

## Advanced Swords & Sorcery

### Hit Points

**Dice for Accumulative Hits (Hit Dice):** This indicates the number of dice which are rolled in order to determine how many hit points a character can take. Plusses are merely the number of pips to add to the total of all dice rolled not to each die. Thus a Super Hero gets 8 dice + 2; they are rolled and score 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 5, 6/totals 26 + 2 = 28, 28 being the number of points of damage the character could sustain before death. Whether sustaining accumulative hits will otherwise affect a character is left to the discretion of the referee.<sup>1</sup>

**Cure Light Wounds:** During the course of one full turn this spell will remove hits from a wounded character (including elves, dwarves, etc.). A die is rolled, one pip added, and the resultant total subtracted from the hits points the character has taken. Thus from 2-7 hit points of damage can be removed.<sup>2</sup>

**Character Hit Points:** Each character has a varying number of hit points, just as monsters do. These hit points represent how much damage (actual or potential) the character can withstand before being killed. A certain amount of these hit points represent the actual physical punishment which can be sustained. The remainder, a significant portion of hit points at higher levels, stands for skill, luck, and/or magical factors. A typical man-at-arms can take about 5 hit points of damage before being killed. Let us suppose that a 10th level fighter has 55 hit points, plus a bonus of 30 hit points for his constitution, for a total of 85 hit points. This is the equivalent of about 18 hit dice for creatures, about what it would take to kill four huge warhorses. It is ridiculous to assume that even a fantastic fighter can take that much punishment. The same holds true to a lesser extent for clerics, thieves, and the other classes. Thus, the majority of hit points are symbolic of combat skill, luck (bestowed by supernatural powers), and magical forces.

Hit points are determined by hit dice. At 1st level a character has but one hit die (exception: rangers and monks begin with two dice each). At each successive level another hit die is gained, i.e. the die is rolled to determine how many additional hit points the character gets. Hit points can be magically restored by *healing* potions, *cure wounds* spells rings of regeneration, or even by *wish* spells. However, a character's hit points can never exceed the total initially scored by hit dice, constitution bonus (or penalty) and magical devices. For example, if a character has 26 hit points at the beginning of an adventure, he or she cannot drink a potion or be enchanted to above that number, 26 in this case.

As an example, let us assume that the character with 26 hit points mentioned above is engaged in an adventure. Early in the course of exploring the dungeon, he or she falls into a 10' deep pit taking one six-sided die (1d6) of damage – 4 hit points damage so the character drops to 22 hit points. Next, he or she takes 15 hit points of damage in combat, so the character drops to 7 hit points. A cleric in the party uses a *cure serious wounds* spell on the character, and this restores 10 (for example, depending upon the die roll) of his or her lost hit points, so the character has a total of 17. Later activities reduce the character to 3 hit points, but the party uses a *wish* spell to restore all members to full hit points, so at that time the character goes up to 26 once more.

Rest also restores hit points, for it gives the body a chance to heal itself and regain the stamina or force which adds the skill, luck, and magical hit points.

Your character's class will determine which sort of die you will roll to determine hit points. In some campaigns the referee will keep this total secret, informing players only that they feel "strong", "fatigued" or "very weak", thus indicating waning hit points. In other campaigns the Dungeon Master will have players record their character's hit points and keep track of all changes. Both methods are acceptable, and it is up to your DM as to which will be used in the campaign you participate in.<sup>3</sup>

**Cure Light Wounds:** Upon laying his or her hand upon a creature, the cleric causes from 1 to 8 hit points of wound or other injury damage to the creature's body to be healed. This healing will not affect creatures without corporeal bodies, nor will it cure wounds of creatures not living or those which can be harmed only by iron, silver, and for magical weapons. Its reverse, cause light wounds, operates in the same manner; and if a person is avoiding this touch, a melee combat "to hit" die is rolled to determine if the cleric's hand strikes the opponent and causes such a wound. Note that cured wounds are permanent only insofar as the creature does not sustain further damage, and that caused wounds will heal – or can be cured – just as any normal injury will. Caused light wounds are 1 to 8 hit points of damage.<sup>4</sup>

**Damage:** Damage is meted out in hit points. If any creature reaches 0 or negative hit points, it is dead. Certain magical means will prevent actual death, particularly a ring of regeneration (cf. **MONSTER MANUAL**, Troll).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Dungeons & Dragons: Men & Magic* (1974), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Dungeons & Dragons: Men & Magic* (1974), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Player's Handbook* (1978), p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Player's Handbook* (1978), p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Player's Handbook* (1978), p. 105.

**Spell Casting:** All magic and cleric spells are similar in that the word sounds, when combined into whatever patterns are applicable, are charged with energy from the Positive or Negative Material Plane. When uttered, these sounds cause the release of this energy, which in turn triggers a set reaction. The release of the energy contained in these words is what causes the spell to be forgotten or the writing to disappear from the surface upon which it is written.<sup>6</sup>

**Damage:** Any winged creature which sustains damage greater than 50% of its hit points will be unable to maintain flight and must land. Any winged creature which sustains more than 75% damage will not even be able to control its fall, and will plummet to the ground. This simulates damage to the wings, as in aerial combat the wings will be a prime point of vulnerability. Feathered wings are not as easy to damage as membranous wings, and in flight should be given an extra hit point value equal to one-half the normal hit points of the creature they support, for the purpose of figuring how much damage need be taken before the creature can no longer fly. Thus, a griffon with 30 hit points would add an additional illusory 15 points in aerial combat, for a flight-damage total of 45, and thus would be able to take 23 points of damage before it would be forced to land. In contrast, a membrane-winged creature like a succubus with 30 hit points would only be able to sustain 15 points of damage before it could no longer fly. Under no conditions are the extra flight-damage points to be added to the monster's actual hit points for the purpose of absorbing damage. A flying monster will only be able to sustain the normal amount of damage it usually takes in order to incapacitate or kill it, i.e., if the exemplary griffon above takes 31 points of damage from dragon breath, it is dead.

As a final note, remember that heroic aviators who leap into the saddle of their hippogriff and rise to battle without taking a couple of rounds to strap in will tend to fall out in the first round of melee, and it is 1-6 hit points of damage for every ten feet they fall (up to a maximum 20-120 points).<sup>7</sup>

**Combat:** Combat is divided into 1 minute period melee rounds, or simply rounds, in order to have reasonably manageable combat. "Manageable" applies both to the actions of the combatants and to the actual refereeing of such melees. It would be no great task to devise an elaborate set of rules for highly complex individual combats with rounds of but a few seconds length. It is not in the best interests of an adventure game, however, to delve too deeply into cut and thrust, parry and riposte. The location of a hit or wound, the sort of damage done, sprains, breaks, and dislocations are not the stuff of heroic fantasy. The reasons for this are manifold.

As has been detailed, hit points are not actually a measure of physical damage, by and large, as far as characters (and some other creatures as well) are concerned. Therefore, the location of hits and the type of damage caused are not germane to them. While this is not true with respect to most monsters, it is neither necessary nor particularly useful. Lest some purist immediately object, consider the many charts and tables necessary to handle this sort of detail, and then think about how area effect spells would work. In like manner, consider all of the nasty things which face adventurers as the rules stand. Are crippling disabilities and yet more ways to meet instant death desirable in an open-ended, episodic game where participants seek to identify with lovingly detailed and developed player-character personae? Not likely! Certain death is as undesirable as a give-away campaign. Combat is a common pursuit in the vast majority of adventures, and the participants in the campaign deserve a chance to exercise intelligent choice during such confrontations. As hit points dwindle they can opt to break off the encounter and attempt to flee. With complex combat systems which stress so-called realism and feature hit location, special damage, and so on, either this option is severely limited or the rules are highly slanted towards favouring the player characters at the expense of their opponents. (Such rules as double damage and critical hits must cut both ways – in which case the life expectancy of player characters will be shortened considerably – or the monsters are being grossly misrepresented and unfairly treated by the system. I am certain you can think of many other such rules).<sup>8</sup>

**Poison Saving Throws For Characters:** For those who wonder why poison does either killing damage (usually) or no harm whatsoever, recall the justification for character hit points. That is, damage is not actually sustained – at least in proportion to the number of hit points marked off in most cases. The so called damage is the expenditure of favour from deities, luck, skill, and perhaps a scratch, and thus the saving throw. If that mere scratch managed to be venomous, then DEATH. If no such wound was delivered, then NO DAMAGE FROM THE POISON. In cases where some partial damage is indicated, this reflects poisons either placed so that they are ingested or used so as to ensure that some small portion does get in the wound or skin of the opponent.<sup>9</sup>

**Hit Points:** It is quite unreasonable to assume that as a character gains levels of ability in his or her class that a corresponding gain in actual ability to sustain physical damage takes place. It is preposterous to state such an assumption, for if we are to assume that a man is killed by a sword thrust which does 4 hit points of damage, we must similarly assume that a hero could, on the average, withstand five such thrusts before being slain! Why then the increase in hit points? Because these reflect both the actual physical ability of the character to withstand damage – as indicated by constitution bonuses- and a commensurate increase in such areas as skill in combat and similar life-or-death situations, the "sixth sense" which warns the individual of some otherwise unforeseen

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<sup>6</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 81.

events, sheer luck, and the fantastic provisions of magical protections and/or divine protection. Therefore, constitution affects both actual ability to withstand physical punishment hit points (physique) and the immeasurable areas which involve the sixth sense and luck (fitness).

Harkening back to the example of Rasputin, it would be safe to assume that he could withstand physical damage sufficient to have killed any four normal men, i.e. more than 14 hit points. Therefore, let us assume that a character with an 18 constitution will eventually be able to withstand no less than 15 hit points of actual physical damage before being slain, and that perhaps as many as 23 hit points could constitute the physical makeup of a character. The balance of accrued hit points are those which fall into the non-physical areas already detailed. Furthermore, these actual physical hit points would be spread across a large number of levels, starting from a base score of from an average of 3 to 4, going up to 6 to 8 at 2nd level, 9 to 11 at 3rd, 12 to 14 at 4th, 15 to 17 at 5th, 18 to 20 at 6th, and 21 to 23 at 7th level. Note that the above assumes the character is a fighter with an average of 3 hit points per die going to physical ability to withstand punishment and only 1 point of constitution bonus being likewise assigned. Beyond the basic physical damage sustained, hits scored upon a character do not actually do such an amount of physical damage.

Consider a character who is a 10th level fighter with an 18 constitution. This character would have an average of 5% hit points per die, plus a constitution bonus of 4 hit points, per level, or 95 hit points! Each hit scored upon the character does only a small amount of actual physical harm – the sword thrust that would have run a 1st level fighter through the heart merely grazes the character due to the fighter's exceptional skill, luck, and sixth sense ability which caused movement to avoid the attack at just the right moment. However, having sustained 40 or 50 hit points of damage, our lordly fighter will be covered with a number of nicks, scratches, cuts and bruises. It will require a long period of rest and recuperation to regain the physical and metaphysical peak of 95 hit points<sup>10</sup>

**Recovery of Hit Points:** When a character loses hit points in combat or to some other attack form (other than being drained of life energy levels), there are a number of different means by which such points can be restored. Clerics and paladins are able to restore such losses by means of spells or innate abilities. Magical devices such as potions operate much the same way, and a ring of regeneration will cause automatic healing and revitalization in general of its wearer. Commonly it is necessary to resort to the passage of time, however, to restore many characters to full hit point strength.

For game purposes it is absolutely necessary that the character rest in order to recuperate, i.e. any combat, spell using, or similar activity does not constitute rest, so no hit points can be regained. For each day of rest a character will regain 1 hit point, up to and including 7 days. However a character with a penalty for poor constitution must deduct weekly the penalty score from his or her days of healing, i.e., a -2 for a person means that 5 hit points healing per week is maximum, and the first two days of rest will restore no hit points. After the first week of continuous rest, characters with a bonus for high constitution add the bonus score to the number of hit points they recover due to resting, i.e., the second week of rest will restore 11 (7 + 4) hit points to a fighter character with an 18 constitution. Regardless of the number of hit points a character has, 4 weeks of continuous rest will restore any character to full strength.<sup>11</sup>

**Zero Hit Points:** When any creature is brought to 0 hit points (optionally as low as -3 hit points if from the same blow which brought the total to 0), it is unconscious. In each of the next succeeding rounds 1 additional (negative) point will be lost until -10 is reached and the creature dies. Such loss and death are caused from bleeding, shock, convulsions, non-respiration, and similar causes. It ceases immediately on any round a friendly creature administers aid to the unconscious one. Aid consists of binding wounds, starting respiration, administering a draught (spirits, healing potion, etc.), or otherwise doing whatever is necessary to restore life.

Any character brought to 0 (or fewer) hit points and then revived will remain in a coma for 1-6 turns. Thereafter, he or she must rest for a full week, minimum. He or she will be incapable of any activity other than that necessary to move slowly to a place of rest and eat and sleep when there. The character cannot attack, defend, cast spells, use magic devices, carry burdens, run, study, research, or do anything else. This is true even if cure spells and/or healing potions are given to him or her, although if a heal spell is bestowed the prohibition no longer applies.

If any creature reaches a state of -6 or greater negative points before being revived, this could indicate scarring or the loss of some member, if you so choose. For example, a character struck by a fireball and then treated when at -9 might have horrible scar tissue on exposed areas of flesh – hands, arms, neck, face.<sup>12</sup>

**Control of the Game:** Now and then a player will die through no fault of his own. He or she will have done everything correctly, taken every reasonable precaution, but still the freakish roll of the dice will kill the character. In the long run you should let such things pass as the players will kill more than one opponent with their own freakish rolls at some later time. Yet you do have the right to arbitrate the situation. You can rule that the player, instead of dying, is knocked unconscious, loses a limb, is blinded in one eye or invoke any reasonably severe penalty that still takes into account what the monster has done. It is very demoralizing to

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<sup>10</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 82.

the players to lose a cared-for-player character when they have played well. When they have done something stupid or have not taken precautions, then let the dice fall where they may! Again, if you have available ample means of raising characters from the dead, even death is not too severe; remember, however, the constitution-based limit to resurrections. Yet one die roll that you should NEVER tamper with is the SYSTEM SHOCK ROLL to be raised from the dead. If a character fails that roll, which he or she should make him or herself, he or she is FOREVER DEAD. There MUST be some final death or immortality will take over and again the game will become boring because the player characters will have 9+ lives each!<sup>13</sup>

**Intervention by Deities:** This is not to dictate that deities will never come to characters. Serving some deity is an integral part of AD&D. The mighty evil gods, demons, and devils are prone to appear when their name is spoken – provided they stand the possibility of gaining converts to their cause. The forces of good might send some powerful creature of like alignment to aid characters on a mission in their behalf. Certainly in the case of some contest between opposing deities all sorts of intervention will take place – but always so as not to cause the deities themselves to be forced into direct confrontation! Otherwise, the accumulation of hit points and the ever-greater abilities and better saving throws of characters represents the aid supplied by supernatural forces.<sup>14</sup>

**Energy Draining by Undead or Device:** When a character loses a level of energy, he or she loses an experience level. That is, he or she loses hit points equal to those gained with the acquisition of the former experience level (including bonus points for constitution), all abilities gained with the experience level now lost, and experience points sufficient to bring the total possessed to the mid-point of the next lower level. If this brings the character below 1st level of experience, then the individual is a 0 level person never capable of gaining experience again. If a 0 level individual is drained an energy level, he or she is dead (possibly to become an undead monster). In order to allow for the possibility of the loss of hit dice due to energy level draining, you might require that players record the score of each hit die rolled for their characters, so that when a level is lost the appropriate number of hit points also lost can be known immediately.

A multi-classed character (or character with two classes) who is drained of an experience level always loses the highest level he or she has gained (e.g., a halfling 2nd level fighter/3rd level thief would lose one level of thieving ability). If all levels are equal, the highest level of the class which requires the greatest amount of experience points is lost. If a multi-classed character (e.g., a fighter/magic-user) is struck by a creature which drains two levels, a level is drained from each class.

When a character is drained of all energy levels, he or she might become an undead monster of the same sort which killed him or her. (See the appropriate paragraphs pertaining to the undead monsters concerned in the **MONSTER MANUAL**.) These lesser undead are controlled by their slayer/drainer. Each has but half the hit dice of a normal undead monster of this same type. Lesser vampires have but half their former level of experience with respect to their profession (cleric, fighter, etc.) at the time they initially encountered and were subsequently slain/drained by their now-master vampire, i.e., an 8th level thief killed by a vampire, even though drained to below 0 level in the process, returns as a 4th level thief vampire, as appropriate. However, upon the destruction of their slayer/drainer, such lesser undead gain energy levels from characters they subsequently slay/drain until they reach the maximum number of hit dice (and their former level of class experience as well, if applicable) appropriate to their type of undead monster. Upon reaching full hit dice status, they are able to slay/drain and control lesser undead as they once were.<sup>15</sup>

**Damage:** The number of hit points or structural points that have been inflicted on the being or structure.<sup>16</sup>

**Death:** This occurs when a creature's hit points reach 0 (or optionally, -10). Most dead characters can be resurrected, although destruction of the body (among other factors) will prevent this.<sup>17</sup>

**Hit Dice:** The number of dice rolled to determine the creature's hit points.<sup>18</sup>

**Hit Points:** The number of points of damage a creature can sustain before death (or optionally, coma), reflecting the creature's physical endurance, fighting experience, skill, or luck.<sup>19</sup>

**Damage:** The effect of a successful attack or other harmful situation, measured in hit points.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 110.

<sup>14</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), pp. 111-112.

<sup>15</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 119.

<sup>16</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 227.

<sup>17</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 227.

<sup>18</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 228.

<sup>19</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1979), p. 228.

<sup>20</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Player's Handbook* (1989), p. ??.

**Hit points:** A number representing: 1. How much damage a character can suffer before being killed, determined by Hit Dice. The hit points lost to injury can usually be regained by rest or healing; 2. How much damage a specific attack does, determined by weapon or monster statistics, and subtracted from a player's total.<sup>21</sup>

**Injury and Death:** Sometimes, no degree of luck, skill, ability, or resistance to various attacks can prevent harm from coming to a character. The adventuring life carries with it unavoidable risks. Sooner or later a character is going to be hurt. To allow characters to be heroic, and for ease of play, damage is handled abstractly in the AD&D game. All characters and monsters have a number of hit points. The more hit points a creature has, the harder it is to defeat. Damage is subtracted from a character's or creature's hit points. Should one of the player characters hit an ogre in the side of the head for 8 points of damage, those 8 points are subtracted from the ogre's total hit points. The damage isn't applied to the head or divided among different areas of the body. Hit point loss is cumulative until a character dies or has a chance to heal his wounds.<sup>22</sup>

**Wounds:** When a character hits a monster, or vice versa, damage is suffered by the victim. The amount of damage depends on the weapon or method of attack. In Table 44 of the *Player's Handbook*, all weapons are rated for the amount of damage they inflict to Small, Medium, and Large targets. This is given as a die range (1d8, 2d6, etc.) Each time a hit is scored, the appropriate dice are rolled and the result--damage--is subtracted from the current hit points of the target. An orc that attacks with a sword, for example, causes damage according to the information given for the type of sword it uses. A troll that bites once and rends with one of its clawed hands causes 2d6 points of damage with its bite and 1d4 + 4 points with its claw. The DM gets this information from the *Monstrous Manual*.

Sometimes damage is listed as a die range along with a bonus of +1 or more. The troll's claw attack, above, is a good example. This bonus may be due to high Strength, magical weapons, or the sheer ferocity of the creature's attack. The bonus is added to whatever number comes up on the die roll, assuring that some minimum amount of damage is inflicted. Likewise, penalties also can be applied, but no successful attack can result in less than 1 point of damage. Sometimes an attack has both a die roll and a damage multiplier. The number rolled on the dice is boosted by the multiplier to determine how much damage is inflicted. This occurs mainly in backstabbing attempts. In cases where damage is multiplied, only the base damage caused by the weapon is multiplied. Bonuses due to Strength or magic are not multiplied. Bonuses due to Strength or magic are not multiplied; they are added after the rolled damage is multiplied.<sup>23</sup>

**Specific Injuries (Optional Rule):** The AD&D combat system does not call for specific wounds – scars, broken bones, missing limbs, and the like. And in most cases they shouldn't be applied. Remember that this is a game of heroic fantasy. If characters were to suffer real-life effects from all their battles and combats, they would quickly be some of the sorriest and most depressing characters in the campaign world. It's hard to get excited when your character is recovering from a broken leg and a dislocated shoulder suffered in a fall off a 15-foot wall. It is not recommended that characters suffer specific injuries. In general, stick with the basic pool of hit points.

Is This Injury Necessary? Before adding specific injuries to a campaign, consider all the factors. If the injury is one that can be healed, such as a broken arm, how long does this healing take? What are the effects on the character while the arm heals? Is there some quick way to get healed? Will the player still be able to have fun while his character is an invalid? Only after considering these questions satisfactorily should a specific injury be used. DMs can use specific injuries to lessen a character's ability scores. A member of the party might acquire a prominent scar, lowering his Charisma by a point. Although, in this case, you'll want a ready explanation of why a scar had this effect, as in some instances a scar can actually enhance the personality of a person. It can make him look tougher, more mysterious, more worldly, more magnetic, all things that could conceivably increase a character's Charisma. Similarly, the loss of a character's finger or eye could be used as an excuse to lower an excessively high Dexterity. Loss of an arm could reduce Strength (among other things).

Don't overdo this brute force approach to player control. Players get attached to their characters; they get used to thinking of them and role-playing them a particular way. Mess with this too much and you'll find players deserting your campaign. Within reason, it's okay to leave a character physically marked. This leads to good role-playing. It adds to the feeling that each character is unique, making one player's fighter, wizard, or whatever different from all others. A scar here, an eye patch there, or a slight limp all result in more of an individual character and thus one more interesting to role-play. But in these cases physical effects are tailoring the character, not punishing the player. Always try to be fair and ask the question, "Would I want to role-play such a character?" If the answer is no, then it's likely the player won't want to either. Don't load players with handicaps – their characters have enough of a challenge as it is.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Player's Handbook* (1989), p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1989), p. 72.

<sup>23</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1989), p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Dungeon Master's Guide* (1989), p. 72.