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A GAME OF FANTASY AWESOMENESS

January 2011
Basic Game v1.1
by Kirin Robinson
with thanks to Scott Moore and others
based on a game by Eric Provost
www.oldschoolhack.net

acknowledgments

The majority of this game is based on Eric Provost's excellent **Red Box Hack**, in his attempts to capture what he considered the best parts of the original Red Box version of Gygax's game and take it in a new direction. Without Eric's innovative work, and the generosity with which he released his game for anyone to tweak and play with, this "hack" of his hack would not exist.

Encouragement and support was also given to me by the fine folks at both the Story-Games forum and the Circvs Maximvs

forum. Thanks of course to my own excellent group of gaming buddies and to my older brother without whom I never would have gotten into tabletop gaming in the first place.

Lastly I hardly need mention the wonderful legacy of table-top roleplaying gaming that Gary Gygax and his friends and fellow authors have left us with, without whom none of these adventures would be possible.

Rest in peace, dear friend.

license

Old School Hack is a free, non-commercial roleplaying game, which you should feel free to expand upon by writing your own content or supplements.



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Introduction & Setup

The pedigree of this particular roleplaying game should be pretty obvious, as it's certainly not lonely in the particular niche it's hoping to fill. Nonetheless, I think it's safe to call Old School Hack a *re-imagining* of the original fantasy roleplaying game by Gary Gygax; aimed squarely at capturing the spirit and the feel of his game but with a new ruleset that takes advantage of more recent gaming ideas.

I've worked hard to make this game as approachable and as intuitive and easy-to-understand as possible (though basic knowledge of roleplaying principles are assumed), and I'm pleased to say that it's withstood the rigors of a considerable amount of playtesting to find the right balance of mechanics, flavor, and narrative

abstraction that encourages entertaining and adventurous roleplaying.

You should recruit somewhere between two to seven other people to play it with, with one of you designated as a DM (which stands for, well... you know); probably being you, since you're the sort that actually takes the time to read a game introduction.

Old School Hack should be played adaptively and off-the-cuff, with an eye to letting each character shine in his or her particular way, and with a love for the wonderfully fantastic locales, environments, and dungeons inspired by the decades of creative fantasy gaming adventures that have been released and the great adventures that originate from our imaginations.

stuff you'll need

A BUNCH OF DICE

The game uses mostly **d10s** and **d12s**. Some of the d10s should be cooler-looking than the others (for face dice).

A POINT-FILLED BOWL

You can use poker chips, beans, coins, whatever's handy. The bowl should be reachable by everyone.

VARIOUS PRINT-OUTS

At least one of each of the seven **Class Sheets**, **Character Sheets** for everyone, and maybe an extra **Weapons & Arenas Sheet** and an **Armor & Healing Sheet**.

CHARACTER & BAD GUY TOKENS

Something to represent the good guys and the bad guys, there's a sheet in the supplementals section. A one-inch hole punch from a craft store plus some washers work great.

SETS OF COMBAT CARDS

One set per player & DM. Note that each set comes with a handy card dispenser which also includes some useful character info.

COMBAT HEX TRACKER

– and/or –

You'll need an extra set of the **Character & Bad Guy Tokens** for placing on the tracker each round.

how far can we go with this?

This document represents hopefully the first in a tiered collection of games: this being the **Basic Game**, representing the careers and character options a party would have for the first four levels of play. Once you and your group have accomplished that, the next tier of the game (tentatively called the **Heroic Game**) will take you into the fifth through eighth levels of your character, and the one after that (tentatively called the **Mythic Game**) will take you into the ninth through twelfth levels.

Each graduation into the next game will give your character more hit points and access to a new assortment of talents and class options, while also giving the DM more and more tools for broadening the world and the plots that he or she has in play.



the setting

The game starts out in a magic-infused medieval fantasy world on the edge of civilization, this “edge” perhaps being geographical (occurring in the borderlands or a wild frontier) or historical (either chronologically taking place after some sort of cataclysm or during the decline of a great empire); it is a world where fantastic dangers exist in a multitude of old ruins and underground lairs.

There is always some sort of evil plot afoot, a darkness that is unfolding in sinister

places, and it is always up to the players to uncover it and defeat it; whether in the pursuit of justice, glory, or their own lusts for power.

If over multiple sessions of play the game progresses beyond the initial adventuring implied by these rules, more and more of the world may get explored, and the characters could end up traveling through other worlds or even weirder places as they adventure for fame and glory.

Creating your Character

HOW TO MAKE AN OLD-SCHOOL HACK (and SLASHER)

1st Every player picks one of the seven **Class Sheets**. Once you've picked a class, that class belongs to you, and no one else can play it, so don't be a dick about it. Look over your class sheet and read as much of it as you can, paying special attention to your class **Inherent** and **Limitation*** as well as what Talents the class offers.

2nd Grab a **Character Sheet** and begin rolling your Attributes. Roll **2d10** and consult the Attribute Bonus Chart (there's one on your Class Sheet as well), and then assign the bonus (-2 to +5) to one of the six attributes you feel is appropriate. Do this five more times. Don't worry too much about having the right "Key Stat" for your class, the system doesn't care too much about such things.

3rd Fill in the **Class & Concept** on your sheet with something cool, like the named level of your chosen class, but add a little extra flair: "*Eagerly Curious Prestidigitator*" or "*Skulking Little Bastard*" are some examples. If you can come up with something you like, name your character at this point.

4th Pick a single **Talent** from your class sheet, whatever you think sounds like the most fun. Can't pick just one? Don't worry, you get to pick a new one every level.

Oh yeah, this is kind of important - Talents come in three flavors:

constant talents

These talents are either always on or can be used as many times as you want.

arena talents

Once *successfully* used in combat, these talents can't be used again until you move to a new Arena.

However, spending an **Awesome Point** lets you use a spent Arena Talent *again* even though you're still in the same Arena.

rested talents

These talents can only be used *once a day*, or at least until you get a meal and some decent rest.

If you spend *two Awesome Points* and roleplay a little explanation how, you can usually recharge a spent Rested Talent outside of combat unless your DM has a good reason why you can't.

* **Limitations**, by the way, are *purely optional* suggestions on how to roleplay the class you've chosen. Feel free to ignore, change, or put your own spin on them.

ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5



Sample file

You may have also noticed that some Talents (like most spells) are also marked as **Focused Talents** - this means that using them in a combat round requires you to be vulnerable for a short while before they take effect.



5th Take a look at the **Weapon & Arenas** sheet and pick what category your starting weapon is - your weapon can be anything from a *Shortsword* to a *Magic Wand* to a *Keg of Ale* as long as you pick a weapon category that makes sense for it. Write it down and note what arena it has a bonus in. Note the **Encumbrance Rules** if you want a *Heavy* or *Very Heavy* weapon!

6th Keeping the (simple) Encumbrance Rules in mind, pick a type of armor from the **Armor & Healing** sheet. Magic Users can wear armor but they may want those free Awesome Points that you get after fighting armorless in order to recharge their Talent Spells.

7th Note the starting equipment for your class (on your class sheet), and roll your starting coin and write it in your **Coin Purse** box. If you're playing the Goblin, check the other players' class sheet equipment lists and claim stuff like they have.

8th Come up with an **Adventuring Goal** and write it on your class sheet! It should be something fun that fits your concept and is (relatively) achievable with a little bit of hard work and luck.

some adventuring goals

CHOOSE, ROLL or COME UP WITH YOUR OWN

- 1 A cleric has divined the whereabouts of a rare cure for an ailing family member.
- 2 You're after the bandit that killed one of your parents.
- 3 An ancestor forged a mighty weapon but it has since been stolen and lost.
- 4 You owe a dangerous underworld lord 5 thousand gold pieces.
- 5 You will collect something from every foe you've defeated.
- 6 You're obsessed with finding a strange and fantastical place that most people assume is just myth.
- 7 A dangerous person in power must be stopped, and you're the one to do it.
- 8 An old lover or friend has gone missing or is involved in something dangerous.
- 9 An assassin is after you and you don't know why.
- 10 You must prove and test yourself in danger to join the guild/circle/school you desperately want to be a part of.
- 11 You were mentioned in a portentous prophecy.
- 12 One of these days you're going to spit in a dragon's eye!

The Fighter

The Fighter is a bad-ass warrior who's good at surviving when the chips are down.

inherent: Steely-eyed

You're good at hitting things. Every roll you make to hit something gets a +1 added to it.

limitation: Upkeep

Staying in combat trim requires constant focus, practice and precision, as well as lots of weapon sharpening and armor polishing.

A lot of your free time is mostly spent either practicing or working on your equipment.

ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

starting equipment

A bedroll, a leather flask of wine, a sack filled with dried rations and hardcheese, some flint & tinder, three torches, a whetstone, a sewing kit, some candles and a crowbar.

STARTING COIN: 1d10 gp, 1d12 sp

available talents

(pick one at first level)

ARMOR OF SCARS *constant ability*

Getting beat up as often as you do has its advantages. You're tougher than most, and can take more punishment because of it. You start off with seven hit points instead of the usual five. Plus you've usually got some old war stories and a don't-mess-with-me countenance that gives you a +2 on any *Charm* check when trying to talk someone out of violence.

WEAPON OF CHOICE *constant ability*

You've become adeptly familiar with a specific weapon of your choice, and you use it as a natural extension of your body. As long as you are wielding it, all your attack dice are **Face Dice**. If for whatever reason you take up a new weapon, a week of training will switch your **Weapon of Choice** to that one.

CHARGER *double action, usable once per arena*

You're an expert at rushing in to attack. Once for every arena, you can make both a **Move** action and an **Attack** action in the same round, with a +2 bonus to the attack.

HEFT *constant ability*

You've got a little bit more oomph than everyone else. You can carry one more **Heavy** weapon or armor than your *Brawn* bonus would allow, and when you choose to wear no armor at all, your sexy build gives you a +2 bonus on any *Charm* check you make against someone that might be attracted to you.

EXPLOIT WEAKNESS *focused attack, usable after rested*

Practice in fighting means you have a trained eye for an Achilles' Heel. Every couple of fights you can carefully observe that a monster or an opponent has a weakness, and if you are able to successfully **Focus** on it, subsequent attacks you make against it get a +2 bonus to hit and do an extra point of damage.

adventuring goals

experience

Awesome Points Used

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1st ☒ Man-at-arms

2nd ☐ Mercenary

3rd ☐ Warrior

4th ☐ Hero



game notes



focused

constant

per arena

rested

The Magic User

The Magic User has studied the inner workings of the magical forces that permeate the world, and has some control over them.

inherent: Veil Touch

You see the mystical forces at work, where other users of magic have left their mark, or their spells are in effect or were within the last day or two. Not only that, you can leave your magical mark on any wall or object, visible only to people whom you feel would need to see it.

limit: Power Hungry

You wouldn't have the knowledge you have if you weren't ruthlessly passionate about being able to control stuff. Someday time and space will change at your whim, and who knows how that will affect you.

ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

starting equipment


A cloak warm enough to sleep in, a waterskin, some dried food, a small knife, a few pouches of exotic and weird components, a scrollcase filled with parchments and pens, a small bound book for notes, and some flashpowder for impressing people.

STARTING COIN: 2d10 gp


available talents

(pick one at first level)


BOOK OF POWER *magic item, usable anytime out of combat*

 You have acquired a magical tome, perhaps found, stolen, or given to you, in which hold a great many secrets, spells and lore. By spending a couple of minutes looking things up, you always know a single important fact about any given subject, either given to you by the DM or made up on the spot (per DM approval).


SLEEP SPELL *focused spell, usable once after rested*

 Your character can make his or her voice take on a particularly somber and restful tone. Doing so, you can make two **per arena** or any number of **Minions** in your arena that can hear you fall asleep by making a successful *Charm* test vs. their *Commitment(s)*. They'll sleep through any noise, but a good shake or swift kick is all it takes to wake them.


PUPPET STRINGS *focused spell, usable only once per arena*

 By waving your staff, implementing your fingers about, you can make one to three small and light **animate** things begin to float about nearby. They will even dance if you play a tune. If you successfully cast the spell in combat, it increases your armor by one category as if you had a reach weapon until you take damage from a successful attack.

CONTROL PORTAL *focused spell, usable anytime*

 You have the ability to speak to doors of any type. You can make any door unlock itself with a successful *Charm* check, tell you what has gone through it recently, or you can tell a single door to bar itself against any entry, your *Commitment* against the *Brawn* test of anything trying to open it. You can only affect one door at a time in this way.

MAGIC MISSILE *focused spell, usable once after rested*

 This spell shoots out a magical bolt that automatically hits anything in your arena or an adjacent one, doing 2 points of damage, no need to roll. By taking a hit point of damage yourself, you can increase the damage to 3 points.

adventuring goals



experience

Awesome Points Used

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1st ☒

Prestidigitator

2nd ☐

Conjurer

3rd ☐

Theurgist





4th ☐

Magician



game notes



focused 
constant 
per arena 
rested 

The Cleric

A holy warrior or fighting monk, the Cleric's faith inspires righteous acts, salves the wounded, and rallies companions.

inherent: Divine Favor

You are under the wing of one or more deities, and have their protection. As long as you visibly wear representation of your faith, your **Armor Class** increases by a single point.

limitation: Humility

You are bound by the strictures of your faith, whatever they may be. It is important to you to present the ideals of that faith to others.

ATTRIBUTE BONUS CHART (roll 2d10)

5 or lower	-2
6 to 8	-1
9 to 11	0
12 or 13	+1
14 or 15	+2
16 or 17	+3
18 or 19	+4
20	+5

starting equipment



A bedroll, some holy vestments, a symbol of your faith, bread, cheese and a small bottle of wine, an ornate box filled with incenses or other ritual items, soap and some bandages.

STARTING COIN: 1d10 gp, 1d12 sp


available talents

(pick one at first level)


PRAYERS OF THE HURT *focused spell, usable only once after rested*

-  This spell invokes your deity to close wounds and restore health and energy. By laying your hands on someone who is down to 2 hit points or less, which could be yourself, you bring them back up to 1 hit point less than full in a quick ritual that lights up the area around you.
-  **AURAS OF EVIL** *constant ability*


AURAS OF EVIL *constant ability*

-  Above and beyond simple malevolence in someone's heart, some places, things and people in the world reek of true evil, whether they are touched by fell gods or by demonic taint. You can sense the kind of greater evil by merely taking a moment and focusing, and by taking the time to make an actual *Awareness* check you may be able to discern the source or nature of the evil if it is disguised.


BLESS WEAPON *focused spell, usable once per arena*

-  You can clutch a weapon and imbue it with divine essence at the cost of a little bit of your health. When touching a weapon, you must declare a purpose for its blessing, whether for something quick or for a long-term goal. Any weapon thus touched does an extra point of damage each time a successful attack is made with it, but your character is permanently down a hit point. Once the purpose is reached or is declared unobtainable, the weapon loses its property and you get your hit point back.

TURN UNDEAD *focused spell, usable only once after rested*

-  By invoking your god and displaying your holy symbol, you acquire a holy or unholy aura around you and those nearby. Any non-**Minion** undead must test their *Daring* against your *Commitment* (at a +2) to be able to attack anyone in your party, while **Minions** can't attack you at all. If you remain undamaged for three rounds of concentrating, you can disperse the aura outward, either destroying (holy) or controlling (unholy) any one undead or group of minions in the same arena.

WORK THE ROOM *non-combat talent, usable only once after rested*

-  By making an impassioned speech that lasts at least five minutes, you can inspire people around you (giving them +2 to their *daring* or +1 to their attacks) for the next hour, or convince people of your point of view (+5 to your next *Charm* check if needed).

adventuring goals



experience

Awesome Points Used

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Party levels up when everyone has spent 12 awesome points

1st ☒ Acolyte




2nd ☐ Faith Keeper

3rd ☐ Adept

4th ☐ Priest



game notes

- focused 
- constant 
- per arena 
- rested 