied by a suitable event such as a holy quest, series of tests, or similar great challenge. Chapter 3: Running an Epic Game has more information on this topic.

CLASS AND LEVEL BONUSES

Regardless of the method by which you achieve 21st level, once you reach that point you are considered an epic character. Epic characters—those whose character level is 21st or higher—are handled slightly differently from nonepic characters. While you continue to gain most of the benefits of gaining levels, some benefits are replaced by alternative gains.

Despite the 20th-level limit indicated in the *Player's Handbook*, you can advance a class level beyond 20th by using the rules in this book. You can also advance the class level of a ten-level prestige class (such as those presented in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*)

beyond 10th level, but only if your character level is already 20th or higher. You cannot advance the class level of a class with fewer than ten levels beyond the maximum described for that class, regardless of your character level.

Epic Save Bonus: Your base save bonus does not increase after your character level reaches 20th. However, you do receive a cumulative +1 epic bonus on all saving throws at every even-numbered level beyond 20th, as shown on Table 1–1: Epic Save and Attack Bonuses. In other words, you have a +1 epic bonus on all saving throws at 22nd level, a +2 epic bonus on all saving throws at 24th level, and so on. Any time a feat, prestige class, or other rule refers to your base save bonus, use the sum of your base save bonus and epic save bonus.

Epic Attack Bonus: Similarly, your base attack bonus does not increase after your character level reaches 20th. However, you do receive a cumulative +1 epic bonus on all attacks at every odd-numbered level beyond 20th, as shown on Table 1–1: Epic Save and Attack Bonuses. Any time a feat, prestige class, or other rule refers to your base attack bonus (except for gaining additional attacks), use the sum of your base attack bonus and epic attack bonus.

Experience Points: This column on Table 1–2: Experience and Level-Dependent Benefits shows the experience point total needed to achieve a given character level. For multiclass characters, experience points determine overall character level, not individual class levels.

Though Table 1–2 only shows experience point totals through 30th level, you can easily calculate the experience points needed to reach 31st level and higher. Simply add your current level times 1,000 XP to the experience points required for your current level. For instance, reaching 31st level would require an additional $30 \times$

1,000 XP (or 30,000 XP), taking the character's XP total from 435,000 to 465,000.

Class Skill Max Ranks: The maximum number of ranks a character can have in a class skill is equal to his or her character level +3.

Cross-Class Skill Max Ranks: For cross-class skills (skills neither associated with nor forbidden to the character's class), the maximum number of ranks is one-half the maximum for a class skill.

Feats: Every character gains one feat (which may be an epic or nonepic feat at the player's choice) at every level divisible by three (21st, 24th, 27th, and so on). These feats are in addition to any bonus feats granted in the class descriptions later in this chapter.

Ability Increases: Upon gaining any level divisible by four (20th, 24th, 28th, and so on), a character increases one of his or her ability scores by 1 point. The player chooses which ability score to improve.

For multiclass characters, feats and ability increases are gained according to character level, not class level. Thus, a 13th-level wizard/11th-level fighter is a 24th-level character and eligible for both a feat and an ability score increase.

TABLE 1–1: EPIC SAVE AND ATTACK BONUSES

Character Level	Epic Save Bonus	Epic Attack Bonus
21st	+0	+1
22nd	+1	+1
23rd	+1	+2
24th	+2	+2
25th	+2	+3
26th	+3	+3
27th	+3	+4
28th	+4	+4
29th	+4	+5
30th	+5	+5

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: EPIC LEVELS AND PRESTIGE CLASSES

These rules allow you to go beyond the normal level limit in a prestige class, but only if it is a ten-level class. Why can't you add levels to a prestige class with fewer than ten levels?

It's Too Easy: Maxing out a ten-level prestige class takes a lot of time and effort, detracting significantly from your pursuit of the *Player's Handbook* classes. If you could gain additional levels in a prestige class with only five levels, for instance, you haven't taken more than a short detour from your main class or classes.

It's Not Significant Enough: Characters with ten levels in the blackguard prestige class undoubtedly think of themselves as blackguards, regardless of the fact that they also have ten levels in one or more other classes. If you've taken fewer than ten levels in a prestige class, those levels represent a smaller fraction of your character's identity.

It's Hard to Build an Epic Progression: With only a few levels to guide you, it's hard to determine what an appropriate progression of class features would be for the class. The rate of

improvement of a special ability might be too fast to extrapolate over an infinite number of levels, or there might simply be too few class features to build a unique epic progression. Epic class progressions are described later in the chapter.

That said, if your DM wants to allow a character to gain epic levels in a prestige class with fewer than ten levels in its progression, that's okay. Work together with your DM to create an epic progression for the class (see the Behind the Curtain: Building an Epic Progression sidebar later in this chapter).

NO LIMITS

Although most of the tables in this book only show information up to a certain level (often 30th), that level is by no means the limit of a character's advancement. Because of space limitations, we generally show advancement only ten levels beyond what's given in the *Player's Handbook*. Once you've read this chapter, you should know how to calculate the proper values for levels beyond those shown on the tables. You can generally assume that any patterns on a particular table continue infinitely.