

Notes

Why did you do this?

The short answer is, "because of Frank Trollman!" :D Alright, that's not completely true, but he did get me thinking about this again. A friend (thanks Ouini!) and I started working on a generic class system & Mana magic system shortly after 3E came out to address a lot of issues in the Core rules that bothered both of us (as well as our DM at the time). This spreadsheet is a natural extension of that work after Monte Cook addressed a lot of them with the release of AU.

So, what's Frank Trollman's beef?

That every odd Fighter level beyond 1st was pointless, and I happen to agree with him. If you look at the Core Fighter and the Core Wizard, a few basic assumptions are easily made. 1) Wizard spells are so powerful that Wizards don't deserve much of anything else (smallest HD, poorest BAB, only 1 Good save, fewest SPs) beyond a Familiar and a few Metamagic/Item Creation feats, and 2) Fighter Feats are so powerful that, while Fighters get bigger HD, they also get stuck with only 1 Good save & the fewest SPs. Even with those limitations, apparently more than 1 Fighter Feat every other level is unbalancing. While the first doesn't bother me so much, after 4+ years of playing 3E I just don't agree with the second at all. While the Wizard gains access to a new level of spells every odd level similar to a Fighter getting his Bonus Feats, at least at even levels the Wizard picks up a few additional spells per day and another couple to add to his spellbook, the Fighter gets zilch!

Yeah, but the Fighter can use his Feats all day long, while the Wizard only has a limited number of spells.

That's true, but some of those spells essentially last all day long and/or can often bring such an end to an encounter that everyone can go home for the day early! The Fighter doesn't have too many (if any) high level feats that can arguably do the same thing.

Well, the Fighter's BAB continues to increase twice as fast as the Wizard's.

True again, but so do three other Core classes and at each level they also get access to some spells, a nifty class ability, or both. And while Fighters are supposed to have "the best all-around fighting capabilities", they don't beat these other full BAB classes so handily that they deserve to be left with a similar size HD, a single Good save, the smallest number of SPs and nothing else to show for it other than a Bonus Feat every other level.

Okay, but there are a lot of cool Prestige Classes out there that the Fighter can enter the earliest because of his Feats.

Absolutely, and many of them offer full BAB progression and give abilities at each level similar in power to the Fighter's Bonus Feats, and often have a larger HD, better saves and/or more Skill Points to boot (even in the revised DMG, take a look at the Dwarven Defender). So why stick with a generic Fighter again? Even when we compare him to the 3/4 BAB classes he seems to come up short. They get Spells (Cleric, Druid), more SPs (Rogue), better Saves (Cleric, Druid) or all three (Bard) and STILL get nifty class abilities on top of all that more levels than not.

Hold on, all those classes have a smaller HD by one or two steps (including the Ranger!). That's gotta be worth something!

Right, so where's the balance? Well, that very much depends upon how you value things. Is a bigger HD worth more than a couple extra Skill Points? Or a better Fort/Ref/Will Save? And how much would you trade for a few spells? Or an extra Feat?

Alright, so how do you propose to "fix" the system?

By giving the Fighter a Bonus Fighter Feat at every class level, so that it's actually *fun* to pick up EVERY level of Fighter.

Wow! That's a bit extreme, isn't it?

Maybe, but I don't think so. When I started working on this spreadsheet, that's really what I was trying to find out. Now, I'll be the first to admit that not all Feats are equal, and many Class Abilities may be worth more or less than whatever a Feat is worth, but since I'm trying to rebuild character creation from nearly the ground up, rebalancing some feats along the way seems like a small price to pay. I mean, isn't Sneak Attack +1d6 pretty close to Weapon Specialization? The former gives nearly twice the damage as the latter, but SA only kicks in under certain conditions while WS is automatic with every swing of your chosen weapon. And Rage? It gives a hefty set of bonuses (including upping your damage just like WS), but its only useable a limited number of times per day and only lasts for a limited time (and until higher levels comes with some pretty significant drawbacks).

Fine, so what did you learn?

Well, assuming you haven't tinkered with the "Near-Core Classes" sheet (I'd recommend you make a copy and tinker with the copy if you want to mess around with things) it's pretty easy to see for yourself.

Wait, what does "Near-Core" mean?

Since this was something I was doing primarily for myself for an upcoming campaign, I started with a few things different from Core, many of them exactly what Monte did with AU for exactly the same reasons as he's professed during chats & interviews. I also added a Defense Bonus from Unearthed Arcana. All of this is explained on the Intro sheet. Didn't you read it?

Uh, yeah, of course I did. So let's get back to the Fighter...

Right. It's easy to see on that sheet that with the values I've entered at the top the Fighter's HD, bonuses and Bonus Feats are worth 18 CPs at 1st level and 7.7 CPs for levels 2-20.

Great! Um, what the hell does that mean?

In and of itself, nothing really. But when you take those values and compare them to the averages at the top of the sheet for all the Core classes, you can at least start to draw some conclusions. You can see at the top that the average number of CPs for all classes at 1st level is 24.3, and for all later levels is 10.7. The Fighter comes in low by several CPs in both cases.

Well, you've taken away his free Martial Weapon Proficiencies and All Armor Proficiencies he had in Core. You've only given him three

proficiencies of each type.

You're right, but that's by design for two reasons. One, by switching to the UA Weapon Group variant the Fighter loses access to all Martial Weapons anyway and is forced to choose the few he'd like to use right from the start (which many do anyway by taking Weapon Focus at 1st level). Two, all the classes are likely going to have to spend some extra CPs on Proficiencies at some point, and because of that the total CPs allotted for 1st level and all other levels are going to have to take that into account. Also, since the Fighter starts off a few CPs below the average, he can put them towards a couple more proficiencies if he'd like, right at 1st level. At later levels he's got a couple more coming to do the same thing at every, or every other, level. YMMV, but this just makes more sense to me than saying the Fighter (and all other MWP classes) knows how to use nearly every damn weapon out there right from the start.

Okay, fine. So what happens if you give the Fighter a Bonus Feat at every level?

Easy. Switch over to my sheet and look at the Fighter section. I've added a Bonus Feat by entering "Base" into the 1st Special Ability slot at every odd level and labelling it as such in the Special Ability section underneath that. It works out that he has enough CPs left over at 1st level to pick up a _second_ Bonus Feat as well. With those changes he now has a total of 23 at 1st level (and I'm shooting for a class average of 24) and the overall class total now averages 10.2 (shooting for 11). Over 20 levels that leaves him with 30 extra CPs to spend on some extra Proficiency Expansion feats or whatever he feels he needs. I could have easily spent those points on a better HD, Defense, Saves, Skill Points, etc. but the Core Fighter is an amazingly versatile class. I'd rather provide a solid framework to my players and give them the freedom to spend those extra 30 CPs as they need to to flesh out the concept they're working on.

Huh. Hey, but what if I don't agree with your values? I think Base Feats should be worth more! or less!

Fine. Like I said above, I recommend you make a copy of the Near-Core Classes sheet and then mess with the copy. Rename it however you like and then go to town. Change all the values at the top however you see fit and when you're happy with them, see how the classes balance out against the average and relative to each other. If you think a class ability is Base vs Expansion, or think you've got a better way to organize the class abilities, go to it. Tweak it however you want. When you're done getting a feeling for how the Core classes stack up, make a copy of *that* sheet and see what changes you'd make to each class to bring them in-line with the average totals. BTW, I'm still tinkering a lot here, too, so do what you want with it!

Alright, cool. I'll try it. But when I'm happy with what I've got, what do I do with it?

Well, at a minimum you could think about using those tweaked classes of yours in your next campaign (assuming you DM). If you're really happy with the balance you've achieved between classes, hopefully that will translate into more fun for you and your players. OTOH, if you want to move to a generic character building system (like I've thought about doing before), you take a look at the average totals for 1st level and levels 2-20, then

figure out how many CPs to hand out to your players at each level. As I've set things up for my game we're going with 24 CPs at 1st level and 11 CPs/level thereafter. Assuming your players are spending those CPs according to the values you set up in your copy of the class sheet, no matter what combination they come up with you can feel confident they're pretty balanced relative to each other. If you build your NPCs using the same system, things should work out just dandy. At least, I hope so. :p

Great. But what if I find something that doesn't work like you say it should? Or have a suggestion to improve this thing?

Please post your findings at EN World, specifically in the House Rules forum in a thread titled "DrSpunj's Class Balance Spreadsheet", where many of us are having an on-going discussion about this worksheet and how to value the various class attributes. Thanks in advance for your help!

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