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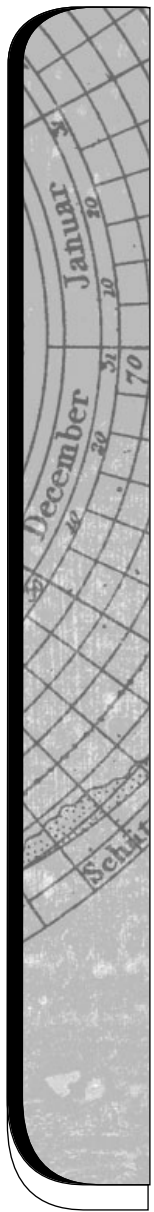
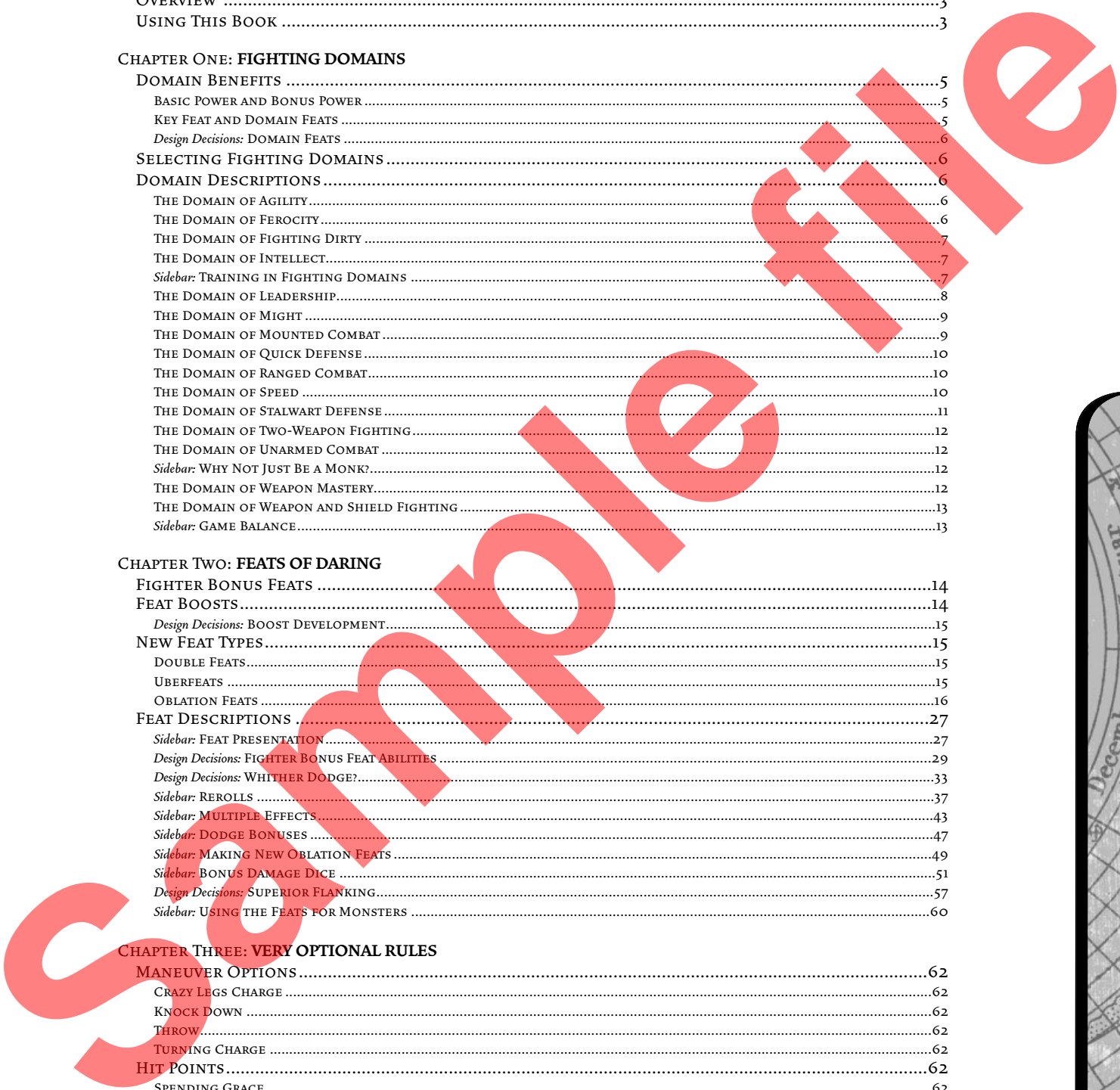
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Dangerous Designs

And then we were surrounded. I knew we had to fight our way out, but many of the others questioned whether “brute force” was the answer. When they approached the enemy under the flag of truce to parlay, they discovered that the cultists were actually all demons in disguise. My allies were murdered quickly, and all they gained for us was an even smaller fighting force. “Brute force,” I should have told them, “is indeed not the answer. Skill, bravery, and fortitude are the answer.” One way or another, they are always the answer.

—Dierna Hillerchaun, leader of the Knights of the Pale

When Malhavoc Press released *The Book of Experimental Might*, I was overwhelmed by how well it was received. Among those who did find fault with it, however, the most common criticism was that the book didn’t devote enough space to nonspellcasters. A few readers contended that the rules actually hurt the fighter class. (I pointed out this possible perception myself in the book, although I still contend that the class is quite viable.)

Still, the comment got me thinking.

Some readers wanted to know, “Why don’t fighters get disciplines?” Well, disciplines were designed to make spellcasters more like fighters, so the question makes no sense. *The Book of Experimental Might* de-emphasizes what are basically per-day abilities (spells) and gives characters with few or no per-round abilities the option of always having something to do. This isn’t an area where fighters need any help. They’re the kings of always having something to do—they’re ready to use their best attack every round.

Perhaps, then, what nonspellcasters needed was some per-day abilities that functioned like spells. A resource to manage. Except I’d already gone down this path with *Arcana Evolved*’s ritual warrior and combat rites.

So for this book, I designed a less intrusive solution. It’s not a whole new class, but a method of allowing fighters to “boost” their main power source—feats—a limited number of times a day. But I wanted a little more. I’ve always liked the idea that fighters (and anyone who does a lot of physical combat) specialize in certain styles. With 3rd Edition, this concept became workable with “feat chains” based on Power Attack, Combat Expertise, or Point Blank Shot, for example. I decided to take this a step further, though, and actually reward characters for focusing on one area. That’s how fighting domains were born.

Here’s something I want to be up-front about: This book makes fighters more complicated to play. I mention this because I do feel there needs to be a class for the player who doesn’t want to have a lot of abilities to keep track of or a lot of options to juggle. If you’re that player, this book might not be for you. At the very least, you might not want to adopt all the options presented here.

OVERVIEW

The book’s subtitle, “Bloody, Bold, and Resolute,” comes from *Macbeth*, my favorite work of Shakespeare. It’s probably my favorite because it was the first Shakespeare play I ever read long, long ago, and the first I ever saw performed. It’s also the best I’ve ever seen performed. Its dark, hard-edged nature appealed to me as a teenager, and it appeals to me still.

I think the line, “Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn the power of man, for none of woman born shall harm Macbeth,” is very appropriate to the fantasy adventurer.

(And it is spoken by an apparition conjured by a witch, so all the better.) Every fighter could do worse than to strive to be bloody, bold, and resolute. Bloody because he shouldn’t be afraid to get in there and take damage as well as deal it. Bold because fear and hesitation don’t get you the treasure. Resolute because your friends depend on you to go toe-to-toe with the enemy, not run away.

To help you achieve these three goals, this book centers around new feats and feat-related concepts. There are only three chapters.

Chapter One: Fighting Domains—This chapter presents the concept of fighting domains, which are basically feat groupings based on combat style. These domains reward characters for taking feats that all match a similar style.

Chapter Two: Feats—In this large chapter you’ll find a massive listing of new feats and updated core feats. The chapter introduces new concepts such as double feats, uber-feats, feat boosts, and special abilities for those who take a feat as a fighter bonus feat.

Chapter Three: Very Optional Rules—The book wraps up with a brief discussion of some potential gamebusting rules that nevertheless might be fun to try. In the *Books of Experimental Might*, these ideas are the most experimental of all.

USING THIS BOOK

You can, of course, use just some of this book rather than all of it. New feats are easy to introduce into any campaign. The design of this book does assume, however, that you are also using the rules from the first *Book of Experimental Might*, such as gaining a feat at every level and using Grace and Health points.

Contributors to *Book of Experimental Might II: Bloody, Bold, and Resolute*

About the Author

Monte Cook has worked professionally in the game industry since 1988 for companies including Iron Crown Enterprises, TSR Inc., and Wizards of the Coast. He is a codesigner of *Dungeons & Dragons*® 3rd Edition and author of the 3rd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*. He has designed dozens of popular roleplaying books through his own company Malhavoc Press and also has authored miniatures games, novels, comic books, and short stories.

About the Illustrators

Self-taught cover artist **Michael Komarck** has worked as a projectionist at the local cineplex, a children's book illustrator, graphic designer, and owner of a small publishing company. Since 2003 he has illustrated covers for fantasy authors including Robert Asprin and George R.R. Martin and many game companies. Visit www.komarckart.com.

Caleb Cleveland is a 2d concept artist and illustrator whose designs have been seen in roleplaying publications, interior design catalogues, on stage, on film, in furniture showrooms, and in the proposals of marketing and advertising companies. Caleb lives in Irvine, California, with his beautiful wife Karen. View samples of his artwork at his website www.calebcllevelanddesign.com.

Leeds, England, illustrator **Kev Crossley** learned early on that a monster lived in the abandoned house down the street—after that, he saw monsters everywhere. He drew them all the way through school, but in art college and university he was told to stop. After getting a job in computer games, however, people started paying him to draw monsters. The moral of the story? Art college and university were a waste of time. Check out his work at www.kevcrossley.com.

Scott Purdy, a UK-based illustrator, has a great love of horror, evil, and all things tentacular. He wills clients his way if they have need of nasty critters to bring to life. You can see more of Scott's work at www.scottpurdy.net.

Seattle-based illustrator **Sam Wood** is well known in the roleplaying and electronic game industries. While a staff artist at Wizards of the Coast, Sam illustrated *Dungeons & Dragons, Magic: The Gathering*, and many other games. In addition to Malhavoc Press, he's worked for a wide range of companies, from *Green Ronin* to Microsoft.

Born and raised in the Australian coastal city of Darwin, illustrator **Kieran Yanner** came to the U.S. at the age of twenty to pursue his dreams. With some hard work and many a sleepless night he has amassed a broad client base from around the world and has produced creative works for a number of leading entertainment companies. See more of his work at www.kieranyanner.com.

Malhavoc Press

Malhavoc Press is Monte Cook's roleplaying game imprint devoted to the publication of evocative elements that go beyond traditional fantasy. Malhavoc products such as *Ptolus*, Monte Cook's *Arcana Evolved*, and *The Complete Book of Eldritch Might* exhibit a mastery of the 3rd Edition rules that only one of its original designers can offer. Current titles are available to purchase in print or electronic (PDF) format at www.montecook.com.

Like the material in that book, the contents of this one is of a more tentative nature than that of most previous Malhavoc Press releases. It really stretches some of the central concepts from the Core Rules. It introduces all-new ideas that take things in fresh directions. It might not mix well in your games with non-core material. DMs should carefully consider everything they read in this book and feel free to experiment with it themselves.

Throughout *Book of Experimental Might II*, all references to spells, feats, and other rules not in this book come from the v. 3.5 revision of the three Core Rulebooks: the *Player's Handbook*, *DMG*, and *MM*. This sourcebook is protected content except for items specifically called out as Open Gaming Content on the title page. For full details, please turn to the Appendix on page 64. Open content is not otherwise marked in the text of this book.

As I did in *The Book of Experimental Might*, I've annotated these pages to show you not only what rules I have added, but why. You'll find numerous asides, many of them set apart as sidebars, that

explain why I use a particular new rule or suggest some things to consider if you're thinking about using it.

This book is not a condemnation of the Core Rules. It simply provides ideas and material for doing something new with them, just for fun. It's not a "fix," because, in my opinion, nothing in the Core Rules is really all that broken. Instead, consider these chapters some new options designed for people who are really familiar with the rules—so familiar, in fact, that a new spin might make for a refreshing change.

Monte Cook
April 2008

Fighting Domains

When you are sizing up your opponent, it's not enough just to see what weapon he uses. It's more important, in fact, to figure out how he's going to use it. A longsword in the hand of a ferocious beast of a man is a completely different weapon than one in the hand of someone with finesse. Both can be deadly, of course, but in different ways.

—Tiel Lawley, battle cleric

Also called styles, schools, or foci, fighting domains allow characters to concentrate their efforts on one method of combat and gain additional benefits from this specialization. Each domain represents a different method of fighting. Some domains focus on offense, some on defense, and some on a combination of the two. But in any case, domains reward characters—particularly fighters—for focusing on just a few styles of combat.

Just as a cleric domain includes a set of spells appropriate to its overall concept, fighting domains contain collections of feats along a given theme. There is some overlap in concept—and, in fact, overlap in feats—offered by each domain. For example, the similar domains of Speed and Agility both share a few qualities with the domain of Quick Defense. Still, each fighting domain is distinct and special, providing characters with unique powers as well as thematic feat offerings.

Characters gain access to domains based on their class (see next page). Fighters have the easiest access and are likely to gain the largest benefit from them.

DOMAIN BENEFITS

Each fighting domain offers a basic power and a bonus power to those who select it. They also include a key feat and domain feats grouped around a particular concept.

BASIC POWER AND BONUS POWER

When a character chooses a fighting domain, he immediately gains that domain's basic power, which is called out in the domain's description.

Characters who have selected eight of the feats associated with the domain also receive its listed bonus power. One of the eight feats must be the domain's key feat. (However, having the key feat is not required to access a domain's basic power.)

KEY FEAT AND DOMAIN FEATS

The key feat is simply a feat that makes a good first choice for those who select the domain. It is often a prerequisite for many of the domain feats, and having it is required for a character to gain the domain's bonus power.

Each domain has a dozen or so domain feats. All of these are available to take as regular feats or fighter bonus feats, as long

as a character meets the prerequisites. There are no restrictions on taking feats outside the domain. In fact, some domain feats may have prerequisite feats that lie outside the domain.

The main benefit of taking domain feats comes when the character has collected eight feats from the same domain; this total qualifies him to receive the domain's bonus power, as described above. Taking the same feat twice, which is allowed for some feats (such as Weapon Focus), counts as two different feats. A double feat or an uberfeat (see page 15) counts as only one feat.

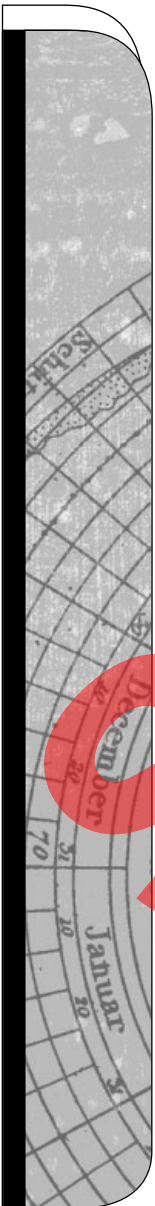
DMs who allow feats from other books are free to add more options to domain feat lists. The size of a domain feat list does not appreciably affect the domain's overall value.

RESELECTING DOMAIN FEATS

Another benefit of choosing domain feats is that characters can swap out a particular feat for another one that might be more helpful in a particular situation. A character may trade one feat for another within the same domain at no cost, as long as he has access to the domain in question. Switching one's domain feats takes one full day of practice, study, and preparation for each feat a character wishes to swap. He must still qualify for all his feats (i.e., he must have all prerequisites) and, once he has made a swap, he retains that feat assortment until he reselects again. A character can never switch out a domain's key feat.

For example, Hyurth is a 12th-level fighter with the Might and Stalwart Defense fighting domains. Hyurth has the following domain feats from the Might domain: Athletic, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Power Charge, and Knock Back. Before going on his next mission, Hyurth can change some of his feats. He cannot swap Power Attack for anything else, as it is the Might key feat. He cannot trade in Improved Bull Rush without also losing Knock Back, because the former is a prerequisite of the latter. But with little fuss, he could swap Athletic for Great Cleave, or Power Charge for Knock Down. Each trade would take one day, as Hyurth refocuses his training to utilize his might in different ways.

While feat reselection is unlikely to happen too often, it gives the fighter something to do while he waits for the wizard to identify items, prepare scrolls, copy spells into his spellbook, or whatever it is that those mages do with their time.



Design Decisions: Domain Feats

Not all the feats on the domain feat lists are the kind of feat you'd want to be saddled with forever. This flexible assortment is intentional and is meant to work hand in hand with the fighter's ability to reselect domain feats. Strikes From All Around isn't handy if you know you're going up against a lot of undead, for example. Even old stand-bys like Cleave aren't useful on every adventure.

Characters cannot swap double feats or uberfeats (see Chapter Two: Feats of Daring).

This ability is designed to work alongside the rules in Chapter Three of *The Book of Experimental Might* that allow characters to swap a feat that they have not used during the preceding level for another at the time they gain a level. While reselecting as described here works well for feats within the same domain, the previous swapping rules can apply to feats that lie outside a single domain. Note that characters who swap out a key feat in this fashion lose access to the domain's bonus power.

SELECTING FIGHTING DOMAINS

All fighters should pick a fighting domain at 1st level. At 9th level, they choose a second domain. At 17th level, they get a third.

While fighting domains are primarily the purview of fighters, other classes can use them, too, if the DM allows it. Some classes may gain access to a single fighting domain if they give up some class abilities, as follows:

- A **barbarian** that gives up the improved uncanny dodge ability can select a fighting domain at 5th level.
- A **monk** that gives up the improved evasion ability can select a fighting domain at 9th level.
- A **paladin** that gives up the remove disease ability (at all levels) gains a fighting domain at 6th level.
- A **ranger** that gives up the animal companion ability gains a fighting domain at 4th level.
- A **rogue** that gives up the improved uncanny dodge ability can select a fighting domain at 9th level.

Otherwise, nonfighters must spend a feat slot to select a fighting domain and gain its basic power. They must be at least 10th level to do so. Nonfighters can then earn the fighting domain's bonus power by selecting domain feats as a fighter would (but, of course, they do not get the fighter bonus feats that a fighter does).

Nonfighters cannot select double feats or uberfeats (see Chapter Two: Feats of Daring).

Monsters without appropriate class levels should not have access to fighting domains.

DOMAIN DESCRIPTIONS

The following is a list of the fighting domains available. DMs could create more if they wish, but these fifteen domains cover most standard fighting styles.

It's possible that exotic races or cultures could have their own domains. Dark elves might have a domain based on trickery, for example, or a winged race could develop one based on aerial combat.

Throughout this section, in the descriptions of the basic and bonus power for each domain, all references to "level" refer specifically to a level in the class that granted the domain.

All the key feats and domain feats listed in these descriptions are detailed in Chapter Two.

THE DOMAIN OF AGILITY

You have trained to utilize your speed and reflexes to improve your ability to strike foes when and where they are the most vulnerable.

Characters often use lighter weapons with this domain—they are sometimes seen as fencers. Those with this domain almost always have high Dexterity scores but not always high Strength scores. Fighters and rogues often train in this domain.

The Nidaris school in the Dragonsbirth Mountains is one of the foremost training facilities for Agility, but no one is allowed within the fortress-school without a written recommendation from an instructor or a graduated student. "Alacrity over brutality" is their motto.

Humans, elves, halflings, and gnomes typically prefer this style more than do the other major races.

Basic Power: You can choose to add a competence bonus to your melee attack roll three times each day. The competence bonus is equal to +1 plus an additional +1 for every three levels. You cannot use Power Attack on the same round as you use this power.

Bonus Power: When you are struck in melee combat, you can immediately make an attack against the foe that struck you as a free action, as if making an attack of opportunity. You can use this power three times per day. This counts against the total number of attacks of opportunity you can make in 1 round.

Key Feat: Weapon Finesse

Domain Feats:

- Agile
- Astounding Dexterity
- Canny Strike
- Careful Eye
- Careful Strike
- Combat Reflexes
- Crippling Strike
- Draw Attack
- Fencing Master (uberfeat)
- Full Opportunity
- Light as a Feather
- Light Weapon Mastery
- Rapid Strike
- Sudden Attack (double feat)
- Uncanny Agility

THE DOMAIN OF FEROCITY

You have trained to release your inner beast. You kill foes quickly and savagely—woe to anyone who stands in your way.

Characters with this domain typically (but not always) wear light armor and wield large weapons. They prefer melee to ranged combat, and they usually have high Strength and Constitution scores.

A focus on this domain usually requires a journey into the deep wilderness, for the greatest teachers live far from civilization for fear of losing control of their own inner beast. Their training often includes a mystical spirit-quest in which the student must confront the animal inside them—literally.

Humans, half-orcs, and the rare dwarf are devotees of this fighting domain.

Basic Power: If you take a –2 penalty to attack rolls and hit a foe in melee combat, you can daze that foe for 1 round, due to your ferociousness. The target may attempt a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + half your level + your Strength modifier) to resist. You can use this power once per day plus one additional time per day for every three levels.

Bonus Power: All foes within 30 feet of you must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 + half your level + your Charisma bonus) or become shaken for 1 round plus 1 round per four levels. You can use this power once per day plus one additional time per day for every three levels.

Key Feat: Berserk Attack

Domain Feats:

- Accept Attack
- Diehard
- Endurance
- Greater Increased Vigor
- Improved Initiative
- Increased Vigor
- Large Bruiser
- Leap Into the Fray
- Master of the Inner Beast (uberfeat)
- Outlast Foe
- Small Scrapper
- Smash and Grab
- Terrify
- Unnerve
- Wild Swing

THE DOMAIN OF FIGHTING DIRTY

You do what you need to do get the job done, and in this case the job is winning the fight. You aren't interested in honor, tradition, or nobility—you're a scrapper and a backstabber, and that's why you're still alive. There's no such thing as an unfair fight.

Characters devoted to this domain typically wear light or no armor and use one-handed weapons, or fight with two weapons. However, you never know who's going to turn out to be a dirty fighter. Fighters and rogues typically favor this domain moreso than other classes, but barbarians and even rangers might use it as well. A paladin likely will not.

A paladin likely will not.

Fighting dirty is usually taught on the streets and dank alleyways of the less pleasant parts of town. Fister Allet is a difficult man to find, but if you know the right people in the wrong sections of Dohrinthas, you might find him as a teacher—if he doesn't rob you and leave you for dead, that is.

Of all the races, humans, halflings, and half-orcs are the most common dirty fighters, although the occasional half-elf and gnome may utilize some of its tricks.

Basic Power: Whenever you knock a foe prone in melee (including if you slay him or knock him unconscious), you get to make an attack of opportunity on that foe immediately. This counts against the total number of attacks of opportunity you can make in 1 round.

Bonus Power: If a melee opponent in your threatened area does anything other than attack you or use full defense on his turn, you may attack him on your next turn as though you were flanking him—with a +2 bonus to attack rolls and the possibility of a sneak attack.

Key Feat: Distraction

Domain Feats:

- Blinding Strike
- Canny Strike
- Careful Eye
- Deafening Strike
- Debilitating Strike
- Hamper Defense
- Hamper Movement
- Hampering Shot
- Low Blow
- Paralyzing Blow
- Pinning Shot
- Punishing Blow
- Quick Poison
- Right Bastard (uberfeat)
- Unexpected Blow (double feat)
- Unexpected Shot (double feat)

THE DOMAIN OF INTELLECT

Brains over brawn, you always say. You focus on how best to use your weapon, not on how hard you hit, for you know that the proper strike in the proper place can be more valuable than a hundred lesser blows.

Characters focused upon the Intellect domain use many different types of weapons and armor, because it is the mind of the wielder that is truly important. They are quite skilled at both offense and defense. Typically, students of this domain have high Intelligence

Training in Fighting Domains

Many DMs will want to enforce some kind of training regimen for fighters, or anyone with a fighting domain. This is the kind of thing the character can do while the wizard is copying spells into his spellbook or scribing scrolls. Generally, one day per level upon gaining each new level might be appropriate.

Failure to continue training means a temporary loss of all domain basic and bonus powers until the training is completed. In addition, at 1st, 3rd, and 5th levels, at least one day of training should be with an instructor of higher level. This typically costs 5 gp or 10 gp per day. After that time, characters can train again on their own. Instructional manuals can take the place of a trainer in a pinch. Whenever possible, the DM should try to be casual in the enforcement of these training "rules" to fit the flow of the campaign.