

Combat Options

A Basic Fantasy RPG Supplement

Release 5

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INTRODUCTION

This supplement additional combat options for player and non-player characters for use with the Basic Fantasy Role-Playing Game rules. If you do not already have a copy of the **Basic Fantasy RPG Core Rules**, please visit the website and download a copy.

Using These Rules

Below are defined various *optional* combat rules. The Game Master must choose which, if any, of these rules apply in their game.

In order to make these options easier to use, each optional rule has a checkbox beside it. The GM may wish to print a copy of this supplement and mark the checkboxes for the rules they have chosen.

Weapon Specialization ☐

Under this rule, the player of a Fighter may choose a weapon in which the character is especially skilled. Specialization only applies to "true" Fighters, and not to any subclasses thereof which may appear in other supplements, unless otherwise noted.

At first level, the player applies one **rank** of specialization to the chosen weapon. This choice must be quite specific; for instance, a specialization in the longsword will give no bonuses when using a shortsword.

Every third level after first (that is, 4th, 7th, 10th, etc.) the player applies another rank of specialization. Each new rank may be applied to an existing specialization, or to a new specialization.

For instance, at first level Darion's player assigns a rank to longsword. Darion gains a bonus of +1 on attack rolls when using a longsword. At 4th level, the player may assign the new rank to longsword, giving a bonus of +1 on attack rolls and +1 on damage; or, the rank may be applied to a new weapon, such as the longbow, in which case both weapons have +1 on attack rolls but no bonus to damage.

As indicated in the Attacks Per Round column, at higher ranks of specialization the Fighter is allowed to attack more than one time per round. 3/2 means that the character may attack three time in every two rounds, once in the odd-numbered round and twice in the even-numbered round. At 2/1 the Fighter is allowed to attack with the specialized weapon two times per round.

Additional attacks always come after all other attacks are resolved; that is, the Fighter attacks once on their Initiative number, then again after all "first" attacks are done. If more than one weapon specialist is involved in a battle, count Initiative down twice, once for "first" attacks and again for "second" attacks.

Rank	Combat Bonuses (Attack / Damage)	Attacks per Round
1	+1 / +0	1 / 1
2	+1 / +1	1 / 1
3	+2 / +1	3 / 2
4	+2 / +2	3 / 2
5	+3 / +2	2 / 1
6	+3 / +3	2 / 1

Some GMs do not like the 3/2 rate, as it does involve keeping track of even and odd rounds. In such a case, the GM may either choose to use 1/1 for both ranks, or 1/1 for rank 3 and 2/1 for rank 4.

Shield Specialist ☐

A Fighter character may spend a specialization rank to specialize with shields.

If the Game Master utilizes other non-standard shield types (see the **Armor & Shield Supplement**) then the character must acquire specialization in each such type.

A shield specialist receives an additional +1 bonus to AC while wielding the shield.

Armor Specialist ☐

A Fighter character may spend a specialization rank to consider a type of armor of their choice one step lighter in regards of movement rates.

A Fighter can only apply one rank of specialization to each type of armor.

Critical Hits □

A natural 20 on the attack die roll results in a **threat**. Roll again; if the character hits on the second roll (a normal hit, not just another natural 20), a **critical hit** is scored and double damage is done. However, if the only way the character can hit is to roll a natural 20, critical hits are not scored.

Fumbles □

A natural 1 on the attack die roll may result in a **fumble**; if this occurs, the character must save vs. Death Ray with Dexterity applied. If the save fails, the character has fumbled.

The effects of a fumble vary based on the type of weapon. For hand-held weapons, the weapon is dropped; use the grenade-like weapons table to determine where, considering the wielder as if they were the "target" in the table. If the character binds their weapon to their hand (so they cannot drop it), then the fumble leads to the character suffering damage equal to the weapon's normal attack die (without Strength, magic, or other bonuses). For bows, a broken bowstring is the usual result; for crossbows, a fumble leads to a jammed mechanism requiring 2d10 rounds to clear.

The GM is encouraged to make up alternate fumble results when appropriate to the circumstances, using these suggestions as a guideline.

Two Weapon Combat □

This rule allows a character to use a weapon in each hand. The weapon in the primary hand suffers a penalty of -2 to hit, while the weapon in the off-hand is used at a -5 penalty normally. Subtract from this penalty the character's Dexterity bonus, with a minimum penalty of +0 (so a character with 18 Dexterity does not get a +1 bonus to hit this way). The primary weapon must, obviously, be one-handed, and the secondary must be a dagger, handaxe, or similar very small weapon.

The off-handed weapon normally does not get multiple attacks, even if allowed by specialization. Like a monster using an attack routine (claw-claw-bite) the off-handed weapon attacks at the same time as the primary weapon.

Note: Off-handed weapon attacks (with no primary hand attack) are at -3 penalty, with the Dexterity bonus subtracted as above.

As an option, a character using two-weapon combat may choose to use the off-handed weapon as a defensive item similar to a shield. This must be declared at the start of the round.

In this case, no special penalty is applied to the primary weapon, and the off-handed weapon adds +1 to the wielder's AC value against a single melee attacker per round.

If the weapon has a magic weapon bonus, it may be applied, but only the base bonus for those weapons with multiple values.

If the character using two weapons at once has a specialization bonus with the off-hand weapon they are using to defend, add the specialization AB modifier as well to the character's AC.

Defending □

The application of Armor Class assumes that the character tries to avoid each incoming attack, while still making attacks themselves. However, there will be occasions when the character just wants to avoid being hit. The player must declare that the character is **defending**. This can be done regardless of Initiative, and is therefore a good choice when fighting unarmored and the Initiative is lost.

The defending character applies a bonus of +4 to AC. If the character is holding/using a specialized weapon, they may add the specialization "to hit" bonus to AC to reflect the additional parrying skill. Also, magic weapons usually confer the bonus to the AC of the defending character (as described under **Two-Weapon Combat**, above).

Alternative Staff Combat □

Staves must generally be wielded with two hands, though a walking staff can be used in one hand, doing damage as a club if so used. A character using a staff of any kind with both hands may perform a normal attack, and still use the weapon to parry any single melee attack; this grants the wielder a +1 to AC vs. that attack, in much the same way as a shield would. Or, the staff may be used as a shield against any number of melee attackers, granting a bonus of +1 to AC, but in this case the wielder may make no attacks of his or her own; this is often combined with the Defending rule, above. When used as a defensive item, apply magical bonuses as explained in **Two-Weapon Combat**, above.

Alternately, the wielder may choose to make two attacks in any given round, treating the staff as if it were two clubs. The penalties given under **Two-Weapon Combat**, above, are applied when the staff is used in this way, and the weapon may not be used to parry in this situation. The two attacks are separated by one Initiative number; i.e., a wielder who has rolled a 4 for Initiative attacks once on 4, and again on 3.

Unarmored Combat □

Characters who, for whatever reason, engage in combat while wearing no armor whatsoever have a base Armor Class of 11, plus Dexterity bonus, *plus the character's normal Attack Bonus*. Use of a shield is allowed (to those characters who may use shields normally), as are magical protection items which are not otherwise properly armor (such as **Rings** or **Cloaks of Protection**). This improved base Armor Class only applies to opponents the character is aware of and whose location is at least approximately known, as it is not possible to defend effectively against attackers you do not know about. This is sometimes called the "Swashbuckler Option."

Mounted Combat □

When a combatant is mounted, the rider's Initiative roll is used for both rider and mount, as the rider is the one guiding the mount's movements. Thus, all attacks by rider and mount are effectively simultaneous and generally must all be against the same target. Some exotic mounts may vary from this rule at the GM's option, especially if the mount is unusually fast or slow. For example, a zombie steed still moves and attacks last in the round regardless of the rider's Initiative roll.

When charging, only one of the rider or mount receives the charging bonus, and the other of the pair does not attack that turn. Note that normal steeds (horses) do not generally have attacks which benefit from a charging movement. To receive the benefits of charging, the rider must have proper riding equipment, i.e. a saddle with stirrups.

The mount must be trained for mounted combat in order to coordinate attacks with rider. Otherwise, only the rider may attack, and does so at a -2 penalty to AB. Mounts having near human Intelligence (or better) are automatically considered trained for combat.

A mount is generally large enough compared to the rider to allow the rider to "set against charge" when using an appropriate weapon. The rider and mount must remain stationary and the rider must have a proper saddle with stirrups to do this.

Nearly all rider and mount combinations are considered large for purposes of fighting against small humanoids like halflings, who may have special bonuses against such combatants.

Unless otherwise specified by the attacker, all attacks are assumed to be directed against the rider rather than the mount. An attack that misses the rider by 1 to 2 points, but which would hit the mount's AC, is applied against the mount instead.

An untrained mount that takes damage must roll a Morale check, and will generally attempt to flee immediately if the check fails (regardless of Initiative). The rider must save vs. Death Ray with Dexterity bonus applied or be thrown from the steed's back. A thrown rider suffers 1d6 points of falling damage, is prone, and cannot make any further action until the next round. A rider who retains their seat will regain control 1d4 rounds after the mount is out of sight of the attacker. The GM must rule if magic or other means is used to regain control. Also note, even trained mounts subjected to magical **fear** will respond in this way.

Jousting: A joust is simply a situation in which two riders charge at each other with lances. All the standard rules apply to such attacks, except that the AC penalty for charging does not apply to their attacks against each other (but the penalty does apply to attacks made by bystanders).

When a jouster is hit by their opponent they must make a save vs. Death Ray (with Strength bonus applied) or else be unhorsed and land prone upon the ground, suffering 1d6 points of damage just as given above. Each full 5 points of damage dealt applies a -1 penalty to the save. If the save is failed by 5 or more points, then the unhorsed individual is also stunned for 1d3 rounds, suffering a penalty of -2 to AC and a -2 penalty to AB for the duration. If save is failed by 10 or more, the combatant is knocked out completely for 2d4 rounds.

Jousting with deliberately blunted lances (as is often done in tournaments) results in subdual damage, but all other effects above still apply. Damage from being unhorsed will still be normal damage, for instance.

Shield Bash □

A character may use a shield as a weapon rather than as a defensive item. Such an attack is a normal melee attack and does 1d4 points of subdual damage, plus Strength modifier if any. Shield specialists receive a +1 bonus to damage. If the shield is magical, its normal bonuses may be applied to both the attack and damage roll.

Naturally, the character loses all the AC benefits of the shield (including those for magic and specialization) until the beginning of the next round after attempting a shield bash. Penalties normally applied for an off-handed weapon do not apply, as shields are made to be carried and employed in that way.

Light Weapons □

A Fighter or Thief character with a light weapon may choose to use their Dexterity modifier instead of Strength on attack rolls. Regardless of which bonus applies to attack rolls, the Strength modifier is always used to modify damage rolls. When using this rule, the short sword can be used to represent rapiers, sabers, or any other fencing-type sword.

Light weapons from the **Basic Fantasy RPG Core Rules** include: hand axe, daggers, short sword (and variants), and warhammer (or throwing hammer).

Called Shots □

Called shots are all those kind of attacks that are not performed with the intent of simply dealing damage but rather to achieve “special effects” like tripping, disarming, or otherwise subduing the target.

The character executing a called shot makes a normal attack roll with a -4 penalty on the roll.

Called shots may be resisted with a saving throw of some kind; when in doubt, the GM should consider either Paralyzation or Death Ray. If the attacker is a weapon specialist, apply the specialist's damage bonus as a penalty on this saving throw.

Here are some samples of called shots:

Disarm: The character chooses to inflict no damage and simply disarm the enemy; the target is permitted to save vs. Paralyze to hang onto their weapon.

Trip: The character tries to hook and pull down a foe instead of inflicting damage. On a successful hit, the victim must make a save vs. Paralyze or fall to the ground; standing up again is equivalent to a full move.

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