

First, a philosophical introduction that aims to answer the question of why I made these changes. I despise giving ability scores to characters. At best the numbers define what their character is capable of, only to be ignored by the skill check system, and at worst the numbers define what their character COULD BE, in any given situation, for the rest of the game. On top of that, Ability Scores in 5e (and in any other game that relies on the 6 “core” scores,) rely on mechanics that are vague and ambiguous. (Vague means that the definition of the word is unclear, and ambiguous means that the word could also be used interchangeably with another word in certain circumstances.) The result is that the Ability Scores are simply meaningless numbers that offer no real benefit to the player in most circumstances, except to provide a starting place for SKILLS, which are actually useful. I will dig even deeper.

Charisma has no place in a game that requires social interaction between human beings. The argument that Charisma is an ability score that benefits players with low IRL Charisma is bad. A player does not need help with their charismatic character, they just need to be charismatic to the best of their ability. I once ran a game for someone who I would say had an IRL charisma score of 6. His sentences were usually less than 5 words, and would say things that nobody else was tracking with. He would laugh at the wrong time, and interrupt others without knowing that he was doing anything wrong. He was uncharismatic. In response to that, I did not make him roll Charisma checks to see “what his character actually says,” or “how it is perceived by the others,” I let him play his character to the best of his ability. You say, but that’s not fun! Well, we’ve been playing for 2 years now. It’s his favorite character he ever made. I think we’re having fun. Players do not need help playing their characters, they need FREEDOM to make their characters do and say what they want them to. Charisma takes away from that by giving the players an

“out,” which takes away from roleplay and hurts the game. I vote to remove Charisma from the game entirely.

Intelligence and Wisdom has no place in the game. I’m not interested in making an argument about fruit salad or street smarts, I can settle this topic by asking the following questions:

1. If a character has high Intelligence and low Wisdom, can you (the DM) consistently tell the difference between possible actions? Can the player? If the answer to either is no, then the distinction has no place in the game. If the answer to both is yes, go to Q2.
2. Do you require the player to perform the action that you decided is reasonable, and NOT what the player initially wanted to do? If the answer is no, then the distinction has no place in the game. If the answer is yes, then you are not playing D&D correctly.

At first there would seem a good counterargument. Take for example the classic low Int Barbarian, intent on raging and decapitating all who stand in her path. Her player’s decisions are quite simple “I want to act dumb most of the time.” But what of the 20 Int wizard with 10 in Wis? You can’t say that he’s bad at social interaction if you accept Charisma as an ability. And you can’t say that he can’t come up with ideas inside his head and act super smart. Will you impose some sort of requirement on the PLAYER to make it harder for him to carry out his plans, since it moves from theory to practice, therefore drawing some sort of distinction between his high Intelligence and decent Wisdom? I can tell you right now, every player ever will not appreciate that decision. Requiring players to behave in a certain way based on their stats is wrong. The low intelligence barbarian acts dumb because she WANTS to. The intelligent wizard does not WANT to have difficulties implementing an incredibly thorough and well thought out plan, he just wants to do it.

Even in real life the distinction between wisdom and intelligence is not so clear. It is often said that an older person is wiser, though not necessarily intelligent. If you define Wisdom simply as aging then yes, an aged person is wiser. The problem is, I would not say that a person who is 50 and only knows how to build houses is “wise.” They are simply good at being a house builder. Wisdom is not something solely gained through experience. Philosophy literally means the “love of wisdom,” and is a study mostly contained within long and drawn-out books. Have you ever read Aristotle or Plato’s writings about Socrates? These were no doubt wise men, and clearly intelligent. The distinction is less clear in real life than some claim it is. Intelligence and wisdom both in game and IRL are simply ambiguous, and not a basis for any strong argument. I vote we simply do away with them all together in every TTRPG.

So at this point we have the following abilities: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, and probably a 4th one that has to deal with the mind. 4 stats that seem to cover all the possibilities of a character, right? Well, no. If you were to look at Mamdouh Elssbiay, aka Big Ramy, what would you say his IRL Strength score is? The question seems absurd, does it not? Big Ramy does not have a number that defines his strength, his strength simply is what it is. And yet he is plainly stronger than I am. The need to have a number that defines what a character in a TTRPG is capable of is quite obvious. How can strong characters be different than weak ones without a strength score? The difference is found not in their abilities, but in their skills. A skill defines what a character is good at, whereas an ability defines a characteristic of that character. Big Ramy is more Athletic than I am, and I would understand if the DM of real life gave him a higher Athletics score than I. You say, but isn’t he also stronger? I say yes. What’s the difference? Strength and Athletics simply as numbers is yet another ambiguous distinction. I vote that we do away with strength as a defining characteristic, and rely solely on Athletics, a skill.

We are now left with Dexterity and Constitution as abilities, and presumably a 3rd that deals with the mind. Constitution is plainly useless as an ability, why not make it the same as Strength? But if Strength does not exist then Con can't exist. I vote that its gone. Thus we are left with a distinction between the body and the mind. But we cannot simplify characters to these two things, for surely a character that is strong can also be smart?

Here lies the core of the problem with the Ability system. Using abilities to define characters will inherently lead to a lack of answers to the unlimited numbers of questions that players will have. In order to remedy this problem, we have created the Skill Check system, which overrides the numbers with the roll of a dice. I ask you then, if we can override the system with such a simple mechanic, why even have that system in the first place? I vote to remove ALL ability scores.

Having made my arguments, I hope that you find them persuasive. The beauty of the system that I will now introduce is that even if you do not agree with my conclusions, you may still accept the system as good. The following changes are made in step with Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition. These rules are meant to overhaul the game in a way that a texture pack (now called resource pack, I recently found out,) does to Minecraft, and Requiem did to Skyrim. This overhaul still requires knowledge of the core game. These rules cannot be standalone, though they may get there some day.

Lets get started.

The main change:

Abilities are gone. When you create a character, you no longer put points into Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma. This has a two-fold impact on the game. First, as outlined above, it removes the need to define a character on abilities and puts it on skills. Second, it does away with the odd vs even number of ability scores. No longer is there a difference between 11 and 12, since those numbers do not exist. We keep several of the same rules as before, so the main change to the way the game works is this:

Whenever a +1, +2, +3 etc. is found in the book, it applies directly to the character's skills or saves, not their abilities, since abilities do no exist.

Any time a Race provides an Ability Score Increase, that increase applies ONLY to Saving Throws.

For this we will use my personal favorite race, the half-elf. We shall call him Brom. Brom has the following racial bonuses since he is a Half Elf. +2 Charisma, +1 to two other [abilities], 2 skill proficiencies. (We will deal with the extra proficiencies later.)

Abilities do not have a place in the game, but Saving Throws still do. Currently Brom's Saves are:

+2 Charisma, +1 Dexterity, +1 Constitution.

Chapter 3: Classes. This is where things really start to change.

Since characters are technically getting nerfed by not being able to add Ability Score Increases to their skills AND their saves, they need something that will bump them back up. This is found in the class that they choose. Each class gets 3 bonuses to certain skills at level 1. The following

combinations of skill bonuses are simply a starting point, to show how this system works. **DMs and players alike are free to change the bonuses to skills that characters receive. There is nothing stopping you from having a weak Barbarian, or a strong Wizard. However, there is one exception to this rule. Since Arcana is no longer dependent on Intelligence (since the Ability of Intelligence does not exist,) the following requirement does apply to magic users:**

Arcana: ALL classes that can cast magic need a bonus to their Arcana skill. Since this skill no longer requires Intelligence, the bonus that they get should be dependent on their class. Sorcerers are full casters, Rangers are half casters, Arcane Tricksters are 1/3 casters, and everything else. Full casters always get +3, half casters always get +2, and quarter casters always get +1 to Arcana. (This requirement benefits everyone, since no longer is a bard going to be making less powerful counterspells than a Wizard, simply due to the fact that their Intelligence is lower. Since intelligence does not exist, the only check that would apply is Arcana.)

Barbarian: +3 Athletics, +2 Intimidation, +1 Survival

Bard: +3 Arcana, +2 Performance, +1 Sleight of Hand

Cleric: +3 Arcana, +2 Religion, +1 Athletics

Druid: +3 Arcana, +2 Nature, +1 Investigation

Fighter: +3 Athletics, +2 Acrobatics, +1 Insight

Monk: +3 Acrobatics, +2 Religion, +1 Perception

Paladin: +3 Religion, +2 Arcana, +1 Medicine

Ranger: +3 Survival, +2 Arcana (if magical)/Nature, +1 Acrobatics

Rogue: +3 Stealth, +2 Acrobatics, +1 Deception (Arcana if AT)

Sorcerer: +3 Arcana, +2 Acrobatics, +1 Performance

Warlock: +3 Arcana, +2 Religion, +1 Deception

Wizard: +3 Arcana, +2 Investigation, +1 History

Brom is going to be a Sorcerer. His benefits are +3 Arcana, +2 Acrobatics, +1 Performance. But I want Brom to be an older guy that's not as Acrobatic as he once was, so instead of Acrobatics I'm going to take History.

As a Half Elf, Brom also benefits from 2 skill proficiencies. However, since there are no more ability scores, there is no base number to add a proficiency bonus to. **Brom therefore has +2 Skill Points that come from his race.** This means that Brom's race allows him to put two +1s wherever he wants. The following rule applies to ALL skill bonuses:

If character gets multiple skill points as part of a level up, feat, or any other unforeseeable reason, they HAVE to put them into different scores, and cannot put them into the same one.

Brom will use his half-elf racial Skill Points to put a +1 to Arcana, and a +1 to History.

Characters also have some skill that they are good at that makes them stronger than the average person. This is showcased by giving the character three +1s to place into any skill they wish. These skills must be different, as per the rule stated above.

Brom therefore has three +1s to put wherever he wants. I want to put them into +1 to Arcana, History, and Performance. Therefore, Brom now has the following skill bonuses:

Arcana +5, History +4, Performance +2.

Since abilities do not exist, the characters have the skills they are good at, and 0s to everything else.

Let us build a Rogue. We shall call him Vincent, the human. As a future assassin, Vincent's bonuses are +1 to all 6 Saves (human racial feature), +3 to Stealth, +2 Acrobatics, +1 Deception. When we add his free three +1s, Vincent's bonuses look like this:

+4 Stealth, +3 Acrobatics, +2 Deception.

But wait! What about expertise? The ROGUE gets a bonus to two of their skills equal to twice their proficiency modifier, but this modifier cannot exist unless abilities exist. **Proficiency modifier does not act the same way anymore. Rather than being a number that we add to things we have proficiency in, characters use their proficiency modifier as a guide.**

Expertise doubles the bonus that a character gets specifically from their class. Therefore, once Vincent applies both of his expertise points, his bonuses look like this:

Stealth: +7 (+3 from Class, x2 from Expertise= 6, +1 from being an adventurer,) Acrobatics: +5 (+2 from class x2 from expertise =4, +1 from being an adventurer,) Deception +2.

Additionally, characters get bonuses every level. These bonuses are equal to their proficiency modifier, as stated in the book. At level 2-4, they get two +1s. At level 5-10, they get three +1s, and at level 11 they get four +1s, etc. In other words, the number of *Skill Points* given to the players is their proficiency modifier, according to their tier of play. The key here is that proficiency is no longer simply a fill in the bubble, but a number that corresponds to the skill level of the character. **Players can add their Skill Points to any skill they wish, so long as they are different.**

This can at first seem like an incredible amount of bonuses! But, there is something that we have largely been ignoring until this point, and that is Saves. According to the rules listed above, the only thing that has thus far given a character a bonus to their Saves is their race. This would mean that without any benefits, Brom at level 20 would still only have +2 to Charisma saves. This obviously would not work very well. In order to remedy this situation, the following rules for levelling up apply:

Odd numbered levels give Skill Points.

Even numbered levels give Saving Throw Points.

And remember, Points that are gained by way of levelling up can be placed anywhere the player wants, except that you cannot place multiple points into the same Skill or Save in a single level.

Brom the Sorcerer has reached level 3: His stats WERE +2 Charisma Save, +1 Dex Save, +1 Con save. Arcana +5, History +4, Performance +2. As a level 3 character his proficiency modifier is +2. Level 2 is even, so he has two +1s to add to his Saves. He is going to put them into Strength and Dex, since his Strength Save is quite low, and he wants a bigger number in his Dex saves. Level 3 is odd, so he has two +1s to put into his Skills. He is going to put one into Arcana, and he will also put his last +1 into Acrobatics, since his time spent adventuring has limbered him up slightly. At level 3, Brom's stats therefore look like this:

+2 Charisma save, +2 Dex Save, +1 Con save, +1 Strength Save. Arcana +6, History +4, Performance +2, Acrobatics +1.

Now comes my favorite part. As part of levelling up, 5e gives the players an ASI at certain levels. But since abilities do not exist, the players have no abilities to increase at those levels. It

is therefore replaced with a feat. **At levels where players would receive an ASI or a Feat, the players' only option is to take a feat.**

Let's take Brom to a high tier of play, to see how powerful he will become. Meet Brom at level 15:

Sorcerer 15.

His stats WERE +2 Charisma Save, +1 Dex Save, +1 Con save. Arcana +5, History +4, Performance +2.

At levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, Brom can add his prof mod to different Saves. This gives him a total of 23 bonus points to his Saves.

At levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, Brom can add his proficiency modifier to different Skills. This gives him a total of 26 bonus points to his Skills.

Brom's stats now look like this: +9 Charisma Save, +8 Dex Save, +8 Con Save, +2 Str Save. Arcana +12, History +11, Performance +9, Acrobatics +5.

Also, Brom enjoys the ability to pick 4 feats of his choice.

Remember, there is nothing preventing him from being decent at all the skills, if he wishes to be a "jack of all trades" sort of character. But I built Brom in this case to be great at a few things, which necessarily means that he gets +0 in many other things. For example, you should never lean on Brom to change NPC's attitudes based on a skill check. Even though he is a Sorcerer, and RAW would say that he should have an excellent ability to force his will on people and get reactions, his skills say otherwise. The key here is this: I, Brom's player, have built Brom the

way that I want to, and have not been rewarded with high Charisma Skills simply for picking the Sorcerer class. Brom is good at the things that I want him to be, and not good at the things that I don't want him to be. If Brom does end up talking to important people and needs to make a Persuasion, Deception, or Intimidation check, he has no benefits that will help him with that check, and so he will likely fail. If I wanted to build him as a talker, then I would need to take points away from his current skills and put them into those other skills. Since Brom has no "Charisma" score, the only way for me to make Brom better at passing "Charisma-based checks" is to give him Skill Points in those skills that you have in mind.

This system allows for a complete overhaul to what it means to be likely to fail a check. No longer is a character required to have a negative number in their ability scores to make them likely to fail. Rather, a character whose Persuasion skill never gets points put into it will simply never be good at persuasion, and no ASI, feat, or magical item can change that.

On the topic of feats: If a feat allows a character to add a +1 to an ability, that number gets added to BOTH their Save and Skill. For example if a player takes the Athlete feat, their character gets +1 to Strength Saves, and also +1 to Athletics. Or, if the player can make a case that their +1 skill point should go somewhere else, the DM should work with that player in a way that seems consistent with this paper.

There are further changes that come about by necessity. The first of these is AC. RAW, AC is benefited mostly by Dexterity. But since Dexterity does not exist, Armor Class must rely on something else.

We therefore have to make a distinction between Martial and Magical classes. A Barbarian will most likely need a higher AC than a Wizard. A barbarian is a Martial Class, and a Wizard is a magical one. RAW, a Barbarian gets a bonus to her unarmored AC equal to her Dex and Con modifiers. This averages to around 13-15 at level 1, and 20 at level 20, since Dex and Con will likely both be +5.

The rule I propose is simple: Martial Classes get +2 AC every tier of play, and Magical classes get +1 AC every tier of play. Barbarians and monks, who get a bonus to their AC via abilities that no longer exist, get +3 every tier. This makes a Barbarian have 13 AC at level 1, and $3 \times 4 + 10$ or 22 AC at level 20. I don't think this is game breaking, and seems relatively similar to the RAW AC scaling. Additionally, if a monk or barbarian dons armor, they lose their extra AC benefit. (obviously)

A wizard, by contrast, gets 11 AC at level 1, and 14 AC at level 20. This is assuming no magical items, no spells that increase AC (mage armor), and no benefits in any other way. It seems very reasonable that a wizard should have a respectable AC at all times. The bonus to AC that each class gets is not considered armor, which means that if a Mage casts Mage Armor, they can add their +1 to their new AC. A level 1 wizard with mage armor would therefore have 14 AC.

Rogues, a martial class, also get to wear light armor. This means that a level 1 Rogue should be sitting at a cool 13 AC, 11 from leather armor, and +2 from the first tier of play. The same goes for Fighters in light armor, and any other class for that matter.

To balance this with Medium and Heavy armor, we can make a simple change. Adventurers in medium armor can receive only +1 at every tier of play. Adventurers in heavy armor can receive no other benefits. This creates a scale that is nearly identical to the scaling of AC RAW, without AC being dependent on Dex. (It makes you wonder why this wasn't done to begin with?)

Another question that comes about by necessity is that of combat. Since we now know how to avoid damage, it makes sense that we should now search for a way to deal damage. The way that dealing damage works is very similar to the way that AC works.

The formula for hit and damage is 3+proficiency bonus to hit, and proficiency bonus to damage plus any other relevant modifiers. Every character has +5 to hit and +2 damage at level 1, as a base. This means that at level 10, all characters have a base of +7 to hit, +4 to damage.

What kinds of things can be relevant modifiers? Well the weapon for one, meaning that a short sword will still do 1d6 damage, plus proficiency modifier. Rage still adds its bonus like normal, etc.

Optional rule: I haven't done any playtest with this rule at all, but it could be fun if you want the players to deal more damage. Martial classes can receive a bonus to damage equal to half their Athletics/Acrobatics skill, rounded down, their choice. Magical classes, using either magical weapons or spells, can use half their Arcana skill rounded down. If a Magical class wants to use their Athletics/Acrobatics I guess, there's nothing wrong with that. This would likely add 2 or 3

damage at level 1 and could add as much as 10 damage every attack at higher levels. (I don't use this rule because it would seem to extremely benefit Fighters, with their broken action economy. However like I said I have never used it.)

The next question is that of spell save DCs. Without a spell casting ability, it would seem that characters no longer have the ability to cast spells right? Wrong! Remember, all spell casters require points in Arcana. The reason for that is this: Spell Save DC equals $8 + \text{Arcana skill}$. Its that easy! If we take the example of Brom from before, at level 1 his Spell DC is 13, and at level 15 it would be 20. Again, this seems comparable to RAW.