# AJ's AD&D 2e House Rules

Dungeon Masters often weave their own house rules into game play. Unlike almost every other board game, the Dungeon Master's guide actually *encourages* the DM to tweak, change, add, remove, bypass, or ignore any and every rule in the book they feel has a good reason to be modified. This is the genius behind D&D. It is not restricted by traditional board-game limitations.

Here lies my AD&D 2e House Rules. Everything here is open for consideration, discussion, and modification (take what you like, ignore what you don't!). Many of these rules I've pulled from various corners of the internet—Reddit, forums, YouTube. Some of these rules are brutal. However, other parts are pretty forgiving (like the boost for Humans, gaining hit points, etc). See AD&D 2e Optional Rules article for suggestions on which optional rules I use.

- [Addendum: Rules Clarifications](#)
- [Accounting](#)
- [Alignment](#)
- [Ammunition Recovery](#)
- [Armor Class & THACO](#)
- [Character Creation & Leveling](#)
- [Combat](#)
- [Crits](#)
- [Death](#)
- [Encumbrance](#)
- [Experience](#)
- [Infravision](#)
- [Initiative](#)
- [Level Caps](#)
- [Lockpicking](#)
- [Proficiencies](#)
- [Time](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Weapons](#)

## Addendum: Rules Clarifications

A few rules in AD&D 2e are not explicitly called out.

## Sneaking

All characters can attempt to sneak regardless of whether they have the Move Silent*ly* skill or not. Success or failure is determined by the listening enemy's noise detection chance and/or surprise roll (determined by the DM, see Listening *DMG* 175 and Surprise *DMG* 139). A character with the Move Silently skill who announces they are attempting to do so gets a check *before* the enemy's noise detection chance and upon success negates the enemy's opportunity to try to detect noise.

## Proficiencies

A character with a proficiency typically requires no check when performing a task they are proficient in. For example, a weaponsmith does not need to make any checks to forge a sword. They receive an automatic success—they are proficient in this skill and have performed the task dozens or hundreds of times.

Any character can *attempt* any task, even if they do not have the relevant proficiency. For example, a character without the weaponsmithing proficiency can try to forge a sword, but must make the relevant check for the proficiency with any penalties as determined by the DM.

A character with a proficiency who attempts a very difficult task, for example forging a sword of extremely fine quality (a sword with +1 to attack or damage), must make a check with any penalties or bonuses as determined by the DM.

## Reactions

NPC reactions can be determined by the DM rolling 2d10 for a random reaction (if necessary) to a friendly or unfriendly encounter (*DMG* 140). The player character's Charisma Reaction Adjustment is *subtracted* from the roll, for example if the character has a Charisma of 16 for a +5 reaction adjustment, subtract 5 from the roll (see *Complete Wizard's Handbook* 34).

# Accounting

The following should be accounted for during play:

- Encumbrance, determined by max item carry, see [Encumbrance](#)
- Ammunition, see [Ammunition Recovery](#)
- Food/Rations (in days per person)

# Alignment

There is no alignment. Play your character as you see fit. Paladins do not lose Paladin abilities if their alignment changes. Evil Paladins are allowed (adjust abilities as necessary).

# Ammunition Recovery

After firing a bow or crossbow, or throwing a weapon, decrement your ammo count. When fleeing a battle, or otherwise leaving without searching for fired ammunition, all ammo or thrown weapons are lost (unless the area is returned to at a later time).

## Arrow & Bolt Recovery

Roll a d4:

| Roll | Result |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | All ammo is lost or broken. A quarter of the arrowheads, round up, can be found but bolts are unusable. |
| 2 | Two thirds, round up, of ammo is found. Half of the found arrows are broken (bolts are not broken). |
| 3 | Two thirds, round up, of ammo is found, unbroken. |
| 4 | All ammo is recovered and reusable. |

## Thrown Weapons Recovery

All thrown weapons can be recovered unbroken once combat is over and the area is searched.

# Armor Class & THAC0

AC starts at 10 and increments up rather than down. Armor still gives the same bonus, but it is now added rather than subtracted. Attack rolls have an attack bonus equal to 20 minus the character's THAC0.

# Character Creation & Leveling

- Stats: 4d6 discard the lowest die, arrange the stats in any order. Undesirable stat sets can be completely discarded and re-rolled (players can't select previously rolled stat sets), up to a reasonable maximum number of times (2 to 4 times).

- Maximum hit points on first level.

- Players may choose their character's starting age (within allowed ranges) including the ability score modifications granted for age.

- Humans receive two "Racial Ability Adjustment" points. Add +2 to any one ability score or +1 to any two ability scores. STR, WIS, CHR cannot exceed 18, CON, DEX, and INT cannot exceed 19, as per the limits defined by the Racial Ability Adjustments (*PHP* 27). Additionally, Humans gain a +10% XP bonus in addition to any class based prime requisite XP bonus.

- Wizards (Mages, Illusionists, Specialists) receive 6 HP on first level, and then roll the standard d4 for HPs on subsequent levels.

- Wizards and Priests receive one extra first level spell slot on their first 3 levels. This remains at 3 slots when reaching 4th level and spell progression proceeds as normal.

| Caster Level | 1st Level Spell Slots |
|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 3 |

- Thieves and Bards receive additional skills points (see below).

- Basic starting clothing, a backpack, and 2 pouches are free.

- When leveling up, roll new hit dice twice and use the higher roll.

## Thieving Skills

At first level Thieves receive 80 skill points to distribute amongst their thieving skills instead of 60, however still no more than 30 points may be assigned to a single skill.

## Bard Abilities

At first level Bards receive 30 skill points to distribute amongst their bard abilities instead of 20.

# Combat

## Movement In Combat

You can move full movement in a melee round, or if you attack or cast a spell you can move half your movement in that melee round.

## Packs

Characters cannot efficiently engage in combat while carrying a large backpack (such as a bedroll, blankets, cooking equipment, food, etc) or other heavy load. During initiative, after any surprise rounds, characters can slip off their packs while drawing their weapons. When fleeing from battle, characters must use an action to pick and shoulder their packs or abandon them. While carrying a pack characters have a –1 penalty to AC and a –1 to attack rolls.

## Encumbrance In Combat

Paraphrased from Skills & Powers 124: Encumbrance affects how well a character can fight. Moderately encumbered characters suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls. Heavily encumbered characters suffer a –2 attack penalty, and their Armor Class suffers a –1 penalty. If the character is severely encumbered, he suffers a –4 penalty to all attacks and a –3 penalty to his Armor Class.

# Crits

## Critical Hits

When an attack roll for a ranged or melee weapon results in a natural 20, roll a d6:

| Roll | Result |
|------|--------|
| 1 | Defender is disarmed in addition to taking damage. If the enemy is not wielding a weapon, they are partially crippled. |
| 2 | Defender takes a hit to the face and is blinded for 1d4 rounds in addition to taking damage. |
| 3 | Defender is knocked prone, in addition to taking damage, until they can stand up on their following turn (see Combat & Tactics p. 30). |
| 4 | Defender is knocked off balance, in addition to taking damage. Until their following turn, all hits against them receive a +2 damage bonus. |
| 5 | Defender takes double damage, roll damage dice twice, then apply any damage bonuses. |
| 6 | Defender takes triple damage, roll damage dice three times, then apply any damage bonuses. |

## Critical Misses

When an attack role for a ranged or melee weapon results in a natural 1, roll a d6:

| Roll | Result |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | The attacker is disarmed by a parry or deflection and the weapon is dropped. |
| 2 | The attacker trips and is prone until they can stand up on their following turn (see Combat & Tactics p. 30). |
| 3 | The attacker's weapon slips and is thrown 1d20 feet away. |
| 4 | The attacker's weapon cracks but is still usable. The weapon breaks on an attack roll of 1, 2, or 20. |
| 5 | The attacker's weapon breaks in two pieces. The weapon can be reforged or repaired. |
| 6 | The attacker's weapon shatters into 3d4 pieces. The weapon cannot be reforged or repaired except by a master artisan (weaponsmith, bowyer, etc). |

## Spell Chaos

Magic is mysterious and dangerous. Casting a spell—drawing on arcane pools of energy or accessing spiritual forces—can fail or result in unexpected consequences, some may amplify the spell and be beneficial, while some may be detrimental to the caster and their party. This rule is inspired by spell casting in Dungeon Crawl Classics and is designed to increase strategic consideration of both combat and utility magic. While a wizard can cast Light anytime, it might just blow up in their face, so maybe bringing some of those torches into the dungeon isn't such a bad idea after all.

When casting any spell, roll a spell check on a d20. Like with an ability check, the caster must roll equal to or below their spell casting attribute (WIS for Priests, Paladins, and Rangers, INT for Wizards and Bards), otherwise the spell fizzles, however the spell slot is not used.

### On a roll of 1

On a roll of 1, a critical success, roll a d6 and consult the following table:

| Roll | Result |
|------|--------|
| 1 | The spell is cast successfully but no spell slot is spent. |
| 2 | The spell is cast successfully, no spell slot is spent, and a single depleted spell slot of the caster's choosing is regained. |
| 3 | The caster grows in size as they channel magic, roll a d4 and increase the character's height by the result in inches. |
| 4 | The caster channels excess magic into an item on their person which stores a copy of the spell. The power in the item can be tapped by a caster with the appropriate knowledge (wizard, illusionist, cleric, specialist, etc), as an action at a later time, at which point the power is depleted from the item. This does not require a spell slot to be spent by the caster. |
| 5 | The spell's effect is amplified. Spell attacks do double damage (roll damage dice twice), area effect is doubled, number of targets is doubled, duration is doubled, etc. |
| 6 | The spell's effect is extremely amplified. Spell attacks do triple damage (roll damage dice three times), area effect is tripled, number of targets is tripled, duration is tripled, etc. |

## On a roll of 20

On a roll of 20, a critical failure, roll a d8 and consult the following table:

| Roll | Result |
|------|--------|
| 1 | The spell fizzles in a puff of smoke and has no effect. The spell slot is spent. |
| 2 | The spell fizzles in a cloud of sparks and has no effect, but the energy is retained. The spell slot is unused. |
| 3 | The spell backfires, causing the caster's skin to change to a subtle tint of a random color, roll a d6: red, purple, blue, green yellow, orange. |
| 4 | The spell backfires, causing the caster to take 1d4 damage per spell level on a failed save vs spell. All of the caster's hair falls out with a 50% chance to start growing back at |

| | |
|---|---|
| | the start of each month. |
| 5 | The spell is delayed, and is instead cast on the character's next turn. If the character takes damage before casting the spell, it fizzles and the spell slot is spent. |
| 6 | A rogue blast of energy shoots out from the caster in all directions, causing 1d6 damage per spell level to each creature within 5 feet, multiplied by the spell's level, on a failed save vs spell. The blast is of a random type, roll a d4: fire, lightning, necrotic, divine. |
| 7 | The caster shrinks in size as they attempt channel magic, roll a d4 and decrease the character's height by the result in inches. |
| 8 | The spell goes haywire and the target is randomized. Determine the number of possible targets and roll a die accordingly. |

## Death

Upon reaching 0 hit points the character falls unconscious and bleeds out in 1d6 rounds. The number of rounds is rolled in an opaque cup and upended in the middle of the table, no one knows the result until someone arrives to stabilize or heal them at which point the cup is lifted to find out if the character is still alive.

## Encumbrance

Characters can carry a number of items equal to their STR + CON. Clothing, a backpack, and pouches do not count as items towards encumbrance. The level of encumbrance increased at each increment of 5 items over a character's max carry limit.

- Treasure: 100 pieces of coin equal 1 item
- Rations: 1 day of rations equals 1 item
- Small items (arrowheads, caltrops, etc.) are counted as 1 item per bag

## Experience

Experience is awarded in the following, distributed both during play or at the end of an adventure as noted. Once enough experience to reach the next level is reached, that character will advance to the next level once they have at least 24 hours of down time to study their craft.

- **Having fun**. Each player who has fun, gets involved, contributes to the story, helps or encourages their fellow players, and does not get hung up on rules will receive 100 or 200 XP at the end of each session. That's right, you get a reward for simply showing up and having fun!

- **Treasure**. 1 experience point is awarded for each gold piece acquired. Any non-coin treasure (gems, artifacts, art objects, etc) is awarded as experience once it is sold or traded based on the value the item is appraised at. Treasure amounts are recorded during play and awarded at the end of each session. Treasure XP is divided evenly among all player characters whether present for a session or not.

- **Problem solving**. Brilliant ideas, clever solutions, and heroic acts may be awarded during game play in an amount of 50, 100, or 200 XP (or even 500 XP if the idea saves the party), as determined by the DM.

- **Good role-playing**. During play the DM should note any time a player makes a decision or sacrifice in the spirit of roleplaying. For example, a noble warrior or cleric is offered gold by poor townsfolk for their heroic deeds, but instead of taking the money (which would benefit themselves), they deny it, playing into their character's nobleness. Or for example, a character uses cunning to talk the group out of what looks to be a difficult battle, avoiding conflict and possible death. A reward of 100 XP is granted to each player who achieves this each session.

- **Combat**. XP is awarded for combat based on monster XP as soon as an encounter ends and is divided evenly among all members who are present for the session. Treasure is rolled immediately after, assuming the characters have time to search the monsters and/or lair.

- **Completing personal goals**. Each player should have one or more reasonable short to medium term goals for their character. Agree on these goals with your DM and establish new goals as needed. For example, a character with the bowyer/fletcher may have a goal of crafting the finest quality longbow (not an easy feat even for the proficient), or a priest may have a goal of establishing a strine to their deity in the town square, or a wizard may work tirelessly researching a spell. A reward of 200 XP is granted to each player who achieves a personal goal.

- **Competing party/story goals**. Party/story goals typically manifest as an adventure or quest—slay the dragon, retrieve the artifact, protect the town, etc.—and should be predetermined and agreed on by the players and the DM. Typically these types of goals will require at least a few sessions to complete. Party/story goals are often upwards of 500 to 1000 at low levels and multi-thousands at higher levels. Each character receives the total XP amount whether they are present for the final session or not.

- **Survival**. In some cases the party/story goal might not be immediately completed—for example the characters infiltrate an orc base in an attempt to defeat their leader but things go south and the group barely makes it out alive. In this case an XP award  simply

for surviving may be grated, in an amount as determined by the DM. Each character present receives the total XP amount if they were present in any of the sessions which resulted in the survival of the party.

# Infravision

Infravision is qualified as low light vision. It requires some small amount of light (stars, candles, bioluminescent moss, etc.) to function. Infravision is useless in pitch black.

# Initiative

To determine which side goes first at the start of combat, a player is selected to roll initiative for the party and the DM rolls for the enemy, the side with the lowest roll goes first. Player turn order starts from the DM's left and then proceeds around the table clockwise. Weapon speed modifiers are not used. Subsequent combat rounds proceed in the same order (initiative is not rolled again).

# Level Caps

There are no level caps for specific race/class combinations.

# Lockpicking

Lockpicking can only succeed by a character with the Lockpicking thieving skill. Lockpicking chance is adjusted based on lock quality (*DMG* 54). Lockpicking can be attempted multiple times, however on failure lockpicks have a 75% chance of breaking minus 5% per character level. The 1st attempt to pick a lock takes 1 round, the 2nd attempt takes an hour, and all subsequent attempts take an entire waking day.

# Proficiencies

Additional language slots (determined by the character's INT) can be used for additional weapon and nonweapon proficiencies and nonweapon proficiency slots can be used for additional languages. Putting an additional slot into a nonweapon proficiency grants a +2 bonus to the proficiency check instead of +1.

### Requirements

- Wizards must take the Reading/Writing proficiency in at least one language.
- The Forgery proficiency requires a character to be able to read and write in the language they are forging.
- Weaponsmithing costs 2 nonweapon proficiency slots instead of 3.
- Armorer costs 1 nonweapon proficiency slot instead of 2.
- Each extra slot spent on a proficiency adds +2 to that skill, instead of +1.

- Ambidexterity can be purchased for 1 weapon or nonweapon slot by Warriors and Rogues. Rangers automatically gain the ambidexterity proficiency.

## Prerequisites

- To take Weaponsmithing the Blacksmithing proficiency is required.
- To take Armorer the Blacksmithing proficiency is required.
- To take Seamanship the Rope Use proficiency is required.
- To take Forgery the Reading/Writing proficiency is required. If the character is a Rogue taking Forgery, the Reading/Writing proficiency can be acquired for a single nonweapon proficiency slot.

## Training For New Proficiencies

Acquisition of new weapon and nonweapon proficiencies requires training with an expert for a duration determined by the DM.

New characters may decide to leave some of their initial proficiency and/or language slots available to fill later—for example if they find a magical weapon which they are not yet proficient in and want to start using it, or they meet a new culture and want to learn their native language.

# Time

Year, date, and season will be recorded and tracked by the DM. This section dips slightly into world building but provides a structure for the calendar. Time passes in each year of 360 days as follows:

| Day | Season |
|---|---|
| 1 to 90 | Spring |
| 91 to 180 | Summer |
| 181 to 270 | Fall |
| 271 to 360 | Winter |

The moon waxes and wanes with each month as follows:

| Day | Phase |
|---|---|
| 1 | Full moon |
| 8 | ¾ moon |

| 15 | ½ moon |
|----|--------|
| 23 | No moon |

## Travel

Long distance movement is measured in hexes. Each hex is approximately 6 miles. A normal day's travel consists of about 8 to 10 hours of hiking or riding—a few hours of which will be spent resting and scouting—at a base rate of about 2 mph. The number of hexes which can be traversed in a day can be calculated with the following tables.

| Terrain | Time per hex |
|---------|--------------|
| Plains, farmlands, or desert | 3 hours (3 per day) |
| Hills, swamps, ice, or forests | 4 ½ hours (2 per day) |
| Mountains | 8 hours (1 per day) |

| Modifiers | Time adjustment |
|-----------|-----------------|
| Forced march (see *DMG* 158) | – 1 hour per hex |
| Established road or trail | – 1/2 hour per hex |
| Mounted | – 1/2 hour per hex (varies, see *DMG* 164) |
| Heavy rain or moderate snow | + 1 hour per hex |
| Darkness | + 2 hours per hex |

## Weapons

Weapon damage from Player's Option: Combat & Tactics is used, specifically the increases to crossbow bolt damage.