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BEING A SELECTION  
OF HOUSE RULES FOR  
**OLD SCHOOL**  
**ROLEPLAYING GAMES**  
BASED UPON THE OSE SYSTEM  
- AND -  
TWEAKED FOR THE CAMPAIGN SETTING OF  
**THE HALLS OF ARDEN VUL**

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*Old School Essentials is by Gavin Norman.*

*The Halls of Arden Vul is by Richard Barton.*

*These house rules cribbed from various OSR luminaries, largely Gavin Norman (Carcass Crawler and Dolmenwood), Arnold K (goblinpunch), and Jon Britton (3d6DTL).*

# 1. GAME SYSTEM

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## 1.1 CHARACTERS

### **Character Creation.**

Use the “basic” (race-as-class) rules.

### **Ability Scores.**

Roll 4D6DL1 down the line.

### **Allowed Classes.**

Acolyte, Assassin, Bard, Cleric, Dwarf, Elf, Fighter, Goblin, Half-Elf, Halfling, Illusionist, Mage, Magic-User, Paladin, Phase-Elf, Thief.

The Acolyte, Goblin, and Mage classes are from *Carcass Crawler* issue 1. The Phase-Elf class is from *Carcass Crawler* issue 2.

### **Starting Hit Points.**

If your HP total is below the average of your hit die (3, 4, or 5), take that instead.

### **Starting Languages.**

Archontean, native cultural, plus a number of extra languages based on your Intelligence score. Choose from: Mithric, Thorcin, Wiskin, Khumus, or cultural.

### **Starting Equipment.**

Roll on the Quick Equipment table in *Carcass Crawler* issue 2 for your class.

### **Arcane Spellcasters.**

Use the optional Advanced Spell Book Rules.

New spells are not gained automatically. Learn spells by:

- Copying from another source.
- Spending time and money on magical research.
- Studying with a mentor.

If a character fails to learn a spell, they must level up before attempting to learn it from the same source again.

### **Acolytes, Assassins, Mages, and Thieves.**

Use the D6 Thief Skills system from *Carcass Crawler* issue 1, modified slightly. All skills start at a 1-in-6 chance, and cannot increase beyond a 5-in-6 chance.

<b>Acolyte</b> <sup>1</sup>	1 point at first level	3 points per level
<b>Assassin</b>	3 points at first level	1 point per level <sup>2</sup>
<b>Mage</b>	7 points at first level	1 point per level
<b>Thief</b> <sup>3</sup>	6 points at first level	2 points per level

1. The Turn Undead ability remains percentage-based.
2. Except at levels 5, 10, and 14.
3. The Read Languages ability is now a skill, and starts at 1-in-6 at first level.

### **Fighters.**

Choose a Combat Talent from *Carcass Crawler* issue 1 at 1st, 5th, and 10th level.

### **Goblins.**

Replace the “Wolf Affinity” ability with the “Listening at Doors” ability as described in the Dwarf class.

### **Illusionists and Magic-Users.**

Start with Read Magic, for free. They can also use staves as weapons in addition to daggers.

## 1.2 ADVANCEMENT

### **Levelling Up.**

When a party member (PC or retainer) gains enough experience to go up a level, they immediately increase their hit points but do not gain any other benefits of the new level until they spend a week training with a mentor NPC. This costs 1500gp, though the mentor may ask a PC to perform a task in lieu of payment.

Arcane spellcasters with space in their spellbook gain a new spell for free as part of this training.

### **Downtime.**

PCs may carouse (§ 3) or practice philanthropy (§ 5) in a settlement to gain XP.

### **Exploration.**

Upon returning to a safe haven, bonus XP will be awarded to all surviving characters (both PCs and retainers) for any feats of exploration (§ 4) the party achieved.

### **Treasure.**

Upon returning to a safe haven, the gp value of all recovered treasure is totalled up and distributed amongst all surviving characters (both PCs and retainers) as XP.

### **Slaying Monsters.**

Does not grant XP.

## 1.3 COMBAT

### **Movement in Melee.**

Fighting withdrawal does not require declaration.

### **Missile Fire into Melee.**

The hit roll is penalised by -1 for each combatant in melee with the intended target (to a maximum penalty of -4).

### **“In Melee”**

Two characters are in melee if one has made a melee attack on the other, and they have not moved apart.

### **Shields.**

You may sacrifice a shield to completely absorb the damage of a single hit. This destroys the shield. Magic shields can absorb a number of hits per day equal to their enchantment bonus.

### **Helmets.**

A helmet can absorb the damage from a single critical hit. This destroys the helmet.

### **Death and Dismemberment.**

When a PC drops to 0 HP, they must roll on the Death and Dismemberment table (§ 2). Retainers still die outright at 0 HP.

### **Additional Combat Rules.**

From the *OSE:AF* combat chapter:

- Ascending Armour Class
- Attacking with Two Weapons
- Charging into Melee
- Morale
- Parrying
- Splash Weapons
- Subduing
- Variable Weapon Damage

## 1.4 MISCELLANEOUS

### **Hiring Retainers.**

As described in *Carcass Crawler* issue 2.

### **Item-based Encumbrance.**

From *Carcass Crawler* issue 2, with the following changes:

- A character has 9 slots for equipped items.
- A backpack has 16 slots for packed items.
- A large sack can hold another 16 slots, but requires the use of both hands and two equipped slots.
- A small sack can hold another 8 slots, but requires the use of one hand and one equipped slot.
- A character can move so long as everything they're trying to carry fits into a slot.

### **Expanded Equipment List.**

From *Carcass Crawler* issue 3.

For item-based encumbrance purposes all the new adventuring gear occupies 1 slot except for barrels and chests (2 slots) and miniature bells, paper, and parchment (tiny).

### **Plate Mail.**

Is a lost technology in the Archontean Empire, it can't be bought or made.

## 2. DEATH AND DISMEMBERMENT

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When a PC takes damage which brings them to 0 HP or below roll for a hit location (if not obvious), then roll for severity and apply the listed effects.

*Severity:* 1D12 + EXCESS DAMAGE + # FATAL WOUNDS

	<b>1 Arm</b>	<b>2 Leg</b>	<b>3-4 Torso</b>	<b>5-6 Head</b>
<b>1+</b>	Disabled <i>for Sev days</i>	Disabled <i>for Sev days</i>	Blood Loss <i>for Sev days</i>	Concussed <i>for Sev days</i>
<b>11+</b>	Mangled	Mangled	Crushed	Skullcracked
	<b>Acid or Fire</b>	<b>Lightning</b>	<b>Magic</b>	<b>Non-lethal</b>
<b>1+</b>	Burned <i>for Sev days</i>	Burned <i>for Sev days</i>	Anathema <i>for Sev days</i>	KO'd <i>for Sev rounds</i>
<b>11+</b>	Blinded	Deafened	—	—

Additionally, on a roll of **11-15** take one Fatal Wound, and on a roll of **16+** take SEVERITY - 15 Fatal Wounds.

### **Anathema.**

You cannot benefit from magic (including healing).

### **Blinded.**

Save vs Death or be permanently blinded.

### **Blood Loss.**

Your maximum HP is reduced by your level.

### **Burned.**

You cannot wear armour.

### **Concussed.**

You act last in a combat round, and your spells have a 1-in-6 chance of failing.

**Crushed.**

Save vs Death. On a success, you get a cool scar. On a failure, roll 1D6:

1. Permanently lose 1 STR.
2. Permanently lose 1 DEX.
3. Permanently lose 1 CON.
4. **Crushed throat.** You can only whisper.
5. **Crushed ribs.** You can only hold your breath for 2 rounds.
6. **Broken spine.** You are paralysed from the neck down. Make a CON check after 1D6 days and again after 1D6 weeks if you fail the first check. If you fail both, it is permanent.

**Deafened.**

Save vs Death or be permanently deafened.

**Disabled.**

The limb is unusable (cannot hold anything, cannot support your weight, etc).

**Fatal Wound.**

You are unconscious. If any Fatal Wounds remain after 3 rounds, you die. At the end of each round you have a 1-in-6 chance to remove one Fatal Wound.

An adjacent ally can attempt to remove a Fatal Wound by making an INT check with a -4 penalty.

Magical healing does not restore HP while you have Fatal Wounds, instead every 2 HP of magical healing removes 1 Fatal Wound.

**Mangled.**

Save vs Death. On a success, you lose a digit. On a failure, the limb is permanently disabled or hacked off.

### **Skullcracked.**

Save vs Death. On a success, you get a cool scar. On a failure, roll 1D6:

1. Permanently lose 1 INT.
2. Permanently lose 1 WIS.
3. Permanently lose 1 CHA.
4. **Lose your left eye.** -1 penalty to ranged attacks.
5. **Lose your right eye.** -1 penalty to ranged attacks.
6. **Fall into a coma.** You are unconscious. Make a CON check after 1D6 days and again after 1D6 weeks if you fail the first check. If you fail both, it is permanent.

### 3. XP FOR CAROUSING

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Once per session while in a civilised settlement, a PC may choose to carouse to gain extra XP.

A PC who goes carousing spends an amount of gold limited by the size of the settlement:

<b>Village</b>	(0–999 residents)	1D6 × 100gp
<b>Small Town</b>	(1000–3,999 residents)	1D8 × 150gp
<b>Large Town</b>	(4000–7,999 residents)	1D10 × 200gp
<b>City</b>	(8000+ residents)	1D12 × 200gp

PCs may choose to roll for a smaller entry.

The PC receives the spent gold value as XP, +10% when carousing on the weekend.

Thieves connected to the settlement’s organised crime element gain a +2 bonus on the roll. Friends of thieves gain +1.

If the amount of gold spent is more than the PC has, and the party can’t (or won’t) cover it, they are now in debt to someone nefarious and must Save vs Poison or roll for a mishap.

If the die result is higher than the PC’s level, they must roll for a mishap.

#### 3.1 CAROUSING MISHAPS

Roll 2D6:

- 2. My head!** Take 1D4 damage each to INT, WIS, and CHA. Save vs Poison for half.
- 3. Gambling binge.** Lose all your gold, gems, and jewellery. For each magic item in your possession, roll 3D6 under WIS or lose it.

4. **Poisoned.** Reduce CON by 1D4 for 1D4 days. You are unable to speak coherently or cast spells for the duration.
5. **Experimented upon.** Local wizards / alchemists / assassins / sages ply you with their latest experimental concoction. Heal all HP and Save vs Poison. Failure indicates catatonic sleep for 1D4 days.
6. **Drinks are on you!** Roll to carouse again to see how much extra this costs (do not gain additional XP).
7. **Hung-over.** First day of adventuring has a -2 penalty to all rolls, and casters must check INT or WIS with each spell cast to avoid failure.
8. **Life of the party!** Carousing costs twice as much for 1D4 weeks.
9. **Trouble with the law.** Pay a fine of  $2D6 \times 25gp$  and check CHA or spend 1D6 days in the gaol.
10. **Insult important person.** Check CHA. On success, they are amenable to some sort of apology and reparations.
11. **Beaten and robbed.** Lose all your personal effects, and you're reduced to 1 HP.
12. **Arsonist!** You accidentally start a fire. Roll a D6 twice:

#### **First Roll**

- 1-2 Burn down your favourite inn.
- 3-4 Some other den of ill repute is reduced to ash.
- 5-6 A big chunk of town goes up in smoke.

#### **Second Roll**

- 1-2 No one knows it was you.
- 3-4 Your fellow carousers know you did it.
- 5 Someone else knows, perhaps a blackmailer.
- 6 Everybody knows.

## 4. XP FOR EXPLORATION

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When a PC completes a feat of exploration and returns to a safe haven, all the party members (both PCs and retainers) receive a portion of the XP needed to advance from the start of their current level to the next level.

- 2%**
  - Apply lore in a useful or flavourful manner.
  - Confirm a rumour's veracity.
  - Explore 5 areas of a single dungeon level.
  - Make creative use of equipment or abilities.
  - Overcome a puzzle.
  - Overcome a trap.
  - Overcome an environmental obstacle or hazard.
  - Uncover a secret.
- 5%**
  - Beneficially resolve a high-stakes encounter with an important NPC.
  - Discover an important location.
  - Manipulate or cripple a faction to your benefit.
- 10%**
  - Establish a reliable safe haven in a dangerous locale.

If the feat is especially impressive, the XP award may be upgraded to the next step (2%  $\mapsto$  5%  $\mapsto$  10%).

## 5. XP FOR PHILANTHROPY

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Once per session while in a civilised settlement, a PC may choose to practice philanthropy to gain extra XP.

A PC who participates in philanthropy spends an amount of gold determined by the size of the settlement:

<b>Village</b>	(0-999 residents)	300gp+
<b>Small Town</b>	(1000-3,999 residents)	600gp+
<b>Large Town</b>	(4000-7,999 residents)	1000gp+
<b>City</b>	(8000+ residents)	1500gp+

The PC receives 80% of the spent gold value as XP.

The gold must be donated to a worthy cause, such as an orphanage or a temple, with no direct benefit to the PC. Treasure may be used instead of gold if appropriate (e.g. donating a religious statue worth 1500gp to a temple).