



*Silly Sally Went to Town,
Cursing Every Thief Around*

Lavender Hack

Lead Design and Writing Phil Lewis

Additional Design and Writing Matt Bohnhoff (Magical Artifacts, Bestiary), Alhana Lewis (Folk, Bestiary)

Layout Phil Lewis

System Editing Mxtress Khan

Copy Editing Alhana Lewis

Art Sara Martinez (168, 171, 172, 173), Isaac Milner (70, 131, 134, 174), Francois Rabelais: *The Drolatic Dreams of Pantagruel*, 1565, Internet Archive Public Domain Collection

French Caption Translations Phil Lewis (Doesn't Speak French)

Playtesting/Feedback Jenn Lewis, Alhana Lewis, Ara Winter, Nick Hopkins, Jeremy Friesen, Aidan Friesen, Matt Bohnhoff, Daniel Lofton, Jenni Higginbotham, Isaac Milner, Geoff McCool, Jason Eley, Wilhelm Fitzpatrick, Leighton, Amalie McKee, Sage LaTorra, Paul Czege, Megan Bigbie, Pimp Daddy Maddie, Maximilian Strack, Gabi Savoie, Arwyn Lewis, Travis Jons, Ross McMillan, Elora O'Neil, Matt Ruddell

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Feedback and Discussion <https://rpggeek.com/rpgitem/306558/lavender-hack>

Playlist <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1niMC2MtD4FO21LOksRTHV>



Table of Contents

Core Rules	8
Getting Started.....	9
Ability Scores.....	10
Tests.....	11
Procedures.....	12
Minigames.....	14
Spotlight Player.....	15
Usage Dice.....	16
Running the Game.....	18

Characters and Company	20
Aspects.....	24
Invoking Aspects.....	26
Goals.....	27
Character Creation.....	28
The Company.....	28
Campaign Creation.....	29

The Strong	30
Core Concepts (d12).....	30
Backgrounds (d12).....	30
Starting Equipment.....	30
Starting Feats.....	31
Advanced Feats.....	31

The Deft	34
Core Concepts (d12).....	34
Backgrounds (d12).....	34
Starting Equipment.....	34
Starting Feats.....	35
Advanced Feats.....	35

The Wise	38
Core Concepts (d12).....	38
Backgrounds (d12).....	38
Starting Equipment.....	38
Starting Feats.....	39
Advanced Feats.....	39

Spells	40
Custom Spell.....	51

Valuables and Equipment	52
Valuable Types.....	52
Encumbrance Slots.....	53
Random Valuables.....	55

Appraisal.....	56
Company Resources.....	56
Gear.....	56
Food and Light.....	57
Fellowship.....	57
Equipment.....	58
Weapons.....	59
Qualities.....	62
Armor.....	62
Land Transport.....	62
Ocean Transport.....	62
Loans.....	63

Retainers	64
Retainer Descriptions.....	64
Retainer Types.....	65
Retainer Conditions.....	67

Exploration & Travel	68
Time and Distance.....	68
Roles.....	69
Exploration Sheets.....	70
Danger.....	70
Knowledge.....	70
Perception.....	72
Searching.....	74
Regrouping & Camping.....	76
Drowning & Falling.....	76
Fast Travel.....	78

The Wild	80
Wilderness Events.....	81
Wilderness Exploration & Travel.....	85
Searching a Wilderness Hex.....	86
Wilderness Regrouping.....	87
Wilderness Camping.....	88
Actions at Night.....	89

The Dungeon	90
Dungeon Events.....	91
Holding Portals.....	92
Dungeon Exploration & Travel.....	92
Searching a Dungeon Room.....	93
Light Torches.....	93
Re-balance Gear.....	93
Dungeon Regrouping.....	94
Dungeon Camping.....	95



Zounds! Sally Hath Cursed Me Wyth an Infynate Case of the Moonsdays!

The High Sea	96
Roles at Sea	96
Resources at Sea	97
Wind	98
Ocean Events	99
Ending Ocean Exploration	101
Encounters	102
Surprise and Initiative	102
Communicate	103
Encounters at Sea	105

Combat	106
Violence and Damage	106
Command	108
Support	109
Volley	110
Clash	110
Cast	111
Morale	112

Naval Combat	114
Command Crew	115
Naval Support	115
Maneuver	115
Fire!	116
Close Action	116
Naval Morale	117

Factions	118
Faction Classes	118
Folk	120
Culture	122
Faction Encounters	125
Disposition	125
Factioncraft	126

Court	128
Goals	128
Approaches	130
Greetings	132
Faction Trade	133
Diplomacy	134

Downtime	136
Towns	137
Sell Valuables	139
Level Up	140
Upkeep	140
Reset Character Goals	141
Town Growth	141
Downtime Events	141
Buy	141
Recover	142
Crafting	143
Research	144
Carouse	146
Retire	146
Towncraft	150



Alight and Hear Tell of My Fortune Beyond the Torturer's Demesne!



*Tammy Tortoise, Returning From Spurforge, Read With Some Alarm -
The Fruitful Void Had Indeed Been Filled*

Magic Items.....	154
Artifacts	154
Crafting Artifacts	156
Example Artifacts	158
Trophies	164
Crafting Trophies	164
Example Trophies	165

Flora, Fauna, and Fiends	166
Special Features.....	167
Open Game License.....	178
Other Credits	179

Core Rules

They'll certainly kill you if you show up back at the manor house. But you have no intention of going back. Who wants to barely survive, serving every sadistic whim of some wealthy asshole? Not you.

They say there are devils out there. Things that will suck the life force out of you and leave you as a drooling husk. Or maybe they spin lies to keep you here. Maybe you can learn new things from those so-called devils, and return to lay all these bastards low. Won't that be nice.

Or, maybe you'll be ripped apart or poisoned or fall in a pit. Better than spending one more second here.

Lavender Hack is a grand strategy fantasy role-playing game of **strict time records, mismanaged party resources, diplomatic incidents, magical mishaps, starving in the wilds, running out of light in a dungeon, facing mutiny on the high sea, and going broke** in service to your company's wild ambitions!

Hi! I'm Phil Lewis. I wrote much of the text and designed a few new widgets, but most of *Lavender Hack* is heavily inspired by other games. The big influences are *Whitehack*, *The Black Hack*, *Hot Springs Island*, *Macchiato Monsters*, *Fate Core*, *Dungeon Crawl Classics*, *Beyond the Wall and Other Adventures*, *Czege House Rules*, *Knave*, *Dreams of Adventure*, *The One Ring*, *Into the Odd*, *Sharp Swords and Sinister Spells*, *Ironsworn*, *Torchbearer*, *Dungeon World*, *Five Torches Deep*, *Perilous Wilds*, *Freebooters on the Frontier 2E*, *Adventurer Conquerer King*, *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, and *Old School Essentials*. I'm going to use these highlighted commentary sections to add more context. Skip them if you're just looking for rules.

Strict Time Records is a Gygaxian reference to the first edition *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Dungeon Master's Guide* which claimed

YOU CAN NOT HAVE A MEANINGFUL CAMPAIGN IF STRICT TIME RECORDS ARE NOT KEPT. There is some truth to this, but I've never been satisfied with the way time is handled in the various *D&D* editions.

One of this system's goals is to make time pressure and resource management central to the game while keeping the fiddly bits manageable. That's my jam. I wrote another game called *Wrath of the Autarch* which is fun if you want a deep dive on domain management. Word of warning: *WotA* is very fiddly, and feels more like a boardgame.

Another goal is to stay roughly compatible with the 1981 *Basic/Expert D&D* core popular in Old School Renaissance (OSR) circles. In particular, I'm interested in using hexcrawl content like *Barrowmaze*, *Hot Springs Island*, *Night's Dark Terror*, or *Dwimmermount* without too much pain.

Torchbearer and *The One Ring* both manage time in interesting ways, but aren't close enough to *B/X* to make that content easy to use. That said, those two are among my favorite RPGs, so if you haven't played them, you should!

What makes something compatible or easy to convert is a matter of opinion. In the case of *Lavender Hack*, most of the conversion involves an armor class change and using abstract values for treasure rather than a gold piece standard, both of which aren't too difficult to manage.

Getting Started

One player, the **gamemaster**, facilitates the game for the rest of the **players**, who each control a **character** they create. Characters in *Lavender Hack* explore a dangerous and fantastical world, inhabited by different **factions** to interact with. The characters form an adventuring **company** to escape their miserable existences and explore the world around them.

To play *Lavender Hack*, you will need 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 20 sided dice. The shorthand d20 refers to the twenty-sided die. The shorthand 3d6 refers to rolling three six-sided dice and adding the results together. The shorthand d100 refers to rolling two ten sided dice and using one die for the tens digit to generate a number from 1 to 100.

Each player will need a **character sheet**, and the group will need a **company sheet** and a **town sheet**. There are also **exploration sheets** which can be useful during exploration. All of these sheets are located at the back of the book, as well as at ziapeltagames.com.

What is this Game About?

This game is about characters who aren't afraid to travel into the unknown, and the impact that choice has on the society around them. Sessions link together to form a **campaign**. At the start of the campaign, the players create characters, a company, and a home town.

The company leaves home and explores the world, returning frequently to spend their findings, gain experience, learn more about the world, and recover from their injuries and trauma. Factions encountered during exploration have their own cultures and goals, which the company becomes embroiled in.

Bringing wealth into town creates new problems. A rapid influx of wealth creates winners and losers. New folk from around the world arrive in town looking for opportunity.

Factions probably won't appreciate this new attention, and the company will have to consider how their ambition impacts the larger world.



Astride His Plasmic Emu, Clever Noel Smells Trouble

Ability Scores

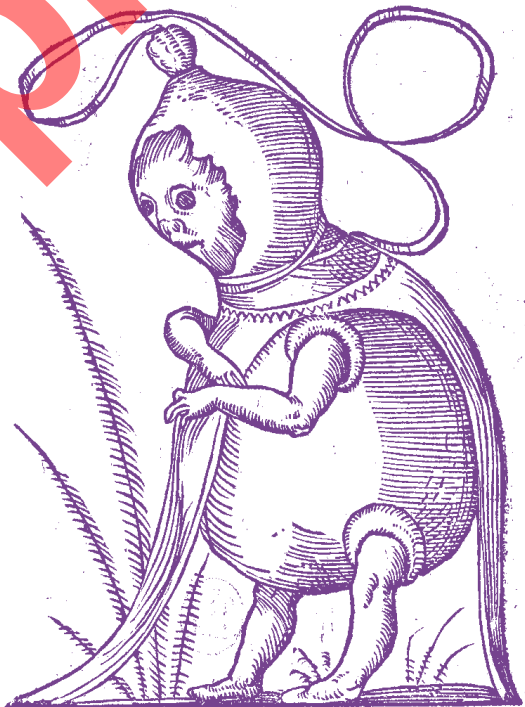
Ability scores are central to the game. They are the first thing you calculate when making a character. There are six, and they shouldn't be a surprise. Examples of when they're used are listed below.

- **Strength (Str)**
 - Swing a sword.
 - Kick down a door.
 - Climb a wall.
- **Dexterity (Dex)**
 - Shoot a bow.
 - Pick a lock.
 - Sneak past a guard.
- **Constitution (Con)**
 - Run a marathon.
 - Survive being poisoned or diseased.
 - Intimidate with a menacing glare.
- **Intelligence (Int)**
 - Read an arcane scroll.
 - Speak the language of the goatfolk.
 - Use logic to investigate a crime.
- **Wisdom (Wis)**
 - Train a horse.
 - Lead while under attack.
 - Craft a healing poultice.
- **Charisma (Cha)**
 - Charm with humor and fellowship.
 - Perform a play.
 - Spin a web of lies.

Ability scores range from **3** to **18**, and have modifiers between **-3** and **+3**. The modifiers are based on the ability score as follows.

Score	Modifier
18	+3
16-17	+2
13-15	+1
9-12	+0
6-8	-1
4-5	-2
3	-3

Ability score modifiers are more important than the actual score. If the game text says something like **add Con** or **+Str**, that means adding the ability score modifier, never the original ability score. The modifier added may be negative, thus lowering the result! Ability scores change over the course of the game, which may change the associated modifier.



Tinky-Winky the Strong
Str 18, Cha 3

Tests

The **test** is the core *Lavender Hack* mechanic, a d20 roll added to an ability score modifier.

If the total is **8 or higher**, the test **succeeds**. If it's below that number, the test **fails**. Frequently, finer granularity is needed beyond determining whether a test succeeds or fails. In that case, the following degrees of success and failure are used.

Total	Result
<i>Natural</i> 20	Critical Success
18+	Strong Success
8+	Weak Success
7-	Miss
<i>Natural</i> 1	Fumble

Natural refers to a d20 roll that shows the **exact** number in question, regardless of ability score modifiers. For example, if a player has a +2 modifier to a roll, and rolls an 18, the result is **not** a critical even though the total is a 20. Only an unmodified roll of 20 is a critical.

I wanted to keep the widely known d20 interpretations of 1 as a fumble or massive failure and 20 as a critical success. The roll under ability score OSR variants like *The Black Hack* or *Whitehack* are cleanly designed, but there's a ton of cultural inertia around what rolling a 20 means. I also like the historical precedent of rolling 3d6 straight down for ability scores during character creation. Using roll under tests with that ability score creation approach makes for wildly ineffective or overpowered characters.

Keeping modifiers between -3 and +3 and success on 8+ means that even very high or low ability scores aren't going to wildly skew success or failure. At worst, there's still about a 50% chance of success.

Advantage and Disadvantage

Some situations can result in a roll having **advantage** or **disadvantage**. If a player has advantage on a test, they roll two dice and take the highest result. If they have disadvantage, they roll two dice and take the lowest result. This frequently applies to tests (d20 rolls), but could apply to any dice rolls, of any dice type, as specified. If a player has both advantage and disadvantage on a roll, they cancel each other out and the die is rolled straight.

Keep Criticals and Fumbles!

Some situations may allow a player to modify a test result in various ways, or re-roll the result. This may allow a player to change a miss into a weak success or a weak success into a strong success. However, **fumbles and criticals can't be altered after the roll**. That's the result!

General Tests

A **general test** does not use any ability score modifier. It's treated as testing an ability score that is at +0.

Saves

Saves or **saving throws** are reactive tests. They work the same way as other tests, but they are driven by the gamemaster as a consequence of some action taken by the player.

For instance, if a venomous beast bites a character, they may have to save using their Constitution. As usual, an 8+ is successful. Degrees of success and failure may further distinguish results, although most saves only use success and failure.



Alfina the Kazoo Bard Holds Court

Procedures

Lavender Hack, like most role-playing games, consists of an ongoing dialog between players. The gamemaster gets the ball rolling by narrating scenes and situations that the characters find themselves in.

As this narrative unfolds, some situations trigger explicit steps. These steps are **procedures**. Most procedures use tests, and include fictional results for degrees of success and failure. If there isn't an entry for a particular degree of success, assume nothing happens. That's usually true for misses. Some procedures specify which ability score to use, with phrases like **test Str** or **make a Cha test**.

The choice of which procedure to use is not just up to the narrative, however! There may be multiple procedures that apply to a situation; some are simple and some are involved. Choosing which to use depends on what sounds fun and interesting to everyone at the table.

Most procedures are written from the perspective of the players rather than the gamemaster, because this game is about the player characters. When a procedure says *you*, it's referring to the player.

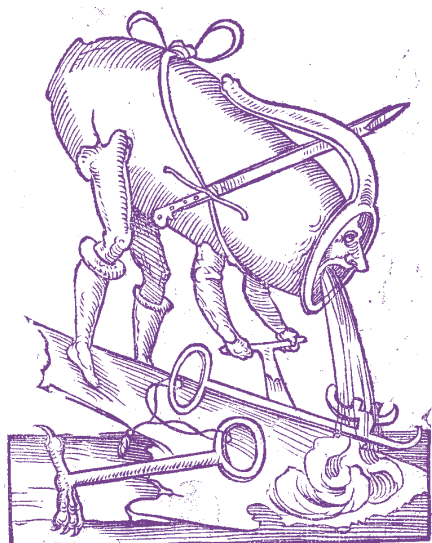
Overcome and Create Advantage

Overcome and **Create Advantage** are heavily used core procedures. They will become second nature.

Overcome

When you wish to accomplish a task that is both **uncertain** and **interesting**, narrate the specific approach and intent. The gamemaster describes the consequences for failure and determines which ability score to test. On a:

- **Critical**, the character has amazing success! Either the effect is much greater than intended or it takes less time than anticipated.
- **Strong success**, the character succeeds at the task.
- **Weak success**, the character succeeds at the task, but there's a complication of some sort! Resources are used or a different problem has emerged.
- **Miss**, the character fails at the task and suffers the consequences. They may not try again until the situation changes significantly somehow. Let failure ride!
- **Fumble**, as a Miss and whatever can go wrong, does! This is the worst possible result.



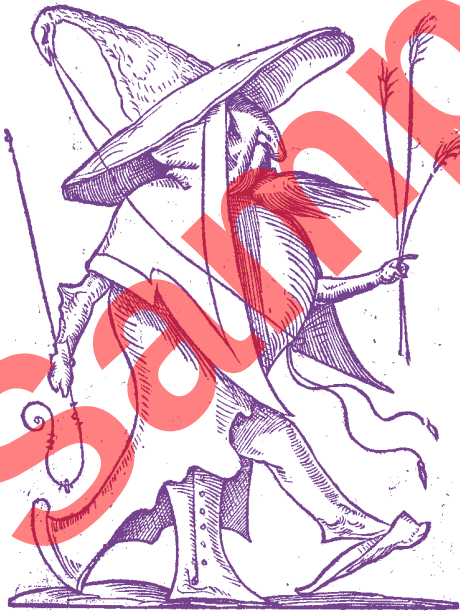
Boomy Overcomes a Rosé Hangover

Create Advantage

Choose an ally to help with a test. Helping takes the same amount of time as the target ally's action.

Narrate how your character is helping and test the most relevant ability. On a:

- **Critical**, the ally's test is made with advantage, and they receive an additional +4 on the result.
- **Strong success**, the ally's test is made with advantage, and they receive an additional +2 on the result.
- **Weak success**, the help is appreciated! The ally's test is made with advantage.
- **Miss**, there are too many cooks in the kitchen! The ally does not get advantage and no one else can create an advantage for this test.
- **Fumble**, you're doing more harm than good! The ally's test is made with disadvantage and no one else can create advantage for this test.



Wistandantilus, Sorcerer from the College of Wheat Wrangling



Can I Create Advantage Using Botfly-Wise?

Inevitably in role-playing games, one player wishes to help another one. Create Advantage was crafted for this reason. The name of this procedure, along with the name for Overcome, were stolen from *Fate Core*. The goal of Create Advantage is to provide an avenue for characters to help each other in a careful, deliberate manner.

Note that Creating Advantage takes as much time as the action the advantage is for. So, in combat, creating an advantage takes a short amount of time, since actions are measured in rounds of a few seconds each. During wilderness exploration, creating an advantage takes longer, since actions in wilderness exploration are measured in four-hour watches.

There are going to be times when helping doesn't make sense or should be impossible. But in general, the gamemaster should err on the side of letting players help each other. It's fun — and the create advantage procedure already encodes downsides to excessive helping.