

# Experts D3.5

## A Comprehensive OGL Sourcebook for Fantasy Role-Playing Games

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**Cover Image:** “The Alchemist, in Search of the Philosopher’s Stone” (1771), by Joseph Wright of Derby.

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## Foreword by Gary Gygax

No reader should be surprised at finding this prefatory piece herein. As the principle one to whom this book is dedicated, there was no conceivable way I could refuse writing a short introduction for it without seeming to be a total ingrate. I mention this merely to point out the clever tactics of the authors, for the same ingenuity is certainly applied to the contents of the work proper.

The concept of player characters hiring experts is integral to the role-playing game. That is to say, some 30 years ago when I sat down to write the first draft rules for the first such game, there were already in play a few such characters. In addition to the men-at-arms hired by adventurers there were armorers, sages, and scribes. That list grew over time, so that as the more complex version of the original system was introduced there were a fair number of non-player characters whose services were for hire. Aside from suggested wages, however, not much was said about these special NPCs.

We now jump ahead in time some 25 years. You are holding the book that finally takes this concept and brings it into the contemporary period where the participants are furnished a wealth of information in regards who their player characters meet in "ordinary" dealings, those special sorts of non-player characters that might be engaged to serve them. When I received the manuscript for the Experts sourcebook, I sat down to see if it was all that it claimed. It did not disappoint me. In fact, I had to laugh when I saw the library size table for NPC Sage experts. It is good to know that one is level 12+. This is mentioned to illustrate the wealth of details provided by the authors here-



special sorts of experts that you might wish to add? Absolutely!

By first setting forth “metaclasses” for experts, this work creates general groupings into which most will fall, so that similarities can be dealt with. Then, by describing the area of expertise, quantifying it, the reader is furnished with ample information for developing any sort of expert contained herein, as well as creating new sorts as previously mentioned. What they can do is also quantified in game terms of course, along with a guideline for the level of expertise one such NPC has attained, what skills and feats they might have. So now such characters can have more than names and a vocation. They have hit dice, levels, clearly defined capacities, guild organizations too. What will hiring some expert cost? That’s cov-

ered too, by the day, week, month, or year.

In short, if you are engaged in play of the D20 system based on a fantasy world, you can not pass up this work. Experts is truly a most useful sourcebook for the Game Master and player equally, because all concerned in the campaign activity deal with such non-player personae so much of the time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Gygax". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. It is positioned over a large, semi-transparent red watermark that says "Sample".

Gary Gygax  
Lake Geneva, Wisconsin  
June 2002

Sample

## Acknowledgements

A number of people contributed to making this book—both this version and the v3.0 rules version that preceded it—what it is. Some of their major contributions follow.

Michael J. Varhola and Paul O. Knorr—the primary authors of the first, version 3.0 rules edition of this book—did the majority of writing, rewriting, and editing that went into this volume. Their association as gamers goes back some 23 years, and they are both founding members of the Skirmisher Game Development Group.

Perry Frix, a contributor to the first edition of the book, rose to the level of a co-author in this version by providing much of the new material it contains and by participating in the painstaking task of converting it over to the v.3.5 rules. Gamer Andrew McCallum assisted him in playtesting some of the concepts and material that appear in this book.

Jim Clunie, one of the newest initiates into the Skirmisher Game Development Group and author of a number of major upcoming titles, lent invaluable assistance in the final phases of this project, catching everything from mundane typos to significant rules anomalies.

A number of talented artists also contributed their efforts to this book. These include Sharon Daughtery, who provided many illustrations for this book, including all that appear in the section on New Magic Items and the dungeon map on page 169; Phil “Shade” Kightlinger, creator of the illustration that accompanies Profession (Bartender) in the section on skill in this book; Lissanne Lake, a virtual patroness of this venture and the creator of the images that appear on the cover surfaces of

this book and several of its interior pages; Russell Prime, who did the full-page illustrations of the Undertaker and Weaponsmith; Cassandra Rogers, who provided a number of the illustrations in the section on Sample NPCs; and Geoff Weber, who both provided art to this project and coordinated the inclusion of many of the other images that appear within it (and who also helped playtest many of the concepts presented in this book). Pages on which their contributions appear are listed on page 2.

A number of artists whose work now appears in the public domain also deserve recognition as Experts of note. Foremost among these is Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797), whose *The Alchemist in Search of the Philosopher’s Stone Discovers Phosphorous* and *The Blacksmith’s Shop* appear on pages 57 and 9 of this book, respectively, and appeared on the front and back covers of the previous version of this book. A page from Leonardo da Vinci’s notebook appears on page 134.

Several people who are not members of the Skirmisher group—among them colleagues, friends, and family members—provided the moral support needed to see this project through to the end.

Diane Varhola made sure, among other things, that the development group was well fed during its meetings and playtest sessions.

Designer Brian Kelly provided invaluable guidance during the redesign of this book and in preparing the cover surfaces and a number

## Acknowledgements

of the interior images for print.

Michael H. Varhola provided some of the “flavor text” that appears in conjunction with the various Expert types.

And Nancy Coe Bailey provided a collection of vintage *St. Nicholas* children’s books from which some of the images in this volume were taken.

Several other people also contributed to the first edition of this book and, while they did not directly contribute to the completion of

this revised volume, some of their influence can still be felt in it. They include former Skirmisher Game Development Group Members Rob Fernandez, Shai Laric, Dave Thomas, and Christopher Varhola; Skirmisher co-founder Robert “Mac” McLaughlin; writer and editor Chip Cassano; and designers Ellen Errico and George Dively.

If we have neglected anyone here, please forgive us! Your contributions are appreciated more than you know.



## Introduction

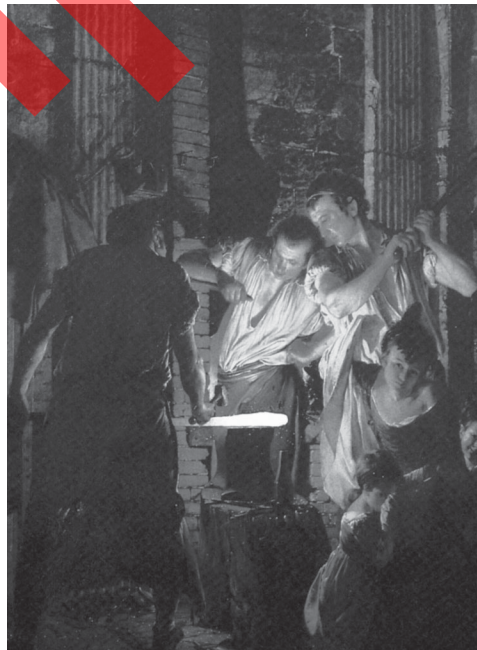
One of the most intriguing and versatile character classes in the d20 fantasy roleplaying game system is, without a doubt, the Expert, an NPC class introduced in the 3rd edition of the game. As noted in the description in the DMG, such characters can include almost any sort of highly skilled professional, including Blacksmiths, Barristers, Merchants, Guides, and Sages. All of these—plus nearly two dozen others, organized into five broad metaclasses—are presented in this book.

### Using This Book

One of the things that makes the Expert unique is that—of all the character classes in the game—only it can have *any* 10 class skills. This can make Experts extremely versatile and varied—but it can also make it difficult and time consuming for GMs to quickly and easily create them as needed. Providing GMs and interested players with a tool for easily and consistently creating compelling Experts that can interact with characters as hirelings, patrons, consultants, friends—and even as antagonists or adventurers in certain circumstances, and any other role appropriate or imaginable—is the primary purpose of this book.

While the Experts described in this book reflect a wide variety of abilities and occupations, they all conform in most ways to the description of the Expert class in the DMG. All have the same base attack and saving throw bonuses, use a d6 for hit points, have 10 class skills, start with  $6 + \text{Int modifier} \times 4$  skills points at 1st level and  $6 + \text{Int modifier}$  at each subsequent level (plus more for Humans, of course), and are proficient with Simple weapons.

Some of them vary in other ways, however. For example, most are proficient with Light armor, but those classified as Scholars are not, while the Armorer type of Craftsman can ob-



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tain proficiency with medium armor, heavy armor, and shields as level-based class features. Other types can gain other class features, such as bonus feats or the ability to use skills in enhanced ways.

Most of the Experts presented on the following pages have been designed for use in the “traditional fantasy setting” familiar to gam-

ers and readers of fantastic literature. GMs running very non-traditional game settings may find it useful to exclude some of these Experts, change others, and add new ones altogether (a task for which the following can serve as good models). For the majority of campaigns, however, all of the included Experts can be used without modification.



## Preface to *Experts v.3.5*

One of the features in the version 3.0 DMG that the Skirmisher game development group was most pleased with was the introduction of the various non-player character classes, an innovation that was absent in the earlier editions of the game. These classes—the Adept, Aristocrat, Commoner, Expert, and Warrior—can serve as invaluable tools in the hands of Game Masters as they populate the communities of their campaign worlds.

While all of these classes are generic in nature, the Expert is by far the most versatile, and can be used to create almost any sort of Craftsman, Entertainer, Professional, Scholar, or Tradesman and to fill the niches in society that are not clearly occupied by the members of other classes. This versatility, combined with the bare-bones description of the class in the DMG, is practically an open invitation to both expand upon the Expert class and address some of the ways it might be used in the game.

It was with those ideas in mind that Skirmisher Publishing published its first d20 book, *Experts*, in 2002. Not everyone involved with our game development group believed it was a particularly good subject for a book, and some thought it was such a bad idea that they dropped out of the group altogether (although our insistence that they actually pitch in on projects and not just criticize them seemed unreasonable to these defectors ...). In the months and years following its publication, however, that book proved to be our venture's most successful d20 title.

That success has been due, in large part, we believe, to the absence of any similar work. Indeed, during our development of that first rendition of *Experts*, we became increasingly feverish in our efforts to complete it, fearing that someone else would publish a virtually identical work on the eve of our own release, rendering our work moot. Until the publication of this updated, revised, and expanded volume, however, no other book dedicated to the Expert character class had been released.

This volume is an improvement in all ways upon its predecessor, and reflects both our deeper understanding of the d20 rules system and our desire to go beyond our first—albeit suc-

cessful—attempt at a d20 sourcebook.

As its name implies, *Experts v.3.5* has been thoroughly updated and revised to bring it into conformance with the latest edition of the d20 rules. In the process, we have also reedited and corrected it as necessary, redesigned and expanded it, and added a number of new features. These include:

- A new layout and design and many new or improved pieces of art.
- The Specialist, a new basic character class that players can use to create versatile “adventuring Experts” of any sort.
- Flavor text from a number of literary sources that can help stimulate interest in the various sorts of Experts presented in this book, suggest how they might be used, or show them in a different light than usual.
- Several new skills.
- The concept of Convergence Tasks, activities that can be accomplished as the result of having ranks in two or more skills (e.g., use of Craft (Blacksmithing) and Profession (Mining) to perform Smelting). These can allow characters to perform relatively specialized functions but does not inundate the game with obscure, rarely-used skills. That said, any given Convergence Task could be treated as a separate skill for highly focused NPCs or the rare PC that prefers it to the parent skills.
- A greatly expanded section of feats, many of which were introduced in the Skirmisher Publishing d20 adventure and sourcebook *Tests of Skill*.
- Updated and improved versions of the Guild Master and Militia Leader prestige classes, which have been enhanced to make them more appealing for use as both player- and non-player-characters.
- A new prestige class, the Spellcrafter, which can allow Experts, Specialists, and other characters to gain specialized magical abilities that they can use to enhance their mundane abilities. This prestige class replaces the skill-and-feat-based spellcasting system for Experts presented in the first edition of this book and is more in line with the canons of the d20 system.
- An expanded appendix of Expert work areas, many of them based on digital photographs of three-dimensional models produced

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by the Miniature Building Authority and Dwarven Forge. (We pioneered this innovative map creation technique in *Tests of Skill*, using Dwarven Forge's Master Maze dungeon modules.)

*Tests of Skill*, ironically, included a great deal of content that was originally intended for inclusion in the first edition of *Experts*, but which was bumped in order to keep its size manageable and to get it off to print in a timely manner. *Tests of Skill* was also, on one level, intended as a series of adventures and encounters suitable for skill-based characters like Experts, and many of its encounters were derived from a list of adventure hooks developed for the earlier book.

Select content from that book and other Skirmisher Publishing projects is available to readers of this book on our constantly updated Website, at [www.skirmisher.com](http://www.skirmisher.com).

**Note:** *New skills, feats, and other elements introduced in this book are marked in the text with an asterisk (\*), for ease of reference.*

### Availability of Experts

In a typical fantasy milieu, most of the non-adventuring population in any given community will be Commoners (e.g., 91%), while Experts comprise a much smaller proportion of the populace (e.g., 3%), the balance consisting of Adepts, Aristocrats, and Warriors.

These proportions can vary widely as the GM sees fit, of course. Primitive societies might only have a few types of Expert (e.g., 1% or less of the non-adventuring population), or none at all. Sophisticated societies with high levels of education, on the other hand, such as our own 21st century industrialized society or even a specific Renaissance-level culture, might conceivably have Experts make up as much as 30% of their non-adventuring populace (most of whom would be relatively low-level).

Even within societies in which Experts represent the standard 3% of the overall population, major metropolitan areas known for specific crafts or other goods and services might have a higher proportion of such characters, as might areas containing workshops attached to fortress, palace, or temple complexes. The ratio of Experts to Commoners might also represent the availability of education and/or

skilled labor in a particular campaign setting. Regardless of the proportions or actual numbers of Experts, however, it is to them that player characters must turn when they need goods or services that are customized, exceptional, or exotic.

Not every nation or region will have every type of Expert described in this book (although most areas will have at least a few from each of the five metaclasses). Areas with abundant quarries and other sources of natural rock but few forests, for example, are much more likely to have Stonemasons than Carpenters, while areas with large deposits of clay but little native rock will probably have many more Brickmakers than Stonecutters. Cultural factors can also influence what sort of Experts are available. For example, cultures that eschew drinking are not likely to have much of a demand for Brewers.

To determine the number and level of Experts in any given community, consult the guidelines on town generation in the official rules of the game or some of the many alternates that are available; to determine what specific types of Experts those are, see table V-2 in Appendix VI: Guilds in this book.

### Experts vs. Commoners

So what is the difference between Commoners and Experts? Commoners are generally who characters go to when they want standard goods and services at list prices. Experts, on the other hand, are who they go to see if they want things that are customized, specialized, or somehow above average or unique—and are willing to pay for them.

For every Expert Craftsman, Tradesman, or Entertainer in a given area of specialty, there will likely be anywhere from three to 10 Commoners performing essentially the same functions. Commoners and Experts often pursue the same occupations, however, and it may not always be possible for player characters to differentiate them at a glance. It may not even be necessary much of the time.

For example, if a party needs to purchase a few sheaves of arrows, they might not ever discover whether the fletcher they buy them from is actually a Commoner or an Expert. If,

however, they need 1,000 arrows on deadline, masterwork arrows, or missiles fashioned from special materials or with silvered heads, whether the fletcher can meet their demands—or is even willing to try—can depend on whether she is an Expert or not. Similarly, a Commoner armorer might manufacture one or two types of armor, while an Expert Armorer will probably make several, and is almost always willing to try something new. A Commoner Exterminator might say, “No, rats are all we handle,” while his Expert counterpart is more likely to say, “Sounds dangerous. Sure, we’ll try it, but it’s going to cost you ...”

Commoners’ shortcomings derive from the fact that they are so limited in their selection of class skills in comparison to Experts. Peripheral skills that might enhance their ability to excel in their professions—such as the various Knowledge skills—would have to be taken as cross-class skills, making them prohibitively expensive and limiting advancement in them. An Expert Guide, for example, has Survival as a class skill, and is thus likely to be much more proficient in the outdoors than a Commoner Guide, who would have to take it as a cross-class skill just to be half as proficient in it.

Thus, Commoners generally practice single Crafts, Professions, or other occupational skills in a narrow or basic way. Experts, on the other hand, incorporate theoretical, analytical, and experimental aspects into their work. Expert Entertainers write their own songs, poems, or plays; Expert Craftsmen develop new types of armor, weapons, and equipment; Expert Tradesmen develop new techniques for performing their jobs. Commoners, however, sing only the songs of others, create items patterned after the works of their betters, and rely on methods perfected by those who preceded them. Some Experts are better than others, of course; the worst have natural talent that sometimes shines through in their work, while the best have raised their vocations to the level of a true art or science.

A number of occupations are unlikely to have Expert versions, and in almost all cases fall to Commoners. Some Experts might have a few of the skills associated with such characters, of course—especially those who may have

started off as Commoners and eventually multiclassed as Experts.

It is certainly possible for a Commoner to reach a certain point in his career and then do this. It happens less often than one would think, however; once they have found a niche and are able to earn a decent living at their trade or craft, most Commoners see little reason to expend the additional effort to become Experts. Most of those with the ability or drive to be Experts start off in this class.

### Apprentices

Many sorts of Experts, especially Craftsmen and Tradesmen, begin their careers as apprentices, characters who enter a Trade, Craft, or Profession with little or no practical knowledge of it. On the day they begin that occupation, however, they do not start off with a base 24 points worth of skills, abilities, and knowledge. In fact, this level of ability (i.e., 1st level) generally represents four to six years of training.

About half of all apprentice Experts, in fact, would probably be apprentice-level characters who have not yet reached 1st level. Such characters have Attack Bonus +0, Fortitude Save +0, Reflex Save +0, and Will Save +1. They can have any one feat, in many cases representing a natural aptitude for some particular pursuit (Human Experts gain their bonus feat upon attaining 1st level).

Apprentices have a base 2d12–1 skill points, as determined by the GM or rolled randomly. Ability score modifications, if any, should be half of what they would normally

