

Rome: Decline and Fall - House Rules

This document is public knowledge, and can be read by both players and DMs

No Resurrection: Any effects that return dead characters to life are removed from the game, including the *Raise Dead* ritual and the *Potion of Life*.

Slower Healing: Characters no longer regain hit points, healing surges or action points after an extended rest. Characters still regain encounter and daily powers after an extended rest. Characters only regain healing surges after an adventure or from special events. Characters start each adventure with their full hit points, healing surges and powers. See below for more rules on action points.

Bonus Saves: There are several game effects that cause your condition to worsen when you fail a saving throw, such as the gradual petrification from a Basilisk. Your condition can only worsen for failing a normal, end-of-turn save. Any bonus save, from abilities like *Inspired Recovery* or *Sacred Flame*, only improves your condition. They never make it worse.

Stealthy Attack (Stealth; Trained Only): The stealth rules to hide and become effectively invisible are as described in the Errata. In addition, if you are trained in Stealth and make a move ending behind any kind of cover or concealment, you can make Stealth check against your enemy's passive Perception to make a stealthy attack. This check is at -5 if you moved more than 2 squares, or at -10 if you ran.

If successful, you gain a Combat Advantage against that opponent for your next attack this turn. If you are able to target multiple opponents with a single attack, compare your Stealth check separately against their passive Perceptions to see which ones you have Combat Advantage against. You can only make a stealthy attack on opponents against whom you have cover or concealment. For this purpose, allies do not count as cover.

Knowledge Skill Coverage

The knowledge skills include a broader scope of human knowledge:

- *Arcana:* Includes scientific as well as magical knowledge, but no longer covers other-worldly realms (which falls under religion).
- *Dungeoneering:* Includes architecture, siege craft and military strategy. As such, it also becomes a class skill for all the military classes (fighter, paladin, warlord).
- *History:* Includes geography and cultural knowledge (including literature).
- *Nature:* Includes animal handling, animal training and biological sciences.
- *Religion:* Includes knowledge of cosmology and all the other worlds, not just the Astral Sea.

Hobby Skills

Each character can have 3 or 4 hobby skills based on their background. These skills should not be adventuring related, and cover things like crafts, performance skills and specialized knowledge. The base attribute should be appropriate to the skill. These skills are never primary skills for Skill Challenges, but may come in through creative skill use. A character can learn an extra language in place of one of his hobby skills. A character gains an extra hobby skill per tier (Paragon and Epic).

Action Points

These house rules increase the value and availability of action points. In these rules, action points can be used for four things:

- 1) An action point can be spent for an extra standard action during your turn, as usual.
- 2) An action point can be spent to re-roll any d20 roll made by the player. The result of the new roll must be taken, even if it is lower.
- 3) An action point can be spent with abilities that require action points, such as paragon path features. Special abilities in the original rules that give re-rolls for an action points, such as *Archer's Action* or *Daggermaster's Action*, now give an additional +2 bonus to the d20 roll.
- 4) Action points can trigger special benefits from abilities such as the Warlord's inspiring presence or tactical presence. Abilities that give a additional benefit for spending "an action point to take an extra action" give their benefit for any use of an action point (if applicable).

Spending Limits: Characters with more than one action point can spend any number of points per encounter. However, a character cannot spend more than one action point per turn. The re-roll options for action points lets them be spent in non-combat as well as combat encounters.

Starting Action Points: A character starts a new game session with exactly 1 action point. Characters no longer reset action points for an extended rest. Action points do not carry over between sessions.

Milestone Action Points: Player characters earn 1 action point per milestone (every 2 encounters). A skill challenge generally count as an encounter for this purpose, but only for individuals that participate in the challenge. You may only earn a milestone action point if you do not already have an action point. This means there is little point to hoarding action points.

MVP Action Point: At the beginning of each gaming session, after everyone is seated, randomly choose one of the players to be the first MVP judge. At the end of an encounter, including skill challenges, the MVP judge picks one other player to be the MVP (Most Valuable Player) for that encounter. The MVP gets an extra action point. This award occurs after the milestone action point award. Unlike milestone action points, the MVP gets this action point even if she already has action points. This is the easiest way to end up with more than one action point.

After each encounter, the role of MVP judge moves one player to the left (clockwise). The way, each player gets an opportunity to be the MVP judge. Other players and the DM can offer suggestions to the MVP judge, but the MVP judge makes the final decision for the MVP. The MVP judge can never choose himself as the MVP.

Monster Action Points: Because these rules make more action points available to players, the monsters in an encounter get an extra "floating action point". This action point can be used by any one monster in the encounter, in all the same ways as player characters (extra standard action, re-roll, etc.). There is rule does not generally apply to skill challenges.

Equipment and Magic Items

Tracking money and treasure is a bookkeeping pain and detracts from the heroic elements of D&D. These rules replace treasure with magic items slots that increase as characters gain levels.

- **Level 2:** 1 magic item, level 3
- **Level 3:** 2 magic items, levels 3 and 4.
- **Level 4:** 3 magic items, levels 3, 4 and 5.
- **Level 5:** 4 magic items, levels 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- **Level 6:** 5 magic items, levels 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.
- **Level 7:** 5 magic items, levels 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.
- **Level 8:** 5 magic items, levels 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.
- And so forth (+1 level to each slot as you advance).

As you adventure, the DM should award periodically reward you with a new magic item. In the simplest case, this can be when you advance to a new level. Alternately, the DM can give you the new item as a reward between levels, at some appropriate point in your adventures. Roughly midway through a level is a good place to award new magic items.

The new item's level should be up to 1 level better than the level you are about to gain. For example, sometime between levels 3 and 4, the DM should award a character with a new item of up to level 5. The DM should award items appropriate to the character, or simply let the player choose the new item.

Limits and upgrades: Above 6th level, you are limited to five items slots. When you gain a new magic item, you must also give up one item, usually your weakest. The simplest way is to replace your weakest magic item with a similar item that has an extra +1 bonus, effectively upgrading it to the level of the new item slot. At character level 7, you might upgrade your +1 Sylvan armor (level 3) to +2 Sylvan armor (level 8). Five levels later you might upgrade again to +3 Shadowflow armor (level 13).

Split item slots: If you want to have more than your normal allotment of magic items, you can split one of your item slots into a pair of items, both 3 levels lower. For example, at third level, you can take a pair of 1st level items instead of your allotted 4th level item. You can only split each slot once, so the maximum number of items you can ever have is ten items.

Item swapping: When you gain a new item, you also can retrain a second item, swapping it for another item of equivalent level. For example, suppose you currently have +2 chain armor (level 6) and a +2 frost sword (level 8). At 10th level you gain a new 11th level item, but decide you would rather upgrade your +2 chain armor to a +3 sword because you want to have a better attack bonus. You can then retrain your +2 frost sword to become +2 delver's chain armor (also level 8), so that you still have some magic armor.

If your retrain a split item slot, swap out both items, either for a single item or another pair of lower level items. Also, you can retrain a single item into a split item. Finally, you can use your Retraining option from PH 28 to retrain an extra magic item instead of retraining a skill, power or feat.

Mounts: For the purpose of these rules, mounts count as a magic item of their level. The character can upgrade mounts to more powerful creatures as they gain levels, or add levels to the existing mount. Ignore the level requirements for mount special abilities.

Consumable Items: After first level, a character can also have a single consumable item (potion, ritual scroll, etc.) up to his level + 3. Alternately, he can have two consumable items of his current level, three consumable items of level – 3, four of level – 6 and so forth. These consumables can be replenished and changed freely between adventures. The DM may allow characters to acquire consumables in the middle of an adventure, so that they might get a ritual scroll of *Water Breathing* when they know they are going on an underwater adventure.

Rituals: Other than magic items, the other major cost expenditure in the 4th Edition D&D rules are for magic rituals. These rules allow ritual casting based on their level instead of giving them a component cost. Rituals are grouped into three categories, based on the ritual's level and the caster's level:

Hard: Rituals between the caster's level and the caster's level – 2.

Moderate: Rituals between the caster's level – 3 and the caster's level – 5.

Easy: Rituals below the caster's level – 6.

For an 8th level caster, rituals level 6-8 are hard, 3-5 are moderate and 1-2 are easy.

A ritual caster starts with 2 rituals and gains 1 ritual per level. Wizards start with 3 rituals, gains 1 ritual per level plus a bonus ritual at the levels specified in his class description (5, 11, 15, 21, 25). The caster can only learn a ritual if he is trained in the key skill and if the ritual is not higher than his current level. You can retrain a ritual to another, equal-level ritual by using your retraining option when you advance a level. To reduce overall bookkeeping past a certain point, a caster automatically knows all easy rituals (those below his level – 6) for the key skills in which he is trained.

A ritual caster can only cast 1 hard ritual per day. This limit is increased to 2 hard rituals at the paragon tier and 3 at the epic tier. A ritual caster can cast 1 moderate ritual per hour. A caster may exceed these limits by spending a healing surge, to cast a hard or moderate ritual sooner than he would normally be allowed. This is in addition to any healing surge cost for the ritual itself. A ritual caster can cast easy rituals as often as he likes, limited only by their casting time.

The caster does not need to spend any gold for the ritual's component cost, but a caster needs special equipment to cast a ritual. If a caster is separated from his equipment, he cannot cast rituals. Any other ritual casting costs (such as healing surges) are still required.

The very expensive Raise Dead ritual is no longer allowed.

Mundane Equipment: Player characters can have whatever mundane equipment they want, within reason, even at first level. In practice, only bother to keep track of weapons and armor. You can assume that the player characters have whatever other reasonable adventuring gear they might need. You can also assume the PCs never run out of ammunition unless it is dramatically important.

Rationale: The goal of these rules is to eliminate the need to track treasure and to balance items between characters. These rules are roughly equivalent to the treasure parcels and the "Starting at Higher Level" rules in the DMG, p. 143. They assume that (a) treasure value is split evenly among the party, (b) it is devoted mainly to magic items and (c) the character's sell off older and weaker items to

cover their living expenses. Alternately, the characters are spending gold to upgrade their existing items' magic. The rules simply abstract the entire treasure acquisition and magic item creation process.

An alternate rationale for these rules is that heroes naturally generate mystic energy that improves the items they possess. As they grow in power, they unlock new abilities in their items. These items are attuned to the hero and cannot be used by anyone else, because their source of power is the hero. This alternate rationale lets you have high-level, low-cash heroes that still have access to the magic items they need to be competitive. This means the greatest heroes in the world don't necessarily have to be among the wealthiest individuals as well.

Skill Challenges

Skill Difficulties

The DCs from the DMG Errata are used for the DMG p. 42, but the two footnotes to the table are retained. This means skill checks are effectively +5 DC.

Table 1: Skill Difficulty Classes

<i>Level</i>	<i>Easy</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Hard</i>
1-3	10	15	20
4-6	12	17	22
7-9	13	19	24
10-12	15	21	26
13-15	16	23	28
16-18	18	25	30
19-21	19	27	32
22-24	21	29	34
24-27	22	31	36
28-30	24	33	38

Skill Challenges

Skill challenges are based on the moderate difficulty from the Errata-based difficulties on DMG p. 42, with the +5 DC bonus for being skill-based (see above). This number of required successes and allowed failures from the Skill Challenge Complexity table on DMG p. 72 are adjusted as follows:

- **Complexity 1:** 3 successes before 4 failures
- **Complexity 2:** 5 successes before 5 failures
- **Complexity 3:** 7 successes before 6 failures
- **Complexity 4:** 9 successes before 7 failures
- **Complexity 5:** 11 successes before 8 failures

By default, every challenge has exactly 3 primary skills. Creative skill use is allowed if the DM feels the skill use is appropriate, but each skill not specified as part of the challenge may only be used once overall (not once per player), and has a Hard DC. The XP value of the challenge is the complexity times the standard XP value of a monster of that challenge level.

Skill challenges generally count as an encounter for the purposes of reaching milestones. A character may opt out of a skill challenge, but the non-participating character does not count this encounter towards earning a milestone and the associated benefits (action points, item usage, etc.) This is true for combat encounters as well. It means that different characters may reach milestones at different times, depending on their level of participation in encounters.

A typical party of PCs should beat Complexity 1 challenges roughly 80% of the time, Complexity 3 about 65% of the time and Complexity 5 about 50% of the time. Clever and creative play can further improve these win-rates.

Special adjustments to a challenge change the effective complexity of the challenge. This modifies the XP value of the challenge.

More or Fewer Primary Skills: Complexity -1 per extra skill, +1 for two skills, +3 for a single skill.

A challenge with more primary skills is easier, because the party is more likely to have characters trained in those skills. A challenge with fewer primary skills is harder because the party is less likely to have skilled party members. Each primary skill above 3 reduces the complexity by -1. A two-skill challenge is +1 complexity. A single primary skill challenge is very difficult and has +3 complexity. A single-skill challenge should be balanced by options to reduce the complexity. Opt-Out or Aid Another are good balancing options.

Limited-Use Skills: Complexity -1

The challenge includes two additional skills that can be used in the challenge, but those skills can only be used successfully a limited number of times. Limited-use skills use the Moderate DC, like primary skills. Once the limited-use skills have added successes equal to the basic complexity of the challenge, they cannot be used any more in the challenge. This option is good for defining a sub-challenge as part of the main challenge. You may wish to balance it by having fewer primary skills than normal. For example, a challenge with 2 primary skills and 2 limited-use skills has no overall Complexity modifier.

Secret Skills: Complexity +1

Sometimes the list of Primary Skills for a challenge isn't obvious. The party should always have a general idea of which skills to use (social skills in a social challenge) but they may not know, for example, that the Duke reacts poorly to Intimidation attempts. The first check with the wrong skill uses the Hard DC instead of the Moderate DC. This also reveals that the skill is not appropriate and can no longer be used at all. The secret skill option works well in combination with the Information Skills and the Easy Skill option.

Information Skills: Complexity -1, or -2 if information checks do not contribute to winning or losing the challenge.

Information skills are similar to limited-use skills. Information skills are two extra skills that can be used with the challenge. In addition to contributing to the successes or failures in the challenge, each success provides information about the challenge. This could reveal which skills are best for the challenge, reveal special bonuses that can be earned or unlock the use of an easy skill.

The number of pieces of information available should equal the base complexity of the challenge. Once all the information has been revealed, the information skills can no longer be used in the challenge. Information skills are usually knowledge skills appropriate to the challenge, the Perception skill or Insight skill. Both information skills should reveal the same information about the challenge. Information skills use the Moderate DC, like primary skills.

Successes and failures on the information skill normally still count toward victory or defeat in the challenge. If they do not, this challenge option has a complexity adjustment of -2 instead of -1. The reduced complexity is because unskilled characters can make safe information skill checks and not risk adding failures to the challenge.

Easy Skill: Complexity +0 or -1 if the easy skill can be used several times.

This options adds another skill that can be used in the challenge, using the Easy DC instead of the Moderate DC. An easy skill should generally only be used with secret-skill challenge. The characters must guess correctly or succeed at an information skill check before they unlock the easy skill. If the easy skill can only be used once, this doesn't modify the complexity of the challenge. If the easy skill can be used several times, up to the base complexity of the challenge, this option reduces the complexity by -1.

Costly Failures: Complexity +1

With this option, characters lose some limited resource for each failed skill check in the challenge. This could be gold, healing surges or magical Residium. Healing surges can be lost to represent exertion or injury in physical challenges. If equipment or gold is lost, it should equal 10% of the value of a magic item of challenge's level for each failure.

The resource lost must matter to the characters. Healing surges only count as a costly failure if the party cannot rest before their next combat encounter. If a challenge uses costly failures, the DM can choose not to assign any other cost to losing the challenge. The resources lost from failed skill checks may be enough of a penalty for losing.

Helping Hand: Complexity +0

A character voluntarily takes a -2 penalty to her skill check to give another character a +2 bonus on his next skill check. Only one character can give a helping hand to another character at a time. Since the bonuses and penalties for this option balance even out, it does not modify the complexity of the challenge. This option is especially appropriate to challenges with costly failures.

Aid Another: Complexity -2 or -1 if only the designated party leader can be Aided.

A character can choose to Aid Another by making an Easy Skill check with the skill being aided. Unlike other checks in a skill challenge, success or failure does not count towards winning or losing the challenge. Instead, a success gives the aided character a +2 bonus and a failure has no effect.

Each a party member can only be the recipient of a single Aid Another check each round in the challenge. The party member that received aid must make a skill check with that skill on his next turn, whether or not the Aid Another attempt succeed.

Normally Aid Another can be used by any party member to help any other party member and reduces the challenge complexity by -2. If Aid Another can only be used to help a designated party leader, and only once per round, this option only reduces the complexity by -1.

Total Victory: Complexity +0

This option lets the party continue to roll past the success threshold to gain some additional benefit. If the party gets two more successes above the number of required successes, they achieve a total victory and earn the added benefit. For example, a party sneaking into an evil wizards castle might get past the guards with a normal victory, but will also surprise the wizard with a total victory.

Once the party has rolled enough successes to win a challenge, continuing on to earn a total victory does not put the party at risk of losing the challenge. If they roll the number of failures that ends the challenge, the challenge ends with only a normal victory instead.

Partial Victory: Complexity +1

This option is similar to total victory above, except that the party suffer some setback if they only achieve a partial victory (an extra complication or some lost resource). The party can push on to achieve a total victory by earning two successes beyond the Victory Threshold if they want to win a clean victory with no side effects. For example, if the party earns a partial victory when negotiating for military aid from the king, he might agree to send forces but insists on sending his suspicious and somewhat hostile chamberlain along to monitor their actions.

The only difference between this option and the total victory option is that the party is penalized for only earning a partial victory instead of getting a bonus for earning a total victory.

Fewer Failures: Complexity +1

This option reduces the number of failures the party can have in a challenge. Each -1 to the failure threshold adds 1 to the complexity. This option should only be used to balance some of the beneficial options that reduce complexities, such as Aid Another.

Short Challenge: Complexity +0, half XP

Short challenges take less time than normal. Halve the number of successes and failures needed to complete the challenge. Halve success/failure adjustments for options like Total Victory, Partial Victory and Fewer Failures as well. This does not adjust the challenge complexity, but the XP earned from winning the challenge is halved. Challenges with multiple parts can be broken up into a series of short challenges. An short challenge is a good choice for challenges in combat.

DM Judgment: Complexity as appropriate.

Any special rules and other factors the DM includes should adjust the complexity appropriately.