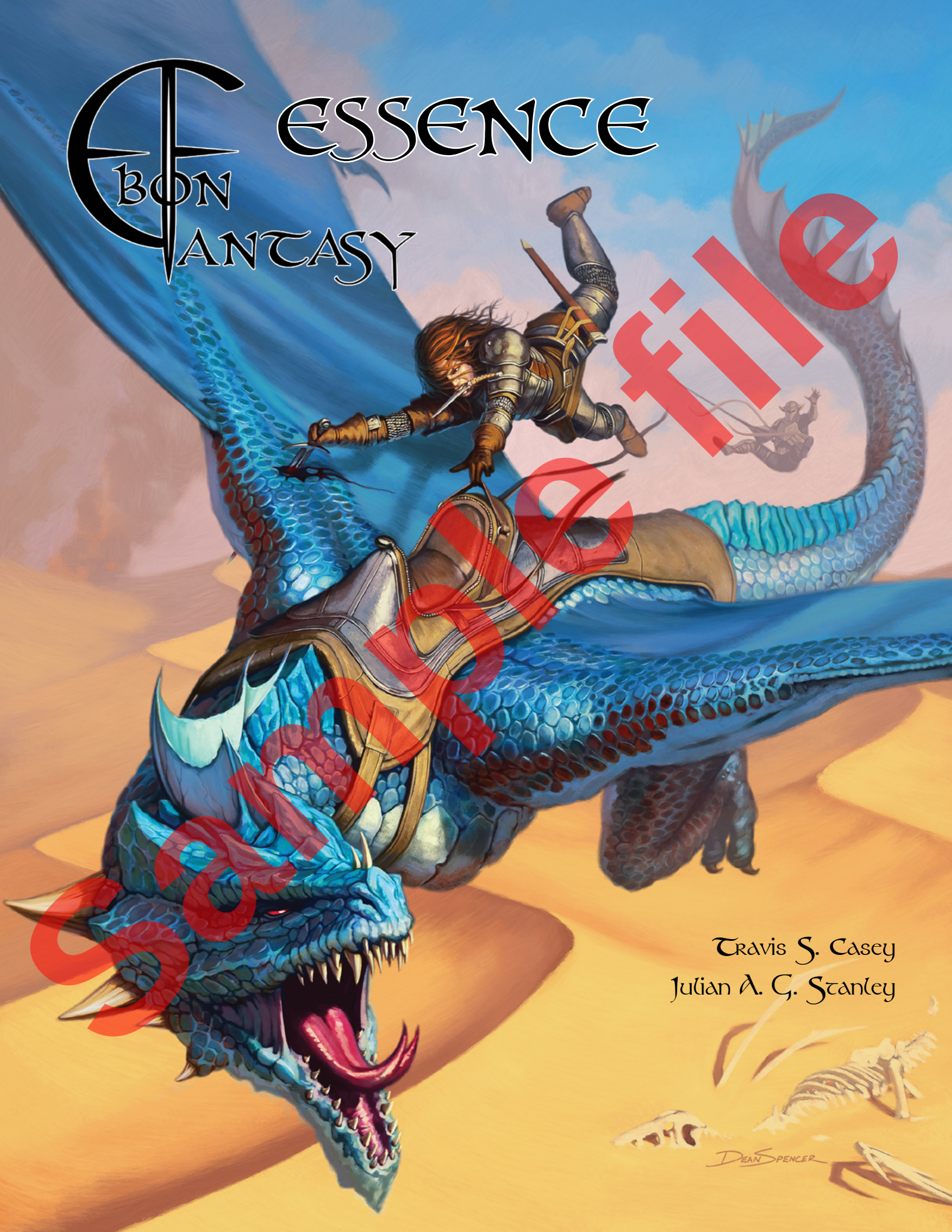


ESSENCE

BON FANTASY



Travis S. Casey
Julian A. C. Stanley

WHAT IS EBN FANTASY?

GM: The skeleton is attacking with its spear. What do you do?

Player: I'll defend with my scimitar.

GM: Okay. Roll the dice for your sword and add that to your defense. It gets an 8 on its attack-

Player: I got a 6 on my scimitar, for 24 defense.

GM: It's missing by 10, so you can inflict a major consequence on it. What do you want to do?

Player: Can I knock the spear out of its hands?

GM: Sure! It jabs at you with the spear, but you sidestep and put it aside with your scimitar, then stomp on the haft, tearing it from the skeleton's grip!

Player: Sweet!

Player (grimacing): I guess Malcolm'll try to grab the crocodile's mouth and hold it shut.

GM: Okay. Roll your attack, but don't add your weapon die.

Player: Ooh, I got a 6! Rerolling... 17 on the dice... 23 total.

GM: You beat its defense and got a major effect. <Writes grappled: major effect on a card and lays it down.>

Player: That's it? No complicated extra rules for grappling?

GM (smiling): Not in Ebon Fantasy!

GM: Your wyvern is falling, wounded by your foe's lance! What do you do?

Player: What can I do? I guess I have to jump to his as mine falls!

GM: Okay, it's going to be a Dexterity check. Acrobatics definitely applies... and I'll let you have Battle Tempo too.

Player: Okay... <rolls dice>, Ugh, 9, plus 8 for those, so 17. Is that going to make it?

GM: Nope!

Player: Can I succeed with a consequence?

GM: Sure! You jump. At the last moment, you realize you're just short, and your gloves won't give you a grip on its scales... drawing your sword, you plunge it into the wyvern's wing and hold on to the grip for life! Its motion whips you around! He's not expecting that, and his lance isn't useful with you this close, so I'll give you first action.

Player: I spend a Destiny Point for extra actions, to slice the belt holding him on and kick him off!

Do your games play like this?
Do you wish they did?

Ebon Fantasy is a modern gaming system designed to free your imagination! With a simple and flexible rules engine, it is designed to allow gamemasters and players to experience their fantasy games without the limitations of other systems.

Ebon Fantasy provides infinite customization to characters, creatures, magic, and magical items using traits—either chosen from those provided, or created by gamemasters and players. If you want a flexible tool kit for exciting games, Ebon Fantasy is for you!

Essence contains the core rules and a sampling of backgrounds, kindreds, and class specializations to start you off on your adventures!

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Gryphon
Games



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Credits

The Ebon Fantasy system is based on the Effect Engine, created by Sarah Newton.

Playtesters: Craig Barnes, Rhianna Casey, Josh Clark, J.T. Evans, Nathan Hamilton, Emily Powell, James Register, Calvin “CJ” Tyler Jr.

World Development: Craig Barnes, Rhianna Casey, Dani Marie Greisl, Savannah Hughes, Julian Stanley

Artists: Dave Allsop, Jacob Blackmon, Brian Brinlee, Travis Casey, Claudio Casini, Blake Davis, Camila Deon, Valerie Diaz, Gary Dupuis, Trixie Fabbrini, Rick Hershey, Alicia Jonas, Vagelio Kaliva, Indi Martin, Matt Morrow, Quico Vicens Picatto, Eric Pommer, Claudio Pozas, Joshua A. Reesor (TabletopTrolls.com), Dean Spencer, Nobu Tamura, Mariana Ruiz Villareal, Giedrius Visokas (in memorium of Darkzel)

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Visit ebongryphon.com/ebonfantasy for character sheets, pre-made characters to help players get started quickly, and additional specialties, kindreds, backgrounds, creatures, and more!

1: Introduction



Why Ebon Fantasy?

Why create yet another fantasy role-playing system? Aren't there enough already?

We love the concept of D&D, but the implementation has always left a lot to be desired. D&D often leaves GMs and players "in the lurch", asking questions like: "Can I use magic missile to push a lever from a distance?" or "How much can control winds speed up a sailboat?"

Go to any Internet forum about D&D, and you'll find many such questions, with the same answer repeated over and over: "It's up to the DM." That's not a problem itself—the benefit of a human gamemaster in tabletop RPGs is that they can be flexible in ways pre-written rules can't—but D&D offers no real support for this. Ebon Fantasy adds mechanics to give weight to GM (and player!) improvisation.

These are the important elements Ebon Fantasy adds:

- Successful checks generate **effect points**, which are used to create **effects**. These come in **ranks**, and can be used to represent things in the game world.
- Failed checks can generate effect points for the target to use, sometimes called **consequence points**.
- A negative effect is a **consequence**. In combat, attacks generate consequences, which can be injuries, status effects such as being knocked down, or status changes such as moving your opponent back.
- Instead of hit points and hit dice, characters have limited **consequence slots**, and **Resilience** they use to resist attacks or enhance their own checks.
- The concept of tiers of play is extended as **scale**, with qualitative differences in play as characters advance.

Story Comes First

The most important guiding principle is this: The rules exist to help you tell interesting and fun stories. When the rules get in the way, modify them! In particular, gamemasters should feel free to override things with common sense. A few specific pointers to keep in mind:

Effects apply if it makes sense. A CHOKER HOLD makes it harder to speak, so it should impact trying to persuade your foes to stop attacking.

Effects go away when it makes sense. A character who's been KNOCKED DOWN can simply use their action to stand up, no roll needed. On the other hand, a brief rest won't heal a WRIST FRACTURE!

You can use effect points in ways that make sense. If you're using a sword, you could have an opponent's blood spill, making a SLICK SPOT, or allowing the party mage to get some to use for a spell later. If your foe is wearing a fur cloak, hit them with a torch and set it ON FIRE! Imagination is the only limit for creating effects!

System Basics

For the most part, Ebon Fantasy works similarly to games based on the d20 System, but there are notable differences. In particular, our base roll uses three six-sided dice ("3d6") instead of the single twenty-sided die ("1d20" or just "a d20") used in the d20 System. Here's a quick overview of the mechanics; the detailed description starts with Checks & Tasks (p 58).

Action Checks

The core mechanic of Ebon Fantasy is the **action check**. You roll an action check as follows:

$$\text{total roll} = \text{base dice} + \text{attribute modifier} + \text{trait bonus} + \text{adjustments}$$

The total roll is usually compared to a **difficulty**. If the total roll is equal or higher, the check succeeds, giving a minor effect, and effect points equal to the difference.

$$\text{effect points} = \text{total roll} - \text{difficulty}$$

If the total roll is below the difficulty, the action fails. If it's five points or more below, the GM or the player of the target of the action can use the difference as effect points against the character who attempted the action. In this situation, we call them **consequence points**. Note that failure does not give a free minor consequence!

Base Dice

An action check is made by rolling three six-sided dice ("3d6" in gaming lingo). We call these dice **base dice** and treat them specially. If a base die comes up 6, a **bonus d6** is rolled and added in. If it comes up 1, a **penalty d6** is rolled and either added to the difficulty, or subtracted from the total roll. Both are equivalent mathematically, so whichever seems easier at the time. When adding penalty dice to the difficulty, the GM might roll them.

Only the three base dice cause more dice to be rolled. If a bonus or penalty die comes up 1 or 6, it does not add more dice to either side. So, the effective total of the dice ranges from -15 (all ones on the original roll, all sixes on the penalty dice) to 36 (all sixes on the base dice, all sixes on the bonus dice).

If you're rolling other six-sided dice in a check (for example, a **weapon die** if your character is using a weapon), you should roll them separately, or use dice that are distinct from the base dice, to make it easy to tell which are the base dice.

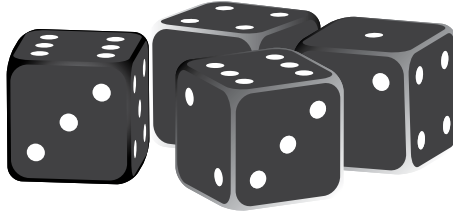
By treating base dice this way and using effect points, we don't need special rules for "critical successes" or "fumbles"—luck creates extreme rolls, which carry extra rewards or penalties naturally!

Example of Dice Rolling

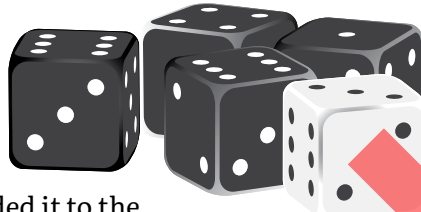
Aislynn rolls base dice for an action. They come up 6, 4, and 1, for a total of 11. However, since she has a 6 and a 1, a bonus die and a penalty die will be added.



First, she rolls the bonus die. She leaves the base dice in place, so there won't be any doubt what they were, and uses a die the same color, since these add up.



She's in luck—a 6! Her total is now 17. Since the bonus die is not a base die, she doesn't get another bonus die. Now, she rolls the penalty die for her 1, using a die of a different color.



It comes up 3. She subtracts it from her current total of 17, for 14. The GM could have rolled the penalty die and added it to the difficulty Aislynn's character was facing.

$$(17 - 4) - 10 \text{ is equal to } 17 - (10 + 4)$$

Either way, she's succeeding, with 4 effect points.

Effects

Effects represent outcomes of actions, even actions not made "on screen". They have a **rank** and a **description**. When you succeed at an action, you get a **minor** effect, and can use effect points to create more or upgrade the free minor. Heroic effects require **heroic scale**.

RANK	NAME	MODIFIER	EP COST
1	minor	±2	5
2	major	±4	10
3	extreme	±6	15
4	heroic	±8	20

Effects last as long as makes sense, or until removed. This might require a check, or it might not—the GM might simply allow it to be done.

EXAMPLES: A **WRESTLING HOLD** lasts until released, or until the target breaks free. A **BLAZING FIRE** lasts until it burns out or someone puts it out. A **STUNNED** character can use an action to try to clear his head, and, at worst, will recover in a few minutes. Someone who is **KNOCKED DOWN** can use their movement to stand up.

Injuries and Related Effects

An effect can be an injury, with higher ranks being worse. See *Injuries & Healing* (p 73) and *Determining Results* (p 60) for full details.

minor: BAD BRUISE, MINOR CUT, CONFUSED

major: MILD FRACTURE, FLESH WOUND, MINOR HALLUCINATIONS

extreme: SERIOUS FRACTURE, GAPING WOUND, PSYCHOTIC EPISODE

State Change Effects

Effects may change a creature's state in the game:

minor: draw/sheathe a weapon, dismount, lure/push someone a few feet, force a **usage die** roll (p 51)

major: mount up in combat, lure/push someone about ten feet, disarm, use up a **major resource** (like losing a coil of rope), reduce a **usage die** without rolling

extreme: break a weapon or shield, disable an ability (e.g., prevent a dragon from breathing fire, or a mage from casting spells!)

Environmental Effects

Features of, or changes to, the local environment can be represented as effects as well. Examples:

minor: MUDDY GROUND, WINDY, RAIN

major: SHIFTING SAND, HIGH WINDS, HEAVY RAIN

extreme: QUAGMIRE, GALE, DOWNPOUR

Other Effects

Spells are represented by effects. For example, a spell like D&D's *bleed* creates a minor effect assisting several people. A *shield* spell makes an effect raising Physical Defense. This can also apply to non-magical things: for example, if a party plans and prepares an ambush, that can be represented as an effect of **CAREFULLY-SET AMBUSH**. A fire can be represented with an effect of **ON FIRE**. With a little thought, you'll find effects useful for all sorts of things!

Boons & Consequences

Effects placed directly on a character can be called **boons** if they are likely to be positive for the character, and **consequences** if they are likely to be negative.

Characters have **consequence slots**: a minor, major, and extreme slot for physical consequences, and separate sets for mental and social consequences. To prevent consequences from piling up and becoming hard to track, consequences on characters are limited to these. Thus, if a character has a minor physical consequence and takes another, they combine into a major physical consequence, leaving the minor physical slot empty.

It should be noted that these slots are for long-term consequences like injuries. In particular, state change

consequences do not use slots—they simply do whatever they do, such as forcing the character to move, making them lose an item, etc.

There are also slots for boons. This is a single set of slots, rather than two sets. As with consequence slots, each slot can hold one boon of its level, and this is the limit on the number of active boons the character may have directly on them. The advancement **Additional Boon/Consequence Slot** (p 32) can give more.

Traits

Traits represent what would be skills, powers, feats, flaws, and so on in other games. A relevant trait lets you add a **proficiency bonus** when making a check. If the trait is only dubiously related, you might use *secondary* or *tertiary* proficiency bonus. If more than one trait applies, add +1 for each additional, to a limit of 2 x initial proficiency bonus (called **maximum trait bonus**).

Attributes

Ebon Fantasy uses a slightly different set of attributes from most fantasy RPGs. We list our attributes below, along with examples of when and how they are used.

Strength (Str) is the ability to move things, especially to do so quickly. You would use Strength to:

- pick things up or move them
- knock someone down
- slog through shallow quicksand
- break things
- see how far you can throw something

You would **not** use Strength to:

- hold your breath (Constitution)
- throw something accurately (Dexterity)
- run quickly (Dexterity)
- hold a slippery thing (Dexterity or Instinct)

Dexterity (Dex) is the ability to move your body and hands with precision, speed, and coordination. You would use Dexterity to:

- make sudden movements
- keep your balance
- throw or shoot accurately
- feel for something in the dark
- pick a lock

You would **not** use Dexterity to:

- defend against an attack (Physical Defense)
- attack with most melee weapons (Strength)
- hold a position for a long time (Constitution)
- spot something in the distance (Instinct)

Constitution (Con) measures health and endurance. You would use Constitution to:

- resist poisons and diseases
- determine how far you can travel in a day
- hold your breath
- perform strenuous exertion for a long time

- see how quickly you heal from injury

You would **not** use Constitution to:

- lift or carry a moderate weight (Strength)
- react quickly (Dexterity or Instinct)
- “take a hit” (Physical Defense)
- out-sprint someone (Dexterity)

Reason (Rsn) reflects one’s training and experience in formal logic and rote memorization, and their general level of education. You would use Reason to:

- cast arcane spells
- make detailed plans in advance
- figure out a code
- notice logical inconsistencies
- recall something learned via formal education

You would **not** use Reason to:

- cast divine spells (Instinct)
- make an emotional appeal (Presence)
- realize someone is very nervous (Instinct)

Instinct (Ins) is being “in tune” with one’s inner nature and the world around them. Predators use Instinct to choose potential prey, while herd animals use it to watch for predators and know when to sound a warning. Player characters would use Instinct to:

- “feel out” a social situation
- determine the intentions of other man-kin
- tell whether food is safe to eat
- cast divine spells
- see if a character recognizes subtle danger signs

You would **not** use Instinct to:

- persuade someone (Presence)
- get people’s attention (Presence)
- resist a mind-attacking spell (Mental Defense)
- figure out a way to span a chasm (Reason)

Presence (Pre) is one’s emotional impact on others. It’s not “likeability”—Presence helps you get a reaction, but getting a particular reaction depends on traits (yours or theirs!). Charming, beautiful people can have high Presence, but so can a drill sergeant everyone’s afraid of. You would use Presence to:

- get people’s attention
- intimidate them
- tug at their heartstrings
- pretend to be someone else
- inspire a group

You would **not** use Presence to :

- hide (Dexterity, maybe Reason or Instinct)
- understand someone’s motivations (Instinct)
- resist persuasion (Mental Defense)
- write up a formal legal pleading (Reason)

Sometimes no attribute is the correct thing to use. In particular, Physical Defense, Mental Defense, and Movement Allowance may be used instead in some situations. Traits may allow specific substitutions as well! See the Choose Attribute section (p 59) for more.

2: Making Characters



Here's an overview of the steps to create a character in Ebon Fantasy. You don't have to do the steps in order!

- Choose a Class and a Specialty in that class.
- Choose a Kindred and Background.
- Determine Attributes, dividing 74 points among them, with maximum 18 and minimum 8 in each.
- Choose an Advancement and customize Traits.
- Calculate Scores.
- Get Equipment (Starting Equipment, p 56).

Classes & Specialties

There are six classes available in Ebon Fantasy:

Arbiters are oriented toward knowledge-based and social abilities. They are often diplomats, sages, or investigators.

Channelers use their minds to directly manipulate the minds of others, the physical world, and Dream.

Devotees gain powers from divine, semi-divine, or demonic Patrons. Their relationship to a Patron sets special limitations on them, and acts as their specialty.

Mages manipulate the forces of arcane magic... and some utilize demonic magic.

Scoundrels make a living through deception, either via stealth and illegal entry, or social manipulation. Of course, some combine the two!

Warriors are skilled in physical combat and the ways of war. Some branch into commanding others, or into the fields of military intelligence.

Each class has specialties available, and you pick one of these with your class. You gain traits granted by both your class and your specialty.

Kindreds & Backgrounds

Your character belongs to a kindred. In Essence, the kindreds available are: elf, goblin, human, lizardfolk, and pelagleos. You can choose to be 'mixed-blood'. Kindred grants traits, and may also grant adjustments, such as special movement modes or size.

Background is the 'nurture' to kindred's 'nature', and acts similarly, also giving traits and adjustments.

Advancements & Customizing Traits

Advancements are traits you get to choose. At the start, you get one advancement. Select this from the traits of other specialties in your class, from another class, from general advancements available to all characters, or, with GM approval, from other backgrounds.

Players (and GMs!) can rename traits to fit character concepts. For example, the Devotee class covers not only "clerics", but also "warlocks", "paladins", and so on. If you envision your character as having a

bargain with a Patron instead of worshipping them, it would make sense to change the **Devoted** class trait to something like **Bound by the Pact**. It changes nothing mechanically—it still helps you keep your obligations to your Patron—but thematically, it's significant.

You can also switch one trait for a different one. If you do, it must be swapped for one from the same type of source: class for class, kindred for kindred, or background for background.

Calculating Scores

Your attributes help to determine other numbers you'll use in play. Here are the important ones:

- **Defenses: Mental Defense (MD)** is the middle score of Reason, Instinct, and Presence; **Physical Defense (PD)** of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. Add tertiary proficiency bonus to each: at first level, this is +1. If your character is Small, add +2 to PD and -2 to MD; if Large, reverse these.

EXAMPLE: Maribelle has Reason 16, Instinct 9, Presence 15, so 15 is the base for her Mental Defense. +1 for tertiary proficiency gives her MD 16.

- **Movement Allowance (MA)** is set by kindred. You might have multiple MAs, such as swimming and land. Normally, this will be a land MA.
- **Attribute Modifiers:** As a formula:

$$\text{modifier} = (\text{score} - 10) / 2, \text{ round down}$$

Within the range of starting PC attribute scores:

SCORE	MODIFIER	SCORE	MODIFIER
8-9	-1	14-15	+2
10-11	0	16-17	+3
12-13	+1	18-19	+4

- **Proficiency Bonus (PB):** +3/2/1 at first level.
- **Destiny Rating (DR) and Destiny Points (DP):** both start at 1. (Spending Destiny Points and Rating, p 60)
- **Resilience:** start with 1 Resilience point. Choose whether Physical and Mental Resilience dice are both d8, or one d6 and the other d10. (Spending Resilience, p 59).

Traits may modify these. Check to see if yours do! See Advancement on the next page for how these numbers change as your character goes up in level.

Fleshing Out Your Character

Personalize your character with a name, history, likes and dislikes, and so on. You can grant such choices mechanical weight with an advancement. If you do, it becomes a possible source of bonuses in play.

Advancement

Like many other fantasy roleplaying games, Ebon Fantasy represents overall character power in terms of **levels**. Characters normally start at level 1 (“first level”), and can advance up to level 10 (level 20 in the full rules).

How Do I Get Levels?

We use **milestone advancement**. That is, rather than keeping track of an exact amount of “experience points”, characters level up somewhat arbitrarily. The group should discuss when characters will level up, basing it on number of sessions played, time played, completion of story arcs, or similar considerations.

We suggest that the group all stay about the same level, even if some players have to miss sessions. This keeps all players feeling useful.

Based on the group decision, the GM should tell you when your characters level up. It’s best to do so at the end of a session, we feel, so that players can have time to consider how they want to advance their character.

What Do I Get?

As characters advance, these things change:

- Their **proficiency bonus** increases.
- They gain additional **advancements**, getting a new one at each odd-numbered level.
- They gain **destiny rating**, getting a point at each even-numbered level.
- Also at even-numbered levels, they gain an extra **attribute point** to spend.
- **Resilience** goes up by one each level.
- They gain **scale**, getting a new level of scale every five levels. In *Essence*, we include only a few epic-scale advancements.
- Their **attribute maximum** increases, going up by +1 each time they gain a rank of scale.

These are summarized in the **Benefits By Level** table on this page.

BENEFITS BY LEVEL

LEVEL (RESILIENCE)	SCALE	PROFICIENCY BONUS (PRIMARY/SECONDARY/TERTIARY)	ADVANCEMENTS	DESTINY RATING	ATTRIBUTE POINTS
1	adventurer	+3/2/1	1	1	74
2		+3/2/1	1	2	75
3		+4/2/1	2	2	75
4		+5/3/1	2	3	76
5		+6/4/2	3	3	76
6	heroic +1 to attribute max	+6/4/2	3	4	77
7		+7/4/2	4	4	77
8		+7/5/2	4	5	78
9	epic +2 to attribute max	+8/5/2	5	5	78
10		+9/6/3	5	6	79

Free from set class and subclass progressions, Ebon Fantasy characters can grow and change in many possible directions over the course of a campaign!

Example of Character Creation & Advancement

Let's walk through this quick! Travis is creating a character. The group has decided to play adventurers in the Kalirad, exploring the desert, plundering lost tombs, and trying to skate past the Empire's taxes on treasure in a sort of fantasy-Indiana Jones setup.

While other players are making Scoundrels, Travis loves to play mages, and thinks the goblin's **Seeker of Ancient Ways** makes good sense for this, giving his character a reason to be searching out lost artifacts. He writes down the traits and adjustments from Goblin and Mage:

Arcane Lore, Arcane Magic, Focus
Excellent Hearing, Flexible, Hardy, Seeker of Ancient Ways
+1 wealth level
move allowance 5, size Small

Now, what about Specialty and Background? He wants his goblin to throw fire around, so he decides Academy Mage fits that best. Looking over the backgrounds, he decides to make the goblin a Gnome (which is a culture rather than a kindred in Ebon Fantasy!). From these, he notes down:

Gnomish Magic, Profession Skill
Broad Knowledge, Intimidate the Ignorant, Metamagic,
Theory of Magic
wealth 1
native language: Puxatekor

Travis comes up with a name for his goblin-gnome: **Per Firehands**. He divides up the 74 points for attributes, calculating attribute modifiers as well:

Str 8 (-1), Dex 14 (+2), Con 12 (+1)
Rsn 16 (+3), Ins 14 (+2), Pre 10 (0)

Next is calculating other scores. The middle score of Per's Str, Dex, and Con is 12. Travis adds +1 (tertiary proficiency bonus) and +2 (Small size), for PD 15. For Mental Defense, the middle score of Rsn, Ins, and Pre is 14, and the modifiers are +1 (tertiary proficiency) and -2 (size), for a total of MD 13.

He notes +3/2/1 for proficiency bonus on the character sheet, along with Destiny Rating 1.

Travis decides that being able to use Mental Resilience to increase the power of spells is more important to him than being able to resist damage, and decides to make Per's Physical Resilience die be d6, and Mental be d10.

Then, Travis realizes he hasn't picked an advancement yet, and also needs to decide on Per's **Profession Skill**. He decides to take **Conjuration**, so Per will actually be able to conjure fire and other elements, and to trade out **Profession Skill** for **Illusions**.

That completes the first-level version of Per—well, other than buying equipment! You'll find that in *Starting Equipment Example* (p 57).



Travis also envisions Per having one eye, but doesn't want that to have a mechanical effect, so takes no trait for it.

Advancing Per

Over the next couple of months, Per levels up twice, to third level. If we look at the Benefits By Level table on the facing page, we see that Per:

- Now has 3 Resilience points.
- Still has "Adventurer" scale.
- Now has +4/2/1 proficiency bonus—that is, primary PB of +4, secondary of +2, and tertiary of +1.
- Has gained an advancement.
- Has gained a point of Destiny Rating.
- Has gained an attribute point.

For the advancement, Travis chooses **Shielding**, to boost Per's defensive capabilities. He puts the attribute point into Instinct, raising it to 15. Since that's Per's middle score among his mental attributes, that also raises his Mental Defense a point, to 14.

Later, Per advances to fourth level. Looking at the table, they gain a Resilience point, proficiency bonuses of +5/3/1, an attribute point, and another point of Destiny Rating. Travis decides to put the attribute point into Reason. That won't help immediately, he'll put another into it later. He also decides to **burn** a point of Destiny Rating to gain another advancement (p 60), and takes the general advancement **Use Mechanism**, so Per can take better advantage of the mechanisms another party member creates.

More on Middle Scores

Mathematically speaking, our "middle score" is the median. If two of the three scores are equal, the relevant Defense equals them. For example, among our example characters you can find on the website, Anrehinalu has Reason 16, Instinct 13, and Presence 16, so their Mental Defense starts at 16.

3: Kindreds



The example setting for *Ebon Fantasy* is called Tathir, and is home to many intelligent species of humanoids. In *Essence*, we only describe a subset of these for use as player characters, but the full rules have all of them (those included here are italicized):

Centaur: half-horse, half-human

Dwarf: short and thick, with powerful hands and a link to metal

Elf: naturally-magical exiles from Dream

Faun: goat-people with an instinctive link to nature

Goblin: once the most beautiful and magical of all, but struck down for hubris

Grim: elves twisted and mutilated by the magic of Externals

Halfling: created by demons as spies, with minor shapeshifting abilities

Human: curious, slippery-minded, and prone to crossbreeding with other kindreds

Lamia: created by Arel (p 25) to allow lizardfolk and others to indirectly interbreed

Lizardfolk: imported from another dimension by demons and Kalirad the Great (p 37)

Orc: engineered from goblins by demons

Pelagleos: the sea-folk, native to undersea areas; there are several types

Spiderfolk: created to replace the halflings, molded to be frightening to other kindreds

Therocephalian: mute animal-headed creatures created by wizards

Mixed-Kindred Characters

During character creation, you could have swapped out a trait from your kindred for one from a different kindred. By doing so, you create a “mixed-kindred” or “mixed-blood” character. In that situation, we call the main kindred you chose your base kindred, and the other your mingled kindred.

Most kindreds have a signature trait, indicated by italics in their description. Signature traits cannot be swapped out: you must keep your base kindred’s signature trait, and cannot take the signature trait of your mingled kindred.

You have the size and Movement Allowance of your base kindred. If your mingled kindred grants a special movement mode, you may “shift” points of Movement Allowance from one mode to another, but cannot be faster than either kindred in your ancestry.

You may use advancements to acquire other traits from your mingled kindred, but not their signature trait.

Languages

The full version of *Ebon Fantasy*’s language system allows for relationships between languages, multiple writing systems, and other details. While our system for handling this is simpler than you’d expect, it still takes a few pages for it and the brief descriptions of each language.

So here in *Essence*, we use a simplified version:

The number of languages your character can know depends on the higher of their Reason and Presence.

For each 4 points of the higher one, you can learn one language, script, or symbol system.

That’s it. The full rules allow for things like limited fluency, but we don’t deal with that here.

The spoken languages are listed in Regions, in the sidebar *Languages of the Kindreds* (p 33). Beyond those, there are:

The writing systems Dargic (used for arcane magic), Demonic Glyphs (similarly related to demonic magic), Dwarven Runes, Elven Script, Lakaran Alphabet (used in the Empire of Lakar), and Pelagian Script (used by deep-water Pelagleos).

The sign languages Locartem (used by minotaurs and other animal-headed creatures created by mages who do not have human-like vocal cords) and Ontapa (used by Thund centaurs and some Varthenas and Rothnirin people for silent communication when hunting).

Alchemists’ Symbols, Caravanseer Signs, and Military Signs—written symbols used by special groups to mark paths, trails, places to avoid, and so on. The Enneched Signs are similar, but used by ‘undesirables’ such as beggars and some traveling entertainers.

In the full system, it can cost less to learn a language if you already know a related one, and some writing systems and symbol systems cost less than 4 points to learn. Here, we simplify by having everything cost 4 points, so that if you move to the full system, your character may be able to learn more languages.

