

Steel Dragons' Guide to

Fighters

*Subclasses and additional character options.
"Old School" sensibilities for "New school" systems.*



*A supplement for Players & Dungeon Masters of
the 5th edition of the world's first role-playing game.*

The Fighter

Warriors of the world fill roles in nearly all cultures. The diversity of concepts filled by the Fighter class can barely be scratched within the finite limitations of game mechanics and class structure.

The features of the base class remain unchanged. Following are just a few more options, more or less specific in their flavor and implementation than the subclasses to be found in the 5th Edition's Player's Handbook. The archetypes presented herein are untested and completely optional to a DM's discretion as to how (or if) they fit into a given game setting.

Martial Archetypes

The Cavalier

The Cavalier is the best there is at what they do, fight while mounted (typically a horse, but other land-based animals and eventually flying or underwater mounts are also possible). Traditionally viewed as the mounted knight-in-shining-armor with their lance or spear, a cavalier could easily



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be represented as expert lightly-armored archers (such as the Mongols or Persians were reputed to be), chainmail-clad stag-riding elf knights, jungle-tribal-gnomes who bond with local panthers or wolves, and many more mounted warriors, real or imagined. The only necessity of the cavalier's concept is they have a mount and prefer to be/excel atop them. Typically possessed of a forceful presence and charisma, as useful in training their animal ally as mastering their fellow men, cavaliers are often welcomed protectors of their communities and valued advisors (if not leaders) to their militias or armed forces.

3rd: Strength of Character

The Cavalier gains proficiency with Charisma ability rolls and saving throws. For ability rolls that would normally use Constitution, the cavalier can use their Charisma score/modifier instead if it is higher.

Allies within 20' radius who can see the cavalier add the cavalier's Cha. modifier to a save roll of the cavalier's choice. The area is extended to a 50' radius when the cavalier is atop their mount. The cavalier must complete a long or short rest before they may lend their Strength of Character to allies again.

Mounted Expert

At 3rd level you gain a Medium (for Small PCs) or Large (for Medium PCs) land-based animal companion of CR 1/2 or less that accompanies you on your adventures as loyal mount. The mount may possess an enlightened intelligence or simply exceptional training, but they obey verbal and tactile commands (such as leg pressure), as best it can within its natural ability. The mount is an NPC that takes its turn on your initiative and can attack independently of the cavalier, except as noted below. The cavalier's bond with and special training of the mount provides them with the following mutual benefits:

- **Expert Trainer:** You add your proficiency bonus to the animal's AC, attack rolls and damage rolls, as well as to any saving throws or skills in which it is proficient.
- **Tough Creature:** Its HP maximum equals normal maximum or 4 times your fighter level, whichever is higher
- **Quick Mount:** You may mount or dismount with fluid ease. You can mount your chosen creature with only 5' movement (instead of using 1/2 your full movement as the normal rules) and you do not suffer the *prone* condition if you fall from your mount.
- **Ride as One:** Your mount moves its full movement rate with up to double encumbrance. Neither you nor your mount suffer a first level of exhaustion for distance, dif-

difficult terrain or other environmental conditions travelled until they have gone double the normal time for exhaustion to accrue. Following the first, exhaustion levels accrue normally.

- **Valorous Charge:** Given 20' or more to charge your enemies, you and your mount attack as one (in a single action). Both you and your mount add your Charisma modifier to attack and damage rolls. The *Valorous Charge* can only be used for one attack of the fighter's turn. i.e. A 5th level fighter with 2 attacks can use their second attack against a target within reach after the *Valorous Charge*, but the mount's attack for the turn has been used, unless the creature possesses the *multiattack* feature.

At 9th level, the cavalier can bond to two mounts of a quality that grant the above benefits. At 16th the cavalier can have three chosen mounts.

When a new mount is possible or if a mount is lost for any reason, the cavalier requires a minimum of 1 month of downtime to train and bond with a new mount well-enough to receive the above benefits.

7th: Issue Challenge: On your turn, you issue a challenge to melee or mounted combat to a creature within 50' that can see and hear you. This distance is extended to 100' if you are mounted. Whether the target understands your language or not (your body language, tone and forceful presence are all very clear), the cavalier can add their Cha. modifier to their attack rolls against the "challenged" target. The cavalier may only have one such creature challenged at a time. The challenge is ended when either party reaches 0 HP, surrenders or the cavalier does not use their action to attack. Once ended, the target is immune to challenges from the cavalier for the next 24 hours. The cavalier can issue challenges equal to once plus Cha. modifier times before needing a long or short rest.

10th: Mounted Superiority: You can bond to mounts that are one size category larger than you previously could and mounts may be of any CR. You can bond to mounts that have a flight or swim speed. The cavalier and mount now gain the following additional traits:

- **Shared Respite:** When you spend HD on a short or long rest to regain HP, your expert tending can transfer up to half your rolled HP to heal your mount. Also, when using the fighter's *Second Wind* feature, your mount receives the same benefit.
- **Extra Attacks:** Your mount can make extra attacks, using your Extra Attacks, instead of yourself.
- **Applied Expertise:** You gain the benefits of *Mounted Expert* traits when riding any creature of the same kind as your bounded mount.

15th: Unflappable: You gain immunity from the *frightened* condition. You add your Charisma modifier to all save rolls against magics or effects that aim to charm, confuse or otherwise alter the cavalier's mind or emotions.

18th: Last Stand

At 18th level, during a "challenge" combat, a blow that would reduce you to 0 or less HP takes you to 1 HP instead. This includes dying from taking massive damage, but not effects that kill without dealing damage, such as the *Power Word Kill* spell. For each time you take damage that Last Stand keeps you conscious, you gain a level of exhaustion. If you die from accrued exhaustion, you die as normal. If your challenged enemy dies or falls unconscious, or you end a round without having attacked your challenged enemy, this effect ends and you begin to die as normal.

The Dwarven Defender

The elite fighters of the dwarven clan-holds are the Dwarven Defenders. They are exceptional warriors of incredible durability and strength, capable of holding a line firm against waves of goblinoids and giantkin that assault their mountain strongholds or subterranean homes.

Prerequisite: The PC that chooses this martial archetype must be a dwarf (either subrace).



3rd: Defender Stance

At 3rd level you learn a variety of stances that grant you power in battle. They are the hallmark of the Dwarven Defender's fighting style. The Defender can initiate a Stance as a bonus action. Once begun, a Stance can be maintained for 1 minute as long as the dwarf does not move. The dwarf may end the stance at any time they wish. The defender uses Defender Stance a number of times equal to their level + Constitution modifier before requiring a long rest.

- **Mountain's Durability:** You gain advantage to Constitution rolls. Also, you can add your Constitution modifier to your AC.
- **Immovable Object:** You can not be moved from your location or suffer the *prone* condition unless first *restrained* or *incapacitated*.
- **Unstoppable Force:** Add your level + Constitution modifier as temporary HP until the stance is ended.
- **Strength of the Clan:** You gain advantage on Strength rolls. Also, you add your proficiency bonus to damage rolls with melee weapon attacks.
- **Against the Rocks:** For save rolls that would normally use Dexterity, the Defender can use their Constitution modifier with the roll instead of Dexterity.

At 9th level, the defender can have two stances in effect at once (requiring 2 bonus actions, as normal, on two different turns). At 16th the defender can use three stances (invoking each as an action or bonus action on successive turns, as normal) at once.



Trap Sense

You have advantage to Perception and Investigation rolls to detect stonework traps. You have advantage to save rolls to avoid damage caused by traps.

7th: Damage Reduction: The defender can shirk off some damage from most melee blows. As a reaction, when you take damage, you can "spend" a HD [d10] while in battle and reduce the damage of the attack by your roll. This may be done once + Con. modifier times before requiring a short or long rest. At 14th level, this increases to 2 + Con. mod. times. At 19th level, 3 + Con. mod. times.

If the roll exceeds the damage dealt, the leftover is discarded, i.e. You can not replace HP with a HD used for *Damage Reduction*, only lessen (or cancel out) damage taken.

10th: Pivoting Stance: You may move up to 5' on your turn and maintain the benefit of your Defender Stance(s) in effect.

15th: Magic Resistance: You have resistance to *damage* caused by magic spells and effects. Spells or magical effects that bypass HP damage, such as *Charm Person* or *Power Word Kill*, are not impeded by this ability.

18th: Mobile Stance: You may move up to half your normal movement rate and maintain the benefit of your Defender Stance(s) in effect.

The Hero of Destiny

The Hero may be chosen by the stars, born of a god, foretold in ancient prophesy...or merely the guy in the right place at the right time to pull that sword from the stone, slay the dragon or save the princess/day/world. From King Arthur to Beowulf, William Wallace to the classic heroes and demigods of myth: Heracles, Gilgamesh, Semiramis, Odysseus, et al. Driven by lust for glory, secret grief, famed destiny or doomed fate, the Hero rises in power and reputation until their purpose is revealed and, with some luck, fulfilled.

3rd: Luck of the Destined

When you roll a 1 on an attack roll or an ability check or saving throw for an ability with which you have proficiency (Str. or Con.), you can reroll the die. You must use the second roll.

Finger of Fate

At 3rd level, you gain the following benefits:

- **Fate's Favor:** You choose a damage type from the following list. You have resistance to damage of this type. Choose from *slashing*, *piercing*, *bludgeoning*, *fire*, *cold*, *lightning*, *thunder*, *psychic*. If saving throws are permitted for an attack dealing this damage type, you roll with advantage.
- **Stalwart Heart:** You may experience fear, but do not suffer damage or forced movement due to being frightened.
- **Fortune's Fitness:** You may become ill or suffer damage from sickness, but you can not be killed from damage or effects of mundane disease.
- **Fated Flaw:** You must choose a condition for which you always roll with *disadvantage*: poisoned, stunned, incapacitated, restrained, blinded, deafened, charmed, or grappled.

At 9th level, you choose another Favor and another Flaw. At 16th the hero adds a third Favor and gain full immunity to disease.

7th: Legendary Feats: You add 2 to an ability score of your choice. Your maximum score for the ability you apply this point to can rise to a maximum of 20.

Once + the ability mod. times between long rests, when you make an ability check or saving throw with this ability or any other ability with which you have proficiency you add double your bonus to the roll.

10th: Hero's Renown: Your name and [at least a few] deeds live in infamy. You are revered (or feared) enough throughout the land that you can expect hospitality for yourself and up to 8 companions. You will receive room and board from any noble house in which you let yourself be known. If recognized or announced in non-noble surroundings (such as a typical inn), the Hero can expect to receive accommodations 1 lifestyle category better than they request or pay for.

15th: Mythic Resilience

At 15th level, any damage type for which you have Fate's Favor becomes full immunity.

18th: The Legend Lives On: You begin to age more slowly than other's of your race with a vitality intact. For every 10 years that pass, you seem to age only 1. You suffer no frailty from aging and can not be aged magically.



The Warrior Woman

The Warrior Woman is a fighter archetype of deep mythic and historic roots. In cultures and myths the world (and worlds of fantasy) over, female warriors, soliders, leaders, even pirates, have strode alongside, if not surpassed, their male counterparts and contemporaries. Whether from some all-female society, secretive sisterhood, or special "ladies only" training, the warrior woman is truly a force to be feared and reckoned with on the battlefield. The Amazons of Scythia, valiant Germanic shield-maidens, stalwart leaders like Boudicca and Hangaku Gozen, and dreaded foes like Teuta of Illyria and Ching Shih are all evocative bases for this subclass. Even the mythic and magical, as the Norse Valkyrie or folkloric Swan Maidens are formidable combatants suitable for characters based on this archetype.

Prerequisite: The PC that chooses this martial archetype must be a female of a playable race.

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3rd: Societal Fighting Style: At 3rd level you choose one melee weapon and one ranged weapon, as the weapons with which you were trained and specialized. You receive +1 to hit and +1 damage when using either of these weapons. You may choose additional weapons, melee or ranged, and apply this bonus to them, one at 9th and one, again, at 16th level.

Agile Defense

Wearing light or no armor, your AC = 10 + Dexterity mod. + Constitution modifier. Additionally, in medium armors (where Dexterity modifier is limited to +2), you may use your Dex. mod up to +3. In heavy armors that are made for females of your race, you may add your Dexterity [maximum +2] to AC.

7th: Improved Critical: Your weapon attacks deal a Critical Hit at 19 & 20, as the 3rd level Champion Fighter feature.

10th: Uncanny Dodge: Use your reaction to halve damage from an attack you can see, as the 5th level Rogue feature.

15th: Unbelievable Strikes: At 15th level, whether by divine grace, uncanny luck, internal will, or sheer external force, your weapon and unarmed attacks ignore resistance or immunity to non-magical weapon attacks to deal damage as normal.

18th: Societal Weapon Mastery: Your to hit and damage bonus with the weapons from your Societal Fighting Style increase to +3.

The Warlord

Whether leading organized troops, mauling bandits or just among adventuring companions, the warlord is an imposing commander and formidable presence on the field of battle. With their knowledge of combat techniques and tactics, maneuvers and strategy, those who follow the warlord's direction greatly enhance their chances for success in combat. Sometimes leading from the vanguard, sometimes from the rear, sometimes advising other leaders behind the scenes, the warlord's practical know-how is as important to their success, if not moreso, as the strength of their sword.

3rd: Stalwart Commander

At 3rd level you have a variety of commands that you can use in battle. When the warlord uses their action to take the Help action, instead of its normal use, the warlord can choose to assist their allies in one of the following ways:

- **Reassuring Presence:** You grant advantage to a save roll to allies within a 10' radius who can see you.
- **Coordinate Retreat:** You grant a bonus action for all allies within 10' to take the Disengage action.
- **Spur to Action:** You grant advantage on the next initiative roll of an ally that can see and hear you.
- **Coordinate Offense:** You grant advantage to an ally within 10' who can see and hear you on their next Attack roll.
- **Move!:** You push allies to action. Allies within a 10' radius who can see and hear the warlord are permitted an additional 10' of movement on the Warlord's turn, if they so choose, even if they have already taken their movement for the turn.

At 9th level, the warlord command radius extends to 20'.

Inspiring Word

As a bonus action, the warlord lets themselves or an ally within a 20' radius who can see and hear them use one of their HD to refresh hit points during combat. The warlord can also use Inspiring Word to grant 1 extra HD for up to 1 + Cha. modifier allies on a short rest. The warlord may use Inspiring Word 1 + Cha. modifier times before needing a short or long rest.

At 9th level, the warlord can effect themselves and one other ally within range at the same time. At 16th the warlord can effect themselves and two allies within range with a single Inspiring Word.

7th: Into the Ground: As a bonus action following a successful melee weapon attack, you force the target not more than 1 size category larger than the warlord to make a Strength save to beat DC 8 + proficiency bonus + Str. modifier. Failure means you have successfully imposed the prone condition on the target.

10th: Lead by Example: When you make a successful weapon attack that deals maximum damage or brings a foe to 0 or less hit points, all allies who can see you roll their next attack roll with advantage.

15th: Inspiring Presence: When you use your Inspiring Word to spend HD during a battle, it now effects all allies within a 50' radius who can see and hear you. You must complete a long rest before using this feature again.

18th: Devastating Offensive

At 18th level, all attacks made by yourself and allies within 50' who are aware of your presence add your Cha. modifier to damage rolls.

Optional Feat:

In lieu of a full subclass for one type of fighter only, the Warlord archetype can be implemented, for any fighter or any other character (if the DM wishes), as a Feat.

Marshall

Prerequisite: Charisma 13 or higher.

- You know the *Commander's Strike* and *Rally* maneuvers from the Battlemaster archetype. You gain 2 d8's of "superiority dice" to use before requiring a long or short rest. You regain all used dice after a rest. *If you already possess superiority dice*, you gain another 1 die and a maneuver of your choice instead of the above.
- With your knowledge of the battlefield and vocal instruction, you can use a bonus action to grant an ally within 20' radius who can see and hear you the Disengage or Dash actions. The ally can take this action even if they have already used their bonus action. You may use this strategic movement Cha. mod times before requiring a long or short rest.
- As a bonus action, you can assert your presence on the field of battle has a calming and bolstering effect on your allies. All allies within 20' radius who can see or hear you gain advantage on a save roll they must make before the end of your next turn.



The Weaponmaster

Submitted as a replacement for (or in addition to) the existing "Champion" subclass, the Weaponmaster is the closest thing to a "default" fighter. This most broadly generic subclass is a specialist warrior with their chosen weapons, Whether exceeding through intensive training, pure talent, sheer luck, or any combination of the three, the weaponmaster fighter "masters" the battlefield through their effectiveness and oneness with the weapons at the end of the their arm(s).

3rd: Weapon Specialty: At 3rd level you choose a group of weapons (typically that synergizes with your chosen Fighting Style) with which you excell. The possible groups are:

- **Swordsman:** any size or type of sword, scimitars, rapiers, etc...
- **Axeman:** Hand axes, battle axes, glaives, and other predominantly slashing damage weapons.
- **Spearman:** spears, javelins, halberds and other polearms, predominantly piercing weapons.
- **Bludgeoner:** maces, hammers, staves, morningstars, and other predominantly bludgeoning weapons.

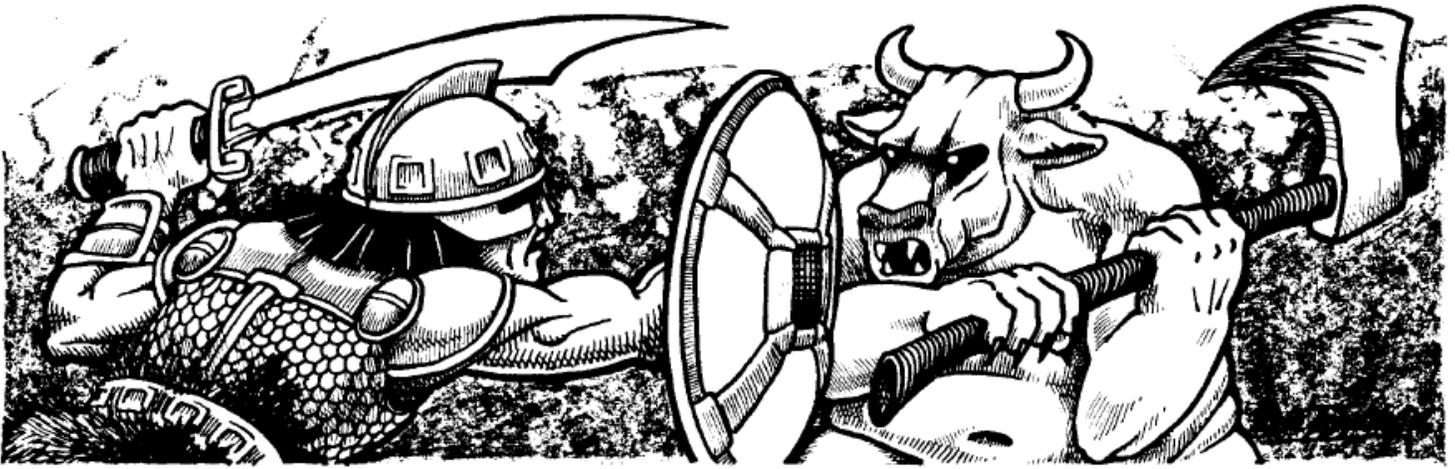
- **Grenadier:** daggers, darts, slings, and other small easily thrown objects (stones, plates, etc...).
- **Bowman:** choose between pulled bows or crossbows.

You know how to use your weaponry (or pieces thereof) to deal any style of damage you might need. The Weaponmaster ignores resistances or immunities to bludgeoning, slashing or piercing damage. Immunities to conditional damage types function as normal, e.g. if a weapon must be silvered, adamantine, magical, etc..., those conditions still apply to protect from weapon damage.

Your attacks with any weapon of your specialty type is considered a Critical Hit on an unmodified roll of 19 or 20.

Parry

In lieu of an attack on your turn, you may use your action to use your weapon to parry incoming attacks. This grants the fighter a +2 bonus to their AC until the beginning of their next turn. If the fighter is wearing no or light armor or is using a single-handed weapon and shield, the parry bonus to



AC is increased to +3. At 9th level, the AC bonus increases to +3 and +4, respectively.

7th: Mastery Strikes: You choose 2 of the following special strikes. The player must declare their intention to use of one of these maneuvers prior to their roll.

- **Versatile Strike:** When using a single-handed martial weapon of your speciality that does not normally have the *Versatile* descriptor, you may now use it as a versatile weapon. Doing so requires the use of both hands, as normal. You also suffer no penalty from using a single-handed weapon with the versatile property as an off-hand weapon/attack.
- **Artful Strike:** When using a martial weapon that does not normally have the *Finesse* descriptor, you may opt to use your Dexterity bonus on your attack and damage rolls instead of Strength.
- **Thrown Strike:** Your knowledge and balance with your weapons of choice grant them the *Thrown* descriptor. If they already possess the thrown property (like hand axes or spears), you add 20' to the weapon's thrown range. If the weapon does not already possess the thrown property, you may make a thrown attack with it, adding Str. to hit and damage, without penalty, and it now has a maximum thrown range of 20'.
- **Called Strike:** You take careful aim to strike where and how hard you want. On a successful attack, the fighter hits where they want and the player can determine damage, up to half the normal damage of the attack (+ applicable modifiers) without rolling any dice.
- **Subduing Strike:** You roll your attacks and damage as normal, but any damage dealt is non-lethal, "subdual" damage that does no permanent or significant harm to the target. A creature reduced to "0" hit points with subdual damage must surrender to the fighter or is knocked unconscious. All subdual damage is regained, without spending HD, on a short rest.

The fighter can use their special strikes 1 + Str. modifier times before requiring a short or long rest.

10th: Combat Superiority: You gain an additional Fighting Style and select an additional weapon group with which you gain the benefits of *Weapon Speciality*.

15th: True Master: You gain proficiency with the Smith or Woodworker's (for bowyer/fletchers, spear makers, etc...) Artisan tools, if you do not already possess them. You may repair and craft weapons of your weapon speciality type that are of surpassing quality and value. With 1 month of downtime and requisite material costs, you may craft 1 weapon or 15 pieces of ammunition (such as arrows) created by you are of a quality to be considered +1, bypass mundane weapon resistances or immunities, and will fetch double their normal cost for their beauty and craftsmanship from an interested buyer/market. Also, weapons that are already +1 quality or higher can be improved by an additional +1 with one month of downtime for you to repair/rework with your own hand.

At 17th level you may create 1 weapon per year of +2 quality. At 19th level, *and only once in your lifetime*, the Weaponmaster may create a single weapon of +3 ability and may include the magical ability(-ties) of a rare or very rare magical weapon. The details, costs, and special materials that may be needed/quested after for crafting such a special item are left to the DM's discretion and imagination.

18th: Enhanced Mastery: You choose another Mastery Strike and may use all of your strikes 3 + Str. mod. times [total, not each] before needing a short rest.

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