



The Sleeping Imperium

A far future, science-fantasy setting for the d20 System, created by Kenneth S. Hood.

Grim-n-Gritty Hit Point and Combat Rules

For Use with Dark Fantasy or Horror-based Settings

Version 2.1

by Kenneth S. Hood

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The Sleeping Imperium (<http://sleepingimperiu.rpgghost.com>)

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Introduction

In a typical d20 game, a character can suffer tremendous physical damage without batting an eye. Arrows poking from his body like a porcupine, flesh still flaming from a recent fireball attack, and a toothy beast gnawing on his leg, the character strides about with aplomb, no more inconvenienced than if he had chipped a fingernail.

That's fine. Most d20 campaign settings were designed with heroic, cinematic feats in mind. Characters are *supposed* to wrastle' the grizzly bahr and be the lone warrior who battles evil hordes. To borrow a line, they are expected to "eat thunder and crap lightning'."

These rules, however, are not for that type of campaign. They are provided as alternative rules for a setting where the fights are quick and brutal, where the monsters are unstoppable and terrifying, and where the players must be very careful or end up very dead. They are designed for a setting where a man can die painfully from a single sword stroke and the claws of the beast can rend even the most skilled warrior from crotch to throat.

These are rules for a dark fantasy or horror setting. Or perhaps one with a simply more "realistic" type of violence.

If you use these rules, your characters will be made of paper in a world where the monsters are made of steel. Dragons will lay waste to legions. A single giant will obliterate cities. Death will await every adventurer with a naked blade. Stealth, maneuver, cunning, and avoidance will become the order of combat.

If this is what you seek in your gaming experience, then you have found it.

Enjoy.

Overview

The Grim-n-Gritty Hit Point and Combat System differs from the standard d20 rules in the following respects:

- The system attempts to emulate a higher degree of "realism" in combat without sacrificing too much of the abstraction fundamental to the d20 system.
- Hit Points are direct measure of a character's ability to suffer damage, rather than their ability to avoid it.
- At lower levels, characters have more Hit Points than their standard counterparts. At higher levels, they will have much, much less Hit Points.
- Characters do not roll dice to determine their HP totals. They are doled only a small amount of HP as they progress in levels.
- Hit Points are heavily weighted by the size of the character or monster. The larger the creature, the more HP it will possess. Monsters tend to have more HP than a humanoid character. This makes monsters extremely tough, moving them towards the literary ideal of Monster. (With this system, it is assumed that the primary conflict of the campaign will be character v. character, rather than character v. monster. A monster can decimate even a well-armed and armored party.)
- The term "Armor Class" is not used with this system. A character's ability to avoid damage is Defense. A character's ability to absorb or reduce damage is Armor Rating.
- Because Hit Points no longer represent a character's ability to avoid damage, characters are given a new class-based statistic called Defense. Enemies perform Attack rolls opposed by a character's Defense score to determine whether or not an attack hits.
- Because characters have fewer Hit Points, armor now *absorbs* damage, rather than preventing a character from being hit in combat.
- Characters can suffer severe trauma from a wound. A moderate amount of damage could stun them.
- Critical hits work slightly different, multiplying dice rolled, rather than total damage.
- Called Shots have an important role in the system. Characters can target specific parts of their opponents' bodies and disable limbs.
- The ability to disable limbs and target vital body parts is based solely on critical hits and Called Shots. This allows the system to implement something along the line of Hit Locations without necessitating a multitude of extra dice rolls in combat.

If you have questions or comments about this system, contact Kenneth S. Hood via email at kenhood@hotmail.com or visit his web site, The Sleeping Imperium at <http://sleepingimperium.rpghost.com>. This web site holds the rules and background for a d20 campaign setting fifty million in the future during the twilight of the human race.

Appropriate Settings

The *Grim-n-Gritty Hit Point and Combat Rules* are not appropriate for all d20 game settings.

The Sleeping Imperium

These rules were originally created for use with the Sleeping Imperium, a dark science fantasy setting created by Kenneth S. Hood. The setting uses unique psionics, magic, and martial arts rules. Psionics are limited and relatively weak. Magic is extremely rare, bears a high price, and ridiculously powerful. Advanced technology and firearms are available to characters. Monsters can lay waste to entire cities.

These rules reinforce the atmosphere of a dangerous world in which the characters struggle for survival.

Good Fits

For fantasy, the Grim-n-Gritty rules fit well in a campaign with no, low, or rare magic. Magic takes on a literary rather than cinematic scope. Wizards and other spell-casters become extremely powerful individuals, the cause of fear and trembling, like they are in classical literature.

The rules work well in dark fantasy and horror settings where the characters are supposed to be the little fish swimming with sharks. Monsters and magic are very powerful, as befits this type of genre.

For tactical military, historical, hard science fiction, spy, and post-apocalyptic settings, these rules also make a good fit — assuming the spirit of the game is non-cinematic.

Bad Fits

Any sort of setting with lots of magic is an awful fit for these rules. Spell-casters can kill nearly any humanoid character with a single spell, giving them a tremendous advantage. There is no balance for it.

High fantasy, middle fantasy, heroic, and cinematic campaigns are likewise poor fits for these rules.

Magic Kills

These rules assume that magic should destroy nearly anything with relative ease, as spells would if they existed in real life. People should not be able to shrug off a fireball or lightning bolt; they should die. For this reason, there are no rules to reduce the damage inflicted by spells, nor shall any variant rules be provided to this end.

If you do not wish to play in a setting where magic is an incredibly destructive force, do not use these rules.

Again, if you are playing in a setting where magic is extremely common, these rules are inappropriate.

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Hit Points

In a standard d20 campaign setting, a character receives a large amount of Hit Points as she progresses in levels. This is because Hit Points not only represent her ability to suffer physical punishment and keep going, her Hit Points also represent her ability to turn a serious blow into a less serious one. In other words, her Hit Points represent an ability to roll with blows, dodge attacks, and the like.

In the Grim-n-Gritty system, this is not the case. A character's Hit Points represent *only* her ability to suffer damage and keep going. Hit Points are a measurement of the character's life force, not her dodging ability. Because of this, a character in the Grim-n-Gritty system has much fewer HP than a standard d20 character.

There are two major changes to Hit Points in the Grim-n-Gritty system. First, characters gain fewer Hit Points than normal as they acquire levels. Second, size has a tremendous impact on a character's Hit Point total.

Figuring Hit Points

To figure your Hit Points in the Grim-n-Gritty system, use the following formula:

$$(Base\ Hit\ Points + Bonus\ Hit\ Points) * Size\ Modifier$$

Your base Hit Points are derived from your Constitution score. Your bonus Hit Points come from your character class, creature Hit Dice, and any feats, like Toughness. Your size modifier is a multiplier based on your – you guessed it – size.

Step 1: Figure Base Hit Points

Figuring your Base Hit Points is a simple matter. Your Base Hit Points *always* equal your Constitution score.

If you are a creature that does not have a Constitution score, such as a construct or undead, you have 20 Base Hit Points.

Step 2: Figure Bonus Hit Points

Bonus Hit Points are slightly more difficult to figure than your Base Hit Points. There are three things that give you Bonus Hit Points: your character class and level, your creature type and hit dice, and feats or other special modifiers.

Bonus Hit Points for Character Class and Level: If you have one or more levels in a particular character class, such as a fighter or rogue, you may get bonus Hit Points from your class. First, find your class' Hit Point Progression on table HP-1: HP Bonus Progression by Core Class. Then, on table HP-3 HP Bonus Progression, find your level in that class on its Bonus Progression column. This is your Bonus Hit Points for that class.

If you are multi-classed, figure the Bonus Hit Points for each class separately. The results are added together.

For example, a 7th level fighter would use the Good Progression column. The 7th level row on that column shows +7 Hit Points. Therefore, the character gets +7 Hit Points for his class.

Bonus Hit Points for Creature Type and Hit Dice: If you are a "monster," you get Bonus Hit Points based on your Creature Type and Hit Dice. First, find your creature type's Hit Point Progression on table HP-2: HP Bonus Progression by Creature Type. Then, on table HP-3 HP Bonus Progression, find your hit dice on the Bonus Progression column that corresponds to your type's progression. This is your Bonus Hit Points for your creature type.

For example, a 6 Hit Dice Aberration (Average HP Bonus Progression) would have +4 Bonus Hit Points.

If you are a "monster" with a character class, then add the bonuses for your Hit Dice and class level(s) together.

Bonus Hit Points for Feats and Other Modifiers: Depending on your special abilities, you may get additional bonus Hit Points. For example, the Toughness feat would give you +3 Bonus Hit Points. These extra points are added to the Hit Points from your class level(s) and Hit Dice.

Step 3: Figure Size Modifier

Your Size Modifier is based solely upon your size. It is found on table HP-4: Size Modifier to Hit Points. Your Base + Bonus Hit Points are multiplied by this modifier.

For example, a large creature has a modifier of 2. Therefore, its Hit Points are doubled. A small creature has a modifier of ½. Therefore, its Hit Points are halved.

As can be seen, smaller creatures always end up with fewer Hit Points, while larger creatures end up with a lot of Hit Points. This makes size an important characteristic.

Table HP-1: HP Bonus Progression by Core Class

Progression	Classes
Good	Barbarian,* Fighter, Paladin, Ranger
Average	Bard, Cleric, Druid, Monk, Rogue
Poor	Sorcerer, Wizard

**Barbarians receive an additional +3 HP at 1st level.*

Table HP-2: HP Bonus Progression by Core Creature Type

Progression	Monster Type
Good	Beast, Construct, Dragon, Magical Beast, Ooze, Undead
Average	Aberration, Animal, Elemental, Giant, Humanoid, Monstrous Humanoid, Outsider, Plant, Shapechanger, Vermin
Poor	Fey

Table HP-3: HP Bonus Progression

Class Level - or - Hit Dice	Good	Average	Poor
1	+1	+0	+0
2	+2	+1	+1
3	+3	+2	+1
4	+4	+3	+2
5	+5	+3	+2
6	+6	+4	+3
7	+7	+5	+3
8	+8	+6	+4
9	+9	+6	+4
10	+10	+7	+5
11	+11	+8	+5
12	+12	+9	+6
13	+13	+9	+6
14	+14	+10	+7
15	+15	+11	+7
16	+16	+12	+8
17	+17	+12	+8
18	+18	+13	+9
19	+19	+14	+10
20	+20	+15	+10

Table HP-4: Size Modifier to Hit Points

Size	Modifier
Fine	1/12
Diminutive	1/8
Tiny	¼
Small	½
Medium-size	1
Large	2
Huge	4
Gargantuan	8
Colossal	12

Examples

1st Level Human Fighter: A 1st level Human Fighter with a Constitution of 15 gets 15 Base Hit Points. His class gives him +1 HP (Good Progression, 1st level). He is not a monster, so he does not get any Bonus Hit Points from Hit Dice and creature type. He is medium-sized, giving him a size modifier of 1. His total Hit Points are . . .

$$(15 (\text{Constitution}) + 1 (\text{class})) * 1 = \mathbf{16}.$$

3rd Level Rogue/14th Level Wizard: This multi-classed human has a Constitution of 9. She gets 9 Base Hit Points from her Constitution. The Bonus Hit Points from her classes are figured separately.

Her Rogue class has Average Bonus Hit Point Progression. A level of 3 on the Average column of table HP-3 provides a result of +2.

Her Wizard class has a Poor Bonus Hit Point Progression. Level 14 on the Poor column of table HP-3 gives a result of +7.

She is not a monster, so she gets no bonus Hit Points from her creature type and Hit Dice. She is medium-sized, giving her a Size Modifier of 1. Her total Hit Points are figured as follows:

$$(9 (\text{Constitution}) + 2 (\text{Rogue}) + 7 (\text{Wizard})) * 1 (\text{size}) = \mathbf{18}.$$

This gives her 18 Hit Points.

Red Dragon: A great wyrm red dragon has a Constitution of 31, Hit Dice 40, and colossal size. Its Base Hit Points (from Constitution) equal 31. It has no character class, so it gains no Bonus Hit Points from this.

As a monster, we look up the creature's type on table HP-2. We find that a dragon has Good Bonus Hit Point progression. Table HP-3 only goes as high as twenty levels or Hit Dice, so we have to do a bit of extrapolation for the dragon's 40 Hit Dice. The result is +40 Bonus Hit Points.

As a colossal sized creature, the dragon has a size modifier of 12. Its Hit Points are multiplied by a whopping twelve!

The total Hit Points of the creature are figured as follows:
 $(31 (\text{Constitution}) + 40 (\text{Hit Dice})) * 12 = \mathbf{852}.$
 The result is 852 Hit Points for this massive creature.

Monkey: A monkey is an animal with 1 Hit Dice, 10 Constitution, and tiny size.

The animal gets 10 Base Hit Points, derived from its Constitution score. It has no character class, so it gets no Bonus Hit Points from this. However, it does have one Hit Dice, so it might get some Bonus Hit Points from there.

Look up the "animal" creature type on table HP-2, we find the monkey has average Hit Point progression. Finding the row for 1 Hit Dice in the Average column of table HP-3, we discover that the little monkey gets +0 Bonus Hit Points.

As a tiny creature, the monkey gets a size modifier of ¼. This means its Hit Point totals are actually *divided* by four!

The monkey figures its Hit Points as follows:

$$(10 (\text{Constitution}) + 0 (\text{Hit Dice})) * \frac{1}{4} = \mathbf{2.5}.$$

We round this amount normally, so the monkey ends up with 3 Hit Points.

If the same monkey had the Toughness feat, its Hit Points would be figured as follows:

$$(10 (\text{Constitution}) + 0 (\text{Hit Dice}) + 3 (\text{Toughness})) * \frac{1}{4} = \mathbf{3.25}.$$

This rounds normally to a 3, so the monkey gains no real benefit from the Toughness feat. Poor monkey.

Defense

In the Grim-n-Gritty rules, Defense *replaces* Armor Class as the mechanic by which a character avoids being hit in combat.

Defense represents a character's ability to roll with blows, dodge attacks, and actively avoid being hit. It is a score derived from the character's class and level, modified by Dexterity, dodge, shield, and similar bonuses.

Using Defense

Whenever a character is attacked, an opposed d20 roll occurs. The defender rolls 1d20 + Defense. The attacker rolls 1d20 + total Attack value. If the attacker rolls higher than the defender, the attack hits. If the attacker rolls equal to or less than the defender, the attack misses. Ties on the roll always go to the defender.

Figuring Defense

Your Defense score is figured using the following formula:

$$\text{Base Defense Bonus} + \text{Dexterity Modifier} + \text{Size Modifier} + \text{Other Modifiers}$$

Your Base Defense Bonus is derived from your character class and level, your creature type and Hit Dice, or both. Your Dexterity modifier is figured normally. Your size modifier is derived from your creature size. The other modifiers to Defense are explained below; these modifiers could be Armor Check Penalties or Dodge bonuses.

Step 1: Figure Base Defense Bonus

Two things determine your Base Defense Bonus: your character class(es) and level(s), and your creature type and Hit Dice.

If you are caught flat-footed, you lose your Base Defense Bonus. If you have a special ability that lets you retain your Dexterity bonus while flat-footed, you also retain your Base Defense Bonus.

Defense from Class and Level: To figure your Base Defense Bonus from your character class, find your class' Defense Bonus Progression on table Ev-1: Base Defense Bonus Progression by Core Class. Then, find the row that corresponds to your class level in your class' progression column on table Ev-3: Base Defense Bonus Progression.

If you are multi-classed, figure the Base Defense Bonus for each of your classes separately. Then, add the results together.

For example, a 5th level cleric (Average progression) would have a Base Defense Bonus of +3.

Defense from Creature Type and Hit Dice: If you are a monster, your creature type and Hit Dice determine your Base Defense Bonus. To figure this, find your creature type on table Ev-2: Base Defense Bonus Progression by Core Creature Type. Then, find the row that corresponds to your Hit Dice in the column that corresponds to your progression on table Ev-3: Base Defense Bonus Progression. That number is your base Defense.

For example, an 8 Hit Dice giant (Average progression) would have a Base Defense Bonus of +4.

If you are a monstrous character with levels in a character class, add the Base Defense Bonus of your creature type and Hit Dice to the Base Defense Bonus for your class and level.

Table Ev-1: Base Defense Bonus Progression by Core Class

Progression	Classes
Good	Barbarian, Fighter, Monk, Rogue
Average	Bard, Cleric, Druid, Paladin, Ranger
Poor	Sorcerer, Wizard

Table Ev-2: Base Defense Bonus Progression by Monster Type

Progression	Type
Good	Dragon, Fey, Magical Beast, Monstrous Humanoid, Outsider
Average	Aberration, Animal, Beast, Elemental, Giant, Humanoid, Shapechanger, Vermin
Poor	Construct, Ooze, Plant, Undead

Table Ev-3: Base Defense Bonus Progression

Class Level - or - Hit Dice	Good	Average	Poor
1	+2	+1	+0
2	+3	+2	+0
3	+3	+2	+1
4	+4	+2	+1
5	+4	+3	+1
6	+5	+3	+2
7	+5	+4	+2
8	+6	+4	+2
9	+6	+4	+3
10	+7	+5	+3
11	+7	+5	+3
12	+8	+6	+4
13	+8	+6	+4
14	+9	+6	+4
15	+9	+7	+5
16	+10	+7	+5
17	+10	+8	+5
18	+11	+8	+6
19	+11	+8	+6
20	+12	+9	+6

Step 2: Figure Dexterity Modifier

Apply your Dexterity modifier to your Defense Bonus.

If you are caught flat-footed, you lose your Dexterity modifier (if any) to your Defense score.

Also, if you are wearing armor, your maximum Dexterity modifier is limited by that armor's Maximum Dex Bonus statistic.

Step 3: Figure Size Modifier

Your Size Modifier to your Defense score is derived from your size, using table Ev-4: Size Modifiers to Defense.

Table Ev-4: Size Modifier to Defense

Size	Modifier
Fine	+8
Diminutive	+6
Tiny	+4
Small	+2
Medium-size	+0
Large	-2
Huge	-4
Gargantuan	-6
Colossal	-8

Step 4: Figure Other Modifiers to Defense

See table Ev-5 for modifiers that are applied to your Defense score. If a particular modifier has “yes” under the “Flat-footed?” column, then you retain that modifier in any situation where you would normally lose Dexterity bonuses to Defense, such as being caught flat-footed.

Table Ev-5: Other Defense Modifiers

Modifier	Flat-footed?
Circumstance Bonus	Yes
Cover	Yes
Deflection Bonus	Yes
Dodge Bonus	No
Haste Bonus	No
Insight Bonus	Yes
Luck Bonus	Yes
Profane Bonus	Yes
Sacred Bonus	Yes
Shield Bonus	Yes

Examples

Fighter in Full Plate: A 1st level human fighter with 16 Dexterity and wearing full plate armor would figure his Defense score as follows.

First, he uses the Good progression column of table Ev-3, since he’s a fighter. This gives him a Base Defense Bonus of +2 for 1st level in that class.

Second, he figures his Dexterity modifier. Normally, he would have a +3 Dexterity bonus. Unfortunately, the full plate armor he wears limits his maximum Dexterity bonus to +1.

Finally, he figures his size modifier. As a medium-sized creature, this is +0.

His total Defense score is +3: +2 for base, +1 for Dexterity (limited by his armor), and +0 for medium size.

Multi-classed Rogue/Wizard: A multi-classed human, Rogue 3/Wizard 14, wears a Ring of Deflection +3 and has a Dexterity of 19.

First, she figures the Base Defense Bonus for her classes. A Rogue has Good progression; three levels give her a +3 bonus. A Wizard has Poor progression; fourteen levels on the Poor

column of table Ev-3 give her a +4 bonus. Adding these two bonuses together gives her a Base Defense Bonus of +7.

Her Dexterity modifier is +4. She is a medium-sized creature, giving her a +0 size modifier.

All of these bonuses give her an Defense of +11: +3 (Rogue) +4 (Wizard) +4 (Dexterity) +0 (Size).

Dragon: A great wyrm red dragon has 40 Hit Dice, colossal size, and Dexterity 10.

In table Ev-2, we see that dragons get Good Defense Bonus Progression for their creature type. Since table Ev-3 only goes to 20 levels or Hit Dice, we have to extrapolate 40 Hit Dice. This gives a result of +22 for the dragon’s Base Defense Bonus.

The dragon’s Dexterity of 10 provides no bonus, but its colossal size imposes a –8 penalty to Defense.

The final Defense score of the dragon is +14: +22 (Hit Dice) +0 (Dexterity) –8 (size).

Monkey: A monkey is a tiny animal with one Hit Dice and Dexterity 15.

An animal gets Average Defense Bonus Progression. Table Ev-3 shows a Base Defense Bonus of +1 for a one Hit Dice creature.

The monkey gets a +2 Dexterity Bonus. Its tiny size, while heavily penalizing its Hit Points, works in its favor for Defense; it gives the monkey a +4 Defense modifier.

The monkey’s total Defense modifier is +7: +1 (Hit Dice) +2 (Dexterity) +4 (size).

Flat-feet and Defense

If you are caught flat-footed, you lose your Base Defense Bonus and your Dexterity modifier from your total Defense score. You do not lose your size modifier.

Any situation which would normally cause you to lose your Dexterity modifier due to being unprepared, ambushed, stunned, immobilized, and the like, also causes you to lose your Base Defense Bonus.

You do not lose your Base Defense Bonus when attacked by an invisible opponent.

Inanimate Objects

If an inanimate object is moving, like a pendulum or wheel rolling down a hill, it rolls 1d20 + its size modifier + any other modifiers determined by the referee for its Defense.

Immobile inanimate objects do not roll 1d20 for Defense. They only get their size modifier + any other modifiers determined by the referee. (The same rule applies to immobile, unconscious characters and creatures. They are very easy to hit.)

Armor Rating

Because this variant damage system results in characters with fewer Hit Points and because the system aims at a less abstracted approach to combat and damage, it implements a variant rule in which armor *reduces* the damage suffered by a character, rather than making a character harder to hit.

The capacity of armor to reduce damage is called its Armor Rating (AR).

Effects of Armor Rating

Like many things in the d20 System, a number denotes Armor Rating (AR): the higher the number, the more powerful the armor's ability to absorb damage.

The number in a creature's AR is the amount of hit points the creature ignores from *any* attack that inflicts Hit Point damage (including subdual damage). Both physical and energy attacks are affected by AR.

AR reduces the damage from attacks, only. It has no effect on damage caused by the environment, such as ubiquitous high temperatures.

Example: A creature with AR 5 is struck by an attack that inflicts 9 points of damage. The creature only suffers 4 points of damage because he ignores the first 5 points.

Determining AR

Your Armor Rating is figured with the following formula:

$$\text{Highest Armor Bonus} + \text{Highest Natural Armor Bonus}$$

Basically, any item, ability, or effect that provides an *armor* or *natural armor* bonus will give you AR equal to that bonus. (Shields do not provide AR. They increase your Defense.)

For example, a suit of full plate armor provides a +8 armor bonus. Wearing it gives you AR 8.

An amulet of Natural Armor +4 gives you AR 4. If you were wearing both the amulet and the plate armor, the different bonuses would stack together, giving you AR 12.

Note that bonuses of the same type do *not* stack.

Additional Armor-related Rules

Stacking Damage Reduction and AR

AR stacks with Damage Reduction for purposes of reducing the damage from physical attacks.

When a creature with both Damage Reduction and AR is struck by an attack, the effects of AR are applied *before* the effects of Damage Reduction.

If a creature is struck by a weapon type that ignores its Damage Reduction, it still receives the benefit of its AR.

Example: A werewolf has a +4 natural armor bonus, which grants it AR 4. It also possesses supernatural Damage Reduction of 15/silver. If an opponent attempts to strike the werewolf with a wooden club, his damage is reduced by 19

points: 4 from the natural armor, 15 from the supernatural properties of the creature. If the same opponent were to use a silver dagger, he would only have to deal with 4 points of AR.

Stacking Energy Resistance and AR

AR stacks with Energy Resistance for purposes of reducing damage from energy-based attacks.

When a creature with both Energy Resistance and AR is struck by an attack, the effects of AR are applied *before* the effects of Energy Resistance.

AR provides no protection from constant, environmental damage, such as damage from extreme heat in a volcanic region. AR only protects a character from instantaneous attacks.

Metal Armor

If armor contains a large amount of metal, it provides no AR against electricity and only half AR against cold.

Monks' "Sixth Sense"

The armor class bonus that monks gain for high Wisdom and class levels does *not* provide AR. It represents the character's ability to avoid attacks, not absorb the damage. Therefore, it is added to the character's Defense score.

Shields

The bonus for a shield does not provide AR, nor will enhancement bonuses on a shield provide AR. Any defensive bonuses for a shield are applied to the character's Defense.

Penetration

Some weapons under this system may have armor piercing qualities, either by enchantment or technological design. This quality is called Penetration.

If a weapon has armor piercing abilities, it is designated with Penetration followed by a number. This number is the amount of AR the weapon ignores when it inflicts damage.

Penetration does not ignore a target's Damage Reduction or Energy Resistance.

Example: A large caliber pistol is Penetration 10. If fired at a target with AR 9, it ignores the target's AR completely. If fired at a werewolf with AR 4 and 15/silver Damage Reduction, then it only has to contend with the 15/silver DR; it reduces the AR below zero and ignores it.

SRD Weapons with Penetration: Very few weapons in the d20 System Reference Document (SRD) have Penetration. All firearms in this document have a Penetration of 10. Arrows and crossbow bolts with Penetration 2 can be purchased for triple the normal price. The light pick has Penetration 2. The heavy pick has Penetration 4.

The Role of Strength

Because armor no longer makes a character harder to hit, but harder to damage, it is not logical to continue to give an Attack roll bonus for high Strength.

Your Dexterity bonus supplies your Attack roll bonus for *all* attacks. Strength only increases your damage.

Effects of Damage

Most of the mechanics of a character suffering damage from a successful attack remain the same in the Grim-n-Gritty system, though the reduced Hit Point totals makes combat dicier. No one, no matter his or her skill, is guaranteed to survive a toe-to-toe slugfest. Stealth, maneuver, and surprise become the order of the day.

Still, mechanics remain generally the same. A character declares his attack and performs a d20 roll to determine if he hits his target. Should he hit his target, he subtracts the target's AR from his weapon's damage total. If any damage is left over, he subtracts that amount from his opponent's Hit Point total.

The main change is that once a person loses Hit Points, he may be dazed or stunned from immediate Wound Trauma. He may begin to bleed and slowly become fatigued from exsanguination. Finally, he suffers penalties to all his rolls because of severe injury.

Wound Trauma

In the Grim-n-Gritty system, whenever you lose Hit Points, you must immediately perform a Fortitude saving throw against *wound trauma*. If you fail this saving throw, you might become dazed or stunned by your injury. This mechanic represents an immediate response to physical injury.

The DC of your Fortitude save equals 10 + the damage you suffered. (For example, if you suffered 8 points of damage, you would have to save against DC 18.)

If you fail the saving throw, you are *dazed* for one round. If you fail the save by 5 or more points, you are *stunned* for one round. If you fail by 10 or more points, you are *stunned* for 2d6 rounds.

Example: A character with 18 HP and wearing chainmail (AR 5) is struck by a bastard sword and suffers 12 points of damage. His armor reduces the damage to 7 points. The 7 points of damage are subtracted from his HP total.

This forces him to make a Fortitude saving throw against DC 17 (10 + 7 points of damage). He rolls an 11 and misses his saving throw by 6 points. The wound stuns him for one round.

Wound Trauma and Size

The size of a creature or character affects the amount of damage necessary to send it into deep shock. For example, a giant would almost ignore a stab from a knife that could kill a grown man.

Before you figure the DC of the saving throw, you multiply the damage inflicted upon the creature by its size modifier. Table WT-1 shows the modifier, below.

Table WT-1: Wound Trauma Save Modifier Based on Size

Size	Modifier
Medium-size	x1
Large	x1/2
Huge	x1/4
Gargantuan	x1/8
Colossal	x1/12

Creatures Immune to Wound Trauma

Undead, oozes, constructs, and other creatures immune to critical hits do not suffer from Wound Trauma. They are exempt from rolling a Fortitude save each time they suffer damage.

Injury

Loss of Hit Points in the Grim-n-Gritty system not only has an immediate effect upon you, it also has long-term, negative effects, called *injuries*. Injury represents a wearing down of the your resilience, an increasing weakness that results from long-term, severe wound trauma.

Injuries are based on your current Hit Point total. When your Hit Points dip below a certain level, you are injured. When the character's Hit Points rise above that level, the injury has been healed.

Injuries do not stack.

There are three grades of injury: *Light*, *Moderate*, and *Severe*. They are described below.

Light Injury: When you have only 75% or less of your Hit Points, you have suffered a *Light Injury*. A Light Injury imposes a -2 penalty on all attack rolls, ability checks, saving throws, and skill checks.

Moderate Injury: When you have 50% or less of her Hit Points, your have suffered a *Moderate Injury*. Like a Light Injury, a Moderate Injury imposes a penalty on all attack rolls, ability checks, saving throws, and skill checks. However, the penalty for a Moderate Injury is -4.

Severe Injury: When you have 25% or less of your Hit Points, you have suffered a *Severe Injury*. A character with a Severe Injury has a -6 penalty to all attack rolls, ability checks, saving throws, and skill checks. Also, characters with Severe Injuries cannot run or charge.

Example: A character with 12 Hit Points has a Light Injury when her Hit Points are reduced to 9 or less (i.e., 75% or less of 12). At 6 or less Hit Points, she has a Moderate Injury. (Six is 50% of 12.) At 3 or less Hit Points, she has a Severe Injury.

Creatures Immune to Injuries

Creatures that are immune to critical hits, undead, oozes, constructs, and the like do not suffer injuries.

Disabled, Dying, and Dead

The rules for disabled, dying and dead conditions remain the same as standard d20 rules, with the following exceptions:

1. The instant death from massive damage rule is not used. The variant Wound Trauma rules already account for this sort of effect.
2. The amount of negative Hit Points to which a character can drop before dying equals $-10 \times$ the character's HP Bonus Size Multiplier in Table HP-3 (above). Therefore, a huge creature is alive until it reaches -40 HP, while a small creature dies at -5 HP.
3. The chance a creature will stabilize while dying equals its Constitution score, rather than a flat 10%.

Critical Hits

Because – for the most part – creatures and characters possess fewer Hit Points in this system, the effects of a critical hit are slightly reduced. Instead of multiplying the entire damage of a weapon by its critical multiplier, you multiply the *dice* rolled for the weapon by the critical multiplier.

Example: A long sword that inflicts a critical hit would roll 2d8 damage because it normally inflicts 1d8 damage and has a x2 modifier. Any enhancement bonuses, modifiers for the wielder's Strength bonus, and the like are applied *after* the dice are rolled.

Improving Your Threat Range

In the Grim-n-Gritty system, your Base Attack Bonus affects your critical threat range with any weapon in which you are proficient. In other words, characters who are adept at fighting are more likely to cause critical hits than characters who are not. Table CH-1 shows the modifier to threat range for a high Base Attack Bonus.

This bonus is added to the threat range of whatever weapon you wield. This bonus is applied *after* any threat range modifiers for enhancements, feats, and special abilities.

Table CH-1: Threat Range Bonus for Base Attack Bonus

Base Attack Bonus	Threat Range
0-5	+0
6-10	+1
11-15	+2
16-20	+3
21+	+4

Example: A long sword normally has a threat range of 19-20. In the hands of a character with a Base Attack Bonus of 13, this threat range is increased by +2. The character will threaten a critical on a 17-20.

Called Shots

Because the Grim-n-Gritty system tries to more accurately model damage in combat, it provides rules for Called Shots. Called Shots are attacks that a character tries to target at a specific location on his opponent's body, in an attempt to inflict more serious damage – or – perhaps to pierce a weak point in the target's armor or disable a limb.

The Cost of a Called Shot

Called Shots are difficult to perform. They impose a penalty to your attack roll. Also, you may not perform a Full Attack Action in conjunction with a Called Shot. You may only perform a standard Attack Action.

Called Shots cannot be performed as attacks of opportunity.

The Basic Called Shot

With a basic Called Shot, you try to increase the likelihood of a critical hit with your weapon. The desire to perform a Called Shot must be declared *before* you roll your dice for the attack. You suffer a –4 penalty to your attack roll. If you succeed in hitting your target, you *double* the critical threat range of your weapon.

Your total threat range, *after* all modifiers from feats and enhancements, is doubled.

Example: A character that has the Improved Critical (battle-ax) feat and wields a battle-ax has a critical threat range of 19-20. If he succeeds in a basic Called Shot, he threatens on a range of 17-20. Were the same character wielding a *keen* battle-ax, he would normally have a threat range of 18-20. A Called Shot would double this total threat range to 15-20.

Armor Piercing Called Shots

An Armor Piercing Called Shot lets you target the weak points in your opponent's armor and circumvent some of their AR. The penalty to your attack roll is based on the type of armor worn by your opponent, per table CS-1, below.

If you successfully hit with an Armor Piercing Called Shot, you *halve* your opponent's AR against your attack. If you double the attack penalty for your Called Shot, you may *ignore* your opponent's AR.

You may perform an Armor Piercing Called Shot in conjunction with a Basic or Advanced Called Shot. The attack penalties for the various Called Shots are cumulative.

An Armor Piercing Called Shot has *no* effect on Damage Reduction or Energy Resistance.

Table CS-1: Armor Piercing Called Shot Penalty for Armor Type

Size	Multiplier
Light	-4
Medium	-6
Heavy	-8
Natural	-8
Force	Not possible

Example: An Armor Piercing Called Shot against a character in studded leather armor imposes a –4 penalty to the attack roll, because the target is wearing light armor. If the Called Shot hits, the target's AR is halved against the attack. By doubling the Called Shot penalty to –8, it is possible to ignore the target's AR completely.

The Advanced Called Shot

If you not only desire to increase the critical threat range of your attack, but also want to inflict an additional effect on your opponent, such as disabling a limb or poking out an eye, you must perform an Advanced Called Shot.

An Advanced Called Shot modifies a Basic Called Shot. It has the –4 Called Shot penalty for the Basic Called Shot and also has its own Called Shot penalty. Both are applied to the attack roll.

If the attack hits and the character achieves a critical hit, then a secondary effect takes place in addition to the increased damage of the critical hit.

The secondary effect is chosen before the Called Shot is performed. It cannot be changed. Each secondary effect has its own attack penalty. This penalty is added to the –4 attack penalty for a Basic Called Shot. Secondary effects are listed in table CS-2 and described individually below. (Skill check, ability check, attack roll, and saving throw penalties caused by secondary effects are *not* cumulative.)

Note: In order for a secondary effect to take place, the attacker *must* make a successful critical hit.

Table CS-2: Secondary Effects of Advanced Called Shots

Effect	Attack Penalty
Disable arm	-2
Disable ear	-6
Disable eye	-8
Disable foot/leg	-2
Disable hand	-4
Disable head	-4
Induce arterial bleeding	-6
Silent kill	-6
Strike vital spot	-6

Description of Effects

Disable Arm: This secondary effect imposes a –2 attack penalty. If you succeed in a critical hit, the injury imposes a –2 penalty to your victim's attack rolls and Strength checks. The victim also suffers a –2 penalty to all Climb, Craft, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Forgery, Alchemy, Heal, Open Lock, Pick Pocket, Swim, and Use Rope checks.

If both of your opponent's arms are disabled, he cannot attack or perform any of the skills listed above.

Disable Ear: The victim suffers a –2 penalty to all Listen checks. Because of inner ear damage, the penalty also applies to Tumble, Balance, and Climb checks, as well as initiative rolls.

If both ears are disabled, the character is deafened.

Disable Eye: The critical multiplier for the attack is increased by one (i.e., a weapon that inflicts a x2 modifier, it now inflicts x3). It also imposes a –2 penalty to the following checks and rolls: Appraise, Alchemy, Craft, Decipher Script, Disable Device, Forgery, Open Lock, Read Lips, Scry, Search, Sense Motive, Spot, Spellcraft, and Wilderness Lore (for tracking) skill checks; initiative checks; Dexterity checks; attack rolls; and Reflex saving throws.

If both eyes are disabled, the victim is blind.

Disable Foot/Leg: The victim cannot run or charge. A –2 penalty is imposed on all Climb, Swim, Jump, Ride, Tumble, Balance, and Move Silently checks; Reflex saving throws; and Dexterity checks.

If both legs are disabled, the victim can only move by crawling.

Disable Hand: If the critical hit succeeds, the victim automatically drops whatever was held in the disabled hand. The injury imposes a –2 to attack roll penalty to any weapon held in that hand. Also, all Climb, Craft, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Forgery, Alchemy, Heal, Open Lock, Pick Pocket, and Use Rope skill checks suffer a –2 penalty.

Disable Head: This secondary effect causes a severe head wound, like a concussion. The victim is disoriented, suffering a –2 penalty to all attack rolls, checks, and saves.

Induce Arterial Bleeding: A slashing weapon is necessary to perform this secondary effect. If the critical hit succeeds, the victim begins bleeding profusely, regardless of the total amount of damage inflicted. Within a short while, he will collapse and die without medical treatment, use the Severe Bleeding rules in the Variant Rules section.

Silent Kill: If the victim dies or is knocked unconscious by this attack, he makes no sound. It is not possible for the victim to scream or groan. Nothing more than a slight, faint gasp escapes his lips.

Strike Vital Spot: The critical multiplier for the attack increases by one step (i.e., from x2 to x3).

Recovery from Secondary Effects

Disabled body parts will not heal naturally. Medical treatment over several days or weeks is necessary to repair the damage. Magical or extraordinary means of healing will repair it as well.

Arterial bleeding can be stopped with a successful use of the Heal skill against DC 20.

Other Called Shot Rules

Sneak Attacks

The sneak attack ability of characters such as the rogue or assassin is based upon their ability to catch an opponent unawares and strike a vital spot for extra damage. Since the Called Shot system provides detailed mechanics for striking an opponent in this fashion, and also because characters have fewer Hit Points in the Grim-n-Gritty system, it is inappropriate for rogues, assassins, and other “sneak attackers” to gain extra damage to their attacks.

In the Grim-n-Gritty system, characters with the sneak attack ability gain a bonus to attack rolls and their critical threat range. Whenever a character with sneak attack ability flanks an opponent or catches an opponent in a situation that denies the Dexterity bonus to AC (if any), he gains the bonus. The primary intent of the bonus is to allow the character to easily deliver Called Shots, but it can be used for normal attacks.

To convert a standard character’s sneak attack damage bonus to the Grim-n-Gritty attack/threat bonus, use table CS-3. Find the character’s damage bonus and replace it with the attack roll and threat range bonus on the same row.

Table CS-3: Damage Bonus to Attack/Threat Bonus

Total Standard Damage Bonus	Attack Bonus	Threat Bonus
+1d6	+4	+0
+2d6	+4	+1
+3d6	+5	+1
+4d6	+5	+2
+5d6	+6	+2
+6d6	+6	+3
+7d6	+7	+3
+8d6	+7	+4
+9d6	+8	+4
+10d6 (or more)	+8	+5

Creatures Immune to Called Shots

For the most part, creatures immune to critical hits, such as undead, oozes, and constructs, are immune to Basic and Advanced Called Shots. AR-Piercing Called Shots can be performed against most targets, except for creatures whose armor derives from a solid body, such as a construct or earth elemental, or immaterial form.

Healing

Normal Healing

All characters recover lost HP at rate of (1 point + their Constitution modifier) times their size multiplier (see table HP-3) per *week* of rest.

With a week required for healing, it becomes extremely important for characters to seek medical help after severe or even moderate injuries.

Example: A large creature with a Constitution score of 14 automatically gets 1 point of healing and +2 points for its high Con score. The sum of these, multiplied by its size multiplier of x1.5 gives it a healing rate of 5 points per week of rest. ($1 + 2 = 3 \times 1.5 = 4.5$, round up to 5.)

Medical Treatment

Instead of boosting the rate at which a character heals per day, the Heal skill and similar abilities increase the rate at which a character heals per *week*.

Extraordinary Healing

All forms of magical, psionic, and other supernatural or extraordinary means of healing work normally.

Healing Injuries

A character recovers from an injury when her Hit Points rises about the threshold for that injury.

For example, a character with 12 Hit Points suffers a Light Injury when her Hit Points are 9 or less. She currently has 8 Hit Points and a Light Injury. Once she heals to 10 Hit Points, she no longer has a Light Injury.

Grim-n-Gritty High Magic

The Grim-n-Gritty rules are not intended for a campaign setting where magic is common and powerful, like a standard high fantasy setting. All sorts of game balance issues crop up when you attempt to implement these rules in that type of setting. A 3rd-level spell, like *fireball* or *lightning bolt* could easily wipe out a group of high level adventurers.

But that is the way these rules are intended.

If you insist on using these rules in a “high magic” setting and you are using the core magic rules, then you should eliminate any level-based scaling of damage for spells. For example, a *fireball* spell should not scale-up in damage as the caster acquires new levels. The damage of the spell should remain fixed. A *magic missile* spell should not gain more missiles as you gain caster levels.

If a spell normally permits you to “scale” its damage with caster level, like a *fireball* or *lightning bolt*, then use the following table, HM-1, to determine the dice of damage for the spell. These dice of damage are fixed. Whenever you cast the spell, you always use this amount.

Table HM-1: High Magic Spell Dice by Spell Level

Spell Level	Dice of Damage
0	1
1	2
2	3
3	4
4	5
5	6
6	7
7	8
8	9
9	10

Basically, the spell’s level is the dice of damage. If the spell normally inflicts only one die of damage, then it still only inflicts one die of damage, regardless of its level.

With this system, a *fireball* inflicts 4d6 damage each time it is cast. An average damage roll with a *fireball* should kill just about any low level, unarmored, medium-sized, Constitution 10 creature.

Variant Rules

Severe Bleeding

Some injuries can cause severe blood loss.

Table BL-1 shows the amount of damage that must be inflicted upon a creature to cause severe bleeding. The bigger a creature, the more damage that must be inflicted. Slashing weapons need to inflict less than other attack types to cause bleeding.

Table BL-1: Damage Necessary to Cause a Creature to Bleed

Size	Slashing Damage	Other Damage
Fine	1	1
Diminutive	1	1
Tiny	1	1
Small	2	3
Medium-size	4	6
Large	8	12
Huge	16	24
Gargantuan	32	48
Colossal	48	72

If you suffer enough damage to cause severe bleeding, roll 1d6 + your Constitution modifier. The result is a time limit in rounds (minimum of 1 round). If you have not bandaged your wound or performed some other treatment to cease bleeding at the end of this time period, you will become *fatigued* from blood loss.

If you still have not stopped the flow of blood at the end of this time period, roll 1d6 + your Constitution modifier again. Like before, the result is a time limit in rounds. If your wound is not bandaged before the time is up, you become *exhausted* from blood loss.

If you still have not treated your wound, roll 1d6 + your Constitution modifier again. You become *incapacitated* from blood loss once a number of rounds equal to the result have passed.

If another 1d6 + your Constitution modifier rounds pass, you are *dying* from blood loss.

In other words, once you begin bleeding severely, you will incur one level of fatigue every 1d6 + Constitution modifier rounds.

Bleeding from Multiple Wounds

If you are already bleeding and are struck by another attack that would induce bleeding, then knock two rounds off the time limit.

Creatures Immune to Severe Bleeding

Undead, oozes, incorporeal creatures, constructs, and creatures without bodily fluids are immune to severe bleeding.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it true that a Fighter 6/Cleric 5 can have a Base Defense Bonus of +8 which is one point higher than a single-classed 11th level Fighter's +7 base? If this is true, doesn't it create a serious inequity in the system?

Yes, it is true. No, it does not create an inequity.

If you mix and match classes, you'll reinforce certain characteristics of the class. The process is much like creating a hybrid in genetics. The dominant traits of the parents are accentuated in the offspring, while the recessive traits diminish.

Let's compare the standard d20 traits of a Fighter 6/Cleric 5 to a Cleric 11 and Fighter 11. See table FAQ-1, below.

Table FAQ-1: Hybrid v. Pure Class Comparison

Trait	Fighter 6/ Cleric 5	Fighter 11	Cleric 11
Base Attack Bonus	+10/+5	+11/+6/+1	+8/+3
Fortitude Save	+9	+7	+7
Reflex Save	+3	+3	+3
Will Save	+6	+3	+7

In table FAQ-1, we can see that the multi-classed Fighter/Cleric has a superior Base Attack Bonus in comparison to a single-classed Cleric of equivalent character level. In fact, its bonus is only *one point* below a single-classed fighter — not much of a sacrifice considering the additional spell casting abilities of the cleric. The Fortitude save of the multi-classed character exceeds *both* single-classed characters by a full two points. Its Will save is *three* points higher than the Fighter's and only one point lower than the Cleric. Judged on these statistics alone, the hybrid Fighter/Cleric is a superior character.

However, the Fighter/Cleric lacks the spell-casting power of the single-classed Cleric. It also lacks the plethora of feats available to the single-Classed Fighter. It gains much, but it also denies itself much.

So it is with hybrid characters and Defense Bonuses. Just because a certain mixture of classes can produce a high Base Defense Bonus, do not assume an inequity in the system. The hybrid character may have a single powerful trait, but it loses many others in comparison to the pure ones. In the end, it balances out.

Shouldn't the damage inflicted by spells be reduced when you use this system? Characters are going to be killed easily.

If you truly feel this way, then this system is not appropriate for your campaign setting.

The damage of spells should *not* be reduced to "balance" the reduced HP of characters. The intent of the system is to create

a brutal environment for characters. It is *supposed* to be *grim* and *gritty*. It is not an oversight that spell damage is not reduced.

Does subdual damage exist in this system?

Yes. Unless stated otherwise or logic dictates a difference, old rules apply in all situations.

Will you have HP and Defense bonus progression for NPC and Prestige Classes soon?

I do not plan on it.

As a rule of thumb: d10 and d12 classes get Good HP Bonus Progression, d8 and d6 get Average, and d4 gets Poor.

For defense bonuses: A tough fighter type or nimble thief type gets Good progression. Folks who cast spells but have decent combat abilities (like a cleric) should get Average progression. Wizard-type classes should get Poor. If a class casts spells, knock 'em down one step on the Defense bonus.

How are weapons of wounding handled under the bleeding rules?

Any hit by a weapon of wounding will cause Severe Bleeding, per the variant rule.

If a character has temporary hit points (from an aid spell, for example), will she suffer Wound Trauma or Bleeding from damage to her temporary hit points?

No. Consider the temporary hit points to act as an "ablative" defense for the character. This increases the importance and usefulness of these spells.

With an Armor Piercing Called Shot, the attacker suffers an attack penalty based on the type of armor the target possesses. Which penalty is used if the target wears multiple types of armor, such as a chain shirt (light armor) and natural armor?

For simplicity's sake, the higher of the two penalties is used. If the target is wearing force-based armor and normal armor, then you can perform a Called Shot to pierce the normal armor, but may not reduce the force-based bonus.

If someone performs a Armor Piercing Basic Called Shot or Armor Piercing Advanced Called Shot is the total attack penalty doubled or just the penalty from the AP Called Shot?

Only the Armor Piercing Called Shot penalty is doubled.

If a subdual damage attack is used with an Advanced Called Shot, what change does this have on the Secondary Effects?

The Secondary Effects will end as soon as the victim recovers from the subdual damage.

Versions

- 1.0 – Original document.
- 1.1 – Added FAQ.
- 1.2 – Changed Damage Reduction for armor and natural armor to AR. Changed Armor Piercing to Penetration.
- 1.3 – Added “Applicable Settings” and gray boxes to denote Open Game Content. (04-17-2001)
- 1.4 – Added “The Role of Strength,” standardizing the variant rule wherein Strength no longer supplies an Attack roll bonus.
- 1.5 – Added a listing of SRD weapons with Penetration and the “No Hit Points” variant rule. (04-19-2001)
- 1.6 – Added Injury rules for Hit Point Loss. (04-27-01)
- 2.0 – Removed the variant rules for No Hit Points; I will print that in another document. Cleaned up and streamlined the rules for figuring Hit Points and Defense. Changed several terms. Got rid of all references to Armor Class. Simplified the mechanics for bleeding and wound trauma. (05-08-2001)
- 2.1 – Moved the Severe Bleeding rules to the Variants section because it’s a little clunky. (05-10-2001)

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