

SPELLCRAFT & SWORDPLAY

BASIC GAME

FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING

BY JASON VEY

This work is respectfully dedicated to the memories of Dave Arneson and E. Gary Gygax.

Acknowledgements: Philotomy Jurament and Old Geezer, on RPG.Net, for great comments and interpretations of the rules that inspired this game, Matthew Finch and Stewart Marshall, for getting the whole “retro-gaming” phenomenon up and running in a big way, and Daniel Proctor for taking it a step further with the first shot at the B/X version.

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Acknowledgements: Marv Breig, Matt Slepín and James Maliszewski for great reviews, Internet discussion board presence, and aiding in word of mouth. Special Thanks also to Roger Calver, Bill Coffin, Joseph Goodman, Shane Hensley, and George Vasilakos, for opportunities, advice, and support.

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BOOK ONE:
SWORDSMEN AND SPELLSLINGERS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *Spellcraft & Swordplay Basic Game*! This free PDF and minimally priced print version gives you the bare essentials to get up and running with S&S, including full (if limited and streamlined) rules. This book gives you everything you need to play as one of the four core classes up through level 3. To take the game beyond that, you'll need to purchase either *Spellcraft & Swordplay Revised*, or *Spellcraft & Swordplay Deluxe Edition*.

"Why do this?" you ask. Well, a lot of the old school movement's publishers are giving away free PDFs of their games. We feel that S&S is uniquely suited for new players, being easier and more streamlined than many of the games on the market today, and we really think that once you get a taste of this basic game, you'll want to buy the full version, which includes tons of extras like Elite Paths (specialized character classes), background skills, rules for naval combat, a ton of additional monsters, and level progression all the way to level 10 and beyond!

So please enjoy this Basic Edition of *Spellcraft & Swordplay*. We hope it brings you tons of enjoyment for a long time to come.

WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

A role-playing game, or RPG, is an exercise in collective storytelling, similar to improvisational theatre, except you don't actually get up, run around, and act out your part (at least, not in this type of RPG). Rather, you narrate what your character says and does. It's similar to what computer role playing games, except less limited; your imagination substitutes for your keyboard, which means your options are more open than in a computer-based game. Storylines can also be more complex and personal in a pen-and-paper game. That isn't to say one is superior; they're just different, though they have some of the same roots.

Each player in an RPG controls a single character. Your character could be a sword-swinging swashbuckler, a pious faith-healer, a nimble, sly rogue, a white-bearded, wizened mage, or just about any other fantastic archetype you can imagine. The statistics listed on your character sheet define his abilities and limitations. You can have your character do anything you like within those limitations, but you should try and play him as a *character*, with a background and consistent personality, like a character in a book or movie.

There is one player, the Referee, who doesn't just control a single character. The Referee is the final authority on the rules of the game. He controls everything in the game that is not a player character (PC), from monsters to non-player characters (NPCs) such as barkeepers, merchants and kings, to the gods and the weather. The Referee is the grand storyteller of the game. He sets the stage, presents challenges and goals for your characters to overcome and achieve, and adjudicates the rules of the game. The Referee/player relationship isn't adversarial, however; while he portrays your characters' enemies, he also portrays their allies. It's his job to set the stage and help tell the story. He's

your best friend and your worst enemy on the road to adventure, glory, and legend.

If you're ready to take on the role of Referee, let your imagination run wild. It would take a long volume unto itself to even begin to touch on the techniques of being a good referee; spinning a good story and letting your players have a big hand in the telling is no small task and for many it takes years to master. Some never do. Some take to it like a fish to water. This booklet makes no claims to be any kind of definitive guide to mastering a game. There are resources out there for that, if you look, but herein we seek to give you the tools to find your own way and style, a tricky and sometimes frustrating, but rewarding path. Here you'll find rules to interpret and adjudicate. Take ideas from your favorite books, movies, or even paintings. Come up with a goal and allies and adversaries for the PCs to meet and overcome, determine an ideal path for them to achieve that goal, and make notes about other paths they might take, for if there's one thing to remember as Referee it's this: *your players will always do the unexpected*. Never force them on a preferred path just because you haven't scripted another. Improvisation is a skill every Referee must learn. Encounters can be transplanted; just because the players take the swamp road instead of the mountains doesn't mean they can't still encounter the troll guardian. It's just that now perhaps he guards the only ford crossing a deep, smelly bog rather than guarding the mountain pass. Be flexible and don't force your characters onto a given path. Likewise, as players, your job is to cooperate and not deliberately try to throw the game out of whack or off the tracks. Sometimes you do what we refer to as "hopping on the plot train" because you understand that's the best thing to do for the game, because this is the way heroes in books and movies do it and even though it seems obvious, it'll probably lead to a rousing good time down the road.

What is here is intended to present a minimalistic rules-set that grants fast play in a style that is both "old school" and "cinematic." S&S is divided into three volumes:

Book One: Swordsmen and Spellslingers is the section you're reading now. It details the process by which characters are created. Don't worry if you see terms that seem unfamiliar or in need of explanation; just note them and in Book Two, most likely, they'll be explained. For now, just get your character on paper. That way when you hit the rules, you'll have all the figures you need to reference right in front of you.

Book Two: Combat and Confrontation details the rules of play, covering ability checks and combat systems, as well as advice on how to run a game.

Book Three: Monsters and Magic includes a bestiary and information on treasure. This one is mostly for the Referee, who will be running the game.