

HOUSE RULES - GRITTY EDITION

OVERVIEW

The following house rules allow for a grittier and more dangerous game of D&D. A game using these rules is intended to be more challenging, and thus, more rewarding.

The campaign world, too, is altered. Magic is much rarer, powerful, and dangerous. The lines between "good" and "evil" are often muddled. Life in such a world can be a grim slog for many. Few adventurers are considered "heroes," but its those very heroes who serve as points of light against the merciless realities of life.

The aim is for a game that is more *Game of Thrones* and less *Harry Potter*. More *The Witcher*, less *The Avengers*.

CHARACTER CREATION

- **Ability Scores.** Roll seven sets of 3d6. Drop the lowest. Assign the remaining six sets however you wish.
- **Hit Points.** Characters roll for hit points each level (including level 1). Include Constitution modifier as normal.
- **Starting Gold/Equipment.** Use "Starting Wealth By Class" variant from page 143 of the PHB.
- **Max Level.** Characters can only progress to level 10.

COMBAT

- **Initiative.** The players roll a d20 for their initiative as a group, or side. The DM also rolls a d20 for the monsters. Neither roll receives any modifiers. Whoever rolls highest wins initiative. In the case of a tie, keep rerolling until the tie is broken.
- **Cover.** The normal rules for cover aren't used. Instead of fiddling with -2 to this and +5 to that, Advantage or Disadvantage are used as appropriate.
- **Critical Hits.** Critical Hit mechanics are used for characters and monsters.
- **Critical Misses.** Critical Miss mechanics are in play for characters. Monsters that roll a Critical Miss in combat grant advantage on the next attack against them.
- **Cinematic Moves.** Characters are encouraged to act cinematically and not be restrained to the base mechanics of the game.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE

- You try to jump off a table and bring your sword down on a foe. A good Athletics check may result in extra damage.
- You decide to kick the embers of the campfire into the face of the growling beast as part of your movement. You may end up with advantage on your attack.
- You attempt to slide under the legs of a foe to close off his escape in a tight dungeon corridor. A good Acrobatics check may do just that. A bad one, however, and you may get stomped on.

Note: Announce what you'd like to attempt. The target DC will be shared, along with negative consequences for failing. Then you can decide how to proceed.

HEALING

- **Slow Natural Healing.** Characters don't regain hit points at the end of a long rest. Instead, a character can spend Hit Dice to heal at the end of a long rest, just as with a short rest.
- **Medical Aid.** Over the course of 10 minutes, hit points may be regained by use of non-magical medicine, bandages, or tinctures. The character applying the aid must have access to a Healer's Kit or other suitable materials and succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check. If they do, the target regains rolls 1 hit die (without having to expend it) and regains that many hit points plus their Constitution modifier. A creature cannot be the target of this ability again until it finishes a short or long rest. **Note:** Consequences exist for Critical Failures and bonuses exist for Critical Successes.

INSPIRATION

- **Earning Inspiration.** Characters begin life with zero inspiration points but can earn them in a number of ways, such as: good roleplaying, cinematic fighting, clever questioning, contributing new details to the story and so on. A character can have up to three inspiration points stowed at a time, the balance of which carries over between sessions.
- **Spending Inspiration.** A character can spend an inspiration point to grant themselves advantage on any d20 roll. Likewise, inspiration can be used to enforce disadvantage against any target attempting a save against that character's spell or ability (i.e. *sacred flame*). **The character must declare that they wish to use inspiration before a roll is made.**

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

- **Death Saving Throws.** There is only one save against death. It is DC 12, not DC 10. You get to add your Constitution modifier to it. On a failure, the character dies. On a success, the character is considered Bleeding Out.
- **Bleeding Out.** When reduced to 0 Hit Points and knocked senseless, you begin to bleed out. The character dies if they do not receive some form of healing within the next three rounds. The concept of 'down but stable' does not exist. **Note:** You suffer a level of exhaustion upon recovering from Bleeding Out.
- **Resurrection.** Spells like *Revivify*, *Raise Dead*, and *Resurrection* do not exist. Instead, *Thwart the Grave* is available as a 3rd level spell (spell details on next page).

MISCELLANEOUS

- **Banned Feats.** Bountiful Luck, Lucky, Sentinel (this is one isn't banned, just modified)
- **Encumbrance.** Variant encumbrance rules from page 176 of the PHB are in effect.
- **Crafting.** Rules for potion making, poisoning, and harvesting (i.e. dragon scales) available as necessary.
- **Milestones.** Characters advance based on accomplishing milestones, not tracking experience points.

RESURRECTION

When a character dies, their soul leaves their body and travels to a transient plane called the soul realm. The soul realm is like a cosmic waiting room where all souls go before they eventually move on to their finally resting place.

To be brought back to life, a character's soul must be released from the soul realm so that it may be returned to the material plane.

For this to happen, the characters attempting the resurrection must perform a ritual that calls out to the deceased's soul, and make an offering to the guardian of the soul realm for them to grant the deceased passage back to the material plane.

Souls only remain in the soul realm for a limited period of time. The guardian of the soul realm takes the deceased to their final resting place after three days have passed.

THE RITUAL CHALLENGE

Assuming the surviving characters have access to *thwart the grave*, including its material component, they can attempt to revive their dead ally. The ritual challenge has three parts: the supplication, the offering, and the soul bond.

THE SUPPLICATION

During the supplication, each character involved in the ritual challenge must make a request to the guardian of the plane in which the deceased character's soul resides.

To do this, the character must speak the reasons they want and need the deceased to return to life, arguing why this creature deserves to return.

THE OFFERING

There is always a cost to bringing back the dead, and during the offering each character must place an item into the magical fire to be sacrificed to the deceased soul's guardian.

These items can be valuable either from a monetary standpoint, or a sentimental standpoint.

THE SOUL BOND

The final part of the ritual involves a single creature designating themselves as the anchor for the deceased character's soul.

They use their own soul to call out to the deceased and bring them back to the material plane, binding their souls together.

THE RESURRECTION CHECK

The character who has chosen to be the anchor makes a Intelligence (Religion) check to determine if the deceased character is brought back to life. The DC for this check is secret and is determined by the worthiness the supplications and offerings.

If the resurrection check is successful, the deceased character's soul is released and returns to their body. Upon their return, the resurrected character will share a trait with the character with whom they now share a soul bound.

The most common manifestation of a soul bound is the resurrected creature sharing the eye color of their soul bonded counterpart.

A character can only be resurrected **once**.

THWART THE GRAVE

3rd-level necromancy (same availability as *Revivify*)

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a vial of blood from a regenerative creature, such as a troll, which the spell consumes)

Duration: Instantaneous

You return a dead creature you touch to life, provided that it has been dead no longer than 3 days. If the creature's soul is both willing and at liberty to rejoin the body, the creature returns to life with 1 hit point.

This spell also neutralizes any poisons and cures nonmagical diseases that affected the creature at the time it died. This spell doesn't, however, remove magical diseases, curses, or similar effects; if these aren't first removed prior to casting the spell, they take effect when the creature returns to life. The spell can't return an undead creature to life.

This spell closes all mortal wounds, but it doesn't restore missing body parts. If the creature is lacking body parts or organs integral for its survival—its head, for instance—the spell automatically fails.

Coming back from the dead is an ordeal. The target takes a -4 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks. Every time the target finishes a long rest, the penalty is reduced by 1 until it disappears.

