# ÆXES & ÆNVILS

# QUICKSTÆRT RULES

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## QUICKSTART RULES

# HOW TO GET STARTED

**P**repare for the First Session. One person should read over the rules, and prepare cards to use for character generation.

❋ Character record sheet on page 12.

❋ Introductory adventure on page 22.

❋ Combat role cards on page 26. *Make two copies!*

❋ Guiding Saying cards on page 30–31.

❋ Skill cards on pages 27–29.

❋ Character forging quick reference on page 32.

Each player will need a set of dice including a d4, d6, d8, d10, and d12.

❋ **The Clan.** For the quickstart, the characters are on their way to join a clan, the Firebrakes, based out of their clan home in Tumbletop.

❋ **Forge the Characters.** Use the cards, and the quick reference to generate and record the new characters.

❋ **Introductory Adventure.** Use the adventure starting on page 22, or use your own.

*The GM should read the adventure ahead of time to understand how it will go. Since it is a modular adventure, how much of it to use can be adjusted based on how much time the group took making characters.*

Whether your group includes the same people every session, or you have a high turnover of players, service to the clan is a binding idea that keeps players coming back to see how their efforts have improved the fate of their people.

Welcome to Axes and Anvils!

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*Resources for Axes and Anvils can be found here.*

❋ *https://axesandanvils.com/toolkit/*

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# RULES

## THE SHAPE OF A CHARACTER

Some of the information on the character sheet is description that helps role play the character, and some of the information also affects the rules.

The name, description, age, birthdate, known languages, and saying are all useful for getting ideas of how to play and develop the character's persona. Other descriptions have more mechanical (rules and dice) impact.

Before we get to the rules, let's take a quick look at what rules affect characters from the very beginning.

* **Primary and Secondary Skill.** Each character is trained with a service skill (doing something) and a craft skill (making something.) Characters choose one of their skills as primary and one as secondary, and that affects the chances of success with each skill.

* **Resolve.** Dwarves are stubborn! Resolve starts at 6 (though it can be raised over time) and allows dwarves to push harder, snatching victory from the jaws of defeat.

* **Combat Role.** This role is shorthand for the focus of the character's combat training. Every character has some expertise in how to handle a fight, and what weapons and tactics are preferred. This matters in the "Battle" section. How well does a character handle dodging and wearing armor? Is the character a good shot, or better with a melee weapon in hand? How tough is the character; how easily knocked down?

Now let's take a look at how skills, resolve, and combat work.

## HOW SKILLS WORK

There are three ways to apply skills to tasks: simple actions, challenge rolls, and risk rolls. Challenge rolls and risk rolls can be combined in a single roll.

When a character attempts a non-combat task, the question is, how relevant is the character's training? Is the character untrained, using a secondary skill, or using a primary skill?

**Simple Actions.** If the action would not present a challenge or any danger to the character, the character automatically succeeds.

**Challenge Tests.** If the attempted task is so difficult the character might fail to accomplish it fast enough, make a challenge test. Roll 1d12.

* **Primary skills** pass on a 5–12.
* **Secondary skills** pass on a 6–12.
* **Untrained attempts** pass on an 8–12.

**Risk Tests.** If in a dangerous situation, make a risk test (saving throw) to avoid harm. Roll 1d12.

* **Primary skills** fail on a 1–2.
* **Secondary skills** fail on a 1–3.
* **Untrained attempts** fail on a 1–5.

### COMBINING CHALLENGE AND RISK

If there is a chance of failure, *and* failure could be dangerous, one roll of the d12 can handle both possible outcomes. If the player knows there is a risk of failure, and wants the character to go ahead, roll the d12.

* **Succeed.** If the challenge test succeeds, the risk is avoided and the task is accomplished.

* **Does not succeed.** If the challenge test does not succeed, but the roll is high enough to pass the risk test, then the character is struggling and unsuccessful but not in greater danger.

* **Fail.** If the risk test is a fail, then the character does not succeed, and a negative consequence applies.



### INCLUSIVE, NOT EXCLUSIVE.

Players and GMs are encouraged to think creatively, while being fair. The skills do not list everything the skill covers; each skill is a kind of training. If a player tries to justify a task fitting into a skill, then the GM can decide whether or not to allow it.

If a proposed use of a skill seems like abuse, or unfair expansion of the skill, the GM can say no to using the skill's chance for success to cover it. In an ambiguous case, the GM can downgrade the chance for success by one, so a primary skill could provide a secondary skill's chances. Or, a secondary skill could allow trying something that could not normally be done untrained, at the untrained chance of success.

# RESOLVE

**R**esolve is a measure of a dwarf's tenacity. This stubborn determination separates dwarves from other races, and it is core to their cultural and individual personalities. Dwarves often refuse to accept the limits of their capacity and luck, insisting on pushing past them.

**All characters begin with a Resolve of 6.**

*Spend 1 Resolve to add 1d4 to a roll.*
*(This can be added after rolling.)*

*Players can only spend 1 Resolve on each roll.*

*Players can spend up to all Resolve on rolls in one round, one per roll.*

Resolve can be spent on rolls for challenge and risk tests, to-hit in combat, damage, defense, and armor.

Resolve can also be spent to push on for a forced march, or act when exhausted beyond normal limits. This is at GM discretion.

## REGAINING RESOLVE

Characters regain 1–3 points of Resolve at a time, at the GM's discretion. Here are the ways to regain Resolve:

* **Fellowship.** Dwarves thrive on the fellowship of their companions. Sharing a good meal, fine ale, and a song should recover Resolve. Some rituals reinforce the community bond and return Resolve to their participants.

* **Inspiration.** Dwarves have legendary passion. It is easy to rile them up. Hearing heroic speeches, witnessing heroic acts, recounting religious legends, and viewing the cultural accomplishments of the dwarven people will restore Resolve.

* **Motivation.** Dwarves fight harder when they have a reason to fight. When dwarves encounter mockery, blasphemy, desecration, or violation of their people, they smolder with fury. They will gladly die to protect what they love, and they will not hesitate to kill those who threaten their way of life. A long-lived people, they have seen the consequences of inaction, and they can be spurred to great energy if a clear threat emerges.

* **Victory!** Any time dwarves overcome a particularly vexing obstacle or defeat a heinous enemy, they raise a cheer and regain Resolve!

# HERO TEST

**C**haracters will attempt unreasonable (but possible) actions. The GM may allow a normally out-of-bounds action to be attempted with a chance of success. The character spends 1 Resolve and makes a Hero Test.

Hero Tests are passed on 7–12, and they have a risk threshold of 1–4. If a character gets a 12 result on a Hero Test, the character regains all Resolve and any companions who are watching gain 1 Resolve point also.

Axes and Anvils focuses on larger-than-life dwarven heroics. What should be allowed with a Hero Test, and what remains impossible no matter what the dice roll? Allow actions that make for a good story, and do not allow actions that seem like system abuse.

The character already spent a Resolve point on attempting the action and cannot spend another Resolve point to boost the roll for that action.

**Legendary Test.** In the rare case where a player insists on trying something when there is only a remote chance the action could succeed, call for a Legendary Test. A Legendary Test only succeeds on a 12, with a risk threshold of 1–6. Resolve must be spent to attempt a Legendary Test, and a point of Resolve cannot be spent to boost the roll.

| (1D12) | FAIL* | DOES NOT SUCCEED | SUCCEED | | |
|--------|-------|------------------|---------|---|---|
| Primary | 1–2 | 3–4 | 5–12 | PASS 5–12 / NEUTRAL / 1-2 FAIL | **PRIMARY SKILL** |
| Secondary | 1–3 | 4–5 | 6–12 | PASS 6–12 / NEUTRAL / 1-3 FAIL | **SECONDARY SKILL** |
| Unskilled | 1–5 | 6–7 | 8–12 | | |
| *Heroic* ** | 1–4 | 5–6 | 7–12 | | |
| *Legendary* ** | 1–6 | 7–11 | 12 | | |

* Failure only matters on Risk tests.

** Heroic and legendary actions are unlikely, but possible, and cost a Resolve to attempt.

# BATTLE

## ACTION TYPES

There are four kinds of actions. Characters get 1 move action, 1 attack action, 1 defend action, and any appropriate free actions each round.

* **Move Action.** Characters can move up to about thirty feet or take a significant movement related action (like climbing, swimming, or mounting a steed.) These movements cover about thirty feet. (This is known as a "hurl" in dwarven measurements—about as far as a strong dwarf can hurl a keg of ale.) The move action must be taken all at once; it cannot be split between other actions.

* **Combat Action.** These actions are used to attack unarmed, with melee weapons, or at range.

* **Defend Action.** These actions allow the character to parry, dodge, and push, depriving an enemy of the chance to hit back. Defend actions also allow cautious withdrawal from melee, denying the foe a chance to take a free shot. Defend actions can also hinder a foe's movement.

* **Free Action.** Drawing or sheathing a weapon, moving up to about 10 feet, shouting or whispering, opening a normal door, or other minor actions can be accomplished for free. An object can be passed from one character to another once a round as a free action, but costs an action to move further.

A move action, combat action, or defend action can be used as a reload action.

Sometimes actions are paired. For example, disengagement requires a defend action before a move action to avoid being attacked while fleeing.

### NOT ON A GRID

Let the combat movement be flexible. If the dwarves are near each other, let them count as adjacent in battle. Be free and easy with combat moves of five or ten feet to keep things rolling and keep melee exciting.

### HOLD ACTIONS

Sometimes, the Fellowship benefits from allowing its foes to act first. Some or all characters can hold actions and act during the foe's phase. If a player announces that his or her character is interrupting a foe's action before the GM rolls that NPC's behavior die (or announces the result of the action if not using the behavior die), that player's character can go first.
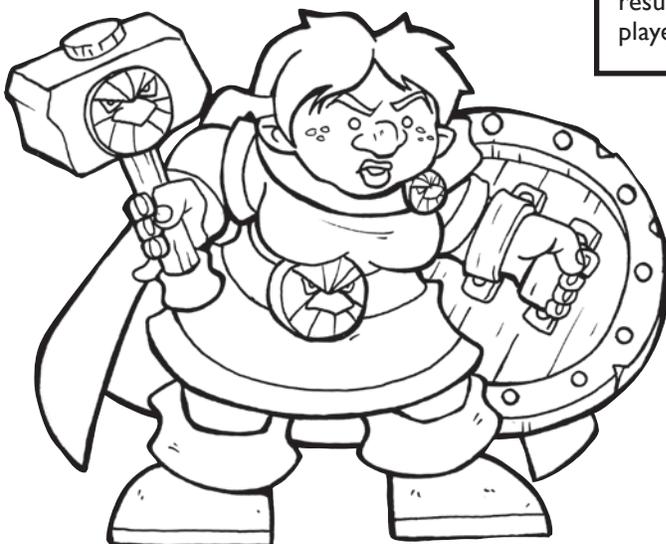
# COMBAT ORDER

**D**warves and allies act first, in the Allies Phase. All enemies act last, in the Enemies Phase. The only exceptions are if the dwarves are surprised, or if they hold some or all of their actions to interrupt their foes.

## ALLIES PHASE

The characters can use their actions in any order, assisting each other as much as possible. Combat is a team sport for dwarves! They should use their moves, attacks, defenses, and actions they grant each other to their best advantage.

**Characters Attack.** If you roll equal to or higher than the target's Combat Rating on 1d12, you inflict damage (melee or ranged, depending on how you attack.)

❋ **Melee or Range Damage.** Roll the die type for your role.

**Armor.** The target reduces your damage if it is wearing armor and takes the rest of the damage to its Vitality. The target is incapacitated if its Vitality reaches zero.

❋ **Critical Success.** If you roll a 12 to hit, add ½ your maximum damage.

For 1d4, add 2. 1d6, add 3. 1d8, add 4. 1d10, add 5. 1d12, add 6.

❋ *Only one character can use the Leader ability in a combat group.*

**Characters Defend.** The defend action is a parry, or buffet, or some other way to keep the foe from attacking. If the foe's attack is not dealt with, the foe will automatically hit.

❋ **Defend.** Roll 1d12, and if you roll equal to or higher than the target foe's combat number, reduce the target's number of attacks by 1. (The target gets one fewer attack that round, possibly down to no attacks.)

**Critical Success.** A 12 on a defend allows the defender to roll damage, automatically scoring a hit on the target as well as successfully defending.

❋ **Push Actions.** A defend action can be used to move a foe instead of reducing attacks (usually after all attacks have been countered, but not always). A successful defend action moves a target about 10 feet. If the target is a lot bigger, like a troll or a minotaur, it can be moved about 5 feet per successful defend action. In this way, dwarves can drive bigger foes off cliffs, into cages, and so on.

**Withdrawing.** Leaving melee combat takes a move action and allows the foe or foes one free hit. Using a defend action as well as a move action denies the foes a free hit.

❋ **If you flee** you are hit for half damage by one foe per melee.

❋ **If they flee** *one character in melee range* can roll damage to see how much the fleeing target takes. *You hit automatically.*

## PLAYER VS. PLAYER

While it is not encouraged, sometimes player characters may want to fight each other. This can happen in sports, if one is controlled by magic, if one has lost sight of the unity of the clan and Fellowship, in an honor duel, or for other reasons.

The dwarves may be brothers and sisters, but even siblings fight each other sometimes.

In that case, each treats the other's die code for Melee as the combat rating. Defend actions remove actions (combat, defend, or move). So, a melee code of d6 would count as a 6. If damage is inflicted, the target can roll armor to reduce it.

## ASSISTING ANOTHER

A character can give up all actions in the round to assist another character, granting +1 to a roll or allowing a re-roll (where the new result is kept whether it is better or worse.)

❋ This applies to d12 combat, damage, or armor rolls.

❋ The assistant cannot use Resolve to boost rolls while assisting.

❋ A team can move no faster than its slowest member.

❋ *Maximum two assistants at a time. Their +1 bonuses can stack.*

When the team of assistants and assisted takes damage, all roll armor, and the lowest applies. The rest of the damage is assigned to the assisted character unless an assistant volunteers to take it.

**Assistants.** Competent warriors get 1 action a round, seasoned warriors get 2, and distinguished warriors get 3. Who decides what they do? These actions can be assigned by the one they assist, or the combat leader, or the GM.

Forced to act independently, competent warriors have d6s. Less well trained and stalwart helpers have d4, and distinguished allies may have d8. They do not have combat roles unless the GM chooses to assign roles to them.

Assistants can use any of the three actions (move, attack, defend) once a round, up to the maximum number of actions they have. They can have additional actions granted them by the combat role abilities of others just like characters can. For example, a leader could grant an extra action of any kind, or a vanguard could assign an extra defend action.

## ENEMIES PHASE

**Surprised Action.** *If something unexpected happens during the enemies phase that directly affects a character, the character's player can spend 1 Resolve to get 1 action. Since Resolve is spent to get the action, more Resolve cannot be spent to increase its roll. Spending Resolve for an extra action can only happen 1 time per character in the enemies phase.*

**Behavior Table.** (Optional.) Every round, roll a d12. If rolling equal to or below the lower number, the enemy reacts in a more cautious or weak way. A roll in the middle means the enemy acts normally. A roll equal to or above the higher number unleashes a more aggressive or effective action. Each creature's entry has guidance for interpreting this roll. Some enemies may have complex or unpredictable abilities using more of the options on the behavior table.

**Foes Attack.** Foes default to one move and one attack. (Individuals may have more if their monster entries say so.)

**Damage.** Foes do not roll damage. Their description includes a "damage" number that is inflicted on those they hit.

*Some of this is soaked by your Armor rating. Roll the die type and reduce damage by that much.*

- **Melee Attack.** Any foes in melee range whose attacks were not defended away automatically hit at the end of the round.

- **Ranged Attack.** Use the behavior die to determine shooters' accuracy. Some creatures have information on their entry that makes them better or worse shots, but this is the default.

  **1:** All range attacks miss.

  **2–6:** Every other ranged attack hits. (The first is a hit.)

  **7–11:** All ranged attacks hit.

  **12:** All hit, and one does +1/2 damage (round up.)

  If a character has full cover, then the character is not hit by ranged weapons.

## MULTIPLE FOES

When characters attack the same foe, they resolve their actions separately (unless they are cooperating, *Assisting* p. 7). When foes attack characters, tougher foes resolve their actions separately. However, lesser foes are often used to working as a pack or swarm against enemies.

Opponents who can combine their efforts into a single assault on a foe have a damage bonus in parenthesis next to their damage rating. *The number in parenthesis is added for each additional allied attacker after the first.*

*For example:* A goblin warrior does 3 (+1) with a bow. If six goblin warriors shot at a character, the first one would inflict 3 Vitality, +1 per each of the other 5, for a total of 8. If the behavior roll was between 2 and 6, with a ranged attack, goblin 1, 3, and 5 would hit. So the first would do 3, and the other 2 would add 2, total 5.

**Foe Armor.** Foes may have an armor rating that allows them to ignore some of the damage characters inflict. Here is a rough guide to compare armor to ratings for monsters and NPCs. Use this as a guide when thinking about tough hides, armor plated monsters, dodgy reflexes, amorphous goo, and so on. How does it compare?

- Light armor: 1.
- Metal armor: 3.
- Full plate: 5.
- Shield: +1 to Combat Rating.

# WEAPONS AND ARMOR

A character's ability in combat is not defined by tools, but by the character's ability to get the most out of those tools. Leaders with daggers can move swiftly and stab accurately, and can turn the weight of a massive battleaxe into a deadly force. A support character with the same weapons would be frustrated by the dagger's short reach, and slowed by the heft of the axe.

This ability to get the best out of whatever equipment is at hand is true for melee weapons, ranged weapons, and armor. Dwarven training in arms and armor teaches flexibility and opportunism, to make the most of what you have.

## ARMOR

When a character takes damage, the player rolls his or her Armor die and reduces the amount rolled from the damage. If the damage is reduced to 0 or less, the character does not take damage. The armor die represents protective armor as well as reflexes for dodging, use of cover, and luck.

## MELEE WEAPONS

Melee takes a combat action. Players roll 1d12 and must roll equal to or higher than the target's Combat rating to hit. Then they roll damage based on their combat role.

It is a free action to prepare or put away a melee weapon. If balanced for throwing, a melee weapon can be hurled and do the range die code of damage. If they are not, they do –1 step damage.

## RANGED WEAPONS

Shooting takes a combat action. Characters roll 1d12 and must roll equal to or higher than the target's Combat rating to hit. Then they roll damage based on their combat role.

Reloading can take a defend, move, or combat action. Targets involved in melee combat may spend a defend action to disengage before reloading or making a ranged attack. If they do not disengage, they are automatically hit as though they were fleeing combat.

Throwing weapons can be readied as a free action. Bows and crossbows require one action to reload. Heavy crossbows require two actions to reload. Reload actions do not need to be consecutive for heavy crossbows.

**Range.** Short range is about 30 feet. Long range is 90 feet. Extreme range is 120 feet. This has as much to do with eyesight as weapon capacities. If a character wants to shoot further than seems normal for the weapon, allow the player to spend 1 Resolve and let the character take the shot normally. Range issues should be more cinematic and contextual than simulationist.

# DAMAGE AND HEALING

## VITALITY DAMAGE

The damage that is not reduced by armor is subtracted from Vitality.

When Vitality reaches 0, the character falls unconscious.

* Vitality does not track negative numbers; it does not go lower than zero.

Taking 6 Vitality still causes a Wound, even if the target has less than 6 Vitality left. Unconscious target armor is −2 die codes.

* Regain 1 Vitality for every 5 minutes of rest.

Each Wound lowers the maximum Vitality by 3 until healed.

## WOUNDS

When a character takes 6 or more Vitality from a single hit, the character takes 1 Wound.

* Wounded characters add an additional element of risk on every d12 roll. If they fail the risk test, then they take an additional point of Vitality damage. If their Wound was bound, it loses 1 level of binding.

Untreated Wounds make the risk test untrained. Wounds treated by an unskilled ally, or self, make the risk test as a secondary skill. Wounds treated by a healer make the test as a primary skill.

A dwarf with an untreated wound making a primary skill test, for example, could pass the test but still fail the unskilled risk test for the wound on the same roll; the dwarf would succeed, but lose 1 Vitality.

* If you reach 0 Vitality, roll 1d12. If you roll equal to or less than the number of your Wounds, you are Incapacitated. You are unable to act or regain Vitality until one or more Wounds are healed. If you roll higher, you can rest to regain Vitality normally.

* Wounds heal at the rate of 1 Wound per 12 hours of rest.

**Mortality.** Characters only die if they are left untended while incapacitated, executed while helpless, or loaded up with 6 Wounds at once.

### WHEN FOES LOSE ALL VITALITY

Are they dead? Incapacitated? The GM doesn't have to know unless the characters stop to make sure. Characters can revive a knocked-out or wounded foe to interrogate him or her, or to take the foe hostage. Maybe that victim is wounded, or maybe ran out of vitality and is just scraped up.

Adding this durability to foes allows for more stories where fights do not end with one side killing everyone who doesn't run away. The GM can rule that if characters specify they are not striking to kill, then when the Vitality is gone their foes are knocked out.

## OTHER FACTORS

**Healers.** A Healer secondary skill allows a character to tend one patient at a time, or as a primary skill, up to 3 patients at a time. Healers can tend themselves as one patient. Healers cannot be treated while helping others. Those tended by a healer regain Vitality and lose Wounds at twice the normal speed: 2 Vitality in 5 minutes and 1 Wound in 6 hours. Healers can also treat a Wound so that its risk test is as a primary skill when trying to act while injured.

**Liver Damage.** A dose of alcohol (a pint of beer, or smaller quantities of more powerful spirits) inflicts 1 Vitality damage on a dwarf. If the dwarf has 6 Vitality of alcohol damage at once, then the dwarf takes a Wound. The Wound is the only way the dwarf gets a hangover. However, the dwarf regains 1 Vitality for every 5 minutes of rest, so dwarves can pace themselves, drink a lot, and be fine.

**Falling Damage.** Take 1 Vitality per 5 feet of falling. When the dwarf hits, take a risk test. If it is failed, add ½ to damage for a bad landing.

**Drowning.** Dwarves can hold their breath for six rounds. Each round after that, take 1 Vitality damage. When the dwarf has taken 6 Vitality, even though it was not all at once, the dwarf takes a Wound and goes unconscious. Spending a point of Resolve buys another 4 rounds per point.

# BENCHMARKS

There are many rule systems out there that will provide all the complexity you may desire for details of movement, encumbrance, and so on. For Axes and Anvils, it is enough to have some benchmarks to have a basic sense of what is considered fair and appropriate.

**Encumbrance.** Dwarves can carry about 100 pounds as a load, up to 200 if they are willing to cut speed in half, and they can drag about 600. Armor does not slow them. If they want to carry an unreasonable amount of weapons and gear, they move 1/3 slower.

**Speed.** Dwarves trundle along at about 30 feet per move action. They can run about 100 feet a round, and a sprint is about 150 feet. They usually get about 4 miles an hour out of a day's travel, down to 3 for difficult terrain like mountain roads. They usually travel about 12 hours a day.

**Range.** Short range is about 30 feet. Long range is 90 feet. Extreme range is 120 feet. This has as much to do with eyesight as weapon capacities. If a character wants to shoot further than seems normal for the weapon, allow the player to spend 1 Resolve and let the character take the shot normally.

Range issues should be more cinematic and contextual than simulationist.

**Vision.** Dwarves can see in low light conditions, so a torch or candle allows them to see up to 60 feet in the darkness. Twilight is like daylight to them.

# BATTLE REFERENCE

## TURN ORDER

| | |
|---|---|
| **ALLIES PHASE** | Each character gets an attack, defend, and move action. |
| | Characters can act in any order to greatest advantage. |
| | Attacks hit if they roll equal to or higher than the target's Combat Rating. |
| | Defend actions reduce the target's attacks by 1 if they roll equal to or higher than the target's Combat Rating. |
| | Roll Melee or Ranged damage die. |
| | Rolling a 12 gains a critical hit or critical defend. Critical hit adds +1/2 damage die max; critical defend counts as a hit. |
| | Reduce target's armor rating from damage inflicted. |
| **ENEMIES PHASE** | Roll Behavior die (optional). |
| | All attacks that were not "defended" hit for fixed damage. Multiple attackers may add to the first attacker's damage. |
| | Targets roll armor ratings to reduce incoming damage. |

**Push Actions.** Defend actions that do not reduce attacks can move a target 10 feet, or 5 feet if the target is much bigger than the dwarf.

**Surprised Action.** If something unexpected happens during the enemies phase that directly affects a character, the player can spend 1 Resolve to get 1 action.

**Pick and Shield Assistants** (max 2) give up all actions to help someone else:

⁕ Grant +1 untrained, +2 secondary, +3 primary for skill help

OR

⁕ Grant +1 or grant a reroll, chose after rolling, keep new result. Applies to d12 combat, damage, or armor roll.

The assistant cannot use Resolve. The team moves no faster than the slowest member. When hit, everyone in the team rolls armor; the lowest roll applies to whoever takes damage (default being the one being assisted.)

**Assistants.** If acting independently, competent assistants are 1d4, veteran aids 1d6, expert aids 1d8 default for melee, range, and armor. Competent assistants get 1 action, veterans 2 actions, and experts 3 actions.

**Withdrawing from combat:** Characters can use a defend action before moving, or take a ½ damage hit from one foe. When foes flee, one character per melee automatically hits and rolls melee damage.

**Reloading** can take a defend, move, or melee action. Heavy crossbows require 2 reload actions. Throwing weapons are readied for free. *Most ranged weapons can be used as melee weapons.*

**Range:** Short range is about 30 feet. Long range is 90 feet. Extreme range is 120 feet. Spend 1 Resolve to shoot 1 range further than normal, no penalty.

**Player vs. Player:** Use the melee die code as the combat score. Defend actions remove combat, defend, or move actions from the other.

## INJURY

**Vitality.** When a character reaches 0 Vitality, the character falls unconscious.

⁕ If the character has one or more Wounds, roll 1d12; if the roll is equal or less than number of Wounds, the character is incapacitated and unable to act until one Wound is healed.

**Wounds:** When a character loses 6 Vitality at once, the character takes 1 Wound. When wounded, d12 roll actions have an extra element of risk; fail, and lose 1 more Vitality. Expert bindings are primary, unskilled bindings are secondary, and no bindings are untrained. Failing a risk test unbinds Wounds 1 level.

**Healing:** Get 1 Vitality per 5 minutes of rest and lose 1 Wound per 12 hours of rest.

⁕ The healing skill can reduce times to 2 Vitality in 5 minutes and 1 Wound per 6 hours.

⁕ Every Wound reduces the character's maximum Vitality by 3 until healed.

# CHARACTER FORGING

## CHARACTER FORGING

1. **Guiding Saying.** Which of the Sayings shapes your perspective?
2. **Combat Role.** Choose one of the six roles, showing your combat style.
3. **Skills.** Characters start with 2 skills, 1 for service and 1 for crafting.
4. **Name Weapon.** What is your identifying weapon like?
5. **Name and Description.** What are you called, and what do you look like?

## GUIDING SAYING

There are twelve Sayings in the Code, the foundation of dwarven culture. All dwarves are shadowed by one particular Saying, whether they like it or not. This is the dwarven version of astrological signs. The Guiding Saying is bestowed on a newborn dwarf by the oldest dwarf present.

Choosing a saying can slow things down. Ideally, the GM brought cards with the sayings on them, and people can randomly choose one, then write it down and return the card. Or, the sayings are placed where the players can read them, and players roll and write one down. Allowing choice or more deliberate methods is fine, but will take time and lose momentum. Duplicates are fine.

### THE SAYINGS OF THE CODE

Here are the original words, the Sayings that form the Code.

1. *Every great fire frees seeds of new life.*
2. *Greed starves the family.*
3. *Stone outlasts life, but words outlast stone.*
4. *Your judgment is your truth. To surrender it is to become a lie.*
5. *You must never be the highest authority in your life.*
6. *Your soul is revealed in your work.*
7. *Pleasure in leisure betrays a weak mind.*
8. *Motives are scaffolding, removed from the finished stone.*
9. *The chisel reveals the stone's heart, and discipline reveals a mortal's truth.*
10. *A hasty tunnel buries the foolish delver.*
11. *Save the drowning child before you punish the careless watcher.*
12. *All certainty hosts some doubt, and all doubt allows some certainty.*

## COMBAT ROLE

In battle, dwarves know their places. Combat is a team sport. Players may use cards, randomize with d12, or choose their combat roles.

**1–2 Berserker:** *A tradition of fury fuels you to profound violence.*

Vitality: 22. Armor: d6. Ranged: d4. Melee: d10.

✳ May use a defend action as a combat action.

✳ May spend 1 Vitality to do +5 damage after successfully hitting (before rolling damage). Only 1 Vitality may be spent per hit.

**3–4 Leader:** *You excel in combat, tactics, and command.*

Vitality: 20. Armor: d8. Ranged: d8. Melee: d8.

✳ Give any clan-mate ally that can see or hear you an extra action of any kind once each round.

✳ *Only one Leader can use this special ability per combat group.*

**5–6 Mauler:** *You have a gift for killing.*

Vitality: 20. Armor: d6. Ranged: d6. Melee: d10.

✳ May use one move action as a melee attack action each round.

✳ Once each round, take a free move or attack action after defeating a foe.

**7–8 Skirmisher:** *You strike and fade.*

Vitality: 18. Armor: d6. Ranged: d8. Melee: d8.

✳ Once each round, may give an extra attack action to an adjacent ally. This action must be used immediately.

✳ May disengage without spending a move action or getting hit while withdrawing.

**9–10 Support:** *Cull the ranks and chase the craven with missile weapons.*

Vitality: 18. Armor: d6. Ranged: d10. Melee: d6.

✳ May use a defend action as a ranged attack.

✳ May count one reload action each round as a free action.

**11–12 Vanguard:** *You plant yourself, and stand as a bulkhead.*

Vitality: 22. Armor: d10. Ranged: 1d4. Melee: 1d8.

✳ May use a move action as a defend action.

✳ Once each round, may give an extra defend action to an adjacent ally.

# ÆXES & ÆNVILS

**NAME:** _____

**CLAN:** _____

**DESCRIPTION:** _____
_____
_____
_____

**AGE:** _____ **BIRTHDATE:** _____ **PLAYER:** _____

**GUIDING SAYING:** _____

**LANGUAGES KNOWN:** Dirit (Dwarven) _____

| COMBAT ROLE: | Page Ref.: |
|---|---|
| Armor: | Combat Role Traits: |
| Ranged: | |
| Melee: | |
| Vitality: | |
| Current Wounds: | |
| (Each Wound –3 Max Vitality) | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

| RESOLVE: | (Resolve Starts at 6) |
|---|---|
| DIE STEPS | NAME WEAPON: |
| I | |
| Id2 | |
| Id4 | |
| Id6 | |
| Id8 | |
| Id10 | |
| Id12 | |
| Id12+1 | |

**PRIMARY SKILL:**

PASS 5-12
3-4 NEUTRAL
1-2 FAIL

Service/Craft          Page Ref.:

**SECONDARY SKILL:**

PASS 6-12
4-5 NEUTRAL
1-3 FAIL

Service/Craft          Page Ref.:

Untrained: Fail on 1-5, unsuccessful on 6-7, Pass on 8-12

| UPGRADE | TYPE | PAGE | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
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**CURRENT LEDGER:** _____ Upgrades cost 5 Ledger each. "Type" is Service, Craft, Combat, or Other.

# SKILLS

Characters start with two skills: a service skill and a craft skill. The player chooses one as the character's primary focus, and the other as secondary focus.

## CARDS FOR SKILLS

When a group of players make characters together, use the skill cards. The only time allowing players to simply choose their skills is recommended is when there are only one or two characters joining an established group. Using the cards helps establish the Fellowship as it is created. Drawing and exchanging cards encourages a sense of shared history and past relationships. Cards can be found starting on page 27.

### SERVICE SKILLS

These skills represent the active role of the character in Dwarven society. What does the character *do*?

Each player can draw two cards from the Service skill deck. Players can exchange cards if they want. *Keep one of these cards.*

If making a character alone, you can use the deck, randomize, or choose.

1. **Adept.** Sensing, reading, and using magic.
2. **Athlete.** Physical strength, movement, and reflexes.
3. **Carouser.** Celebration, inspiration, and drinking.
4. **Chosen.** Serving Gods of Ur, rituals, and blessings. *Speak Nevrecht.*
5. **Delver.** Underground tracking, stealth, and survival. *Knows another language.*
6. **Diplomat.** Social interaction, negotiation, and manners.
7. **Engineer.** Coded plans, directing work, and sieges.
8. **Healer.** Diagnosis, treatment, and surgery.
9. **Merchant.** Appraisal, haggling, and management.
10. **Performer.** Music, poetry, and racial memory.
11. **Scholar.** Teaching, studying, and researching. *Speak Nevrecht.*
12. **Topsider.** Surface tracking, stealth, and survival. *Knows another language.*

### CRAFT SKILLS

These skills represent the character's training in creating something to benefit the clan. What does the character *make*?

Each player can draw two cards from the craft skill deck. Players can exchange cards if they want. *Keep one of these cards.*

If making a character by yourself, you can draw from a deck, randomize with 1d12, or choose.

1. **Alchemist.** Make potions.
2. **Armorer.** Make weapons and armor.
3. **Brewer.** Make intoxicants.
4. **Chef.** Make food.
5. **Enchanter.** Infuse magic into objects.
6. **Fabricator.** Make things that are neither stone nor metal. *Specialties:* Carpentry, Leatherwork, Clothwork, Pottery, Glassblowing, or Bookbinding (choose one).
7. **Farmer.** Make food and meat.
8. **Gunsmith.** Make guns.
9. **Jeweler.** Make jewelry and cut gems.
10. **Mason.** Make stone buildings.
11. **Mechanician.** Make clockwork and machinery.
12. **Miner.** Extract and refine ore, and make mines.

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SKILLS

Players now assign one of their skill cards to be primary, and the other to be secondary.

## THE SWEET SPOT

Characters start as experienced dwarves. They do not quickly ascend to become more spectacular. Instead, experience broadens their capabilities, instead of boosting statistics over and over. Adventures earn them flexibility and a place in the world. Even as they individually advance, the focus should always be on how they can now best serve their clan.

*All characters start with 6 Resolve.*

A primary skill means the character has amazing ability in that field. Secondary skills are professional level (expert level for less accomplished and shorter-lived races).

Use the primary or secondary rating of the skill to determine its chance of success. If you do not have a skill that covers something you are trying to do, treat it as untrained.

---

## COMBAT ROLES AND SKILLS

If a Combat Role seems like good training to do a task, it counts as a secondary skill. Examples include movement tests for Skirmishers, intimidation for Berserkers, demolition work for a Mauler, noticing far off movement for a Support, *etc.*

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## NAME WEAPON

When a dwarf becomes an adult, the community participates in a ritualistic ceremony where a smith presents the dwarf with a weapon with the dwarf's symbol carved into it. A name weapon is a mark of stature. To speak in a dwarven assembly, whether in your clan or elsewhere, you must have a name weapon. What does yours look like?

If you lose your name weapon, it can be replaced if you receive special permission from your archon. Still, most dwarves try to find their name weapon, if only to make sure it is destroyed and not in the hands of enemies or the ignorant.

**Oath of Fealty.** You are under the shield of your clan. Your clan provides you with shelter, aid, and meaningful work. In exchange, you will not betray your clan, and you will use your blood and breath to further its interests. When you became an adult, you were sworn into the obligations and responsibility of clan life, and to turn your back on your clan is to tear out your bones, losing all structure and strength.

## NAME AND DESCRIPTION

Your character needs a name. Also, describe any outstanding features. What kind of armor and weapons does your character prefer? How about hair, build, timbre of voice? The description does not need to be detailed; just choose a few things that would be obvious at first glance. The rest can grow with time.

# MAGICAL MATERIAL

Here are some mystic tools that dwarves (including the characters) can make.

## FOUNDATION RUNES [ENCHANTERS]

All Enchanters know the six Foundation Runes upon which all their runic magic is built. These runes can be placed on objects, architecture, jewelry, and so on. Sometimes the effect can be idiosyncratic, but the basic function remains mostly the same in dwarven craftsmanship across time, distance, and culture.

1.  **Brilliance.** This can add beauty, or it can add light (usually conditional on a command word or circumstance). The power of the enchanter determines its maximum brightness. It defaults to the brightness of a torch, but that light can be intensified and brightened x2 for each permanent Vitality sacrificed to it.

2.  **Concealment.** This rune renders its bearer invisible. Dwarves can make a challenge test to see what is hidden, but other races and creatures need special senses to even try.

3.  **Fortitude.** The object's strength is reinforced, and it lasts twice as long. Armor is improved by 1 die step.

4.  **Friendship.** Usually placed on a ring or medallion, this rune allows access to magically hidden or restricted dwarven areas. Its symbolic power is as potent as its magical power.

5.  **Lock.** Runes of this family can be placed on objects that either lock or openlocks, to improve their effectiveness. From master keys to a fortress to protections around a relic, these runes are frequently used. Non-magical means cannot defeat their effectiveness, and only the most powerful non-dwarven magic can affect these enchantments.

6.  **Sharpness.** A blade or point will not dull. Edged or pointed weapons are improved by 1 die step.

## CURATIVE POTIONS [ALCHEMISTS]

In the quick start, alchemists know how to make curative potions. Each curative potion takes about 2 days and about 50 gold of ingredients to brew. These are advanced studies for Alchemists.

1.  **Wound Sealant.** After drinking, the wounded character must rest for an hour for the potion to work. One Wound is healed, but no Vitality is returned.

2.  **Stimulant.** When it is drunk, 1d10 Vitality return. Each stimulant drunk between at least 6 hours of rest takes −1 to the roll; a 0 or negative inflicts 1d4 Vitality damage instead.

3.  **Magical Antidote.** This rare and wonderful potion burns a poison out of the system. The drinker makes a challenge/risk test as a secondary skill. On a success, the poison is defeated. If the drinker does not succeed, the poison goes into remission for 24 hours. If the drinker fails, the drinker takes 1d4 Vitality damage.

## HOW THE MAGIC FLOWS

Adepts, Alchemists, Chosen, and Enchanters all produce mystical effects. However, they are very different in practice.

*   Adepts can see and feel the magic that binds the world together. The mutagenic processes that warped the dwarves into a slave race in the mists before civilization still linger in these rare dwarves; they are open to manipulating the latent energy in the world. They sense different flavors of supernatural energy, and they can weaponize it.

*   Alchemists have learned that combining different materials carefully can create incompatibilities that provoke magical effects, or synergies that elevate otherwise undetectable magic in physical matter. Their work is rooted in observation, a ridiculous amount of memorization, some superstition, and a handful of luck. They revere formulae as ways to control and exploit the world. Everything has energies and harmonies, and knowing how to repair or disrupt those harmonies is a key to power.

*   Chosen have a trace of divine energy threaded through their veins, whether because they are descended from gods or because their ancestors were touched by that energy somehow. Many Chosen can trace their lineage back to someone who was raised from the dead, punished by a god, bathed in divine blood, or on the receiving end of some other miraculous event. Chosen can touch the cosmic, and provide an outlet for that energy into the mundane world. When they act to bring about harmony, they align with their energy. When they bring about despair and darkness, it sours in them. The Gods of Ur, real or symbolic, serve as their guides.

*   Enchanters have mastered the use of runes to pull the threads of the fabric of reality, drawing energy through objects to achieve certain effects. Visible, tangible shapes hold a complex, multi-dimensional matrix of energy that tugs reality into alignment with the rune's purpose, achieving magical and impossible feats. Reality is repurposed, adjusted by symbol and pattern.

None of these mystical abilities are dependent on any of the others, and they can be combined to create truly peculiar shamen of the dwarven people. Some upgrades are provided for each, but GMs can make up their own, too.

# BACKGROUND

## AREA DESCRIPTIONS

### BLOODCRAG

**Geography:** Ardentpeak is the clanhome center, focused on the law and the ancestors. They also have a mystical site of power (and a site for teaching and crafting) at Gushrock. Both are built into volcanoes. Their settlements focus on maximizing ley line energy, sites are sometimes laid out in runic patterns to harness or direct it.

**Stance:** The clanhome is relatively secure and protected with the aid of others. They can specialize and divide labor, sending investigators and mystics through the dwarven nation. Their attention is focused on the dwarven nation's internal troubles, but they sometimes deal with outsiders.

**Notes:** Red-heads are chosen as Thanes, and traditionally have mystic potential. The clan serves as the guardian of law for the dwarven nation, answering to the High King.

### SHIELDSPLITTER

**Geography:** Slakethirst is the clanhome center, a grimy coastal trade city with lots of gambling and arena combat. Steading in stubby mountains that are poor in every kind of resource has led this over-clan towards alcoholism and mercenary service. The terrain is punishing, and not inspirational.

**Stance:** Blessed with a homeland that lacks anything anyone else wants, they struggle with self-esteem issues. Since they need not defend much, they can channel their warlike temperaments to bolster other groups in need of muscle and blades. Their bad attitudes keep them from integrating well or fostering good diplomatic relations with others. Still, they have the most contact with non-dwarves.

**Notes:** Most of the thane's influence in the over-clan comes from doling out mercenary contracts. Clans compete for them in various ways, including arena combat.

### STONDRÆG

**Geography:** Freedom Peak is the clanhome, the impossibly beautiful result of centuries of dwarven art. Built in completely isolated valleys and shadowed by the highest mountains, this is the most ancient independent seat of power in the dwarven nation. The structures of the clanhome are the pinnacle of aesthetic functionality, even the memory of their genius provokes emotion in dwarven crafters, who travel great distances to witness them.

**Stance:** Defensive, stubborn, and hidebound. Nestled in the center of the knot of mountains that hosts the dwarven nation, they are the keepers of tradition—but they are also very isolated from the practicalities and realities of more connected clans. They are so disconnected from the real world, the danger that worries them most is earthquakes. *They are deeply connected to Stonebreaker, which is the more active off-shoot of the over-clan.*

**Notes:** They are superstitious, deliberate, and ultra-conservative. They worship ancestors.

### STONEBREAKER

**Geography:** Boneshield is the clanhome, scarred and grim from repeated battles that almost broke its innermost defenses. Clan Stonebreaker claims the most desperately inhospitable mountains. They swarm with goblins. However, there are rich deposits of iron, gems, and precious metals threaded through the stone.

**Stance:** Stonebreaker broke out of Stondraeg because they were willing to take risks to gain great rewards. They pushed into wealthy stone that was forbidden by the superstitions of Stonedraeg, and they have been severely battered by the endless masses of goblins that swarm that rich territory. They are too proud to give up their territory, that would admit defeat to Stondraeg. Instead they live in harsh conditions of battle and work, making almost-undrinkable foul brew and slaying and mining. They must mine, to justify the cost in blood for taking their territory from the goblins. They have formed alliances with non-dwarves because of their intense warfare, and as a market for what they mine.

**Notes:** These guys are seriously dour.
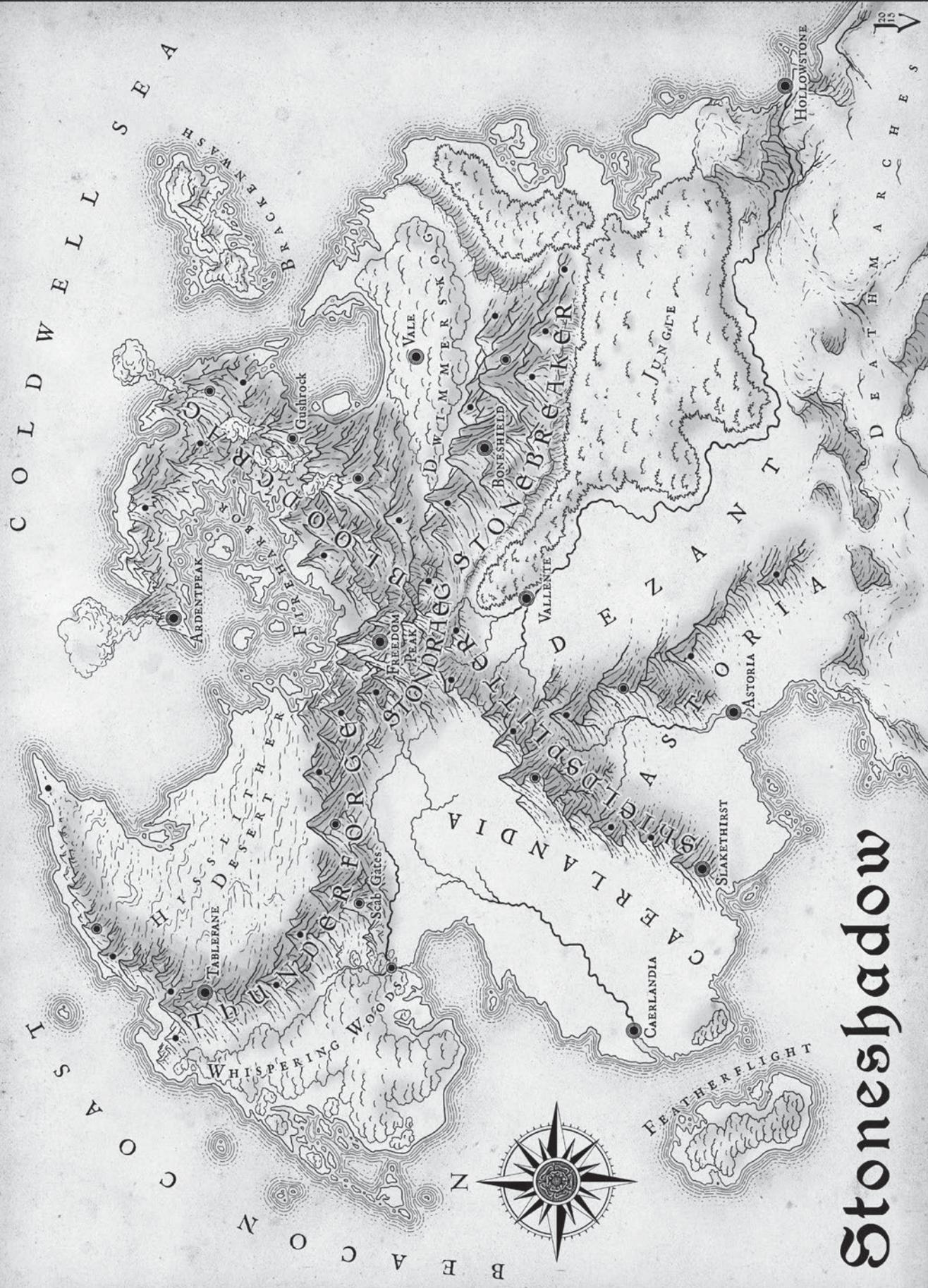
### THUNDERFORGE

**Geography:** Tablefane, a massive temple complex built around the finest forge compound in the world, is the clanhome. The Thunderforge Mountains partially encircle a desert, where pilgrims go to scourge the needless cruft from their bodies and spirits in the mystic tradition. The Gods of Ur are purported to live beneath the sand.

**Stance:** They are aggressive in promoting their religion. To give weight to their words and mission, they send skilled warriors and smiths to other communities to get the attention and loyalty of dwarves seeking to gain a greater place for worshiping the Gods of Ur in clanhomes across the nation. While they trade normally, they also desire obedience and conversion, driving their cross-clan contact to greater lengths. They deal with outsiders, but are more interested in internal matters of the dwarven culture.

**Notes:** They brought the religion of the Gods of Ur to the dwarven people as part of the process of pushing the dragons back. This religion overshadows ancestor worship, they co-exist uneasily in some communities.

COLDWELL SEA

BRACKENMARSH

THUNDERFORGE

HISSLITHER DESERT

FIREHEART

BLOODGORE

STONEBREAKER

STONDRAEG

DEATH MARCHES

DEZANT

ASTORIA

SHIELDSPLIT

CAERLANDIA

WHISPERING WOODS

BEACON COAST

DWIMMERSKOG

JUNGLE

Hollowstone

Vale

Gushrock

Boneshield

Vallente

Astoria

Slakethirst

Ardentpeak

Tablefane

Scab Gates

Freedom

STONE PEAK

Caerlandia

Featherflight

N

Stoneshadow

20
15

# FOES

## CREATURE ENTRIES

❋ **Combat.** The Combat rating is what an attacker must roll to hit the creature. Also, foes automatically hit for full damage unless a Defend action takes away their attack. The Defend action must roll higher than the foe's Combat rating to disable the attack. Multiple numbers mean multiple attacks.

**(Weapon)** This is the foe's preferred weapon.

**Ranged Attack.** For those with a ranged attack, the weapon and damage are included.

❋ **Damage.** This is the damage a target takes from a melee or ranged attack.

**(Bonus)** When multiple foes gang up on a target, some of them do extra damage when attacking as a mass instead of individually. If many targets attack, each one after the first adds a bonus to the base damage.

❋ **Armor.** This number is the amount of incoming hit points of damage the armor (or dodging, or amorphous shape flexibility, or magic power, *etc.*) subtracts.

❋ **Vitality.** When they lose this many points to attacks, the creature is out of the fight.

❋ **Behavior Table.** (Optional) Every round, roll a d12. If rolling equal to or below the lower number, the enemy reacts in a more cautious or weak way. A roll in the middle means the enemy acts normally. A roll equal to or above the higher number unleashes a more aggressive or effective action. Each creature's entry has guidance for interpreting this roll. Some enemies may have complex or unpredictable abilities using more of the options on the behavior table.

❋ **Special.** There are three other action types that some creatures can use:

**Command.** This can be used once per round as a free action without the creature losing an attack action. Only one leader may issue a command in the round, even if there is more than one leader in play; otherwise it confuses the troops.

**Active.** This action must be maintained, so the foe does not get a move or an attack.

**Special.** This is a special ability the creature may use, as a free action by default. The description may list some other cost.

## GOBLIN WARBAND

Sadistic and brimming with alien vitality, these green-skinned corruptions breed fast and kill slowly. They are cowardly but dangerous.

### SLAVE GOBLIN

Combat 4. Improvised weapons, 2 damage (+1) melee and ranged.

Armor 0. Vitality 4.

*BEHAVIOR:*

❋ **3–:** *Cowardice.* The goblins lose their nerve and flee.

❋ **10+:** *Overwhelm.* This round, goblins have +1 mass melee or mass fire damage bonus.

### WARRIOR

Combat 5. Spear / blade, 3 damage (+1). Spear or shoddy bow, 3 damage (+1).

Armor 0. Vitality 6.

*BEHAVIOR:*

❋ **3–:** *Cowardice.* The goblins lose their nerve and flee.

❋ **10+:** *Overwhelm.* This round, goblins have +2 mass melee or mass fire damage bonus.

### LEADER

Combat 6/6. Blade, 5 damage.

Armor 1 (light). Vitality 10.

*Command: Again!* At the end of the enemy phase, all goblins who are engaged in melee can be commanded to attack whether or not they were able to attack this round.

*BEHAVIOR:*

❋ **3–: Line of Succession.** The leader spends the round lining up minions between danger and his or her skin. Next round, up to 3 attacks aimed at the leader will hit minions instead.

❋ **10+: Grapple.** With a horrible scream, the leader pounces at a target within 30 feet. If the attack would have done damage, instead the target loses 3 actions a round (and 6 Vitality, but armor can reduce that) as the wiry goblin wrestles the hapless target.

### SHAMAN

Combat 5/5. Knife, 2 damage (melee or thrown).

Armor 0. Vitality 8.

*Special: Curse.* The shaman can give up all actions in a round and curse one opponent that the shaman can see clearly. Any odd roll made by the victim is reduced by 3. Against NPCs, the curse can have a variety of unpleasant effects at the GM's whim, from damage to slowing to bad luck to behavior shifts. Goblins know lots of spells.

- **3–: Vanish.** Using showmanship, chemicals, or magic, the shaman automatically escapes combat and relocates somewhere within 30 feet as a full round action (even if no actions were left to use).
- **10+: Writhing Mass.** As a free action, the shaman inflicts a spell on one target within 30 feet. The target is suddenly swarmed by spiders, slugs, wasps, or some other vermin. The target loses 1d12 actions ridding itself of the mass; every action spent inflicts 1 Vitality on the target, ignoring armor. Spending 1 Resolve ignores 4 lost actions and takes 4 Vitality; the target can spend 1 along with every action.

## CHAMPION

Combat 7/7. Blade, 7 damage.

Armor 3 (light armor, quick). Vitality 12.

*Special: Envenomed Blade.* If the goblin inflicts Vitality damage, then the target loses 1 action per round. On the third dose of venom, the target is incapacitated for 12 hours, and will die if not tended by a healer.

*Command: With Me!* Any goblins fighting the same opponent as the champion add +2 to the champion's damage instead of attacking on their own.

*BEHAVIOR:*

- **3–: Battlecry.** The champion shrieks and regains 1d12 Vitality.
- **10+: Murderous.** The champion gains 2 extra actions.

# ORC WARBAND

Meat hulks twisted and bred for the sole purpose of violent war, orcs are troublesome neighbors and awful guests.

## WARRIOR

Combat 6. Cleaver or spear, 5 damage (+1). Spear, 4 damage (+1).

Armor 1 (natural). Vitality 12.

*BEHAVIOR:*

- **3–: Stuff Yer "Plan."** One orc gets a bright idea for a new battle strategy and the warband switches tactics immediately.
- **10+: Lookit Me!** One orc attacks the toughest target it can reach. If it does damage, it upgrades to a Tough immediately and regains all Vitality.

## TOUGH

Combat 7/7. Something big spikey, 7 damage. Hurled weapon, 5 damage.

Armor 2 (natural). Vitality 14.

*Special: Enthusiasm.* Any round the tough does damage, it regains 1 point of Vitality.

*Command: Look Lively.* All troops under the tough's command can ignore one defend action that succeeded against them.

*BEHAVIOR:*

- **3–: Thass IT!** The tough forgets the plan and challenges a character to single combat; others commanded by the orc will not interfere, unless the other side does.
- **10+: You Know Who Oi AM?!?** The orc roars and curses for a round and regains all Vitality.

## BOSS

Combat 8/8. Unreasonable weaponry, 8 damage.

Armor 3 (natural). Vitality 20.

*Special: Minions.* Once a round, during the player turn, the boss can snatch an underling in arm's reach and force the underling to take the damage intended for the boss.

*BEHAVIOR:*

- **3–: Big Shot.** The boss has to prove its mettle to keep the top spot; whether it is tactically wise or not, the boss rushes in for a share of the glory.
- **10+: Better View.** The boss moves around to take on shooters, or to get a better tactical position.

## HERO MONSTER

Combat 9/9/9. Weapons involving bones, 10 damage.

Armor 4 (natural). Vitality 25.

*Special: Chomp.* The orc's huge maw is lined with massive teeth. It gets an extra attack, and if the attack scores a Wound, the target's head is bitten clean off.

*BEHAVIOR:*

- **3–: Show Off.** The hero monster attacks in an awkward, overly dramatic way, only getting a single attack for 14 damage. This only works if the hero monster has an attack left. The hero monster takes 6 Vitality in this grandstanding maneuver. This move is wide open to GM interpretation.
- **10+: Invincible.** Rage triggers toughness; the hero monster's armor goes up 1 (maximum 6) for the rest of the battle.

## MINOTAUR

Combat 7/7. Weapons or horns, 14 damage.

Armor 2 (natural). Vitality 40.

*Special: Horn Toss.* If it does Vitality damage to a target, the minotaur can fling the target so the target must spend a move action to rise and re-engage (or flee).

### BEHAVIOR:

❋ **3–: Charge.** The minotaur takes a move action, and anyone it goes over or next to takes a hit. Must move in a roughly straight line.

❋ **10+: Bellow.** The minotaur roars, and those within about 20 feet must make a challenge and risk test. Those who pass act normally, those who do not pass cannot attack the minotaur next round in any way, and those who fail must flee.

## OGRE

Combat 6/6. Fists or massive weapon, 9 damage. Hurled scenery, 9 damage.

Armor 1 (natural.) Vitality 36.

*Special: Desperate.* When the ogre's Vitality falls to 18 or less, its Combat drops to 5 and it gets an extra attack each round.

### BEHAVIOR:

❋ **3–: Clumsy.** The ogre only gets 1 attack this round.

❋ **9+: Frenzy.** The ogre gets an extra attack this round.

## TROLL

Combat 7/7. Claws and jaws, 13 damage.

Armor 3 (natural.) Vitality 20.

*Special: Regenerate.* The troll regenerates 5 Vitality each round during behavior generation. Each time the troll is hit with fire or acid that causes Vitality damage, its regeneration rate slows by 1 damage per round for a day.

*Special: Long Lived.* If the troll reaches 5 Vitality or less, it will flee as best it can. It gets 3 move actions per round while it flees.

### BEHAVIOR:

❋ **3–: Hungry.** If there is any food around, the troll will stop and devour it. Otherwise, act normally.

❋ **10+: Pounce.** The troll attacks a single nearby target, as long as the troll has any attacks left, and ignores armor as it drives the target to the ground under the troll's weight and energy.

## WYRMLING DRAGON

Combat 8/8/8. Claws and jaws, 12 damage.

Armor 5 (natural.) Vitality 20.

Killing machine in a gleaming coat of scales, about 40 feet long with a 40 foot wingspan and a massive bite radius that can fit most of a dwarf betwixt its teeth.

*Special: Crush.* Using legs or body mass, the dragon crushes up to 3 targets in melee range. Risk test, those who fail take 12 damage and cannot act again until the dragon lets them up, taking another 7 damage a round until then. Only a heroic action can get free. If crushing from an elevated position, like diving out of flight, double damage.

*Special: Tail Snap.* Targets to the flank or rear of the dragon must pass a dodgy risk test or take 12 damage and be hurled up to 30 feet; if they hit something hard before then, take another 7 damage. Armor counts against both.

### BEHAVIOR:

❋ **3–: Relocate.** Dragons expect to live forever. Caution is inherent, and even if things are going well the dragon will pull back to re-engage with strafing attacks while flying, or attacking from ambush, or maybe losing interest.

❋ **4–5: Taunt.** The dragon pauses to talk. Depending on the circumstance, this can be mockery, bargaining, threatening, or even offering to hire the dwarves for something. (This could end combat.)

❋ **8–9: Special.** Dragon either crushes or uses tail snap, whatever makes more sense.

❋ **10+: Fire Breath.** All things in front of the dragon take 20 damage, all gear loses a die step or quality level (*Example:* from d8 to d6, from normal to poor). Those threatened may pass a dodgy risk test to *either* halve damage or protect gear.

# THE ROAD HOME

## MOUNTAIN PATHS

**D**warves build paths to connect settlements. These paths go over and around the mountains, as well as through them. At their height, the paths were expanded into a vast, patrolled and trafficked network. Now, they crumble on the heights. Traffic is less, and threats are greater.

Each clanhome has an area surrounding it that its people patrol and clear. This relatively safe area is "the pale" and is usually marked by whitewashing the stone where it ends. The dwarf road lies outside any clan's "pale" or protection. More heavily-trafficked paths are better patrolled and maintained than abandoned routes.

This is a tool kit for building your own mountain paths. Once you have built a mountain road connecting two destinations, note the order of scenery so if the player-characters take that route again you are consistent.

### WEATHER

Roll once per section of scenery, or per day, or per half-day; pace it how you want. This only matters if the characters are outside, not if they are under the earth. This table applies to winter; other seasons make for easier travel. The main hazard in non-winter seasons is high winds (usually with rain). If you want to control the weather directly, choose instead of rolling.

Training to deal with weather effects comes from the Top-sider adventurer skill.

### SCENERY

Three elements figure into the scenery: the type of terrain for the dwarf-road, a variety of set pieces that can be described to add to the flavor of the game, and the weather.

Roll 1d12 to determine the type of terrain for the section of road. To generate one or more "set pieces," roll 1d12 to see what features are in the background. As a default, set pieces are 1d12 or 2d12 hours of walking apart from each other. Each hour of walking covers about 2 miles, up in the mountains at least. Dwarves generally move 12 hours a day.

**1–6: Outdoor Path.** This consists mostly of steps of varying pitch, often narrow and dangerous. Only the toughest mules can make it.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1–2 | Ancient watch post husk above the road, gutted and fire-scarred. |
| 3–4 | Crumbled roadway gap; must inch around it on a scrap of road. |
| 5–6 | Trapped, rigged to drop supports, starting to sag (needs repair). |
| 7–8 | Stairway winds up around a peak; endless stairs next to a drop. |
| 9–10 | Dips low, shadowed by mountains, into a dreary fog bank. Slick. |
| 11–12 | Road peaks with a stone look-out station; breath-taking view. |

**7–12: Underground Path.** This passes through or under stone, including caves, tunnels, and settlements that connect outdoor paths.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1–2 | Long-untended luminescent fungus once lit this now wild area. |
| 3–4 | Huge gem-studded engineering wall mosaic; grand chamber. |
| 5–6 | Corridors half-flooded, chest deep in stagnant water. |
| 7–8 | Public crypt of the architect who built the pass, under huge statue. |
| 9–10 | Walkway around a bottomless shaft; wind feels like breath. |
| 11–12 | Massive portal gates, crumpled and broken, by vast doorway. |

### WEATHER EFFECTS

| D12 | DESCRIPTION | EFFECTS |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Howling blizzard. | As "heavy snowfall" and "high winds" together, test once an hour. |
| 2 | Needling ice storm. | |
| 3–4 | Heavy snowfall. | Lose 1 Vitality per hour, 2 if not in winter gear. 6 Vitality damage causes 1 Wound of frostbite. Six "at once" resets each warm rest. |
| 5 | High winds. | Pass a risk test or lose 1d12 Vitality from a fall. |
| 6–7 | Murky. | Take 1 Vitality per hour of exposure if not in winter gear. |
| 8–11 | Clear. | |
| 12 | Brilliant sun. | Pass a risk test or go snowblind. |

**Bridge.** Add bridges at will, on either path. Length: 1d12+2 x10 feet.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1–2 | Statues of the Gods of Ur, scored and chipped, line the rails. |
| 3–4 | Ancient lifts connect the road and the bridge far below. |
| 5–6 | Center has fallen, replaced by much cruder see-through lattice. |
| 7–8 | Vengeful dwarven faces carved into bridge howl with wind. |
| 9–10 | Massive waterfall to the side; bridge always loud and slick. |
| 11–12 | Crypt bridge; mountain warrior corpses rest in the bridge itself. |

You can generate a road ahead of time if you want, laying out the path and setting terrain features and encounters. The game system is simple enough that you can also improvise as you go using these tables to roll or to offer inspiration for your decisions.

*Example: Lynn rolls a 6, so the section is an underground path. She rolls for a couple set pieces, getting a 9 and a 4 for a walkway around a bottomless shaft, and a huge gem-studded engineering wall mosaic. Lynn could roll 2d12 to see how many hours of travel separate each side of the section from the landmarks, but she instead decides the bottomless shaft is at the entrance. The wall mosaic is 2d12 hours in (15 hours) and the exit is another 2d12 hours on (10 hours). It takes 25 hours to move through this section, and that will take two days at a hard pace.*

If you want, you can make any outdoor path or underground path a fork in the road, especially with a memorable set piece in the background. In that case, generate what type of scenery goes each way, and let the players choose.

## ENCOUNTERS

In general, call for a risk test or have an encounter once every six hours of time passing in the game. Safer areas are a

### POSTING GUARD

Smart travelers will post guard when they rest. If the players are not familiar with this, their characters certainly are. The night is divided into three watches, and every dwarven adventurer can feel the passage of time bone deep.

The first watch is from 9pm to midnight, the second watch from midnight to 3am, and third watch is from 3am to 6am. As long as a character rests for 2 watches uninterrupted (even if they are not consecutive), that's enough sleep. Otherwise, knock off 2 from maximum Vitality for each watch missed—that's up to 4 Vitality a day.

primary skill risk test, default is a secondary risk test, and dangerous areas are an untrained risk test. A topsider or delver can use that skill to test, reducing the risk of encounters, at GM discretion. One player rolls for the group.

**Monsters Attack.** Roll 1d12 to see what menace crosses the dwarves' path.

Remember to give the dwarves options for parlay or retreat as much as possible. The appearance of potential foes should not always trigger bloodshed. Be open and flexible, and encourage players to be creative.

**1:** Minotaur. 1 per 3 characters.

**2–3:** Ogre. 1 per 2 characters.

**4–5**: Troll. 1 per 4 characters.

**6–8:** Orcs, 3 orcs per character, 1 tough per character, 1 boss. (p. 19)

**9–11:** Goblins, 5 goblins per character, 1 champion. (p.18)

**12:** Wyrmling Dragon. (p. 20)

If you want an impressive battle as a set piece, you don't have to roll an encounter. You can create a battle with a random force, or even choose to hit the dwarves with a particular monster. Adjust numbers and composition of war bands if you want to. These give you a place to start, and some inspiration.

# THE ROAD HOME
## INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE FOR AXES AND ANVILS

The dwarves are on their way to a new clanhome (Tumbletop), intending to join the Firebrake clan and serve its interests. The adventure ends when they reach a white-washed and guarded portal at the edge of Tumbletop's patrol lines.

## HOW TO USE THIS ADVENTURE

The introductory mission has self-contained and modular parts. This design helps the GM tailor the length of the journey to fit the session time left after generating clan and characters. Feel free to make adjustments as you go.

The dwarves are equipped with lanterns that glow with odd bioluminescence, harvested from deep in the caverns, with enough light for several days. They also have bedrolls, camping equipment, and whatever else seems appropriate in addition to their heavy winter clothes.

## GRANTING LEDGER FROM THE EXPERIENCE

They will each be given 5 points of Ledger (buying an upgrade costs 5 points of Ledger) for joining their new clan when they arrive and tell the tale. If they do something unexpectedly

useful along the way, or if you want the leader to award someone one additional point, you can adjust as needed.

## THE ROAD HOME

*(32 HOURS TRAVEL TIME, 3 DAYS, 64 MILES)*

### UNDERGROUND

* **Bone Bulwark.** (Crypt Bridge.) Starting point, halfway to the clan home.

* **Samach Gates** (broken portal gates).

  *9 hours.*

### OUTDOORS

* **Crumbled roadway,** narrow gap of road.

  *2 hours.*

* **Pit Entry** (walk around bottomless shaft to underground entrance).

### UNDERGROUND

  *1 hour.*

* **The Garden of Lights** (long-untended luminescent fungus).

  *7 hours.*

### OUTDOORS

* **Mazurin's Portal** (ancient watchpost ruin).

  *12 hours.*

### UNDERGROUND

* **Hegarian's Tomb** (public crypt of architect, under a statue).

  *1 hour.*

* **The Dirge Rift** (bridge, with vengeful howling faces, to the Pale).

You can choose any point on the mountain road to start the adventure. The closer to the Pale, the shorter the adventure will be. Remember to roll for weather when entering an outside area.

When the dwarves look for a place to camp for the night, the topsider is skilled in finding a good place outdoors, and the delver is skilled in finding a good place underground.

## SETTING THE SCENE AT THE BEGINNING

The group has had a rough 3 days of travel towards the clan home, but they have finally reached the Bone Bulwark, a bridge. The stone of the bridge is stained black, and buried in niches in the stonework are the bones of the brave warriors that gave their lives defending the workers so the bridge could be built, leading to the vanquishing of the Sandri goblin nation centuries ago.

The dwarves camped on the far side of the bridge the night before; only their innate sense of time informs them, they are deep underground here. They break camp and cross the bridge towards home.

## AMBUSH!

Use the Goblin Warband on page 18. Attack with 5 goblins per dwarf, plus a leader. Half the goblins will try to hang back and shoot while the rest charge in, and the leader will do his best to be the last one to die.

Even if you start somewhere besides the bridge, an ambush gets the blood pumping and tries out the rules early on in the adventure.

## WEATHER

Roll once per section of scenery, or per day, or per half-day; pace it how you want. This only matters if the characters are outside, not if they are under the earth. This table is winter; other seasons make for easier travel. The main hazard in non-winter seasons is high winds (usually with rain). If you want to control the weather directly, choose instead of rolling. Training to deal with weather effects comes from the Topsider adventurer skill.



*WEATHER EFFECTS*

| D12 | DESCRIPTION | EFFECTS |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Howling blizzard. | As "heavy snowfall" and "high winds" together, test once an hour. |
| 2 | Needling ice storm. | |
| 3–4 | Heavy snowfall. | Lose 1 Vitality per hour, 2 if not in winter gear. 6 Vitality damage causes 1 Wound of frostbite. Six "at once" resets each warm rest. |
| 5 | High winds. | Pass a risk test or lose 1d12 Vitality from a fall. |
| 6–7 | Murky. | Take 1 Vitality per hour of exposure if not in winter gear. |
| 8–11 | Clear. | |
| 12 | Brilliant sun. | Pass a risk test or go snowblind. |

# ENCOUNTERS

Every 6 hours or so (whether traveling or camped), call for the current leader to make a risk test (where Topsider or Delver apply). If they fail a risk test, they have an encounter.

Remember to give them options for parlay or retreat as much as possible. The appearance of potential foes should not always trigger bloodshed. Be open and flexible, and encourage players to be creative.

If you want an impressive battle at a set piece, you don't have to roll an encounter; you can choose to have one with a random force, or even choose to hit them with a particular monster. Adjust numbers and composition of war bands if you want to. These give you a place to start, and some inspiration.

- **1:** Minotaur. 1 per 3 characters.
- **2–3:** Ogre. 1 per 2 characters.
- **4–5**: Troll. 1 per 4 characters.
- **6–8:** Orcs, 3 orcs per character, 1 tough per character, 1 boss. (p. 19)
- **9–11:** Goblins, 5 goblins per character, 1 champion. (p.18)
- **12:** Wyrmling Dragon. (p. 20)

# IMPRESSIONS

If you want some ideas for "fleshing out" a bit of detail in the set pieces, here are some brief descriptions.

❋ **Bone Bulwark.** The stone was stained black by its builders centuries ago. Some flagstones on the bridge are marked with runes, and you know that under those stones are niches containing the bones of long-dead dwarven warriors. The broken stone of the rift lip stretches into blackness to either side. Below the bridge is only darkness. This side of the bridge is paved. The bridge is cold to the touch, and all around hangs a weird, dry smell. There are no guano or droppings. The bridge is over 100 feet long, its other side hidden in darkness.

❋ **Samach Gates.** Vast iron doors are crumpled and laying to the sides of the broken archway. The entry is over 60 feet tall and 30 feet across. Long ago, the doors were smashed open by dark magic. Only smears of soot and chipped stone remember the battle now. The apron of paved stone around the doorway is cracked and uneven now, with moss growing here and there. The paving begins a road that leads into the darkness of the massive corridor beyond the gate.

❋ **Crumbled Roadway.** This dark passage opens to the sky. At the entrance, the sturdy dwarven construction has been massively degraded, like something smote it with unreal force. The path here was once fifteen feet across, but a twenty foot long stretch was torn from the mountain. Only a few feet stick out from the sheer cliff side, hardly a ledge. It looks slippery, too.

❋ **Pit Entry.** Under the shelf of rock, the path widens to a paved plaza. In the center is a shaft, maybe thirty feet across, with no rail around it. The smooth sides of the pit bear no decoration or handhold. The sky is still visible from the edge of the plaza, but moving under the stone means moving closer to the pit, with only a fifteen foot ledge around each side. Murals on the wall seem to suggest this was once a display for a great treasure; whatever it may have been, it is gone now. Unbarred doors on the far side of the pit lead down into darkness.

❋ **The Garden of Lights.** The plants breathe out a glow, so delicate that it feels like imagination made visible. Grooves carved in the wall once carried water and nutrients to a careful garden. That was centuries ago; now the luminescent lichen and mosses have spread and mingled, their strange hues seeming to drink the darkness more than filling it with light. This was a place with galleries, benches, lookouts, and pools. Now it is overgrown and strange. Color swells and shifts through the acres of caves, stretching under the mountain. The road continues on the far side of this ancient garden.

❋ **Mazurin's Portal.** This area is cracked and shifted, the stairs uneven and the walls unsteady. Collapsed doorways yawn to the sides, only some rooms still useable. The face of the cliff was once a fortress, but it looks like the place suffered a furious dragon's attack; it is smashed and fissured now. The raked doorway opens up to crooked stairs, following the mountain road under the sky.

❋ **Hegarian's Tomb.** The road splits into two flights of stairs, around the base of a massive planter with the stump of a once-great tree in it. Beyond is a 30-foot-wide corridor, with two double doors. Above the doors looms a massive carving of a dwarf. The head was chipped off; it must have been ten feet across and ten feet tall, easily many tons. It is gone without a trace. The doors stand open to the plaza beyond.

❋ **The Dirge Rift.** The bridge is a massive staircase, rising fifty feet across a hundred and twenty foot arch. Iron and stone mingle in the bridge's modular construction, which sways slightly in the constant wind of the rift. Dwarven faces carved into the rails on either side of the ten foot wide bridge channel the wind, making a hollow groan that rises and falls with currents of air. Far above, a slit of light reveals the sky between two walls of rock. The far side of the bridge has white paint on the stone walls—the Pale, at last.

# FOLLOW UP ADVENTURES

Here are some further low-prep adventures for the new agents of the Firebrake clan. Take a primary goal and one or more complications for each expedition.

## PRIMARY GOALS (1D6)

1. **Hunting the Hunter.** A pack of ogres is lurking at the Marshwell Bottoms, where the trade road winds down to human territory. Take a donkey loaded with bags of animal blood, so the smell will attract the predators and you can slay them.

2. **Goblin Probe.** Goblins have sent a warband to occupy the tower on the shoulder of Sungreeter Rise. If they hold the position, a *lot* more goblins will come. Scour them out, and make sure some survivors can limp home with news of their failure.

3. **Fractured Solidarity.** Lord Gennet wants a delegation to come to a local event (like a summer fair, or his daughter's wedding, or his father's funeral) as a sign of the friendship between your people. However, he faces unrest at home. Rebels may try and recruit the dwarves to help overthrow Lord Gennet, or Lord Gennet may ask the dwarves to ride along to a skirmish on the border against Lady Alsar's troops as they try to claim the Skinbow Fields as part of their territory. Or Lord Gennet may be poisoned, and the dwarves are convenient suspects. Maybe all of these things.

4. **Confidential Courier.** Archon Grimbeel wants you to take a sealed message pouch to Archon Kayvin, of Clan Seargate, in the neighboring clanhome Smokestone. Generate a dwarven road and mount the expedition. A clan of harpies is determined that the message will not arrive, and will do everything they can (including manipulating other threats to help out) to stop the dwarven couriers.

5. **Defend the Lower Gate.** A warband of orcs has slipped through the territory and massed to assault the lower gate. They will attack in waves; stop them if you can. If you can't, fall back to the Upper Gate and defend that. If there is an opportunity, mount a sneak attack to assassinate the war leader Grable and his shaman, Dreadpowers. Then the orcs will fall back and fragment into factions, defusing the threat.

6. **Float Trip.** The river Stylure leads to an island that was once a burial ground for the archons of Tumbletop. It is time for the annual placement of marrow incense on the founding matriarch's tomb, but the Kelseverin tribe of elves has claimed the fishing rights to the river and gotten hostile towards anyone trying to travel on it. Use stealth, diplomacy, or force to get past them somehow. Their lead Hunter, Melviss, has other problems; a small family of trolls has moved into the river and is stealthily picking the elves off. Maybe the dwarves could sort that out and earn passage.

## COMPLICATIONS (1D6)

1. **Eager Young Utram.** Archon Grimbeel's son, Utram, is 35. He is still in his years of service to the clan, and he's eager to go on missions and try his mettle. He's assigned as an assistant to one of the dwarves; if he takes a Wound, that's −3 Ledger for everyone. If he is lost or killed, −10.

2. **A Terrible Storm.** Violent weather is going to make everything more difficult. Decide whether it is a blizzard, flooding, a drought leading to fires, or some other exciting condition.

3. **Missing Persons.** Either they are the second expedition sent when the first disappeared, or there is news of a missing dwarf or group of dwarves where they're going. See if they can figure out what happened, and if possible, rescue the dwarves or reunite them with the clan.

4. **Trigger the Trap.** Spies report that the mission is a trap, and an enemy of the clan is going to make a move against them. Figure out who the enemy agents are, and be ready for the inevitable trap.

5. **A Diplomatic Touch.** The archon wants the clan to have better relations with one of the factions involved in the mission, so keep a lookout on how to get them in the clan's debt through your service. Don't offend them, even if they are really asking for it.

6. **Snakebite.** A dapplersnake bites someone, either a character or an important ally. The herbs for the cure are well known in the region, but must be fresh picked from the bog to work. The poison kills at dawn, so depending on when the snake bites, they have a limited time to get the victim to the antidote in a nearby bog.

# CARDS

**P**rint out two copies of the role cards. (More than one character can have the same role.) When a group makes characters together, you may want to include only one "Leader" role.

## BERSERKER

**Vitality:** 22.              **Armor:** 1d6.
**Ranged:** 1d4.              **Melee:** 1d10.

¬ May use a defend action as a combat action.

¬ May spend 1 Vitality to do +5 damage after successfully hitting (before rolling damage). Only one may be spent per hit.

**COMBAT ROLE**

## LEADER

**Vitality:** 20.              **Armor:** 1d8.
**Ranged:** 1d8.              **Melee:** 1d8.

¬ Give any clan-mate ally that can see or hear you an extra action of any kind once a round.

¬ Only one Leader can use the special ability per combat group.

**COMBAT ROLE**

## MAULER

**Vitality:** 20.              **Armor:** 1d6.
**Ranged:** 1d6.              **Melee:** 1d10.

¬ May use one move action as a melee attack action each round.

¬ Once a round, take a free move or attack action after defeating a foe.

**COMBAT ROLE**

## SKIRMISHER

**Vitality:** 18.              **Armor:** 1d6.
**Ranged:** 1d8.              **Melee:** 1d8.

¬ Once a round, may give an extra attack action to an adjacent ally. This action must be used immediately.

¬ May disengage without spending a move action or getting hit while withdrawing.

**COMBAT ROLE**

## SUPPORT

**Vitality:** 18.              **Armor:** 1d6.
**Ranged:** 1d10.              **Melee:** 1d6.

¬ May use a defend action as a ranged attack.

¬ May count one reload action a round as a free action

**COMBAT ROLE**

## VANGUARD

**Vitality:** 22.              **Armor:** 1d10.
**Ranged:** 1d4.              **Melee:** 1d8.

¬ May use a move as a defend.

¬ Once a round, may give an extra defend to an adjacent ally.

**COMBAT ROLE**

## ADEPT

- Read dwarven magic.
- Sense magic energy.
- Resist magic.

**SERVICE SKILLS**

## ATHLETE

- Strength, agility, and stamina.
- Resisting fatigue and sleep.
- Know dwarven sports.

**SERVICE SKILLS**

## CAROUSER

- Holding your liquor.
- Enthusiasm and team spirit.
- Bolster Resolve.

**SERVICE SKILLS**

## CHOSEN

- Worship Gods of Ur.
- Sense magic energy.
- Weapons and armor of faith.
- Know *Neverecht*, the dwarven language of study

**SERVICE SKILLS**

## DELVER

- Know underground ecology.
- Awareness, tracking, and stealth.
- Foraging and shelter underground.
- Know 1 Language:
  1. *Oblinclack* (goblins)
  2. *Sizraeths* (spiders)
  3. *Guchour* (giants)
  4. *Issrasak* (reptilians)
  5. *Spyrak* (underdweller)
  6. *Fernisaal* (demons)

**SERVICE SKILLS**

## DIPLOMAT

- Charismatic and respectable.
- Lawyer and negotiator.
- Deception.

**SERVICE SKILLS**

## ENGINEER

- Knows secret architectural code.
- Siege engines and fortifications.
- Supervise crews of workers.

**SERVICE SKILLS**

## HEALER

- Diagnose illness.
- Know healing plants and animals.
- Know surgery.

**SERVICE SKILLS**

## MERCHANT

- Know the merchant trade.
- Appraise anything.
- Prepared to run a business.

## PERFORMER

- Know poetry and music.
- Shift mood with art.
- Interpret history.

## SCHOLAR

- Teacher, learner, mentor, and researcher.
- Language skills.
- Know *Neverecht*, the dwarven language of study

## TOPSIDER

- Know surface ecology.
- Awareness, tracking, and stealth.
- Foraging and shelter on the surface.
- Know 1 Language:
  1. *Oblinclack* (goblins)    2. *Vokk* (humans)
  3. *Guchour* (giants)    4. *Issrasak* (reptilians)
  5. *Sorzok* (fliers)    6. *Shann* (elves)

## ALCHEMIST

- Knows alchemic formulae.
- Identify and blend science and magic.
- Aware of elements and their uses.

## ARMORER

- Craft weapons and armor.
- Appraise weapons and armor.
- Know every part of armory process.

## BREWER

- Know how to make intoxicants.
- You have a signature drink.

## CHEF

- Know recipes, manners, and feasts.
- Choose the best ingredients.
- Direct assistants to make a feast.

## ENCHANTER

- Know 6 Foundation runes.
- Make an enchanted object in a month.
- Appraise and identify magic equipment.

**CRAFT SKILLS**

## FABRICATOR

- Materials that are not metal or stone.
- Appraisal and repair too.
- Choose 1:
  Carpentry.
  Leatherwork,
  Tailoring.
  Pottery.
  Glassblowing.
  Bookbinding.

**CRAFT SKILLS**

## FARMER

- Understand farming.
- Manage domestic animals.
- Evaluate farms.

**CRAFT SKILLS**

## GUNSMITH

- Make and use guns.
- Make gunpowder.
- Work with guns up to cannons.

**CRAFT SKILLS**

## JEWELER

- Make and repair jewelry.
- Appraise, cut, and set gems.

**CRAFT SKILLS**

## MASON

- Find, evaluate, quarry rock.
- Fitted stonework, building.
- Mortar and technique, scaffolding.

**CRAFT SKILLS**

## MECHANICIAN

- Work with gears and machines.
- Appraise, build, diagnose, and repair.
- Invent, build custom machines.

**CRAFT SKILLS**

## MINER

- Detect tunnel slope and stability.
- Survey for ore, plan a mine.
- Run a mine's workers and logistics.

**CRAFT SKILLS**

**SAYINGS**

Every great fire
frees seeds of new life.

**OF THE CODE**

**SAYINGS**

Greed starves the family.

**OF THE CODE**

**SAYINGS**

Stone outlasts life,
but words outlast stone.

**OF THE CODE**

**SAYINGS**

Your judgment is your truth —
to surrender it is to become a lie.

**OF THE CODE**

**SAYINGS**

You must not ever
be the highest authority in your life.

**OF THE CODE**

**SAYINGS**

Your soul is revealed
in your work.

**OF THE CODE**

**SAYINGS**

Pleasure in leisure
betrays a weak mind.

**OF THE CODE**

**SAYINGS**

Motives are scaffolding,
removed from the finished stone.

**OF THE CODE**

## SAYINGS

**The chisel reveals the stone's heart,
and discipline reveals a mortal's truth.**

### OF THE CODE

## SAYINGS

**A hasty tunnel
buries the foolish delver.**

### OF THE CODE

## SAYINGS

**Save the drowning child before
you punish the careless watcher.**

### OF THE CODE

## SAYINGS

**All certainty hosts some doubt,
and all doubt allows some certainty.**

### OF THE CODE

# MAKE SURE YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED

- ❋ Character record sheet on page 12.
- ❋ Introductory adventure on page 22.
- ❋ Combat role cards on page 26. *Make two copies!*
- ❋ Skill cards on pages 27–29.
- ❋ Guiding Saying cards on page 30–31.
- ❋ Character forging quick reference on page 32.

For dice, you need one each of d4, d6, d8, d10, d12 for each player.

# REFERENCE SHEET FOR CHARACTER FORGING

## CHARACTER FORGING STEPS

1. **Guiding Saying.** Which of the Sayings shapes your perspective?
2. **Combat Role.** Choose one of the six roles, showing your combat style.
3. **Skills.** Characters start with 2 skills, 1 for service and 1 for crafting.
4. **Name Weapon.** What is your identifying weapon like?
5. **Name and Description.** What are you called, and how do you appear?

### GUIDING SAYING

Like an astrological sign for your dwarf. Cards on page 30–31.

1. *Every great fire frees seeds of new life.*
2. *Greed starves the family.*
3. *Stone outlasts life, but words outlast stone.*
4. *Your judgment is your truth. To surrender it is to become a lie.*
5. *You must never be the highest authority in your life.*
6. *Your soul is revealed in your work.*
7. *Pleasure in leisure betrays a weak mind.*
8. *Motives are scaffolding, removed from the finished stone.*
9. *The chisel reveals the stone's heart, and discipline reveals a mortal's truth.*
10. *A hasty tunnel buries the foolish delver.*
11. *Save the drowning child before you punish the careless watcher.*
12. *All certainty hosts some doubt, and all doubt allows some certainty.*

### COMBAT ROLE

Players can choose or randomize a combat role.    Page 26.

**1–2: Berserker.** Vitality: 22. Armor: d6. Ranged: d4. Melee: d10.

* May use a defend action as a combat action.
* May spend 1 Vitality to do +5 damage after successfully hitting (before rolling damage). Only one may be spent per hit.

**3–4: Leader.** Vitality: 20. Armor: d8. Ranged: d8. Melee: d8.

* Give any clan-mate ally that can see or hear you an extra action of any kind once per round.
* *Only one Leader can use the special ability per combat group.*

**5–6: Mauler.** Vitality: 20. Armor: d6. Ranged: d6. Melee: d10.

* May use one move action as a melee attack action each round.
* Once per round, take a free move or attack action after defeating a foe.

**7–8: Skirmisher.** Vitality: 18. Armor: d6. Ranged: d8. Melee: d8.

* Once per round, may give an extra attack action to an adjacent ally. This action must be used immediately.
* May disengage without spending a move action or getting hit while withdrawing.

**9–10: Support.** Vitality: 18. Armor: d6. Ranged: d10. Melee: d6.

* May use a defend action as a ranged attack.
* May count one reload action per round as a free action.

**11–12: Vanguard.** Vitality: 22. Armor: d10. Ranged: 1d4. Melee: 1d8.

* May use a move action as a defend action.
* Once per round, may give an extra defend action to an adjacent ally.

### SERVICE SKILLS

Draw 2, keep 1. Can trade with other players.  Page 27–28.

1. **Adept.** Sensing, reading, and using magic.
2. **Athlete.** Physical strength, movement, and reflexes.
3. **Carouser.** Celebration, inspiration, and drinking.
4. **Chosen.** Serving the Gods, rituals, and blessings. (Speak Neverecht)
5. **Delver.** Underground tracking, stealth, and survival. (Gain a language, p. 27)
6. **Diplomat.** Social interaction, negotiation, and manners.
7. **Engineer.** Coded plans, directing work, and sieges.
8. **Healer.** Diagnosis, treatment, and surgery.
9. **Merchant.** Appraisal, haggling, and management.
10. **Performer.** Music, poetry, and racial memory.
11. **Scholar.** Teaching, studying, and researching. (Speak Neverecht)
12. **Topsider.** Surface tracking, stealth, and survival. (Gain a language, p. 28)

### CRAFT SKILLS

Draw 2, keep 1. Can trade with other players.  Page 28–29.

1. **Alchemist.** Make potions and use chemicals.
2. **Armorer.** Make weapons and armor.
3. **Brewer.** Make intoxicants.
4. **Chef.** Make food.
5. **Enchanter.** Put magic in objects.
6. **Fabricator.** Make things that are not stone or metal. *Specialties:* Carpentry, Leatherwork, Clothwork, Pottery, Glassblowing, or Bookbinding.
7. **Farmer.** Make food and meat.
8. **Gunsmith.** Make guns.
9. **Jeweler.** Make jewelry and cut gems.
10. **Mason.** Make stone buildings.
11. **Mechanician.** Make clockwork and machinery.
12. **Miner.** Extract and refine ore, make mines.

### EACH PLAYER CHOOSES ONE SKILL TO BE PRIMARY, AND ONE SKILL TO BE SECONDARY.

* Each character starts with 6 Resolve.
* Each player chooses a kind of weapon as a name weapon.
* Each player names and describes the character. *Age defaults between 50–300.* Optional: 1d6 x 50 years.

# BATTLE REFERENCE

## TURN ORDER

| | |
|---|---|
| **ALLIES PHASE** | Each character gets an attack, defend, and move action. |
| | Characters can act in any order to greatest advantage. |
| | Attacks hit if they roll equal to or higher than the target's Combat Rating. |
| | Defend actions reduce the target's attacks by 1 if they roll equal to or higher than the target's Combat Rating. |
| | Roll Melee or Ranged damage die. |
| | Rolling a 12 gains a critical hit or critical defend. Critical hit adds +1/2 damage die max; critical defend counts as a hit. |
| | Reduce target's armor rating from damage inflicted. |
| **ENEMIES PHASE** | Roll Behavior die (optional). |
| | All attacks that were not "defended" hit for fixed damage. Multiple attackers may add to the first attacker's damage. |
| | Targets roll armor ratings to reduce incoming damage. |

**Push Actions.** Defend actions that do not reduce attacks can move a target 10 feet, or 5 feet if the target is much bigger than the dwarf.

**Surprised Action.** If something unexpected happens during the enemies phase that directly affects a character, the player can spend 1 Resolve to get 1 action.

**Pick and Shield Assistants** (max 2) give up all actions to help someone else:

❋ Grant +1 untrained, +2 secondary, +3 primary for skill help

OR

❋ Grant +1 or grant a reroll, chose after rolling, keep new result. Applies to d12 combat, damage, or armor roll.

The assistant cannot use Resolve. The team moves no faster than the slowest member. When hit, everyone in the team rolls armor; the lowest roll applies to whoever takes damage (default being the one being assisted.)

**Assistants.** If acting independently, competent assistants are 1d4, veteran aids 1d6, expert aids 1d8 default for melee, range, and armor. Competent assistants get 1 action, veterans 2 actions, and experts 3 actions.

**Withdrawing from combat:** Characters can use a defend action before moving, or take a ½ damage hit from one foe. When foes flee, one character per melee automatically hits and rolls melee damage.

**Reloading** can take a defend, move, or melee action. Heavy crossbows require 2 reload actions. Throwing weapons are readied for free. *Most ranged weapons can be used as melee weapons.*

**Range:** Short range is about 30 feet. Long range is 90 feet. Extreme range is 120 feet. Spend 1 Resolve to shoot 1 range further than normal, no penalty.

**Player vs. Player:** Use the melee die code as the combat score. Defend actions remove combat, defend, or move actions from the other.

## INJURY

**Vitality.** When a character reaches 0 Vitality, the character falls unconscious.

❋ If the character has one or more Wounds, roll 1d12; if the roll is equal or less than number of Wounds, the character is incapacitated and unable to act until one Wound is healed.

**Wounds:** When a character loses 6 Vitality at once, the character takes 1 Wound. When wounded, d12 roll actions have an extra element of risk; fail, and lose 1 more Vitality. Expert bindings are primary, unskilled bindings are secondary, and no bindings are untrained. Failing a risk test unbinds Wounds 1 level.

**Healing:** Get 1 Vitality per 5 minutes of rest and lose 1 Wound per 12 hours of rest.

❋ The healing skill can reduce times to 2 Vitality in 5 minutes and 1 Wound per 6 hours.

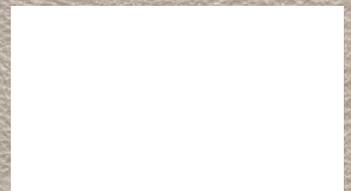❋ Every Wound reduces the character's maximum Vitality by 3 until healed.

PASS 5-12
3-4 NEUTRAL
1-2 FAIL
**PRIMARY SKILL**

PASS 6-12
4-5 NEUTRAL
1-3 FAIL
**SECONDARY SKILL**

Unskilled: 1–5 Fail, 8–12 Succeed