

Attack/Defence Variant

Attacks and defences without ability scores

Background

The purpose of this house rule is to improve the customizability and freedom of the character creation process by reducing the degree to which ability scores affect combat. Most RAW builds require an 18 in their primary ability score to be optimal. Two other ability scores are often maximized to increase non-AC defences (NADs). This leaves very little room for customization. Ability score arrays that maximize three scores and minimize three scores are the norm.

18 15 14 11 10 8

Essentially, a major component of the character creation process is determined by your class, and players who want to try something different are punished by the system.

Another option is to simply allow level to determine your attack bonus. Ability scores can be removed from the picture without upsetting balance. Primary ability scores still determine your damage, so there is still incentive to invest in them, but 18s are no longer required.

For those concerned with realism and flavour, imagine a fighter relying on swordplay and footwork rather than strength to land a hit, a rogue who tricks opponents with guile to find an opening, or a wizard with exceptional aim rather than genius level intelligence.

Similarly, we can stop applying ability scores to defences, ridding the system of the tendency for each ability score category to contain one very high score and one very low score.

The main advantage is to open up many more build options for players using the same classes. A fighter could be free to build a swashbuckler type character with a Str of 14 and a Dex of 18. Another player could play a sly rogue with 14 Dex and 18 Cha.

This also allows players greater freedom in choosing their race. A dwarf fighter with only 16 Str no longer suffers from a career long attack bonus penalty. Sub-optimal race/class combinations are more accessible, without completely removing their advantages.

Implementing this house rule will allow you to remove ability scores from attacks/defences without upsetting the balance of your game. The following rules apply only to player characters (or NPCs built as though they were PCs).

House Rules

Apply the following changes to the standard D&D 4e rules.

1:

Ability score modifiers no longer apply to attack powers, AC, or non-AC defences. Situational ability score modifiers such as that granted by a Warlords tactical presence still apply.

2:

Armour now provides the following defence bonuses. Masterwork armour no longer exists.

Cloth: +2

Leather: +4

Hide: +5

Chain: +6

Scale: +7

Plate: +8

3:

You have an **agility bonus**.

If any of your class's key abilities are Dex or Int, your agility bonus is +1. If your primary defence is Ref, your agility bonus is +2 instead.

If you have a class feature or feat that allows you to apply another of your key abilities to AC in light armour, your agility bonus is +1. If the defence associated with that ability score is your primary defence, you have a +2 agility bonus instead.

When wearing light armour, apply your agility bonus to AC. Any factor that would normally prevent you from adding a Dex/Int modifier to AC also prevents you from adding your agility bonus to AC.

Record your agility bonus. It will generally remain static throughout your career.

4:

You have a **racial defence bonus**. You gain a +1 bonus to each NAD associated with an ability score boosted by your race. Apply this bonus to each defence no more than once. Add this to the racial bonuses you would normally gain to defences. The total is your racial defence bonus.

For example, Elves gain +1 to Ref and Will. Eladrin gain +1 to Ref in addition to the +1 racial bonus normally gained to Will. Humans gain +1 to the defence associated with whichever ability score they boost in addition to their +1 racial bonus to all NADs.

You have a **class defence bonus**. This is the 'bonus to defence' entry in your class description.

5:

You have a **primary defence bonus**. Choose an NAD associated with one of your key abilities. This becomes your primary defence. You gain a +2 bonus to your primary defence.

6:

Sum your **racial defence bonus**, **class defence bonus**, and **primary defence bonus**. This is your **initial NAD bonus**. Record your **initial NAD bonus**. It will generally remain static throughout your career.

7:

Apply the following bonuses to attacks, AC, and NADs at the given level. These bonuses replace the +½ level bonus normally applied to these numbers. Expertise feats, paragon defences and robust defences cannot be taken. This is your **level bonus**.

Modifiers			
Level	Attacks	NADs	AC
1	4	2	0
2	5	3	1
3	5	3	1
4	6	4	2
5	7	5	2
6	8	6	3
7	8	6	3
8	10	8	5
9	10	8	5
10	11	9	6
11	11	9	6
12	12	10	7
13	12	10	7
14	14	12	9
15	15	13	10

Modifiers			
Level	Attacks	NADs	AC
16	16	14	11
17	16	14	11
18	17	15	12
19	17	15	12
20	18	16	13
21	19	17	14
22	20	18	15
23	20	18	15
24	21	19	16
25	22	20	17
26	23	21	18
27	23	21	18
28	25	23	20
29	25	23	20
30	26	24	21

Implementation

These rules can seem difficult to apply using the DDI character builder. The following tips will simplify things. Characters built this way can actually be just as easily

Continue to build characters in DDI:

Although attack and defence values will be incorrect, most things on the character sheet will remain accurate. Powers descriptions and damage bonuses will still be correct. Skills will still be correct.

Calculate your defences manually at each level

- For AC add: Level bonus, agility bonus, armour, shield, enhancement
- For NADs add: Level bonus, initial NAD bonus, enhancement
- Add defence values to 10 to determine your defences

Calculate your attack bonuses manually at each level:

- For each weapon/implement add: Level bonus, proficiency, enhancement, class features
- Record your attack bonus for each weapon and implement

A worked example:

Redgar is a 9th level human (+1 NADs) fighter (+2 Fort). His ability score bonus is Str (+1 Fort). His primary defence is Ref (+2 Ref). His initial NAD bonuses are 4/3/1. He is a great weapon fighter. He is equipped in +2 Scale Armour and a +2 neck slot item.

For his attack value, he records +10.

For the fullsword he adds +10 level bonus, +3 proficiency, +3 enhancement, and +1 class. He records +17 (10 + 3 + 3 + 1) for the fullsword.

For the longbow he adds +10 level bonus, +2 enhancement, and +2 proficiency. He records +14 (10 + 2 + 2 + 1) for the longbow.

For his NADs he adds +8 level bonus, +2 from enhancement, and +4/3/1 initial NAD bonus. His total NADs bonuses are +14/13/11. His NADs are 24/23/21

For his AC he adds +5 level, +7 armour, and +2 enhancement. His total AC bonus is 14 (5+7+2). He records 24 for his AC.

Behind the scenes

All attacks/defences gain + 1 every even level

Bonuses to attacks:

I apply +4 to attacks initially to set players on par with RAW

I apply +1 to attacks at levels 5/15/25 to make up for the expertise feat tax

I apply +1 to attacks at levels 8/14/21/28 to scale with ability score increases

Bonuses to defences

I apply +2 to NADs at level 1

I apply +1 to NADs at levels 5/15/25 to make up for the defence feat tax

I apply +1 to NADs at levels 8/14/21/28 to scale with ability score increases

I do not apply any bonus to AC at level 1

I apply +1 to AC at levels 8/14/21/28 to scale with ability scores

I apply +1 to AC at levels 15/25 to replace masterwork armour

Explanations:

Attack bonuses seem self explanatory.

I give players +2 to all NADs at level 1, another +2 from their race, and another +2 to their 'primary defence'. This is a total of +10 before class bonuses. RAW optimized characters usually have about +9. This system allows characters to have some range in their NADs from the first level (ex 6/2/3 for a dwarf fighter who chooses Str for a primary defence) or they can have more consistent defences (4/4/3 if that fighter chooses Ref for a primary defence).

My defences do not diverge with level, unlike defences under RAW. Since 4e makes a '+1' to an attack or defence equally valuable at any level, it makes sense that scores should not diverge.

Heavy armour scales as quickly as light armour now, since the masterwork armour improvement is even for and ability score scaling improves both armour types.

Results:

Over 30 levels attacks and NADs scale by 22, and AC scales by 21. With enhancement bonuses, attacks and NADs scale by 28, and AC scales by 27.

Nice side effects:

This works as a math patch in place of expertise and paragon/epic defence feats.

NADs no longer diverge at high levels.

AC scales much more smoothly between heavy and light armour.