



Cyberzombie's A Murder of Ravens

By Matt "Cyberzombie" Blakeley

Going Beyond Class Skills: Education Skill System

One of the promises of having a skill system in an RPG is that, with it, the characters can go beyond wargame characters into fully fleshed out three dimensional characters. Extensive gaming has shown me, however, that most 3e D&D characters can barely afford their class-related skills, much less a breadth skill like cooking or poetry. In this article, I'm

going to show you a new way for allocating skill points that will allow characters to cook, whittle, or do underwater basket weaving, and still be able to cover their necessary class skills. Additionally, this system will benefit campaigns with low to average ability scores, since the characters will have adequate skill points to cover their most necessary skills.

Under this system, each character will get two sets of skill points. One set will be for their class skills, which can be

used to buy the normal skills provided by their class. The other set will be education skills, which can only be used to buy Craft, Knowledge, Perform, and Profession, along with Literacy and Speak Language as cross-class skills. The Perform skill is also expanded to take advantage of the additional skill points.

Class Skills

The class skill lists remain the same for each class. The base skill points for

Main Ability Scores and CSPs per Level

Barbarian

Class Main Ability Score: Strength
CSPs at 1st Level: (4+Str modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 4+Str modifier

Bard

Class Main Ability Score: Charisma
CSPs at 1st Level: (4+Cha modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 4+Cha modifier

Cleric

Class Main Ability Score: Wisdom
CSPs at 1st Level: (2+Wis modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 2+Wis modifier

Druid

Class Main Ability Score: Wisdom
CSPs at 1st Level: (4+Wis modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 4+Wis modifier

Fighter

Class Main Ability Score: Strength
CSPs at 1st Level: (2+Str modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 2+Str modifier

Monk

Class Main Ability Score: Wisdom
CSPs at 1st Level: (4+Wis modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 4+Wis modifier

Paladin

Class Main Ability Score: Charisma
CSPs at 1st Level: (2+Cha modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 2+Cha modifier

Ranger

Class Main Ability Score: Dexterity
CSPs at 1st Level: (4+Dex modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 4+Dex modifier

Rogue

Class Main Ability Score: Dexterity
CSPs at 1st Level: (8+Dex modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 8+Dex modifier

Sorcerer

Class Main Ability Score: Charisma
CSPs at 1st Level: (2+Cha modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 2+Cha modifier

Wizard

Class Main Ability Score: Intelligence
CSPs at 1st Level: (2+Int modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 2+Int modifier

Adept

Class Main Ability Score: Wisdom
CSPs at 1st Level: (2+Wis modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 2+Wis modifier

Aristocrat

Class Main Ability Score: Charisma
CSPs at 1st Level: (4+Cha modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 4+Cha modifier

Commoner

Class Main Ability Score: Strength
CSPs at 1st Level: (2+Str modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 2+Str modifier

Expert

Class Main Ability Score: Any
CSPs at 1st Level: (6+Any modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 6+Any modifier

Warrior

Class Main Ability Score: Strength
CSPs at 1st Level: (2+Str modifier)x4
CSPs at Each Additional Level: 2+Str modifier

each class also remain the same. However, each class modifies the number of class skill points (CSP) by its main ability score. In the case of wizards, it is still Intelligence. But each class has its own ability score for CSPs, as given on the following table:

Every character gets a minimum of 4 CSPs at 1st level, and a minimum of 1 CSP per level thereafter. Also note that the Cross Training feat below may affect the character's starting skill points.

A special note on Experts: An expert chooses her main ability, just as she chooses which ten skills will be her class skills. Thus, a strong weaponsmith could choose Strength for her main ability score and a healthy herbalist can choose Constitution. Once the expert's main ability score is chosen, it remains fixed for her - she cannot change it later.

Prestige Classes and Class Skills

Prestige classes will each have their own main ability score, depending on its abilities. It's usually not too difficult to figure out which ability is their main score. Their main ability score replaces Intelligence when computing CSPs per level, as with the classes on the table above. The following examples are from the Dungeon Master's Guide:

Arcane Archer: Since their primary focus is archery, their main ability score is Dexterity.

Assassin: This class takes rogue abilities and applies them to killing for hire. It also has Dexterity for its main ability score.

Blackguard: Since this is the twisted, evil shadow of the paladin, it has Charisma as the main ability score.

Dwarven Defender: This class has Endurance, Toughness, and dwarven race as prerequisites, a d12 HD, and many defensive abilities. Given these facts, Constitution is the main ability score for this class.

Loremaster: The emphasis on knowledge makes Intelligence the main ability score for this class.

Shadowdancer: The Shadowdancer is another variation on the rogue class, so it has Dexterity for the main ability score.

Education Skills

In addition to class skill points (CSPs), each character will have education skill points (ESPs). These ESPs can be used to buy Craft, Knowledge, Perform, and Profession skills. These skills are bought as if they were class skills, so they cost only 1 ESP per rank and use the Class Skill Max Ranks column on Table 3-2 of the Player's Handbook.

ESPs can also be used to purchase ranks in Speak Language, but this is treated as if it was a cross-class skill. Each language learned costs 2 ESPs and the maximum number of languages that can be learned from the Speak Language skill is given on the Cross-Class Skill Max Ranks column of Table 3-2.

Barbarians may also use 2 of their ESPs to purchase Literacy.

ESPs CAN NOT be used to purchase any other skills, ever, unless the character has the Unusual Education Feat, described below. Characters that do not have this feat must use all ESPs on the six skills listed above.

Education Main Ability Score: Each character's level of education is tied to their Intelligence score. Thus, Intelligence modifies the number of education skill points that they get.

Education Skill Points at 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x4.

Education Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Every character gets a minimum of 4 ESPs at 1st level, and a minimum of 1 ESP per level thereafter.

The Perform Skill

Under this system, Perform should become a cascade skill (that is, a group of related skills under one main heading) like Craft, Knowledge, and Profession already are. There are two reasons for this: first, it allows the character to emphasize the particular style of performance that she does. Secondly, it keeps bards from becoming too powerful under this skill system, by giving them more types of performance to learn.

The following types of performance skills are recommended. The player can create additional types for their character with the GM's permission. For the musical instrument skills, the character learns to use one instrument per rank in the skill. The examples below are all from Song & Silence, but the player or GM can add any other instruments appropriate to the campaign setting.

Acting

Chanting

Comedy

Crowd Working

Dance (fascinate and suggestion only)

Drums: Bones, bongo drums, drums, gong, handbell, hanging bells, kettle drums, or tabor.

Horns: Alphorn, herald's trumpet, natural horn, shell horn, or lur.

Keyboards: Clavichord, harpsichord, or pipe organ.

Miming (fascinate and suggestion only)

Oration

Poetry

Singing

Storytelling

String Instrument: Banjolele, fiddle, hammered dulcimer, harp, lap-harp, lute, lyre, mandolin, psaltery, or zither.

Woodwind Instrument: Bagpipes, crumhorn, flute, harmonica, hautbois, pan pipes, recorder-flute, shawm, water-pipe, or whistle-pipe

Bards and the Revised Perform Skill

In this system, a bard will likely have a number of different Perform skills and not all of them may be at maximum ranks. A bard can only use her Bardic Music abilities if the individual skill level is high enough.

For example, a 6th level bard might have Perform (Singing) 9, Perform (String Instrument) 6, and Perform (Poetry) 2. If this bard could not sing, but could play one of her stringed instruments, then she could Inspire Competence (which requires 6 ranks of Perform) but she could not use *suggestion* (which requires 9 ranks of Perform). If she regains her ability to sing, she can use her *suggestion* ability again normally. She can't use any of her bardic abilities with her poetry at all, since they all require at least 3 ranks.

Dancing and miming have only limited uses for bards. They can both only be used for the *fascinate* and *suggestion* abilities. This does, however, allow the bard to use these abilities even when under the effects of a *silence* spell or effect.

New Feats

Cross Training (General)

Your initial skill training was unusual for your class.

Benefit: At 1st level only, you can choose which ability score gives your bonus class skill points. For example, an elfen fighter might choose to get his bonus CSPs from Dexterity rather than Strength at 1st level. This feat only affects the CSPs you get at 1st level, not at any subsequent levels.

Special: Normally the ability score that affects class skills is fixed by class. You may only take this feat at the 1st character level.

Unusual Education (General)

Your education is broader than most character's.

Benefit: You can pick one skill and add it to your list of education skills. The skill cannot be an exclusive skill, like Animal Empathy or Scry. Alternately, you may instead choose to upgrade Speak Languages to a class skill.

Special: Normally education skill points may only be spent on the Craft, Knowledge, Perform, and Profession skills, and on Speak Languages as a cross-class skill. You can gain this feat multiple times. Each time you take this feat, it applies to a different skill.

Sample Characters

The sample characters in this section are based on the 1st level NPCs in chapter 2 of the Dungeon Master's Guide. All 11 basic classes are presented, along with a likely skill selection, using both the standard rules (as a comparison) and using the new rules. Each sample character below gains a total of 16 skill points and thus 4 additional skills at rank 4 (or cross-class skills at rank 2). Each skill lists only the ranks taken in the skill, not the total adjusted skill level.

Barbarian

(Str 15, Int 10)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4x(4+0) = 16$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks: Climb 4, Jump 4, Listen 4, Wilderness Lore 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points: $4x(4+2) = 24$ CSPs; $4x(2+0) = 8$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks: Climb 4, Intimidate 4, Jump 4, Listen 4, Ride 4, Wilderness Lore 4; Craft (Leatherworking) 4, Profession (Herdsman) 4.

Bard

(Int 14, Cha 15)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4x(4+2) = 24$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks: Bluff 4, Diplomacy 4, Perform 4, Sense Motive 4, Spellcraft 4, Tumbling 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points: $4x(4+2) = 24$ CSPs; $4x(2+2) = 16$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks:

Bluff 4, Diplomacy 4, Sense Motive 4, Spellcraft 4, Tumbling 4, Use Magic Device 4; Perform (Singing) 4, Perform (Stringed Instrument) 4, Perform (Crowd Working) 4, Craft (Musical Instrument) 4.

Cleric

(Int 10, Wis 15)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4x(2+0) = 8$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks:

Concentration 4, Spellcraft 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points:

$4x(2+2) = 16$ CSPs; $4x(2+0) = 8$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks:

Concentration 4, Diplomacy 4, Heal 4, Spellcraft 4; Knowledge (Religion) 4, Profession (Herbalist) 4.

Druid

(Int 12, Wis 15)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4x(4+1) = 20$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks:

Animal Empathy 4, Concentration 4, Knowledge (Nature) 4, Spellcraft 4, Wilderness Lore 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points:

$4x(4+2) = 24$ CSPs; $4x(2+1) = 12$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks:

Animal Empathy 4, Concentration 4, Handle Animal 4, Heal 4, Spellcraft 4, Wilderness Lore 4; Craft (Woodcarving) 4, Knowledge (Nature) 4, Profession (Herbalist) 4.

Fighter

(Str 15, Int 10)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4x(2+0) = 8$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks: Climb 4, Jump 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points:

$4x(2+2) = 16$ CSPs; $4x(2+0) = 8$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks:

Climb 4, Jump 4, Ride 4, Swim 4; Craft (Weaponsmith) 4, Profession (Siege Engineer) 4.

Monk

(Int 10, Wis 15)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4 \times (4+0) = 16$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks: Balance 4, Hide 4, Jump 4, Tumble 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points: $4 \times (4+2) = 24$ CSPs; $4 \times (2+0) = 8$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks: Balance 4, Hide 4, Jump 4, Listen 4, Move Silently 4, Tumble 4; Perform (Chanting) 4, Profession (Brewer) 4.

Paladin

(Int 10, Cha 15)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4 \times (2+0) = 8$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks: Heal 4, Ride 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points: $4 \times (2+2) = 16$ CSPs; $4 \times (2+0) = 8$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks: Diplomacy 4, Heal 4, Ride 4, Spot (cc) 2; Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) 4, Knowledge (Religion) 4.

Ranger

(Dex 15, Int 10)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4 \times (4+0) = 16$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks: Hide 4, Move Silently 4, Spot 4, Wilderness Lore 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points: $4 \times (4+2) = 24$ CSPs; $4 \times (2+0) = 8$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks: Animal Empathy 4, Hide 4, Listen 4, Move Silently 4, Spot 4, Wilderness Lore 4; Craft (Bowmaking) 4, Knowledge (Nature) 4.

Rogue

(Dex 15, Int 14)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4 \times (8+2) = 40$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks: Appraise 4, Disable Device 4, Hide 4, Listen 4, Move Silently 4, Open Lock 4, Search 4, Spot 4, Tumble 4, Use Magical Device 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points: $4 \times (8+2) = 40$ CSPs; $4 \times (2+2) = 16$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks: Appraise 4, Disable Device 4, Hide 4, Listen 4, Move Silently 4, Open Lock 4, Search 4, Spot 4, Tumble 4, Use Magical Device 4; Craft (Trapmaking) 4, Knowledge (Local) 4, Perform (Storytelling) 4, Speak Language (cc) 2.

Sorcerer

(Int 10, Cha 15)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4 \times (2+0) = 8$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks: Concentration 4, Spellcraft 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points: $4 \times (2+2) = 16$ CSPs; $4 \times (2+0) = 8$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks: Concentration 4, Diplomacy (cc) 2, Gather Information (cc) 2, Spellcraft 4; Knowledge (Arcana) 4, Perform (Singing) 4.

Wizard

(Int 15)

Standard Rules, Skill Points: $4 \times (2+2) = 16$ skill points.

Standard Rules, Skill Picks: Concentration 4, Knowledge (Arcana) 4, Knowledge (The Planes) 4, Spellcraft 4.

Education Skill System, Skill Points: $4 \times (2+2) = 16$ CSPs; $4 \times (2+2) = 16$ ESPs.

Education Skill System, Skill Picks: Alchemy 4, Concentration 4, Hide (cc) 2, Spellcraft 4; Craft (Gemcutting) 4, Knowledge (Arcana) 4, Knowledge (History) 4, Knowledge (The Planes) 4. ♦

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powers that tainted characters may acquire.

Appendix two discusses the spirit realms, which may help spread some light on some of your creature explanations. Also, the appendix introduces a few new items such as the aforementioned jade and crystal weapons and further defines their effects.

Appendix three leads off with stock character types for Rokugan character classes (courtier, inkyo, ninja, samurai, and shugenja) from levels 1-20, in the same fashion that the DMG had samples for basic d20 system character classes. This is very convenient for running games off the cuff.

Appendix three provides some guidance as to how to best use creatures as encounters in Rokugan, and advice for adapting creatures from other d20 system products in Rokugan.

Finally, Creatures of Rokugan has a list of creatures by CR. The book features creatures with challenge ratings from 1/2 to 25.

Conclusion

This is a nice selection of creatures. Most of these are primarily useful in Rokugan or another Oriental Adventures campaigns. However, there are many of these could also be used in fairly typical D&D games. The thought of using animated bone catapults for that army of undead your necromancer summoned or recasting the shadow samurai as a shadow warrior is rather intriguing.

One thing I appreciated a lot about these creatures is that many of them strongly suggest or even demand a solution other than combat. The book is brimming with great creature ideas, and great adventure idea to go with them

Needless to say, I was rather pleased that AEG is maintaining a high level of quality and imagination in their follow-on books to Rokugan. I eagerly await the next one! ♦