

## DM Samuel's 5e House Rules

### Add an Old-School Feel to Your 5e Game

#### Part I Character Generation

- 1) **Races:** Choose from the following races:
 

a. Dwarf	e. Gnome (except Deep Gnome/Svirfneblin)
b. Elf (except Dark Elf/Drow)	f. Half-Elf
c. Halfling	g. Half-Orc
d. Human (Standard or Variant)	
  
- 2) **Birthplace/Culture:** Each PC must roll for or choose a birthplace and culture appropriate to the setting. Use the national and/or cultural information in the setting-specific rules document to help make your choice.
  
- 3) **Height & Weight:** Roll height and weight as per your race entry on PHB page 121.

- 4) **Age:** Determine your character's age by rolling the appropriate dice per the table below:

Race	Age of Maturity	Max Age Range	Age at 1 <sup>st</sup> Level
Dwarf	50	350-400	1d20+50
Elf	100	750-900	2d20+100
Halfling	20	150-225	4d8+20
Human	18	80-100	1d4+18
Gnome	40	400-500	3d10+40
Half-Elf	20	180-220	1d6+20
Half-Orc	14	60-75	1d4+14

- 5) **Class & Subclass:** Choose your class & subclass from the following table (and continued onto the next page):

Class	PHB Subclasses	Xanathar's Subclasses	Tasha's Subclasses
<b>Barbarian</b>	Path of the Berserker Path of the Totem Warrior	Path of the Zealot	
<b>Cleric</b>	Knowledge Domain Life Domain Light Domain Nature Domain Trickery Domain War Domain	Forge Domain	Order Domain Peace Domain
<b>Druid</b>	Circle of the Land (except Underdark) Circle of the Moon	Circle of Dreams Circle of the Shepherd	Circle of Spores
<b>Fighter</b>	Champion Battle Master	Cavalier	
<b>Monk</b>	Way of the Open Hand	Way of the Drunken Master Way of the Kensei	

Class	PHB Subclasses	Xanathar's Subclasses	Tasha's Subclasses
<b>Paladin</b>	Oath of Devotion Oath of the Ancients Oath of Vengeance	Oath of Conquest	Oath of Glory Oath of the Watchers
<b>Ranger</b>	Hunter Beast Master	Monster Slayer	Swarmkeeper
<b>Rogue</b>	Thief	Inquisitive Mastermind Swashbuckler	
<b>Sorcerer</b>	Wild Magic Bloodline		
<b>Wizard</b>	School of Abjuration School of Conjuration School of Divination School of Enchantment School of Evocation School of Illusion School of transmutation		

- 6) **Multiclassing:** No multiclassing allowed – choose your class wisely.
- 7) **Backgrounds:** The following backgrounds are restricted/prohibited:
  - a. Folk Hero
  - b. Hermit
  - c. Noble
  - d. Urchin
- 8) **Deity:** Clerics and Paladins MUST choose a deity that matches their domain/oath. See the deity table in the setting-specific document to help make your choice.
- 9) **Level:** Everyone starts at level 1.
- 10) **Ability Score Generation:** Roll 4d6 and drop the lowest, add the other 3 together, repeat the roll 5 more times, put the 6 resulting numbers into attributes in any order you like
  - a. No attribute can be above 18 at the start of the game
- 11) **Wealth:** Roll starting wealth by class as per PHB page 163, buy equipment as per PHB costs. Do not take the class equipment sets described in the class section.
- 12) **Alignment:** PCs must be non-evil.
- 13) **Languages:** No exotic languages can be learned (see language list on PHB page 123).
- 14) **Hit Points:** HP at level 1 is maximum + CON mod (later level-ups get no CON bonus).
- 15) **Spells:** In general, only spells from the PHB are in the game unless they are granted by a subclass on the list in #5. If you want to use spells from Xanathar's Guide or Tasha's Cauldron, consult with the DM first.

16) **Family Profession:** Roll on the Family Profession table below to find your family profession. You have the basic skills and knowledge to work in this profession in some capacity. If the profession has two or three items separated by a / then you must choose one.

Roll	Family Profession	Roll	Family Profession
01	Acrobatics/Contortionist	36	Wainwright/Wheelwright
02-04	Shepherd/Rancher	37	Cobbler/Bootmaker
05	Brewer/Distiller	38	Weaver/Dyer/Sailmaker
06	Blacksmith/Armorer	39-41	Leatherworker/Tanner
07-09	Construction/Laborer	42-44	Butcher/Meat Preparer
10	Alchemist/Apothecary	45	Merchant/Sales/Broker
11	Appraisal (Gold/Gems)	46-47	Fletcher (Arrowsmith)
12	Cooper (Barrel Maker)	48-49	Bowyer (Bow Crafter)
13	Limner/Painter/Sign-maker	50-75	Farmer (Food Crops)
14	Animal Husbandry/Breeding	76	Textile Artisan/Clothing Maker
15	Cook/Chef/Food Preparer	77	Artisan (Wood)
16	Artisan (Stone)	78-79	Potter or Glassblower
17-18	Forester/Lumberjack	80-84	Miller/Lumber or Grain Processor
19	Jeweler/Gem Cutter	85-91	Fisher/Boatman
20	Herbalist/Botanist	92	Scribe/Calligrapher/Scrivener
21-27	Town Guard/Militia/Castellan	93-94	Tavernkeep/Innkeep/Server
28	Orator/Speaker/Herald	95	Steward/Butler/Valet/Porter
29-32	Mason/Brickmaker	92-96	Weaponsmith (Non-Bow)
33	Doctor/Dentist/Bloodletter	97-98	Musician/Singer
34	Sage: Weather	99	Sage: Terrain (Choose Type)
35	Sage: History (Local or Regional)	100	Sage: Deities/Religion

17) **Feats:** Feats are 100% optional in this game. If you want to take a feat, you can choose from the following list:

- a. Athlete
- b. Actor
- c. Charger
- d. Crossbow Expert
- e. Dual Wielder
- f. Dungeon Delver
- g. Grappler
- h. Great Weapon Master
- i. Healer (only for cleric PCs)
- j. Heavily Armored
- k. Heavy Armor Master
- l. Lightly Armored
- m. Linguist
- n. Martial Adept
- o. Medium Armor Master
- p. Mobile
- q. Moderately Armored
- r. Mounted Combat
- s. Polearm Master
- t. Ritual Caster (must be caster class)
- u. Savage Attacker
- v. Shield Master
- w. Tavern Brawler
- x. Tough

## Part II Combat Rules

- 1) **Flanking/Facing:** No Flanking or Facing rules apply.
- 2) **Firing into Melee:** Targeting an opponent who is in melee with an ally is dangerous. If you miss, you have a chance to hit an ally. Make another attack roll and if it hits the AC of an ally engaged in melee with the original target, the attack hits the ally. Roll damage as normal.
- 3) **Massive Damage:** Rules as per DMG page 273 are used, in brief: When a creature takes damage from a single source equal to or greater than half its hit point maximum, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or suffer a random effect determined by a roll on the System Shock table. For example, a creature that has a hit point maximum of 30 must make that Constitution save if it takes 15 damage or more from a single source.

Roll (1d10)	Massive Damage/System Shock Effect
1	The creature drops to 0 hit points.
2-3	The creature drops to 0 hit points but is stable.
4-5	The creature is stunned until the end of its next turn.
6-7	The creature can't take reactions and has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the end of its next turn.
8-10	The creature can't take reactions until the end of its next turn.

- 4) **Exhaustion:** During combat PCs will suffer a level of exhaustion when any of the following occur:
  - a. A PC takes a critical hit
  - b. When a PC drops to 0 hit points but isn't killed outright
  - c. When a PC fails a death saving throw by 5 or more
- 5) **Healing:**
  - a. **Healing upon rest:** You do NOT regain full hit points upon finishing a long rest. You must spend HD to regain hit points.
  - b. **Healer's Kit Dependency:** We will use the Healer's Kit Dependency optional rules from the DMG (page 266); briefly, A character can't spend any Hit Dice until someone expends one use of a healer's kit to bandage and treat the character's wounds.
- 6) **Cleaving:** I use a modified version of the Cleaving through Creatures rule from DMG page 272. I have modified this to make for a more cinematic game in which the melee fighter/tank can shine if the party is fighting a group of creatures with more than 4 combatants per PC. If the majority of enemies are 3 or more CR lower than the PC's level, when a melee attack reduces a creature to 0 hit points, any excess damage from that attack might carry over to another creature nearby. The attacker targets another creature within reach and, if the original attack roll can hit it, applies any remaining damage to it. If that creature likewise reduced to 0 hit points, repeat this process, carrying over the remaining damage until there are no targets in melee range, or until the damage carried over fails to reduce a creature to 0 hit points.

- 7) **Critical Hits:** a natural 20 on an attack roll is not an automatic hit, but if the roll *does* hit the target, that roll is a critical hit. Critical hits do max damage + damage by weapon. For example, if the weapon normally does 1d8 damage, then a critical hit does an automatic 8 damage + a regular damage roll (that possibly includes the attacking PC's modifier).
- 8) **Fear Effects:** I feel the fear effect in 5e is weak. Therefore, I use a modified form of the frightened condition from PHB Appendix A. The condition as written states that a frightened creature has disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls while the source of its fear is within line of sight. The creature can't willingly move closer to the source of its fear. Sometimes when the frightened condition is imposed by a creature, it includes the sentence: "On its turn a frightened creature must use its movement to move away from the source of its fear until the source is no longer in line of sight." In my games, that last sentence applies to all frightened individuals, with the following addendum: Once the source is not in line of sight and cannot be heard by the afflicted creature, a new saving throw against fear can be attempted. This means the affected individual cannot make a save until they are out of BOTH line of sight AND earshot. These two small changes make terrifying creatures even more terrifying because the PC cannot simply turn their back or move 5 feet and hide behind a pillar and suddenly get over their fear 6 seconds later. Instead, they **MUST** move farther away before they can even attempt another save. Demons, Devils, and Dragons just got a lot more frightening!
- 9) **Morale Rules:** I use morale rules modified from the optional ones on DMG page 273, briefly; A creature fighting the PCs might flee under certain circumstances. Those circumstances include but are not limited to being bloodied, having the leader of a group killed, and having half of their group die in battle. The morale check is a Wisdom saving throw with a DC based on the creature and situation. A failed save leads to the creature/group attempting to flee. In general, PCs are NOT subject to the morale roll, but there could be specific circumstances that force a morale roll for PCs. Here is a sample morale reaction table; I use this one for goblins which have a low morale score, and therefore high WIS save DC because they are generally cowardly. If they fail the WIS save, 2d6 are rolled and I consult the following table:

Roll 2d6	Effect / Resultant Behavior
2	Goblins stay and fight, against all odds
3-4	Goblins retreat after attacking one last time
5-8	Goblins flee, but ranged attackers try to cover others as they go
9-11	Goblins flee in terror, without worrying about their comrades' fate
12	Goblins drop weapons and surrender, begging for their lives

- 10) **Death Saves:** Normally, as written in 5e, death save successes/failures reset to zero when you regain any hit points or become stable. In this game, that is not the case. Death saving throw failures only reset on a long rest.

## Part III Adventuring Rules

- 1) **Dice/Spell Effect/Ability Stacking:** Only one die can be added to any given d20 roll. This means no stacking of Bless, Guidance, Bardic Inspiration, and whatever else the party can muster, onto a single roll.
- 2) **Vision:** Vision is important in the game. Darkvision means that within a specified range, you can see in dim light as if it were bright light and in darkness as if it were dim light, so areas of darkness are only lightly obscured as far as that creature is concerned.

Lighting	Description	Effect
<b>Bright Light</b>	Not obscured, includes daylight, lantern light, torchlight, firelight, magical light	Most creatures see normally
<b>Dim Light</b>	Lightly obscured, includes patchy fog, moderate foliage, twilight at dusk and dawn, unobstructed full moon	Disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight; cannot see color; lots of shadows persist
<b>Darkness</b>	Heavily Obscured, includes nighttime (even under a moon), underground, magical darkness	Blinded; the creature can't see and automatically fails any ability check that requires sight. Attack rolls against the creature have advantage, and the creature's attack rolls have disadvantage

- 3) **Inspiration:** Each PC starts every session with 1 Inspiration point which can be used any time during the session or can be given to another player at a critical moment for any reason. No other inspiration is awarded by me during a session.
- 4) **Rolling Dice:** No die should be rolled at the table until asked for by the DM - any premature roll is ignored, no matter how good the roll was.
- 5) **HP Increases:** When PCs level up, a raw HD is rolled to add to HP for the level gain. Rolls of a 1 can be rerolled once. No CON modifier is added.
- 6) **Encumbrance:** We will be using the standard encumbrance rules (PHB page 176 – lifting and carrying). They are fairly basic and we won't track things too closely, but you should know a rough estimate of how much weight your PC is carrying. We go with the rule of reasonableness regarding what can be carried.
- 7) **Spell Components:** Spell components are very important to wizards and other casters. I assume that many of the basically gatherable items are within easy acquisition (i.e. sand, a feather, string, dirt, gold coin, incense, sumac leaf, etc). However, other items must be actively sought or gathered any time the caster gets a chance (pearls, ruby dust, piece of tentacle from a giant octopus, etc) and so will not necessarily be readily available. Diamonds, rare pearls, and highly decorative bowls worth 5000 GP are not so easily found. A spell focus does not automatically negate the need for a spell component.

- 8) **Sleeping:** While sleeping you remove your armor unless otherwise stated. If you are on watch, I will assume you donned your armor and have your weapon at the ready. A PC who sleeps with armor on must succeed on a DC 12 CON saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion.
- 9) **Weapon Stowage:** While walking around town or moving through an urban area your weapons are assumed to be stowed away. The same is true of typical wilderness travel, in which your weapons would be stowed unless something alerted you to danger ahead.
- 10) **Identification of Magical Items:** The 5e ID rules as written are **NOT** used - they take all the fun and mystery out of magical items. *"Here, just hold this in your hand and think about it for an hour and suddenly you know everything about it!"* That's just... no. Instead, in my game there are three ways to identify a magic item. The expensive way is to find a sage/wizard/hireling who can cast *identify* for the PCs as a service. Once a spellcasting PC is high enough level, of course they can choose to prepare and cast the spell themselves (FYI: the *Identify* spell cannot be cast as a ritual in my game). In lieu of casting the spell, the party can find out what an item is/does via learning about the item through use of said item, as follows:
- Potions:** PCs can taste the potion and try to get a hint of what its effects will be. It will not be determined with 100% surety unless they have had that type of potion before (in which case the taste would be recognized). It is possible to suffer side effects from tasting different potions.
  - Magic Weapons/Armor:** A PC has to use it/wear it for at least 24 hours and/or have its effect triggered by the appropriate situation in-game to find out what it does.
  - Magic Casting Item (rod/staff/wand):** Must be used by a PC and they cannot tell how many charges it has left if it is a charged item.
  - Non-Wearable Magic Item:** Must use it or do some research (in-game via a sage or library) otherwise there is no way to tell just by holding it.
  - Wearable Magic Item (bracelet/ring/necklace/etc):** Same as weapons/armor - PC has to put it on and use it or have its effect triggered by the situation (i.e. if it is a ring of protection, the first time the PC gets hit, they will realize it gave them a +1 to AC).
- 11) **Read Magic:** If you choose a class that provides arcane magical ability you automatically gain the ability to read magic. If you get training in the *arcana* skill you gain the ability to read magic. This includes a spell from someone else's spell-book, a spell on a scroll, mystical runes on a magic item, or a magical glyph. Deciphering this writing neither activates its magic nor identifies any magical properties it might possess. To read magical writing on an object you must be within 5 feet of the writing and spend time deciphering it. The time spent is indicated on the table below:

Item	Size	Time
Unfamiliar Glyph	A few symbols	5-10 minutes
Etching on Small Object	A sentence or two	10 minutes per sentence
Parchment	1-3 pages	15 min per page
Spell Scroll or Spellbook Pages	# pages = to spell level	1 hour per spell level per page
Long Document (non-Spellbook)	Multiple pages of cyphers	1 hour per page at the discretion of the DM

- 12) **Restricted or Modified Spells:** The spells *Guidance* and *Healing Spirit* do not exist on any caster's spell list. Damage dealing cantrips do NOT increase damage output as the PC levels up.

- 13) **Casting Spells from a Scroll:** Casting a spell from a scroll can be dangerous. Arcane casters can cast a spell that is not in their spell-book from a scroll automatically. If the PC does not already know spells of the level of the spell scroll, they must make an Intelligence (Arcana) check with a DC equal to 10 + the spell's level. Failure of this check doesn't necessarily mean that the spell does not go off, but it may have some side effects. Because those trained in arcana can read magic, it is theoretically possible for a non-caster to decipher and read a spell scroll. In this case, the Intelligence (Arcana) check is made with disadvantage.