
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

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

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 *CC #1*. The Phase-Elf class is from *CC #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 *CC #2* for your class

If you roll plate mail for armour, take banded mail (from *CC #3*) instead, since there is no plate mail in this setting.

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 *CC #1*, modified slightly. All skills start at a 1-in-6 chance, and cannot increase beyond a 5-in-6 chance.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Acolyte ¹ | 1 point at first level | 3 points per level |
| Assassin | 3 points at first level | 1 point per level ² |
| Mage | 7 points at first level | 1 point per level |
| Thief ³ | 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 *CC #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 character (PC or retainer) gains enough experience to reach the next level, they do so after a night's rest in a safe haven.

Arcane spellcasters do not gain new spells automatically (see above).

Downtime.

PCs may carouse (§ 4) or practice philanthropy (§ 6) 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 (§ 5) 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 *CC #2*.

Item-based Encumbrance.

As described in *CC #2*, with the following changes:

- A character carrying more than 9 equipped items or 32 packed items cannot move.
CC #2 only allows 16 packed items.
- When in use, barrels, boxes, buckets, chests, and sacks require the use of hands and equipped slots.
CC #2 says storage items don't consume slots when in use.

This has the effect of letting you carry far more treasure at once, but rigid containers (barrels, boxes, buckets, and chests) drastically reduce your carrying capacity compared to sacks.

Expanded Equipment, Weapons, and Armour.

From *CC #3*. See § 3 for a full listing of items, costs, and slots.

Plate Mail.

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

2. DEATH AND DISMEMBERMENT

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

| | 1 Arm | 2 Leg | 3-4 Torso | 5-6 Head |
|------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1+ | 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> |
| 11+ | Mangled | Mangled | Crushed | Skullcracked |
| | Acid or Fire | Lightning | Magic | Non-lethal |
| 1+ | 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> |
| 11+ | 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. EQUIPMENT

3.1 ADVENTURING GEAR

Containers

| Item | Holds | Source | Cost (gp) | Slots |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| Backpack | 16 | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Barrel | 320 ^P | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 2 ^H |
| Box (iron, large) | 8 | <i>CC #3</i> | 30 | 2 ^H |
| Box (iron, small) | 3 | <i>CC #3</i> | 10 | 1 ^H |
| Bucket | 40 ^P | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 ^H |
| Chest (wood, large) | 10 | <i>CC #3</i> | 5 | 2 ^H |
| Chest (wood, small) | 3 | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 ^H |
| Sack (large) | 16 | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 2 | 1 ^H |
| Sack (small) | 8 | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 1 | 1 ^H |
| Scroll case | 3 | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Vial (glass) | 0.5 ^P | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Waterskin | 2 ^P | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 1 | 1 |

P. Pints. One potion is half a pint, one flask of oil is a pint, one day's drinking water is two pints, etc.

H. When in use, must be carried in the hands.

Backpack.

Consumes no slots when worn.

Scroll case.

Holds 3 scrolls in its 1 slot. Can only be used to hold scrolls.

Light

| Item | Source | Cost (gp) | Slots |
|----------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| Candles (10) | CC #3 | 1 | 10:1 |
| Lantern | OSE:AF | 10 | 1 |
| Lantern, bullseye | CC #3 | 20 | 1 |
| Oil (flask) | OSE:AF | 2 | 1 |
| Tinder box (flint & steel) | OSE:AF | 3 | 1 |
| Torches (6) | OSE:AF | 1 | 3:1 |

Camping and Travel

| Item | Source | Cost (gp) | Slots |
|----------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| Bedroll | CC #3 | 2 | 1 |
| Cooking pots | CC #3 | 3 | 1 |
| Firewood (bundle) | CC #3 | 1 | 1 |
| Fishing rod and tackle | CC #3 | 4 | 1 |
| Rations (iron, 7 days) | OSE:AF | 15 | 3:1 |
| Rations (standard, 7 days) | OSE:AF | 5 | 3:1 |
| Tent | CC #3 | 20 | 2 |

Holy Items

| Item | Source | Cost (gp) | Slots |
|----------------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| Holy symbol (gold) | CC #3 | 100 | 0 |
| Holy symbol (silver) | OSE:AF | 25 | 0 |
| Holy symbol (wooden) | CC #3 | 5 | 0 |
| Holy water (vial) | OSE:AF | 25 | 1 |

Holy symbol (gold).

Grants a +1 bonus to the 2d6 roll for the affected HD turned.

Holy symbol (wooden).

Grants a -1 penalty to the 2d6 roll for the affected HD turned.

Miscellaneous Tools

| Item | Source | Cost (gp) | Slots |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-------|
| Bell (miniature) | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 0 |
| Block and tackle | <i>CC #3</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Caltrops (bag of 20) | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Chain (10') | <i>CC #3</i> | 30 | 1 |
| Chalk (10 sticks) | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Chisel | <i>CC #3</i> | 2 | 1 |
| Crowbar | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 10 | 1 |
| Grappling hook | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 25 | 1 |
| Hammer (sledgehammer) | <i>CC #3</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Hammer (small) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 2 | 1 |
| Ink (vial) | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Iron spikes (12) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 1 | 12:1 |
| Ladder (wooden, 10') | <i>CC #3</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Lock | <i>CC #3</i> | 20 | 1 |
| Magnifying glass | <i>CC #3</i> | 3 | 1 |
| Manacles | <i>CC #3</i> | 15 | 1 |
| Marbles (bag of 20) | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Mining pick | <i>CC #3</i> | 3 | 1 |
| Mirror (hand-sized, steel) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Paper / parchment (2 sheets) | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 0 |
| Pole (10', wooden) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 1 | 2 |
| Quill | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 0 |
| Rope (50') | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Saw | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Spade / shovel | <i>CC #3</i> | 2 | 1 |
| Stakes (3) and mallet | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 3 | 1 |
| Thieves' tools | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 25 | 1 |
| Twine (100') | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Whistle | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 0 |

3.2 WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

Weapons

| Item | Source | Cost (gp) | Slots |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------|-------|
| Axe (battle axe) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 7 | 2 |
| Axe (hand axe) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 4 | 1 |
| Blackjack | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Blowgun | <i>CC #3</i> | 3 | 1 |
| Bolas | <i>CC #3</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Bow (long) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 40 | 2 |
| Bow (short) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 25 | 2 |
| Club | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 3 | 1 |
| Crossbow | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 30 | 2 |
| Dagger | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 3 | 1 |
| Dagger (silver) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 30 | 1 |
| Garotte | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Javelin | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 1 | 1 |
| Lance | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Mace | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Net | <i>CC #3</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Polearm | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 7 | 2 |
| Sling | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 2 | 1 |
| Spear | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 4 | 1 |
| Staff | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 2 | 2 |
| Sword | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 10 | 1 |
| Sword (bastard) | <i>CC #3</i> | 15 | 1 |
| Sword (short) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 7 | 1 |
| Sword (two-handed) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 15 | 2 |
| War hammer | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Whip | <i>CC #3</i> | 10 | 1 |

Ammunition

| Item | Source | Cost (gp) | Slots |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------|-------|
| Arrows (20) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Crossbow bolts (30) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 10 | 1 |
| Silver-tipped arrow (1) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Sling stones (20) | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 0 | 1 |
| Blowgun dart (5) | <i>CC #3</i> | 1 | 1 |

One set of ammo fits in the encumbrance slot of the weapon.

Armour

| Item | AC | Source | Cost (gp) | Slots |
|-----------------|----|---------------|-----------|-------|
| Padded armour | 11 | <i>CC #3</i> | 5 | 1 |
| Furs | 12 | <i>CC #3</i> | 10 | 1 |
| Leather | 12 | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 20 | 1 |
| Studded leather | 13 | <i>CC #3</i> | 25 | 1 |
| Chainmail | 14 | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 40 | 2 |
| Banded mail | 15 | <i>CC #3</i> | 50 | 2 |
| Shield | +1 | <i>OSE:AF</i> | 10 | 1 |

4. XP FOR CAROUSING

The normal Prime Requisite modifier is **not** applied to this XP.

Once per session while in a civilised settlement, a PC may choose to spend gold on wild revelries. A PC who goes carousing spends an amount of gold limited by the size of the settlement:

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

PCs may choose to roll for a smaller entry. The PC receives the spent gold value as XP.

Mishaps.

If the die result is higher than the PC's level, or if the amount of gold spent is more than the PC can afford, roll 1D8:

- 1. Nothing happens!**
- 2. Bad employer.** You insult all your retainers. Each of them checks Loyalty or leaves your service.
- 3. Damaged reputation.** Take a -1 penalty to all reaction rolls in the area, until your reputation is repaired.
- 4. 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.
- 5. Poisoned.** Reduce CON by 1D4 (to a minimum of 1) for 1D4 days. You are unable to speak coherently or cast spells for the duration.
- 6. Robbed.** Lose all your gold, gems, and jewellery, and you're reduced to 1 HP.
- 7. Secret exposed.** You reveal a valuable secret you shouldn't have, such as the location of a treasure.
- 8. Roll twice, re-rolling 8s!**

5. XP FOR EXPLORATION

The normal Prime Requisite modifier is applied to this XP.

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%).

6. XP FOR PHILANTHROPY

The normal Prime Requisite modifier is **not** applied to this XP.

Once per session while in a civilised settlement, a PC may choose to spend gold on philanthropic causes.

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

Nonspecific philanthropy.

Unless specified otherwise, money donated is frittered away on nonspecific good deeds, providing no benefits beyond the XP.

Donating to a specific cause.

A PC may donate to a specific cause, such as giving money to a particular temple, or funding the construction of public works.

Leaders of the cause (e.g. high priests or city mayors) may need to be convinced to accept the donation. Every 1000gp donated gives a cumulative +1 reaction modifier for NPCs associated with the cause for one month.

Treasure may be donated instead of gold if appropriate (e.g. donating a religious statue to a temple).

Running a charitable organisation.

A PC may establish or bolster a charitable organisation using the “Institution” rules from *Downtime in Zyan*.

Any buildings the organisation requires (e.g. a hospital or temple), must be paid for and built before it can be established.

Each specialist NPC that an organisation employs (e.g. a doctor or priest) costs 25gp per month, unless noted otherwise in *OSE:AF*.

Gold spent on buildings and specialists also provides bonus XP.