

GUIDELINES & EXPECTATIONS

These guidelines cover both online and round the table play. It is an 'organic' document, which may change or be added to when situations or rules arise that may need addressed.

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1. Character Creation

- Ability scores - Standard array (15, 14, 13, 12, 10, 8) or Point buy. List of point buy stats here: <https://tinyurl.com/DnDPointBuy>
- Races, classes, and backgrounds should come from published Wizards of the Coast publications: *Basic Rules*; *The Player's Handbook* (especially those new to the game). Options from *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* (both owned by DM) and adventure modules should be discussed and agreed with the DM and will be considered if the DM owns the relevant book and it fits the setting.
- No evil aligned characters. Alignment shifts might take place in game only if appropriate to story arc and character actions. Please don't come in expecting to murderhobo your way through a game. It isn't this DM's style. NB. Alignment change might mean the PC becomes an NPC and a new PC having to be made.
- Background
 - Up to 1 page A4 for new PC, up to two pages if the PC is transferring from another game, where events might have an ongoing influence. Can be bullet points.
 - Fits in with Forgotten Realms, and / or DM's homebrew world (the two crossover in this).
 - Physical description, incl. usual everyday clothing.
 - Family
 - Loves; Hates; Fears; Wants.
- Feats - Only if indicated as option by DM, free feat at level 1. Further feats can be taken later where the option is given to do so when ability scores are increased.
- Unhappy with how your character plays after a few sessions or more? - speak to DM to discuss any within rules or in-game story tweaks which might help.
- Have a spare character prepared, just in case!

2. Levelling up

- Experience points, given for combat (XP is not necessarily dependent on killing things - also "routing or capturing" (p260DMG) or negotiation, stealth, intimidation, for instance), and key non-combat (RP) encounters handled well or imaginatively. If an NPC has 'substantially' helped a party that NPC may be counted among the party in terms of XP calculation.
- Players may end up with different XP / levels to each other but should not be more than 1-2 levels apart. (See DMG p260)
- XP for each session divided amongst number of players present.
- If absent, player receives XP for the encounters their PC was involved in minus any bonus XP (eg. RP, participation, clever play).
- New players join at the bottom of the lowest level PC (*or at same XP as lowest player**).
- Upon character death (or departure, agreed with DM), new character joins at the bottom of the level of their previous character (*likely to change to join at same level - why punish a player for death?**).
- Where a key story point has been made, milestone levelling may also apply and everyone will level up regardless of their XP.
- Applying the Level up
 - Weekly or fortnightly games - Apply the HP, Hit Die, Spell slot increase, after short rest. New features / feat (if chosen instead of ASI) and spells can be applied after long rest.

- Monthly game - Apply the HP, Hit Die, Spell slot increases, after short rest. New features / feat (if chosen instead of ASI) and spells can be applied after completing long rest or session, whichever comes first (idea from Adventurer's league).
- (HR) Roll Hit Dice for HP increase. If you get less than the average, you may take the average.

3. Attendance & Absence

- Please be on time. Let the DM know if you are likely to be late.
- Let DM know as soon as is possible if you can't make the game - at least 24 hours before. Helps with planning any changes.
- Where possible absent player's character will be played but faded into the background. (See XP above.)
- DM may decide to postpone game if two or more players missing unless in-story reason for absence is appropriate at the particular point where the game is at.
- Longer absence, eg. Holidays, might be possible to keep in contact via messaging in terms of what PC is up to and key decisions, if they need made within the story.
- If you wish, there will be a 15-30 minute 'wind down' after game, to help transition back to real world. Can be game discussion or a general natter.

4. Rules

- RAW where possible, but some homebrew.
- Errata (from Wizards of the Coast) will be used if appropriate.
- No lengthy rules discussions in game. Chat afterwards, if needs be.
- If I don't know / remember a rule, a ruling will be made and rule can be checked later if necessary. Players can gently remind DM where it is relatively simple matter.
- DM grounded in 3.5e and 4e, so elements might come in where the adventure / encounters have been drawn from old material - only if appropriate to the situation. (eg. Skill challenges from 4e)
- (HR) **Communication** in combat turn sequence. RAW implies you can only talk on your turn. Coming from 3.5 and 4e where "speaking a few sentences" was available as free action 'even when it isn't your turn', I'll allow more than just a couple of words. Brief verbal responses to short comments made in character during a turn, will be allowed within reason - eg. PC1 communicates to PC2 who can briefly respond if needs be, or another PC out of turn can shout a short instruction to another - in character!
If a PC speaks to an NPC enemy (eg. intimidates / persuades) with intent to attempt to halt actual combat, that interaction may be played out, with relevant ability checks, there and then, pausing turn order and returning to it if the attempt fails.
(refs :3.5e PHB p144; 4e PHB p267)
- (HR) **Bloodied** - will use the 4e term which denotes getting to half hp, to describe when creature gets nearer to 1/4 hp.
- (HR) **Potions** - Potions can be taken as a bonus action but given (fed) to another character as an action.
- (HR) Good **roleplaying** / **creative** ideas (without need of rp) may give advantage on skill checks, in particular Charisma checks.
- (HR) Rolling **Hit Die** (short rest or level up) - If you get less than the average, you may take the average.
- (HR) Creative use of a spell / atk combo (even though not RAW) eg. Thornwhip to pull a creature onto your sword in single turn, Thunderwave creature into a wall or object such as a table (extra d4 or d6 bludgeoning dmg), or other 'thinking out-of-the-box' scenarios, may be allowed if doable, but with a possible consequence, eg. Disadvantage. 'Rule of Cool'!
- (HR) **Encumbrance** taken into account when 'heavily encumbered'.
- Identifying magic items: Use one or a combination of the following, depending on rarity of item, to work out what it does. These won't reveal if an item is cursed or not. Will still need to spend another short rest to attune to the item.
 - If a potion, a little taste or smell may tell you what it does.
 - Use a short rest (1hr) to focus on the item whilst being in physical contact with it.

- Wear or experiment with an item.
- Use '*Identify*' spell (which will also indicate if an item has set number of charges).
- (HR) Key NPCs may be subject to death saving throws. (PHB p198)

5. Optional Rules

- Actions (p271-272 DMG):
 - Climb (onto bigger creature)
 - Disarm
 - Mark
 - Overrun
 - Shove aside
 - Tumble
- Flanking (p251 DMG) - when allies adjacent to enemy but on opposite sides or corners, gain advantage on attack rolls. (NB. Enemies will get this too.) (Agree as group)

6. Maps

- Used where appropriate
- Minis, tokens (in Roll20) may be used, however, 'theatre of the mind' may also feature.

7. Roll20

- Please login prior to stated start time to allow for tech issues (hopefully none) to be ironed out. DM should be available at least 15 minute before game start for any queries or general discussion.
- Dice rolls are set to roll both attack and damage at same time (as per rolling dice irl, to save time).
- If when click a macro or attack, ability check, or saving throw on Roll20, if it doubles or triples up, will take the first roll.
- Not all monsters / NPCs will be on Roll20 as using some external resources (eg. *VGtM*; *XGtE*; Cawood Publishing *Hirelings and Henchmen*, *Monsters of Feyland*).
- Zoom for chat and video. Meeting room link will be sent in relevant Twitter message thread and will also be on game front page of Roll20.
- Prefer to see faces where possible.
- Games will be recorded, mainly for DM recap purposes. Recordings put on YouTube as unlisted.
- Chat - please don't fill the Roll20 chat with out-of-game chat or extraneous game chat that isn't relevant to what is going on. If you need to make comment to another player or the DM, please click on your token and use the relevant Marco button. (Alternatively type /w *space*, [name of player or 'GM'], *space*, message.)
- Try not to interrupt people talking but it is understood that internet lag can be an issue where a natural pause in speech might seem longer. Also it is necessary to be aware it is harder to spot the non-verbal social cues via video (especially for those for whom social interaction and communication can be hard (even if it doesn't appear to be) or with diagnosed conditions like ASD).
- Audio
 - Wear headphones or ensure mic is set up so it doesn't 'hear' your speakers.
 - Mute if there is external noise near you.

8. Tracking

- Players to track own loot, money, and resources.
- DM will (try to) keep master list of items found.
- Group could allocate a player to be the 'banker' so to speak.
- Players encouraged to take their own notes.

9. Ability Checks

- The DM asks for a specific ability or skill check, not the player, only if circumstances warrant a dice roll. DM will consider:

- Risk or consequence of failure
 - Time available to the PCs
 - Challenge - Ease or difficulty of the task or action taken
- Only roll if DM asks you to do so.
- Repeat checks - most checks can't be repeated. Your character doesn't know they failed a dice roll, just that the lock was too difficult for them, or they didn't find any secret doors.
- Don't ask specific check by name. "I want to investigate the room" means nothing!
- Describe what you want to do or achieve or find out by declaring your action or asking questions. For example:
 - Is this person lying?
 - I have a good look at the sarcophagus.
 - I try and prise the chest open.
 - I listen at the door.
 - I'd like to haggle the price down.
- Other players can assist with a task if conditions and nature of task are appropriate.
 - Within combat - Help action.
 - Out of combat - 'Working Together' or 'Group Checks' rules (p175 PHB) depending on the situation.
- Some things to remember:
 - Perception = how aware you are of your surroundings and keen senses.
 - Perception in dim light rolled with Disadvantage, inc. PCs with Darkvision, when in darkness, as though in dim light.
 - Investigation = looking for clues, checking the appearance of something, searching for traps.
 - Arcana = lore about magic and magic items (see below)
 - (HR) Arcana checks - By RAW Arcana is for recalling magical lore (p177 PHB). However, Arcana, if proficient, may also be used to indicate if something could be magical or not. If not proficient, roll with Disadvantage. NB. Investigation or Arcana checks used for inspecting might also reveal clues (eg. fine arcane script) which could indicate that an item is 'special'.
 - (HR) Intelligence based checks, either straight intelligence, or a check relating to the field of investigation, will be used to recall something, in particular memory / déjà vu.
 - Passive Investigation and Passive Insight may also be used by the DM

10. Other Things to Remember (which are commonly forgotten) or Note

- Attunement - not all magic items need attunement. Eg. +1, etc weapons (p213 DMG), ammunition (p150 DMG), and armour (p152 DMG) don't require attunement.
- Potions - can be identified by a little taste.
- Inspiration - can give it to another player.
- Darkvision - PCs see in the dark as though it is dim light, thus, perception checks relying on sight alone should be made with disadvantage.
- Charm (spell) - Elves / half-elves can be charmed, they just make their saving throws with advantage.
- Collect arrows after combat - can retrieve half of your spent arrows.
- Not all NPCs will have instant death on being reduced to 0hp. They may be subject to death saving throws.
- Hiding (in combat) - Action (Rogue = bonus action with Cunning Action). Can't hide from creatures that can clearly see you (line of sight).
- Can split movement up between attacks.
- Prone = lying down or on hands and knees - use half speed to stand up. Crouching / 'hunkering down' is not prone thus no penalty to get up.
- Spellcasting (Scrolls) - spell scrolls can only be used by spellcasters if the spell is on their class list (p200 DMG)
- When an attack is declared, initiative is rolled.
- Running away is always an option!

- Opportunity attacks:
 - if you are wielding weapon with 10' reach, opportunity attacks only trigger when enemy leaves that 10'. Thus, enemy could move 5' away and not provoke opportunity attack.
 - Forced movement (eg. Thunderwave) doesn't provoke.
 - Compelled (eg command; fear) to use movement, action, etc to leave enemy's reach, opportunity attack can be taken.
- Moving through allies is difficult terrain.
- Object interaction on turn at same time as movement and action. p109 PHB. Things like opening closing doors, drawing or sheathing weapons, etc. can be done without an action.

11. General Table rules

- **Limit out of character chat** and avoid talking over another player's turn in an encounter. Don't talk over the DM either.
- **Be prepared for your turn** - Pay attention to the action. Plan your next actions before your turn. Take too long and the DM could have one of the following happen:
 - Make a single weapon attack,
 - Move / Disengage,
 - Drop down in the initiative order,
 - Miss your turn (repeat offenders)
- **Dice Rolls**
 - Don't touch other people's dice without permission. Some people really don't like it.
 - Roll dice **on the table in full view of the DM**. Dice which roll off the table must be re-rolled OR (depending on DM) count as a Natural 1 (Critical fail).
 - Dice that land cocked against a book or paper may be re-rolled.
 - Dice that bounce off something will count.
 - Roll both attack (d20) and damage dice at the same time. It makes the action move a bit faster.
- **Spell casters** - have spell information to hand. The DM needs to know range and saving throws.
- Keep personal conflicts away from the table.
- **Character sheet** - Keep accurate track of XP, hit points, spell slot usage, conditions, money, equipment, etc. Use pencil on your sheet or make changes on your Roll20 sheet.
- **Mobile phones** - Not on the table unless you are using an appropriate app with prior arrangement with the DM.
- **Rules discussions** - The DM may quickly clarify a rule where possible, but further discussion should wait until the game session is finished.
- **Avoid numbers** - You are roleplaying! Don't say "I have 2 hit points left." (Unless you are asked by the DM.) Do say something like "I am / my character is really struggling here", "I drop to my knees", for example.
- Have a **spare back-up character** in case the one you are playing dies. If you don't have one, you will be given a pre-generated one.
- **Help each other**. Experienced players should support inexperienced ones.
- Avoid gender, political and racial stereotypes.

12.

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/or/stromnessacademylibrary/files/2008/12/Table-rulesSA.pdf>

* Possible adjustments under consideration