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This d20™ System game utilizes mechanics developed for the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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Introduction

The dragon reared, roaring, clawing at air
And belching fire, and began to lunge down
Upon Dydd, but the druid slashed into
Ashardalon's heart, her scimitar cut
And the lifeblood began to spill. Then Dydd
Was slain, her heart wrested from her breast by
The dragon's grasping jaws, swallowed, consumed
To sustain Ashardalon's ebbing life
For a time. . . .
—The Lay of Dydd

More than any other creature, dragons are a symbol of all that is the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. From the savage white to the majestic gold, dragons represent the greatest perils adventurers face at any point in their careers, as well as the greatest rewards they may hope to claim. From the tiny wyrmling at the bottom of an adventurer's very first dungeon to the colossal great wyrm he meets at the height of his career, dragons are the ultimate climactic encounter: a brutal and memorable fight that will pay off in riches from the dragon's hoard.

Dragons are creatures of myth, often described as the first sentient race to appear on a world, with life spans that stretch over hundreds of years. They symbolize the world itself and embody its history, and the oldest dragons are repositories of vast knowledge and ancient secrets. This aspect of dragons makes them much more than just a challenging combat encounter: They are sages and oracles, fonts of wisdom and prophets of things to come. Their very appearance can be an omen of good or ill fortune.

Perhaps most important, dragons are a reminder that the action of the D&D game takes place in a world of fantasy, wonder, and magic, a world far from mundane in every way. Any attempt to describe them as little more than glorified lizards with wings and breath weapons is a disservice, not only to dragons, but to the fantasy universe of D&D and the wealth of legends, myths, and heroic stories that place dragons in such an iconic position that they had to be a part of the very name of the game. Dragons are, by their very nature, epic forces in the world. Their

actions, their schemes, even their dreams are felt throughout the world. From a wyrmling raiding herds of sheep to the mighty Ashardalon feasting on preincarnate souls, dragons do things that matter, whether on a small local scale or in the cosmic big picture. They are the embodiment of fantasy itself.

That, in a nutshell, is the reason for this book. Dragons are such a central part of the game that a rules reference of this nature is an essential addition to any campaign, enhancing the excitement of draconic encounters for players and Dungeon Masters alike. A DM will find information here on the powers and tactics of dragons, as well as a wealth of new feats, spells, magic items, and prestige classes designed to make dragon encounters more interesting, challenging, and unusual. In case the dragons already described in the *Monster Manual* and other books are not enough, this book also presents a variety of new dragon-related monsters of all types to include in the game. Players, meanwhile, can unearth dragonslaying tactics and take advantage of new feats and spells, magic items, and prestige classes to make their characters the ultimate dragon slayers, dragon riders, or even dragon servants.

Draconomicon is not just about the rules, tactics, and ecology of dragons, however. The illustrations in this book are intended to inspire a fresh sense of wonder and awe at the creatures that make up such an important part of the D&D game. Dragons are rapacious, arrogant, and deadly—but they are also majestic, awesome, and magnificent. A renewed sense of the grandeur of dragons might not have as concrete or noticeable an impact on your game as all the new rules you will find in this book, but its influence will surely be felt around your gaming table.

Let this book inspire you. Whether you use it to build new draconic adversaries and exciting dragon lairs stocked with legendary treasure, or to build a character who rides a silver dragon into battle against the servants of Tiamat, you are sure to find not just the rules you want, but the wonder you need to make your game more fun. Dragons are creatures of legend, and with this book you can be a part of that legend. Retell it, relive it, reshape it in your character's or your campaign's image. *Draconomicon* will show you how.

THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF DRAGONS

In the D&D game, the term “dragon” encompasses a number of different creatures, some of which bear little resemblance to the great flying creatures with breath weapons that we commonly think of as dragons.

For the most part, this book concerns itself with the ten varieties of true dragon described in the *Monster Manual*—the five chromatic dragons (black, blue, green, red, white) and the five metallic dragons (brass, bronze, copper, gold, silver). True dragons are those creatures that become more powerful as they grow older.

A number of other true dragons are described in Chapter 4 of this book. In addition, Appendix 2: Index of Dragons provides

a complete list of all true dragons that have been presented in official sources.

Other creatures of the dragon type that do not advance through age categories are referred to as lesser dragons (which should not be taken to mean that they are necessarily less formidable than true dragons).

The three kinds of lesser dragon described in the *Monster Manual* are the dragon turtle, the pseudodragon, and the wyvern. Chapter 4 of this book contains a number of descriptions of other lesser dragons, and Appendix 2 lists every lesser dragon that has been described in a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rule-book or accessory.



Illus. by J. Grant-West

A

wealth of material, from bard's tales and ponderous tomes alike, has been recorded about dragons. Unfortunately for adventurers planning to confront a dragon, most of that information is wrong. The opening chapter of this book presents the truth about dragons—their types, habits, physiology, and worldview.

THE DRAGON'S BODY

"How can one imagine anything more magnificent than . . . a dragon, the paragon of creation?"

—Bheilorveilthion, red wyrm

"Nothing but a bunch of vain, glorified flying reptiles, if you ask me!"

—Hatredymaes, androsphinx

At first glance, a true dragon resembles a reptile. It has a muscular body, a long, thick neck, a horned or frilled head with a toothy mouth, and a sinuous tail. The creature walks on four powerful legs with clawed feet, and it flies using its vast, batlike wings. Heavy scales cover a dragon from the tip of its tail to end of its snout. As you'll see from the details to come, however, that first glance doesn't begin to tell the whole story about the nature of dragons.

EXTERNAL ANATOMY

Despite its scales and wings, a dragon's body has features that seem more feline than reptilian. Refer to the illustrations on the next few pages as you read on.

Like a cat's eye, a dragon's eye has a comparatively large iris with a vertical pupil. This arrangement allows the pupil to open extremely wide and admit much more light than a human eye can.

The sclera, or "white," of a dragon's eye is often yellow, gold, green, orange, red, or silver, with an iris of a darker, contrasting color.

To a casual observer, a dragon's pupils always look like vertical slits. If one were to look very closely into a dragon's eye, however, one could see a second iris and pupil within the first. The dragon can shift and rotate this inner aperture up to 90 degrees, so that the inner pupil can overlay the outer one or lie at a right angle to it. This ocular structure gives a dragon extremely accurate depth perception and focusing ability no matter how much or how little light is available.

A dragon's eye is protected by a leathery outer eyelid and three smooth inner eyelids, or nictitating membranes. The innermost membrane is crystal clear and serves to protect the eye from damage while the dragon flies,

fight, swims, or burrows with its eyes open. The other two eyelids mainly serve to keep the inner membrane and the surface of the eye clean. They are thicker than the innermost membrane and less clear. A dragon can use these inner lids to protect its eyes from sudden flashes of bright light. A dragon's eyes glow in the dark, but the dragon can hide the glow by closing one or more of its inner eyelids; doing this does not affect its vision.

A dragon's ears often prove indistinguishable from the frills that frame its head, especially when the dragon is at rest. The ears of an active dragon, however, constantly twitch and swivel as the dragon tracks sounds.

Not all dragons have external ears; burrowing and aquatic dragons usually have simple ear holes protected by an overhanging fringe.

A dragon's mouth features powerful jaws, a forked tongue, and



sharp teeth. The exact number and size of a dragon's teeth depend on the dragon's age, habitat, and diet; however, a dragon's array of teeth usually includes four well-developed fangs (two upper, two lower) that curve slightly inward and have cutting edges on both the inner and outer surfaces. A dragon uses its fangs to impale and kill prey, and they serve as the dragon's primary weapons.

Immediately in front of the fangs in each jaw lie the dragon's incisors, which are oval in cross-section and have serrated edges at the top. When a dragon bites down on large prey, these teeth cut out a semicircle of flesh.

Behind the fangs in each jaw, a dragon has a row of peglike molars that help it grip prey. A dragon is not well equipped for chewing, and it typically tears prey into chunks small enough to gulp down. A dragon can create a sawing motion with its incisors by wiggling its lower jaw and shaking its head from side to side, allowing the incisors to quickly shear through flesh and bone.

Many dragons learn to seize prey and literally shake it to

death. Other dragons have mastered the technique of grabbing prey and swallowing it whole.

Some dragon hunters boast that they can hold a dragon's mouth closed, preventing the creature from biting. It is true that a dragon applies more force when closing its jaws than it does when opening them; however, holding a dragon's mouth closed still requires prodigious strength. Even if an foe were to succeed in clamping its jaws shut, the dragon is likely to throw off the opponent with one flick of its head, claw its attacker to ribbons, or both.

The spines, frills, and other projections that adorn a dragon's head make the creature look fearsome, and that is their main function.

A dragon's horn is a keratinous projection growing directly from the dragon's skull. A dragon with horns that point backward can use the horns for grooming, and they also help protect the dragon's upper neck in combat. Horns projecting from the sides of a dragon's head help protect the head.

A dragon's spines are keratinous, but softer and more flexible than its horns. The spines are imbedded in the dragon's skin and anchored to the skeleton by ligaments. Most spines are located along the dragon's back and tail. Unlike horns, spines are mobile, with a range of motion that varies with the kind of dragon and the spines' location on the dragon's body. The spines along a dragon's back, for example, can only be raised or lowered, whereas the spines supporting a dragon's ears can be moved many different ways.

The frills on a dragon's back and tail help keep the dragon stable when flying or swimming.

To a scholar who knows something about the natural world, a dragon's powerful legs are decidedly nonreptilian, despite their scaly coverings. A dragon's legs are positioned more or less directly under its body, in the manner of mammals. (Most reptiles' legs tend to splay out to the sides, offering much less support and mobility than a dragon or mammal enjoys.)

A dragon's four feet resemble those of a great bird. Each foot has three or four clawed toes facing forward (the number varies, even among dragons of the same kind), plus an additional toe, also with a claw, set farther back on the foot and facing slightly inward toward the dragon's body, like a human's thumb.

Although a dragon's front feet are not truly prehensile, a dragon can grasp objects with its front feet, provided they are not too small. This grip is not precise enough for tool use, writing, or wielding a weapon, but a dragon can hold and carry objects. A dragon also is capable of wielding magical devices, such as wands, and can complete somatic

components required for the spells it can cast (see Spellcasting, below). Some dragons are adroit enough to seize prey in their front claws and carry it aloft.

A dragon can use the “thumbs” on its rear feet to grasp as well, but the grip is less precise than that of the front feet.

A dragon's skin resembles crocodile hide—tough, leathery, and thick. Unlike a crocodile, however, a dragon has hundreds of hard, durable scales covering its body. A dragon's scales are keratinous, like its spines. Unlike the spines, however, a dragon's scales are not attached to its skeleton, and the dragon cannot make them move. The scales are much harder and less flexible than the spines, with a resistance to blows that exceeds that of steel.

A dragon's largest scales are attached to its hide along one edge and overlap their neighbors like shingles on a roof or the articulated plates in a suit of armor. These scales cover the dragon's neck, underbelly, tail, and toes. As the dragon moves its body, the scales tend to shift as the skin and muscle under them moves, and the scales' free ends sometimes rise up slightly. This phenomenon has led some observers to mistakenly conclude that a dragon can raise and lower its scales in the same manner as a bird fluffing its feathers.

The majority of a dragon's scales are smaller and attached to the skin near their centers. These scales interlock with neighboring scales, giving the surface of the body a pebbly texture. The scales are large enough to form a continuous layer of natural armor over the body even when it stretches or bulges to its greatest extent. When the body relaxes or contracts, the skin under the scales tends to fold and wrinkle, though the interlocking scales give the body a fairly smooth look.

A dragon's scales grow throughout its lifetime, albeit very slowly. Unlike most other scaled creatures, a dragon neither sheds its skin nor sheds individual scales. Instead, its individual scales grow larger, and it also grows new scales as its body gets bigger. Over the years, a scale may weather and crack near the edges, but its slow growth usually proves sufficient to replace any portion that breaks off. Dragons occasionally lose scales, especially if they become badly damaged. Old scales often litter the floors of long-occupied dragon lairs.

When a dragon loses a scale, it usually grows a new one in its place. The new scale tends to be smaller than its neighbors and usually thinner and weaker as well. This phenomenon is what gives rise to bards' tales about chinks in a dragon's armor. These tales are true as far as they go, but one

new scale on a dragon's massive body seldom leaves the dragon particularly vulnerable to attack.

A dragon's long, muscular tail serves mainly as a rudder in flight. A dragon also uses its tail for propulsion when swimming, and as a weapon.

A dragon's wings consist of a membrane of scaleless hide stretched over a framework of strong but lightweight bones. Immensely powerful muscles in the dragon's chest provide power for flight.

Most dragons have wings that resemble bat wings, with a relatively short supporting alar limb, ending in a vestigial claw that juts forward. Most of the wing area comes from a membrane stretched over elongated “fingers” of bone (the alar phalanges; see Skeleton, below), which stretch far beyond the alar limb.

Some kinds of dragons have wings that run the lengths of their bodies, something like the “wings” of manta rays. This sort of wing also has an alar limb with phalanges supporting the forward third of the wing, but the remainder of the wing is supported by modified frill spines that have only a limited range of motion and muscular control.

Inside the Dragon's Eye

Most scholars remain unaware of how complex and unusual a dragon's eye really is. In addition to its four layers of eyelids and its double pupil, a dragon's eye also has a double lens.

The outer lens (1) is much the same as any other creature's in form and function. The inner lens (2), however, is a mass of transparent muscle fibers that can polarize incoming light. The inner lens also serves to magnify what the dragon sees, and helps account for the dragon's superior long-distance vision.

A dragon's retinas (3) are packed with receptors for both color and black-and-white vision.

Behind the retina lies the tapetum lucidum (4), a reflective layer that helps the dragon see in dim light. A dragon literally sees light twice, once when it strikes the retina and again when it is reflected back. It is the tapetum lucidum that makes a dragon's eyes seem to glow in the dark.

INTERNAL ANATOMY

As you'll see from the following section, a dragon's resemblance to a reptile is literally only skin deep. Refer to the accompanying illustrations as you read on.

Skeleton

Although complete dragon skeletons are hard to come by, most scholars agree that a little more than 500 bones comprise a dragon's skeleton, compared to slightly more than

