

VARIANT EXPERIENCE & LEVELING RULES



FOR THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR FANTASY GAME



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Introduction

The world's most popular fantasy game brings joy to many daily, but has always struggled with non-combat, non-treasure related experience. The reason being that the game was developed from a tabletop wargame, and those roots have remained strong. The current edition offers the standard system of gaining experience, focused on combat, and several optional systems that move into more abstracted territory with milestones and automatic leveling when those are reached. These systems work, but still leave something to be desired.

The Three Pillars

The Three Pillars of the game are Combat (done well), Exploration (done poorly), and Social Interaction (barely acknowledged). Previous attempts to support all three have had varying levels of success. This ruleset aims to change that by offering a flexible, near comprehensive set of rules for awarding experience points and leveling up that will add to the game and encourage players to more fully interact with the worlds they're adventuring in.



Methodology

The concept behind these variant rules is that there are times where experience is given to players immediately in game or at the end of a session. This gives an immediate feedback loop for them to get interested in this system. Within a few sessions, using it becomes almost second nature. So enjoy, and good luck!

Immediate XP Awards

The following XP awards are designed to be awarded on the spot, in game, or immediately after a scene or event in game.

Skill Use XP Awards

Each time a player uses a skill and succeeds, they receive an XP award. If the roll is contested, they receive a higher amount of XP. If they have to roll with disadvantage, they receive the basic or contested amount, depending on the circumstances, and a bonus. The challenge threshold indicates the roll goal of the skill check. This is awarded on the spot in game. This is generally an individual award.

Event	Base Award	Contested Award	Disadvantage Bonus	Challenge Threshold
Ability/Skill Check (Very Easy)	10	15	5	5
Ability/Skill Check (Easy)	25	37	10	10
Ability/Skill Check (Medium)	50	75	20	15
Ability/Skill Check (Hard)	100	150	40	20
Ability/Skill Check (Very Hard)	150	225	60	25
Ability/Skill Check (Nearly Impossible)	250	375	100	30

Puzzle, Trap, and Riddle XP Awards

When the party encounters a puzzle or riddle, there are two approaches to solving them. Either by role-playing, or by rolling. Solving by role-play gives a higher award. This XP should be given on the spot, in game. All the players that participate meaningfully get this XP award.

Event	Award
Solve Puzzle/Trap/Riddle (RP, no roll)	150
Solve Puzzle/Trap/Riddle (Ability/Skill Check)	75

Obstacle XP Awards

Sometimes, the terrain itself, whether it be a chasm, missing stairs, cliff, bog, quicksand, fast moving river, or what have you is the challenge faced by the player characters. Creative, fast thinking, and/or well-planned methods of breaching or overcoming these deserves an XP award. The multipliers represent the potential hazard to the players in the event of failure. Risky might be minor injury, Dangerous could be lethal or have another long-term detrimental effect, and Deadly means death or something worse is most likely in the cards.

Event	Award	Risky	Dangerous	Deadly
Fast Thinking Solution	25	x3	x4	x5
Creative Solution	25	x2	x3	x4
Well Planned Solution	10	-	x2	x3





Threat and Challenge XP Awards

Threats faced by the players can take many forms, from monsters to people to obstacles to traps. The solution is not always to “kill it” though (if that’s even a course of action available). Subduing, deescalating, or overcoming a threat or challenge (depending on what it is) are perfectly viable methods to get XP awards as well. This XP should be given out on the spot, in game, after the threat has been dealt with. Each player involved gets the full award. The level of the threat/challenge is determined using the matrix below.

Event	Award
Defeat/Subdue/Deescalate/Overcome Minor Threat	10
Defeat/Subdue/Deescalate/Overcome Low Threat	25
Defeat/Subdue/Deescalate/Overcome Moderate Threat	75
Defeat/Subdue/Deescalate/Overcome Serious Threat	150
Defeat/Subdue/Deescalate/Overcome Very Serious Threat	300
Defeat/Subdue/Deescalate/Overcome Incredible Threat	500
Make a Saving Throw	25
Flee Threat or Challenge	5*
Break Contact with Threat or Challenge	10**

*Fleeing Threat or Challenge: XP is awarded only if combat is initiated and the player chooses to flee within 1 to 5 rounds. Modifier: x1 minor, 2x low, x3 moderate, x4 serious, x5 very serious, and x6 incredible.

** Break Contact with Threat or Challenge: XP is only awarded after player has been in combat for at least 6 rounds. This reflects the player realizing they need to try the battle a different way, or if the party has suffered a reversal of fortune on the battlefield. Modifier: x1 minor, 2x low, x3 moderate, x4 serious, x5 very serious, and x6 incredible.

Threat and Challenge Matrix

The Threat and Challenge Matrix is meant to be a rough guide to how to award XP based on the type of encounter the characters are having. It’s not set in stone, and can be scaled up or down depending on the preparedness of the player characters. A Team of clerics and paladins with holy magic weapons has little to fear from undead, while a group of mercenaries and rogues may have a much harder fight for example.

Level	Description	Strength Examples
Minor	Poses little to no risk to the characters	To ½ Level of Players
Low	Poses some risk to the characters	To ¾ Level of Players
Moderate	A parity threat or challenge	Equal Level with Players
Serious	A difficult but manageable risk to the characters	To +3 Levels of Players
Very Serious	A difficult but not impossible risk to the characters	To +6 Levels of the Players
Incredible	Likely an impossible battle, completely outmatched	To +9 Levels of the Players

Mixed Immediate and Sessional XP

This section contains types of XP awards that can be awarded at the end of a session or immediately in game, situation and preference dependent.

Exploration and Discovery XP Awards

Exploration gives experience, and this system can be used one of two ways. The first is by distance. Depending on the conditions of travel (road, trail, wilderness), players gain experience as they leave the (relatively) safe confines of their home towns, caves, and cities. The other method is by hex. Each hex that the players enter can be explored, and exploring it provides an XP award. The distance and hex XP awards should be used at the same time. Area XP is awarded based on how much of an area the players explore. An Area can be a dungeon, a specific part of a wilderness biome, a city, fortress, etc...etc...

Wonder and Danger Discovery XP is awarded for discovering previously unknown wonders and dangers of the world, or for discovering new things at established wonders or dangers. Wonders can be things like sacred groves, ancient temples, natural wonders like giant waterfalls or cave complexes, or mortal/immortal made edifices. Discovering a new aspect to an established Wonder would be something like uncovering hidden caverns behind a waterfall, or a temple hidden in a coral reef. Dangers are things like dungeons, monster and/or trap infested ruins, monster lairs, bandit camps, and so on. Discovering a new aspect of a Danger would be something like discovering the pool in the dragon's cave leads to a network of caves if you can swim it. "Established" Wonders and Ruins are things that are known; not rumoured, but firmly known. Following rumours may be a great way to earn this XP...

Event	Award
Per 10 miles/16 km travelled (Road)	5
Per 10 miles/16 km travelled (Trail)	15
Per 10 miles/16 km travelled (Wilderness)	25
Per 10% of Area Explored	25
Per Hex Explored	25
Per Wonder Discovered	100
Per Danger Discovered	100

Sessional XP

- Distance Travelled
- Area Explored (unless they leave it during session, award it then)

Immediate XP

- Hex Explored
- Wonder Discovered
- Danger Discovered



Session XP Awards

These XP Awards are made to be given out on the end of a session.

Role-playing XP Awards

If a player is doing a good job at playing their character, at the end of the session they receive an XP award. Playing in Character includes things like:

- In character interactions with other players and the non-player characters.
- Adhering to their alignment, or role-playing the way they feel for going against it.
- Making decisions their character would make, even if detrimental.
- Sticking to using knowledge their character knows.
- Using their background and experiences in game to figure things out or advance the story.

Event	Award
Roleplays Character	50
Plays in character at least 25% of the time	
Roleplays Character Well	100
Plays in character at least 50% of the time	
Roleplays Character Extremely Well	150
Plays in character at least 75% of the time	

Teamwork XP Awards

Sometimes a team just gels and the players turn into a smooth operating machine. This deserves an XP Award at the end of the session. Good teamwork can be summed as parts of the party, or the entire party, working together, coming up with plans, or leveraging their strengths and weaknesses to advantage.

Event	Award
Part of the Party works together	25
Awarded to the players who worked together well	
Party works together sometimes	50
Teamwork at least 25% of the time	
Party works together well	100
Teamwork at least 50% of the time	
Party works together extremely well	200
Teamwork at least 75% of the time	

Completion XP Awards

Whether it's a job, quest, mission, or what have you, completing it means that the players have earned some XP as they reflect back on the whole adventure and what they learned on it. This XP should be given on the completion of any job, mission, or quest that the players have accepted or found themselves on. Each player involved gets the full award.

Event	Award
Complete Easy Quest/Mission/Job	100
Complete Moderately Difficult Quest/Mission/Job	200
Complete Difficult Quest/Mission/Job	300
Complete Challenging Quest/Mission/Job	500
Complete Very Challenging Quest/Mission/Job	750
Complete Nearly Impossible Quest/Mission/Job	1000

Alternate Level Advancement

With an alternate system for XP Awards comes an alternate system for level advancement.

Why use an alternate table of advancement? Well, there's a few reasons. You may want to see an altered pace of development in your game. You may want to try to recreate the grittier feel of earlier editions where not all classes progressed at the same pace. Maybe you just want to try something new. These tables have been tuned(ish) to work with the Experience Systems in this booklet. They can work with conventional systems, but aren't optimized for that.



Level	XP Needed	Proficiency Bonus
1	0	+1
2	250	+1
3	750	+1
4	1500	+1
5	2500	+2
6	4000	+2
7	6000	+2
8	8000	+2
9	10000	+3
10	14000	+3
11	20000	+3
12	26000	+3
13	32000	+4
14	40000	+4
15	50000	+4
16	60000	+4
17	70000	+5
18	82000	+5
19	96000	+5
20	110000	+5

Rapid Table

The Rapid Advancement table provides a relatively quick progression from level 1 to 20 when using the rules laid out in this booklet. It's ideal for shorter campaigns where players and game-masters want to see their characters hit full potential faster.

Moderate Table

This table may look familiar to players of previous editions, and that's for good reason. The Measured Advancement table gives a more structured progression, using a predictable formula to determine the XP threshold for each level.

Level	XP Needed	Proficiency Bonus
1	0	+1
2	1000	+1
3	3000	+1
4	6000	+1
5	10000	+2
6	15000	+2
7	21000	+2
8	28000	+2
9	36000	+3
10	45000	+3
11	55000	+3
12	66000	+3
13	78000	+4
14	91000	+4
15	105000	+4
16	120000	+4
17	136000	+5
18	153000	+5
19	171000	+5
20	190000	+5

Level	XP Needed	Proficiency Bonus
1	0	+1
2	2000	+1
3	5000	+1
4	9000	+1
5	14000	+2
6	21000	+2
7	29000	+2
8	38000	+2
9	48000	+3
10	59000	+3
11	72000	+3
12	86000	+3
13	101000	+4
14	117000	+4
15	134000	+4
16	153000	+4
17	173000	+5
18	194000	+5
19	216000	+5
20	239000	+5

Slowed Table

The Slowed Progression Table uses a formula with modifiers at 6th, 11th, and 16th levels. With the number and types of XP awards presented in this booklet, this table will provide a closer experience to the conventional leveling process.

Measured Table

This table combined aspects of the previous two, providing a slower advancement rate, but with predictable increments.

Level	XP Needed	Proficiency Bonus
1	0	+1
2	2000	+1
3	5000	+1
4	9000	+1
5	14000	+2
6	20000	+2
7	27000	+2
8	35000	+2
9	44000	+3
10	54000	+3
11	65000	+3
12	77000	+3
13	90000	+4
14	104000	+4
15	119000	+4
16	135000	+4
17	152000	+5
18	170000	+5
19	189000	+5
20	209000	+5

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