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# CROWN and SKULL

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Free Player's Guide

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# Foreword

Welcome to CROWN and SKULL, a new RPG system and setting created from hundreds of hours of play in several player groups over a three year period. My groups are always seeking new ways to play. This book represents a coalescence of our latest and greatest themes, mechanics, monsters, and mapless maps.

The system here will prove a significant departure from the deeply ingrained 'D20' genre that has seen such meteoric growth in recent years. As such, settle in for a brain-tickling ride into new mindsets and methods. If you feel a bit challenged by the player-focused aspects of the system, that means you're in the sweet spot. This may be that long-overdue moment you and your group break into new territory.

No small amount of inspirational credit must be given to Steven Peterson and his team on Fantasy Hero 1st edition (1985), Steve Jackson and the GURPS team (1986), and David Wesely/Dave Arneson and their realms of Braunstein/Blackmoor (1969/1971). These creations were my initiation into role-playing, along with many others, and made a formative mark on my young mind. Also, Into the Odd (Chris McDowall) and Cairn (Yochai Gal) must be mentioned for their influences. Veterans of those rules and worlds will see their ghosts flitting here and there in the pages ahead, but in spirit only. No one artifact of those brilliant works can be found here, nor is any compatibility or direct link inferred or included.

Special and infinite thanks go to my stalwart players: The Council of Magi, Dirty Jobs, The Cypher Rebellion, and The Immortals. They are the soil in which this game grows. Their patience and incredible role play gave rise to many of the dark and hopeful truths in these pages.

Settle in with pen and journal, mighty reader, and let me tell you of the days after the Bloodwing War, when nations fell and shadows sharpened. This is The North Holds, and there are few roads here...

*Ever grateful, ever strong*  
*-Runehammer*



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Visit  
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**CROWN and SKULL**

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Special thanks to:  
The CROWN and SKULL player crews: The Council of Magi, Dirty Jobs, The Hoodlums and The Immortals  
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and Reid Landeen

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# A Leaning Stone

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Castigere drifted down from the lichen-choked stones, weightless, white robe waving in a centuries-lost breeze. His transparent form was luminous, but waning with each moment. The light of elder days was failing, even in the vapors of a ghost. Without sound he alighted, holding out a gentle hand to Adelaide. She knew no fear in his presence, no matter what realm he hailed from, living or dead... Castigere was her teacher, her patron, her saint. His presence was like a cool spring on a warm day.

“Addy, you hang your head so low, what troubles you?” The voice was reverberant, distant. The sound was barely a whisper, loud as thunder.

“Father, I have just had a waking dream, a veil pulled over my eyes on a morning walk... the wandering mist couldn’t cool me. I couldn’t wake from the flight of it. My feet barely touched the road. It was... terrible.”

“You have always had a gift for far-sight, Adelaide. The Great One has given you the eyes of an eagle. What do you see?”

“A world in gloom and candlelight. Spider webs on hillock heaped, and Ruinmoor howling with dead wind. The bones of dragons dead and gone, a tree soaked in blood, creaking ropes, lightless water, and sinister laughter in catacombs dim.”

“Your time in the abbey is coming to an end. We live in an age of leaning stone and crumbling rooftops, and your stout heart is needed... out there... out on those vanishing roads...” Castigere looked out across the Fairfield Hills. The icy summit of Folsom’s Peak was bright in the early day; even the gloomy Shadow Glades had sun-kissed treetops.

She didn’t want to, but she nodded, acknowledging the truth of Castigere’s council. She was a student no more. Her vision was all-too simple, a thinly hidden view of the subconscious... it was, in a word, fear. This fear she compacted, tucked away in a shadowy corner... watched as Castigere’s ethereal form drifted and dissipated like a plume of white butterflies. The sun crested the ridge, sending long, angular rays into the valley. The chimneys of Slimshire hosted lazy tendrils of breakfast smoke.

# A Leaning Stone

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The abbey was behind her now, a mile up the zig-zagging trail, blue with distance, tiny against the darkening sky. A storm was gathering, billowing down from Stonemark. It was seldom this cold in spring, but the wind had a bite that kept her cloak wrapped snug.

Ahead, the waymarker of Saint Sarraf, a blocky oblong of granite, leaned to one side. It had stood for over 300 years in this spot, but each year the monolith sagged further. It was a disquiet feeling to see such a mass of rock at such a pitch... as if it could topple and end the age of light at any second. Past this Adelaide walked. Her bundle was simple: great sword in a cloth-clad scabbard, wool blanket, a gourd flask carved with leaves, then camping pouch and nested daggers. Thigh boots were perfect in this cool air, and her chain was kept quiet by a Fairfield arming coat and tabard. Black and white were her sleeves, bunching at the gauntlet. Her brown hair she let fly, walking alone and putting on no airs.

Before the descent to town and whatever this crumbling world would call upon her, she stopped, leaning on the guard of the broad blade like a drunk at the tavern, looking back at Sarraf's stone. The breeze caught her pommel-banner, a bright red strand of cloth. In that moment, the world had never felt so immense, so ripe with danger, so dark with dooms yet hidden. There were no spear-guards walking the old roads, no borders, no toothless scholars giggling at the crossroads, no lantern-lit shelves of books kept. Time had been cruel to the realm, and when a thing is wounded, it is delicate as a sparrow's wing.

Someone had to protect what was left of these lands. Someone had to nurture them back to health, to believe former heights within reach, to rally the stumbled, to burn away the webs. She smiled to herself, proud, feeling Castigere's ghost in those thoughts.

Across hill and dale, beyond river and mountain, above marsh-soaked lows and in stone-walled mazes beneath the world, all Adelaide feared was stirring, and planning, and seething, and growing with evil power.

If the realm was to be saved from those dripping fangs, it would not be easy.



## Concepts & Content

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Before we dive into the process of imagining an entire world, numerous storylines, possible heroes and villains, game mechanics, character concepts, and how it will all come together, let's get our footing.

Whether you're new to tabletop role playing, or a battle-scarred veteran of yesteryear, all good games begin with the same phrase...

*'...wouldn't it be cool if...'*

---

Every day, we dream of things we crave. Whether it be that first cup of coffee, our last day of finals, slaying at the gym, or finishing a project. We visualize the outcomes of daily life or set our wills to hard work, and then the magic happens: we imagine *other* things. We daydream about wide-open fields, trackless wilderness, friends clanging mugs in lantern-lit taverns, freedom and exploration, swords flashing and heroism well-earned. For fantasy fans everywhere, this is a daily exercise... dreaming of a world of adventure.

If you do this, you're ready to role play. If you've role played before and you find yourself dreaming of worlds beyond our own, it's time to get back into the hobby. You, my friend, like me, are ripe with the substance of role playing: *concepts*.

Role playing concepts are the simple foundation that you'll bring to CROWN and SKULL. You'll imagine yourself in each scene, your friends emerging from the landscape, your own details adding to a 'living' view of an imaginary universe. All the muscles of reading a great novel will serve you well here: translating words into images, and images into emotions. How do you fit into it all? Wouldn't it be cool if it was *you* in this story?

This time, it *is* you.

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Role playing games have been around in the form we know them today since the late 1960's. There's no need to get too deep into a 'what is role playing?' discussion. Just get those daydreams in your head, see yourself in the pages to come, and you'll be ready for anything.



## Concepts & Content

The real skillset of role playing is the translation of concepts into playable content. Anyone can imagine themselves slaying a dragon with a silver sword. The art of the gaming hobby is codifying that scene into risks and uncertainties... making a gamble of it all, and seeing what happens. That art falls on you, dear reader, whether player or gamemaster (GM).

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**World:** Much of this book portrays a world... The North Holds. This vast space is our backdrop, but its details are far more than stage setting. The world provides its own invitations, dilemmas, and challenges. Answering those calls is usually what sets things in motion.

**Characters:** Players change concepts into content by building mechanically sound and emotionally compelling characters. Heroes, hermits, and explorers all play their part... giving the world life.

**Enemies:** Before our heroes can do whatever they please, they'll have foes to contend with. The GM will hurl all manner of monster at you. Is there any way around? Any hope? When is the sword the only choice?

**Dice:** To resolve the friction at play here, it's time to roll dice. We can sway the results a bit, but there's no telling what will happen.

**And then...** After the dice have spoken, we'll have to update our scene, change our perspective, take in new circumstances and press on. How we confront all this together is the *content* of a great tabletop game.

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*Hail, reader. My name is Hankerin Ferinale, a mountain dwarf, intellectual, painter, fisherman, brewmaster, cheese connoisseur and former battle commander. I'll be weighin' in on the text here and there, so mind ye my council!*

---

# A Player Focus

In many RPGs, the game master is an ever-deeper source of almost everything at the table besides role play and decision making. In combat, this becomes even more apparent, as a GM is often ‘thinking’ for numerous monsters and environmental hazards, making lots of rolls, and even assisting players with their roll targets and hoped-for output values. This can lead to a cognitive overload for GMs, but it is considered acceptable, as GMs are often the most enthusiastic about the hobby in general. In CROWN and SKULL, there is an intrinsic call to players: *you are now the focus!*

---

The term ‘player facing’ in the role playing hobby refers to rolls and mechanics that do not require input or answers from the GM. Rather, players need only consult their own sheet and resources, personal and unique to them, to make rolls, attempt actions, attack foes, and determine the output values of their work. Rather than asking ‘*what’s my target on this roll?*’ the player always knows the answer, rolling in the context of their skills and equipment.

Just knowing what you’re trying to roll is hardly a robust ‘player facing’ game, though. Here’s where you, dear reader, are called upon to step up as a CROWN and SKULL player. In this game, there are numerous aspects aimed squarely at you. Let’s start with the ‘soft’ elements:

**Acquiring Player Expertise:** An expert player doesn’t just stay focused on the game, expedite turn time, lift up other players, and role play with the best of ‘em. Player expertise is also found in a deep comprehension of the mechanics and thematics in the game. This comes with time and attention.

**Gathering Character Knowledge:** Your character will gain knowledge of foes, treasure, magic, politics, geography and more as they grow. This area is entirely your purview... the GM won’t remember to remember what you may or may not remember.

**Finding Synergy:** Throughout this book, there are numerous easy-to-miss interconnections. The masterful player finds and exploits these synergies with style and effect, making the most of the many details given.



## A Player Focus

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Beyond the soft skills of a player focused game experience, we have the more mechanical expectations of this system...

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**Making Rolls:** Since the GM has far fewer rolls to make, the player will find themselves making a great deal more rolls throughout play. This places the burden of speedy play on the player! Rolling Defense to avoid a Formian mandible bite? Be ready, knowing what your target is, where your D20 is hiding, and the like. Knowing the ins and outs of your sheet becomes far more important when you are making 5 times the rolls of the GM. It also means there is seldom a dull moment.

**Building Elements with Points:** It's one thing to play skillfully within given elements and things-from-the-book. CROWN and SKULL takes 'player facing' to a whole new level by entrusting players with the construction of new and emergent elements of play by granting *hero points*. These points can be earned in many ways, and they allow you, the player, to invent spells, equipment and other progression abilities as play proceeds.

Who is the best designer of an RPG? The people playing it! If this level of involvement feels intimidating, you can always play what's written. Go with your gut.

CROWN and SKULL has total trust in the player. The more you explore this book, the more that should become apparent, and (I hope) offer you new vistas of creativity in your sessions and evolution.

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*Synergy and customized fibbity jibbity! Bah! I've got a silly accent to perfect, a million drawings of my axe to finish, and these chips to eat! I'll use gear, skills, and spells straight out o' me tome, thank ye very much!*



# The North Holds

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**CROWN and SKULL** takes place in a realm called The North Holds. This vast, diverse landscape is filled with cultures, secrets, and dangers for you to explore. It is a dark time, but thanks to you, there is always hope.

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**The North Holds** are recovering from a terrible time of calamity. Some 30 years before present day, The Bloodwing War ravaged the realm. The once-unified lands no longer have a king, borders have decayed, wilds are more dangerous than ever. An age of order and ideas has come to an end. With no unifying rule, The North Holds struggle to find new purpose and new direction. An era of adventure.

**Bloodwing** was a colossal green dragon, driven mad by a slime-entity called The Corruption. Since his rampage of desolation, dragons are widely feared by all but the elves of Dragon Tooth, and seldom seen. Only the very old remember a time when dragons and mortal folk were allies.

A **formless evil** has been creeping into the world since the fall of Bloodwing. It is not fully understood, but the dreams of mortal folk are darkening. Rumor holds that the lord of Blood Manor is somehow behind this growing shadow. This is a mysterious figure known as Lord Royce, said by doomsayers to be 'he who would drink the world.'

Despite all this, **good yet has a foothold**. Three once-tiny towns are on the rise with renewed ambition... havens for a new generation of adventurers. Long-standing tyrannies are being worn away by courageous defectors. The light challenges the darkness to retreat, and asks every soul in The Holds: will you choose the Crown, or the Skull?

**An Irrevocable choice.** As you grow and explore The North Holds during play, at some point a lord, king or elder wizard will offer you access to once-forbidden realms of knowledge and power. To make this exciting step in your journey, you will face a choice that can never be undone... you must choose either the CROWN or the SKULL. Both paths have secrets and skills to teach. Choose wisely! There and many foes of both sides in the wide world...



# hometowns



If you're looking over The North Holds world map, you may feel a bit lost. Who are we? Where are we, and why? CROWN and SKULL is a bit different from many RPGs, in that players can only begin the game in one of three possible locations. Your Hometown will define the feel and opening events of your game, and nearby areas accessible by foot travel.

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**Gardenburrow, Forest Refuge:** This town was founded by elves centuries ago as a waystation for forest caretakers and foragers. Since then, it has grown to a few hundred residents and many travelers crossing the West. To call this town home, you'll be diving into mysterious forests, a long-standing feud with frog men, tensions with dwarves, and the mists of the Emerald Narrows. Gardenburrow is an elemental place... a pilgrimage for druids and nature-folk of the realm.

**Rivergate, Bustling Trade City:** At the geographic center point of The North Holds is the port city of Rivergate. This central location has made the ruling elite here wealthy, trading with the Stormkeeper dwarves and the abundant farms south of the River Thenne. Now that Ruinmoor has gone quiet, though, Rivergate is in crisis. To call this town home, you'll be working for desperate nobles, escorting merchant barges, or exploring the fallen walls of ancient monasteries. Rivergate is the busy hub of mankind, with all its intrigue and peril.

**Slimshire, High Plains Outpost:** The coming of the 'White Bird' and The Holy Order has grown this town, once a wide spot in the road to Hakburg, to new heights. Ruling here is Lord Pickins, and times have been good. Such fortune has attracted the destructive attention of goblins from the Shadow Glades, Orc raiders from the deep desert, and even the darkly dreaming influence of a mysterious entity generally referred to as 'the eye in the well.' To call this town home, you will be confronting vampiric cults, fighting goblin skirmishers, or working to secure allies in the war with the Orcs.

Before you choose a hometown, and all the thematic elements that come with it, let's get into the rules of play...



# Game Flow

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It's one thing to describe towns, dream up adventures, or role play a heroic character. But this is a *game* not just a narrative, governed by chance and rules. When dice are being used to create surprising events, govern conflict, or test character ability, you'll be playing in the following flow.

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- **Setting the Scene:** When a gathering with friends changes tone from chatter to gameplay, the GM will gather attention, set music and lights, ensure all players are ready to go, and begin. Through a series of descriptions, reminders, questions and confirmations, a great GM will pull everyone back to a specific moment, where the story is waiting to continue. *“The empire of frogs is at your doorstep, rallying columns of warriors in the marsh. The Alderman has chosen your company to defend the southern wall, entrusting you with the safety of the mysterious old man called Grimblegums. As the war-cry of frog-folk is heard, drums in the bog, we see our heroes at the ready. Grimblegums trembles with anticipation for the battle to come. Let’s get into it.”*
- **Phases and Rounds:** Once everyone is in the moment, the action kicks in. The great majority of play time happens in *phases*, moving from player to player around the table. The GM will call the next phase, and ask what you are doing. Descriptions become dice rolls and their hoped-for results. Enemies attack, the scene and terrain may change or escalate, and on it goes. A phase is one moment of action, a shared sliver of time between heroes and enemies. A round is one full set of phases for players and the GM. *“In the final seconds before the explosion, I bring my blade down on the evil commander! Victory is ours!”*
- **Transitions and Table Talk:** When a scene is concluded, the story will lurch forward. There will be GM descriptions, montages, player plans, and a short break. Players will be seeking means to rest or upgrade their characters. The GM will be revealing new truths, keep the danger pressing in, and offer little quarter for weary warriors. When the transition is complete, a new scene will be set and it all begins again. *“As the smoke of battle clears, a new horror rises in the swamp... it’s already within a bowshot of the wall! Any actions in phase 1?”*



# Making Rolls



Great games always include interesting and varied rolls for players. All kinds of moments will call for rolling dice in the categories below.

---

- **Flat Roll:** To test simple, unmodified luck, the GM may call for a ‘flat’ roll. This simple roll is made on a **D20**, **rolling at or below the target or opposing roll** to succeed. *“You grab hold of the anchor chain to pull, but a fish-man is pulling from below the waves! Let’s see who can roll lowest on a D20!”*
- **Player-Declared Skill Roll:** Often during play, you will announce *“I will roll my jump skill to leap over this creek!”* or some equivalent. Roll D20 at or below that skill’s listed value to succeed. In some cases, a difficulty penalty will reduce the skill’s value. Note that many specialized or athletic actions are **simply not possible** without a working skill! *“You strain to bend the bars, but without a Muscle skill, you accomplish nothing!”*
- **Called-For Defense Roll:** Enemies do not make attack rolls! When attacked, the GM will ask you to roll Defense. Roll at or below this value to avoid injury from the incoming attack. An enemy stat, ATK, will act as a penalty to reduce Defense rolls. *“The serpent lashes out at you! The viper has ATK 3, so roll Defense with a -3 penalty!”*
- **Rolling Damage/Effect:** There is no ‘to-hit’ roll in CROWN and SKULL! When you attack, you roll damage instantly! This roll can use a wide variety of dice. Add the total rolled for damage inflicted. This roll can be reduced by an enemy stat called DEF.
- **Yes/No Rolls:** When important yes/no questions come up, and the GM doesn’t have an answer, roll 1D6. 1, 2, 3: NO. 4, 5, 6: YES.
- **All Other Rolls:** How long until the boat arrives? How many houndmasters are there? How tall is the statue? How much armor does this knight have? All kinds of numbers are needed and rolled for in play. Be flexible, ready for anything, and trust the dice absolutely.

# Attrition

Sustaining damage from hazards and attacks is part of any RPG. You'll be hit by arrows, knock your head, sustain sword cuts, or drop items when exhausted. Attrition is a term for the reduction of your character's resources when hit by hazards and attacks. Here's how it works...

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## WHEN INJURED, CROSS OFF EQUIPMENT AND/OR SKILLS

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**Cross 'Em Off:** When you're hurt, you'll be losing use of your skills and gear! *Crossed-off* equipment and skills cannot be used until restored or repaired. Role play it! Attrition impairs your senses, physical wellness, or equipment beyond use. In some cases, items may be lost permanently, but skills are never permanently lost. A few simple rules govern attrition.

**Attrition Types:** Enemies and hazards will hit you in one of 5 ways:

- Basic Attrition: Cross off any 1 equipment or skill
- Flesh Attrition: Randomly select a skill and cross it off
- Equipment Attrition: Randomly select 1 equipment and cross it off
- Destroy Attrition: Destroy 1 random equipment AND cross off 1 randomly selected skill. Destroyed equipment is permanently lost
- Brutal Attrition: Cross 1D6 total random equipment and skills

**Total Inventory:** All characters are allowed 10 skills and 10 items in their inventory maximum. All small items are counted as a single 'pouch' item.

**Healing and Repair:** Upon a successful heal (by magic, potion, or first aid), restore 1 crossed-off skill. For damaged equipment, use repair or armorer skill. Destroyed gear will need to be replaced entirely.

**Rest & Recovery:** Regain a combined 1D4 of equipment and skills with a night's rest in safety. Additionally, after each scene in play, **once safety is found and no enemies or timers are incoming**, *'Take a Breather.'* Regain 1 equipment or skill... catch your breath, ready to go on.

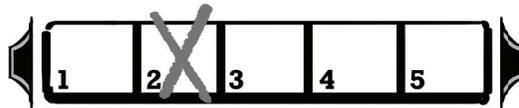
**Death:** If a hit can't be absorbed by inventory, you take a 'hit to the heart' and will die at the end of the next phase 5 unless healed. Phase? Read on...

# Phases

Phases are a unique aspect of CROWN and SKULL. They divide time into bite-size pieces, and give player turns order, timing, and detail as each scene unfolds. Enemies also uses phases to act.

**The 5 Phases:** Think of phases as cool moments in an action scene. A collection of these moments is called a round. Which phase a hero takes action is a meaningful choice for timing and strategy. There are no ‘held actions’ here (as in many RPGs), and your phase is locked for the encounter once chosen, so choose with intent!

**Choosing a Phase:** Generally, players will agree on which phase is best, especially after a few battles inform their decision. What phase a character chooses can be changed, but not mid-combat. Players can also choose the same phase. Track your choice on your character sheet here...



**On Your Phase:** When your phase comes up, it’s your turn to act. You have three options, listed below.

- **Move:** Move elsewhere in the scene, about 6” table space. A small ‘sidestep’ move is allowed without using one’s phase.
- **Perform an Action:** Make an attack, use a skill, cast a spell or perform one discreet action. This takes your entire phase.
- **Hurry:** If you need to move AND do something in one turn, your haste opens up your Defenses with clumsy haste. All enemies in the scene gain +5 ATK against you for 1 round. Hurry can only be used for a move+action combo, not dual action or dual move.

**Enemy Phases:** Foes will act in 1-3 phases per round! A monster attacking in phases 1, 3, and 5, for example, will keep an entire team of heroes occupied! Any time enemies and heroes share a phase, heroes go first.

**The GM Call:** During play, the GM will keep things cruising along by ‘calling’ for actions during a phase. “*Ok, it’s now phase 3, who’s up? Lucy, that’s you! The wolves are coming in fast, what will you do?*”



# Hero Points

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In the course of their perilous lives, our heroes will need replacement gear, new armor, healing herbs, new skills, magic elixirs, wagons, war horses, hired thugs, bribe funds, beach huts and court finery to survive and thrive. CROWN and SKULL uses **hero points** for players to buy items and upgrade their characters.

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You'll be using hero points to create, and later grow, your character. The GM will award hero points after each session, granting more for 'session mvp' or other momentous elements of play. In CROWN and SKULL, this replaces the heaping of treasure. As such, you'll be looking for a chance to spend these gathered points on new skills, spells, improved equipment, or even an animal companion. There is, however, a key limitation to your spending opportunities:

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## **HERO POINTS CAN ONLY BE SPENT TO UPGRADE A CHARACTER WHEN RESTING IN A SAFE PLACE WITH REQUIRED FACILITIES OR SERVICES**

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At first, this limitation may not seem like much. Resting to regain resources is very common in many RPGs. Simple restoration occurs by the rules on page 12. **Spending hero points** is a different matter, requiring rest, safety, skilled people, special equipment, training, or technical services to perform. In short, spending hero points is not just rest... it's an active state of character development with more specific requirements than rest and safety.

Upgrading or creating new armor may require a forge, anvil, or capable blacksmith. Improving a falconry skill requires meeting with a local expert. Upgrading a magic skill might be achieved by reading from age-old tablets or dusty tomes. This limitation, combined with a life of travel and danger, should make the spending of hero points a milestone moment for any character. *"Is that? Can it be? A TOWN? Gods above, let's go! I've been sitting on a dozen points for ages!"*



# The Extremes



During play, things can get intense. Some rolls are all but impossible, death can be all too close, defeat imminent! At times like these, the extremes of the game are your only chance, so know them well.

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**Negotiation:** Characters often get themselves into terrible situations of danger and limited time. When this happens, rolls can become prohibitively difficult. This is a time to negotiate with the GM, seeking environmental or strategic elements that can soften the difficulty. Don't be shy! *"The wall isn't climbable? Can I lean one of these desks against it for a boost?"*

**Critical Success and Failure:** Extreme successes and failures are called critical or 'crits.' A D20 roll of 1 scores a critical success, and a 20 a critical failure. Each of these rolls will create a maximal version of success or failure. Critical successes overcome impossible odds, grant extra time, or defy belief. Critical failures cost precious equipment, accelerate destructive environments, or lend advantages to foes. *"It's a crit! Not only do you leap the creek, your pursuer falls in!"*

**Hero Coins:** Acts of heroism or astounding play are rewarded by the GM with a hero coin. A hero coin (not to be confused with *hero points!*) can be redeemed to **1) Reroll any roll entirely.** **2) Maximize the damage or output of an attack or effect.** Coins can be freely given between players. A player may only have 1 coin at a time. *"We need this attack to be huge... we're out of options! Here, take my coin."*

**Meta-Gaming:** In an effort to overcome or outwit the odds, players may find themselves 'meta-gaming,' that is, using their overall knowledge of game mechanics to exploit details or loopholes. This has two forms, one good, one bad. The good kind of meta-game means players use deep knowledge of items and mechanics to maximize their chances. The bad kind (often called 'cheesing') employs hard-to-believe or flimsy methods to make things easy or gimp the game. Leaping from a rock to earn a *deadly* attack? Great. Padding your hero with ham sandwiches to absorb attrition? Not very cool. *"My fighter has 10 skills, all at value 3. My inventory is mainly free biscuits. I also carry a bag of backup biscuits."* *"Dude."*

# Character Creation

Once you have a sense for the basic flow of the game, it's time to get into some nuts and bolts decisions to build a playable character. Grab a CROWN and SKULL character sheet, or just use your trusty journal to jot down skills and ideas, or start drawing the ever-important character portrait! To build your character...

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## For Beginners: Templates and Prompts

To get right into rolling dice with no hassle, choose a hometown then choose a character template starting on p. 24. This will get you started playing instantly without learning the point-build system. You can also use the Character Prompts on p. 26 to get story and background ideas flowing for your new character.

## For Experienced Players: Custom Built Characters

For more fielded RPG veterans, CROWN and SKULL features a robust, in-depth point buy creation system. This super-flexible method lets you create everything using hero point costs and discounts... even spells, equipment, and companions. Skip to p. 30 to start your custom character.

## And Beyond: Hero Points

No matter how you create your character, you'll gain experience in play with hero points. These can spent to add skills, spells, or equipment to a character using the same rules and options custom characters use. You can save them up or spend as you go. Every 10 hero points earned, you'll gain a bonus reward specific to your hometown. All the rules you need for this growth process are right here in the Player's Guide. Good luck out there, hero.

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*When building or expanding a character, always feel free to make bad decisions. It's a tough world out there, not everything we experience makes us better. Me? I spend every point I can get on Resist. Better for quaffin'.*

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## hometowns

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**F**orest adventurer? Your home town is **GARDENBURROW**

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In the far west, the elven forest town of Gardenburrow serves as a waypost for the borders of Thryn. The town itself is on a small rise, with wooden fortifications, and a great central oak tree that serves as the town square.

As stewards of the vast bogs and forests here, the town is always busy with travelers, horticulturists, druid-kind, game hunters, forest foragers, and those heading to the dwarven lands of Ullur's Teeth.

In recent years, a shadow has been spreading through the Oakenwood. Crops are failing, elder trees are withering away. Frogman defectors, venturing here from the marshes, believe the problem demands a new alliance. Can the heroes make friends of the cruel frog-kin and heal the forest? A council is called in the town longhouse. Something must be done.

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**Alderman Wallabytarnwhatwallaby:** The Alderman here is called Wallaby for short. He is a proudfoot scholar, almost two centuries old, and a lover of festivals. He relies on good counsel from many townsfolk. Local envoys and lords are widely known to adore the old fellow, coming from far and wide to offer gifts on his birthday.

**The Suede & Saddle:** Gardenburrow features a women's social club for food, drink, and reprieve. Any female character may stay here free, gathering information or restocking basic supplies at no charge. The only male allowed in these walls is a bumbling cook named Scooby.

**Selene:** An elder hunter and forest warden, Selene is widely known as the oldest elf in this region. She was making camp here before there was a town at all, and knows every nook and cranny of the Oakenwood and beyond. She is a descendent of the third royal line of Thryn, enjoying all the privileges of a Baroness but choosing a humble life. Selene will only become available to players for high-level or high-stakes endeavors, focusing her skills on saving the world, defeating titans, or undoing sinister schemes beyond Gardenburrow's borders.



# Hometowns

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**M**ountains and mischief? Your hometown is **RIVERGATE**

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Wealthy families have called this port city home for generations. The lucrative gem trade has earned Rivergate its fortune, so alliances with the Stormkeeper dwarves are ever-strong. Recent conscriptions of dwarves to Runnimir have diminished earnings from the mines greatly, earning the ire of the Walcrests and other ruling families here.

In recent days, adventurers have found abundant work scouting and serving as messengers for various groups moving to fill the vacuum in the mining trade.

Against this busy backdrop, a new threat has made the roads deadly, even by day. Mysterious archers have been harassing travelers and residents alike, leaving none alive to identify them. A murmur of fear is spreading...

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**Lady Walcrest:** The most widely respected figure in Rivergate is a venerable Baroness: heir to the Walcrest empire, Lady Ezmerelda Walcrest. Well into her 70s, she has seen and survived it all, but held true to the old alliances and standards of the town. All city policy is approved and executed by her and her council of advisors.

**The Frothy Mare:** One of the most famous (or infamous) taverns in the realm calls Rivergate home: The Frothy Mare. This chaotic, multi-level inn, eatery and house of revelry serves as a meeting point for all kinds of river folk, known for its cheese-sausages and dwarven ale by the gallon. The lead barkeep is a red-mustached stout fellow called Barmm.

**Thenneport Docks:** The complex of piers, moorings and cranes in Rivergate is a wonder of The North Holds. All manner of barges, fishing boats and rivercraft gather here to load and unload cargo, conscript crew, and arrange expeditions to every corner of the world. So much wealth moves through these ports, there is an abundance of 'red cloak' guards present at all times. These city soldiers sport 10-foot spears, and they are some of the finest fighters in The Holds.



# Hometowns

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**D**angerous deserts? Your hometown is **SLIMSHIRE**

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This remote town was once a mere wide spot in the road to Hakburg. Since the arrival of its unlikely benefactor, Lord Pickins, after the Bloodwing War, the town has seen a veritable golden age. This has been bolstered by a rock solid relationship with the ever-growing Holy Order.

As Slimshire has reached the apogee of its prosperity though, a dark force has emboldened goblins from the Shadow Glades and orc raiders from the remnants of Dalric's Wall. To make things worse, Lord Pickins has been seen less and less of late, cloistered with his ailing daughter Kay, who, according to rumor, has been afflicted with a vampiric sickness.

A new alliance with the folk of Cloudtop has made adventuring a lucrative trade, even calling up Proudfoot riders from the frontier of Hakburg.

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**Dunsel & the Kid:** Operating from a blacksmith-and-mercantile in town called 'Haldur's Goods,' Dunsel is a stout folk merchant, beer expert, and journeyman smith. His ever-present sidekick is a fearless boy known simply as The Kid. These two have their ear to most of the goings-on in town, and the growing military challenges at hand.

**The Bee Spoke:** The oldest tavern in town was recently damaged by a collapse and fire during an orc incursion. Its owner, Bespo Kerat, was killed in the blaze. Now his daughter Revelle has disappeared. The calamity of the Bee Spoke has rallied folk to fight back against the orcs, no matter what the cost. So, reconstruction has begun.

**The Eye in the Well:** As Slimshire faces the challenges of a full-fledged city, darkness has entered the dreams of its people. The dream is always the same: descending into a pit of wet stone, beyond the lightless water, deeper, darker, until a single yellowish eye opens in the murk. The dread of this dream-intrusion is slowly growing in Slimshire, but its nature, origin, and solution are completely unknown. Some doomsayers claim the goblin-orc alliance and the eye are somehow connected...



# Character Templates

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New to CROWN and SKULL and eager to jump right in? Once you and your players have chosen your hometown, simply choose a template below, choose your equipment, add up all armor for your Defense score (6 + total armor worn), give your character a name, and you're ready to go!

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**SOLDIER:** You specialize in weapons and armor. On adventures and quests, your allies look to you to take a beating and see foes dispatched.

- **Flaw:** Stubborn (You set your mind to a thing with tenacity)
  - **Core Ability:** Battlemaster (Damage dice rolled maximum are rolled again. There is no limit to the number of times the dice can 'explode'.)
  - **Skills:** Armorer 8, Evade 8, Knowledge (Military Tactics) 8, Muscle 7
  - **Equipment:** Choose 9 pts of basic equipment and basic armaments
- 
- 

**ADVENTURER:** You are a nomad, a hunter, a road-walker. You thrive in the ruins and wilderness, seeking treasures and truths.

- **Flaw:** Grudge (Choose a monster you just can't stand)
  - **Core Ability:** Uncanny Shot (Roll an extra damage die with all ranged weapons, and ignore 1 DEF on all targets.)
  - **Skills:** Forage 8, Hunting 7, Jump 9, Stealth 7
  - **Equipment:** Choose 9 pts of basic equipment and basic armaments
- 
- 

**SAGE:** You are a learned researcher; keeper of books; mind of science, history, and the arcane. The writing desk is your home, but adventure calls.

- **Flaw:** Timid (Only choose phase 4 or 5)
- **Core Ability:** Empath (Gain the Investigation, Streetwise and Oratory skills at value 7 free of cost.)
- **Skills:** Medical 10, Magic 10, Spell Research 8, Empath skills
- **Equipment:** Choose 6 pts of basic equipment and basic armaments
- **Spells:** Choose any 2 basic spells



# Character Templates

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**SMITH:** You are a hearty worker of materials and tools. The daily grind of making wares must wait, though, as the wide world beckons.

- **Flaw:** Drunkard (Ale calls to you each and every day)
  - **Core Ability:** None
  - **Skills:** Armorer 10, Repair 10, Resist 9, Survival 14
  - **Equipment:** Choose 12 pts of basic equipment and basic armaments
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**CLERIC:** Yours is the holy path. You represent a higher power, divine will, and the greater good that watches over living things.

- **Flaw:** Ascetic (Never exceed 5 items inventory)
  - **Core Ability:** Paragon of Faith (Add a D6 to all divine magic effects, as well as your damage with blunt weapons. Additionally, destroy 1D4 weak undead as an action with no roll.)
  - **Skills:** Magic 10, Medical 8, Scholar (The Holy Order) 8
  - **Equipment:** Choose 5 pts of basic equipment and basic armaments
  - **Spells:** Choose any 3 basic spells
- 
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**HOODLUM:** You are a dubious character... a shadow-dweller. You dabble in the forbidden, the lawless, and the truly free. Your fate is yours alone.

- **Flaw:** Greedy, Pursued (Guards from a nearby town)
  - **Core Ability:** Brutal Fighter (Each of your melee attacks may hit 2 foes with a single damage roll)
  - **Skills:** Stealth 9, Lockpick 10, Disguise 9, Jump 8
  - **Equipment:** Choose 9 pts of basic equipment and basic armaments
- 
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Grab your dice, and start drawing a portrait... you're ready to explore the dangerous world of CROWN and SKULL! After some familiarity, you'll be ready for the real fun here: custom-built characters! Read on...

# Character Prompts I

If seeking a random concept for a new character, roll on these tables to inform a point build process, template, or hometown choice.



## I AM A...

1. **Tall, Slender Elf:** The so-called 'high elves' are known for long ears, sharp features, and elegant limbs.
2. **Rugged Woodland Elf:** The wood elves are almost human in appearance, except slightly pointed ears. Some even have beards.
3. **Elf with Regal, Flawless Presence:** One of a royal or ancient bloodline.
4. **Muscle-Bound Elven Athlete:** A statuesque figure... defined, powerful.
5. **Sure-Footed Stout Folk:** Some dwarves are less bulky, but have larger feet, making them skilled climbers and distance walkers.
6. **Thick-Necked Dwarf:** Known among the stout as 'guntrnekke,' this type is heavily muscled, with square features and a strong jaw.
7. **Jolly, Well-Fed Dwarf:** Ah the stout folk revelers! A life of eating and drinking shows on this huggable figure.
8. **Dark-Eyed Stout Folk:** Some dwarves spend decades underground, gaining an uncanny, colorless look in the eyes and skin.
9. **Towering Human:** The largest folk in the realm.
10. **Human with Drawn, Serious Features:** A life of hardship and struggle gives gravity and presence to your expression.
11. **Bright-Eyed Human:** The happy, optimistic folk of many places.
12. **Afflicted Human:** Stricken with years or injury, these folk struggle on.
13. **Furry Little Proudfoot:** The smallest of Proudfoots are whiskered from head to toe, with exaggerated front teeth and small, deep-set eyes.
14. **Robust Proudfoot:** Reaching up to 5' tall, these proud folk are almost human in appearance, save the refusal to wear shoes.
15. **Proudfoot Citizen:** Diminutive, knobby-nosed, with foppish hair.
16. **Lighthearted Proudfoot:** Ah, the river folk! Silly, floppy, with large hands, gleaming, colorful eyes and creative hairstyles.
17. **Green Frog-Kin:** Light green folk, 4 to 5 feet high, who squat often.
18. **Mottled Frog-Kin:** Spotted frog folk, browns and grays, thickly muscled, with a bright white throat pouch and wide-set eyes.
19. **Frog-Kin Giant:** 5 to 6 feet tall, more suited to walking than leaping.
20. **Gold Frog-Kin:** Bright yellow skin, the smallest of the frog people.



# Character Prompts II

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In traversing the frontiers of life, each of us have a few trusted things, garments or possessions we trust beyond all others.



## EQUIPPED WITH...

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1. **Axes and Hammers:** You prefer the heft and balance of ‘headed’ weapons, and the crushing, chopping fighting style there found.
2. **Armor from Head to Toe:** With a skilled fit, perfectly comfortable.
3. **A Single, Huge Weapon:** You have eschewed versatility in favor of specialization. You and your weapon are one. A focused fighter.
4. **Tools and Gadgets:** You are outfitted with belts and pouches... all manner of implements and handy doo-dads.
5. **Mining Gear:** A simple kit for the pragmatic delver.
6. **Little More Than Robes:** Clutter and encumbrance is bothersome.
7. **Bow and Arrow:** You are an archer through and through. You may carry other weapons and gear, but seldom need it.
8. **A Steel Shield:** Not your only gear, but your closest ally in a pinch.
9. **Vials and Magical Baubles:** You revel in oddities, artifacts, ingredients, trinkets, curios, wands, and jewelry.
10. **Grimoire and Staff:** You carry a hefty spell book and twisted stick.
11. **A Mighty Spear:** Learned in a military fighting style, you prefer the reach, piercing, and versatility of a 10-foot spear, halberd, or bill hook.
12. **Fishing Pole, Paddle, and Net:** So few things in this world can you trust... swords, magic, beasts? No. But these? These you can trust.
13. **Lightweight Cloak and Quiet Boots:** Soft materials for stealth.
14. **Chainmail and Emblazoned Tabard:** The armor kit of a soldier.
15. **A Many-Pocketed Great-Cloak:** Your odd interests make this critical.
16. **Armor from the Marsh Lands:** You possess a suit of protective gear from the frog empire: slat plates, leather ties, ‘gunomo’ undercoat.
17. **A Bold-Crested Helm:** Walk tall with a high-topped steel helmet, horsehair crest, top spike, or bannered brim.
18. **Charms and Holy Symbols:** You carry a collection of beads, vestments, and blessed objects that invoke feelings of divinity.
19. **Flintlock Guns and Kit:** Black powder weapons are your specialty.
20. **Froggish Weapons:** The curved blades, flexible steel, red-lacquer hafts and brass guards of frog-folk blades are your preferred equipment.



# Character Prompts III

Adventurers are a different breed. At some point in your life, you stepped off the beaten path, and into the unknown. But why?



## IT ALL STARTED WHEN...

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1. **I Left the Cult:** Madmen and fools! I escaped by night, never to return!
2. **I Joined the Cult:** Outsiders may never understand us, but our great leader sees many things. My purpose was found when I joined them...
3. **Our Village Was Called to Arms:** Our lord rallied my people to mighty deeds, and I gave answer, taking the oath.
4. **When I found the Red Crystal:** It guides me... I can't explain how.
5. **Rumors of My Lost Kin Surfaced:** For so long was I alone in this world, so when word of my family came, I set out.
6. **I Was Taken Prisoner:** I was very young... a nomad ever since.
7. **The Fissure Split Open:** A great crack broke the land, revealing darkness below. The monsters that arose set my life in motion.
8. **My Brother Disappeared:** To this day I have yet to find him.
9. **The Crops Failed:** I was chosen to find the evil cause of the blight.
10. **The Alderman Came:** Our town headman chose a handful of us for higher purpose. I was sent into the wide world, and never looked back.
11. **We Discovered the Ruins:** The weird stones and starfallen carvings of those moldering walls changed us... posing too many questions.
12. **We Went Searching for Better Fishing:** Our feet just took us too far!
13. **The Rats Came Ashore:** In the chaos, folk running about, I was tossed into the water and almost drowned. Since then, my days have darkened.
14. **The Sky Went Dark:** My mother stayed behind so that we could escape... she knew the ash clouds brought dark portents.
15. **I Met These Ninnies:** I've been keeping them out of trouble ever since.
16. **The Wolves Appeared:** They leave nothing alive, so we fled.
17. **I Was Chosen:** The runes never lie, so I seek this unknown destiny.
18. **I Inherited This Jewel:** It's a humming, glowing thing. I need answers. Those I ask all seem to have a different story.
19. **My Master Released Me:** I completed my training, somehow, and was sent into the wild world to become a teacher someday.
20. **I Betrayed my Oath:** The limits of those close-minded folk were too much to bear. Someone had to choose the hard path. That was me.



## Character Prompts IV

The past is part of us all, but it's our actions in the present that define us. What is the fundamental drive, aptitude, or daily deed of your character?



BUT NOW, I...

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1. **Seek and Destroy Evil-Doers:** My purpose leaves evil no quarter.
2. **Simply Gather Power:** If there is such mighty arcane force in the world, why not me to wield it?
3. **Make a Mess of Things:** Who doesn't like a good jest? It's all in fun!
4. **Protect My Friends:** There is great value in the service of others.
5. **Sell My Skills for Coin:** I have released the upturned nose of morality and destiny. I do jobs. I am content.
6. **Aid the Rebellion:** Those who topple the bloated fools in power are my allies. Our lives are the weapon they cannot deflect.
7. **Find What I Seek:** No danger is too great, no task too daunting.
8. **Humbly Wander:** I ask nothing of the world, save its majesty.
9. **Answer to a New Master:** My loyalties are well-earned and absolute.
10. **Am Driven Mad by Nightmares:** The visions won't stop. Gods, the horrors it shows me, even in waking moments!
11. **Hear a Call from Afar:** When the twilight makes red the clouds, or a clap of thunder rings... I can hear some distant sound... beckoning.
12. **Just Want a Place to Call Home:** A cozy hearth and soft bed await.
13. **Must Secure my Fortune:** I will not wind up in poverty and rot after all this. I need to find a true nest egg.
14. **Fight to Earn My Place:** Only mighty deeds will earn me a seat with the elders and mentors. There must be a way...
15. **Pursue a Masterwork:** I know it is out there... the masterpiece of craft told of in legends. I will be the one to find it.
16. **Will Have My Revenge:** They will pay. I will be their angel of death.
17. **Live for the Gods' Will:** I am but a vessel, and if it be their will, they will act through me. I am but a conduit, a pilgrim.
18. **Am Gainfully Employed:** I live a sensible life of honorable work. Given enough time, I'll find leisure at last.
19. **Answer to No One:** I go where I please, and slay whom I choose.
20. **Lead My Allies to Glory:** For whatever reasons, I carry the mantle of leadership for this troop. I mean to make it matter, and see deeds done.

# Custom Character Creation

**CROWN** and **SKULL** really shines most when using the custom creation system below. Hero points are used to ‘buy’ every detail. In the following pages you’ll find everything you need to build a fully custom character. If you have an idea that isn’t listed, just work with your GM to add new bits.

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**STEP 1: Starting Points:** All characters start with **50 hero points** to spend on their build. You’ll be keeping track of your running point total as you work, so don’t be shy with making a mess on the page.

**STEP 2: Choose Flaw(s):** Visualize your new character. What is a weakness or stress point for them? Flaws imply history and drive believable role play. Take a maximum 2 at creation, and maximum 4 in the character’s lifetime. Each flaw adds 5 points to your point total. Flaws are entirely optional! Track your new total and move ahead.

**STEP 3: Core Ability:** Choose a core ability and deduct 15 points for its acquisition. This is one of the most useful mechanical aspects of your character, and you can only ever choose one, so choose wisely! You can also choose **NONE** here and save the 15 points for other ideas.

**STEP 4: Choose Skills:** Skills are the majority of rolls you’ll be making in play. Just roll a D20, at or below the skill value to succeed. Sometimes, the GM may place a penalty on this roll, so high skills are a welcome friend! Outfit your character with a handful of skills that fit your concept. Skills are purchased at 1-to-1 point value, meaning a skill of 6 would cost 6 points and so on. No skill can be higher than 18 or lower than 3. 10 skills max in inventory.



*In a system with no stats and no hit points, your challenge is to capture a character concept with skills and equipment as the focus. When you’re hit, you’ll be losing use of skills and gear, so there are many vectors of strategy here!*



## Custom Character Creation



Complete your custom character with the steps below. Creating customized spells and equipment is a learned skill as a player, so don't be surprised if it takes some time and attention. This is where the hero point system truly shines with a little ingenuity and a clear character concept to guide your decisions.

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**STEP 5: Buy & Customize Equipment:** Visualize your character and spend your precious points on the equipment you need to satisfy the concept. There will plenty of time in play to earn hero points and buy more equipment, so focus on essentials. Record damage and details for any weapons equipped. If creating a very specific idea, like a priest with a talking sword, dive into the custom equipment rules and be creative! Add the total value of armor equipped and record it as your Defense. You'll *roll a D20 at or under that value* when attacked. Keep track of final costs and move ahead. 10 items max in equipment inventory.

**STEP 6: Buy, Customize, or Scratch-Build Spells:** Of all the steps in custom character creation, none is more nuanced and 'DIY' than creating spells. This takes a flair for magic creativity, a good handle of effects and limitations, and your GM to make a few calls on the magic you're creating. All this odd work will be especially satisfying to the dedicated wizard-player. For even more options, see *The Path of Magic*.

**STEP 7: Acquire & Customize a Companion:** If your character concept includes a small familiar, falcon, pet or mount, use these rules and pay the points needed.

**STEP 8: Choose Your Lineage:** There are five lineages to choose from,. Each offers a bit of flavor for your place in the world.

**Finish:** Clean up left over points (is there such a thing?) or reduce skill values to make ends meet. If you like, you can even save a handful of hero points for spending after a session or two. The possibilities with this style of character creation are limitless... they just take some hobby-brain, pen and paper, and the ever-important character concept. You got this!

# Flaws

Things that make you unique, but also prove challenging in time... flaws! Each flaw earns 5 points, maximum 4 flaws over a character's lifetime.



## CHARACTER FLAWS LIST

1. **Addict:** You have a specific vice you cannot deny. If you can't get your fix, the GM will ask for a roll vs. attrition in some form.
2. **Aescetic:** You frown on possessions. Never exceed 5 equipment.
3. **Ancient:** You are old! Muscle, Jump, Climber, Breakfall, and Stealth skills may not exceed 9, but you earn respect for your advanced age.
4. **Bad Reputation:** You've done things... terrible things, and people know about it. You've done harm, broken oaths, or let someone down.
5. **Crazy:** When faced with a difficult choice, choose randomly.
6. **Disorganized:** Where'd you put that? When seeking anything but your most-used items and armor, roll 9 or less on a D20 to find it.
7. **Drunkard:** Your drinking wavers between revelry and tomfoolery. Beer and wine drain your pockets and frustrate your friends.
8. **Employed:** You are paid or oathsworn to a lord or employer. Disobey at your own peril!
9. **Greedy:** Tempted by treasure, roll 6 or less on a D20 to resist the urge.
10. **Grudge:** You have been wronged, and hold it against an individual or group, unjustly. When you encounter them, you behave terribly.
11. **Impetuous:** You are impatient, leaping into situations without planning or reservation. Only take action in phase 1 or 2.
12. **Injured:** This common flaw should be taken a few times in a character's lifetime. An Injury brings a -1 maximum skill inventory.
13. **Just a kid:** Hey, I'm just a kid! Never exceed 6 skills.
14. **Paranoid:** What's that? You hear that? You invent your own boogie men, and sew doubt among others. NPCs will be hesitant to trust you.
15. **Phobia:** Fear of a common thing. In its presence, no roll can succeed.
16. **Pursued:** You have a nemesis out there... somewhere... hunting you.
17. **Sickly:** You were born frail. Survival and Resist skills cannot exceed 9.
18. **Stubborn:** If you make up your mind, only a D20 contest with another player or NPC will sway you.
19. **Timid:** You'd rather let others lead. Only take action in phase 4 or 5.
20. **Unlucky:** No matter how many rabbit's feet you carry, you have a penchant for comical mishaps and crit fail on a 16+.



# Core Ability

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Select a CORE ABILITY to gain a mechanical specialization. A character can only have one. **Core abilities cost 15 hero points.**



## CORE ABILITY LIST

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1. **Battlemaster:** You have been trained as a soldier who knows how to hit hard. When you roll maximum damage, roll again. There is no limit to the number of times the dice can ‘explode.’
2. **Brutal Fighter:** You are fast, efficient, and adept at taking on multiple opponents in close quarters. All of your melee attacks may hit 2 foes with a single damage roll.
3. **Druid:** Master of wilderness. Gain the Tracking and Hunting skills for free, each at 9. When outdoors, gain +3 on all skills.
4. **Empath:** You have masterful intuition. Gain the Investigation, Streetwise and Oratory skills at a value of 7 for free.
5. **Go Unnoticed:** You blend into shadows with ease. When enemies are attacking you and your allies, they will target you last.
6. **Mountaineer:** A master of finding ways through rock and cavern. Gain the Climber and Breakfall skills at 10. In mountains or underground, you also have a Scout skill of 15.
7. **Paragon of Faith:** Your Faith skill grows by 2 with a successful cast, and maxes at 16 (see p. 84). Additionally, destroy 1D6 weak undead (such as zombies, shamblers or skeletons) as an Exhausting spell.
8. **Protector:** When using a shield, change a failed Defense roll by an ally into a success once per round, if they are nearby.
9. **Spellsinger:** You cast spells with flair and oratory. You can never use ‘silent’ or ‘still’ spells. As a default, though, your spells work on a target that can HEAR you cast. Upgrade from there as normal.
10. **Uncanny Shot:** Roll an extra damage die with all ranged weapons, and ignore 1 DEF on all targets when using ranged weapons.
11. **Veteran Commander:** When a combat encounter starts, choose 1 ally. Inspire them with a command to fight! Their first attack does maximum damage, and they cannot be harmed for the remainder of that round.
12. **Wizard Savant:** You don’t just cast spells; you are a conduit of incredible power. When casting, effects and outputs of all magic you cast are maximized on a Magic skill roll of 6 or less on a D20.



# Skills

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Skills are a diverse look at what you have studied over the years, what learning you've acquired, and what talents you've cultivated. Character skill inventory is limited to 10 skills. Roll at or under skill value on D20.

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- **Buy cost:** Pay 1 to 1 points for skills. Minimum value 3, maximum 18.
  - **Upgrade cost:** Pay 1 point to add a +1 to a skill and so on.
- 

## SKILL LIST

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**Animal Training:** Charm or induce an animal companion to perform simple actions. Can only be used with one animal at a time.

**Armorer:** In arm's length of an ally, roll this skill to repair 1 damaged armor item in their inventory. On a failure, the armor is destroyed.

**Brawling:** Fight with fists and feet. Two uses: 1) Roll the skill to grapple or stun a foe for 1 round. 2) Use a D6 when attacking without a weapon.

**Breakfall:** Half damage taken in long falls if this skill rolled successfully.

**Climber:** Climb any reasonable surface with texture, holds, or crevasses.

**Courtier:** Roll to outwit bureaucrats or royalty.

**Disguise:** Take on alternate identities. More difficult with acquaintances.

**Evade:** Used to avoid attacks that armor cannot protect against.

**Faith:** The ability to call forth miracles with prayer (see Divine Magic).

**Forage:** A skill used to find plants in the Herbalists' Guide.

**Gambling:** Cheat or overcome casino games with devious attention.

**Hunting:** Acquire food in natural environments, enough for a group.

**Investigate:** Uncover hidden information, history or subtle facts.

**Jump:** Leap with uncanny agility, out-jumping the untrained by 3-fold.

**Knowledge:** Roll to recall details on a single topic or area of expertise.

**Languages:** Be fluent with a successful roll. Only spend here for languages outside what would be normal for your folk to speak.

**Linguist:** Discern lost or unknown language, glyphs, or writing.

**Lockpicking:** Disable non-magical locking devices with tools.

**Magic:** Used to contain infernal or unstable magic, or as a resistance to spells. Also used for wild magic and anti-magic.

**Medical:** Recover a crossed-off skill on yourself or an ally, with a touch. A failed roll renders that skill recoverable only by rest.

**Mining:** Navigate or excavate underground with perfect direction and skill.

# Skills

**Muscle:** You have a knack for leverage, a powerful grip, and raw strength. Roll this skill to bend bars, lift the unliftable, or brace against wind.

**Oratory:** Fascinate or deceive with stories, bravado and sheer charisma.

**Pickpocket:** Acquire small or simple items on unsuspecting targets.

**Profession:** Any working skill or commerce skill, its tools and ways.

**Resist:** You are hearty. Roll to ignore extreme cold, poison, or too many mugs of ale. Hold your breath or fight back harmful magic with Resist.

**Repair:** Mend a damaged weapon or item. Not usable on armor. A failed roll destroys the item. *“I think I dropped a piece...”*

**Riding:** Perform daring maneuvers on horseback without penalties.

**Running:** Run double the distance of others, outrun pursuers in the open.

**Sailing:** Operate marine vessels, with appropriate crew.

**Scholar:** Achieve renown in a specific topic. You are published.

**Scout:** Find all kinds of clues, information, or traps in the immediate area.

**Shield Fighting:** When using a shield, roll this skill instead of Defense. Additionally, add the Defense bonus of your shield to this skill.

**Skinning:** Harvest a slain beast for pelt or hide in 1D4 rounds.

**Spell Research:** Roll to study spells with time and materials in a safe place. Gain 1 hero point per day invested thus, spendable only on spells.

**Stealth:** Go unnoticed when moving. Easier if perfectly still or hidden.

**Streetwise:** You know shady people and back-alley secrets.

**Survival:** If your heart is hit, a lethal injury, roll this skill instantly (it will be crossed off). On a success, you fight off death’s embrace for 1 round.

Also rolled when refusing to rest and pushing onward after lack of sleep.

**Swimming:** Swim twice as far as others. Stay under water twice as long.

**Take Aim:** Add a die of your attack type on the next attack you make.

**Tracking:** Find obscured foes in the wild.

**Trading:** Get more value out of trade despite hagglers, bad leverage, distractions or scammers.



*Savvy players should take note of the immense value of the Evade, Muscle, and Resist skills. These foundational skills will come up often in play when confronting enemies, avoiding area effects, or surviving dangerous terrain.*



## Basic Equipment List

ITEM	NOTE	COST
1. Backpack	Carry 2 additional items	6 pts
2. Torches	3 count, snap-light, burns for 1 scene	1 pt
3. Climbing Gear	Ignore penalties on Climbing rolls	1 pt
4. Mining Kit	Exploring or excavation times cut in half	1 pt
5. Cold Weather Fur	Ignore penalties from normal cold or snow	1 pt
6. Diving Gear	2 dive helms, spearguns, fins, marker buoy	1 pt
7. Lockpicks	Cannot pick locks without these tools	1 pt
8. Sack of Bearings	A pouch of 3 dozen metal balls	1 pt
9. Flint & Steel	Camp with comfort and cozy fire	1 pt
10. Scribe's Kit	Parchment book, charcoal sticks	1 pt
11. Craftsman's Tools	Hammer, spanner, and bits for simple work	1 pt
12. Bandage Kit	3 count, heal 1 crossed off skill	3 pts
13. Oil Flask	3 count, flammable liquid, glass phial	1 pt
14. Rope	50' length, breaks on crit fail usage	1 pt
15. Iron Chain	15' length, all but unbreakable	1 pt
16. Snare Kit	3 count, catch small animals	1 pt
17. Bear Trap	1 count, Muscle to escape	2 pts
18. Caltrops	3 uses, spiked floor-scatter, inflicts D4	1 pt
19. Powder Kit	1 Firearm never empty, ruined if wet	3 pts
20. Blessed Water	3 uses, anathema to pure evil or the undead	3 pts



LARGE ITEMS	NOTE	COST
1. Horse	Transports 2 people at 4x walking speed	5 pts
2. Cart	Holds Crates and barrels filled with goods	10 pts
3. Wagon	Transports like a cart, at horse speed	20 pts
4. War Wagon	An armored wagon for siege	25 pts
5. Small Boat	Holds 4 people, barely seaworthy, sneaky	15 pts
6. Mast Ship	Crew of 3 required, 2 masts, huge hold	35 pts
7. House	A cozy place to live, deed for life	50 pts
8. Fort or Garrison	A wooden Defense position with pole-fences	75 pts
9. Castle	A series of keeps and towers, stone	200 pts
10. Fortress	A massive, impregnable castle on a cliff	300 pts



## Basic Armaments List

WEAPON	DMG	NOTE	COST
1. Dagger	D4	Conceal, thrown	1 pt
2. Walking Staff	D4	Handy for all kinds of things	1 pt
3. Short Sword	D6	Use with no hindrance in tight spaces	1 pt
4. Long Sword	D8	If max damage, roll again	2 pts
5. Great Sword	D10	Uses 2 hands	3 pts
6. Wood Axe	D6	Thrown, double damage on wood	1 pt
7. Battle Axe	D12	Ignore 2 target DEF	5 pts
8. Pick Hammer	D6	Reduce target armor by 1 per hit	2 pts
9. War Hammer	D10	If 7+ dmg, stun for D6 phases	3 pts
10. Studded Mace	D8	If max damage, stun target 3 phases	2 pts
11. Spiked Flail	D10	Double dmg if used mounted	3 pts
12. Spear	D8	Thrown, long reach	2 pts
13. Halberd	D10	Long reach, halt a target's progress	3 pts
14. Scimitar	D8	On max dmg, attack another target	5 pts
15. Barbed Whip	D8	Induces bleed on target	5 pts
16. Short Bow	D6	Conceal, Use point blank	1 pt
17. Long Bow	D8	On max dmg, fire again	3 pts
18. Crossbow	D10	Takes 1 round to reload	5 pts
19. Musket	D12	Heard for miles, D6 phases to reload	7 pts
20. Flint Pistol	D10	Concealed, D6 phases to reload	7 pts



ARMOR	DEF	NOTE	COST
1. Cloak	+1	+3 Stealth skill	1 pt
2. Greaves	+1	Boots with armored shins	1 pt
3. Leather Vest	+2	No protection against blunt force	2 pts
4. Chain Mail	+3	Noisy	3 pts
5. Scale Vest	+3	Rare/requires expert blacksmith	3 pts
6. Helm	+1	Draws enemy attention	1 pt
7. Chest Plate	+4	-3 Stealth skill, cannot swim	5 pts
8. Wood Shield	+1	Absorb 2 hits before attrition	3 pts
9. Steel Shield	+2	Absorb 3 hits before attrition	5 pts
10. Tower Shield	+3	Clumsy, ignore attrition from arrows	5 pts

\*\*\*All characters have a base 6 Defense for clothing\*\*\*

# Armor and Defense

Defense is a crucial aspect of your CROWN and SKULL character. Any time enemies attack, they make no roll... it's up to you to roll Defense!

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**All characters receive Defense 6 at no cost... basic clothes. Add additional armor values to determine total Defense value. Damaged or destroyed armor no longer contributes to this value. Max 18.**

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**Using Backup Armor:** When loading up on armor, duplicates can be carried, but only one of a type/body location can be *worn* to boost Defense. You can't wear two helmets, for example. That said, backups can be carried in your 10 item slots, but only *one of a type/body location counts toward your Defense*. Backup armor is just as vulnerable to attrition as worn armor or any other equipment. This gives 'tank' heroes many vectors of strategy.

**Damaged/Destroyed:** When hit by an enemy, you can 'cross off' a piece of armor as your attrition. Most commonly, this means the armor is damaged beyond use. Some foes with corrosive or 'sundering' attacks will **destroy** armor, not just damage it. Delete the item from your inventory permanently.

**The Armorer Skill:** All heavy armor fighters worth their weight are trained in the repair of armor. This skill allows an armor user to 'self-heal' with a successful skill roll. Fall back, strap down a dented bracer, charge!

**Precious Space:** With the tightly limited inventory of your character, you'll find that there is often little room for armor, forcing the kinds of tough choices that make teamwork essential.



*Aye, I carry three shields most days, and a canoe paddle for good measure. I find that schlepping the damn things is better than fighting back a pack of ice wolves with a pair of mittens and harsh language, but that's just me.*



# Custom Equipment



**G**ear is king for the life of an adventurer! It's cheap, lying around, and often quite awesome in creative hands. In CROWN and SKULL, hero points can be used to acquire and upgrade equipment. Like all point-spending in the game, this can only be done while resting in a safe place with the aid of an expert... in this case, a smith, mentor, or artificer.

Gear is like most things in CROWN and SKULL: it has a base cost, gets more expensive with effects, and earns a discount with limitations. This allows you to buy a super simple dagger, or craft a very specific magic item all with the same value system. Any given effect added to gear can only be applied ONCE PER ITEM, though an item may have multiple effects.

---

**1 Point Gear** (D6 weapons, +1 armors):

Small weapons, pouches, rope, lantern, torch, climbing kit, travel rations, staff, ring or jewelry item, cloak, boots.

**2 Point Gear** (D8 weapons, +2 armors):

Medium-sized weapons, light armor, flares, bear traps & snares, thieves' tools, common supplies.

**3 Point Gear** (D10 weapons, +3 armors):

Heavy and exotic weapons, mechanized weapons and tools, gear for horses, complex or heavy armor.

**5 Point Gear** (D12 weapons, +4 armors):

Firearms, siege weapons, war-ready equipment and armor.



*Keep it simple, laddy. Pay an extra 3 points to make that sword deadly. Even this simple level of gear customization can give ye an edge in battle. Me? I prefer all my armor be cold iron forged... only way to be sure!*

# Character Creation: Custom Equipment

## GEAR EFFECTS LIST (3 PTS COST)

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- Deadly weapon:** Add an additional damage die of the weapon's type.
- Balanced weapon:** Ignore 1 target DEF to attack with this weapon.
- Lucky weapon:** Critical fails with this weapon incur no penalties.
- Chained weapon:** You cannot lose or be robbed of this weapon.
- Lightweight:** Finely made equipment doesn't inhibit stealth or swimming.
- Reinforced armor:** Add an addition +1 Defense.
- Bleed:** After inflicting damage, target bleeds same damage D4 rounds.
- Die Upgrade:** Upgrade the damage die of a weapon by 1 grade.
- Cold Forged:** This metal equipment is immune to corrosion of all kinds.
- Reinforced:** This gear is resilient to damage (2 hits to cross off).
- Compact:** This gear incurs no unwanted attention or clumsiness.

## GEAR LIMITATIONS LIST (GAIN 3 PTS)

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- Breakable:** On a critical fail usage, minimum damage roll, or special GM-noticed circumstances, this equipment just goes to pieces.
- Sought after:** There are nefarious folk seeking this gear.
- Stolen:** The owner of this gear, or forces of law, will hunt you down.
- Wonky:** This gear has silly or unexpected malfunctions the GM will referee as needed.
- Heavy:** This equipment is bulky, occupying 2 item inventory.
- Garish:** The appearance with this gear is over the top, ugly, or off-putting to most. This will draw enemy ire, embarrass you, or embolden foes.

*\*\*\*A piece of equipment cannot go below 1 pt cost*

## UPGRADING YOUR GEAR

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During play, your character will receive hero points for completing sessions. If used to upgrade gear, consider these key rules:

- Customizations are added for 3 points as normal.
- Upgrading gear can only be done at a smithy or artisan.
- Limitations cannot be added as part of an upgrade.
- All effects can only be applied to a single item once, no stacking.
- The final cost of a piece of gear can never be less than 1 point.



# Character Creation: Spells

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If you're playing a magic-user in CROWN and SKULL, you have a wealth of possibilities ahead. You can choose from basic spells, let your GM offer available spells to buy with points as you progress, or *create* your spells custom for the unmatched fun of bespoke magical effects. Whether you use premade spells, build them custom, or discover them as equipment in the form of wands, staves, rings or scrolls, all spells follow a few core rules in CROWN and SKULL.

## CRITICAL CONCEPTS FOR ALL SPELLS

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**Casts and Expend:** Spells are cast on command. By default, spells include 1 cast. Once a spell has no casts remaining, it is expended and must be studied again in rest and safety to cast again. Add casts with customization.

**Magic Skill:** The Magic skill is rolled to contain Infernal and Unstable spells, or utilize the Wizard Savant ability. It is also used as a defensive measure against enemy spells and effects in some cases.

**Somatics:** By default, all spells require audible words and gestures with both hands to cast. This must be remembered when casting under duress, when using equipment, or when speech is suppressed or disrupted.

**Duration:** The default duration of a spell's effect is 1D6 phases. If an effect is to conclude on the caster's action phase, it dissipates at the *end* of that phase. Upgrade effect duration with customization.

**Effect:** The default effect output of a spell is 1D6. This could be damage, for example. This amount can be upgraded with customization.

**Range:** All spells require touch as the default range to cast. This can be upgraded to 'ranged' or 'area' with customization.

**Targets:** In their default state, all spells affect a single target. A spell can be upgraded to affect multiple targets or areas with customization.

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\*\*\*See *CUSTOM SPELLS* to improve spell outputs



# Character Creation: Basic Spells

SPELL	NOTE	COST
1. Arcane Lock	A glyph used to permanently seal a door	3 pts
2. Armor	Add +3 Defense	3 pts
3. Courage	Ignore fear or intimidation	3 pts
4. Dream Spike	Stun an intelligent foe	3 pts
5. Far-Seer	See your position from high above	3 pts
6. Fireblast	Explosive fire from the caster's hands	3 pts
7. Ghost Blade	Hit 1D2 targets with arcane knives	3 pts
8. Healing Light	Heal a skill attrition with a touch	3 pts
9. Invisible Wall	A 20' wide force field, 4 attrition/10 Def	3 pts
10. Levitation	Hover up to 6 feet above ground	3 pts
11. Mage's Cloak	Enchant a cape. Its wearer is targeted last	3 pts
12. Piercing Blade	Enchant a weapon. It is deadly	3 pts
13. Purify	Free a target of all afflictions	3 pts
14. Sprint	Grant double move speed	3 pts
15. Stormcaller	Conjure a type of weather when outdoors	3 pts
16. Summon Vermin	Attract a swarm of local pests	3 pts
17. Telekineticus	Move small objects in your immediate area	3 pts
18. Vanish	Become invisible	5 pts
19. Vines	Call up vines that grab passers-through	3 pts
20. Waterbreath	Breathe underwater with ease	3 pts

When using basic spells in play, answer almost every question with the defaults mentioned on p. 41. Casting *Healing Light*? Heal 1 skill attrition from a target you touch. Casting *Mage's Cloak*? Touch the target cloak, and its wearer will be targeted last for 1D6 phases. These default values should feel limiting quickly to the magic-user. That is when useful upgrades like *Powerful*, *Lasting*, or *Dice Upgrade* can be bought with hero points.



*Considering the defaults on page 41, you'll be feeling flimsy with touch-only spells at your most basic level. Always consider throwing the 'ranged' upgrade on basic spells right from the get-go for 3 points. Trust me on this one.*



# Character Creation: Custom Spells

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Creating and modifying spells is an art in itself, and may take some practice. Much like the wizards of old, you'll be scheming how limitations and effects can counterbalance one another, or how a simple upgrade could make a Basic Spell all it needs to be. Settle in to the ancient library, and ponder the mysteries of Custom Spells...

---

The simplest way to begin your wizard's journey is to customize Basic Spells. Once you have some hero points to spend, consider these options:

- Spend 3 points for each new effect to be added
  - Add limitations, reducing spell cost by 3 for each, 1 pt minimum cost
  - You must be in a safe place to customize spells
  - No single effect can be stacked more than 3 times total
- 

When Basic Spells will no longer fulfill the desired level of magical craft, you are ready to create spells from scratch. This assumes you have a solid working knowledge of spell-casting in general, with specific outcomes in mind. Here's all you need to know:

- Give the new spell an evocative name that implies its function
  - Select one effect as focal or use a Basic Spell as a starting point. Stack on effects as desired, tracking cost as you go. Each effect raises the spell cost by 3. No single effect can be stacked more than 3 times total
  - Add limitations to the spell to get its cost down as needed. Each limitation reduces spell cost by 3. Cost can never be less than 1 point
  - You must be in a safe place for 1 day or more to create new spells
  - Check in with your GM to get the final approval on your new spell
- 

Wizards have many ways of studying their craft. As an introduction to spell creation, consider visualizing a well-known spell from your role playing past...

Blasts of fire, for example, are a staple for all adventurer-mages. Use the spell creation rules to create such a well-known spell, getting a feel for effect and limitation combinations. Don't see what you have in mind? Work with your GM to add effects or limitations as needed.

# Character Creation: Custom Spells

Choose desired spell EFFECTS below, or roll a D4 for group and a D12 for EFFECT. This method can also be used when finding scrolls.



## SPELL EFFECTS GROUP 1 (3 PTS COST)

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1. **Accuracy:** Boost an upcoming damage roll.
2. **Adapt:** Select a specific substance you can now breathe easily.
3. **Additional Cast:** Add a cast to this spell.
4. **Analyze:** Cast and roll effect. If this effect is greater than the approximate point value of the target spell or item, gain all information about it.
5. **Animate:** Use objects as puppets, D6 of them per cast.
6. **Area:** Modify a single-target spell to affect an arm's-width radius.
7. **Banish:** Cast out a summoned creature or construct.
8. **Blast:** Inflict magic damage of specified theme, element, or style.
9. **Clairvoyance:** Affect unseen target(s) with rolled effect x 10' distance.
10. **Cloak:** Reduce the chance of being spotted by others. This effect can have many variations including camouflage, stillness, deception...
11. **Clone:** Duplicate an object or person into a semi-real copy.
12. **Create:** Create an object imbued with a spell you know. At its base level, this spell creates an object with 1 use of the selected spell.



## SPELL EFFECTS GROUP 2 (3 PTS COST)

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1. **Arcane Armor:** Roll the output effect and add it to target Defense.
2. **Detect Object:** Detect a specific object.
3. **Duration:** Upgrade from 1D6 phases default to 1 full round duration.
4. **Dispel:** To cancel a spell, roll this output. Surpass the point value of the target spell to cancel it. Sacrifice your next phase to dispel immediately.
5. **Dice Upgrade:** Increase the dice used by this spell by one grade.
6. **Dominate:** Target rolls a D20. Surpass that roll with effect to dominate.
7. **Drain:** Reduce a target's DEF or ATK for 1 round.
8. **Enchant:** Imbue a weapon or object with a single gear effect.
9. **Evade:** Boost the Evade skill of a target.
10. **Haste:** Run or swim (choose on purchase) twice as fast as others.
11. **Mend:** Repair 1 weapon, item, or piece of armor.
12. **Illusions:** Place illusions into a mind directly, or fabricate them for all.



# Character Creation: Custom Spells



## SPELL EFFECTS GROUP 3 (3 PTS COST)

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1. **Language:** Listen, speak, or translate any language or cypher.
2. **Lasting:** Make a spell's output permanent, with GM approval, for a cost of 15 points.
3. **Levitate:** Hover or move a few feet above the ground.
4. **Locate:** Locate a person without seeing them. If being located by an enemy, roll your Magic skill to evade detection.
5. **Metal:** Manipulate metal in numerous ways.
6. **Mind Defense:** Ignore Dominate, Illusions, Obscure, or Telepathy being cast upon you.
7. **Obscure:** Hide objects. Use effect as penalty to detection rolls.
8. **Perception:** Add effect to a Scout or Investigate roll.
9. **Poison:** Conjure arcane goo or oil that inflicts poison on living things.
10. **Powerful:** Boost a spell with a die upgrade, additional die, or similar.
11. **Psychokinesis:** Use the Muscle skill at distance of effect x 10 feet.
12. **Held Spell:** Use a turn to 'pre-cast' spell, triggering it any time after.



## SPELL EFFECTS GROUP 4 (3 PTS COST)

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1. **Ranged:** Cast up to long range and visible targets (most of a scene).
2. **Restore:** Heal 1 skill attrition.
3. **Shapechange:** Change into a specified animal form.
4. **Shield:** Create a damage-absorbent magical barrier the size of a shield. It is impervious for 1 round and cannot be moved.
5. **Silent Spell:** Cast this spell with no magical words spoken.
6. **Still:** Cast this spell with no gestures.
7. **Summon:** Conjure 1D6 1 attrition 'minion' creatures or constructs.
8. **Telepathy:** Read minds by overcoming foe's D20 roll with effect.
9. **Transmute:** Change a mass into a different material of equal or lesser value. Change effect x 10 pounds of mass.
10. **Transport:** Move a person from here to there instantly. Distance equal to effect x 10 feet.
11. **Vapor:** Contain a spell's effect in a lingering vapor cloud. The cloud is subject to air movement as a conventional gas.
12. **Ward:** Prevent passage of a specified creature or person through a portal or passage.

# Character Creation: Custom Spells



## SPELL LIMITATIONS LIST (GAIN 3 PTS)

1. **Campfire magic:** Can only be cast in a safe place.
2. **Cannot be customized:** This spell is minimalistic, only available in its first-learned form, never to be changed.
3. **Cannot be targeted:** Spell always flies wild. Use dice for direction, or randomly select from available targets.
4. **Exhausting:** No magic can be used for 1 round after cast.
5. **Costs 1 attrition to cast:** Sustain 1 attrition with each cast.
6. **Costs material to cast:** When cast, mark off 1 item in your inventory as destroyed... a powerful reagent like a crystal or crushed bone.
7. **Druidic:** Cannot be cast if the caster wears or is touching any metal.
8. **Ineffable:** This magic is primal, and can't be recorded for others to use on scrolls, weapons, rings, or wands of any sort.
9. **Linked to physical object:** The spell manifests with or through an object. If that object is destroyed or stolen, the spell is lost.
10. **Madness:** Each time this spell is cast, roll your Magic skill. On failure, take the Crazy flaw until your next rest.
11. **Must be sustained:** This spell ends if the caster is hit or takes any other action while the spell is active.
12. **Nullified by:** Has no effect on a specific type of target or target property.
13. **Only works on specific target type:** Can be anything. Be as specific as possible.
14. **Only works outdoors:** Elemental forces are required to cast.
15. **Painful:** After this spell is cast, the user can only make a *move* on their next turn... i.e.; no actions. "*Gods! My limbs are all but numb!*"
16. **Red Speech:** This spell can only be cast with booming, shouted words. This limitation prohibits the use of Silent Spell.
17. **Ritual:** This spell can only be cast with 1D4 uninterrupted rounds of successful Magic skill rolls.
18. **Takes 2 phases to cast:** Effect takes place at the end of the caster's second phase spent casting. If hit in that time, the count starts over. If rolling to cast, the roll must be made twice consecutively.
19. **Unstable:** A wobbly, barely-contained magic. When cast, roll Magic to maintain control. If failing, roll on the Unstable Magic table.
20. **Uses infernal powers:** Calls on brimstone and demons. When cast, roll Magic to maintain control. If failing, roll on the Infernal Magic table.



# Character Creation: Custom Spells



## UNSTABLE MAGIC

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1. **Spellblast:** Explosion! Absorb 2 attrition. The blast is large, reaching to 'near' distance.
2. **Wild Shot:** The spell fires at a random target or area, including allies.
3. **Forgetful:** You forget how to cast this spell for 1D4 days. For each of those days, roll Investigation to try and remember.
4. **Psychic Spike:** Your mind reels from failed magic. Take a -3 penalty to your Magic skill until your next rest.
5. **Erosion:** The spell itself is damaged. Roll to add a new limitation.
6. **Echo:** A searing, loud noise erupts, heard for miles.
7. **A dud:** The cast fails, and expends itself.
8. **Stable:** Your spell casts normally, with no unstable aspects.



## INFERNAL MAGIC

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1. **Hellrift:** A powerful baron of hell appears, furious. It has 20 HP, actions on phases 2 and 4, and does D12 sword damage.
2. **Charred:** Terrible burn... reduce skill inventory by 1 permanently.
3. **Hellstone:** A mass of smoldering rock falls from above! It smashes a random area in 1D6 phases, inflicting 2 attrition on those below.
4. **Imps:** 2D6 1 HP imps materialize and attack you. They do not make rolls, fly about like bats, and inflict 1 attrition per bite.
5. **Smoke Cloud:** A large cloud of opaque smoke surrounds you.
6. **Pain:** Heat and sparks sear your flesh for 1 item attrition.
7. **Devilish:** Your appearance slightly changes: a hint of horns, a glow to the eyes, black fingernails, crab-claw fingers or scaly skin.
8. **Inert:** Nothing happens, save a wisp of smoke.



*Cazzaban was mad with his search for spells!  
The damned fool had us on the underbelly of  
an Orcish mining barge, breathing through  
tubes, with iron diving caps and boots a-full with  
leeches! Wizards! Lunatics, all of ye!*

# Character Creation: Acquiring Spells

Magic has a wild, boundless nature that can permeate every aspect of a game and its setting. Before things get out of control, your GM may want to place some limitations on how and where magic can be researched, created, stored, or modified. These aren't hard rules, but thematic limits that invite our heroes to seek out magical powers rather than simply, inexplicably, acquiring them with hero points at any time.

## ACQUIRING NEW SPELLS

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**Safety:** Decoding, translating, modifying, creating or learning spells can only be accomplished with concentration and focus. This means a safe place and restful conditions. In 'the field' these conditions can be hard to find. Safety means no threats of any kind are incoming.

**Elder Wizards:** It takes decades to learn higher magics. Elder wizards are a good way to access new or more powerful spells. If more than 20 points have been / are being put into a spell (before limitations applied), the GM may require an elder wizard to aid your work. Your campaign may even have GM-made spells that can only be acquired from such a mentor. How to find such a wizard? Who knows?

**Spell Storage:** Gems, scrolls, rings, amulets, wands, staves, and frescoes are the common residences of spells. All of these require some acumen to translate and comprehend. Wizards are often searching for such 'containers' wherever they go. A *Detect Object* spell built to find magic or spell storage is handy for such work. Given time and safety, the spell(s) therein could be learned, no longer requiring the container.

**Gaia Theory:** The land itself holds magical power. In very special places in the wilderness, new magic can be acquired directly from this vast, mysterious source of power. These are most commonly a henge or heroic grave site. To grasp the hidden power of such a place, the aspirant must spend a matter of hours or days there, searching for subtle energies and cues from nature itself. Numerous intellectual skills can be handy in this endeavor.



## Character Creation: Costs of Magic

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When building or considering magic and spell casting for your character, the question of ‘Why doesn’t everyone make a spellcaster?’ may come up. Spells can be very powerful, transcend the abilities of sword and shield, or simply seem more exciting in play. The wizard player is invited to consider some aspects of The North Holds when musing on this subject...

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**Hatred of Magic:** Some remote communities, religious sects, or superstitious governments have no love of the magic-user. You may be hunted, despised, imprisoned, mocked, robbed or plotted against if your use of the arcane arts is revealed. Also, many lower forms of monstrous life such as fish folk, ogres, reptiles and wild beasts can have a violent and sudden aggression when magic is used, targeting the caster before all others.

**Unwanted Attention:** Loud noises, pyroclastic displays, bizarre robes, twisted staves and the like are seen, by many, as a portent of bad things. Wizards are strange, far-minded folk. This can make stealth and deception more challenging, or create ill-favored rumors.

**Vulnerability Without Magic:** By investing their hero points in spells, magic-users become intrinsically vulnerable if they should enter a magic-nullifying or silenced environment, be stripped of magic items, lose the Magic skill to attrition, or have their hands bound. This vulnerability seems unlikely to the greenhorn adventurer, but all veterans know how real these threats are.

**Complexity of Play:** On a more ‘meta-game’ level, there is a burden of complexity in efficiently playing a wizard or magic-user. Spells must be clearly tracked; thought must be given BEFORE one’s turn as to actions taken; times, outputs and other specifications must be clear to the whole table, without eating up undue time. All these duties can be overly clerical for some players, or become so cumbersome that other players are groaning and falling asleep during the wizard’s ponderous turns.

If none of these sway you, then may the arcane be with you... always.



# Character Creation: Companions

It's dangerous to go alone! On the dark adventures ahead, you may have need of a falcon, a hunting dog, or even a paid retainer or scribe. In CROWN and SKULL these are called companions. You can customize a companion much like a spell or piece of prized equipment.

With a clear concept of your companion in mind, get a heap of points ready to spend, and use the rules below.

The most important thing to remember with companions is that they will not serve to double your actions in combat. A companion action counts as your own. You operate as one! This keeps companion characters from overtaking the table.

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## **3-Point Companion** (Small animals)

A ferret, rat, snake, parrot, frog, or hedgehog may not have great strength, but they make good company, stow away with ease and generally go unnoticed by foes.

D4 attacks, 1 skill value 9, 6 Defense

## **5-Point Companion** (Medium sized beasts or simple devices)

Dogs, cats, falcons, owls, or even small pigs count as medium-sized. Also in this group are tiny devices such as mechanical animals, orbs or smaller automatons. The latter should be very rare in any campaign. Medium companions have more combat capability, but also become targets.

D6 attacks, 2 skills value 9, 9 Defense

## **12-Point Companion** (Large animals or retainers)

A tiger, wolf, bear, or condor is considered the largest of companions. Also in this group are trainee human fighters, equipment squires, chroniclers or personal chefs. The GM should be prepared to manage the mechanics and story for such a companion, without allowing them to consume more table time than any other character type.

D8 attacks, 3 skills value 9, 9 Defense

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# Character Creation: Companions

## COMPANION SKILL LIST

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**Retrieve:** Roll to recover an object of equal or smaller mass.

**Track:** Roll to reliably follow a designated quarry for 1 round.

**Attack:** Roll damage with natural weapons.

**Stand Watch:** This companion reliably keeps guard, alerting at any event.

**Protect:** The companion clings to its charge, taking damage when possible.

**Find:** Locate a person or object in 1D4 rounds.

**Report:** In 1D4 rounds, scout the area and report back in simple terms.

**Carry:** This companion can carry its weight or less with ease.

**Hunt:** Once per day, this companion can feed a group with its efforts.

**Pin Down:** Roll to pounce on a foe and pin it. Versus rolls encouraged.

**Endure:** This companion gains a +1 protective attrition against a lethal hit.

**Frighten:** With a roll, scare a foe into hesitating for 1 round.

**Taunt:** With a roll, require a foe to attack for 1 round.

*\*\*\*Work with your GM if assigning unlisted skills to a companion*

## UPGRADING YOUR COMPANION (COST 3 PTS)

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When out of danger, a companion can be trained with time...

**Deadly:** Upgrade the companion's damage with an additional die.

**Cunning:** Upgrade the skill value used by +1.

**Precise:** Your companion ignores most penalties in combat.

**Evasive:** This creature gains +3 Defense.

## COMPANION LIMITATIONS LIST (GAIN 3 PTS)

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**Frightened:** On a roll of 4 or less, or in special circumstances, this companion will flee, vanishing for 1D4 days.

**Trophy:** This companion is sought after by shadowy folk, collectors, jailers, or those who simply hate it.

**Feral:** Once attacking, this companion will not stop attacking until all immediate foes are slain or subdued.

**Impulsive:** When battle is joined, this companion rolls its best skill. On a failed roll, it makes its own opening decision, using the hero's phase.

**Clumsy:** This companion is almost never stealthy, hidden, or silent. The group's sneaking or stealth efforts are afflicted by a -3 penalty.



# Character Creation: Lineage

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Choose a LINEAGE when creating a character. Lineage does not include mechanical aspects, as each population is vast and diverse.

## **Humankind are a versatile folk...**

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The story of human folk and their kin in The North Holds is a ragged line of ambition, ascension, and ruin. Again and again have their kings and golden ages fallen to calamity. This is largely attributed to their unusual desire to unite The Holds under one banner, as the Earl did so many years ago.

Ironically, in present times human folk are less unified than ever. Their royal lines and heritage are largely lost. For some, this is just politics and daydreaming, but for others it is a call to find and lift a true king or queen, and reclaim the great vision of the past. How this can be done, which bloodline has the purest claim, and all the intrigue that goes with such questions, is argued in every lord's hall.

## **Elven folk have a knack for the magical...**

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Elves in The North Holds have long endeavored to stay out of wars and witchcraft, instead choosing to cultivate powerful allies with nature and primal forces. As the sole keepers of Dragon Tooth, they wield this power with care and patience... most of the time. Exactly what to do with the delicate friendship of dragonkin is a matter of perpetual debate among elven scholars and wizards.

Within the elven people, there is yet disunity despite the high-flying banners and pageantry of King's Field. Some claim that King Ithamel of Forestheart is a deceiver... a demon. Others impugn the law of Thryn as appeasement to lesser houses, demanding the elves deal elemental justice to all The Holds.

As self-proclaimed keepers of these weighty matters, elves curate the greatest libraries and scriptoriums in the realm... a tool they will surely need in the days to come.



## Character Creation: Lineage

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### **Stout Folk are usually built like tanks...**

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Ah, the beard-sporting, ale-quaffing, hammer-wielding folk of Runnminir and Ullur! Stout folk, also called dwarves by the ill-mannered, can all trace their family lines to one of these two ancestral homes, endlessly arguing theirs as the best. Stout folk have a hearty sense of moral duty. They carry an inheritance of mighty deeds from their ancestors, allying with all the folk of The Holds to preserve the best things in life.

The only weak point in the stout folk code of honor is the sinister shadow of greed. Players creating stout folk characters should remain ever-mindful of dwarven greed and its effects.

### **Proudfoots are feastwise inventors...**

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These diminutive folk are a happy and peaceful lot, mostly hailing from the deserts near Hakburg. They are master horsemen and frontiersfolk... sturdy, optimistic, and resourceful. Above all they prize a good meal.

By the ingenuity of Proudfoot artisans, the frightening wonder of gunpowder has come to The Holds in recent years... not simply in pot-bombs or mining charges, but flintlock muskets with die-cast bullets. With great care and caution they guard this deadly new technology.

### **Frog-kin are honor-bound, trapped in a violent empire...**

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Lord Croakokame is the cruel emperor of all frog-folk, willing to burn the world to see it under his rule. A strict code of honor keeps his legions in line, but a very few among them throw down their vows and leave the murderous empire for greener lands. For this, they are hunted.

Players selecting frog-kin should keep a sharp eye for assassins, will be considered traitors, and are largely misunderstood by most folk. On the other hand, froggish warriors are disciplined, skilled absolutists who are not to be trifled with. A weighty lineage indeed.

# Character Creation: Discovery

With all these tools, prompts and options available to you for creating a character, there's one last origin method to consider: *discovery*. This method places your character in a vulnerable state of amnesia with little to no equipment. This method can be exciting for newcomers and veterans alike, but asks a bit of lifting by both player and GM.

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**The Opener:** If your group is using discovery-style character creation, much of who your character will be relies on the nature, details, and themes of the opening moments. These can be summarized in three parts...

- *Location:* Where does the story begin, and why is it cool? A remote cavern? A dismal tomb? A sinking ship? Choose something everyone is excited about.
- *Condition:* What condition are our heroes in? Asleep too long? Imprisoned? Freezing cold? Materialized by magic? Buried alive? This is no meet-up in a tavern.
- *Time Pressure:* What is about to happen, or pushing our heroes to action? Something needs to initiate the action, and soon... 1D4 rounds soon. The chamber fills with water, a blizzard breaks windows, walls of fire close in, air runs out or a giant grinder-machine grows ever closer.

**One Little Memory:** As heroes seek to escape or get moving, a fleeting shadow, reflection, or strange feeling triggers one small memory for each character. This memory takes the form of a single skill, granted at value 6.

**Stuff Lying Around:** On their way to whatever lies ahead, characters find 1D4 useful items in their immediate area. A rusty iron spear? A ragged leather vest? A snow-cruled blanket? This is all they have for now.

**I Remember My Name:** After a few exciting moments, rolls, or events, the GM will notice key details and announce, "*At that moment, shaking the panic of it all free, gaining a bit of your wits, you remember a name... your name.*" Record this name when so instructed. Soon enough, the group will know itself a little better, and the discoveries are ready to begin. "*Free of the ice cave, it collapses behind you with only seconds to spare. Beyond, the vast ice fields await, and daylight fades fast...*"



# Character Creation: Discovery



Discovery asks that players lean in to skill sets and ideas as they unfold during play, while GMs stay highly aware of these cues to reward memories. It can feel a bit open-ended at first, but trust the adventure, and each other. There are no hero points in these first few discovery sessions, just collaborative revelation of our heroes' identities.

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**Finding Memories:** As the early struggles of the first session unfold, both GM and player should be keenly aware of exciting moments, unlikely successes, clutch dice rolls, bumps on the head, nostalgic items, or other triggers for unlocking hero memory. When such a moment occurs, the GM will announce that another memory has surfaced, spreading them evenly between heroes. This could be an increase to a skill, a new skill, a piece of character background, or even a flaw. Expect 3-5 of these memories per character in session 1.

**Finding Gear:** Players will be gear-hungry to say the least. Remember that in CROWN and SKULL 'usable' or 'useful' inventory is somewhat rare, even if the world has objects lying about. Expect each character to find 1-3 useful inventory in session 1.

**Finding Your Past:** Skills and equipment are useful, but to know *who you are* is the real pay dirt of a discovery session. This may not even occur in session 1, but all characters are encouraged to seek their history.

**Origin Revealed:** In the next few sessions, when a character reaches a moment of truly epic success, poignant role play, or powerful luck, the GM may announce "*At that moment, you remember everything...*" Once this occurs, memories come flooding back. The next time the revealed character is in rest and safety, gain these rewards:

- 2 skills, each at value 9 "*I was a blacksmith... yes! And a good one!*"
- 10 points of basic equipment "*This cache was left for you, sir.*"
- A Core Ability "*The hands are starting to remember...*"
- Memory of how you got into all this "*We must find Castigere!*"

Play then continues as normal, with heroes earning points in play.

# Deeds

When our heroes have done more than survive, more than gain wealth and equipment and influence, but instead have risked their lives for the good of all and emerged victorious... when these moments occur, the realm acknowledges a mighty deed. Deeds provide 3 benefits to players...

**Hero Points:** When a deed is done, each character receives 3 hero points. These can be spent (if in a safe place) or saved for later. A deed should be awarded every other session or so. Listed here are the primary moments deeds are awarded by the GM...

- Completing a session with flair. *“You guys, that was amazing. Consider a mighty deed done! Take 3 hero points, all of ya.”*
- Executing legendary or pivotal actions in play. *“That critical didn’t just collapse the cavern, it sealed the horrors behind a wall of rock for all time? Ha! Consider that a mighty deed!”*
- Returning to goodly folk who cheer for their courage and aid. *“Wallabytarnwhatwallaby sheds a single tear as you return to town. Children run to meet you, and banners stream in the air. The deed is done! Victory at last!”*

**Closure:** Normally, the dangerous situations facing ordinary folk get worse and worse until our heroes come to help. Once a deed is done for such people, the decay of circumstances finally halts. This lets players move on to other exploits with no worries or loose ends. *“With the goblins vanquished, and the caverns destroyed, Gardenburrow will never be threatened again!”*

**Renown:** When word spreads of the heroes’ mighty accomplishments, bards and poets will begin to assign them titles and nicknames...



*Ah, the sound of cheering townsfolk and laughing goats! I may have gone soft in my golden years, but there’s no better feelin’ in life than to return to folk made safe, have an ice cold bath, and drink until the sun rises anew. To the crown!*



# Renown

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**R**enown is the inevitable result of heroic action, acknowledged by folk of the realm and GM alike as deeds. When these pile up, the honor of title is bestowed on our band of adventurers. Here are a few guidelines...

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**3 Deeds:** After a few exploits, a hero or group receives a title derived from a famous doing. Examples of this could be ‘spider-slayer,’ ‘boulder breaker,’ or ‘the wild man of Mooncrest.’ Stories have begun to circulate about deeds done, but most folk wouldn’t recognize the heroes if they saw them. You are little more than a rumor or tavern tall tale.

**5 Deeds:** After so many doings, our heroes acquire actual titles either individually or as group. ‘Knight Errant,’ ‘Commander,’ ‘Warmaster,’ or ‘Forest Mother’ come to mind. Folk recognize our heroes more often, and refer them by proper title to show respect. Vendor prices drop, ales are bought aplenty by admirers and well-wishers.

**10 Deeds:** Here the greatest heroes find their place in history. If awarding deeds every other session or so, this would be 20 sessions of play. For some groups, that’s an entire year of campaigning! At this stage, our heroes’ renown is legend. They become part of the ‘world lore’ of The North Holds. They are offered a fortress, village, or outpost by lord and lady. Some folk even kneel or swear fealty to such heroes. Titles for renown of this level could be ‘Lord,’ ‘Baron,’ ‘Duchess,’ ‘Arch Druid,’ or ‘High Priest.’

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At this level of play, our protagonists will be ready to take on the largest perils of the day: plan with kings and generals to end wars, slay titanic monsters, protect the ascension of royalty, stand for the Crown or the Skull, explore other dimensions, prevent cosmic calamities, or rescue entire towns from destruction.

Often, somewhere beyond this level, characters are retired and treated as mighty avatars of The Holds, fading into the background for a new group of up-and-coming characters our players create *in their own wake*. This is when things become truly interesting...

## The Crown or the Skull?

After several perilous chapters, a character earning **25 or more hero points** in play (not at creation) will earn the attention of mighty forces. This hero is ready to make the ultimate choice: the CROWN or the SKULL? Once this threshold has been crossed, the GM will find an opportune moment to pose this question as part of the ongoing story. The deliverer of this choice will be a familiar lord, king, mentor, or trusted ally. Larger forces are at work, and a call to greater duties arrives at last.

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*“You stand before me a hero of the realm. Your deeds have not gone unnoticed. No longer can you chase whims or petty treasures. Yours is a mighty calling, adventurer. Make your choice!”* With that, the king opens his hand, revealing two silver rings. One is carved with a seven-eyed skull, the other, a high-tined crown. He waits patiently. All eyes are on you.

Since the fall of the world’s unity three decades ago, many heroes have faced this choice. It has become tradition... a sacrament to lend order to a chaotic world. The CROWN is not simply ‘the good guys’ nor is the SKULL wanton evil. The question is a matter of alignment with larger forces at work in The North Holds.

For players, your job is to announce when 25 hero points have been earned. For the GM, you are charged with weaving this choice into the campaign naturally. Before we look at what’s at stake, here are a few pointers.

**Sacred Rite:** When presenting this moment in play, GMs, be sure to pause the story a bit, revel in this moment. Heralds take the knee, trumpets sound.

**The Ring Itself:** For added effect, offer two actual rings to the player(s) about to choose. Spare no bravado in their presentation.

**Consider the Group:** Some groups may prefer to all reach the 25 point threshold together, some independently. Survey their preference.

**The Only Chance:** This choice is only offered once. If a hero refuses to choose, they will be scorned widely, possibly deemed an enemy to all.



## The Crown or the Skull?

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Those who choose the CROWN will join an order of protectors, knights, and heralds sworn to the well-being of the realm, the sanctity of all life, and the upholding of ancient codes. They swear to honor the decrees of kings and queens, to serve as a beacon of truth and loyalty.

- Gain 6 hero points
  - Choose any 1 crown skill at no cost, value 9
  - Choose any 1 crown equipment at no cost
  - Take the ‘Crown-Sworn’ flaw: If you disobey a royal summons, edict or order and are caught doing so, the penalty is death.
  - Gain a Ring of the Anvil’s Light: Roll 9 or less on a D20 to heal 1 skill attrition for all close allies. Also, add +1D4 to their Defense until your next turn.
- 

*“I knew it! Sound the bells! Bring forth a silver cloak and goblet of ale! The ranks of good have another in their phalanx! Look, ye evil doers, on this fellowship, on this shield wall, and despair! I honor you, crown-sworn.”*

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Those who choose the SKULL will join no order, swear allegiance to no one, and walk the world as a masterless rogue. They will spare no method or dark power to see their deeds done. They trust their own wisdom over the laws of kingdoms or motives of kings. Free to choose their own path, they will be honored by others who stand defiant, self-contained.

- Gain 9 hero points
  - Choose any 1 skull skill at no cost, value 9
  - Choose any 1 skull equipment at no cost
  - Take the ‘Ronin’ flaw: Unless in disguise, you will be identified and unwelcome in any high hall, throne room, council chamber, or royal household. Even in taverns and markets you will be seen as suspicious.
  - Gain a Ring of the Skull: When you make a kill, gain 1D12. Store this until desired to add or subtract from any roll you make in the future.
- 

*“Fascinating. I see in you no need for the straight path. No lord or land will you keep, no law will you endure... shadow-walker, king slayer. So be it, but choose wisely how you use this mighty freedom, ronin. A skull with too many enemies is short-lived. Until then, I bid you good luck. Now go.”*

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## Crown Skills

These skills can never be learned by those who choose the skull.

**Court:** With this skill, argue, dominate, or placate the highest-ranking folk.

**Silvercraft:** Cast ammunition or weapons with a smithy and silver.

**Burial Rites:** With ancient rites, you can ensure that the dead or undead will never rise again... truly at peace... inert.

**Codex Language:** You speak the oldest language known... a root of all.

**Ancestor:** Call the phantom of long-dead kin to fight at your side.

**Skewering Strike:** Roll this skill with any attack, and add the margin of success to the damage dealt.

**Bladeguard:** Master of the parry. Add margin of success to DEF, 1 round.

**Bloodlines:** You can glean many details from a sample of blood.

**Squadron:** Send out a call with this skill: D6 allies arrive in D4 rounds.

**Fort Command:** In garrisons or forts, take command with this skill.

**Artillery:** You are a genius with range and aim at long distances. Use this skill with any long-range strategy to guarantee the success of such a roll.

**Sun Keeper:** Roll to manifest sunlight from an object of your choice.

## Crown Equipment

This equipment can never be used by those who choose the skull.

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1. Plumed Helmet	+3 Defense, enrages enemies	3 pt
2. Silver Shield	+6 Defense, repel lycanthrope attacks w/ no roll	3 pt
3. Sun Amulet	This chain necklace holds 1 burst of sunlight	3 pt
4. Silver Darts	12 thrown spikes of purest silver, D10 damage	3 pt
5. Roc Feather	Destroy to fly for 1D6 rounds	3 pt
6. Prophet's Hood	Renew 1 spent spell daily	3 pt
7. Beads of Lurian	If facing fear or panic, gain +5 Magic skill	3 pt
8. Great Bear Pelt	Ignore penalties from cold or snow	3 pt
9. Giant Sword	A 3D12 blade with +2 Defense	3 pt
10. Song of Ullur	Roll Magic to heal all allies 1 attrition	3 pt
11. Arconyx Ring	Store 3D12 per rest, use on any future roll	3 pt
12. King's Plate	Lesser undead cannot touch this plate armor	3 pt

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## Skull Skills



These skills can never be learned by those who choose the crown.

**Dragon Speech:** You speak draconic. One mistake can be deadly.

**Shadow Guild:** Recall hand-signs and passwords of underground groups.

**Vicious Strike:** When you do damage, forego your next turn to double the amount inflicted. If a kill is made, recover the turn sacrificed.

**Scurry:** With this roll, relocate anywhere within a bowshot. What the-

**Shadow Jump:** Roll to move between any two deep shadows.

**Fire Snap:** Snap your fingers to quadruple an open flame you can see.

**Misdirection:** If a thing is noticed, you can 'move' that attention to something else entirely. Not with magic, but cunning.

**Silent Kill:** If you kill an unsuspecting target, roll this skill to go unnoticed.

**Lift:** Roll to steal a high-profile item or object without being seen.

**Fade:** Even if being directly observed, roll this skill to move unnoticed.

**Fang Disciple:** Once per town, castle, or abbey, roll to attract a strange, misfit worshiper... this person will do anything for you.

**Blood:** In a pinch, drink the blood of your lineage to recover 1 skill attrition.

## Skull Equipment



This equipment can never be used by those who choose the crown.

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1. Antler Dirk	A D10 dagger that uses no metal parts	3 pt
2. Karlan's Claws	D10 fist weapons, victims bleed after hit	3 pt
3. Spring Cable	An elastic wire for base-jumping, holds 3 people	3 pt
4. Twistroot	A fungal bud that drills through almost any lock	3 pt
5. Spellspark	Once each day, add 1 cast to 1 spell	3 pt
6. Kinetic Glove	Add a damage die each consecutive attack, up to 3	3 pt
7. Spellcannon	A bulky pistol. Arm with 3 casts of a spell per rest	3 pt
8. Night Hood	In moonlight, you are all but invisible	3 pt
9. Cold Iron Scythe	2D12 blade, if you hit for 10+, kill your foe	3 pt
10. Thieves' Ruby	A gem so pretty it causes a kind of hypnosis	3 pt
11. Fool's Coin	When given, binds the recipient to a favor	3 pt
12. Black Crown	If you see a foe healed, convert it to dmg	3 pt

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# Heroes of the Realm

Player characters, even in their fledgling days, have heard inspiring stories of these mighty folk. Once characters have completed a few adventures, they will likely hear from one of these famous people. Each is listed below with an introductory quest.

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## Saint Castigere Villaroyas Antares

- *Location:* Bramford Abbey area
- *Widely Known:* For over 400 years, Castigere has dwelled in the veil between life and death, lingering in the mortal realm to fulfill a vow to honor the dead. He is the saint of the grave, the giver of alms to the lost, the guide from life to death's reprieve.
- *Quest:* The Dead of Stormfoot Woods: Castigere appears as an apparition, hovering a few feet above the ground. He asks that heroes investigate a legion of wandering skeletons in the forest southwest of Jay's Rock. *'I fear some evil has risen these souls from their duly-earned sleep. Please, help me root out this doom!'*

## Greentooth

- *Location:* The Bleeding Tree near Blood Manor
- *Widely Known:* Greentooth is the older sister of Bloodwing the Destroyer. She is, perhaps, the oldest being in The Holds. She takes the form of a colossal green dragon and a withered old woman. Her hut is seen now and then in the deepest of forests... a bubbling stew cooking. She is kind and watchful, but ethereal... having lived and died many lifetimes. Thus, she seeks allies to aid her causes.
- *Quest:* The Blood of Kellos: After a recurring dream of Greentooth soaring over the Stormkeepers, heroes are mysteriously drawn to the old woman's hut near the Bleeding Tree. She explains that deep below the forest, an ancient evil is growing, poisoning the roots of the old oak with congealed blood-ichor. Taking dragon form, she offers to shuttle the heroes to a remote crag of solid bedrock in the hills south of the tree, where a great fissure has opened a path into the cavernous realm below. *'Down and through and under the stones, seek the eye of Kellos and all his blood-soaked bones, to root out the poison and heal the tree... go in the darkness to finally see.'*



# Heroes of the Realm



## Elayna of the Redwoods

- *Location:* Forestheart
- *Widely Known:* Elayna is the queen of the Red Woods elves, wife of King Ithamel, keeper of the Heart of the Forest. She was once a wild elf, betrothed by Ithamel after the Bloodwing War. She is widely loved in all The North, spending her days helping good people.
- *Quest:* The Ring of Ashes: A royal writ is received by our heroes. Queen Elayna seeks a team of adventurers to discreetly enter the burned ruins of the old elven capital, in hopes of retrieving chipped or broken-off dragon claws. A contact awaits in Old Watch to outfit the adventurers on arrival. *'If dragons are to return to our lands, these fragments will help us know how and when...'*

## Raka Galmorn

- *Location:* The Wolf Lands
- *Widely Known:* Once mortal, Raka now wanders Pyros, the dimension of fire, in search of his quarry: Orgidex the Watcher. He is a cryptic figure, appearing when matters of flame are at hand.
- *Quest:* The Spark: When wildfires ravage several huge swaths of forest throughout the realm, Raka is blamed by most folk. By order of a local lord, our heroes are sent to find him where last sighted: The Wolf Lands. Is Raka part of the plague of flames, or the solution? *'Yes, I am Raka. Fire is a living thing, friends. Let's go hunting.'*

## Lord Pickins, Mayor of Slimshire, Herald of the White Bird

- *Location:* Slimshire, Mayor's Manor
- *Widely Known:* Lord Pickins is a benevolent figure, widely credited with the golden age of the south. In recent days, darkness has fallen on his family, as his daughter has been afflicted with undeath.
- *Quest:* The Cure for Vampirism: Desperate to save his daughter, Lord Pickins employs our heroes to find a cure for the affliction of undeath. This quest is no simple thing. Pickins offers a few clues: the research of Fairfield Abbey nuns, the blood-drinking entity hiding below Slimshire, and ultimately the evil of Blood Manor. *'There must be a connection in all this... a way to help her! Time is running my friends, I beg of you.'*

# Heroes of the Realm

## Zipler's Ghost

- *Location:* Ruinmoor
- *Widely Known:* Zipler was a warrior bard beloved by all The Holds in his day, during the breaking of the Bloodwing War. By strange fate he came to wield Ruin, the starfallen sword of legend. When afflicted by the vampiric curse, he hid Ruin and let himself be destroyed in the plane of fire... finally free of the urge to kill for food. Now, rumor spreads that Ruin has been found by the prophet Threya, and Zipler's ghost has risen with dire warnings.
- *Quest:* The Starfallen Sword: Encountering or seeking out Zipler's phantom, our heroes will be asked to help with the retrieval of the deadly weapon, that it may be safeguarded once more. Zipler is barely visible, weak with departure from the land of the living, but desperate to see Ruin stashed away. His only clue? A woman named Threya carries the blade... lurking somewhere in the endless crumble and corridors of Ruinmoor tower. *'That blade is not of this world, and has no place here... it must be found.'*

## High Princess Kaylia Enzerill, Keeper of Dragon Tooth

- *Location:* Thryn / Dragon Tooth
- *Widely Known:* The Princess is known far and wide, especially for renowned appearances at the King's Field tournaments. She is a competent warrior, but more so a scholar of dragonkind. She is the heir of Thryn, but chooses a life of adventure, to the chagrin of the High King of elves.
- *Quest:* The Brood of Hydranax: Awarding our heroes a royal commendation for their recent efforts, the Princess takes them aside, asking if they could serve the crown of Thryn. She requires a group of adventurers to infiltrate and investigate Dragon Tooth tower. Her plan? Lure the dragon guard out with court politics. The reason? A strange dragon was sighted during a new moon, barely visible in the lightless sky, visiting Dragon Tooth. Since then, a brood of eggs has appeared. If all this be true, it can only mean one thing: Hydranax the Hungry has returned to Dragon Tooth, and means to roost there. If the dragon guard is hiding this, they are already corrupted by the blue dragon's magic. *'Go to the highest crags and find what you can. All depends on this.'*



# Heroes of the Realm



## Iron King Thromm, Lord of Stonemark

- *Location:* Stonemark Hall
- *Widely Known:* King Thromm is lord of the Eastern dwarves, guardian of Runnminir, master of the Hammer Host. He is a famous reveler, ale-quaffer, and holder of ancient, honorable values.
- *Quest:* Locking the Vaults: Fully engaged with fighting back invading orcs at Runnminir Gate, Thromm implores our heroes to embark on a risky mission into the depths of the undermountain. Using his Stoneborn Ring, they are to access the perilous Door of High Rock, and use newly cut passages to delve far below the mountain. There, ancient vaults holding evil things great and small have been damaged or opened by the orc incursions. The vaults must be closed and locked once again! *'It will be a deadly, lonely, terrible journey... your chances of success are thin and of survival even thinner! So, what do you say?'*

## Sir Jormund Osrigard, Grand Champion of Thenne

- *Location:* Kaargfort
  - *Widely Known:* Sir Osrigard has won the all-realm tournament on King's Field for the last three years. He has been decorated in a half dozen wars, and completed a number of near-immortal deeds many thought impossible. Pulling back from the spotlight to train a wave of young squires, he now resides in the cheese capital of Kaargfort, where his journey began years ago.
  - *Quest:* A Humble End: Hearing of our heroes' deeds, Osrigard sends an invitation to the log-tossing festival at Kaargfort, promising the greatest revelry the realm has to offer. In truth, he seeks an errand from the adventurers. After a lifetime of heroism, he now wishes only to settle down and be of use to his community. He takes our heroes aside, revealing a secret... much of his power and success is owed to a magic jade pebble. This arcane stone was loaned to him by an old hermit who lives in the remote area of Greenstone. He begs the heroes to venture there, and to return the stone to the old man for him, with utmost discretion. He has so many admirers and dreamers around him, he would hate to disappoint them with knowledge of the pebble. *'Will you take this back to the old man? Will you offer this knight one final request... that I may know a humble end?'*
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# Infamous Villains

Player characters, even in their fledgling days, have heard dread tales of these tyrants, sadists, and dark lords. Once our heroes have completed a few adventures, they will likely cross paths with one of these infamous villains. Each is listed below with an introductory quest.

## Longshadow

- *Location:* Cairn Bay
- *Widely Known:* Likely the most dreaded elder wizard in The North Holds, Longshadow is a real-life boogie man. Little is known about his origin, but all too many know the withering death of his arrival... always in the last rays of daylight.
- *Quest:* The Ring of Keranzan: Moving in larger circles of influence, our heroes learn that Longshadow has returned along with his murderous cultists, building a strange tower in Cairn Bay. Scholars tell of a powerful ring that he uses to channel immense power. If the ring could be stolen... Longshadow's newest plot could be foiled... *'If you can find the wizard's new stronghold... he'll keep the ring somewhere safe... not simply slipped onto a finger. A vault perhaps, or some high chamber hidden away...'*

## Nails

- *Location:* Cloudbottom area
- *Widely Known:* Also known as the 'skeleton rider' or 'Dead Horse,' Nails is a being displaced from his own realm, wandering in a haze of rage and confusion in The Holds. He is seen as a cloaked skeleton in riding boots, black-brimmed hat, spurs and gun belts. Where the rider goes, death follows.
- *Quest:* Back to Hell: Nails is terrorizing small towns, using enchanted firearms unlike any in The Holds, searching for someone named Dyre, and ranting about devils and angels. When a player character loses a family member to the marauder, the madness must be stopped. Rumor has it the rider cannot be killed, but can only be defeated by sending him back to the dimension the came from... but how? *'I saw the rider out on Pete's Bluff... just staring into the sunset, that black hat against the sky. A demon, I say! A demon from another time!'*



## Infamous Villains



### **Toad King Highlord Croakokame, Pikeborn, Emperor of Exodur, Protector of the Marsh, Ruler of all Frogdom, architect of the Seventh Age, Lord of the Swamp**

- *Location:* Isle of Toads
- *Widely Known:* There is no corner of the world where Croakokame is not known. He is one of the mightiest rulers ever to live. For over four hundred years he has reigned as seventh emperor... a titan. Even so, very few are allowed the privilege of even seeing his majesty.
- *Quest:* One Consort Too Many: When Godiva Goodwin, a much-loved druid's apprentice from Mooncrest, is kidnapped and taken to Croakokame's bath houses to be his newest concubine, a movement grows to wage a near-suicidal rescue mission into the frog empire. Near the top of a short list of heroes for the job? You and your allies. No land-walker has ever laid eyes on the imperial palace of Croakokame and lived. When the mission seems impossible a wild card appears: a frogman warrior who has defected from the cruel empire...

### **Kuggbang, Oggbang's Father**

- *Location:* Ogre Neck
- *Widely Known:* Tales of the ogre nation have begun to spread, mostly that the High King of Thryn has beaten them in every battle since their appearance. Official word from Thryn claims the war set to end in victory within a year... the ogre menace decimated. Oggbang, the current heir, has already gone missing, presumed dead.
- *Quest:* Towering Treachery: Oggbang himself, a crowned Ogre prince, approaches the heroes in an isolated locale. He explains with great care and eloquence how the elves have waged a terrible genocidal war on his folk, that a truce must be reached, but that his father, Kuggbang, refuses to yield, preferring annihilation to dishonor. Oggbang has given up trying to convince his father, and now seeks help to evacuate a large contingent of ogre families from the peninsula before the elves unleash their final, destructive assault. *'Wait, wait! Before you go drawin' blades and slingin' spells, hear me out, humans... or wait I'm not sure what you is- anyway! Hear me out little folk! Oggbang's not here to hurt no one! Oggbang needs your help!'*



# Infamous Villains

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## Queen Hinnla of Harnmoor

- *Location:* Harnmoor Citadel
- *Widely Known:* Ruler of dwarves in the west, Hinnla is the much-disputed heir to Azmagarr Farbrow, who was a long-reigning king. Her rule is tenuous, but her goals mighty. Ullur is seldom a place of peace.
- *Quest:* The Astral Bridge: To win her people over, Hinnla has deployed a small fleet of ships to verify an old legend: that there is a wizard's gateway linking the shores of Ullur and The Chained Tower. If such a bridge could be found, it would be the greatest trade route ever discovered. Word of this search reaches our heroes, and the bounty is free choice from Hinnla's treasure vaults to the heroes who succeed.

## Caligos the World-Drinker

- *Location:* Caverns below Runnminir
- *Widely Known:* Caligos is only known as the 'Nightmare Eye' or 'Drinker of Dreams.' Exactly who or what it is remains a mystery... only that it is undeniably *there*.
- *Quest:* Nightmare Walkers: A whitebeard scholar in Rivergate, a beloved old sage called Higgles, has been using lucid dreaming to unravel the enigma of Caligos. He has learned that a physical portal can be established, traversing the dream realm to meet Caligos in his own domain. As his research is completed, he disappears, prompting the aid of our heroes to follow in his footsteps.

## Hasgar the Dead, Usurped King of Ullur

- *Location:* Ullur's Teeth wilderness
- *Widely Known:* Hasgar is a defunct king, a Frost Giant some believe dormant. In truth, Hasgar is raising a fighting force to lay Harnmoor low once and for all... this is widely known, but seldom spoken of.
- *Quest:* Prisoners of the Ice King: Princess Kaylia contacts our heroes, warning that the west may fall if Hasgar is not dealt with. She hatches an elaborate plan to be taken prisoner, along with the adventurers, and carted off to Hasgar's ice mines. The mission? Find out what state Hasgar's army is in, their plans, and any weaknesses they may possess... and get out in one piece.



# Infamous Villains



## Obleth

- *Location:* The Fissures
- *Widely Known:* Eons before land walkers arose, a breed of spider folk reigned supreme. In those nightmare times, darkness and bone-white webs ruled the land. She who fed upon all others was called Obleth. Obleth the Eater of Young. Some say she yet lives...
- *Quest:* Below the Oakenwood: When young explorers go looking into the poisoned waters of Oakenwood, they find much more than they bargained for: Obleth the Ancient is nesting far below the old growth forest, raising a new hatch of young for the first time in a millennium. The hatch must be stopped, or The North Holds will be flooded with spiderkind.

## Dark Lord Royce of Blood Manor

- *Location:* Blood Manor
- *Widely Known:* Lord Royce, nicknamed ‘The Avarice of Blood,’ is an arch vampire of the highest order... one who embraced evil rather than keep it at bay. Over the last three decades, his homicidal thirst for human flesh has cast a terrible shadow on all. By decree, request, or vendetta, our heroes become entangled in a desperate play to end it.
- *Quest:* Feast of Flesh: Once a decade, Royce invites a handful of nobles and lords to his opulent castle for a week of revelry, feasting, and indulgence. Lady Walcrest of Rivergate has one such invite, and plans to use it as a ruse to smuggle in a team of heroes. Their goal? Recover and contain the legendary flying sword called Alucarr, Royce’s greatest treasure. With this weapon secure, Walcrest means to draw him out and slay him once and for all. *“These clothes won’t do. If you want to slay an arch-vampire, you need to look the part.”*



*Looks like plenty of ways to die out there.*

*These quest starters are for players. If you're the GM for your group, flip forward to the GM's Guide, Atlas, and Enemies for everything you need to bring these adventures to life.*



# Orders, Guilds, and Trusts

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There are a handful of long-lasting groups in The North Holds whose history goes beyond all that is presently known. These exclusive, enduring societies and chapters exist in secretive enclaves and hidden places. Not all yet survive for righteous reasons, though. For the player, these groups may be a goal of distant ambition, a source of fear, or a thing to be destroyed for vengeance overdue. Either way, these are the orders, guilds, and trusts of note in the realm.

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## House of the Heron

- There is a small order of stout folk who live between the Copper Peaks and the Frog Marshes. These dwarves were long ago shunned by their Ullur kin, cast out as ‘lowland dwellers’ or even called ‘mud mutts’ by their own kind. They are a unique hybrid of dwarven resolve and froggish fighting style... stout folk in wicker hats, using curved blades, who follow a long-lost code of honor unlike any in the stout kingdoms.
- The Heron dwarves employ super-heavy armor, seldom removed, and the largest froggish weapons such as the odak, curved-blade spear, and gourd hammer. They are a secretive, formidable lot who prize personal honor and duty over all else, even loyalty to king or land.
- Beyond serving out errands of service to prove their courage, they seek a long-lost book called ‘*Odakai Tomo*,’ or ‘*Giant Sword Book*,’ which is believed to explain their banishment so long ago.

## Ruin’s Children

- Before time was measured by men, fragments of a starfaring vessel fell from the sky. How it happened is lost, but one such shard was forged into the mightiest great sword ever known: Ruin.
- Ruin has had many stewards over the centuries, all of them meeting terrible deaths in its service. It has had many names, and even more stories. A blade larger than a northman, light as a feather, and sharp as a dragon’s fang.
- Ruin’s Children are those who study its history, devote themselves to serve those who dare carry it, and ensure the blade is not lost, destroyed, or mistreated. Know their gathering places by the symbol of a blade-down sword marked with a crude hourglass.



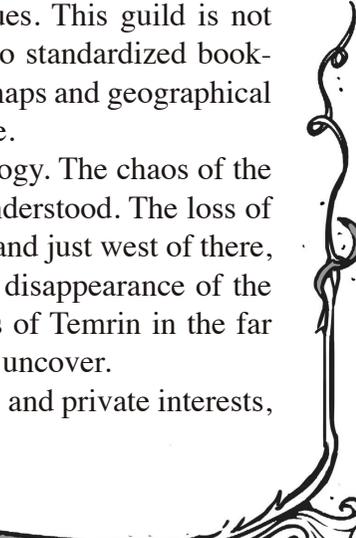
# Orders, Guilds, and Trusts

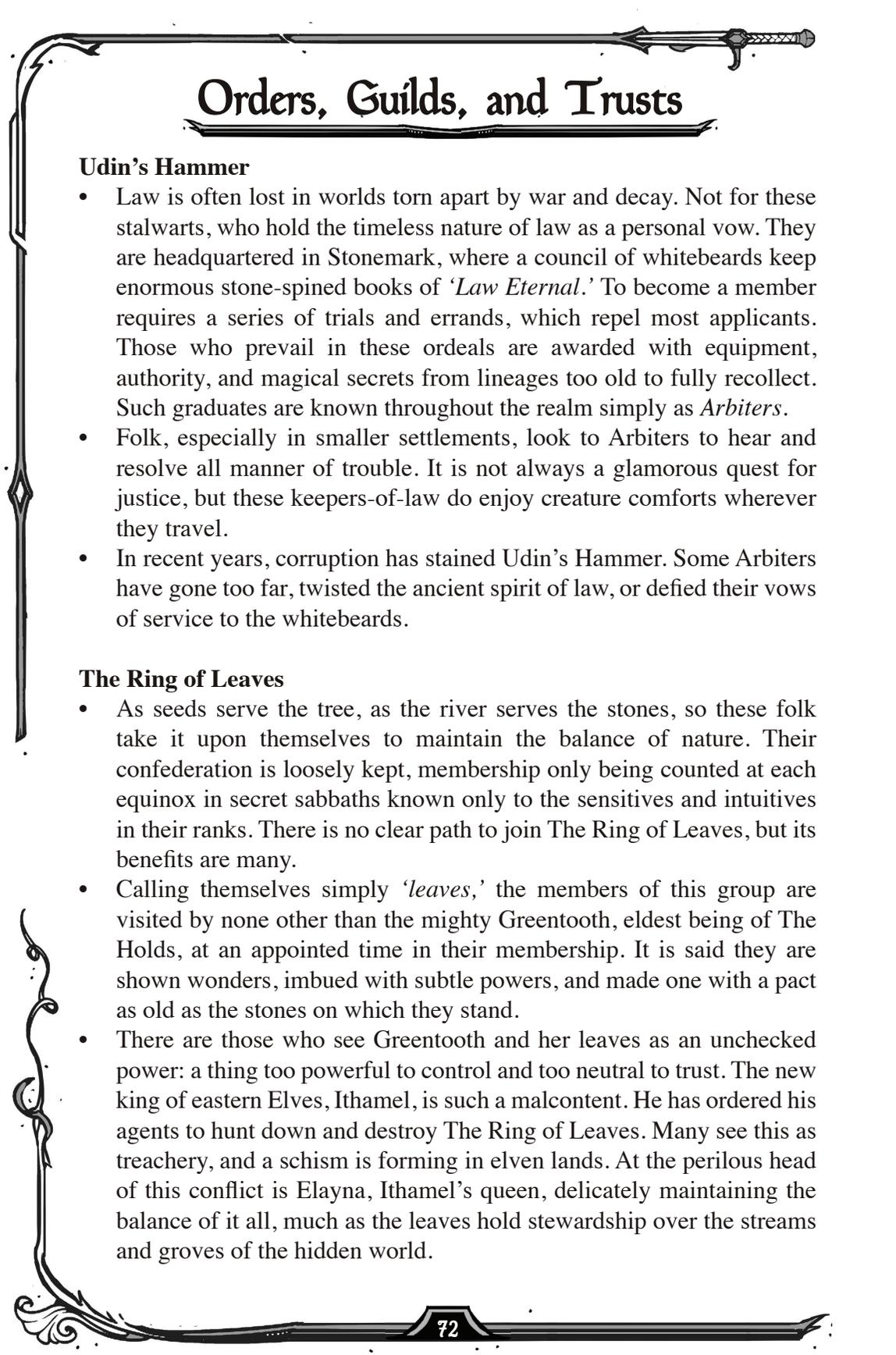


## The Blood Drinkers

- Many are the disciples of Lord Royce the Avarice. Not all are vampires, or murderers, but they see doom as the best outcome for The Holds. They see Royce as a cleansing agent, a restart. They see death as the world's custodian. This makes them dangerous, and hated.
- The influence of vampires and their servants can be found throughout the north, but it has reached an epidemic level in The Redwoods, Jay's Rock, and Ashtown. Matters have only gotten worse after the recent eruption of Volcan, which has darkened the sky in the far Northeast.
- The goals of Royce are many: finding Orgidex the Watcher, forging intelligent swords, killing the infamous Admiral Akarov, and conjuring dimensional gateways to far-off realms.
- To join the Blood Drinkers, one need only pledge loyalty to one of its members, either by the spilling or drinking of blood. The latter does not offer immediate vampiric power, though. Those who walk that path move through a series of ghoulish stages: the blind, the houndmaster, the cryptkeeper, the eater-of-dead, and finally a fledgling vampire proper. Disobedience or insolence during this slow transformation is met with burning-at-the-stake. This gruesome practice has dotted the northeast lands with terrible, charred landmarks.

## Ordo Viator

- The '*Nomads' Guild*' is a widely known organization of travelers, paid adventurers, highway guards, caravaners, and cartographers. Most towns have a waystop for their members, where job boards and supplies are made available with annual dues. This guild is not exclusive, requiring only that members adhere to standardized book-keeping to build the ever-growing repository of maps and geographical data kept by the guild's headquarters in Rivergate.
  - Foremost in Ordo Viator's endeavors is archaeology. The chaos of the Bloodwing War is not entirely documented or understood. The loss of history in the Ruinmoor area, the fall of Rock Island just west of there, the destruction of the Ogre Neck peninsula, the disappearance of the Skandahar, and the fall of the ancient cathedrals of Temrin in the far south are just a few of the mysteries they seek to uncover.
  - Ordo Viator is funded by a cabal of wealthy lords and private interests, with vast treasure holds in various towns.
- 



# Orders, Guilds, and Trusts

## Udin's Hammer

- Law is often lost in worlds torn apart by war and decay. Not for these stalwarts, who hold the timeless nature of law as a personal vow. They are headquartered in Stonemark, where a council of whitebeards keep enormous stone-spined books of '*Law Eternal*.' To become a member requires a series of trials and errands, which repel most applicants. Those who prevail in these ordeals are awarded with equipment, authority, and magical secrets from lineages too old to fully recollect. Such graduates are known throughout the realm simply as *Arbiters*.
- Folk, especially in smaller settlements, look to Arbiters to hear and resolve all manner of trouble. It is not always a glamorous quest for justice, but these keepers-of-law do enjoy creature comforts wherever they travel.
- In recent years, corruption has stained Udin's Hammer. Some Arbiters have gone too far, twisted the ancient spirit of law, or defied their vows of service to the whitebeards.

## The Ring of Leaves

- As seeds serve the tree, as the river serves the stones, so these folk take it upon themselves to maintain the balance of nature. Their confederation is loosely kept, membership only being counted at each equinox in secret sabbaths known only to the sensitives and intuitives in their ranks. There is no clear path to join The Ring of Leaves, but its benefits are many.
- Calling themselves simply '*leaves*,' the members of this group are visited by none other than the mighty Greentooth, eldest being of The Holds, at an appointed time in their membership. It is said they are shown wonders, imbued with subtle powers, and made one with a pact as old as the stones on which they stand.
- There are those who see Greentooth and her leaves as an unchecked power: a thing too powerful to control and too neutral to trust. The new king of eastern Elves, Ithamel, is such a malcontent. He has ordered his agents to hunt down and destroy The Ring of Leaves. Many see this as treachery, and a schism is forming in elven lands. At the perilous head of this conflict is Elayna, Ithamel's queen, delicately maintaining the balance of it all, much as the leaves hold stewardship over the streams and groves of the hidden world.



# Orders, Guilds, and Trusts



## The Riders' Guild

- Horses are rare in The North Holds. Almost as rare as flint-and-gunpowder firearms. In the case of the Riders' Guild, the two go together. Membership here focuses on care and training of horses, as well as construction and use of blackpowder weapons.
- Unlike many orders in The Holds, The Riders' Guild is skewed to a specific lineage, namely that of Proudfoots, who comprise most of its membership. Others are welcome, but seldom apply.
- The political and social purpose of this guild is somewhat unclear. They prize the protection and respect of their way of life over any alignment or loyalty to king or country. For this reason, some consider them outlaws or ruffians.
- Find their headquarters in the remote town of Hakburg, where a 'town circle' of members considers petitioners, '*whoopin' and a-whompin'*' in a ritual of revelry and fellowship.

## The Holy Order

- The matter of gods and divinity has, over the centuries, coalesced in its various forms into a group called The Holy Order. This order has some novelty in that many gods and forms of worship are represented under a single 'roof.' Clergy here ponder and practice many faiths.
- The Holy Order finds much of its spiritual practice and contemplation in famed steam baths. This environment of wellness makes a sacred, and enjoyable, milieu for divine discourse. Almost every abbey has such baths, where the many faiths coexist.
- The abbeys of The North Holds are also home to powerful and experimental magic research. Many, dangerous, and ambitious are their projects.
- To join The Holy Order, one need only show a resounding faith in a deity or deities, and pledge to serve an abbey in whatever way one is useful. When this service is complete, the aspirant is sent abroad to spread faith, wisdom, and the 'truth of many truths' to the world.
- The Holy Order isn't strictly stated as anti-infernal, but they have little love of the demonic or the undead. Despite this, their magic ambitions have led them down some dark corridors of late, causing a stir in the clergy's leadership, and a new blight on their otherwise spotless reputation of piety.

# Enemy Primer

As a supplement to your free Player's Guide, here is a brief, condensed introduction to enemies in CROWN and SKULL.

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## Enemies have 5 STATS: HP, ATK, DEF, PHASE, and TACTICS

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**HP:** A simple pool of hit points. At 0 hit points, the foe is killed.

**ATK:** Enemies do not roll their attacks. Rather, players defend with their own rolls. The ATK stat is a penalty to a player Defense roll.

**DEF:** Enemies have Defenses to resist attack. DEF is subtracted from a hero damage roll. Some attacks degrade DEF, such as the degrading armor.

**PHASE:** Enemies take actions in 1 or more of the 5 phases in a round, up to 3 phases maximum per round!

**TACTICS:** When their phase comes up, monsters do 1-3 actions called tactics. As GM, roll a D6 to select a tactic.

- **Tactic roll 1** (displacement, dash, movement, target change or regroup)
- **Tactic roll 2-5** (common attack)
- **Tactic roll 6** (area of effect attacks that hit all or all-near foes)

A tactic will also include what type of attrition it will inflict...

- **Basic:** When hit, victim chooses any 1 skill or equipment inventory to mark off. Equipment is only damaged.
- **Flesh:** When hit, victim rolls D10, marks off the indicated skill.
- **Equipment:** When hit, randomly select and cross off 1 equipment. Equipment is only damaged, not destroyed.
- **Destroy:** When hit, cross off 1 randomly selected skill and destroy 1 randomly selected piece of equipment.
- **Brutal:** When hit, victim marks off 1D6 combined skill and equipment inventory, randomly selected.

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**Move-to-Engage:** Enemies need not be bound to tactics rolls at all times. They may just *move-to-engage*, getting in attack position or range before rolling tactics. Enemies tend to use *move-to-engage* to reach their most recent or most severe attacker.



# Skeletons!

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To get a feel for running foes in CROWN and SKULL, take note of the differences between the Skeleton and Skeleton Elite below. Try some small skirmish combats, 2D4 Skeletons and 1 Elite, to get a feel for movement, hurry, Defense rolls, enemy stats, tactics, and the like.

The complete version of this book includes comprehensive resources for effective gamemastering, 40 enemies to work with, and much more. For now, here is the humble bag-o-bones...

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**SKELETON** (magically animated human remains, often armed)

**HP: 10 ATK: 3 DEF: 3 PHASE: 3 TACTICS: 1**

**-Tactic 1:** Stumble about, seek a new target

**-Tactic 2-5:** Skeletons use rotten weapons, such as iron spears or rusty scimitars from ages past. Basic attrition

**-Tactic 6:** Cleave attack! The skeleton builds enough strength to swipe its weapon at up to 3 foes in one strike with basic attrition

---

Ah, the inevitable skeleton! Ubiquitous servants of lesser evils and necromancers, denizens of crypts and guardians of graveyards. To mix things up with this classic enemy, mix a Skeleton Elite in now and then...

**SKELETON ELITE:** A heavily armored warrior from bygone days. This bag of bones was once a mighty captain, cavalry rider, or berserker. They walk at the fore of their unit and can even speak, usually threatening foes or chiding their incompetent troops.

**HP: 50 ATK: 5 DEF: 5 PHASES: 4 TACTICS: 3**

**-Tactic 1:** Stumble about, seek a new target

**-Tactic 2-5:** Skeletons use rotten weapons, such as iron spears or rusty scimitars from ages past. Destroy attrition

**-Tactic 6:** Cleave attack! The skeleton builds enough strength to swipe its weapon at up to 3 foes in one strike with destroy attrition

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wolf lands

hascap's  
ruin

greenstone

üllur's  
teeth

Frostfire sea

Anvil  
crag

happmoor

Cairn  
Bay

vaargal

Dagger islands

tidestone

Ogre Neck

thryn

goldpine forest

galegor

king's  
field

Copper peaks  
kaargport

gardenburrow

emerald narrows

Frog  
marshes

isle of  
toads

gulglac

The fissures

chaem lake

Dalric's wall

southwatch

Orc lands



Motsuda Island

North sea

the chained tower

Wolfwatch

Ruinmoor

Barport docks

Mooncrest

Old watch

Volcan

Sylvan wood

Ash town

Popestheart

The Red woods



THE NORTH HOLDS



10 miles 1 day

Wolfwatch

Hogansport

Blood manor

Rayfoot forest

The Stormkeepers

Jay's rock

Rivergate

Bramwall

River the Rine

Bramford

Stonemark

Cloudtop

Ruinmire

Westlake

Fairfield

Slimshire

Shadow Glades

Hakburg

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“No matter how far flung our  
adventures, how high  
the plunder stack’d...  
Our greatest treasure was  
each other.”

-Ingrid Bumall

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