

Tim's 4e Character Spreadsheet

Disclaimers

I make no representations whatsoever that I'm interested in supporting this project long-term. My hope remains that a third-party software developer will create a very cool application with which to manage Dungeons & Dragons 4e characters. If this works for you, that's awesome. If it doesn't, I'm sorry. Learn to code in VBA for Excel.

If I do support this thing, it will be done exclusively via the ENWorld forums.

This spreadsheet makes extensive use of VBA inside Microsoft Excel. If you're concerned about malicious software, go ahead and delete everything now.

It doesn't support Paragon Path or Epic Destiny mechanically. It might someday, if my players ever approach those levels.

Licensing

There isn't one, but if I see anyone copying this work or producing works derived mainly from it and calling it their own, I'll call you out publicly and make a huge fool out of you.

That said, if you want to improve upon my work and share it with others, feel free to do so, as long as you indicate your work is a derivative of mine.

Features

- ❖ Auto-calculates most important values
- ❖ Facilitates selection and subsequent semi-intelligent population of data for race, class, feats, powers, and rituals
- ❖ Data-driven via XML files for races, classes, powers, feats, and rituals
- ❖ Output in any of a variety of formats via the use of XSL style sheets
- ❖ Probably others

Prerequisites

This spreadsheet works best with Microsoft Excel 2007. It might work with Open Office. It might work with previous versions of Excel.

This spreadsheet assumes you have the latest version of MSXML installed. If you don't, you can get it from Microsoft's web site.

Installation

Unzip everything, maintaining directory structure, into the folder of your choice.

Configuration

Configuration is pretty simple. You just need to know where you unzipped the software. Once you know that:

1. Open the spreadsheet
2. Navigate to the configuration section
3. Set the Data File Path
4. Set the XSL Template Path
5. (Optional) Set the XML Output Path

The Data Path is the full path to the Data folder beneath the spreadsheet's main directory. The spreadsheet user must have read privileges to this folder.

The XSL template path is the full path to the XSL folder beneath the spreadsheet's main directory. The spreadsheet user must have read privileges to this folder.

The XML Output Path is used for debugging. If you set it, the spreadsheet will output the character's XML file to that path when you export for printing (see below). If you do not set it, the spreadsheet will not write any XML. The spreadsheet user must have create and write privileges to this folder.

Here's a pretty picture of the configuration section with the paths on MY MACHINE set. You'll use the paths that make sense for the folder into which you installed the program.

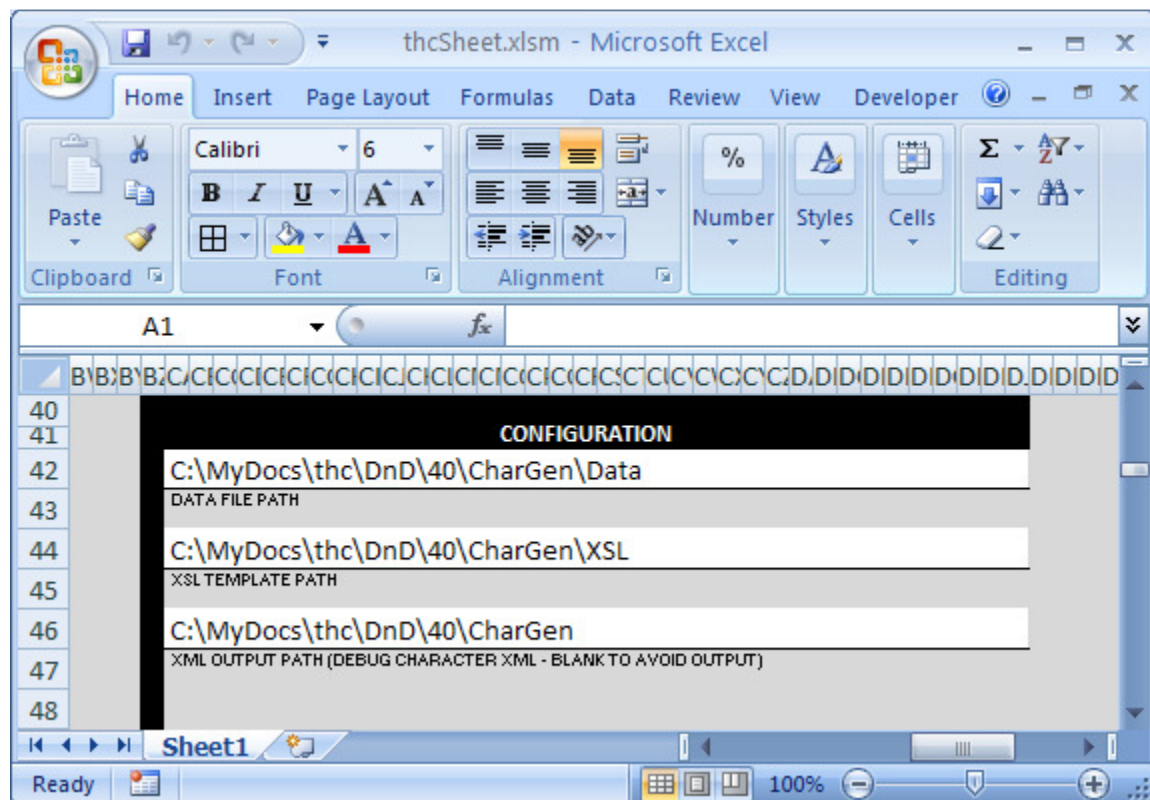


FIGURE 1 – CONFIGURATION SECTION

Creating Your Character

We're going to talk about rolling up a first level character here. If you want to go beyond that, have fun.

1. Make a copy of the spreadsheet file.
2. If you haven't already made a copy of the spreadsheet file, make a copy of the spreadsheet file. Now that you have a copy, name it for your character and open it in Excel 2007. Only open ONE character in Excel at a time. Depending on your screen resolution, you'll see something like this:

FIGURE 2 – FRESH NEW SPREADSHEET

3. In general, the stuff over on the right SHOULD NOT BE EDITED and the stuff over on the left can sometimes be. We'll step through it.
4. Enter data into the following fields, as desired, whenever you care to do so: Character Name, Player Name, Campaign Name, Age, Height, Weight, Gender, Alignment, Deity, Description, and Assets (items owned but not carried). Description is one of the fields that accepts HTML and will print it correctly on the character printout that ships with the spreadsheet (Simple Landscape).
5. Time to pick the fun stuff! Click the Race & Class button. You'll see this amazing interface:

FIGURE 3 – RACE & CLASS SELECTION

6. Pick your race and class. The values in these drop-downs are actually driven by data you can maintain! More on that later. Click OK when you're happy with your choices.
7. Ooh and aah as the spreadsheet automagically populates racial and class data. Notice in particular the Notes & Instructions section of the spreadsheet over there on the right. It will tell you some things you have to do. It will also tell you what you can use for armor, weapons, and such. Do the things it tells you to do.
8. Notice how we haven't populated our Ability scores yet? I don't like to do that until later, when I can see how my Ability Modifiers affect my skills and attacks. Just be patient. We'll get to it. If you're really impatient, you can skip ahead. Just make sure you come back to finish the rest of this off.
9. Let's do something fun, like pick our character's portrait now. On your own time, go find a nice, pretty picture of your character and put it somewhere on your hard drive. If you're using my default output sheet (Simple Landscape), it's going to size the character portrait to 140 pixels tall by however wide it comes out to be while preserving aspect ratio. Anyway, go ahead and click on that Portrait button and pick a picture. When you click OK, the spreadsheet will populate the full path into the Portrait field.

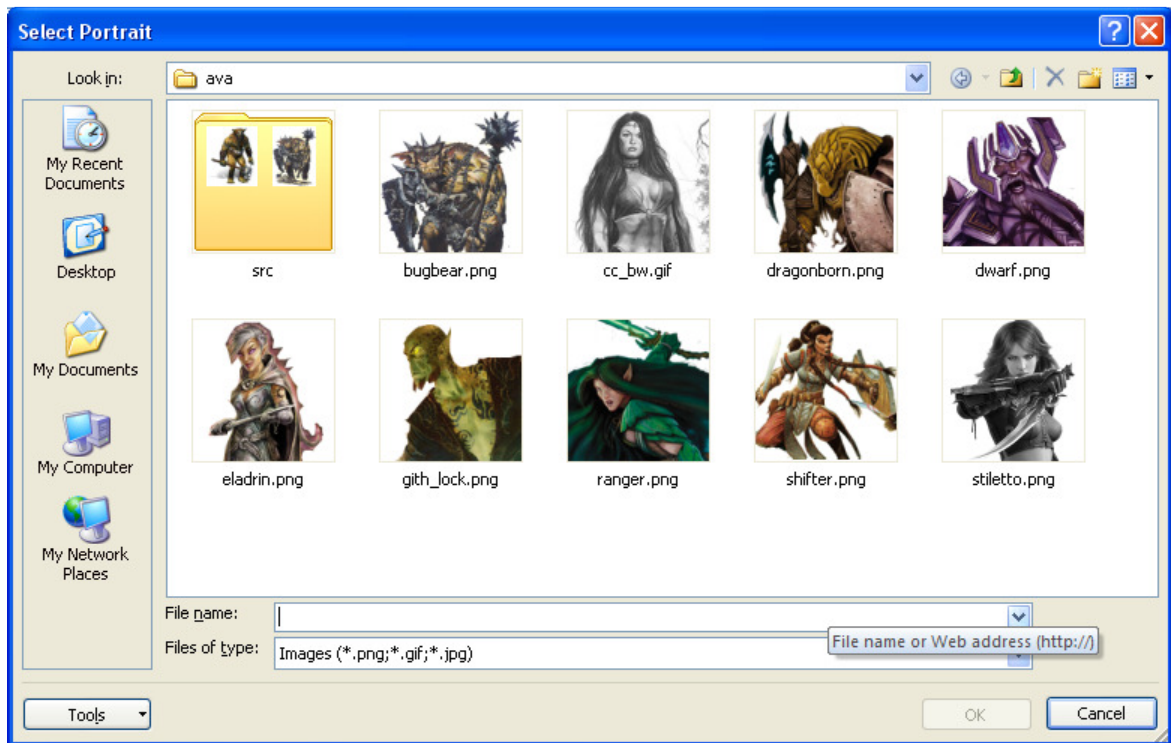


FIGURE 4 – PORTRAIT SELECTION

10. Pick your skills. You'll see how many you get by examining the Calculations section of the spreadsheet – specifically the # Skills field. Over under the Skills section, you'll see which ones are class skills, which are denoted by an X in the first column. Put an X under the second column for the skills you want to train. The only other column you should ever have to edit on the Skills area is the Misc bonus, and that's for modifiers that are driven by factors other than equipped gear and ability modifiers.

11. Pick your feat or feats. Do this by clicking the Feats button. Up comes a very cool Feats dialog. When you click on a Feat, it gives you the description of that Feat, as you configured it in your data set! You can filter the feat list by tier and by using keywords. When you use the keyword filter, the dialog filters on feats that *contain* the text you've typed in. When you're happy with the feats you've selected, click the Save button and watch in awe as the spreadsheet populates the feats into their proper location.

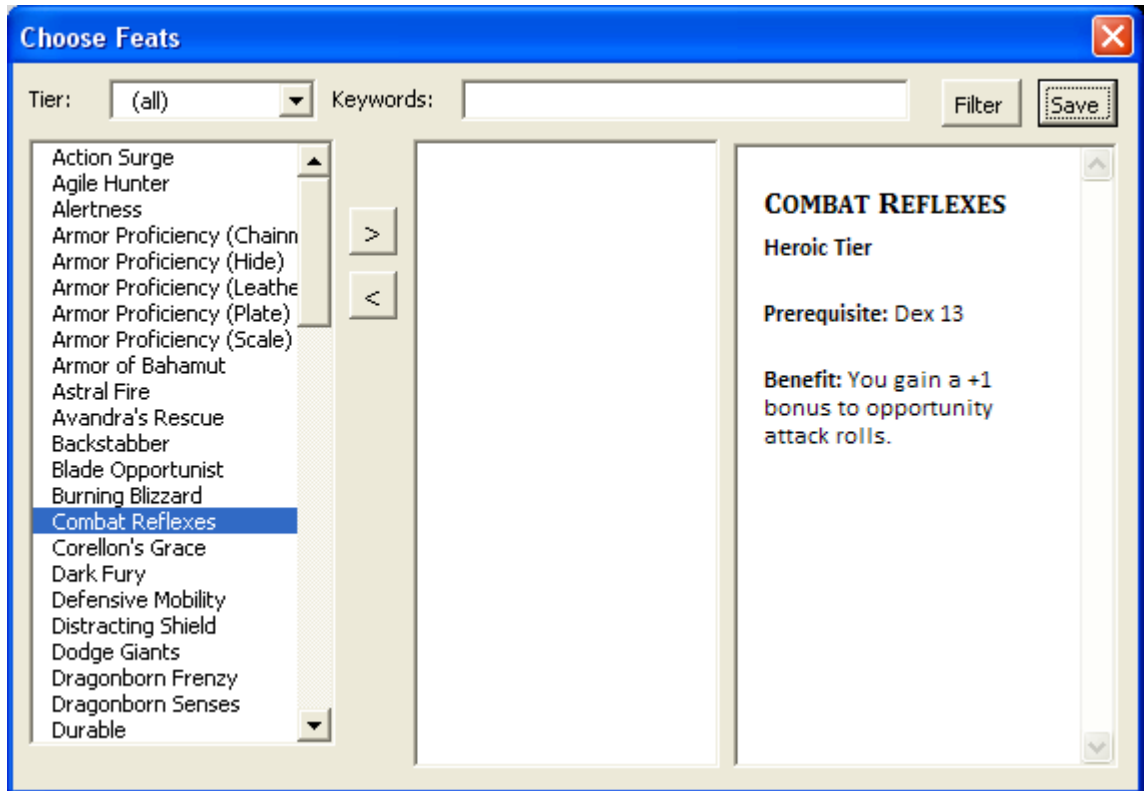


FIGURE 5 – FEAT SELECTION

12. Now we pick our powers. Go ahead and mash that Powers button and see THIS really cool interface. You can filter on a variety of things, including frequency (At-Will, Encounter, Daily), Race, Class, and Level. Notice that when you click on a Power, its power card is displayed in the UI for you. When you're happy with your Power selections, click the Save button and the spreadsheet will drop the powers into their proper place.

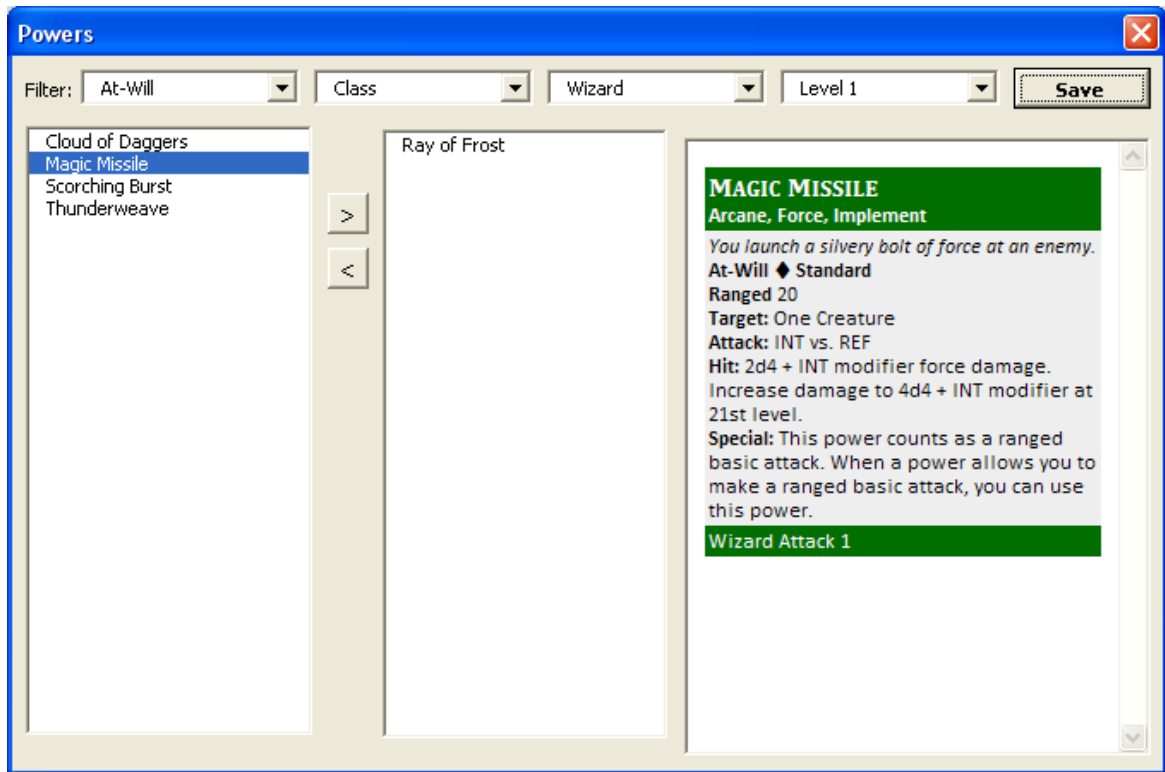


FIGURE 6 – POWER SELECTION

13. Typically I'll do equipment next. This is where I stopped attempting to add intelligence into this spreadsheet, so you get to type rather than pick from lists. So go ahead and type in your armor, weapons, and so forth. Make sure to include your defense modifiers, ability modifiers, speed, check, and type for armor and shields. These are all used in calculations throughout the spreadsheet. Weapon values are not used by the spreadsheet but are there for your reference.
14. When you're done with your equipment, make sure you enter in your remaining coin.

15. Might as well nail down Rituals while we're way down on the bottom of this sheet. If you don't have any, fine, move on to the next bullet. If you do, click that Rituals button, choose your rituals, and save. Another cool dialog is used for Rituals:

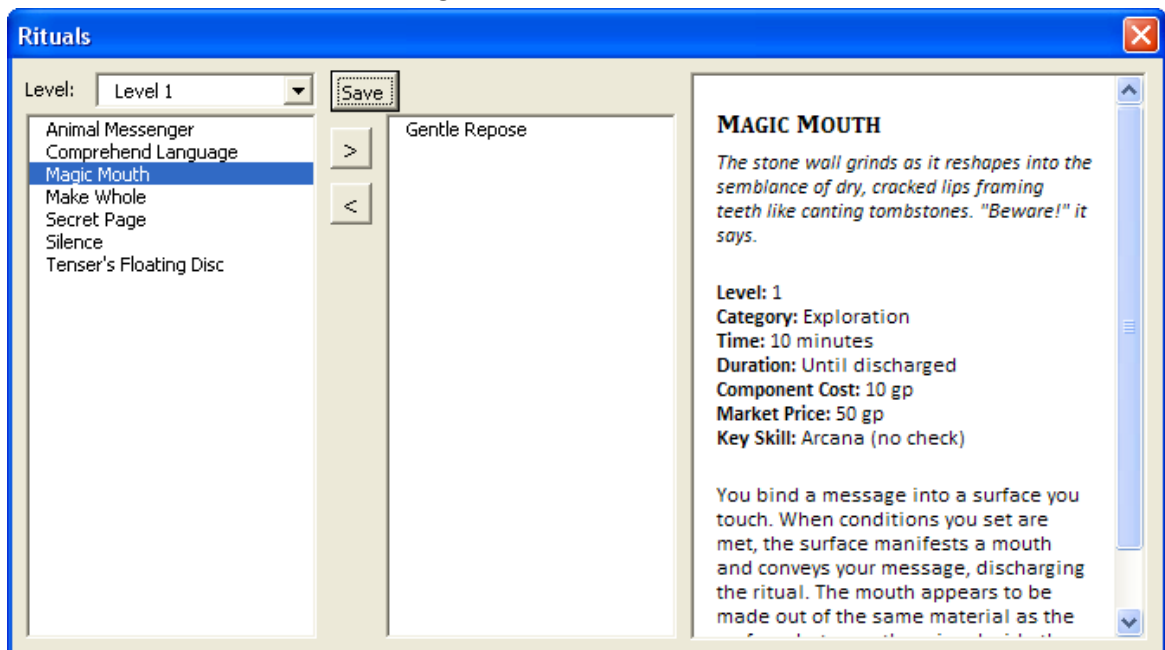


FIGURE 7 – RITUAL SELECTION

16. Now the easy parts are done. Time for you to do some typing and some math. And you thought you were going to just click your way through this...
17. ATTACKS! Time to populate these. You'll want to do your Melee Basic and, if you have it, Ranged Basic attacks. You'll also want to fill in rows for the attacks you use most frequently. Let's go through each editable column:
- Type is the type of attack it is (Melee Basic, Ranged, Area, etc.). This is list driven and corresponds to the D&D 4e font you might still be able to find at ENWorld and on other locations on the Intrawebs.
 - Attack / Power is the name of the attack or power.
 - Frequency is how often you can do it. Options are At-Will, Encounter, and Daily.
 - Action Type is the type of action it takes to do the attack. Options are Standard, Minor, Free, and Immediate.
 - Ability is the name of the ability whose modifier affects the attack's hit roll. Leave it blank of this attack's hit roll is not modified by an ability modifier.
 - Prof is the bonus for proficiency with your weapon or implement for the power.
 - Don't edit bonus. It's calculated. In general, do not edit gray fields.
 - Vs. Def is the defense that the attack, attacks.
 - Dmg Formula is the formula for damage. I'm particularly proud of this one. You can enter something like "2[W]+STR+CHA+5" and it will calculate it down to its simplest expression in the Damage column. As is typical for D&D 4e notation, [W] is weapon damage. Use upper-case, 3-letter abbreviations for ability modifiers.
 - Weapon is the damage calculation for your weapon.

- k. Don't edit the Damage column. It's calculated. Did you not already read that you're not supposed to edit gray fields?
- l. Range is your range, for ranged attacks. It's Excel. Put an apostrophe in front of it.
- m. Add notes if you want them. I use them to denote effects or the potential for secondary attacks (and I'll record the secondary attack as a new line).
- n. Add Attack Bonuses if they apply, for example a Fighter's +1 to attack with melee weapons would go under the Class bonus.

18. Whee! Time to do Abilities! This spreadsheet is set-up to do a slightly modified point-buy based on the 22 point buy described in the PHB. If you want to use any other method, just plug the scores you want into the BUY column and move on. If you're using point buy, plug values into the BUY column and watch the BUY field under the CALCULATIONS section. It will read 32 and turn green when you've achieved your point buy. Why 32? Because I was too lazy to code a 22 point buy based on 8,10,10,10,10,10 correctly so I made 10's worth 2 points each and did some math. Again, if you don't like it just figure out your base ability scores by hand and plug them into the BUY column and ignore the rest. It still works. Get over it.

Printing Your Character

Click the Print button. Pick a template (XSL File). Pick a save file name. Decide whether or not you want to open the printout immediately (in your web browser). Click OK. You get something like this:

The figure displays two sample printouts of a character sheet. The left printout is a 'Simple Landscape' template, and the right printout is a 'Simple Landscape' template. Both printouts show a character's stats, abilities, and equipment in a structured, tabular format. The left printout includes a character portrait and a list of abilities. The right printout includes a character portrait and a list of abilities. Both printouts are designed to be printed as a single page.

FIGURE 8 – SAMPLE PRINTOUT

Of course, your specific output depends on what template you chose. The above is the only template that ships with the software – “Simple Landscape”. Oh, and you’ll want to print preview in your browser

and set output to landscape before printing if you use that template. Browsers don't print landscape by default.

Why, Yes, It Is Data-Driven!

XML files drive your options for Race, Class, Feats, Powers, and Rituals. The XML files are all stored in your Data folder beneath the folder into which you unzipped the software.

If you're smart enough to modify these data files, you're smart enough to figure out their format so I'm not covering it here. Have fun!

Why Yes, Output Is Template-Driven!

Output templates are driven via XSL template files. These template files are stored in the XSL file beneath the folder into which you unzipped the software.

If you want to see a full character XML stream, use the DEBUG configuration described above and look for a file named "thcSheet.xml" in that location after you do a print. Again, if you're smart enough to create or modify an XSL template file, I don't need to describe the character's XML structure to you in this document.

Known Issues

- ❖ Every once in a while, for reasons I haven't figured out, VBA in Excel freaks out and starts ignoring itself in this spreadsheet. When this happens, revert to a back-up copy. Save early, save often.
- ❖ Don't add rows to sections. If you add rows, you need to go update VBA code that tells the spreadsheet's export function (and sometimes the code that populates sections from dialog choices) how many rows there are in a section. You may also need to edit the XSL templates. It's very messy. Likewise, don't delete rows from sections.