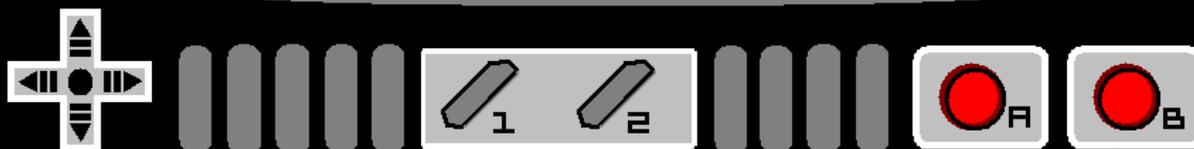


RETRO PHAZE



EIGHT-BIT FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING

BY JOHN
HIGGINS

R•E•G
Relative Entropy Games

RETRO

RAVE

EIGHT-BIT FANTASY
ROLE-PLAYING

BY JOHN HIGGINS

R·E·G

RELATIVE ENTROPY GAMES

© 2011

First Edition, Second Printing

Copyright 2011, Relative Entropy Games.
Retro Phaze™ is a trademark of Relative Entropy Games.

INTRODUCTION

Not long ago, I wrote a game called *Elegia*. The purpose of this game was to marry together two very different kinds of role-playing game: the old-school tabletop RPG and the eight-bit video game console RPG. Console (and computer) RPGs were, of course, based on these earlier tabletop games. Nevertheless, the console games that we played in our youth have a certain ineffable quality not easily described or recreated. Hence *Elegia*, a tabletop RPG designed to feel like the first fantasy RPG you might have experienced on your Nintendo Entertainment System, Sega Master System, or Commodore Amiga... rose-colored nostalgia and all.

Retro Phaze is a revision of *Elegia*, a new edition of the game with more than just the title getting a facelift. Excessive play-testing of the original game revealed its weakness, its imbalances, and its warts—those clunky little bits of inelegance which could use some smoothing over to make the game play better at the table. The upshot: *Retro Phaze* is not a thought experiment or an exercise in armchair RPG design. It is meant to be played. In the hands of a group that knows well and wants to embrace the tropes, modes, and clichés so lovingly reproduced here, it's fun. You'll find no false modesty here: when done right, this game is *really* fun!

As I write this, the old-school gaming community—that network of blogs and forums dedicated to the prospect that RPGs do not become obsolete—is basking in the glow of a renaissance that shows no signs of waning. The old-school renaissance (“OSR”) has even garnered attention enough to draw reactionary attacks and sundry ignorant criticisms from other quarters of the larger role-playing community. Too many of these criticisms, I think, are predicated on the notion that an “old-schooler” won't innovate—that somehow, we're all determined to preserve old games in amber and publish an unceasing parade of retro-clones.

I hope that through my efforts here, I can do my small part to show that these attacks are misguided. *Retro Phaze*, despite the title, is not a retro-clone. It doesn't actually clone any other RPG. Neither is it properly a “heartbreaker”—a game meant to replace other, more popular games in the same genre by doing what they do, only (supposedly) better. This game is hardly so ambitious. It exists not to replace, but to complement—to do something that other tabletop games don't try to do at all.

In early console and computer RPGs, the technical limitations of cartridges and floppy disks often left little room for expansive storytelling or deep characterization. Instead, the player would be presented with simple characters, identified by little more than a name or a class. The characters would be dropped into a mysterious world of tiled graphics and pixelated sprites, and that was all the exposition to be had. From there, the player would be left to his own devices, tasked with exploring a world where every corner, nook, or cranny might hide some secret or vital clue. The game world was presented as an extended puzzle: as the characters fought to save the world, the player played to *solve* the world.

Retro Phaze seeks to emulate this feature by presupposing that each new campaign will have its own distinct setting, created by the referee for that game alone. A new campaign necessarily involves the invention of a new setting, thus requiring the players to always begin each game first and foremost as explorers, acquainting themselves with a brand-new world.

HOW TO PLAY

Like all role-playing games, *Retro Phaze* depends on the participation of several players controlling characters and one special player to be the referee (hereafter abbreviated as “the Ref”). Characters controlled by the players are termed “PCs” (for “player characters”), while the characters and monsters controlled by the Ref are called “NPCs” (for “non-player characters”). As the game progresses, the referee unfolds the game-world before the players, describing what their characters can see and playing out interactions and conversations between the PCs and any NPCs that they meet. The players, in turn, describe what their characters do and how they react to the world. The interaction ultimately creates a kind of collaborative story with the Ref as narrator and the PCs as protagonists.

DICE

Nearly all fantasy role-playing games use dice to determine the outcomes of tenuous or random events. *Retro Phaze* is no different, although it eschews the use of polyhedral dice in favor of the ordinary six-sided variety. When the game rules tell you to “roll a die”, they implicitly mean to roll a six-sided die. The number rolled may be modified by adding or subtracting another number, often referred to as extra “pips” or “spots” (for the dimples on standard dice which indicate the number rolled). “Roll two dice plus three spots” means exactly what it says: roll two six-sided dice, total them, and add three to the result.

Keep vs. Lose: Two terms which are not commonly used in RPGs need explanation here. Occasionally, the rules call for a roll of several dice, where some of the dice are kept and summed and all the rest are discarded. In the context of this game, “keep” means to retain the highest dice rolled and discard the lowest, whereas “lose” means just the opposite. Hence, “roll four, keep three” means to roll four dice, keeping and summing the three highest rolls. “Roll three, lose one,” means to roll three dice, discard the highest roll, and sum only the remaining two.

Dice Notation: Describing dice rolls word-for-word can get cumbersome, so a kind of shorthand notation is used throughout this book.

In *Retro Phaze*, a capital “D” stands for one die. Thus, “roll D” means to roll one die, “roll 2D” means to roll two dice and add them up, and so forth. Should the rules call for “½D” this means to roll a die and halve the result (rounding up), generating a random number from 1 to 3.

Rolls that require keeping or losing dice are instead marked with a “K” or an “L”. Thus, “roll 4K3” means to roll four dice and keep the three highest, while “roll 3L2” means to roll three dice and lose the two highest dice, retaining only the lowest one.

Finally, adjustments to the roll are denoted by standard mathematical operators. “2D+3” means to roll two dice and add three spots to the result. “D-1” means to roll a die and subtract one pip. “3K2×3” would mean to roll three dice, keep the two highest, and triple the result.

CHAPTER 1: CHARACTERS

Player characters are first and foremost described by their four **attribute scores**, which are called Strength (STR), Dexterity (DEX), Intelligence (INT), and Willpower (WIL). Scores can be determined by one of two methods, which are random generation and point-buy.

Random Generation: The player rolls two dice, generating a number from 2 to 12. This operation is carried out six times, producing six numbers. The two lowest numbers are then discarded, and the remaining four are each assigned to one of the characters' attributes. If, for example, a player rolled the dice and came up with scores of 10, 8, 7, 7, 5, and 3, he would discard the 5 and the 3 and assign the remaining numbers to his attributes. In order to create a Fighter, he might put his best score (10) in Strength, put the 8 in Dexterity, and then consign the 7s to his Intelligence and Willpower.

Point Buy: The player has 30 points to distribute among his four attributes, in any way he sees fit, so long as no attribute has a score above 12 or below 2. The player could create a perfectly average character with two 7s and two 8s, or he could min-max and give himself two 12s and two 3s... but this is nearly always ill-advised, since penalties are going to be more hurtful at the start of the game than bonuses will be helpful.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS

Each score has a modifier associated with it, a bonus or penalty which adjusts other secondary attributes (such as combat statistics). Starting scores range from 2 to 12, with modifiers ranging from -2 to +2, but circumstances that arise during gameplay might raise scores as high as 15 or lower them down to 0. Scores can be lowered temporarily by monsters that drain away attribute points; and they can be raised temporarily by magic or permanently by gaining experience levels.

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS		
Score	Modifier	Attribute Check
0-2	-2	1 in 6
3-5	-1	2 in 6
6-8	±0	3 in 6
9-11	+1	4 in 6
12-14	+2	5 in 6
15	+3	5 in 6

STRENGTH

This attribute represents a character's physical power, stamina, and overall toughness. Strength is the most important attribute score for characters belonging to the Fighter class. A character's Strength modifies attack rolls in hand-to-hand combat, hit points rolled on each hit die, and encumbrance limits.

DEXTERITY

This attribute represents a character's agility, coordination, and deftness. Dexterity is the most important attribute for Rogue class characters. The Dexterity modifier is added to initiative rolls, Defense, and attack rolls in missile combat.

INTELLIGENCE

This attribute represents a character's mental prowess, qualities ranging from reason and memory to common sense and intuition. This attribute is very important for Wizards, but Rogues also prefer

a high Intelligence. A character's Intelligence modifier applies to his starting number of trained skills. Intelligence also modifies the Resistance TN for Black Magic spells cast by Wizards and Rangers (i.e. promoted Rogues).

Intelligence and Languages: INT has a special impact on characters' proficiency with languages. Characters of average Intelligence speak the Common Tongue of Men, plus a racial language, if applicable (i.e. Elvish, Dwarvish, or Hobbish). Characters with above-average INT speak more languages, while characters with below-average INT have difficulty mastering their own language(s).

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY			
Score	Effect	Score	Effect
0-2	Impaired speech	9-11	+1 bonus language
3-5	Impaired literacy	12-14	+2 bonus languages
6-8	No effect	15	+3 bonus languages

WILLPOWER

This attribute represents a character's determination, confidence, bearing, and poise. Willpower dictates a character's capacity to steel his own mind and to awe others with his presence. This attribute is most important for Monks, but Fighters should also have good Willpower. A character's Willpower modifier applies to his Resistance bonus (to avoid the effects of spells and special attacks) and to "reaction rolls" (which the referee makes to determine how monsters behave when first encountered). Willpower also modifies the Resistance TN for White Magic spells cast by Monks and Paladins (i.e. promoted Fighters).

Willpower and Contacts: WIL has a special impact on a character's ability to keep friends in high (or low) places. As the game progresses, characters will perform deeds that help others and thereby win the favor or friendship of many NPCs. When the player and the referee agree to it, some NPCs might be designated "contacts", permanent friends who will occasionally grant boons or favors requested by PCs who have earned their friendship. A character can make a number of contacts equal to 3 ± his WIL modifier.

Willpower and Leadership: It might happen that a character is placed in charge of a group of NPC (or even monster) troops, as their leader or commander. When this happens, the Morale of the followers becomes 7 ± the leader's WIL modifier.

ATTRIBUTE CHECKS

Sometimes the Ref may wish to determine the outcome of an action using one of a character's attributes to set the chance of success or failure. This is accomplished through an attribute check. An attribute check is rolled on one die, and it passes if the die roll is equal to or lower than 3 ± the relevant attribute modifier. Note that the minimum chance to pass an attribute check is 1 in 6, while the maximum chance is 5 in 6.

RACE AND CLASS

Once scores are assigned to each of the four attributes, the player must choose a race and a class for his character. There are four races and four classes in the game, and players may choose any combination of the two. The playable races are **Man**, **Elf**, **Dwarf**, and **Hob**. The playable classes are called **Fighter**, **Monk**, **Wizard**, and **Rogue**.

MEN

Mankind is the most widespread race in any traditional fantasy world—adaptable, ambitious, short-lived, and prolific. Humans learn quickly, and destiny often favors them over other races.

- Men add a +1 racial bonus to the skill of their choice.
- Once per game session, a Human character can re-roll one failed attack roll, resistance roll, skill check, or ability check.
- Men have a base Movement of 5" per round and an encumbrance limit of 5 stone (modified for STR).

ELVES

Standing as tall as Men or slightly shorter, slender of build, and graceful in every sense of the word, Elves are a race of magical immortals that prefer to dwell in forests. Elves are jolly and witty, but also capricious in the same frightening way that nature itself can be. Elves have several special abilities.

- Elves add a +1 bonus to Attack with missile-fire.
- Elves add a +1 bonus to their rank in the Perception skill.
- Elves can see in the dark out to a distance of forty feet (8" on the tabletop).
- Elves have a base Movement of 5" per round and an encumbrance limit of 5 stone (modified for STR).
- An Elf character *must* have a DEX score of at least 6.

DWARVES

Dwarves are no taller than four feet, but they are quite broad and nearly always very muscular. Great miners and craftsmen, Dwarves are used to living in tunnels, where they delve into the roots of mountains for treasure and ore. Dwarves are gruff and warlike, and they have a great love for gold, but they are also unsurpassed in terms of honor and loyalty and bravery.

- Dwarves add +1 to their Resistance bonus.
- Dwarves add a +1 bonus to their rank in the Craft skill.
- Dwarves can see in the dark out to a distance of forty feet (which is 8" on the tabletop).
- Dwarves have a base Movement of 4" per round and an encumbrance limit of 5 stone (modified for STR).
- A Dwarf character *must* have a STR score of at least 6.

HOBBS

Hobs are a small folk, usually no more than three and a half feet tall. Although many think them little more than quaint and rustic homebodies, Hobs are surprisingly athletic and unusually spirited. The Hobbish race is noted for its plucky determination, friendly charm, and surpassing love of food, ale, and tobacco.

- Hobs add +1 to their Resistance bonus.
- Hobs add a +1 bonus to Attack with missile-fire.
- Hobs add a +1 bonus to their rank in the Stealth skill.
- Hobs are hard to take by surprise. At the start of an unexpected encounter, most creatures and characters are surprised on a die roll of 1 or 2, but hobs are only surprised if the surprise die turns up a 1.
- Hobs are small compared to other races. They have a base Movement of 4", an encumbrance limit of 4 stone (modified for STR), and they are unable to wield large two-handed weapons.
- A Hob character *must* have a WIL score of at least 6.

THE FIGHTER

Fighters are warriors trained in the use of armor and weapons. They are the hardiest of all the hero classes and the likeliest to survive the rigors of adventure and battle. They have the strongest hit points and the most skill with weapon attacks.

• Fighters are able to wield any weapon, wear any armor, and benefit from the use of a shield.

• Fighters start with four hit dice and roll a new hit die at every level until 10th level. Above 10th level, additional hit dice are gained every three levels.

• The Fighter's special ability is called the **Focused Strike**. Once per battle, a Fighter can declare his next attack a Focused Strike, provided he makes the declaration before rolling to hit. If the attack misses, the Focused Strike attempt is wasted, but if the attack hits, the weapon causes one additional die of damage. As the Fighter gains levels, the Focused Strike can be used more often during a battle: this ability can be used twice per battle at 5th level, thrice per battle at 9th level, and so on, up to a maximum of seven times per battle at 25th level.



Paladins

At any time after reaching 10th level, a Fighter can be promoted and thereby become a Paladin. Paladins have some additional special abilities.

- Paladins are capable of multiple attacks. In ordinary combat (whether with hand-to-hand or missile weapons), a Paladin is permitted to make two attacks per round. The Paladin may also attempt multiple Focused Strikes, if desired.
- Paladins are able to cast White Magic, just like Monks.

THE MONK

Monks are a combination of priest and warrior, adept at both healing and the martial arts. Compared to Fighters, Monks have only moderate battle proficiency and hit points, but Monks are masterful casters of White Magic, capable of learning a great many healing and defensive spells. Monks' magical capabilities begin quite weak, but at the highest levels of the game, Monks are able to use their spells to cure massive amounts of damage, inflict great harm upon undead creatures, and even bring fallen comrades back from beyond the veil of death.

- Monks are only able to wield blunt weapons (clubs, maces, staves, hammers, and flails). They can wear leather or chainmail armor, but not plate. Monks are not proficient with shields.
- Monks start with three hit dice, and they earn a new hit die at levels 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10. Above 10th level, Monks earn additional hit dice at every fourth experience level.

• Monks are exceptionally skilled when fighting with their bare fists. Most characters deal very weak damage with their unarmed attacks, but 1st level Monks deal 1D damage when unarmed. The Monk's unarmed damage increases at every six experience levels thereafter.

Note that a Monk's unarmed damage represents fighting with his whole body. A Monk cannot deal extra damage by "dual-wielding" unarmed attacks. However, when fighting in hand-to-hand combat and armed with a blunt m \acute{e} l \acute{e} e weapon, the Monk is able to use his unarmed damage *instead* of the weapon's damage.

- Monks learn and cast White Magic spells according to the Monk Spells Known progression table (see the next page).

MONK UNARMED DAMAGE	
Level	Damage
1–6	1D
7–12	2K1
13–18	2D
19–24	3K2
25+	3D

HIT DICE (AND AVERAGE HP) BY CLASS LEVEL			
Level	Fighter	Monk/Rogue	Wizard
1	4 (16)	3 (12)	2 (8)
2	5 (20)	4 (16)	3 (12)
3	6 (24)	5 (20)	3 (12)
4	7 (28)	5 (20)	4 (16)
5	8 (32)	6 (24)	4 (16)
6	9 (36)	7 (28)	5 (20)
7	10 (40)	8 (32)	5 (20)
8	11 (44)	8 (32)	6 (24)
9	12 (48)	9 (36)	6 (24)
10	13 (52)	10 (40)	7 (28)
11	13 (52)	10 (40)	7 (28)
12	13 (52)	10 (40)	7 (28)
13	14 (56)	10 (40)	7 (28)
14	14 (56)	11 (44)	7 (28)
15	14 (56)	11 (44)	7 (28)
16	15 (60)	11 (44)	8 (32)
17	15 (60)	11 (44)	8 (32)
18	15 (60)	12 (48)	8 (32)
19	16 (64)	12 (48)	8 (32)
20	16 (64)	12 (48)	8 (32)
21	16 (64)	12 (48)	8 (32)
22	17 (68)	13 (52)	9 (36)
23	17 (68)	13 (52)	9 (36)
24	17 (68)	13 (52)	9 (36)
25	18 (72)	13 (52)	9 (36)

MONK AND WIZARD SPELLS KNOWN								
Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
6	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
7	3	2	2	1	0	0	0	0
8	3	3	2	2	0	0	0	0
9	3	3	2	2	1	0	0	0
10	4	3	3	2	2	0	0	0
11	4	3	3	2	2	1	0	0
12	4	4	3	3	2	2	0	0
13	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	0
14	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	0
15	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	1
16	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2
17	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2
18	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3
19	7	6	6	5	5	4	4	3
20	7	7	6	6	5	5	4	4
21	8	7	7	6	6	5	5	4
22	8	8	7	7	6	6	5	5
23	9	8	8	7	7	6	6	5
24	9	9	8	8	7	7	6	6
25	9	9	9	8	8	7	7	6
26	9	9	9	9	8	8	7	7
27	9	9	9	9	9	8	8	7
28	9	9	9	9	9	9	8	8
29	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	8
30	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

PALADIN AND RANGER SPELLS KNOWN				
Level	1	2	3	4
10	1	0	0	0
11	2	0	0	0
12	2	1	0	0
13	2	2	0	0
14	2	2	1	0
15	3	2	2	0
16	3	2	2	1
17	3	3	2	2
18	3	3	3	2
19	4	3	3	2
20	4	4	3	3
21	4	4	4	3
22	5	4	4	4
23	5	5	4	4
24	5	5	5	4
25	5	5	5	5

Abbots

At any time after reaching 10th level, a Monk can be promoted to the rank of Abbot. An Abbot acquires one new special ability, which is the power of Alchemy—the ability to create magic potions from scratch.

THE WIZARD

Wizards are casters of Black Magic. They are very weak in combat, but their spell ability is unmatched. Although they start the game with knowledge of only a tiny number of spells, later on they become capable of wreaking mighty destruction.

- Wizards are only permitted to wield daggers, staves, and slings. They can only wear leather armor.
- 1st level Wizards have two hit dice. They earn a new hit die at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10. Above 10th level, additional hit dice are gained only at levels 16 and 22.
- Wizards learn and cast Black Magic spells according to the Wizard Spells Known progression table (see left).

Warlocks

At any time after reaching 10th level, a Wizard can be promoted to the rank of Warlock. Warlocks have one special ability that Wizards do not—the practice of Volumancy, which allows them to create magic scrolls.

THE ROGUE

The Rogue is the most unusual of all the character classes. Trained in archery and scouting, Rogues prefer to keep their distance from tough enemies. The Rogue's combat capabilities are best described as a combination of each of the other three character classes': they have in-between hit points, just like Monks, but they attack as Fighters do when engaging in missile combat, and as Wizards when attacking in hand-to-hand combat. Needless to say, Rogues prefer to avoid mêlées and instead shoot their troubles away.

- Rogues are permitted to wield any weapon, but they can only wear leather or chainmail armor. They cannot wear plate, nor can they use shields effectively.
- Rogues have the same hit die total as Monks. They start with three hit dice, and new hit dice are gained on levels 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10. After 10th level, new hit dice are gained at every fourth level (14th, 18th, and 22nd).

- Rogues are prone to lucky shots in combat. Whenever any other character rolls a natural 12 on an attack, this is a critical hit, which causes +1D damage. Rogues, however, cause “crits” on any attack roll of 11 or 12. Furthermore, the damage caused by a Rogue’s crit increases by one die at every three levels above the 1st: +2D at 4th level, +3D at 7th level, +4D at 10th level, and so on, up to a maximum of +9D at 25th level.
- Rogues are quirky, and no two are exactly alike. At each of the 1st, 8th, 15th, and 23rd experience levels, the Rogue may select a special ability called a “Talent” from the following list:

ROGUE TALENTS
• Expeditious Retreat: The Rogue rolls 2L1 rather than 1D when making a check to flee from combat.
• Fleet of Foot: The Rogue adds +1” to his combat movement when unencumbered, so that a Man or Elf with this Talent is MV 6” and a Dwarf or Hob is MV 5”. (Encumbered, the Rogue still only moves at 2”.)
• Jack of All Trades: The Rogue immediately gains three bonus skill points. This talent may be chosen multiple times.
• Marksmen: The ranges on all of the Rogue’s missile attacks are increased by +1”.
• Punch-Out: The Rogue acquires some basic boxing skill and deals 1D damage with unarmed attacks, just like a 1 st level Monk.
• Quick on the Draw: The Rogue rolls 2K1 rather than 1D for initiative. DEX bonuses still apply normally.
• Rapid Reload: The Rogue is so fast that he does not need to use up an Action to reload a firearm in combat. (This Talent is only selectable in campaigns where firearms exist.)
• Skirmisher: The Rogue receives training in m�el�e combat and uses the Monk bonus rather than the Wizard bonus to roll hand-to-hand attacks.

Rangers

At any time after reaching 10th level, a Rogue can be promoted to the rank of Ranger. A Ranger is very dangerous in missile combat! Rangers earn the following special abilities:

- When engaging in missile combat, a Ranger is permitted to attack twice each round. (Unlike a Paladin, a Ranger is not permitted a second attack in hand-to-hand combat.)
- Rangers are able to cast Black Magic spells, just like Wizards. (Rangers use the same spell progression as Paladins.)

MAGIC SPELLS

All of the character classes in the *Retro Phaze* game are (sooner or later) able to cast magic spells. Monks and Paladins are able to cast White Magic, and Wizards and Rangers are able to cast Black Magic. To cast a spell, the player simply declares that his character is doing so, and the referee determines the effect. Casting a spell in battle takes up the character’s Action Phase for the battle round, just like making an attack or using an item. Casting a spell also requires the ability to speak freely, so spell-casting is impossible if the character is somehow muted or silenced.

Learning Spells: Characters have a fixed limit on the number of spells that they are able to know at any one time, determined by their class and level. Monks and Wizards can start learning spells at 1st level; Fighters and Rogues can start learning spells as soon as they promote into Paladins and Rangers, possibly as early as 10th level.

Depending on the particular campaign, referees may allow players to choose their first spell and then learn new spells immediately upon leveling up; or the player characters may be required to learn the spells from other magic-users, buying Black spells from magic shops and donating to temples in exchange for White spells.

Using Spells: Each spell that a character knows can only be cast once per day. Expended spells are then renewed when a character gets a full night’s rest. If a character wants to cast the same spell more than once per day, he actually has to learn it multiple times. (Since there are only four spells per spell level, characters will eventually *have* to learn multiple copies of some spells in order to fill all of their available spell slots.)

Spell Properties: Every spell has a Range and a Spread. The Range is the maximum distance from the caster to the spell’s Target. (Whenever a spell is cast in combat, the caster must designate some creature as the spell’s Target. A spell cast at an empty space has no effect.) The Spread indicates the distance within which creatures near the Target are also affected by the spell. (Most White spells Target an ally and affect all allies within the spread; likewise, most Black spells Target an enemy and also affect all enemies within the Spread. If the caster does not want a spell to affect a particular secondary target in the area of effect, it doesn’t: there is not such thing as a “collateral damage fireball” in *Retro Phaze*!) Both Range and Spread are expressed by a number of inches, which can be read as “spaces” (viz. squares or hexagons on a battle-mat). A spell with a Range of 0” only affects the caster, while a spell with a Range of 1” only affects the caster or a space adjacent to the caster. A Spread of 0” affects only a single Target, while larger Spreads affect wider radii around the Target. A spell with a Spread of 2”, for example, affects a central Target (because it must), and also all desired creatures within 2” of the Target. (This is easily determined with a hexagonal battle-grid; but with squares, funny things happen when you count diagonal Spread. The particulars are explained more fully in Chapter 3: Adventures & Battles.)

Resistance Rolls: Many spells allow a resistance roll to negate or mitigate the effects of the spell. The roll is made much like an attack roll, casting two dice and adding the character’s Resistance modifier (which usually includes the base RS bonus, the character’s WIL modifier, and any racial or magical bonuses). The target number (TN) of the resistance roll depends on who or what is casting the spell. For characters, the TN is 8 plus the spell-caster’s relevant attribute modifier (WIL for Monks and Paladins; INT for Wizards and Rangers). For monsters, the TN is equal to 8 plus one-half the monster’s own Resistance bonus (which amounts to TN 8 for monsters with up to 12 hit dice; TN 9 for monsters with 13 to 24 hit dice; and TN 10 for monsters 25 hit dice and up).



WHITE MAGIC SPELLS BY LEVEL

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6	LEVEL 7	LEVEL 8
BLAST	GROUND	AURA	DETOX	AURA2	PROTECT2	AURA3	BARRIER
BLINK	SIGHT	BLAST2	FEAR	BLAST3	RECALL	BLAST4	DISPEL
CURE	SILENCE	COOL	VOICE	CURE3	SOFT	CURE4	HOLY
PROTECT	VANISH	CURE2	WARM	LIFE	VANISH2	SURVIVE	LIFE2

WHITE MAGIC SPELL EFFECTS

SPELL	LEVEL	RANGE	SPREAD	EFFECT
BLAST	1	3"	1"	3D damage to all undead in area (targets may resist for half damage).
BLINK	1	0"	0"	Creates 2 to 4 (½D+1) mirror images around the caster. Each time the caster is successfully "hit" with a weapon, no damage is taken, and one of the images is destroyed instead. If not destroyed, the BLINK images persist for one round per point of the caster's WIL.
CURE	1	1"	0"	Restores 3D hit points to one target.
PROTECT	1	1"	0"	One target is +2 to DF and RS for one round per point of the caster's WIL.
GROUND	2	0"	2"	Affected allies take half damage from lightning (one-quarter damage if they can roll resistance) for one round per point of the caster's WIL.
SIGHT	2	1"	0"	Causes an object to glow like a torch (4" Spread) for a day, or cures blindness effects.
SILENCE	2	5"	2"	Targets must roll resistance or be muted for a day (or until cured with VOICE).
VANISH	2	1"	0"	Makes the target invisible (+4 DF, Stealth 5, Stealth checks to hide are rolled on 2L1) for one round per two points of the caster's WIL.
AURA	3	3"	1"	Heals all targets for 3D hit points.
BLAST2	3	5"	2"	6D damage to all undead in the area (targets may resist for half damage).
COOL	3	0"	2"	Allies take half damage from fire (one-quarter damage if they can roll resistance) for one round per point of the caster's WIL.
CURE2	3	3"	0"	Heals 6D hit points to one target.
DETOX	4	1"	0"	Neutralizes poison.
FEAR	4	5"	2"	Target creatures attempt to flee (targets may resist to negate). The affected creatures remain afraid (and try to flee if possible, but fight at -1 if forced) for the rest of the day, or until struck for damage.
VOICE	4	1"	0"	Cures silence effects. Alternatively, this spell can be used to transmit a whispered message to an ally, or to throw the caster's voice like flawless ventriloquism, within 9".
WARM	4	0"	2"	Allies take half damage from cold (one-quarter damage if they can roll resistance) for one round per point of the caster's WIL.
AURA2	5	5"	2"	Heals all targets for 6D hit points.
BLAST3	5	7"	3"	Deals 12D damage to all undead in the area (targets may resist for half damage).
CURE3	5	5"	0"	Heals 12D hit points to one target.
LIFE	5	1"	0"	Revives a slain character to 1 hit point, provided the spell is cast within one round per point of the caster's WIL. This spell will even revive a character destroyed by QUAKE, BANISH, etc.
PROTECT2	6	0"	2"	Allies in the area are +2 to DF and RS for one round per two points of the caster's WIL.
RECALL	6	0"	3"	The caster and allies are instantly teleported to the last friendly church visited by the caster.
SOFT	6	1"	0"	Cures petrification.
VANISH2	6	0"	2"	The caster and allies become invisible for one round per three points of the caster's WIL.
AURA3	7	7"	3"	Heals all targets for 12D hit points.
BLAST4	7	9"	4"	Deals 16D damage to all undead in the area (targets may resist for half damage).
CURE4	7	7"	0"	Heals 20D hit points to one target.
SURVIVE	7	0"	3"	Caster and allies are +4 to resist death magic (including SCOURGE, DEATH, QUAKE, BANISH, and KILL) for one round per point of the caster's WIL.
BARRIER	8	3"	0"	For one round per point of the caster's WIL, the target of this spell automatically takes half damage from all attack spells and breath weapons (one-quarter damage if allowed to resist for half).
DISPEL	8	7"	0"	The target creature loses its inherent affinity for any and all elements, thereby becoming vulnerable to full damage from elemental attacks. The target can resist at -2 to negate this effect, which otherwise persists for one round per point of the caster's WIL. This spell also counters and dispels GROUND, COOL, WARM, and BARRIER.
HOLY	8	9"	4"	Deals 16D damage to all foes in the area. (Undead take 20D instead.) All targets may resist for half.
LIFE2	8	3"	0"	Revives a slain character to full hit points, provided the spell is cast within three rounds per point of the caster's WIL.

N.B.—In a typical *Retro Phaze* campaign, healing magic restores hit points to all creatures, including undead, golems, robots, etc. But in some campaign worlds, the referee might decide that undead creatures have "negative life", and therefore CURE and AURA effects actually damage them. Even if this is the case, BLAST is always more effective. Note that in campaign settings where undead are rare or nonexistent, the referee may rule that BLAST can affect other creatures, but it only has its full effect on creatures of darkness or corruption. Directed at normal living things, BLAST effects would cause half damage normally and one-quarter damage to creatures that make a resistance roll.

BLACK MAGIC SPELLS BY LEVEL

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6	LEVEL 7	LEVEL 8
BOLT	DARK	BOLT2	CONFUSE	FIRE3	BOLT3	BLIND	BANISH
FIRE	ICE	FIRE2	HASTE	SCOURGE	DEATH	ICE3	FLARE
PAIN	TEMPER	HOLD	ICE2	SLOW2	QUAKE	SABER	KILL
SLEEP	SLOW	PAIN2	SLEEP2	WARP	STUN	STONE	STOP

BLACK MAGIC SPELL EFFECTS

SPELL	LEVEL	RANGE	SPREAD	EFFECT
BOLT	1	3"	0"	3D electrical damage to one target (resist for half damage).
FIRE	1	3"	0"	3D fire damage to one target (resist for half damage).
PAIN	1	3"	0"	Target is rendered -2 to DF and RS for one round per two points of the caster's INT. (A resistance roll reduces the penalty to -1.)
SLEEP	1	5"	1"	All targets in the area must roll resistance at a +2 bonus or else fall asleep. Affected targets remain asleep for one round per point of the caster's INT or until struck for damage.
DARK	2	5"	1"	All targets must roll resistance or be blinded (cannot see; -4 to hit) by a cloud of darkness that hovers over the target's eyes. Affected targets remain blinded for one day or until cured by SIGHT.
ICE	2	3"	0"	4D cold damage to one target (resist half).
TEMPER	2	1"	0"	Target gains +1 to hit and +1D to damage for one round per two points of the caster's INT.
SLOW	2	5"	1"	All targets must roll resistance or else have their Movement and number of attacks halved for one round per two points of the caster's INT. (A slowed creature with one attack per round, for example, could only attack every second round.)
BOLT2	3	5"	1"	6D electrical damage to all targets (resist for half damage).
FIRE2	3	5"	1"	6D fire damage to all targets (resist for half damage).
HOLD	3	3"	0"	Paralyzes one enemy (resist at a +1 bonus to negate) for one round per two points of the caster's INT.
PAIN2	3	5"	1"	All targets become -2 to DF and RS for one round per two points of the caster's INT. (A resistance roll reduces the penalty to -1.)
CONFUSE	4	5"	1"	All targets must roll resistance or else be confused. Confused creatures attack allies instead of enemies. Confusion lasts for one round per two points of the caster's INT or until a creature is struck for damage.
HASTE	4	3"	0"	Doubles one target's movement and number attacks for one round per two points of the caster's INT. This spell also counters and dispels SLOW.
ICE2	4	5"	1"	8D cold damage to all targets (resist for half damage).
SLEEP2	4	5"	0"	Puts one target to sleep (resist to negate). The target remains asleep for two rounds per point of the caster's INT or until struck for damage.
FIRE3	5	7"	2"	12D fire damage to all targets (resist for half damage).
SCOURGE	5	5"	2"	Produces a cloud of deadly green vapor. All targets in the area must resist at +1 or choke to death. Creatures without breath (such as golems and undead) are unaffected by this spell.
SLOW2	5	7"	0"	Target creature must roll resistance at -2 or have its Movement and attacks per round halved for one round per point of the caster's INT.
WARP	5	0"	3"	The caster and all allies are safely teleported to another location within 360 feet (72" on the tabletop). The destination of the WARP spell can lie in any direction in three dimensions, but it cannot be occupied by solid matter; it must be on a reasonably level surface; and the caster must have at least seen the destination once before. The WARP spell always teleports the caster along with other targets, and only willing targets can be taken along.
BOLT3	6	7"	2"	14D electrical damage to all targets (resist for half damage).
DEATH	6	7"	0"	Instantly slays one target (who may resist at a -1 penalty to negate). Undead are immune.
QUAKE	6	5"	3"	Causes an earthquake that swallows creatures whole, killing them instantly. All targets must roll resistance or else be killed. Flying creatures are immune.
STUN	6	7"	0"	Paralyzes one target (who must resist at -2 to negate) for one round per point of the caster's INT.
BLIND	7	7"	0"	Blinds one creature (as per the DARK spell), who may resist at -2 to negate. The effect is permanent until cured with SIGHT.
ICE3	7	7"	3"	16D cold damage to all targets (resist for half damage).
SABER	7	0"	0"	Transforms the caster into a fierce warrior for one round per point of INT. While the spell lasts, the caster is +2 to Attack and +2D to damage with physical attacks.
STONE	7	7"	0"	Petrifies one target unless a resistance roll can be made at a -2 penalty. Petrification is permanent until cured with SOFT.
BANISH	8	7"	4"	Creates a vortex to the n^{th} dimension that sucks up all enemies, obliterating them unless they can roll resistance at a -1 penalty.
FLARE	8	9"	4"	Creates a cloud of nuclear plasma that deals 20D damage to all foes in the area (resist for half damage).
KILL	8	9"	0"	Slays one creature (resist at -3 to negate). Undead are immune.
STOP	8	9"	3"	Paralyzes all creatures in the area who fail to resist at a -2 penalty. The effect persists for one round per point of the caster's INT.

CHARACTER EXPERIENCE LEVELS

Level	Experience Points Required	Skill Points	Attribute Raises	Resistance Bonus
1	0	3	—	+0
2	20	3	—	+0
3	60	4	—	+0
4	120	4	1 st	+0
5	200	5	—	+0
6	300	5	—	+0
7	420	6	2 nd	+1
8	560	6	—	+1
9	720	7	—	+1
10	900	7	3 rd	+1
11	1,100	8	—	+1
12	1,320	8	—	+1
13	1,560	9	4 th	+2
14	1,820	9	—	+2
15	2,100	10	—	+2
16	2,400	10	5 th	+2
17	2,720	11	—	+2
18	3,060	11	—	+2
19	3,420	12	6 th	+3
20	3,800	12	—	+3
21	4,200	13	—	+3
22	4,620	13	7 th	+3
23	5,060	14	—	+3
24	5,520	14	—	+3
25	6,000	15	8 th	+4

EXPERIENCE LEVELS

Characters improve their abilities by acquiring experience points (XP) and accumulating enough points to go up in levels. Experience points are earned by slaying monsters: each defeated monster is worth a number of XP equal to its hit point total, plus bonus XP for any spell levels or special abilities the monster might possess. The total number of XP earned after each battle is divided among all of the surviving player characters, and when a character has enough XP to go up a level, the effects of the level-up apply instantly.

Hit Dice: Player characters increase their hit point totals at regular intervals, depending on their class, by rolling “hit dice”. A hit die for a player character is rolled in a special way: the player rolls a die, but a result of 1 must be rerolled; only a result of 2 or higher is a valid roll. Then the player adjusts the die roll for his character’s STR modifier, and this adjusted number is immediately added to the character’s current and maximum hit point totals. Note that a STR penalty cannot bring the result below 1 hit point. (N.B., some referees prefer that their players not roll hit dice at all. Instead, the average value—4 hit points—can be awarded to a character each time a player would normally acquire a hit die. STR adjustments of course apply normally)

Skill Points: Characters start the game with three skill points, plus or minus their INT modifier. A character gains one new skill point at every odd-numbered experience level and whenever he raises his INT score to the point where the modifier increases.

Attribute Raises: At 4th level and every three experience levels thereafter, characters are permitted to raise any attribute by one point. An attribute can be raised as high as 15.

Resistance Bonus: This is the base Resistance modifier applied to a character’s resistance rolls. Resistance rolls are explained further in Chapter 3: Adventures & Battles.

Epic Levels: Characters are not limited to the 25th level of experience. Many character features (Attack, Resistance, and most special abilities) stop advancing at 25th level, and Monks and

Wizards stop learning spells after 30th level. But skill points and attribute raises are earned *ad infinitum*, at least until a player manages to raise his character’s skill ranks to all 5s and his attributes to all 15s. Hit dice also continue to accrue at regular intervals (every three levels for Fighters, four levels for Rogues and Monks, and six levels for Wizards). Levels above 25th require 500 additional XP each, so characters will reach 26th level at 6,500 XP; 27th level at 7,000 XP; 28th level at 7,500 XP; and so on.

SKILLS

Starting skills represent a character’s “background knowledge”: all those things that the character knew before becoming a 1st level hero. As characters gain levels, they get the chance to learn new skills and improve upon what they already know. There are twelve different skills in the game:

LIST OF SKILLS	
Skill	Possible Uses
Athletics (Ath)	Climbing, tumbling, running, swimming
Civics (Civ)	Bureaucracy, law, politics, statecraft
Craft (Cra)	Building, brewing, repairing, dismantling
Diplomacy (Dip)	Negotiating, persuading, bluffing
Entertain (Ent)	Acting, playing music, giving speeches
Knowledge (Kno)	Lore, sciences, humanities, languages
Medicine (Med)	Healing, anatomy, surgery, psychiatry
Outdoors (Out)	Animals, plants, tracking, riding
Perception (Per)	Searching, listening, reading people
Pilot (Pil)	Driving, flying, sailing, navigating
Stealth (Ste)	Hiding, sneaking, sleight-of-hand
Trade (Tra)	Business, economics, accounting

A character’s aptitude at each skill is described by his skill rank. Skills always begin at a base rank of 1, which is the minimum possible skill rank and represents no training

whatsoever in that particular skill category. By spending skill points, characters can raise their skills as high as rank 5. At 1st level, most characters begin with 3 skill points plus or minus their INT modifier. Each spent skill point raises one skill by one rank.

Characters gain an additional skill point at every odd-numbered experience level and whenever their INT score rises to the point that the modifier goes up as well. Rogue class characters can also earn three bonus skill points for taking the "Jack of All Trades" talent.

Racial Bonuses: Non-human characters have +1 bonus rank in some particular skill, viz. Craft for Dwarves, Perception for Elves, and Stealth for Hobs. Humans also receive a bonus skill rank, which can be applied to any skill the player chooses.

The Skill Check: A character's skill rank is his chance in 6 of passing a skill check. The referee can call for a skill check, or he can roll it himself in secret, and then use the roll to help adjudicate success or failure at some action that a character is attempting. The referee rolls 1d6, and if the die roll is equal to or less than the character's skill rank, the skill check has passed. What this actually means in a given situation is up to the referee.

Sometimes, a bonus or penalty might be assigned to a skill check. When this is the case, the modifier must be applied to the skill rank, not the die-roll itself! A bonus to a skill will increase the chance of passing the check, while a penalty will (obviously) reduce the chance. Regardless of any modifiers, a roll of 1 always indicates success on a skill check, while a roll of 6 always means failure.

Referees should be careful not to overuse the dice! A game can be ruined quickly if every action that a character takes might fail or succeed depending on a skill check.

Skills and Armor: Two particular skills, Athletics and Stealth, rely on a character's ability to move deftly and without restriction. Therefore, a character wearing chainmail armor suffers a -2 penalty to his Athletics and Stealth ranks, while a character in plate armor suffers a -3 penalty to these skills.

Skills and Attributes: In general, skill ranks should not be used to modify attribute checks, and attribute modifiers should not adjust skill checks. If the referee decides that a die-roll should be used to adjudicate a particular action, he should also decide whether the quality being checked is a matter of raw talent (an attribute check) or training and experience (a skill check) and then stick with a single die-roll.

Of course, the referee is always free to invent new skill resolution mechanics. An action might be resolved by rolling 2D, adding the skill rank and an appropriate ability modifier, and attempting to meet a target number that varies by difficulty (perhaps 6, 8, 10, and 12 for easy, routine, difficult, and very difficult actions).

MONEY

The last important feature of a player character is that character's possessions: his equipment, particularly weapons and armor. But before a character can purchase items, he must have money. In the *Retro Phaze* game, the standard unit of currency is the **gold coin** or **G**. (Some referees might consider this unrealistic and use a silver standard or even a copper standard instead.)

A gold coin is fairly small, weighing less than a quarter of an ounce. When calculating encumbrance for a character's carried gold, assume a standard weight of seventy coins to the pound, which is one thousand coins to the stone.

All player characters start the game with $3D \times 10$ gold coins; or, if the Ref wishes to keep things on an even footing for everybody, each character can start with 100G.

WEAPONS

Retro Phaze characters will have to fight their way through hordes of monsters before their quests are complete. To wit, they will need to be well-armed. Heroes in a hostile world live and die by their choice of weaponry!

Hand-to-Hand Weapons: A hand-to-hand weapon allows a character to add his STR adjustment to Attack. Hand-to-hand attacks have a range of 1" (that is, they can only hit opponents standing in an adjacent square/hex), except for whips and lances, which have a range of 2".

Missile Weapons: Missile-fire allows a character to add his DEX adjustment to Attack. (It doesn't matter whether the weapon is thrown or shot; only DEX ever modifies missile attacks, not STR.) Missile weapons have greater ranges than hand-to-hand weapons, but missile attacks are only possible so long as the character has sufficient ammunition.

Proficiency vs. Non-Proficiency

A character without a weapon can still strike unarmed, in which case the damage dealt is 3L2 (that is, roll three dice and lose the two highest rolls, keeping only the lowest one). Monks, of course, deal more damage when unarmed, but other characters will prefer to fight with a weapon.

In a pinch, a character might have to make do with an improvised or inadequate weapon. Improvised weapons are objects not normally used as weapons—rocks, sticks, broken pieces of furniture. Inadequate weapons are small, concealable, or non-lethal weapons not normally meant to be carried into mortal combat: blackjacks, brass knuckles, switchblades, bullwhips. Both these kinds of weapons deal 2L1 damage (roll two dice, lose the higher roll).

Most other varieties of weapons are indeed meant for combat, but they'll only be effective in the hands of a character trained to use them. Fighters and Rogues are proficient in the use of all weapons, so non-proficiency does not apply to these classes. Monks and Wizards, meanwhile, face some restrictions.

Monks are only permitted to use blunt weapons—nothing with an edge or a point. This restricts the Monk to blackjacks, knuckles, clubs and maces, staffs, flails (including nunchaku), and war hammers (including mauls). It's not a lack of combat skill that causes Monks to avoid the use of edged weapons—it's a matter of principle. Shedding blood runs contrary to Monks' beliefs as priests and healers, so they simply *don't* fight with edged weapons, *ever*.

Wizards actually have to contend with the fact that they're not well-trained to fight. The only weapons they're allowed to use normally are daggers, staffs, and slings. Any other weapon in the hands of a Wizard is no better than a stick or a rock: it counts as an improvised weapon (2L1 damage).

Qualities of Hand-to-Hand Weapons

The various hand-to-hand weapons available in the game are divided into categories of weapons that share similar properties:

Non-Lethal Weapons: Something of an oxymoron, perhaps, but this group describes small weapons not usually meant for combat. It includes blackjacks, knuckles, small concealed blades, and whips. The whip is unique among this category of weapons for the range advantage it confers: the whip is a double-reach weapon, allowing its wielder to attack targets 2" away. All of the weapons in this group cost 5G to purchase, require one hand to wield, deal 2L1 damage, and weigh one-eighth stone for the purpose of encumbrance.

One-Handed Weapons:

The vast majority of hand-to-hand weapons fall into this category. It includes clubs, daggers, hatchets, swords, flails, axes, maces, picks, spears, tridents, and hammers. The *Retro Phaze* rules do not distinguish between these weapons, except to point out that Monks will only opt to wield bludgeons (clubs, maces, flails, and hammers) and Wizards can only fight with a dagger. One-handed weapons cost 10G to purchase and they deal 1D damage. They count as one-fourth stone for encumbrance purposes. A Fighter, Rogue, or Monk (but not a Wizard) may attack with a pair of one-handed weapons (“dual-wielding”) to deal better damage—2K1 instead of 1D.



Two-Handed Weapons:

The simplest of the two-handed weapons is the quarter staff. It is one of the few weapons that a Wizard can wield effectively, and its stats are the same as those for one-handed weapons (10G, 1D damage, ¼ stone), except of course that it requires two hands to wield. Other weapons in this category—great swords, battle axes, mauls, pikes, and lances—are heavier, costlier, and more effective. These two-handed weapons all weigh one-half stone and cost 50G to purchase. Great swords, battle axes, and mauls enjoy superior damage (they deal 2K1). Pikes and lances, meanwhile, deal only 1D damage, but they have long reach (2”). Note that among the class of two-handed weapons, only a quarter staff is light enough for a Hob to wield. The other weapons in this group can only be used by Men, Elves, and Dwarves.

Qualities of Missile Weapons

As with hand-to-hand combat, missile-fire is possible with naught more than improvised implements: thrown stones and ale mugs and dinner plates and such. An improvised missile weapon causes 2L1 damage and has a range of Point-Blank (3” for most characters; 4” for a Rogue with the Marksman Talent). Should a character try to throw a *mêlée* weapon that isn’t meant for it (like a sword), the effects are much the same.

Other missile weapons often have better ranges. There are four range categories in *Retro Phaze*: Point-Blank, Close, Medium, and Long. For most characters, these ranges correspond to 3”, 5”, 7”, and 9” on the tabletop. For a Rogue with the Marksman talent, these ranges become 4”, 6”, 8”, and 10”. Range is the key quality that differentiates the various missile weapons, which otherwise all deal 1D damage.

Point-Blank: Weapons in this range group include *mêlée* weapons which are also easily thrown (and therefore deal 1D damage when used as missile weapons). They include clubs, daggers, hatchets, and tridents.

Close: This category includes darts (e.g. shuriken) and slings. A supply of darts, or a sling with a full supply of bullets, costs 10G and weighs one-eighth stone. (A hand-thrown spear also belongs to this range category.)

Medium: This group includes javelins, crossbows, and hunting bows. Javelins cost 10G each and weigh one-eighth stone apiece. A crossbow with a full case of quarrels, or a hunting bow with a full quiver of arrows, costs 50G and weighs one-quarter stone. (The cost to restock on quarrels or arrows is 10G.)

Long: The war bow (or longbow) is the only Long-range weapon. With a full supply of arrows, a war bow costs 100G and weighs one-half stone. (Again, the cost to restock arrows is 10G.) Men, Elves, and Dwarves can use war bows, but Hobs cannot.

Ammunition: Bows, crossbows, and slings fire separate ammunition, and darts, although thrown, are considered small and inexpensive enough that they can be treated as ammunition. Rather than track pieces of ammunition directly, it’s much easier (and more dramatic) to let the dice decide when a player character runs out of ammo. When a character first purchases a weapon or restocks on ammo, the character is said to be at “full ammo.” Provided the character actually uses the missile weapon in question, ammunition is depleted by the number of battles the character participates in. After one battle, “enough ammo” remains. After two battles, the character has “some ammo” left. After three battles, the character is “low on ammo.” From that point on, the character is in danger of running out completely, which happens whenever the character rolls a 2 (“snake-eyes”) on a missile attack with the given weapon. At that point, the character will have to find a shop or a merchant and pay 10G for some more arrows, quarrels, bullets, or darts.

GUNPOWDER

Depending on the state of the game-world created by the referee, gunpowder may or may not exist in widespread use. If they exist at all, gunpowder weapons will resemble early medieval or late renaissance armaments, such as hand-lit grenades and wheel-lock pistols, muskets, and blunderbusses. The game rules for gunpowder weapons are given here:

Gunpowder weapons come in two types, grenades and firearms. Both are slower than other missile weapons: a grenade must be lit before it is thrown, which takes one round, while a gun must be reloaded after it is fired, again taking one round.

Grenades are thrown weapons with a range of Point-Blank, but no missile attack roll is required to hit. They simply explode when they land near their target (Spread 1”), indiscriminately damaging friend and foe alike. The damage caused is 2K1, with a resistance roll (TN 8) allowed for half damage. Grenades are purchased in boxes of six, which weigh one-quarter stone and cost 50G. Fighters, Rogues, and Wizards can use grenades.

Pistols and muskets both deal 1D damage. Pistols have Close range, weigh one-quarter stone, and cost 50G. A Fighter, Rogue, or Wizard of any race can use a pistol. (Fighters and Rogues can dual-wield pistols for 2K1 damage.) Muskets have Long range, weigh one-half stone, and cost 100G. Muskets can be used by Fighters and Rogues, but they’re too large for Hobs to wield.

The blunderbuss is an odd firearm that deals 2K1 damage within Point-Blank range, 1D damage out to Close range, and 2L1 damage at Medium range. Like a musket, a blunderbuss weighs one-half stone and costs 100G, and its use is restricted to Fighters and Rogues of the Human, Elvish, and Dwarvish races.

ARMOR

Armor is the chief determinant of a character’s Defense score, the number that enemies need to roll in order to hit the character. A character with no armor at all has Defense 6, plus or minus any DEX modifier. Wearing armor improves Defense, but it also weighs a character down (even the lightest suit of armor weighs one stone), potentially lowering Movement.

ARMOR TYPES

Armor	DF	Cost	Weight	Use
Leather	7	20G	1 st	FRMW
Chainmail	8	200G	3 st	FRM
Plate	9	2,000G	4 st	F
Shield	+1	20G	½ st	F

Note that chainmail and plate armor, being metal and relatively heavy and cumbersome, also impose a penalty on certain skill checks (and possibly on Dexterity attribute checks as well, depending on the situation). The Stealth and Athletics skills rely on deft movement, so these skills nearly always suffer the “armor check penalty” associated with heavy armor. The penalty is -2 to the character’s skill rank when wearing chainmail, and -3 when wearing plate. Remember, though, no penalty can lower a character’s chance of passing a skill check below one-in-six.

Armor Proficiency: When a character attempts to wear armor inappropriate to his class, his lack of appropriate combat training shows. Encumbrance and skill penalties apply as usual, but the character benefits only minimally from the heavier armor, according to the usual limitations placed on that class. Thus, a Monk or a Rogue wearing plate armor only has DF 8, while a Wizard attempting to wear chainmail or plate has DF 7. Should a character other than a Fighter try to carry a shield, the character will only enjoy the +1 bonus to DF when *not* attacking or taking any other actions—only a Fighter can benefit from a shield and fight normally at the same time.

OTHER GEAR

Adventuring is rough business, and player characters might want to use all manner of useful things to make their lives easier—torches and lanterns, maps and compasses, wooden poles and iron spikes, rope and climbing gear, mounts and tack, and of course every party of adventurers will need backpacks and waterskins and rations.

Retro Phaze is more about exploring unknown vistas and battling fierce monsters than about mundane logistics or the real-life particulars of traveling through rugged wilderness. The referee is always free to invent a system of rules for specific pieces of equipment and their uses, but in order to speed play, this game assumes that such things happen in the background, between scenes. Whether a character has a coil of rope or not can be vitally important or completely trivial, depending on the referee’s style of moderating the game and how much precision he deems necessary.

The simplest solution of all is to just presume that characters have what they need to survive in the wilds and to negotiate most caverns and dungeons. At the start of the game, each character can spend 50G to buy a fully equipped pack of “adventurer’s gear”, a backpack and a bedroll and a light source and rope and food and so on (weight: one-half stone). Perhaps the consumables in the pack only last for a week or two, and the character will have to pay 10G at regular intervals to replenish rations—in addition to whatever monies the character might pay to rest at inn when arriving in a new town.

Special Items: More important than mundane gear, at least important enough to bear mentioning in the game rules, are those items of a magical nature that adventurers are wont to use by the crate-load: potions and scrolls. Any town with a skilled alchemist or apothecary will stock plenty of these items:

MAGIC POTIONS		
Item	Cost	Effect
HEALING Potion	40G	Restores 2K1 hit points.
ANTIDOTE Potion	50G	Chance to neutralize poison.
SOFTENING Potion	60G	Chance to neutralize petrification.

Potions are cheap, but generally less effective than White Magic spells. A HEALING potion restores only 2K1 hit points. The ANTIDOTE and SOFTENING potions are not automatic in their effects like the DETOX and SOFT spells: instead, they grant the afflicted character a second resistance roll to shrug off the effects of poison or petrification.

On the Black Magic side of things, any town with a decent magic shop will sell scrolls with the following effects:

MAGIC SCROLLS		
Item	Cost	Effect
BLAZE Scroll	50G	2D fire damage.
FREEZE Scroll	50G	2D cold damage.
THUNDER Scroll	50G	2D lightning damage.

Scrolls aren’t as effective as Black Magic spells, because they don’t deal as much damage and they don’t always affect their target. The character must make a missile attack roll in order to successfully “hit” with the scroll. (Scroll magic has a range of 3”.) If the attack roll hits, the scroll-magic strikes the target. The target then takes two dice of elemental damage, unless a resistance roll can be made, in which case the damage is halved.

Potions and scrolls are treated as weighing one-sixteenth stone each. A potion always takes the form of a liquid, sealed within a flask or phial of some kind. The potion takes effect whether the liquid is consumed by its user or merely dashed over the target (which, in the case of the SOFTENING potion, is really the only option available). A scroll is essentially a magical spell written on a roll of parchment and then sealed in some manner, typically by a lump of wax impressed with an arcane symbol. A scroll can only be used by a Wizard or a Ranger, and it is activated by breaking the seal and throwing the scroll in the direction of the target. (Reading the scroll in combat would be impossible—scrolls are inscribed with many lines of magic words, but a battle round is mere seconds long.) Breaking the seal releases the stored magical energy, which then consumes the scroll in mid-air and transforms the paper into the bolt of fire, cold, or lightning which streaks toward the targeted enemy.

Alchemy and Volumancy

Alchemy is the practice of potion-brewing. Volumancy is the art of scroll-scribing. Alchemy can only be performed by an Abbot, while only a Warlock can practice Volumancy. These abilities allow characters to create potions and scrolls from scratch, for only one-fifth the cost (8 to 12 gold per potion, and only 10 gold per scroll). Making special items takes some time, though: an alchemist or scribe can only make one potion or scroll per day, and then only if the character does nothing else that day—no traveling, no fighting, nothing at all but brewing or scribing.



CHAPTER 2: MONSTERS & RELICS

The last chapter covered player characters and all of the details which are to some degree under the players' control. This chapter is only for referees: it describes two important game features which the Ref must place carefully throughout each game world. These are monsters, the opponents that player characters will have to face during their quests; and Relics, items of powerful magic which will be of great use to the characters throughout each adventure.

MONSTERS

The *Retro Phaze* game presupposes a world dominated by vast stretches of monster-infested wilderness. Places of safety and civilization are few and far-between, possibly remnants of a once-mighty and now fallen civilization. Heroes who leave the safety of these few and far-flung towns will encounter fearsome beasts practically everywhere they go. Fortunately for the heroes, fighting these monsters earns them Experience Points, which in turn makes the heroes stronger and better able to survive dangerous monster encounters.

Qualities of Monsters

Each monster entry includes the following:

HD: Hit dice rolled for hit points. A bonus following the hit die number indicates extra pips added to the hit point total. Hit dice indicate the monster's level and therefore determine its Attack in combat and its Resistance to special attacks.

DF: The monster's Defense score.

MV: The monster's Movement, in tabletop squares or hexes.

AT: The damage that a monster causes with a successful physical attack. A multiplier following this number indicates that the monster is capable of multiple attacks each round.

Attack and Resistance

Attack is a bonus to a monster's chance to hit in combat, while Resistance is a bonus to a monster's chance to avoid magic and other miscellaneous attacks. Both of these qualities are determined strictly by each monster's hit dice, so they are summarized here rather than given among the individual monster statistics. Also included on the table below is the base target number (TN) to resist a monster's spells or special attacks, which is always 8 + one-half the monster's Resistance bonus.

MONSTER COMBAT CAPABILITIES			
Hit Dice	Attack	Resistance	TN
1-3	+0	+0	8
4-6	+1	+0	8
7-9	+2	+1	8
10-12	+3	+1	8
13-15	+4	+2	9
16-18	+5	+2	9
19-21	+6	+3	9
22-24	+7	+3	9
25-27	+8	+4	10
28-30	+9	+4	10
31 and up	+10	+5	10

Breath Weapons: Certain creatures possess a special attack called a "breath weapon". A breath weapon has a Spread (like a spell) but no Range, because it is always centered on the creature using it. A monster is always immune to its own breath weapon.

ADAMANTOISE

HD: 30 DF: 12 MV: 4" (2") AT: 4D × 3

One of the largest and most fearsome creatures in all existence is the adamantoise, also sometimes called the "dragon tortoise". The sheer size of this beast actually dwarfs most dragons, and its shell is harder than steel plate. An adamantoise is a sea-going creature (it moves at half speed on dry land). It has a powerful breath weapon, useable thrice per day, a cloud of blistering steam that deals damage equal to the adamantoise's current hit point total (resist for half) to all creatures within 3" of the monster.

AHRIMAN, EYE OF DOOM

HD: 18 DF: 10 MV: 6" AT: 4D

A gigantic version of the floating eye, Ahriman is a much larger and deadlier entity. This creature doesn't just paralyze with its gaze: anything that looks into its single gigantic eye must roll resistance or die. Like its smaller cousins, the singular Doom Eye resembles a gigantic lidded eye, held aloft by huge bat-wings, with a toothy mouth and two tiny claws underneath it. It is immune to death magic and casts spells as a 12th level Wizard.

BANSHEE

HD: 5 DF: 11 MV: 5" AT: 1D

A banshee is the undead spirit of a female Elf who was evil in life. It looks like a translucent, gaunt Elvish woman clad in a death-shroud. A banshee can use its wail to cast FEAR thrice per day and DEATH once per day. Banshees are exceptionally magical, so they enjoy a +2 bonus to Resistance (and the base TN to resist their wail is 9 rather than 8). Banshees can only be harmed by spells and mythril or magical weapons.

BASILISK

HD: 6 DF: 8 MV: 4" AT: 1D

A basilisk is a huge feathered lizard with a petrifying gaze. Once per round, in addition to its bite attack, the basilisk can use its gaze to attempt to turn one creature within sight to stone. A resistance roll must be made to avoid petrification. If characters say that they are averting their eyes while fighting the creature, they suffer a -2 penalty to their attacks, but they add a +2 bonus to resist the gaze attack.

BAT, GIANT

HD: 2 DF: 7 MV: 6" AT: 1D

A giant bat is vampiric and has a bite which puts victims to sleep. Any creature bitten by a giant bat must roll resistance or else fall asleep, after which the bat will continue feeding on the sleeping victim, draining 1D hit points per round. The bat's feeding will not wake the victim, but any other hit will.

BLACK PUDDING

HD: 10 DF: 7 MV: 2" AT: 3D

A black pudding is a giant blob of acidic ooze which lives underground and dissolves flesh, wood, and even metal, but not stone. It can move on walls and ceilings and squeeze through small spaces. Black pudding can only be damaged by fire. It is unaffected by ice, but one hit with lightning or a weapon will cause the creature to divide into five smaller puddings with 2 hit dice and 1D attack. Further lightning or weapon strikes will continue to spawn small puddings until fire is used to destroy them!

BLINK DOG

HD: 6	DF: 8	MV: 5"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	--------	--------

A blink dog is a fairy canine capable of casting BLINK on itself once each hour, generating ½D+1 (i.e. 2 to 4) ghostly mirror-images of itself which absorb physical attacks, each image disappearing when "hit". A blink dog is usually friendly to heroes and hostile to other monsters (especially cœurls).

BOMB SPORE

HD: 1	DF: 7	MV: 3"	AT: ½D
-------	-------	--------	--------

A bomb spore is a semi-mindless aberration, a floating orb that resembles a glowing orange jack-o-lantern with a mane of flame that flickers above its head like a lit fuse. The creature is filled with flammable, lighter-than-air gasses, which is how it floats. It bobs through the air towards living things and attempts to bite them with its rubbery, toothy, gaping mouth. The bomb spore's physical attack causes little damage, but if the creature is destroyed, it immediately explodes (2" Spread), causing 6D fire damage to all creatures caught in the area (resist for half).

BUGBEAR

HD: 3+1	DF: 8	MV: 5"	AT: 1D(+1)
---------	-------	--------	------------

Bugbears are large goblins that walk upright (like men) and do not fear the sunlight. Trained in combat, they add +1 spot to damage when wielding weapons of any sort. Bugbears are also bred to be scouts, capable of running for long distances without fatigue and possessing a Stealth skill rank of 3.

CATOBLEPAS

HD: 8	DF: 9	MV: 5"	AT: 2D
-------	-------	--------	--------

A catoblepas is a bull-like creature with iron scales. Its breath weapon (2" Spread, useable three times per day) is a cloud that petrifies victims caught the area who fail a resistance roll.

CENTAUR

HD: 4	DF: 8	MV: 6"	AT: 1D(+1)
-------	-------	--------	------------

Centaur are magical hybrids, the upper body of a human growing out of the body of a horse. Unarmed, a centaur fights with hooves and causes 1D damage. With weapons, centaurs add a +1 bonus to damage to represent their effectiveness at close combat. With a lance, a centaur also adds +1 to hit.

CENTPEDE, GIANT

HD: 2	DF: 8	MV: 4"	AT: 1D-1
-------	-------	--------	----------

A two-foot long centipede with dangerous mandibles and a venomous bite, anyone hit by a giant centipede must roll resistance (at a +1 bonus, because the poison is relatively weak) or else suffer 2 points of damage per round until the poison is neutralized.

CHAOS, KING OF DEVILS

HD: 40	DF: 16	MV: 8"	AT: 10D × 2
--------	--------	--------	-------------

The "final boss" of a *Retro Phaze* campaign is usually some kind of terrible arch-devil. Chaos is but one example of such a monster, since each campaign world must naturally have its own ultimate villain. Chaos resembles a gigantic, gold-scaled fiend with clawed hands, cloven hooves for feet, and bat-like wings. Chaos has a unique level of spell ability, being able to cast each spell in the game twice per day, both White Magic and Black. His unique breath weapon (5" Spread, useable five times per day), deals as much damage as Chaos has hit points, with a resistance roll allowed at a -2 penalty for half damage. Chaos also has the power to magically SUMMON 1-6 devils, which it can do at will, if it does nothing else that round. Chaos is immune to death magic.

CHIMERA

HD: 9	DF: 9	MV: 4" (8")	AT: 1D × 3
-------	-------	-------------	------------

A chimera is a strange magical creature with three heads—goat, lion, and dragon—on a body which combines the features of all three animals. It also possesses a dragon's wings (flying at twice its land Movement). Instead of attacking, the dragon head can breathe fire (up to three times per day) for 4D damage (2" Spread, resist for half).

COCKATRICE

HD: 5	DF: 7	MV: 8"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	--------	--------

Looking like a combination of lizard and chicken, a cockatrice is a fierce bird with a razor-sharp beak and the fearsome power to petrify its victims. Any creature bitten by a cockatrice must also roll resistance or else be turned to stone.

CŒURL

HD: 6	DF: 8	MV: 6"	AT: 1D × 2
-------	-------	--------	------------

An alien beast resembling a six-legged feline with two whip-like tentacles growing out of its shoulders, the cœurl constantly projects a psychic illusion around itself that makes it appear a few feet from where it actually is. Thus, every "hit" with a weapon made against a cœurl actually has a 2-in-6 chance of being a miss. The cœurl also enjoys a +1 bonus on all resistance rolls. In combat, the cœurl attacks with its tentacles, which are tipped with bony spikes.

DEMON

HD: 21	DF: 11	MV: 6"	AT: 5D × 2
--------	--------	--------	------------

A demon is an undead spirit of pure evil and darkness. It looks like a gigantic wraith, man-shaped and twenty feet tall. A demon is comprised of pure shadow, so dark that it actually hurts the eyes to gaze upon. The touch of a demon is deadly poisonous, so any creature struck by an attack must also roll resistance or be poisoned, losing 5 hit points per round until the poison is neutralized. A demon is capable of using each of the following spells once per day: CONFUSE, DARK, DEATH, DISPEL, HASTE, HOLD, PAIN, SCOURGE, and VANISH. A demon can only be harmed by a magical weapon more powerful than mythrill (i.e. a weapon with a bonus of +2 or better against the demon).

DEVIL

HD: 20	DF: 10	MV: 5"	AT: 5D × 2
--------	--------	--------	------------

A devil is a large, red-skinned, bat-winged fiend of fire and shadow. In battle, it fights with a sword of flame and a whip of lightning. Anyone standing within 1" of a devil suffers 3D fire damage (resist for half) from the swirling miasma of smoke and flame that surrounds the creature. A devil is immune to FIRE and BLAST (unlike a demon, a devil is not undead) but takes double damage from ICE. Devils are particularly resistant to magic and other special attacks: they add a +2 bonus to all resistance rolls (total RS +5; base TN 10 to resist a devil's attack spells). A devil is capable of casting FIRE at will and FIRE3 thrice per day.

DJINI

HD: 7+3	DF: 8	MV: 5" (10")	AT: 2D
---------	-------	--------------	--------

A djini is an air-spirit capable of wondrous feats of magic. It can conjure up perfect illusions or even physical matter at will, and it can likewise become gaseous as often as desired. When a djini flies through the air, it moves at a speed of 10". Thrice per day, a djini can take the form of a great whirlwind (3" diameter). In this form, it automatically sweeps away any creature with 1 HD or less, and it causes 2D damage to other creatures caught within it (resist for half damage).



DRAGON

HD: 7 DF: 9 MV: 5" (10") AT: 2D × 3

Mythology's most infamous monsters, the dragons come in so many types and kinds that cataloguing them all would be impossible. A young dragon has about 7 HD, but there are stories of older, larger, smarter dragons with double or even triple hit dice. (N.B., elder dragons have HD 14; DF 11; MV 6"; AT 4D × 3. Ancient dragons have HD 21; DF 13; MV 7"; AT 6D × 3.) Dragons move at double speed when flying. Dragons are very intelligent, capable of speech and of casting Black Magic as a Wizard of a level equal to their hit dice. All dragons also have a breath weapon, usable thrice per day, which causes as much damage as the dragon has hit points (resist for half). The Spread on a dragon's breath weapon varies by age (2" for a young dragon, 3" for an elder dragon, 4" for an ancient dragon).

The commonest species of dragons come in a variety of colors, each with a unique kind of breath weapon. **Black** dragons breathe acid. **Blue** dragons breathe lightning. **Green** dragons breathe choking chlorine gas. **Red** dragons breathe fire. **White** dragons breathe cold. **Gold** dragons, the wisest and most powerful variety, are able to use either the fire-breath of a red dragon or the gas-breath of a green dragon (although still only three breath attacks per day). Gold dragons can also know both White and Black Magic spells (although they know no more spells than any other dragon with the same caster level). Finally, gold dragons can shape-shift, assuming a human form or a dragon form at will. Black, green, and red dragons are usually evil and very malevolent. Blue and white dragons tend to be merely greedy and selfish, not entirely wicked. Gold dragons are good and usually friendly to human beings and their allies.

DWARF

HD: 2 DF: 8 MV: 4" AT: 1D+1

A typical Dwarfish warrior. More powerful dwarves will have extra hit dice or even class levels. All dwarves enjoy a +1 bonus on resistance rolls and can see in the dark out to 8" (40 feet).

ELEMENTAL

HD: 8 DF: 9 MV: 6" AT: 2D

An elemental is a creature composed of one of the basic forces of nature: air, earth, fire, or water. A typical elemental has 8 HD, but there are also larger elementals with 12, 16, or even 20 HD. All elementals are able to take the form of their element.

Air elementals can take the form of a whirlwind, 3" in diameter, which sweeps away creatures of 1 HD or less and causes 2D damage (resist for half) to other creatures in the area. Air elementals fly at a speed of 12".

Earth elementals always retain the shape of a humanoid lump of rock. They have enough strength that they cause +1D damage per attack, and they can batter down walls in 2D rounds.

Fire elementals can become pillars of flame 3" in diameter which will deal 2D damage (resist for half) to all creatures within the area and ignite anything flammable.

Water elementals can become giant whirlpools which will drown any creature of 1 HD or less and otherwise cause 2D damage (resist for half). A water elemental actually in water can move at a speed of 12" and overturn ships in 2D rounds.

ELF

HD: 2 DF: 7 MV: 5" AT: 1D

A typical Elvish warrior. More powerful elves will have extra hit dice or even class levels. All elves can see in the dark out to 8" (40 feet) and have a +1 bonus to hit with missile-fire.

FIRE BEETLE

HD: 1+2 DF: 8 MV: 5" AT: 2D

These belligerent bugs are carnivorous. Their bodies also contain three oily glands which glow with a bioluminescence that looks like torchlight. If the orb-shaped glands are removed, they will continue to glow for a day.

FLOATING EYE

HD: 9 DF: 8 MV: 5" AT: 2D

The floating eye is a bizarre creature which looks like a giant eyeball with a leathery eyelid, held aloft by bat-like wings. Below the eye are a wide, toothy mouth and two tiny, near-useless claws. The floating eye is carnivorous, and it is capable of a gaze attack once per round (when it does not use its physical attack). Any creature targeted by the gaze must roll resistance or else be paralyzed for 2D rounds. There exist several varieties of this monster, including an aquatic form known as a "deep eye" (it has a swim speed of 5") and the gigantic progenitor of the species, the Eye of Doom.

GARGOYLE

HD: 4+2 DF: 8 MV: 6" AT: 1D × 2

Gargoyles are enchanted statues brought to life by magic. They are semi-intelligent, usually tasked with some simple job like guarding a specific location. Gargoyles are capable of flight. Because of their magical nature, they can only be harmed by spells or by myhrill and magical weapons.

GELATINOUS CUBE

HD: 4 DF: 6 MV: 3" AT: 1D+1

A ten-foot-wide cube of semi-transparent cytoplasm, the gelatinous cube sloshes and squishes its way through narrow dungeon corridors, almost perfectly silent and invisible (it has effective Stealth 4). As it moves, it sweeps up carrion to digest, although metal will not dissolve and remains suspended within the living cube. The creature is acidic: it attacks by touching its victims, causing 1D+1 damage and forcing the target to roll resistance or else be paralyzed for 3D rounds.

GHOUL

HD: 3 DF: 7 MV: 5" AT: 1D × 2

A vicious and intelligent form of zombie which craves the flesh (especially brains) of the living, a ghoul prowls about like a beast in search of victims. The ghoul's claws secrete a potent paralytic venom: any creature struck by a ghoul must also roll resistance or else be paralyzed for 4D rounds.

GHOST

HD: 15 DF: 12 MV: 4" AT: 2D

A ghost is similar to a spectre, but far more powerful. It is the restless undead spirit of some mortal who was completely evil in life. Ghosts hate the living and wish only suffering and death upon them. Ghosts are immune to attacks from normal weapons and mythrill weapons, but they can be harmed by spells and by magical weapons with a bonus of +2 or better against the ghost. A ghost is capable of casting each of the following spells once per day: SLEEP, DARK, DEATH, FIRE2, and SCOURGE. A ghost is also capable of a gaze attack, useable once per round, which forces the target to roll resistance or else be paralyzed for 3D rounds.

GIANT

HD: 8 DF: 8 MV: 5" AT: 3D

Another famous creature of folklore and fairy-tales, giants are like ogres—but even bigger. Ordinary giants are brutish and ill-tempered, even downright barbaric. They enjoy terrorizing human villages, taking whatever (or whomever) they please and generally bullying smaller folk. There also exist mythical giants, which are far larger and smarter.

Jotuns: The Jotuns are elemental giants from northern mythology, giants of frost and fire, of cloud and stone. These giants have upwards of 16 hit dice (DF 9; MV 6"; AT 5D). They like to make sport of throwing boulders great distances (in combat, this is a special attack with 9" Range and 1" Spread for 3D damage; no to-hit roll is needed, but targets may resist for half damage). Jotuns build great and beautiful halls filled with finely crafted weapons and other artful treasures.

Note that elemental giants take no damage from their own element and double damage from an opposed element. Fire Jotuns are strong against fire but weak to cold, and the reverse is true for Frost Jotuns. Cloud Jotuns are immune to lighting but vulnerable to acid, and the reverse is true for Stone Jotuns.

Titans: Even greater and wiser than the Jotuns are the Titans, beings of immense size and nearly godlike powers. Titans are associated with even more primordial forces of nature—oceans, mountains, storms, the sun—and they have 24 hit dice (DF 10; MV 7"; AT 7D). Titans are able to cast White Magic spells as a Monk with a level equal to their hit dice.

GOBLIN

HD: 1 DF: 7 MV: 5" AT: 1D

Known by various names in different cultures and mythologies (orcs, imps, kobolds, bogeymen, bakemono), the Goblins are a foul race of corrupted Elves, twisted and mutilated and altogether evil. They are the foot-soldiers of whichever Dark Lord happens to be plaguing the world on a given day. Goblins hate sunlight (it makes them sick and weak, penalizing their attacks by -1), but they love explosives and clever engines of destruction. Goblin chieftains and kings (usually known as "Great Goblins") will have 2 or more hit dice, or even class levels. Ordinary Goblins were probably crossbred with ogres to create the race of high Goblins known as Bugbears.

GOLEM

HD: 4 DF: 7 MV: 4" AT: 1D

A golem is a man-shaped creature with no mind of its own, constructed by hand from some inert material and then brought to life with magic. The statistics given here are for a *flesh golem*, a horror comprised of stitched-together parts from corpses. Other golems are made from more durable materials. All golems are immune to attacks from normal weapons and can only be damaged by spells or by mythrill and magical weapons.

Clay Golem: HD 8; DF 8; MV 5"; AT 2D.

Stone Golem: HD 12; DF 9; MV 5"; AT 3D.

Bronze Golem: HD 16; DF 10; MV 6"; AT 4D.

Iron Golem: HD 20; DF 11; MV 6"; AT 5D.

Adamant Golem: HD 24; DF 12; MV 7"; AT 6D.

GORGON

HD: 5 DF: 7 MV: 4" AT: 1D

A gorgon is a horrid creature of mythology, a woman with a nest of writhing vipers for hair whose gaze turns men to stone. Gorgons have no legs, possessing instead the lower body of a great serpent. Any creature that looks into a gorgon's eyes must roll resistance or be petrified (as with a basilisk, a character can choose to fight with eyes averted, gaining a +2 bonus to Resistance against the gaze attack but suffering a -2 penalty to Attack when engaging in combat with the gorgon). In addition to her gaze attack, a gorgon uses weapons. Most gorgons favor the bow and arrow, but in hand-to-hand combat they will use spears, swords, or daggers. In close combat, a gorgon actually makes two attacks per round—one for her weapon and one for her snaky hair, which causes no damage but inflicts a deadly poison. Anyone bitten by a gorgon's vipers must roll resistance or be poisoned, suffering 3 points of damage per round until the poison is cured.

GRAY OOZE

HD: 3+3 DF: 7 MV: 1" AT: 2D

Gray ooze is a puddle of acidic slime that looks very much like wet rock. It attacks by lashing out with pseudopods that deal 2D damage, after which it clings, continuing to deal 2D damage each round. Gray ooze is immune to both fire and cold, but lighting and weapons damage it normally.

GREEN SLIME

HD: 2 DF: 6 MV: 1" AT: 1D

The smallest and weakest of all the oozes, the green slime is merely a blob of carnivorous protoplasm that creeps towards living things and attempts to devour them. When it successfully hits a creature, its clinging pseudopods will continue to deal 1D acid damage each round until the slime is destroyed. Green slime is impervious to all attack forms except fire, although a DETOX spell will instantly destroy a green slime.

GRIFFON

HD: 7 DF: 8 MV: 8" AT: 1D × 3

A griffon is a powerful creature with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. Griffons are sometimes (rarely) tamed for use as mounts.

HARPY

HD: 3 DF: 7 MV: 6" AT: 1D × 2

Harpies (also known as "sirens") are a combination of woman and vulture. Some look like hideous hags, while others are beautiful and seductive. The harpy's song is a powerful charm: any creature within 9" of a singing harpy must roll resistance or else become fascinated. A fascinated character will stand stupidly and do nothing, and the condition persists for 4D rounds.

HELL HOUND

HD: 5 DF: 8 MV: 5" AT: 1D

A hell hound is a fire-breathing dog with scaly skin. Its breath weapon, usable at will, deals 3D damage (resist for half) in a 1" Spread around the monster. Some hell hounds, known as *cerberi*, have three heads—these have 7 hit dice and three attacks

per round, although one of the heads might breathe fire instead of attacking on any given round.

HIPPOGRIFF

HD: 4 DF: 7 MV: 8" AT: 1D × 3

A hippogriff has the body of a horse and the head and wings of a giant eagle. Hippogriffs are aggressive and carnivorous, but they can be tamed as mounts, just like griffons.

HOB

HD: 1 DF: 7 MV: 4" AT: 1D

Hobs are a race of small folk, related to Men and Dwarves and probably Elves as well. Slim and athletic while young, they tend to become somewhat lax and potbellied with age. Hobs add a +1 bonus to both resistance rolls and missile-fire attacks, but being short, they can only use smaller weapons.

HORSE

HD: 3 DF: 7 MV: 7" AT: 1D-1

Horses are used as mounts by Men and Elves. Dwarves and Hobs prefer to ride ponies (HD 2, MV 6", AT ½D). Similar statistics could be used for other, more fantastic mounts, such as large flightless birds or giant subterranean lizards or bugs.

HYDRA

HD: 9 DF: 8 MV: 5" AT: 1D × 9

Gigantic reptilian wyrms with nine heads, hydras are very difficult to kill because of their regenerative powers. For every 5 points of damage that a hydra takes, one of its heads is "killed", reducing the number of attacks that the hydra can make in a round. The hydra is regenerative, however, and regains 2 hit points per round, excluding damage dealt to the hydra by fire.

IFRITI

HD: 10 DF: 9 MV: 5" (10") AT: 2D

Ifrit are evil genies composed of elemental fire. An ifrit can fly through the air (MV 10"), and it can cast FIRE at will and FIRE2 thrice per day. Ifrit are themselves immune to fire-based attacks.

KALIDAH

HD: 5 DF: 8 MV: 5" AT: 1D+1 × 3

A kalidah is a vicious beast that dwells in forests, resembling a huge bear with razor claws and the head of a tiger. If the kalidah strikes a single foe with two of its attacks in the same round, it can choose to latch on and rend the target for an extra 2D points of damage.

KILLER BEE

HD: ½ DF: 7 MV: 6" AT: ½D

Huge cousins of ordinary killer bees, this monstrous variety possesses a poisonous sting. Any creature hit by a killer bee must also roll resistance at a +1 bonus or else be poisoned and lose 1 hit point per round until the poison is cured. Killer bees usually haunt underground tunnels near their hive. In a hive, there will be a queen bee with 2 HD surrounded by 1-6 guards with 1 HD. Killer bee honey has semi-magical properties: if consumed within the hive, it heals 1D hit points.

KRAKEN, TERROR OF THE DEEP

HD: 32 DF: 13 MV: 7" AT: Special

The Kraken is a colossal squid, large enough to swallow a ship and frightening in its intelligence. It is the Fiend of the Seas, a being of

terror and malevolence. The Kraken is capable of eleven attacks per round, eight with tentacles that cause 2D damage; two with powerful arms that cause 3D damage and force the target to roll resistance or be paralyzed for 2D rounds; and once with its fearsome beak, which deals 6D damage. Any creature struck by one of the tentacles must also roll resistance or else be dragged 3" toward the beak. Thrice per day, the Kraken can emit a breath weapon (3" Spread), a blast of steam that causes as much damage as the Kraken has hit points (with a resistance roll allowed for half damage). Kraken is immune to ice attacks and death magic, but resists lighting at a -2 penalty.

LICH, LORD OF THE UNDEAD

HD: 24 DF: 11 MV: 5" AT: 1D+2

The Lich is the most powerful undead creature in the world, mummified Warlock who has retained all of his Black Magic spells in undeath. The Lich has the same spell ability as a 24th level Warlock, in addition to a touch that causes damage and forces the target to roll resistance or be paralyzed for 3D rounds. The Lich is immune to all spells of 4th level or lower and can only be harmed by magical weapons which are more powerful than mythrill (i.e. with a bonus of +2 or better against the Lich).

LIZARDFOLK

HD: 2+1 DF: 8 MV: 3" (5") AT: 1D+1

Reptilian humanoids with a barbarian culture, lizardmen are used to swampy terrain. They move at 3" on land and 5" in water.

MARILITH, GENERAL OF HELLFIRE

HD: 28 DF: 12 MV: 6" AT: 3D × 6

An evil General in the Armies of Hell, the Marilith is a large devil resembling a stern six-armed woman with the body of a serpent. Each arm carries a different weapon and deals 3D damage. The Marilith is also capable of casting FIRE2 at will and FIRE3 thrice per day. Marilith is immune to fire attacks and death magic, but she resists ice at a -2 penalty. Being a powerful scion of devil-kind, she is nevertheless immune to 1st and 2nd level spells.

MAN

HD: 1 DF: 8 MV: 5" AT: 1D

The statistics given here are for an ordinary human soldier or bandit, whereas mightier Men will have extra hit dice or a character class. Ordinary humans who are not trained to fight (including children and the infirm) have ½ HD (1-3 hp).

MANTICORE

HD: 6+2 DF: 8 MV: 6" AT: 1D+1 × 2

A bat-winged lion with the face of a man and a tail bristling with barbs, a manticore can attack viciously in close quarters or it can throw one of its tail-spikes. When launching a spike, the beast can only attack once per round (1D damage), but the range is 7". The manticore has six spikes to hurl in total.

MERFOLK

HD: 2 DF: 7 MV: 6" (3") AT: 1D

Merpeople (also known as merrows) are sea-dwelling cousins of Men and Elves who have a great fish tail in place of legs. Merfolk are very fast in the water and move at half speed on land, but they are far from helpless when out of their element. Merfolk are amphibious, able to breathe water or air indefinitely. Many merfolk will be more powerful than the ordinary warrior presented here, having extra hit dice or even class levels.

MINOTAUR

HD: 6	DF: 7	MV: 5"	AT: 1D × 2
-------	-------	--------	------------

Brutish and rather dimwitted, minotaurs look like large shaggy men with the heads of bulls. Despite their lack of intelligence, they have a cagey sense of direction and they add +1 to hit when wielding hand-to-hand weapons.

MUMMY

HD: 7	DF: 9	MV: 3"	AT: 2D
-------	-------	--------	--------

A desiccated undead corpse wrapped in bandages, a mummy is able to cast PAIN and FEAR thrice per day each. The touch of a mummy is also poisonous: any creature struck by a mummy must roll resistance or else take 3 points of damage each round until the poison is cured. A mummy can only be harmed by fire or by mythrill or magical weapons.

NYMPH

HD: 2 or 3	DF: 6	MV: 5"	AT: 1D-1
------------	-------	--------	----------

Nymphs are nature-spirits, usually female and very beautiful. (Males of the species, known as fauns or satyrs on land and tritons in the sea, are relatively rare.) There are several different varieties of nymphs.

River nymphs, also called naiads, are the commonest sort of nymph. They look like ordinary Human or Elvish maidens of surpassing beauty, except that they can swim and breathe in the water as easily as they walk on dry land.

Forest nymphs come in two forms, dryads and hamadryads. Dryads appear human from the waist up and goat-legged from the waist down, with tiny goat-horns sprouting from their foreheads. Hamadryads are similar in appearance, except that they are quadrupeds, a centaur-like combination of woman and doe.

Sea nymphs, called nereids and oceanids, are the ocean-dwelling cousins of forest nymphs. Nereids look much like mermaids, except that they have two fishtails instead of one. Oceanids are odder in form, centauroid like the hamadryads, having the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a hippocampus. Sea nymphs are only truly at home in the sea; they move at a slower speed (4") on land.

Note that hamadryads and oceanids, being larger than other kinds of nymphs, have 3 hit dice where the naiads, dryads, and nereids have only 2. All nymphs are able to cast a CONFUSE spell at will, which is their chief means of defense. Hamadryads and oceanids are also capable of casting SLEEP2 thrice per day.

OCHRE JELLY

HD: 6	DF: 7	MV: 1"	AT: 2D
-------	-------	--------	--------

The ochre jelly is a sickly-looking giant amœba with acidic pseudopods. It is vulnerable to fire and cold, but when struck by weapons or lightning, it splits into smaller jellies with 2 HD and 1D damage per attack.

OGRE

HD: 4+1	DF: 8	MV: 4"	AT: 1D+2
---------	-------	--------	----------

An ogre is a large, smelly, hairy humanoid with little intelligence and an extremely ill-tempered disposition. Ogres are definitely related to bugbears, and they might be cousins to goblins and trolls as well. Ogres and Humans have an instinctive loathing of each other, much as Elves and Goblins do.

ONI

HD: 8+2	DF: 9	MV: 5"	AT: 1D
---------	-------	--------	--------

A large horned ogre capable of magic-use, the oni can cast spells as an 8th level Wizard. Personality-wise, the oni range from wickedly mischievous to outright malevolent.

PEGASUS

HD: 3	DF: 7	MV: 10"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	---------	--------

A winged horse capable of tremendous speed in flight, pegasi are good-natured and shy, though not easily tamed as mounts.

PHANTOM

HD: 12	DF: 10	MV: 5"	AT: 2D
--------	--------	--------	--------

A phantom is an incorporeal ectoplasmic apparition, an undead creature that looks much like a banshee, except that it always carries a dagger and a lantern. Like wraiths and spectres, phantoms can move freely through solid objects. A phantom is able to cast FEAR at will and DEATH thrice per day. Phantoms are only harmed by spells and by mythrill or magical weapons.

PISCODÆMON

HD: 8	DF: 8	MV: 5"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	--------	--------

A piscodæmon is an alien horror, humanoid in form, but having a bulbous head that resembles a squid with four tentacles dangling around the mouth. The piscodæmon possesses a number of psychic talents. It can placate its victims with hypnotic telepathy (essentially, it can produce SLEEP and SLEEP2 spells at will), and it can produce a blast of telekinetic thrust which causes 4D damage (resist for half) against one target within 5". Piscodæmons feed on brains, which they obtain by latching onto their victims' crania with their tentacles and sucker-like mouths. If a piscodæmon is able to successfully attack a helpless or otherwise incapacitated victim (such as one affected by a SLEEP spell), the creature can kill the victim in but two short rounds by slurping out the brain.

PURPLE WORM

HD: 15	DF: 9	MV: 3"	AT: 3D
--------	-------	--------	--------

A terrible giant worm, this creature is a scourge to even the most experienced of adventuring heroes. Any creature bitten by the purple worm must roll resistance or else suffer the effects of a very deadly poison, one that inflicts 4 points of damage per round until neutralized. Furthermore, any natural attack roll of 11 or 12 swallows the victim whole. A swallowed victim will suffer 3D damage each round until cut free of the worm's stomach, which if only possible if the worm is slain.

RAT, GIANT

HD: 1-1	DF: 7	MV: 5"	AT: 1D
---------	-------	--------	--------

One in every six giant rats is a malignant specimen with a diseased bite. These rats inflict a weak poison, forcing anyone bitten to roll resistance at a +1 bonus or else lose 1 hit point per round until the infection is neutralized with a DETOX spell or an ANTIDOTE potion.

REVENANT

HD: 18	DF: 11	MV: 5"	AT: 1D × 3
--------	--------	--------	------------

A more powerful version of a wight, a revenant is an evil undead spirit inhabiting a corpse. Revenants can only be harmed by spells and by magical weapons more powerful than mythrill (i.e. with a bonus of +2 or better against the revenant). A revenant is deadly poisonous to the touch: any creature struck by one of the revenant's attacks must roll resistance or else be poisoned and lose 4 hit points per round until the poison is cured. A revenant is very stealthy (Stealth rank 3). It is able to cast DARK thrice per day and SCOURGE, DEATH, and BLIND once per day each.

ROBBER FLY

HD: 2	DF: 8	MV: 6"	AT: 1D+1
-------	-------	--------	----------

These giant, carnivorous flies are extremely sneaky predators. They have an effective Stealth skill rank of 4.

ROC

HD: 24	DF: 8	MV: 10"	AT: 3D
--------	-------	---------	--------

A roc is a gigantic bird of prey, said to be large enough to snatch fully grown elephants up in their talons. When swooping out of the air, a roc can also snatch up an adventurer on a natural attack roll of 11 or 12.

SAHUAGIN

HD: 2	DF: 8	MV: 6" (4")	AT: 1D+1
-------	-------	-------------	----------

Evil fish-men that dwell in the dark depths of the ocean, sahuagin hate the surface world and all its allies—including the merfolk, who war with the sahuagin. Sahuagin can breathe air for about an hour before they start to suffocate. They move at a slower speed (4") on land. Their preferred weapons are nets, tridents, and crossbows.

SALAMANDER

HD: 7	DF: 9	MV: 4"	AT: 2D
-------	-------	--------	--------

Salamanders are large, lizard-like creatures made of elemental fire. Their very touch ignites anything flammable. In combat, they bite their foes (causing one die of damage from the bite and one die from the sheer heat), but salamanders are also capable of producing a breath weapon thrice per day, a gush of flaming lava that deals 3D points of damage (resist for half damage) in a 2" Spread. Salamanders are intelligent and capable of speech.

SEA DRAKE

HD: 8	DF: 10	MV: 7"	AT: 4D
-------	--------	--------	--------

The statistics given here are for a young sea drake. An elder drake will have 16 HD, while an ancient from the ocean's depths would have 24 HD. Sea dragons are able to both swim and fly at a speed of 7". They also have a breath weapon, a blob of acrid poison that causes as much damage as the sea drake has hit points (resist for half). The poison-blob has a 1" Spread and, unusual for a breath weapon, a 5" Range. On a natural attack roll of 12 (or 11-12 for elder drakes, or 10-12 for ancient drakes), the creature might be capable of swallowing characters, lifeboats, or even entire ships whole.

SHADOW

HD: 2+2	DF: 7	MV: 5"	AT: 1D
---------	-------	--------	--------

A living shadow is an evil creature that drains the strength of its victims. It is not undead (and therefore immune to the BLAST spell), although it shares with the undead an immunity to certain effects: sleep, paralysis, poison, and confusion will not affect a shadow. Being incorporeal, the creature can only be damaged by weapons made of mythrill or bearing an enchantment yet stronger. Most terrifying of all, the touch of a shadow chills the very soul—any creature hit by a shadow takes 1D of damage *and* loses one point of Strength. Any creature drained to -1 STR in this manner actually becomes a shadow. Otherwise, drained Strength is recovered at a rate of three points per night of rest.

SKELETON

HD: 1	DF: 7	MV: 5"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	--------	--------

The weakest of the undead, an animated skeleton is a mindless automaton of a soldier that only does what its creator commands.

SNAKE, GIANT

HD: 4	DF: 8	MV: 5"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	--------	--------

Giant snakes are poisonous. Anyone bitten by this animal must roll resistance or else become poisoned and lose 3 hit points per round until the poison can be neutralized.

SPECTRE

HD: 8	DF: 9	MV: 6"	AT: 1D+1
-------	-------	--------	----------

A ghostly undead creature that looks much as it did in life, spectres are incorporeal and malevolent. Spectres can only be harmed by magic or by mythrill and magical weapons. Anybody struck by spectre suffers 2-7 points of damage and also loses 2 points of Strength. A creature brought down to -1 STR in this manner is slain and will become a spectre on the following night. Otherwise, Strength drained away by a spectre returns at a rate of one point per night of rest.

SPIDER, GIANT

HD: 3	DF: 7	MV: 5"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	--------	--------

The bite of a giant spider is poisonous; anyone bitten by the spider must roll resistance or else lose 2 hit points per round until the poison can be cured. Thrice per day, a giant spider can also produce a mass of webbing that mimics the effects of a SLOW spell (duration: 3D rounds).

SPRITE

HD: 1	DF: 8	MV: 6"	AT: 1D-1
-------	-------	--------	----------

Sprites are diminutive fairies which come in a number of kinds and forms. Air-fairies, known as pixies, look like tiny Elves with dragonfly wings. Water-fairies, called nixies, look like green-skinned Hobs with webbed hands and feet and large, fish-like eyes. Earth-fairies, the gnomes, resemble small Dwarves, except that their skin is the color of granite, and their noses are large and bulbous. Gnomes have a pathological need to tinker with contraptions of clockwork and chemicals. All three sprightly races are capable of VANISHING at will, and some are even known to become powerful Wizards.

TIAMAT, QUEEN OF STORMS

HD: 36	DF: 14	MV: 8" (16")	AT: 8D × 3
--------	--------	--------------	------------

Tiamat is a colossal seven-headed dragon, a fiendish spirit of unrelenting chaos and tempestuous violence. The Queen of Storms possesses a devastating breath weapon, useable four times per day, a lightning blast with a 4" Spread which deals as much damage as Tiamat has hit points (a resistance roll is allowed, at a -1 penalty, for half damage). She is also capable of casting spells as a 30th level magic-user, either a Monk or a Wizard (i.e. she knows nine spells per spell level, just like a 30th level spell-caster, but they can be any of the White or Black spells). She is immune to lighting and death magic. Tiamat (along with her brother and sister fiends, the Lich, the Marilith, and the Kraken) is a chief servant of Chaos the Devil-King. She is also said to be a great rival of goodly Bahamut, the oldest and wisest of Gold Dragon-kind.

TRENT

HD: 9	DF: 9	MV: 5"	AT: 3D
-------	-------	--------	--------

The so-called shepherds of the forest, the famously "un-hasty" Trents look like gigantic humanoid trees. There is some question as to which race is older, the Trents or the Elves—each race claims to have been active in the world before the other first appeared. A Trent is capable of "waking" ordinary trees, making them angry and bellicose. Awakened trees (called "hworms" in the Trentish tongue) have 6 HD, DF 8, MV 3", and AT 2D. A single Trent can awaken up to three hworms at a time.

TROLL

HD: 6+3	DF: 10	MV: 5"	AT: 4D
---------	--------	--------	--------

Trolls are massive humanoid creatures with skin like solid rock, and brains to match. Trolls are thought to have been created in

mockery of the Trents, and the two races hate each other with unmitigated passion. Trolls aren't subtle combatants: they just bash whatever comes within reach, or they throw very large rocks (2D damage to one target, missile range 5"). If a troll is exposed to sunlight, it is instantly turned to stone forever.

UNDEAD

This category of monsters includes skeletons, zombies, ghouls, wights, banshees, wraiths, mummies, spectres, vampires, phantoms, ghosts, revenants, demons, and the Lich. Undead are immune to death magic, poison, paralysis, sleep, and confusion. They are vulnerable to BLAST magic and -2 to resist FIRE and HOLY, but +2 to resist ICE and SLOW. Undead more powerful than ghouls are also either semi-corporeal or completely incorporeal, and these can only be harmed by mythrill or magical weapons.

UNICORN

HD: 4	DF: 9	MV: 8"	AT: 2D
-------	-------	--------	--------

A snow-white horse with a single spiraled horn growing out the front of its head, a unicorn will only ever allow a pure-hearted maiden to approach and ride it. It is capable of casting WARP to carry itself (and any rider) to safety once per day.

VAMPIRE

HD: 9	DF: 9	MV: 5" (7")	AT: 1D+2
-------	-------	-------------	----------

Vampires are quite powerful among the undead, being among the most difficult to kill. They take only half damage from cold and lightning, and they can only be struck by mythrill or magical weapons. In addition, vampires regenerate 3 hit points per round. A vampire's physical blow causes 3-8 points of damage as well as draining 2 points of Strength. (Anyone reduced to -1 STR by a vampire will be slain and rise again as a vampire. Otherwise, drained Strength is recovered at a rate of 1 point per night of rest.) A vampire can assume the form of a giant bat, a worg wolf, or a gaseous mist at will (and if a vampire is ever wounded to 0 hit points, it is not slain, but rather becomes a mist and retreats to its coffin). Once per night, a vampire can also summon a horde of 3D giant bats or wolves. A vampire can perform a gaze attack, once per round, which forces the victim to roll resistance or else fall under the sway of the vampire's will, charmed and confused, unwilling to attack the vampire but ready to turn on friends. Finally, a vampire is capable of casting spells as a 9th level Wizard.

A vampire has certain weaknesses. It is instantly destroyed by exposure to sunlight and gradually (over three rounds) slain by immersion in running water. Vampires retreat from the smell of garlic and the sight of mirrors and holy symbols. A vampire which has retreated to its coffin for repose, whether during the daytime or after it has lost a battle, can be permanently killed by driving a wooden stake through its heart and beheading the corpse, or by setting corpse and coffin aflame.

WEAPON, ANCIENT WAR-MACHINE

HD: 50	DF: 17	MV: 6"	AT: 12D × 2
--------	--------	--------	-------------

The only creature in the game more powerful than the Devil-King and the other "boss" monsters, the Weapon should not be so easily sought out—particularly since it can handily destroy even the strongest of player character parties. The Weapon is a piece of Ancient technology, one that predates the world's current civilization by millennia. Perhaps it sleeps, and the main villain is questing to awaken it and unleash its horrors upon the world—or perhaps it merely patrols some long-abandoned ruin, still carrying out the guard-duty assigned to it by its advanced and long-vanished masters. It resembles a bulky metallic box, six-limbed,

with a mechanical "head" that bristles with armaments. The Weapon can attack physically for massive damage; it can fire a blast of nuclear plasma identical to the FLARE spell at will; or it can repair itself with CURE4 up to three times per day.

WIGHT

HD: 4	DF: 8	MV: 4"	AT: 1D-1
-------	-------	--------	----------

Evil spirits that dwell in barrow-downs, wights take the form of animate corpses which drain life with their very touch. The attack of a wight causes damage and drains 1 point of Strength. Any creature drained to -1 STR by a wight is slain and then rises again as a wight the next night. Otherwise, Strength so drained can be recovered at a rate of 2 points per night. A wight can only be damaged by spells and by mythrill or magical weapons.

WOLF

HD: 2	DF: 7	MV: 6"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	--------	--------

Normal wolves are only inclined to attack people if cornered or desperate with hunger. There are, however, larger and more supernatural varieties of wolf which make for more fearsome opponents:

Worgs: The so-called worg wolves (HD 4; DF 8; MV 6"; AT 2D) are nearly twice the size of regular wolves. They are very vicious and somewhat intelligent. Sometimes they serve Goblins as mounts.

Werewolves: Werewolves are an enchanted sort of wolf (HD 8; DF 9; MV 6"; AT 3D) which can assume the form of a man. In wolf form, a werewolf's bite is extremely poisonous. Anyone bitten by a werewolf must roll resistance at a -1 penalty or else lose 3 hit points per round until the poison can be cured. Anyone slain by werewolf poison will actually return to life within a day, as a werewolf. Werewolves can only be damaged by spells or by mythrill and magical weapons.

WRAITH

HD: 6	DF: 9	MV: 5"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	--------	--------

Wraiths are incorporeal undead that look like cloaked shadows of Men. Wraiths can only be damaged by spells or by mythrill and magical weapons. The touch of a wraith also drains one point of Strength in addition to damage. Anyone drained to -1 STR by a wraith will die, only to become a wraith the next night. Otherwise, Strength so drained is recovered at a rate of 2 points per night of rest. Sometimes, wraiths go about mounted on spectral horses called "night mares", cold-blooded and flesh-eating beasts which are alive (not undead) but only appear to be horses (HD 4; DF 8; MV 7"; AT 2D).

WYVERN

HD: 8	DF: 9	MV: 4" (8")	AT: 2D × 2
-------	-------	-------------	------------

A wyvern is an odd beast, a sort of dragon with two hind limbs, but strong wings in place of forelimbs, and with a stinging, scorpion-like tail. Anyone struck by a wyvern must roll resistance at a -1 penalty or else become poisoned and lose 4 hit points per round until the poison can be cured.

YELLOW MOLD

HD: 2	DF: 4	MV: 0"	AT: 1D
-------	-------	--------	--------

A patch of dangerous fungus, yellow mold does not attack, but if touched it causes one die of acid damage. There is also a 50% chance that when touched, the mold spews a cloud (3" diameter) of poisonous spores. Anyone who breathes the spores must roll resistance at a +1 bonus or else suffer 2 points of damage per round until the poison can be cured.

ZOMBIE

HD: 2 DF: 7 MV: 4" AT: 1D+1

A zombie is an animated corpse, mindless, which does whatever its creator bade it do upon its necromantic creation. It attacks by bludgeoning with its fists. Zombies are awkward and slow and always lose the initiative in battle.

RELICS OF POWER

Apart from scrolls and potions, magical items in the *Retro Phaze* game are known as Relics, and they are exceedingly rare. They are beyond the ken of player characters to create, regardless of how experienced the characters may become. Knowledge of the creation of Relics was possessed by the Ancients, but that knowledge has long since been lost to present civilizations. Also, the great majority of Relics are unique—there might be several Mythrill Swords in the world, but there is only one Flame Sword, only one Vorpall Sword, and so on. In a particular campaign setting, each Relic will have its own name, history, and purpose in that world.

RELIC WEAPONS

Relic weapons obey the same class restrictions as normal weapons. A Monk, for example, can use a magical staff but not a magical sword. All Relic weapons add a bonus (+1 or greater) to a character's Attack. Relic weapons are also lighter than ordinary weapons, weighing half as much. A Mythrill Sword, for example, weighs only one-eighth stone.

Mythrill Weapons

A weapon made of mythrill adds a +1 bonus to Attack. Weapons such as these can damage most (but not all) kinds of magical and incorporeal creatures. Swords are the commonest sort of mythrill weapon, but really any manner of armament could be made from this light and silvery metal—even a bow or a staff. The creation of mythrill weapons is a mysterious and difficult craft, once common among Elves and Dwarves, but long since utterly lost. Still, compared to other Relics, mythrill weapons are downright abundant. Vaults and collections in the ancient homes of Elves and Dwarves may yet hold many swords, spears, knives, bludgeons, and bows made from this finest of enchanted materials.

Bane Swords

Five of these are known to exist, crafted by Elvish master-smiths in a past Age of the world. Each one is an enchanted blade in its own right (+1 to Attack), but spells woven into these rare swords cause the enchantment to double (+2 to Attack) when fighting a particular sort of creature.

BANE SWORDS	
Weapon	Becomes +2 vs...
Coral Sword	Aquatic creatures
Dragon Sword	Dragons, sea drakes, wyverns
Giant Sword	Giants, ogres, trolls
Lycan Sword	Werewolves, wolves, worgs
Runic Sword	Spell-casters

Flame Sword

A heavy bronzed broadsword with an ancient Dwarvish fire-enchantment placed upon it, the blade is actually sheathed in tongues of flame that do not burn the sword's wielder. The Flame Sword is a sword +1 under ordinary circumstances, but when

attacking the undead or cold-based creatures, the bonus to Attack becomes +2.

Power Staff

A quarter staff made from a dark and very durable wood, the Power Staff seems to emit a queer greenish glow. The eldritch energies within this staff impart a +2 bonus to Attack.

Frost Sword

The Frost Sword is a scimitar which seems to be made from crystal-clear ice, frigid to the touch and kept from melting by a powerful and eternal enchantment. Ordinarily, the Frost Sword grants a +2 bonus to Attack, but against fire-based creatures the bonus becomes +3.

Vorpall Sword

This is a sword +2 with a deadly enchantment placed upon the keen-edged blade. Whenever the attacker rolls boxcars (a natural 12 on the to-hit roll), the target is instantly reduced to 0 hit points and slain by beheading.

Sun Sword

The Sun Sword is a golden broad sword which glows with a bright, holy light. The weapon acts as a sword +2 under normal circumstances, but against undead and creatures of pure evil (devils and fiends), the bonus becomes +3.

Legendary Weapons

The rarest and most powerful of weapons grant a +3 bonus to Attack under all circumstances. All such weapons carry names of legend and power. The Excalibur (a sword +3 forged from adamant), the Valkyrie (an ivory lance +3), and Masamune's Katana (a sword +3 made from folded steel) are the most famous.

Ensorcelled Weapons

A rare few weapons actually contain a spell within them, unlocked by the will of the wielder. The weapon and its spell can only be used by someone ordinarily proficient in that class of weapon, so an ensorcelled sword, for example, can only be used by a Fighter or a Rogue, not by a Monk or a Wizard. The spell contained within each of these mighty weapons can be called upon once per day, plus once for every five points of WIL or INT possessed by the wielder, depending on whether the spell is White or Black. Ensorcelled weapons are also enchanted weapons, of course, and so they grant a bonus to Attack.

ENSORCELLED WEAPONS			
Weapon	Bonus	Spell	Attribute
Healing Staff	+1	AURA	WIL
Light Axe	+2	BLAST	WIL
Fire Staff	+2	FIRE2	INT
Shadow Rapier	+2	BLINK	WIL
Wizard's Staff	+2	CONFUSE	INT
Thor's Hammer	+2	BOLT2	INT
Miasma Sword	+2	SCOURGE	INT

RELIC ARMORS

As with Relic weapons, these enchanted armors are rare, unique, and priceless, forged in Ancient times with knowledge now lost and forgotten. Relic armors grant an additional bonus to the wearer's Defense, beyond the armor's ordinary protective value, and they weigh half as much as normal armor. This even

translates into a reduced armor check penalty: magical chainmail imposes no penalty on Stealth and Athletics skill rolls, while magical plate armor imposes only a -1 penalty on the use of these skills. Keep in mind that as with Relic weapons, Relic armors may only be used by characters of the appropriate class.

Mythrill Armor

Shields, chainmail armor, and plate armor can be made from mythrill. Armor such as this adds a +1 bonus to its Defense value. Thus, a Mythrill Shield is DF +2, Mythrill Chainmail is DF 9, and Mythrill Plate is DF 10.

Protective Bangles

A craft perfected by Ancient peoples in the days before even Elves walked the earth, enchanted bangles (a kind of large bracelet or arm-bracer) protect the wearer just like armor. The effects of a bangle and real armor do not stack (only the better DF score applies), but a bonus from a shield still applies, and characters of all classes can use bangles. Note that each successive type of bangle is roughly twice as rare as the previous kind: if there is only one Adamant Bangle left in the world, there might be upwards of thirty-two Copper Bangles in existence.

PROTECTIVE BANGLES			
Copper Bangle	DF 7	Platinum Bangle	DF 10
Silver Bangle	DF 8	Mythrill Bangle	DF 11
Gold Bangle	DF 9	Adamant Bangle	DF 12

Elemental Armors

Said to be the work of Dwarvish smiths, there are three famous suits of magic armor with matching shields which have been hidden in three separate mines or dungeons around the world. The **Flame Mail** is a suit of bronze chainmail +1 (i.e. DF 9) which protects its wearer from ice attacks, just like the WARM spell. Its companion is the **Flame Shield**, a shield +1 which also grants its wielder a +1 bonus to resistance rolls vs. ice magic. The **Ice Armor** is a suit of plate +1 (DF 10) which protects its wearer from fire magic, just like the COOL spell. The Dwarves who forged this armor also created the **Ice Shield**, which grants its wielder a +1 bonus to resist fire attacks. Finally, there is the priceless **Crystal Armor**, a suit of plate +2 (DF 11) which appears to have been made from a solid block of quartz. It dissipates lighting attacks as if the wearer were under the effects of a GROUND spell. The accompanying **Crystal Shield** is a shield +2 which grants the wielder a +2 bonus to resist lighting attacks.

Dragon Mail

Apparently made from the scales of an ancient wyrm, this armor shines like burnished platinum. It counts as chainmail +2 (DF 10), but it also bears a mighty defensive spell. It protects the wearer from all fire, ice, and lighting attacks, as if he were simultaneously under the effects of WARM, COOL, and GROUND.

Protection Ring

What appears to be a simple gold finger-band actually contains a defensive enchantment that protects the wearer from all forms of death magic. The wearer of the Protection Ring is permanently under the effects of the SURVIVE spell, +4 to resist any "instant death" spell. A character of any class can use this item.

Barrier Ribbon

Legend has it that three of these green-and-yellow headbands were woven by a Hobbish wise-woman. Anyone who wears one of the mythical and much-coveted Barrier Ribbons is thereafter permanently under the effects of the BARRIER spell, automatically taking half damage from *all* spells and breath weapons (and one-quarter damage when a resistance roll for half can be made). Furthermore, the protected individual is utterly immune to poison, blindness, slowness, paralysis, petrification, silence, and all other debilitating status effects.

Adamantine Armors

Armor made from the legendary metal adamant, which is only found in meteors, is exceedingly rare. Myths and rumors speak of the **Genji Mail**, a suit of chainmail +3 crafted from a meteor of adamant that landed in eastern Human lands. There is also one suit of **Adamant Plate** +3 which was known to be the heirloom of a house of great Dwarvish kings. Finally, there is the wondrous **Ægis Shield**, a shield +3 whose adamantine surface is polished like a mirror. The bearer of the Ægis is immune to both petrification and all gas-based attacks, including the SCOURGE spell and breath weapons that mimic it.

Ensorcelled Clothing

Like weapons, some pieces of clothing were long ago enchanted to contain spells. The rules governing these special Relics are the same as those for ensorcelled weapons, including the restrictions on which character classes are able to wear and employ them (only a character normally allowed to wear metal armor is permitted to use helms and gauntlets, for example). Otherwise, the spell contained in the item can be used once per day, plus once per 5 points of INT or WIL possessed by the wearer. Most of these objects are not armor, however, and have no protective value of their own—except for the Monks' Robe and the Wizard's Robe, which are both enchanted to protect like ordinary plate armor (DF 9).

ENSORCELLED CLOTHING			
Relic	Spell	Attribute	Use
Healing Helmet	AURA	WIL	F,R,M
Power Gauntlet	SABER	INT	F,R,M
Zeus's Gauntlet	BOLT2	INT	F,R,M
Monk's Robe	VANISH2	WIL	*F,M
Wizard's Robe	ICE2	INT	*R,W
Fairy Boots	HASTE	INT	F,R,M,W

* N.B., only a Monk or a promoted Fighter (a Paladin) can wear the Monk's Robe, and only a Wizard or a promoted Rogue (a Ranger) can wear the Wizard's Robe.

MINOR RELICS

There are also minor Relics in the world, more powerful versions of common potions and scrolls. These items can be used once before they are consumed—and then they are gone for good, since nobody left in the world possesses the knowledge to craft them. Because of their rarity, these Relics are just as priceless as any enchanted weapon or armor. Some examples include the potion of SUPER HEALING (restores 10D hit points), the potion of MANA (which instantly restores six spell levels' worth of cast spells), and ANCIENT SCROLLS (which cause 8D elemental damage, Range 5", Spread 2").

CHAPTER 3: ADVENTURES & BATTLES

The rules of *Retro Phaze* focus mainly on exploration and combat. Other matters are either beyond the scope of the game or merely left to the discretion of the referee. The most useful tools in the Ref's arsenal for adjudicating miscellaneous actions are the attribute check and the skill check, both of which are a simple chance-in-six of success. This rule can be expanded to go beyond merely checking an attribute or a skill, though: nearly any random situation can be decided by the referee assigning a chance and rolling a die. The most complex situations, though, arise in battle—hence the close attention devoted to that subject here.

WILDERNESS TRAVEL

Before a campaign can begin, the referee must have a map of the campaign world, or at least a map of one detailed portion of it. Each region of wilderness is typically charted on hex paper, at a scale of 5 miles to the hex. (The whole campaign world does not need to be mapped like this—only those areas where the player characters are likely to do a great deal of outdoor travel.) In one day, a party of characters can traverse a number of five-mile hexes equal to the slowest character's Movement. This assumes reasonably open and easy terrain, such as plains or roads.

TRAVEL SPEED IN THE WILDERNESS	
Party Composition	Base Travel per Day
Mounted on horses	7 hexes (35 mi)
Mounted on ponies	6 hexes (30 mi)
Men and Elves only	5 hexes (25 mi)
Includes Dwarves or Hobs	4 hexes (20 mi)
Mounted and encumbered	3 hexes (15 mi)
On foot and encumbered	2 hexes (10 mi)

In mountains, swamps, deserts, and other difficult landscapes, wilderness movement is halved (rounding down). Note that some stretches of difficult terrain might be outright impassable without some special means of travel.

Getting Lost: Wherever there are no roads or markers, there is always a chance that the party might become lost while traveling through the wilds. The referee should make this check at the beginning of the day. The chance is 1 in 6 for open terrain, 2 in 6 for mountains, forests, or sea-travel, and 3 in 6 for deserts, jungles, or swamps. When a party becomes lost, they veer off course, traveling in a slightly different direction to where they think they're going.

Random Encounters: At the start of each journey through the wilderness, the referee should roll a die. This is how many days will pass before the party encounters monsters. Each stretch of wilderness must have its own Encounter Table (examples are given in the next chapter) to determine what monsters are found when an encounter occurs. After the encounter is resolved, the referee must roll another die on the next game day to find out how many days pass until the next monster encounter.

Wilderness Skills: Feats of physical skill, such as climbing and swimming, are covered by rolling an Athletics skill check. Outdoor survival, including hunting and foraging for food and regaining one's bearings after getting lost, are determined by checking the Outdoors skill.

Water and Air Travel: Over the course of their adventures, player characters might obtain one or more vehicles to aid in their travels. They might use boats or canoes to travel down a river,

ships to sail the high seas, or even airships to wing through the skies. There are also certain creatures which might be trained to serve as flying mounts.

VEHICLE TRAVEL	
Vehicle or Mount	Base Travel per Day
Canoe (downriver)	5 hexes (25 mi)
Canoe (upriver)	2 hexes (10 mi)
Sailing ship	7 hexes (35 mi)
Airship	10 hexes (50 mi)
Flying mount	Flying MV in hexes

THE DUNGEON

Whenever the adventuring party enters a complex of caverns or an underground labyrinth, they are said to be "in the dungeon". Dungeons are mapped on squares or hexes at a scale of 5 feet to the inch. The 1" space (whether square or hexagonal) is the basis for all Movement, Range, and Spread numbers in battle.

Time and Movement: Characters can move through the dungeon as quickly as caution dictates and circumstances allow. Assume for the sake of simplicity that each discreet area—each room or visible stretch of corridor—takes about fifteen minutes to explore, assuming careful movement and a cursory search to uncover the presence of monsters, treasures, hidden passages, and so forth. Thus, a party of adventurers can explore about four discreet rooms or hallways per hour.

Lighting: Dungeons are dark. Elves and Dwarves, thanks to their superior vision, can see in the dark out to 40 feet (8") away. Men and Hobs have to rely on torchlight or a SIGHT spell, either of which shines out to 20 feet away (illuminating a 4" radius centered on the light-bearer). Note that most monsters are adapted to total darkness and can see in the dark out to a distance of 80 feet (16") without a light source.

Traps: Rarely, some dungeons are booby-trapped. Usually these are long-forgotten vaults or tombs, with only undead or golems for their guardians. (Dungeons full of living monsters aren't likely to be trapped, lest the monsters set them all off while they patrol!) Traps are nearly always concealed and difficult to spot, triggered by some action of the characters (such as stepping on a pressure plate, opening a door, tripping a wire, or even crossing a beam of light). A trap can be found if a character searching for traps passes a Perception skill check. A mechanically inclined character might even be able to use a Craft check to sabotage and thereby disable the trap permanently.

ENCUMBRANCE

Characters need gear to survive the rigors of a quest. They will also recover treasures as they travel. How much a character can carry is dictated by his race and his Strength.

Encumbrance Threshold: For Men, Elves, and Dwarves, the encumbrance threshold is 5 stone (i.e. about seventy pounds), plus or minus the character's STR modifier. For a Hob, the threshold is 4 stone plus or minus his STR modifier.

Encumbrance and Movement: A character who carries weight equal to or less than his encumbrance threshold moves at normal speed (4" for a Hob or a Dwarf; 5" for a Man or an Elf). A character bearing more weight than this moves at half speed (2" for all races). Note that a Rogue with the "Fleet of Foot" Talent gains +1" to Movement when unencumbered only.

Maximum Weight Limit: The most that a character can carry at all is triple the character's encumbrance threshold. A Human, Elvish, or Dwarvish character of average Strength can carry 15 Stone of weight. A Hobbish character of average Strength has a limit of 12 stone. Anyone who tries to schlep more of a burden than this is unable to move (MV 0").

ENCOUNTERS

Encounters can take place in either the wilderness or the dungeon. The referee always rolls one die (the "encounter clock") whenever the player characters set out into the wilderness or enter the dungeon. Outdoors, the result of this die is how many days will pass before the player characters have their next encounter. In a dungeon, the encounter die indicates how many discreet rooms or corridors can be explored (or, if the characters are not exploring, how many quarters of an hour can pass) before their next encounter. Once the encounter occurs, after it has been resolved (whether through battle, avoidance, or negotiation), the referee resets the "encounter clock" by rolling another die at the beginning of the next day of wilderness travel or the next fifteen minute period of dungeon exploration.

Surprise: There is a chance that one side or both could be surprised in an encounter. Normally, this is determined at random—the referee rolls a die each for the player characters and the monsters, and if either side rolls a 1 or a 2, that side is surprised and loses its action on the first round of the encounter. (N.B., Hobs are harder to surprise than other creatures. They are surprised on a roll of 1, but not on a roll of 2. On a 2, Hobs can act that round, even if their allies cannot.) If both sides are surprised, both sides lose their first round of actions.

Note that it is sometimes possible to create or negate surprise with skill checks. If the player characters are sneaking and pass a Stealth check, the referee might decide that the monsters are automatically surprised. Likewise, if the player characters are standing watch and pass a Perception check, the monsters might have no chance of surprising the characters. Of course, monsters performing these same activities should enjoy the same advantages.

Encounter Distance: The space between characters and monsters at the start of the encounter depends on whether the encounter is taking place in the wilderness or the dungeon, and whether the referee rolled surprise. In the wilderness, the two sides start the encounter 6D spaces apart without surprise, or 3D spaces apart with surprise. In the dungeon, encounter distance is 2D spaces without surprise and 1D spaces with surprise.

Reactions: At the beginning of an encounter, the referee can make a reaction roll to determine the monsters' attitudes toward the player characters. The referee rolls two dice, and the result of the roll determines the monsters' initial reaction:

REACTION ROLLS	
Roll	Reaction
2-4	Monster is hostile and attacks at once
5-7	Monster is unfriendly (roll again at -4 next round)
8-10	Monster is cautious (roll again next round)
11	Monster is neutral (roll again at +4 next round)
12	Monster is friendly

If the player characters attempt to negotiate with a monster that has not decided to attack at once, further reaction rolls can be modified for the WIL score of the character leading the negotiations. If the monsters are particularly intelligent, they might also respond to creative use of the Diplomacy skill.

Avoidance: If the player characters take the monsters by surprise, they might decide to simply avoid the monsters altogether. If they can hide (which usually requires Stealth checks) before the monsters can act, they have not been seen and the encounter ends with the player characters having avoided detection. If, however, any one character fails a Stealth check, the monsters have a chance to spot the characters, and then the only way to avoid the monsters is by fleeing (see below).

BATTLES

Combat is more or less unavoidable in the worlds of *Retro Phaze*. Defeating monsters is how player characters earn experience and thereby grow powerful enough to complete their quests. Indeed, some *Retro Phaze* games are little more than a series of battles with minor intermissions of story in between. This is okay; *Retro Phaze* was designed to be a fast-paced and action-based game. Players who derive the greatest enjoyment from tactical combat will probably like *Retro Phaze* the most.

The Battle Round: A battle-round is roughly five seconds long, or twelve rounds to the minute. Needless to say, this isn't a great deal of time. In the span of a round, a character can really only hope to do one thing, like make one attack, cast one spell, or use one item. Each round consists of two phases, the Move Phase and the Action Phase, but the two phases are considered to happen more or less simultaneously—one cannot give up his Move for an extra Action, or vice versa. The only caveat is that each character's Move Phase must always be resolved before the Action Phase occurs. This rule is absolute and inviolable—Movement *always* precedes Action.

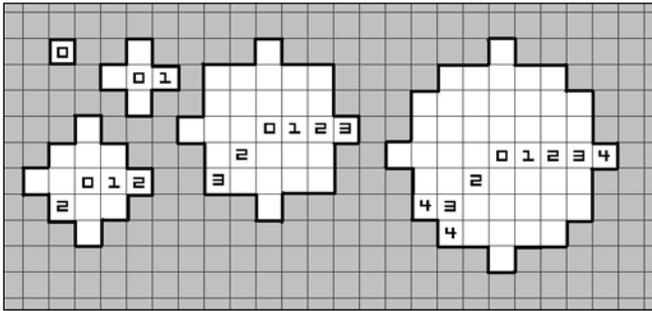
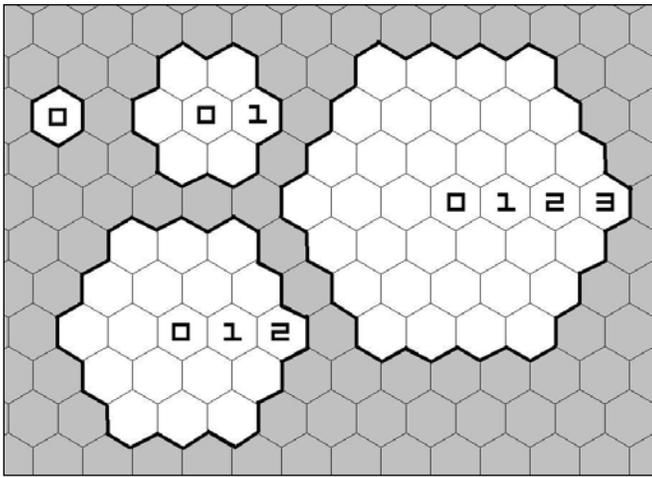
The Battle Space: Battles take place on a mostly abstracted scale where five feet in the game world are represented by one-inch squares or hexes on the tabletop. The battle grid does not, however, realistically correspond to true sizes and distances. Missile ranges, for example, are given in a flat number of tabletop inches (e.g. 9" for a war bow, even though a bow can fire an arrow much farther than forty-five feet in real life). A monster might be a hundred feet long from snout to tail, but it still only occupies a single 1" square on the battle grid. (For reasons such as these, it might be important for the referee to stress this point for the players: battles in *Retro Phaze* are a highly abstracted "mini-game" meant to quickly and enjoyably resolve combats. They are not a simulation with a one-to-one correspondence between actions played out on the tabletop and events taking place in the game world. This is also, for example, why the combat actions described later on in this section are so limited compared to more simulationist role-playing games.)

Hexagons are the preferred shape for battle spaces in most circumstances, particularly in the wilderness and in irregular networks of tunnels and caverns. Sometimes squares are preferred for dungeons (since they line up with walls and corridors better). When squares are used, the following rules must be observed:

1. Only squares that touch sides are considered adjacent to each other. Squares that touch diagonals are considered 1" apart: close enough for missile-fire, but not close enough for hand-to-hand combat without a whip or a lance.
2. When counting distances diagonally, count 2 – 1 – 2 – 1 etc. A character with MV 5", for example, can move three squares diagonally (2, then 1, then 2 = 5).

The rules for diagonal counting must also be observed for the Spread of spell effects and breath weapons. A spell with Spread 3", for example, indicates a total diameter of seven spaces counting laterally, but only five spaces diagonally.

SPREAD EFFECTS—HEXES AND SQUARES



GRIDLESS GAMING

Retro Phaze can certainly be played without a battle grid, although much of the detail and fun will be lost. Playing through battles without a grid renders Movement meaningless, along with missile and spell ranges. To convert spell areas to a gridless system, just replace the spread Statistic with “number of targets”. A spell or breath weapon can affect a number of foes equal to twice the Spread. The referee might even be able to implement a simple and abstract system of distance where, for example, encounters in the wilderness start at “Long” range and encounters in the dungeon start at “Close” range, and each round of movement toward or away from an imaginary center-point determines the relative distance for ranged attacks and mêlées.

Initiative: At the start of every battle, each player and the referee must roll a die to determine the order of actions in the battle. The referee simply rolls 1D. Each player rolls 1D and adds his or her Dexterity adjustment. (Rogues with the “Quick on the Draw” Talent may roll 2K1 before adding their DEX adjustment.) Actions then occur in descending order, from the highest to the lowest initiative roll, with all of the monsters using the referee’s (unadjusted) roll for their initiative.

When the results of one or more initiative rolls tie, the actions are considered simultaneous—all of the Movement Phases occur at the same time, then all of the Action Phases, and finally the results of damage are assessed (a creature which has taken enough damage to fall to 0 hit points is only incapacitated at the end of its attacker’s initiative count).

The Movement Phase: The first half of each battle round is the Movement Phase. On this part of the round, a character or monster may move as many spaces as its Movement score allows.

Note that if a creature foregoes moving in order to take some action first (an attack, a spell, anything), the Movement Phase is lost for that round. Note also that there is no such thing as “running” or “charging” or “double moving” in the *Retro Phaze* game. A Movement score of 5” means no more than 5”, period.

The Action Phase: On the second half of the battle round, a character can do something. Usually this means making an attack, casting a spell, or using an item, but it could be nearly any action that someone might feasibly attempt within five or six seconds. Miscellaneous actions are left to the referee’s judgment (but, for the sake of simplicity, referees are urged not to allow miscellaneous of attack actions—whether attempting to wound, disarm, subdue, or grapple a foe, rolling to hit and dealing damage to the target’s hit points is sufficient to cover all actions that involve “trying to best an opponent in combat”).

Attacking: Any direct, physical assault on another creature in combat is an attack action. An attack is handled by rolling two dice, adding the character’s Attack bonus, and attempting to equal or beat the target’s Defense score. Base Attack bonuses are given on the following table:

CHARACTER ATTACK BONUSES			
ATK	Fighter Level	Monk Level	Wizard Level
+0	1-3	1-4	1-6
+1	4-6	5-8	7-12
+2	7-9	9-12	13-18
+3	10-12	13-16	19-24
+4	13-15	17-20	25+
+5	16-18	21-24	
+6	19-21	25+	
+7	22-24		
+8	25+		

Characters add their STR bonus to hand-to-hand attacks and DEX bonuses to missile attacks. Elves and Hobs add a further +1 bonus to missile attacks. Finally, Relic weapons can add a bonus ranging from +1 to +3 to a character’s attack roll.

Note that monsters have the same base Attack progress as Fighters. Rogues are not listed on the table above, because the bonus they use varies. A Rogue uses the Fighter attack bonus when engaging in missile combat and either the Wizard or Monk attack bonus in mêlée combat, depending on whether or not the Rogue possesses the Skirmisher Talent.

Making the attack roll deals damage to the target’s hit points. Base damage is determined by the attack form (i.e. the kind of weapon employed). For characters, base damage usually ranges from 1 to 6 points, although different weapons might shift the odds by keeping or losing dice. The damage roll is then adjusted by adding one-half the Attack bonus, rounded down, to the roll. For example, a 10th level Fighter with an attack bonus of +7 (+3 from his level, +2 from STR, +2 from wielding a magical sword) causes 1D+3 damage on a hit.

Note that monsters have their own damage values, so they **do not** generally add a bonus to damage from their natural attacks. Some monsters do employ weapons, though, in which case the monster should get a damage bonus, just like a character.

Hand-to-Hand: Close-quarters attacks can occur into adjacent spaces with most weapons, or within two spaces with long-reach weapons (whip, lance, pike). Strength always modifies the attack roll in hand-to-hand combat.

Note that in the *Retro Phaze* game, engaging a foe in hand-to-hand combat does not pin a character into a particular space. These combat rules do not include “threatened squares” or the

condition of being “mêlée”, so there are no attacks of opportunity or special rules governing withdrawals and retreats.

Missile-Fire: Missile attacks can occur within the range of the missile weapon being fired or thrown. A missile attack is always modified for the attacker’s Dexterity. Being adjacent to a target does not impede missile-fire in any way.

Other Actions: Other typical actions in battle include casting a spell or using an item (such as a potion, scroll, or ensorcelled Relic). As with missile-fire, spell-casting is not impeded in any way by standing next to an enemy. Magic-use is never disrupted by attacking the caster.

Resistance Rolls: Attempting to avoid or mitigate the effects of a special attack (magic spell, breath weapon, gaze attack, trap, etc.) is handled by a resistance roll. When such a roll is permitted, the defending target rolls two dice and adds his Resistance bonus. Player characters also adjust their roll for Willpower, and Dwarves and Hobs add a +1 racial bonus to Resistance. The base Resistance bonus is determined by level:

CHARACTER RESISTANCE BONUSES	
Resistance	Character Level
+0	1-6
+1	7-12
+2	13-18
+3	19-24
+4	25+

The base target number for a resistance roll is 8. That is to say, a character makes a resistance roll if the total of the roll plus the modifiers meets or surpasses TN 8. The TN to resist a spell cast by a player character is **8 ± the caster’s INT or WIL modifier**, depending on whether the spell is Black or White. Monsters have no INT or WIL scores, so their TNs increase with added hit dice. The TN to resist a spell or special attack coming from a monster is 8 for monsters with 1–12 HD, 9 for monsters with 13–24 HD, and 10 for monsters with 25 HD or more.

Snake-Eyes and Boxcars: Whenever an attack roll or a resistance roll turns up a natural 2 (“snake-eyes”), the roll is an automatic failure, regardless of modifiers. A natural 12 (“boxcars”) is an automatic success, no matter how high the DF or TN. Furthermore, a natural 12 on an attack roll is a *critical hit*, and as such it causes +1D damage—or more, if the attacking character is a Rogue. (Note that a Rogue also crits on a natural 11.) Rolling snake-eyes on an attack, meanwhile, causes a *critical fumble*, the effects of which vary depending on whether the fumbled attack was a hand-to-hand attack or a missile attack. In mêlée combat, fumbling an attack provokes an immediate, free counter-attack from the missed target. In missile-combat, fumbles have no special effect, unless the attacker has gone more than three battles without restocking ammunition (in which case a roll of snake-eyes means that the character has just run out of ammo).

Damage and Healing: Whenever a character loses hit points due to weapon attacks, spells, or other means, this is called “taking damage”. Hit points represent a character’s ability to dodge fatal blows—they are an abstract measure of “life expectancy under pressure”—so taking damage is not the same as taking wounds. Damage itself has no adverse effects, no matter how much is accumulated—only the blow that finally drops a character to 0 hit points or lower actually *does* something to a character or creature (discounting side-effects like poison and Strength-drain).

A creature that falls to 0 hit points is defeated. The precise definition of “defeated” is very situational: it depends on the nature of that final blow and on the intention of the attacker who delivered it. In mortal combat, where everybody is trying to kill everybody else, 0 hit points probably means “dead”. But if both sides in the fight are merely trying capture each other, 0 hit points could indicate being knocked unconscious, grappled and restrained, or simply disarmed and forced to surrender.

A character who has lost hit points can be healed by means of spells like CURE and AURA, items like HEALING potion, and by rest. (A character who rests for a full night recovers all lost hit points and expended spells.) A character who has fallen to 0 hp will require more attention. If the character was merely subdued or knocked unconscious, healing spells work normally. If the character has been gravely wounded, healing requires several weeks of rest or the immediate application of a LIFE spell. If the character has actually been slain, he can only be revived by the very timely application of a LIFE spell. (Should the player characters be unable to revive an ally with LIFE magic, they might be able to visit a town with a temple, where the Monks can revive characters for a price of 100G × the character’s level.)

WOUNDS AND DEATH’S DOOR	
This optional rule is included for referees who feel that character death is important enough to deserve some added detail. If this rule is used, characters who fall to 0 HP take a “wound”. There is a 1-in-6 chance that the character dies from the wound. Otherwise, the wounded character suffers a -1 penalty to Attack and Resistance, and he must immediately roll resistance (TN 8, not counting the penalty) or fall unconscious.	
Each further hit causes another wound, cumulatively increasing the chance of death and any combat penalties, and forcing another resistance roll vs. unconsciousness. A character with six wounds is instantly dead. A character whose wound levels equal one-half his STR score (rounded down) is instantly unconscious and instead rolls resistance to avoid falling comatose. In any case, an unconscious character who goes untreated will eventually bleed out and die (at the referee’s discretion).	
A Medicine skill roll in combat can revive an unconscious character. Out of combat, a trained surgeon can remove wound levels one at a time until a Medicine skill roll is failed. Otherwise, wounds take 1D weeks to heal. CURE and AURA can remove wounds at a rate of one wound level per ten HP normally healed (and these spells will cure wounds before restoring any hit points), while a LIFE spell instantly removes all wound levels.	

Morale Checks: The behavior of monsters and other NPCs can be determined in battle through the use of morale checks, which determine whether the monsters are willing to stay and fight or want to run away. To make a morale check, the Ref rolls two dice. If the results are equal to or lower than the given morale rating, the monsters (or NPCs) stay and fight. If the roll is higher than the morale number, the monsters try to flee. Morale depends on the type and intelligence of monsters involved:

MONSTER MORALE	
Morale	Monster Type
6	Animals, monsters just looking for a meal
8	Troops, intelligent monsters, goblins
10	Intelligent undead, evil and magical monsters
12	Mindless undead, oozes, golems

The referee should check morale in the following situations: (1) when the first monster in a group is slain, (2) when more than half of the monsters in a group have been slain, and (3) when player characters run away, to see whether the monsters give pursuit or let them go.

N.B., if a player character is placed in charge of one or more subservient allies, such as a unit of troops, a gaggle of bootlicking minions, or a plucky sidekick, the morale of such followers is $7 \pm$ the leader character's WIL modifier.

Running Away: Monsters and characters can attempt to flee from battle on the Movement Phase of the battle round. While attempting to flee, a creature cannot take any actions and must remain in the same square or hex he was in at the start of the round. (The gridded battle-space is an abstraction for actual positions and distances, remember.) The chance to run away depends on the number of opponents present at the battle.

"RUN AWAY!"	
Number of Opponents	Chance to Flee
1 to 4	2 in 6
5 to 12	3 in 6
13 to 24	4 in 6
25 or more	5 in 6

Most characters roll this check on 1D, but Rogues who possess the "Expeditious Retreat" talent roll 2L1 instead.

When a monster or character successfully flees from battle, that creature's miniature or marker is at once removed from the battle-grid for the remainder of the battle. Individual characters who run away are considered to be "fleeing" for the remainder of the battle and cannot return to the action until the battle has been completely resolved, by either the defeat or the escape of one entire side. Note that characters who flee from a battle earn no experience for that encounter.

REWARDS

Characters earn experience and gold for defeating monsters. The formula for experience awarded is simple: just add up all of the monsters' hit point totals. This is the base experience award for

the battle. Then add bonus points for any spell levels or special abilities. A monster with a few special abilities (some isolated spells, a powerful gaze attack, a poison) adds an XP bonus equal to its level. A creature that employs a breath weapon or casts spells like a Monk adds a bonus equal to its level and half again. A creature that casts spells like a Wizard adds a bonus equal to twice its level.

A vampire, for example, has 9 HD (on average, about 31 hit points), casts spells as a 9th level Wizard, and has various special attacks, like a gaze attack and Strength drain. The average vampire is therefore worth 31 (from hit points) + 18 (from Wizard spells) + 9 (from special abilities) = 58 XP.

At the end of each battle, experience is divided equally among all the surviving characters who did not flee (with player characters receiving a full share and any allies getting half a share). Fractions can be rounded up when the division is not perfectly even. In some campaigns (typically those with more character interaction than combat), the referee might also award bonus XP to individual characters for good role-playing or the timely completion of important quests (typically 1 or 2 XP multiplied by the character's current level). Bonus awards should be used sparingly, if at all.

Treasure is awarded according to another simple formula: monsters always have ten times as much gold as the experience points they are worth. A group of monsters worth 56 XP will also have 560G. Gold, of course, can be divided up however the player characters wish. The Ref is always free to place the gold wherever he wants to: it can be on the monsters' persons, hidden in a treasure box nearby, or even piled in a horde at the bottom of the dudgeon along with all the gold earned for defeating all of the other monsters during that adventure.

LEVEL ME SLOWLY
Players and referees who are used to the relatively glacial pace of advancement in other RPGs may find <i>Retro Phaze</i> to be a little too fast-paced. In fact, by comparison it might seem like an RPG designed for attention deficit and hyperactivity patients! But if the referee would like to slow down the pace of the game, that's easy: just multiply tenfold the amount of XP needed to level up.



CHAPTER 4: WORLDS & CAMPAIGNS

The rules of the *Retro Phaze* game are only a framework and a few seeds of ideas. Campaigns come to life in the act of playing, and for this, the referee must first invent a setting. Game referees, as a group, tend to be remarkably creative people. There are no rules or boundaries to circumscribe the creation of a game world, but there are a few tropes—clichés, some might say—that lend a unique atmosphere to the fantasy worlds found in eight-bit video games.

TROPES OF 8-BIT FANTASY

Referees are by no means bound to use all or even any of these ideas in the creation of their game-worlds, but they do recur in most of the video games upon which *Retro Phaze* is based. So at any rate, they're traditional. Using all of these points will lend a distinctive feel of mystery and gravitas to the game setting.

Ancient Technology

There is always a lost, ancient civilization which has left behind its ultra-powerful technology. The technology is often so advanced as to be indistinguishable from magic, and it is nearly always crystal-based. (Sometimes it also looks vaguely Ancient Greek or Egyptian, but not always.) Perhaps it explains what magic really is, or why there are monsters on the world. The technology could be a MacGuffin that drives the player characters to seek it out, or it could be some terribly destructive weapon that the Main Villain wants to unleash upon the world.

Crystal MacGuffin

The Crystal MacGuffin is some object or set of objects which serves not just as a plot device, but as the impetus for the whole quest. It need not be a crystal of any sort (although that's certainly the tradition). If the player characters must quest for the Seven Pieces of the Sage's Statue and assemble them to open the way to the Dark World, that's a Crystal MacGuffin. Simply put, it's a convenient means for the referee to involve the players in the plot and drive it all the way through to the end.

Fate of the World

The player characters are out to save the world. Whatever the characters are doing, eventually the fate of the world *must* hang in the balance. Their quest is *the* Quest, the most important adventure in the history of the campaign world. In short, it's a big freaking deal. So big, in fact, that if the player characters fail, the world ends, and if the player characters succeed, evil is defeated permanently (or at least banished to another realm for a thousand years). In either case, once the main plot has been solved, the next big story has to take place in another world altogether, or in another era so far removed in time that the world as such is completely changed and unrecognizable.

Geographical Barriers

At the start of the game, the player characters can't go just anywhere. They are restricted to one particular stretch of wilderness and two or three interesting locations (towns and dungeons). Barriers, usually physical features of the land, hem them into their tiny little starting "sandbox". An impenetrable mountain range cannot be crossed until the characters find the one and only Ruby Key which opens the Dwarf-Door to the mines that lead under the mountains. Of course the Ruby Key is at the

bottom of the First Dungeon, in the possession of the First Boss Monster. (A good referee will have at least a superficially logical explanation for these kinds of coincidences, but it's really not important.) Other potential barriers include obvious terrain features (swamps, deserts); the sea (hard to cross without a ship); the air (can't fly as high up as the Ancients' floating continent without an upgrade to the airship engines); and areas populated by very powerful monsters (better not venture into the Wraith Forest until you're all at least 5th level!).

Key Item Exchange

Related to the idea of Geographical Barriers, Key Items are objects that have no inherent use to the player characters (they usually aren't magical Relics, for example), but which are nonetheless very important to the player characters' quest. Sometimes a Key Item is necessary to overcome a Barrier (e.g. the Ruby Key in the previous trope explanation). Sometimes it must be given to a certain NPC in exchange for information. Quite often, one Key Item will be exchanged for another in a sequential series of "fetch quests", until some final purpose is realized. A sequence of Key Item Exchanges might be necessary to the main quest, or it might be incidental, constituting a mere side-quest that unlocks some boon for the player characters (e.g. obtaining one of the game's more powerful Relics).

LIKE A VIDEO GAME? OH, REALLY?

The idea of making a tabletop game more like a video game is usually met with bare-faced derision from all corners of the hobby. Superficially, the arguments make some intuitive sense. If the chief strengths of role-playing games are flexibility and boundless possibility, why hobble that potential infinity with the artificial limitations of a video game, which reproduces the same or nearly the same experience every time? Really, though, the main motivation behind bashing video games is probably a bit more myopic. After all, those of us who play tabletop RPGs would probably like to think that our pastime is superior, especially since video games have been "muscling in on our turf" for last couple of decades—and winning.

But video games actually have one noteworthy advantage over the traditional model of tabletop RPG, and it all boils down to those oft-derided limitations. In video games, the magic system is simple and focused. Wizards are good at raining down fiery death upon their enemies, but they lack the game-breaking spells that allow them to solve any challenge easily and one-up the other character classes at every turn. Wizards can't divine for secrets, polymorph themselves or their opponents, fly or teleport past physical obstacles with impunity, or end the adventure with a single well-worded wish. And magical items are rare enough that nobody else can do these things either.

In a nutshell, the truncated magic system forces players of all experience levels to think creatively. Even players in control of 20th level characters can't rely on spells or items to solve all of their problems. This frees up the referee to use a wider range of challenges—things that would make high-level characters in other RPG systems yawn, while the players look to their character sheets for the half-dozen ways that they can bypass the obstacle with no thought or originality involved. (Unless, of course, the problem at hand is monsters that aren't dead yet. *Retro Phaze* magic remains pretty darned good at cracking that particular chestnut.)

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

One common RPG subsystem that *Retro Phaze* lacks is alignment. There is no mechanic in the game to describe characters as Good, Evil, or Undecided. The player characters are assumed to be the good guys, and that's that. But the referee may want to enforce a system of morality. 8-bit fantasy worlds are often torn between two opposed forces, Light (goodness and order) and Darkness (evil and chaos). Things are rarely more specific than this: churches will bless the characters "in the name of the Light", and the players who fight for good are the "Warriors of Light".

To represent this mechanically, here is another optional rule that referees may opt to include. Characters possess two more point pools, Light and Darkness Points. Characters start with no points in either pool. A character gains one Light Point upon reaching a new experience level and whenever else the referee decides that the character has performed a suitably brave, compassionate, or selfless act of heroism. Darkness Points, meanwhile, are accumulated for evil deeds. Whenever a character willfully harms an innocent or engages in wanton, sadistic villainy, the character gains one Darkness Point.

Light Points help characters. They serve as a sort of game-mechanical karma: whenever a player so chooses, he can spend a Light Point to re-roll a failed attack roll, resistance roll, skill check, or ability check (just like the Human racial ability). Alternatively, a character can spend a Light Point to erase a Darkness Point.

Darkness Points aren't nearly as cool as they sound. Should a character's pool of Darkness Points ever equal his WIL score, the character is thoroughly corrupted. He becomes a villainous NPC under the control of the referee, and the player must immediately give up that character in favor of a new one.

Lost Worlds

Some stretches of wilderness will be far removed from any signs of civilization, populated only by fierce monsters and gigantic, even prehistoric beasts. Naturally, the player characters will have to cross this rough landscape at some point on their adventures, probably well after surpassing 10th level.

Main Villain & Co.

There is always a Main Villain, the real Root of all Evil in the campaign world. This Main Villain dispatches powerful underlings throughout the world to do his bidding. The underlings, naturally enough, will be the lesser Boss Monsters that the player characters overcome over the course of their quest. These Bosses might be generals in the Main Villain's evil army, or they might be of the same kind as the Main Villain, only to a lesser degree—Fiends, where the main character is the King of Fiends, for example.

No History

The world is suffused with a vague, quiet, mostly unspoken sense of mystery. Nobody knows why this is so, because most of the world's true history has been forgotten. There might be a sage or two out in the world who actually knows What's Going On Here™, or at least enough hidden lore to aid the player characters on their quest. Naturally, finding the sage who has some part of the answers that they seek will be a difficult task for the player characters, one they will accomplish only after much hardship.

Other Dimensions

There is probably another plane of existence involved. It could be a dark reflection of the world that the player characters inhabit, or a swirling vortex of elemental chaos where Evil has been banished to for a thousand years, or even a higher plane of reality where

the Ancient Ones have ascended to in their state of enlightenment. Then again, it might simply be another era of the world, a mythic past when gods walked the earth and mighty Wizards made Relics, or even a technological past that looks much like our present day.

Promotion Side-Quest

When the player characters reach 10th level, they don't just automatically become Paladins and Warlocks and such. There must be some action to accomplish in order to promote into a new class. Sometimes, this is as simple as visiting the priest in town and being blessed in the name of the Powers of Light. Other times, it's more complicated. Perhaps the characters must be blessed by the Great Dragon-God Bahamut, who requires them to retrieve proof of their courage from the top of the Mountain of Ordeals, where they will face their own dark sides in a battle for the very soul of bravery and heroism. Whatever the particulars, characters only receive their class promotion upon *doing something* in the game world, not just from reaching the 10th experience level.

Sparse Islands of Civilization

The world's population is relatively depleted, possibly by some cataclysm or great war, several generations removed, which people now do not completely remember or understand. There are, at most, a dozen or so major cities world-wide, and in between, vast stretches of monster-haunted wilderness. Each town, though, will have certain things in common: there is always an inn, a temple, and shops for magic spells, potions and scrolls, and weapons and armor. When one or more of these features is missing from a town, something is up! The last town that the player characters visit, just before they confront the Final Boss, might for example have its magic shop well-concealed, so that the player characters don't have such an easy time learning 8th level spells.

BUILDING WORLDS

Crafting a *Retro Phaze* setting is really no more difficult than drawing up a simple map of a wilderness area, complete with a starting town and a first dungeon, and surrounding this area with one or more insurmountable barriers. Overcoming each barrier then unlocks new areas to explore: wilderness spaces with stronger monsters, dungeons with more complex levels (and more powerful Relic treasures), and towns where better weapons and spells are sold.

One can envision the game-world as a long scroll of maps, with each barrier that the characters manage to overcome unfurling another length of the scroll; but a better description might be a series of concentric rings with the starting point in the center, since advancing through the quest will inevitably widen the perimeter of the world that the characters can access and explore. Of course, it's hardly necessary to have the whole world mapped out from the start of the game. The referee will really only need those wilderness regions and dungeons that the characters are capable of visiting at any given time.

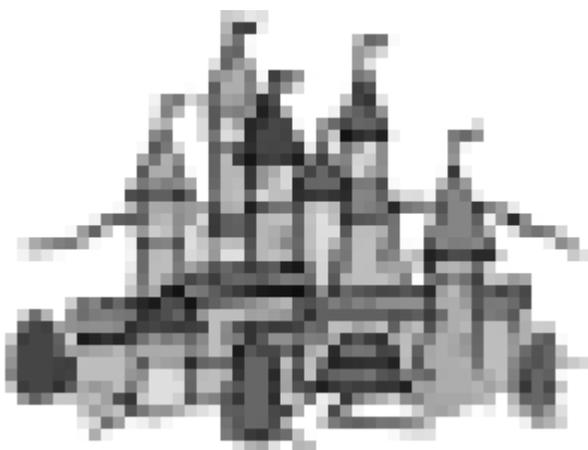
One key feature of any wilderness or dungeon map, quite apart from the mix of terrain and the lay of the land itself, will be the monsters that inhabit a region. In the wilderness, monsters of various kinds can be encountered anywhere. The player characters might even get it into their heads to wander aimlessly through the wilds for a few weeks, so that they can encounter monsters and earn experience. This practice, called "grinding for level-ups", need not be discouraged. The players will eventually

grow bored with it all on their own; and if not (particularly after the characters have gained two or three levels), it's okay to say that the presence of mighty heroes has driven all of the monsters out the region for awhile, and that any weak monsters the players hunt down in that area will thereafter simply flee. In a dungeon, meanwhile, the monsters wander the halls and corridors, and again, the players encounter them at random. (Except for one or two Boss Monsters guarding specific treasures, key items, or plot MacGuffins, most of the monsters in a dungeon should be randomly encountered. There is no need to pre-stock the dungeon with lairs full of lesser monsters.) As with the wilderness, if the player characters become so powerful that they can handily defeat all of the monster types to be found in a dungeon, the referee can simply declare that the dungeon has been "cleared" and all the monsters flee, negating any further random encounters in that location.

The monsters encountered in any dangerous area, whether dungeon or wilderness, are determined by encounter tables, which the referee must devise ahead of time. This is as easy as selecting six monsters which are all more or less equal in strength, or which fit the theme of a particular area. Here is an example encounter table for the first wilderness and dungeon that the player characters can explore in their adventure:

SAMPLE ENCOUNTER TABLE		
1D	Wilderness Encounters	Dungeon Encounters
1	2K1 Goblins	2D Skeletons
2	½D Wolves	1D Zombies
3	1D Men (bandits)	1D Green Slimes
4	1D Giant Bats	2L1 Ghouls
5	½D Giant Spiders	2D Goblins
6	1 Bugbear	½D Bugbears

The random number of monsters encountered can always be adjusted to match the strength of other monsters in the area, so that most encounters are more or less equally deadly. Don't be shy about throwing in a "wild card", though. An encounter with an unusually powerful monster will not only keep overconfident players on their toes, it will also give the player characters the idea that something is unusual (or unknowable) about a particular location. This will quite desirably play on their imaginations, as players tend to read purpose into anything they encounter which is out-of-the-ordinary.



CAMPAIGN MODEL: THE LIGHT WARRIORS

The first of three sample campaign ideas is here dubbed the Light Warriors campaign. This is the game model exemplified by the majority of console fantasy RPGs, including *Final Fantasy*, *Ultima*, and *Dragon Warrior*. In these games, a party of characters (represented on the game map by one sprite) wanders over the world map and through dungeons, randomly encountering monsters (which are represented on a battle screen by colorful graphics sprites which as often as not don't move—this style of campaign lends itself well to gridless battles) and solving a series of quests, especially the sorts of quests that overcome barriers or trade key items. Eventually, characters acquire an airship which allows them to explore every corner of the world (and the Final Boss always lives in a region which can only be accessed by airship). In short, the Light Warriors campaign is all about globe-trotting and dungeon-crawling. This is the typical sort of campaign most strongly implied by the game rules of the *Retro Phaze* RPG.

The Bard

A Light Warriors style campaign often includes an additional class, a jack of all trades and a master of none. The Bard class represents a dedicated adventurer, someone who learns a little bit of everything in order to complement his more specialized fellows and thereby shore up any weaknesses that the party might have. In a pinch, a Bard can serve as an additional sword-arm, blaster-caster, or healer, depending on how versatile the Bard makes his spell selection.

- Bards are able to wield any weapon and carry a shield, just like Fighters. Their use of armor is somewhat more restricted, though: they can wear leather and chainmail, but not plate. A Bard can use any Relic that a Fighter or Rogue can use, except for magical plate armor.

- Bards are considered moderately skilled in battle. They roll their attacks and hit dice just like Monks.

- Bards know fewer spells than Monks or Wizards, and they can only learn spells up to the 6th spell level, but they can fill their spell slots with either White or Black spells, as they prefer. Note that WIL governs a Bard's use of spells (for TNs, spell durations, and all other purposes), Black as well as White.

- Bards possess a special ability called "Insight", which a 1st level Bard can use once per day. (Additional daily uses of the Insight ability come at 5th, 9th, 13th, 17th, 21st, and 25th levels.) This ability targets a single monster within 7" and instantly reveals that monster's number of hit dice, current hit point total, and any strengths or weaknesses with regard to elemental magic (fire, cold, lightning, etc.).

- At any time after reaching 10th level, a Bard can be promoted to the rank of Druid. Druids are permitted to attack twice per round, just like Paladins. Druids also possess a very powerful ability called "Dual-Casting", which is the ability to cast two spells at the same time using only one round's action. A Druid's ability to Dual-Cast is limited by his Willpower score: the WIL score, divided in half and rounded up, is the number of spell levels per day that the Druid can Dual-Cast. If a Druid has WIL 11, for example, this character could Dual-Cast six spell levels per day: perhaps he could use it all at once, to cast a pair of 3rd level spells at the same time, or a 1st and a 5th level spell; or he might use it over the course of the day, casting a pair of 1st level spells on three separate occasions.

BARD SPELLS KNOWN						
Level	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	1	0	0	0	0	0
3	2	0	0	0	0	0
4	2	1	0	0	0	0
5	2	2	0	0	0	0
6	2	2	1	0	0	0
7	3	2	2	0	0	0
8	3	2	2	1	0	0
9	3	3	2	2	0	0
10	3	3	2	2	1	0
11	4	3	3	2	2	0
12	4	3	3	2	2	1
13	4	4	3	3	2	2
14	4	4	4	3	3	2
15	5	4	4	3	3	2
16	5	5	4	4	3	3
17	5	5	5	4	4	3
18	6	5	5	5	4	4
19	6	6	5	5	5	4
20	7	6	6	5	5	5
21	7	7	6	6	5	5
22	7	7	7	6	6	5
23	7	7	7	7	6	6
24	7	7	7	7	7	6
25	7	7	7	7	7	7

CAMPAIGN MODEL: A SHINING WARBAND

Another possible campaign model for the *Retro Phaze* game is the tactical RPG, exemplified by video games such as *Shining Force*, *Fire Emblem*, and *Ogre Battle*. This style of campaign is presented as a series of involved, strategic, large-scale battles. There is relatively little exploring and almost no dungeon-crawling. Indeed, if there are even dungeons at all, they are little more than set-pieces included for the sake of making a few of the battles more claustrophobic. Nor is there any need for random encounters, since each battle consists of a large “warband” of predetermined monsters. Over the course of the battle (which might very well take up an entire game session), the players guide their characters across the gridded battlefield, taking on the enemy monsters one small group at a time, using whatever tactics they have at their disposal to minimize the attrition to their own resources. Another important feature of this campaign is that the player characters’ side is always recruiting new NPCs to join the ongoing battle campaign. At the outset of the game, each player might control only his own character, but near the end, each player could be controlling his starting character and as many NPC henchmen as the referee will allow, subordinate troops who participate in the battle just as fully as the player characters. This sort of campaign is ideal for a group of players who just want to kick butt, but love the tactics involved in a chess-like game of movement and position.

Peculiar Races

The *Shining Force* games are a much-beloved series of strategy RPGs which actually hail from the 16-bit era of video gaming. These games are noted for the odd conglomeration of demi-humans and outright monsters that join the main hero over the course of the battle campaign. In addition to the usual array of Humans, Elves, Dwarves, and Halflings, there are Centaurs,

Birdmen, Wolfmen, Robots, and in various incarnations of the game, stranger allies (like dragons, phoenixes, golems, giant fire-breathing turtle-monsters, and floating magic-using jellyfish-monsters). At minimum, a few oddball races should be included in any Shining Warband style campaign. Some examples:

- **Centaurs**, being equine, are +1 to Attack with lances and have a base encumbrance limit of 8 stone. Centaurs also deal 1D damage when attacking unarmed (due to their hooves). They move at a speed of 6”. A Centaur must have a WIL score of at least 6.

- **Birdlings** appear to be part human, part hawk or falcon. They are capable of flight, provided they go unencumbered, up to a height of five feet above the ground per experience level. They move at a speed of 7” in the air and 5” on the ground. Birdlings can see in the dark (8”, just like Elves and Dwarves). A Birdling must have a DEX score of at least 6.

- **Wolfmen**, not to be confused with werewolves, are anthropomorphic wolves. Wolfmen move at a speed of 6”. Due to the ferocity of their teeth and claws, they add +1 to Attack when engaging in hand-to-hand combat, and they deal 1D damage when attacking unarmed. Wolfmen possess the ability to see in the dark out to 8” (40 feet in-game), just like Birdlings, Elves, and Dwarves. Wolfmen must have STR 6 or better.

CAMPAIGN MODEL: STAR PHAZE

There is no reason why a *Retro Phaze* campaign must be limited to medieval fantasy. Science fiction is perfectly possible, although a number of little alterations would have to be made before a referee could create a game that feels like *Phantasy Star*. Many features of the game would require new names: Monks and Wizards could be replaced by Mystics and Psychics; gold pieces become galactic credits (or some other appropriate currency); “monsters” are re-skinned to become “alien critters”; and most Relics will have to depend on either psionic power or advanced technology. Imperial measurements are best replaced by their metric equivalents: 1” on the tabletop represents two meters, while 1 stone of encumbrance would have to become 5kg.

Guns become the typical weapons of choice. If a semi-automatic “slug-thrower” is standard, a “laser gun” or “plasma blaster” can stand in for the +1 version of the weapon, a “phaser” for the +2 version, and something really weird (a “gravity gun”) for the ultra-rare +3 edition. The player characters will also eventually need a starship to get from planet to planet, something with a hyper-drive fast enough to let them cover at least a few 5-parsec hexes per day. Most importantly, the player characters could be allowed to play aliens! Here are a few possibilities:

- **Roswell Grays** are naturally psychic aliens. They can communicate telepathically with any other being inside of 9”. They get +1 on Diplomacy for their insight. Being scrawny, their base encumbrance limit is only 25kg (vs. a Human’s 30kg). Grays move at 5” and require an INT of at least 6.

- **Space Apes** are big, strong, and furry. They move at 5”, require STR 6, and have a base encumbrance limit of 35kg. Space Apes get +1 on Athletics. They are prone to fits of berserker rage (can cast TEMPER on self once per day).

- **Androids** are robots built to look, act, and think like people. They move at 4”, require INT 6, and have a base encumbrance limit of 30kg. Androids are +1 to Knowledge (computer for a brain). They don’t need to eat, sleep, or even breathe, and they’re immune to poison (but can’t drink potions).



