



THE ARCHMAGE ENGINE



SOURCE MATERIAL  
Rob Heinsoo  
Jonathan Tweet  
SYSTEM REFERENCE DOCUMENT  
Chad Dylan Long

Pelgrane Press



## Combat Rules

Combat is played with various sided dice. You make attack rolls against defense numbers and deal damage against hit points.

### Combat Stats

#### Initiative Bonus

Your initiative bonus is your Dexterity modifier + your level.

#### Attack Bonuses

For each attack, roll a d20 + an ability bonus + your level (+ magic item attack bonus, if any). Depending on the attack, you might also get other bonuses. Compare your total to the target's defense, usually Armor Class but sometimes Physical Defense or Mental Defense. If the total is equal to or higher than the defense, you hit. If you attack multiple targets, make multiple attack rolls. Your class defines which ability bonus you use on attack rolls, and the attack defines the effects of a hit or a miss.

#### Damage

Each attack indicates a specified amount of damage it does; subtract that amount from the target's hit points. If the attack targets multiple enemies, you make a separate attack roll for each one, but only roll damage once.

Damage totals for your attacks are calculated by adding one ability score modifier to the attack's damage roll, normally represented by saying "+ Ability."

Calculate the ability modifier subtracting 10 from the ability score, halving the result, then rounding down.

At 5<sup>th</sup> level, double the ability score modifier before adding to the damage roll for all attacks. (Negative modifiers get are doubled too).

At 8<sup>th</sup> level, triple the ability score modifier.

Spells indicate a specific number of dice to roll for damage. Weapon attacks work differently.

### Weapons

Weapons are rated by how much damage they deal. In the hands of player characters, each weapon attack deals 1 die of damage per character level + ability modifier, notated as WEAPON + [Ability].

Each class has its own version of the weapon chart, showing how well members of the class use weapons of a given damage category.

### Other Damage Types

Different monsters and characters may be resistant or vulnerable to various types of damage, including:

- Acid
- Cold
- Fire
- Force

- Holy
- Lightning
- Negative energy
- Poison
- Psychic
- Thunder (sonic energy)

## Defenses

There are three different defenses: Armor Class, Physical Defense, and Mental Defense. Each uses three ability scores as part of its calculation. PCs also add their class level to their defenses.

### *Armor Class (AC)*

AC protects you from weapon attacks. It is equal to the middle value among Con, Dex, and Wis. Disregard the higher and the lower values.

### *Physical Defense (PD)*

PD protects you from other physical attacks. It is equal to the middle value among Str, Con, and Dex. Disregard the higher and the lower values.

### *Mental Defense (MD)*

MD protect you against mental attacks. It is equal to the middle value among Int, Wis, and Cha. Disregard the higher and the lower values.

## Hit Points

Hit points are based on class, Con modifier, and level. See the level progression chart for each class.

## Speed

If it's important to know who covers ground faster, the GM determines how to make the "speed check" by using either common sense or stats and skills.

## Stacking Rules

Bonuses and effects to a single stat stack with each other, with these exceptions:

- Magic item bonuses don't stack. Only the best one counts.
- Many condition penalties don't stack. Only the worst one counts.
- Powers, spells, and abilities don't stack with themselves or with other game elements with the same name. This works for both PCs and monsters.

## Combat Sequence

At the start of combat, each player rolls initiative for his or her character and the GM rolls for their opponents, with higher-rolling characters or enemies acting earlier each round.

## Cyclic Initiative

### *Roll Once*

Each creature rolls to determine its initiative at the start of its first turn in battle (d20 + initiative bonus). Use those results to determine who goes first each round.

All monsters of the same exact type share the same initiative roll.

### *Delay*

By choosing to delay, you take no action and then act normally on whatever initiative count you decide to act. When you delay, you voluntarily reduce your own initiative for the rest of the combat. Your initiative result becomes the count on which you took the delayed action.

If you come to your next action and have not yet performed an action, you don't get to take a delayed action (though you can delay again).

If you take a delayed action in the next round, before your regular turn comes up, your initiative count rises to that new point in the order of battle, and you do not get your regular action that round.

### *Readying an Action*

The ready action lets you prepare to take an action later, after your turn is over but before your next one has begun. Readying is a standard action.

You can ready a standard action, a move action, or a free action. To do so, specify the action you will take and the conditions under which you will take it. Then, any time before your next action, you may take the readied action in response to that condition. The action occurs just before the action that triggers it. If the triggered action is part of another character's activities, you interrupt the other character. Assuming he is still capable of doing so, he continues his actions once you complete your readied action. Your initiative result changes. For the rest of the encounter, your initiative result is the count on which you took the readied action, and you act immediately ahead of the character whose action triggered your readied action.

Your initiative result becomes the count on which you took the readied action. If you come to your next action and have not yet performed your readied action, you don't get to take the readied action (though you can ready the same action again). If you take your readied action in the next round, before your regular turn comes up, your initiative count rises to that new point in the order of battle, and you do not get your regular action that round.

## **Actions on Your Turn**

### *Standard, Move, and Quick Actions*

Each turn you can take one of each action, in any order. See Combat Actions.

### *Free Actions*

You can take any number of free actions on your turn, as allowed by the GM. Creatures can also take free actions when it's not their turn as part of a triggering condition. Talking is a free action.

### *Make Saves Last*

If you are subjected to an ongoing effect that requires a save, roll that save at the end of your turn, after the ongoing effect.

### *Escalation Die*

The escalation die represents a bonus to attacks as the fight goes on.

At the start of the second round, the GM sets the escalation die at 1. Each PC gains a bonus to attack rolls equal to the current value on the escalation die. Each round, the escalation die advances by +1, to a maximum of +6.

Monsters and NPCs do not add the escalation die bonus to their attacks

If the GM judges that the characters are avoiding conflict rather than bringing the fight to the bad guys, the escalation die doesn't advance. If combat virtually ceases, the escalation die resets to 0.

## Combat Actions

### Actions

#### *Regular Actions*

On your turn, you can take one standard action, move action, and quick action, and a handful of free actions, in any order.

You can use a standard action to take a move action, and you can use a standard or move action to take a quick action.

#### *Interrupt Actions*

You can use one interrupt action when it's not your turn. You can't use another one until the end of your next turn. These types of actions are limited to certain classes and class powers.

#### *Other Actions when it's Not Your Turn*

In certain circumstances, characters can intercept foes moving past them, make opportunity attacks, or otherwise act out of turn. These actions are usually free actions.

### Position

A creature's position amounts to two things: the creature's whereabouts, and who it's contending with in melee.

#### *Whereabouts*

Each creature has a general, relative position on the battlefield. Combat is dynamic and fluid, so miniatures can't really represent where a character "really is."

#### *Nearby*

Generally, all the heroes and their enemies in a battle are nearby. That means they can reach each other with a single move action.

#### *Behind*

If you're behind an unengaged ally, and an enemy moves past that ally to get to you, your ally has the option to move and intercept.

#### *Intercepting*

You intercept a creature when you move to stop an enemy attempting to rush past you to attack someone else. You must be near the enemy and the person that enemy is trying to reach.

#### *Far Away*

Generally, the heroes and their enemies are nearby each other and you can use a single move action to reach any of them (provided no enemy intercepts you). If you want to be far away,

two moves away from the enemies, make that clear to the GM and make sure there's room for that maneuver. Wizards and other casters sometimes like to be far away.

### Engaged/Next to

In a battle, each combatant is either engaged (locked in combat with one or more enemies) or unengaged (free). When two allies are engaged with the same enemy, they are considered next to each other.

### Movement and Melee

The combat system cares about movement and position, but only in simple/approximate terms. It emphasizes where people are and who's fighting whom.

### Free

By default, characters in a battle are free. They can move freely, use ranged attacks, engage in battle, etc. If they try to move past a free enemy, however, that foe usually has the option to intercept them.

### Engaged

Characters are engaged when they are in melee with foes. Engaged creatures can use melee attacks and close-quarter spells against the creatures they engage. They can use ranged attacks but doing so draws opportunity attacks from the enemies that are engaging them that they don't attack, as does moving away from the enemies they're engaged with.

Unengaged creatures have no particular limits on how they move. They can't use melee attacks until engaged.

When you are engaged:	When you are unengaged:
You draw opportunity attacks if you move	You move freely
You can make melee attacks against enemies engaged with you	You can't make melee attacks
Your ranged attacks draw opportunity attacks from enemies engaged with you that you don't target	You make ranged attacks normally
Your spells draw opportunity attacks (except close-quarters spells)	You can cast spells freely
You can disengage safely as a move action by making a normal save (11+)	You can engage enemies by moving into melee with them
You can't intercept enemies	You can engage an enemy moving past you
You're considered nearby other combatants by default	You're considered nearby other combatants by default, but you can usually move far away if you want

### Disengaging

You can move away from the foes that engage you, but you draw an opportunity attack from each of those enemies when you do.

If you don't want to risk an opportunity attack, you can use your move action to attempt to disengage (a disengage check). If you choose to disengage, roll a normal save (11+). You can disengage from more than one foe with a single successful check, but your roll takes a -1 penalty for each foe beyond the first that you are disengaging from.

If the disengage check succeeds, you can move without drawing opportunity attacks from the foes you were engaged with. Use your move normally.

If you fail the disengage check, you don't move, lose your move action for that turn, and remain engaged. You don't take any opportunity attacks.

Disengaging uses a move action. If you succeed, it's like getting popped free at the start of your move. If you fail, you use up the move action to no effect.

When a creature gets to make an opportunity attack, it can make a basic melee attack against that foe as a free action during the turn of the creature that is provoking the opportunity attack. You can only use a basic melee attack.

### *Intercepting*

If you move past someone who is not already engaged, they have the option to engage you and make you stop where they are. The GM rules on what counts as moving "past" a defending character or enemy.

### *Targeting*

Important stats for targeting should be transparent to PCs. The GM should tell you whether your targets are legal targets, or whether they're mooks, normal monsters, or large monsters.

A spell or area-style effect that targets multiple nearby enemies in a group can't skip over enemies. You pick one target and attack the rest in order; you don't skip all over the battlefield. Spells that say they target multiple nearby enemies but don't specify that they have to be in a group are capable of sending magical energy in different directions, allowing spellcasters to choose targets from where they like.

When a spell or power targets a nearby enemy, ally, or creature, you can't target yourself unless it is explicitly stated that you can also be a target.

### *Special Cases*

Here are rules for special situations involving movement and melee.

#### *Allies*

Powers and spells in various classes are written with the understanding that a character's allies are the other PCs in the party with a possible addition for an animal companion. NPCs don't count as allies for abilities that are counting the number of allies that meet certain conditions.

#### *Ambushes and Surprise*

In situations when one side ambushes or surprises the other, start by letting the ambushing side pick one creature who will start the ambush. Then roll initiative for all members of the ambushing side.

Only two creatures get to act in the ambush round: the nominated ambusher and their highest initiative ally. The GM can choose whether to advance the escalation die after the surprise round.

Then roll initiative for the side that got ambushed and play normal combat rounds.

### Dicey Moves

If it's questionable whether a character could execute a particularly interesting move during combat, make a skill check against the ability score that the action is going to use. Specify whether a background will help. The DC depends on the current environment and the dice tell the tale.

### Special Actions

Here are a few things you can do that are more involved than just moving or attacking.

#### Flying

Some classes have spells or talents that enable *flight*. The movement rules for *flight* are the same as for other movement, except that, as long as there is space available, you can fly over enemies you're not engaged with without allowing them to take opportunity attacks against you. You can be intercepted only by other flyers that are already airborne.

The engagement and disengagement rules are also the same when flyers make melee attacks against enemies on the ground. The player may choose to swoop past another flyer, as part of another attack, instead of engaging it directly, at a -2 attack penalty.

#### Fight in Spirit

This is a special combat action that you can take when you are out of the fight altogether. Once a round you can specify how your character is still there "fighting in spirit" alongside the other party members. Come up with some story about what your character has done that could boost party morale. The GM may grant any ally a +1 bonus to attacks, Armor Class, Physical Defense, or Mental Defense. The first time each battle that someone fights in spirit may be a +2 bonus.

The bonus lasts one to two rounds. If the fight is still on and you have something else to add to the story, sell it to the GM.

If you're still (even partly) in the fight, then you can't fight in spirit.

#### Flee

Fleeing is a party action. On any PC's turn, any player can propose that all the characters flee the fight. If all players agree, they successfully retreat, carrying any fallen heroes away with them. The party suffers a campaign loss. The point of this rule is to encourage daring attacks and to make retreating interesting on the level of story rather than tactics.

#### Rally

Once a battle, every PC can use a standard action to rally, spending one of their recoveries and regaining hit points they've lost in combat. (See Recoveries.)

If you want to rally again later in the same battle, make a normal save (11+). If you succeed, you can rally again that battle. If you fail the save, you can take your turn normally, but you can't rally that round.

#### Attacks

Most attacks follow the general attack rules, except as indicated below.



## General Attack Rules

When you use an attack, you declare which attack you are using and pick its target or targets, then roll the d20 for each one to find out if you hit. The attack will indicate what happens to a target that you hit (and sometimes one that you miss).

### *Ranged Attacks*

Any ranged attack (weapon, spell, power, ability, or whatever) draws opportunity attacks from enemies engaged with you that you don't target with the attack.

### *Spell Attacks*

Most spells draw opportunity attacks from enemies engaged with you, even the enemies you target with the spell. Close-quarters spells are the exception; they don't draw opportunity attacks.

Like weapon attacks, you add your level to the attack roll for spell attacks, plus any magical implement or other bonuses you might have.

### *Target Hit Points*

Some spells and effects target creatures with a certain number of hit points or less. The hit point value you use is based on current hit points, not starting hit points.

## Crits

Every attack roll that is natural 20 is a crit ("critical hit") for double damage.

### *Crit Effects*

Standard crits deal double damage and, at the GM's discretion, might entail some additional superior result.

If you manage to double your crit damage (through the effect of a talent, power, spell or other source), triple it instead. If you manage to double your triple damage, bump it up to quadruple, and so on.

### *Crit Range*

Crit range is what you must roll to score a crit. The standard crit range is a natural 20. Some powers and spells expand your crit range. Each point of improvement drops the number needed to score a critical hit by 1.

## Fumbles

Rolling a natural 1 has no effect on the target, not even miss damage. At the GM's discretion, rolling a 1 while in a precarious position might entail a bad result for the attacker. You might also hit an ally if you're shooting into melee.

## Damage on Miss

By default, a miss deals no damage, though some attacks are an exception. These attacks specify what happens on a miss.

## Flexible Attacks

*Flexible* attacks allow you choose your target first, make your attack roll, and then use the natural unmodified die result to determine which of your eligible flexible attacks to use. You still use the modified roll to determine whether or not you hit, but your flexible attacks trigger off the natural result on the die sitting in front of you.

You can only use one flexible attack at a time.

You can't use a flexible attack when you make an opportunity attack.

If you have some attacks that are flexible and some that are not, declare whether you are making a flexible attack or a specific non-flexible attack before you roll.

### Unarmed Attacks

To punch or kick, make a Strength attack with a -2 penalty (regardless of your class) against AC. If you hit, you deal 1d6 damage for every two levels you have, plus your Strength modifier. At odd levels, including 1<sup>st</sup> level, use a d3. If you miss, no damage.

### Two-Weapon Fighting

You fight as normal, generally using the weapon in your main hand to attack. If your attack roll is a natural 2, you can reroll the attack but must use the reroll.

You do not get an extra attack for fighting with two weapons.

Some classes (and class talents) provide other advantages when fighting with two weapons. Those classes still get to use this basic two-weapon advantage.

### Damage and Healing

Damage and healing affect hit points. Healing also involves *recoveries*.

#### Damage

Every creature has hit points. You slay enemies (or occasionally knock them out) at 0 hp. PCs at 0 hp begin using the Death and Dying rules.

#### Recoveries

Each PC starts the adventure with 8 or 9 recoveries, a stat that represents the PC's ability to heal or bounce back from damage. Many healing spells and potions require you to use up a recovery. So does rallying during a battle.

When you use a recovery, regain lost hit points by rolling recovery dice equal to your level and adding your Constitution modifier. Your class indicates which recovery die to use.

At 5<sup>th</sup> level, double the bonus you get from your Con modifier. At 8<sup>th</sup> level, triple it.

If you perform an action that requires a recovery but have none left, you get half the healing you would otherwise get and take a -1 penalty to all defenses and attack rolls until your next full heal-up. This penalty stacks for each recovery used that you don't possess.

#### Staggered

When you are reduced to half your hit points or fewer, you're *staggered*. Some powers, spells, and monster interactions work differently when you are staggered.

In general, monsters become staggered when they take damage equal to half their hit points or more, but it's up to the GM.

## Unconscious

When you drop to 0 hp or below, you fall unconscious. You can't take any actions until you're conscious again, though you do make a death save at the start of each of your turns. (See Death and Dying.)

When monsters drop to 0 hp, it means they've been slain, unless the characters' intent is to keep the monster alive and the attack seems like a potentially humane blow that could knock the monster unconscious instead.

## Death and Dying

When you drop to 0 hp or below, you fall unconscious and can't take any actions (except to make death saves).

To make a death save, roll a d20 at the start of your turn. If you roll 16+, use a recovery to return to consciousness and heal up to the number of hit points you rolled with your recovery. If you roll a natural 20, you get to take actions normally that turn. If you roll 15 or less, you take one step toward the grave. After the fourth failed death save in a single battle, you die.

You also die when you reach negative hit points equal to half your maximum hit points.

If you're able to use one of your recoveries (or otherwise get healed) while you are dying, ignore your current negative hit points. Start from 0 and add the hit points you've regained.

If one of your allies is unconscious and you don't have magic to heal them, you can still stabilize them to keep them from dying. Get next to them and make a DC 10 healing skill check using Wisdom as a standard action. Failure wastes your standard action, but doesn't hurt your friend. Success stabilizes your ally. If your stabilization check is 25+, you treat their wounds so quickly that it only takes a quick action; you can use your standard action normally that turn.

A stabilized character is still unconscious, rolling death saves on their turn, but failed death saves no longer take them a step closer to death. Ignore failed death saves while stabilized.

Feeding a dying character a healing potion gets them conscious and back on their feet, but always takes a standard action.

## Optional Lasting-Wound Rule

If you're dropped to 0 hp or below one or more times during a fight, you take a lasting-wound. Each lasting-wound reduces your maximum hp by an amount equal to 2 + your level. Lasting-wounds are cumulative. *Staggered* is still half or less of your maximum hit points. A full heal-up removes all lasting-wounds.

## Optional Meaningful Death Rule

PCs can only be fully slain by named villains. PCs who fail four death checks fall into a coma and can only be brought back to consciousness once they're fully out of danger.

## Rest and Recharge

After each battle, you can use a quick rest to get ready for the next battle. After four battles, you'll usually earn a full heal-up.

## Quick Rests

When you take a quick rest, you can choose to heal yourself by using as many recoveries as you have available.

If you are staggered when you take a quick rest, you must try to heal yourself, either with a recovery or from a spell that provides some true healing.

For each recharge power that you used in the last battle, roll a d20 to see if you keep the power for your next battle or lose it until after your next battle. You have to roll the power's recharge value or higher to use it again.

## Full Heal-ups

After approximately four battles, characters earn a full heal-up, though the exact number is determined by the GM. Tougher battle can mean more frequent heal-ups, and vice versa.

After a full heal-up, your hit points reset to full. You regain any recoveries you've used. All expended powers are regained or recharged. ("Daily" powers are actually "per heal-up.")

If the party is short of a heal-up but is too beat up to press on, they can retreat and take a full heal-up, which entails a campaign loss. (See Flee.)

## Combat Modifiers

The universal combat modifier is +2 when you have advantageous circumstances. Similarly, -2 is the right penalty for adverse situations.

## Shooting into Melee

When using a ranged attack to target an enemy that is engaged with one or more of your allies and you fumble (roll a 1), reroll that attack considering the engaged ally as the target. If there are multiple allies, the GM rules which ally is the target.

## Invisibility

Invisibility grants a big modifier to any stealth skill checks—at least +5 unless you're dealing with creatures who can detect you without sight.

Once engaged in battle, attacks against invisible enemies have a 50% chance to miss completely, before the attack roll. Attacks that miss in this fashion don't deal any damage or have effects on the invisible creature, though other effects on a miss might occur.

## Special Attacks and Effects

### Conditions

You can only be affected by the same condition once at a time. The worst one affects you and the lesser effects are ignored. Similarly, penalties from these conditions don't stack.

### Confused

You can't make opportunity attacks or use your limited powers. Your next attack action will be a basic or at-will attack against any nearby ally, determined randomly.

### Dazed

You take a -4 penalty to attacks.

### *Fear*

Fear dazes you and prevents you from using the escalation die.

### *Hampered*

You can only make basic attacks. You can still move normally.

### *Helpless*

If you're unconscious or asleep, you're helpless. While helpless, you take a -4 penalty to all defenses and you can be the target of a coup de grace.

### *Stuck*

You can't move, disengage, pop free, change your position, or let anyone else move you without teleporting.

### *Stunned*

You suffer a -4 penalty to defenses and can't take any actions.

### *Vulnerable*

Attacks against you have their crit range expanded by 2 (normally 18+).

### *Weakened*

You take a -4 penalty to attacks and to defenses.

### **Coup de Grace**

When you attack a helpless enemy you're engaged with, you score an automatic critical hit if you follow these three steps:

- Skip your move action and your quick action that turn.
- Make a standard action attack on your turn against the helpless enemy you are engaged with.
- Your attack only targets the helpless enemy, even if the attack would normally target multiple creatures.

### **Grabbed**

Some monsters grab you. Generally they grab you after a successful hit. A creature can let go of a creature it is grabbing as a free action.

When you're grabbed you are engaged with the creature grabbing you and you can't move away unless you teleport, somehow pop free first, or successfully disengage. Disengage checks take a -5 penalty unless you hit the creature that is grabbing you the same turn that you're trying to disengage.

If you are smaller than the creature that is grabbing you, it can move and carry you along with no problem. If you are the same size or larger, it has to let go of you if it wants to move.

Grabbed creatures can't make opportunity attacks. That also applies if the creature grabbing you decides to let go and move away from you; it doesn't have to disengage or take an opportunity attack from you, it just leaves you behind.

Grabbed creatures can't use ranged attacks, although melee and close attacks are fine.

The creature grabbing you gets a +4 attack bonus against you.

## Ongoing Damage

A creature (including PCs) taking ongoing damage takes that damage at the end of its turn immediately before it rolls its save (11+ unless otherwise specified) against that ongoing damage. Success with the save means the creature won't take the damage again; failure means the effect will be repeated at the end of the creature's next turn.

Once a battle is over, the PCs automatically make their next saves.

## Saves

The save mechanic, a d20 roll with no standard modifiers, handles everything from power recharge to saves against power effects to death saves. There are three difficulty values for saves. If a save doesn't specify what type it is, it's a normal save: 11+.

- **Easy:** Roll 6+ on a d20
- **Normal:** Roll 11+ on a d20
- **Hard:** Roll 16+ on a d20

There are no standard bonuses to saves, but there are occasional talents, feats, and magic items that provide small bonuses to saves.

## Resistance

Resistance to types of damage is rated as a number corresponding to the attacker's natural d20 roll. The higher the number, the more resistance you have.

When an attack with a damage type you are resistant to targets you, the natural attack roll must equal or exceed your resistance number to deal full damage. If the roll is lower than your resistance, the attack deals half damage.

If you take ongoing damage of a type you resist, use the original attack roll to determine whether you take the full amount of ongoing damage or half the amount (rounded down).

Any creature with resistance to an energy type is immune to normal energy of that type. Magical attacks, magical weapons, and spells are different: the damage they do can get past the resistance. This resistance = immunity rule only applies to energy types, not to weapons. Weapon resistance does not mean immunity to non-magic weapons.

If there's an automatic damage effect that feels like it should have a chance of being reduced by resistance, fake an attack roll to see if the effect penetrates resistance for full damage or only deals half.

## Situational Weapon Use

When the action in the story backs it up, at the GM's discretion, a weapon's normal dice can be swapped for bigger or smaller dice, letting the character roll the same damage dice of a larger or smaller weapon. This is an optional rule in for memorable situations.

## Teleportation

Teleportation is an effect by which a creature moves instantaneously from one location to another. Teleporting doesn't draw opportunity attacks, but casting the spell may; spellcasting rules don't change because you are casting a teleport spell.

### Temporary Hit Points

Temporary hit points are beneficial effect that keeps a character from harm. When you gain temporary hit points, keep track of them separately from your regular hit points. Temporary hit points don't stack; when you gain more temporary hit points while you still have temporary hit points left, use only the higher amount and ignore the lower amount.

When you take damage, subtract it from your temporary hit points first, and only apply damage to your regular hit points after the temporary hit points are used up.

Temporary hit points reset to 0 after a battle and drop to 0 when you roll initiative.