



ULTIMATE TOOLBOX

ALDERAC ENTERTAINMENT GROUP PRESENTS ULTIMATE TOOLBOX

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DEDICATION FOR ERIC WUJCIK, WHO INSPIRED US ALL**

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◀ INTRODUCTION ▶

Introduction

I don't work well in a void. Being an avid fantasy game master for nearly 30 years, I sometimes take my active imagination for granted. Indeed, we gamers all have the wonderful ability beyond the mundane to create worlds, stories and characters on par with authors and screenwriters.

And at other times... not.

I usually work at my best when my imagination is lit by a spark...just a little something to get me going. I've crafted entire adventures from a single piece of fantasy artwork. I've devised encounters and NPCs specifically off a good painted miniature that catches my eye. I've even crafted an entire campaign after listening to a song by Fleetwood Mac.

It was this need for *sparks* that initially inspired Dawn to write the articles known as "Miscellaneous Mishaps" for a certain magazine about Dragons. Being behind that screen is taxing enough, but adding in little details, description and unique trappings are part of the job, and expected by players. It was this logic that led to the development of the first *Toolbox* by our wise friends at AEG (and the lists we all knew we needed thanks to a book on the subject by Gary Gygax in 1979).

While the original *Toolbox* was designed for GMs, we found that players were mining it for character hooks to flesh out character backgrounds and histories. This book continues in that tradition and is even more valuable to both players and GMs like never before.

Here then — in development for nearly five years — is *Ultimate Toolbox*. At game conventions, email chats and online message boards, we've seen the original *Toolbox* appear again and again on favorite book lists and folks always asked if more lists were coming.

Here is that work.

Beleaguered game masters everywhere, rejoice. We think these tables complement the original but this tome alone should be enough to help add flavor and detail to any game session you run.

Enjoy!

— Jeff Ibach

I can remember my fascination with charts and tables going back to high school gaming. Even before that I had a love affair with baseball statistics and numbers. Heck, I used to read encyclopedia entries for fun. When I saw the potential for a random name generator in my fantasy roleplaying (at the age of 12), I didn't let my lack of understanding about diphthongs and bilabial tones stop me from making the world's worst graph of syllables, consonants, and vowels.

My fascination with charts died when I got to college where I was writing stories, rather than building complex game worlds. Certainly they would always be my mistress, as some of my past designs and campaigns would suggest, but I never loved them with the same enthusiasm... only turning to them before a game, never during.

All of that changed when I started working on the *7th Sea* and *Legend of the Five Rings* roleplaying games. All of a sudden, I found myself buying reference books again, pouring over foreign language dictionaries, and letting myself get inspired by something as simple as a song title or lyric. Inspiration was everywhere and once again I was a sponge, soaking up the data that would be used for great adventures.

This book is a culmination of years of not just gaming, but the inspiration for that gaming—both my side of the table as well as Jeff's and Dawn's. This book is packed with stuff. I wish there was more, to be honest. As I write this, I can't help but imagine that we left out a chart about how to cook a wyvern or where to dispose of a mummy... hmm... hey Jeff!

— jim pinto



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USING ULTIMATE TOOLBOX

Generic lists are everywhere. Some give you 2,000 species of parrots; some provide 3,000 kinds of trees. You get the idea. And while we appreciate levels of detail, this book offers a wider variety of subjects we felt were more vital at the game table itself or in preparation for running a game, not preparing a lecture on biology or botany. This book doesn't pretend to be anything more than an adventure and persona builder, GM's tabletop companion and writer's-block buster.

Some folks like to read *Toolbox* before a game. While waiting for players to arrive, they enjoy just flipping through, making mental notes, or jotting down some ideas that strike their fancy to include in the session. Sometimes reading through a section is enough to get your creative juices flowing and allows you to feel better prepared for improvisational narrative.

If you know the party is coming to a city, or about to explore a forest or take a sea journey, turning to the pertinent sections and perusing the entries gives you tons of ideas to add flavor and detail. Better yet, an unexpected twist or confrontation to the story.

When creating a new character or bit part for a roleplaying game, there is plenty here from naming it, to determining personality, background, quirks, and appearance, either randomly or by picking your favorite entry.

Last but not least, with a healthy dose of sticky tabs and easy access to this tome's index, this book suddenly becomes vital when the players either go off the beaten path or do something unexpected. By letting your eye catch an entry or with a simple roll of a 20-sided die, you can determine what they see, hear, smell, encounter and what other possibilities present themselves.

OVERVIEW AND INDEX

It's not always obvious where a table might appear in this book. Some chapters have vague sweeping themes and it may not make immediate sense that Black Market (for instance) is in the Maritime chapter, but once you realize that smugglers and pirates are, well...

We've tried to be logical and still make the book useful. On the next two pages, you can find an overview of each chapter, with some hint as to what you might find inside. And of course, at the end of the book, there's an index to cross-reference all the meaty bits.



◀ INTRODUCTION ▶

CHAPTER ONE

Here we can help you visualize your game persona. A good character needs a name (actually these are in the appendix), a motivation, a good memorable quirk or two, and the details that make it stand out among the crowd. This chapter helps with all those things, and more; not just naming a character, but giving it a reason to adventure, helping flesh out a fear, and idiosyncratic details that make it come to life (even familiars, mounts, and pets). Keep an eye and marker here. Many times in different chapters the need for a name will arise, from a location, NPC or another special character from the past. These are just as useful for helping a GM prepare characters the players will meet as it is for players crafting memorable heroes.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter helps you create worlds and flesh out campaign details. While it doesn't draw the map for you, it should trigger plenty of ideas and offer inspiration. If anything, it helps you realize some of the more overlooked features world builders sometimes leave behind. If you are about to cross over a mountain range to an unexplored area of your own home game or build a world from scratch, there are some valuable tools here to help in this endeavor.

Draw out an area shape on graph or hex paper using information in whatever game master book you're using. Don't forget the borders of nations. Name them, decide on their governments, and then fill them in with loads of choices from the various "map features" charts. Give each realm a personality based on some of the more flavorful entries of the campaign hooks, astrology, cataclysms, and years of importance, tailoring each decision to the realm to give it its own feel and history.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter follows a distinct flow that may not readily be apparent. First, are tables that help a GM view and build a city. It answers the basic questions — how big is it, what is the population like, who rules (and who really rules). Next are descriptive tables that help the GM visualize and describe a city from a character's point of view, almost like a tour. This is a basic city description (perhaps as seen from a distance) and lore they may have heard, followed by the city gates and the initial architecture. There are sights, sounds and smells to help set the mood. Finally, the chapter delves into the different places the characters will explore and interact with — merchants, guilds, inns, taverns, and the like — and the various interests that naturally attract adventurers.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter collects all the information you'll need when the characters set sail for the high seas. The first part details various ports of call and dockside encounters and descriptions. This section is best used in conjunction with the cities chapter to build ports. The rest of the chapter delves into ships, maritime missions and interesting information and encounters while sailing. It's a grab-bag of nautical information, slang, treasure, and adventure hooks. Here you can name your ship, determine the wind and weather, use terms to liven up your role-playing and gather loads of lore to inspire seagoing PCs.

We realize the sea sometimes offers limited choices for characters and the types of encounters you can have. We also recognize that many game masters wish to inject something different or detailed in such a journey other than "you travel the high seas for three days and reach your destination." This chapters helps you explore the many game possibilities of high seas travel... with a healthy dose of pirates.

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CHAPTER FIVE

More than any other chapter, these entries may come in most handy for fleshing out an unprepared section of a dungeon. When the “impassable passage” suddenly becomes clear, or the characters wander down a corridor the text reveals as “please extrapolate on your own, we ran out of room here,” you’re all set. How do they get in, what are the walls like, what’s in the room, on the walls, in the chambers and how is it lit? What do they see hear and smell? How about the secret doors you know are there somewhere? It’s all here.

Alternatively, if you are preparing for an adventure in a small dungeon environment, this chapter helps you map it out, decide what types of rooms, chambers, corridors and special features to include and some of the special treasures to be unearthed.

CHAPTER SIX

Have plenty of feudal knights and wily rogues but need some mysterious magic to shake up the campaign and keep it fantastic? This is the chapter to use. Helping expand your horizons and imagination when it comes to magic in your game, this chapter provides different magical power sources, loads of evocative names for magic items and devices, and various rituals and the like. Magic item creation flavor helps explore the interesting side of forging enchanted items and we provide you with magical mishaps, command words for items, spell component ideas and magical concoctions made from alchemy and nature.

Finally, this chapter delves a bit into extraplanar travel and the possibilities of devising your campaign’s cosmos. From the portals, keys and hazards needed to travel the planes, to folk you might encounter there and the communities they live in, we try exploring a number of options for your design including alternative planes and planar factions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

We have already said that many treat *Ultimate Toolbox* as a cure for common writer’s block. If that’s the case, we hope this chapter will become vital in developing your own adventures, or better yet, tailoring premade adventures to your game group. There are literally thousands of ideas, sparks, and premade plots to steal from and make your own. We have tables allowing you to take a simple plot and diabolically twist it in new, surprising ways. Trying to avoid stereotypes and typical adventure fare when we can, we hope to liven up your stories with evocative locations, interesting encounters and developing and naming villains and henchmen. Recognizing the role religion plays in many campaigns, there is enough work in here to create pantheons, grand-scale plotlines and destinies to fulfill.

APPENDIX

At last we reach the extra GM goodies. Names, mostly, but we’ve thrown in a few random charts to flesh out places in the book where theme was more powerful than editing. And we put over 20 pages of names together (real and fantastic), all in one place.

And after that, there’s an extremely useful index as well. How’s that for door to door service?

Finally, we want to say thank you to some of the fans out there who loved *Toolbox* so much that you recommended new tables for this one. Your love of charts almost makes this worth it. But really, we do it for the millions of dollars and not the fame like so many people assume.

