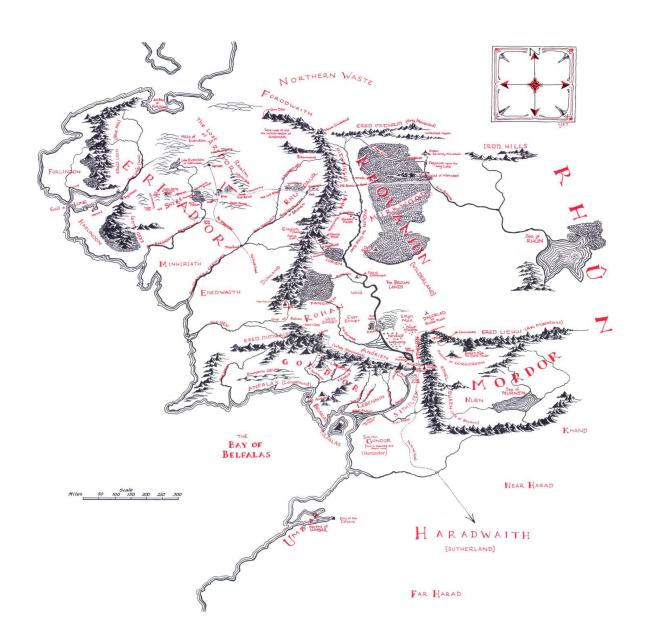# Middle-Earth Adventure Game (v4.5)
(MEAG)

Compatible with materials for
Lord of the Rings Adventure Game (LOR) & Middle-earth Quest Books
by Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE)

(based on Lord of the Rings Adventure Game, Middle-earth Quests, MERP and Rolemaster by ICE; Dungeons
& Dragons by TSR/WotC, GURPS by Steve Jackson Games and others)

Table of Contents

Introduction

Middle-Earth Adventure Game is a system that will allow you and your friends to play various types of characters (Hobbits, Dwarves, Elves, Half-Elves, Humans) of various professions (Warrior, Mage/Scholar, Scout, Ranger, Rogue) in the world of J.R.R. Tolkien's **Lord of the Rings**. In general, MEAG is a type of game called a Fantasy Role-playing Game (FRPG) and these rules can even be generalized to allow you to play adventurers in any quasi-Medieval world where magic and monsters might exist.

Like most other FRPGs, MEAG uses dice to simulate the uncertainty that comes from attempting to perform tasks while under stress due to difficulty, time pressure, and/or danger. For the most part, MEAG uses two six-sided dice (2D6) modified by one or more **bonuses** to the number rolled. Generally, these bonuses (and they can be either positive or negative) represent how good (or bad) your character may be at a specific task, plus any situational aids or hindrances. These tasks that a character can perform are referred to as Maneuvers, and related Maneuvers are associated together into Skill Groups. The greater the difficulty of the Maneuver attempted, the higher the number you have to roll on 2D6 to accomplish it successfully. This is where high (positive) bonuses can make such a big difference in whether the Maneuver can be accomplished or not. The list of Skill Groups, with the primary Maneuvers under each, can be found on the next page.

For example, Tolman the Hobbit attempts to climb a rough stone wall (Difficulty Level 9). Climbing is a Maneuver within the General Skill Group that Tolman has learned and Tolman has a +2 General Bonus. Therefore, Tolman's player would roll 2D6 and add two to the result. If the final result happens to be nine or greater, then Tolman has succeeded in climbing the wall. **(GM guidance:** As the Gamemaster (**GM**), your job is not to kill off the player characters! It's to provide an environment that will challenge them and, therefore, the imagination of the players. In this example, if Tolman happened to fail his attempt, you don't have to automatically assume that he fell and hurt himself (unless, maybe, the player rolled a natural "2" on the dice). You could just say he's having difficulty finding a foothold and either didn't start at all or is stuck part way up. Let the players try to come up with a creative solution to the problem. Then, based on what they come up with, allow new skill rolls.)

Different character types will, by training and/or talent, have different bonuses for each of the Skill Groups. The details of which bonuses each character may have and how they were derived, are in the Character Creation section near the back of these rules. Normally, if you are new to this game, your Gamemaster**(GM)** (the one who sets up and runs the adventure the other players will experience) will create several characters for you to choose from ahead of time, so you should not need to reference that section just to get started. Once you have played a game or two, and feel comfortable with the rules, you may wish to start a game with a character you designed yourself. At some point, you may even wish to be a GM yourself and invite friends to play in an adventure or related series of adventures (called a campaign) you are presenting.

Using these rules as a guide, you can create other characters, animals and monsters with which your player's characters can interact. To help with this task, I recommend the ICE sourcebook called "Creatures of Middle-earth" (ICE #2012). This book is out of print, but copies can be found at online auctions or used bookshops. This book has the official LOR stats for all the creatures described in a table at the back. Try this link to the Realms of Arda project for MERP and LOR/MEAG stats for various creatures and characters from Middle-earth (http://www.kingtape.se/realmsofarda/). You can also use "creature" books from other game systems and use the optional conversion information near the end of this rule set (p. 26) to help you convert them over to MEAG.

Many GM's prefer to write their own adventures, but there are also complete adventures available in bookstores and on the internet to use as is, modify to your own tastes and/or give you ideas for writing your own.

Also, these rules are just guidelines, not set in stone. If your gaming group agrees to a modification or addition to these rules, feel free to use whatever makes sense to you and increases the enjoyment of the game. With that said, though, if the group cannot come to a consensus on a change or interpretation of the rules, the GM's word should be final.

Though many console and computer games, both stand-alone and online, claim to be FRPGs, in any type of computerized game the interactions are limited by the capabilities built into it by the game designers and by how much computer power is available to the game. In a true FRPG, interactions between the player characters (**PCs**) run by the players, and the non-player characters (**NPCs**) run by the GM, are limited only by the imaginations of the GM and players. Therefore, we hope you enjoy the potential of this simple, yet comprehensive, FRPG system. **– Editors**

Notes on Terminology:
In the works of J.R.R. Tolkien he refers to the race of humans as "Men," but to make it easier for modern readers we have used the term "Humans." Also, both this rule set and original LOR use the terms Magic and Magical to refer to the use of any power beyond what people can do in the real world. Tolkien, though, disliked those terms and tried to avoid their use in his works. We use the terms only because they are more familiar to people who may have read other fantasy works or played other FRPGs. Likewise, we use the term Mana (common in other FRPGs) to represent the power used during spell casting, but Tolkien never used this term in his works.

Part I: Stats, Maneuvers, and Movement

Character Statistics

These are the numbers that represent your character's abilities. They are represented as "bonuses" (either positive or negative) to an arbitrary norm of "0." There are **Base Stats** that represent physical characteristics and **Skill Groups** that are keyed to them.

Base Stats:

Strength: This is how strong your character is. It affects his Melee and General skills, and the Encumbrance he can carry.
Agility: This is how nimble and coordinated your character is. It affects Missile and Subterfuge skills, and Defense.
Intelligence: This is how smart **and** educated your character is. It affects Perception and Magical skills.
Movement: This is how fast your character can move, short term. It also affects Defense.
Defense: The Defensive Bonus (DB) represents how well your character avoids being harmed when in combat.
                DB is defined as the average of your Agility and Movement bonuses (round up).
Endurance: This is how fit and tough your character is. It represents how much damage he can take, and affects travel distances.

Skill Group Stats:

Melee OB: This is your character's skill at fighting with various hand (melee) weapons. **"OB"** is short for Offensive Bonus.
Missile OB: This is your character's skill with various missile weapons (bows, crossbows, slings, spears, etc.).
General: This is how good your character is at large-scale, common tasks often requiring strength.
Subterfuge: This is how good your character is at small-scale or sneaky tasks usually requiring agility.
Perception: This describes your character's ability to observe things around him and to persuade people to his thinking.
Magical: This represents your character's talent and training with things magical (spells, potions, items, beings, etc.), but unless your character's Magical bonus is +1 or higher you will only be able to attempt Read Runes/Script and Alchemy.

Maneuvers

Each of the six Skill Groups have a subset of six or more separate Maneuvers associated with them, in which your character may wish to train. Your character is allowed to learn 12 of these Maneuvers (or more if part of a Specialization and/or Special Ability) at Character Creation (see p. 21). Your character can learn more of these Maneuvers later, or even increase his overall Skill Group bonus, through Character Advancement (see p. 25). The Maneuvers he learns provide bonuses when using those Maneuvers in the game. The Maneuvers associated with each Skill Group are as follows:

1. **Melee**   -- Unarmed Combat, Knives, Swords, Axe/Mace/Hammer, Spear/Polearm, Staff, Parry, Dual Attack
2. **Missile**   -- Bows, Crossbow, Sling, Knives, Axe/Hammer, Spear, Pitch (stones, grapnels, etc.), Ranged Spell Attack
3. **General**   -- Climbing, Riding, Swimming, Jumping, Cooking, First Aid/Herbal Healing, Trade/Craft
4. **Subterfuge**   -- Stalk/Hide, Pick Locks, Pick Pockets, Disarm/Set Traps, Forgery, Trickery, Art/Music
5. **Perception**   -- Spot Traps/Hidden, Naturalism, Tracking, Persuasion, Detect Lies, Weather Sense, Navigation/Orienteering
6. **Magical**   -- Read Runes/Script, Cast Spells, Sense Magic Objects/Beings, Sense Magic Spells, Alchemy, Enchantment

Trained, Untrained and Standard Maneuvers

The Maneuvers listed in the table above require a degree of **training** to be performed effectively. Any Maneuver your character has specifically trained is performed by rolling 2D6 and adding the overall bonus of its associated Skill Group. **Untrained** Maneuvers suffer a -2 penalty to this roll. **Standard** Maneuvers, on the other hand, do not require any special training and are used at the full bonus level of the Skill Group they are most closely associated with. For example, to perform a standard Listen maneuver, you would roll 2D6, and add your character's overall Perception bonus to the roll, as Listening is included in normal Perception. To perform a Spot Traps maneuver, however, you would need to be trained in Spot Traps/Hidden to add the full Perception bonus to your roll.

Base Maneuver Difficulties:

Routine............................ 4	Easy................................. 7	Very Hard...................... 11	Folly............................. 15
Simple............................. 5	Medium........................... 8	Extremely Hard............. 13	Absurd............................ 18
Very Easy........................ 6	Hard................................. 9		

Maneuver Difficulty Levels

To perform a **Basic Maneuver** (i.e., your character vs. the environment), the GM will determine which Stat or Skill Group applies. Then, after determining the Base Maneuver Difficulty and applying any environmental, situational, or external factors, the GM will announce an overall **Difficulty Level (DL)** for the maneuver. The player then decides whether or not to make the attempt. To determine the outcome, roll 2D6 and add any character skill bonuses that apply. If the result is equal to or higher than the assigned DL, your character is successful. The GM should not require a roll for things that are natural and routine for characters, but also not allow characters to attempt things that are obviously far beyond their capabilities. A natural "2" on the dice always fails (often with disastrous consequences) and a natural "12" always succeeds (often with an unexpected benefit beyond simple success).

Sample Basic Maneuver DLs:

Climbing a mature deciduous tree	General	/ 7
Climbing a rough stone wall (cottage or inn)	General	/ 9
Climbing a rough stone wall in the rain	General	/ 12
Climbing a smooth stone wall (castle)	General	/ 15
Climbing (descending) a free-hanging rope	General	/ 11(7)
Leaping a 6' ditch or jumping a 4' fence (for 6' char.)	General	/ 8
Crossing a stream on stepping stones	General	/ 5
Spotting a foe running across a meadow in daylight	Perception	/ 5
Spotting a foe standing in the forest on a moonless night	Perception	/ 13
Catching a dropped mug	Agility	/ 9
Swatting a fly with your hand	Agility	/ 9
Catching a fly with your hand	Agility	/ 12
Breaking down a common locked door	Strength	/ 9
Breaking an iron sword over your knee	Strength	/ 12
Stealing a key from a sleeping guard	Subterfuge	/ 8
Picking a standard lock (w/ lockpicks)	Subterfuge	/ 8
Sensing the use of Magic (within 100' x Mana used)	Magical	/ 9
Sensing an Undead creature within 50'	Magical	/ 9
Sensing Enchantment on an item within 10'	Magical	/ 13
Sensing Enchantment on an item you touch	Magical	/ 9
Prepare an Herb to be used	General	/ 7
Creating a Potion (minor: one day; major: three days)	Magical	/ 9
Writing a one-use Spell scroll (30 mins./ Mana point)	Magical	/ 9
Combat from horseback (War Horse only)	General	/ 8

For tasks where it's not a simple case of whether you succeed or fail, but **how well you do**, the GM may set a base DL for the task, and then ask that you roll the dice and add the bonus from an appropriate Skill Group or Stat. The higher the final number, above the base success number, the better the result. For example, this is particularly useful in situations where the GM needs to determine how much a character knows about a certain subject (using Intelligence) or how well a character was able to express himself to the audience of a musical or artistic performance (using Subterfuge).

Resistance Rolls

Some game systems make use of Resistance Rolls (sometimes called Saving Throws) to counter the effects of Spells, Poisons, Diseases, etc. In order to keep combat quick and easy in MEAG, most situations which would require a separate roll in other systems, are handled with a **single** die roll. For instance, in order to resist the effects of a spell cast on your character, the caster would make a single roll, add **his** applicable bonus (Magical in this case), and subtract **your** applicable bonus (Magical or Intelligence), and then see if the spell succeeds or not. In certain situations where your character's success at a particular maneuver depends on the success or failure of another character's maneuver, the GM may require a roll from each character (see **Contest of Skills** below).

Contest of Skills

If the GM needs to pit the maneuvers of one character against another, both characters must roll their applicable maneuvers (e.g., the Spot Hidden (Perception) of one vs. the Stalk/Hide (Subterfuge) of another) and the one with the highest score wins the **contest of skills**. Be sure to assess any environmental aids or hindrances only **once**. For example if it's dark, either adjust one character's Perception down or the other's Subterfuge up by the appropriate amount, but not both. (**GM guidance:** For contests that are PC vs. NPC, it's best to adjust the rolls of the non-player character for environmental conditions and just let players roll normally. This allows you to keep certain environmental conditions secret from the players until it's appropriate to reveal them.)

Increasing Stats and Skills

Unlike many other FRPG's, such as MERP or Dungeons & Dragons, MEAG is a non-leveled gaming system. You do not gain new skills and attributes by going up a level. Instead, you may spend your earned **Experience Points (XP)** to learn new maneuvers, increase attributes, etc. For example, by spending 100 XP you may increase one Skill Group Bonus of your choice by +1. For 300 XP, you may increase a Base Stat by +1. Spending 50 XP allows you to learn a new Spell, Maneuver, etc. (see **Advancement**, p. 25).

Movement & Travel

Short Term Movement

The **Movement** stat represents how fast you can move in a short amount of time. It is measured by how many feet you can cover in a 5-second interval (one Combat Round). Your normal movement rate is equal to 25' + (5' x Movement Bonus). Hobbits are generally slower than the other characters, due to their shorter legs (they have a negative Movement Bonus).

Long Distance Travel

The **Endurance** stat, in addition to determining how much damage you can take before collapsing, also governs your long distance travel. Under ideal conditions (good level road, fair weather, proper gear, not over-encumbered and without foraging) characters may travel at a speed of (½ x **current** Endurance points) miles/day. Poor terrain will reduce this by ½. Bad weather will reduce this by ½ again. Foraging as you go will reduce this by at least ½ again. Finally, exceeding your Encumbrance limit (between 1x and 2x Encumbrance) will also slow you by another ½. These factors are cumulative and apply to pack animals and mounts as well.

Part II: Combat and Damage

Combat Formulas

Combat is governed by two formulas. One which gives the results of the combat encounter (whether the victim is damaged, rendered unconscious, or killed), and another which determines the total amount of damage inflicted.

1. Combat Result = 2D6 + (Attacker's OB - Defender's DB)

A Result of 12 or higher is a "U" (Unconscious) result. Directly **set** the defender's Damage Taken total to **Endurance + Combat Result + Additional Damage** and the defender falls **unconscious**. Also, if Damage Taken ever exceeds a character's Endurance, the character falls unconscious. Unless attended to, a character will remain unconscious for one hour. Upon awakening, he will remain incapacitated (unable to attack, defend or move except at a crawl) until his Damage Taken is less than or equal to his Endurance. Healing can come from resting, medical care, and/or magical healing (see **Healing**, p. 9).

A Result of 15 or higher is a "K" (Kill) result. This **kills** the defender immediately. Also, if a defender's Damage Taken ever otherwise exceeds 150% of his Endurance, the defender dies of his wounds.

Attack Table ("U"=12+, "K"=15+)													
Dice	**OB (Attacker) - DB (Defender)**												
Roll	**+6**	**+5**	**+4**	**+3**	**+2**	**+1**	**0**	**-1**	**-2**	**-3**	**-4**	**-5**	**-6**
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
4	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	0	0
5	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	0
6	U	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
7	U	U	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
8	U	U	U	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
9	K	U	U	U	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3
10	K	K	U	U	U	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
11	K	K	K	U	U	U	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
12	K	K	K	K	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U

Table results are obtained by following the formula:
Combat Result = 2D6 + AttackerOB - DefenderDB

Notes: - Any Combat Result of "0" or less is considered a **miss** and does no damage, regardless of any Additional Damage value.
- Any Combat Result of "1" or more is a **hit** and a negative Additional Damage value cannot reduce the Damage below "1".
- An OB-DB difference of less than -6 is treated as -6.
- An OB-DB difference of more than +6 is treated as +6 and the extra is added as Additional Damage (AD).
- A **natural roll of "2"** on the dice is always a miss and (on 1D6) the weapon is dropped (1), the user injures himself (2-3), or someone close by is injured (4-6). For injuries, **Total Damage = [½ (2D6 + AD) – Armor DB]**, whether the attack was a melee weapon, missile weapon or direct damage spell. Close by injuries are targeted randomly (but **not** defender).
- A **natural roll of "12"** on the dice is always at least a "U" result (even if the Combat Result is not 12 or higher). Note that some creatures may be resistant, even proof, against "U" results (e.g. Undead).
- If a defender is asleep, unconscious or simply does not know an attack is coming, he must rely on his **Passive Defense** (Total DB = Armor DB - 4).
- **Mounted Combat** (riding a War Horse) requires a successful Riding(General) (base DL 8) roll before each Attack roll. Due to the added momentum, add the horse's Movement stat to the Additional Damage done by the weapon.

2. Damage Taken = Combat Result + Additional Damage

Additional Damage (AD) is determined mainly by the weapon used in the combat. It is a bonus that is added to the Combat Result, and can be either positive or negative. The heavier the weapon, the more damage it deals. A two-handed Greataxe has a bonus to AD of +3, whereas a Dagger has an AD bonus of -1. See the Weapons list in the **Equipment** section (p. 10) for more on weapon AD. Some direct damage spells (such as Firebolt and Ice Arrow) also utilize AD in their spell descriptions to determine how much total damage the spell deals to an opponent. See the **Spells and Magic** section (p. 13).

Sequence of Combat Actions

Initiative
Combat Actions take place in **Action Category** order based on **Initiative**. Each round, all characters roll for their Initiative: [2D6 + Agility Bonus + Weapon Initiative Bonus]. Then Actions take place, within each Category, from highest Initiative to lowest. See the section on **Weapons** (p. 10) for more on weapon initiative values. (**GM guidance:** Try one Init. roll for all NPCs that round.)

Notes: - The effects of **Cover** or **Concealment** (p. 9) apply to all **Missile attacks** to the defender that round, regardless of Initiative.
- The effects of **Parrying** (p. 8) apply to all **Melee attacks** to the defender that round, regardless of Initiative.
- The effects of using a **Shield** apply to **both Missile and Melee attacks** to the defender that round, regardless of Initiative.

Action Categories:
1. **Casting a Spell**
2. **Missile Attack**
3. **Melee Attack or Parry**
4. **Movement**
5. **Other Maneuvers**

Combat Action Details

This page details the Combat Action categories from the LOR game and includes some changes. One major change is that a **Combat Round** now represents about five seconds of time, not ten. This better models the time needed to prepare, load, aim and shoot a missile weapon of this tech level, and so allows for better accounting of ammunition used. One round of Melee combat still represents an abstract result of a few seconds of fighting and not just a single swing at a foe. Normally, characters can only perform **one Action per round** of combat. The Combat Actions take place in **Initiative** order within each category:

1. Casting a Spell
- A character performs a **Cast Spells(Magical)** maneuver at DL6 to see if the spell works.
- A natural roll of "2" is always a failure ("U" on caster), a "12" is always a success (no Mana cost).
- If the spell is cast, the caster loses Mana and/or Endurance points as indicated for the spell.
- A missile spell will also need a **Ranged Spell Attack(Missile)** roll to see if the target is hit.
- A character may not cast a spell (except **Defensive spells**) if engaged in Melee Combat.
- Cover or Concealment may limit spells (see **Cover and Concealment**, p. 9).

2. Missile Attack
- Using a missile weapon, a character may attack anyone that he can see and is within range.
- A character may not use a crossbow, bow or sling if engaged in Melee Combat.
- Cover or Concealment may limit missile attacks (see **Cover and Concealment**, p. 9).

3. Melee Attack or Parry
- A character armed with **one weapon** may either Attack or Parry.
    - **Attack:** A character may make a melee attack, Weapon(Melee OB), on any one foe within 5'.
    - **Parry:** Instead of attacking, a character may perform a Parry(Melee OB) maneuver with his primary weapon. This automatically adds his Parry(Melee OB) bonus to his Defensive Bonus (DB) for this round of combat, but not vs. missile attacks.
- If using **two weapons**, a character may Dual Attack, Attack and Parry, or Parry with both weapons.
    - **Dual Attack:** A character may drop his active defenses, rely on his **Passive Defenses** (Total DB = Armor DB - 4), and make two normal attacks this round, one with each weapon. If **untrained** in Dual Attack(Melee OB), then assess a -2 to **both** weapon attacks.
    - **Attack and Parry:** The character makes a normal attack with one weapon, and parries with the other. The weapon used to parry automatically adds [½ x Parry(Melee OB)] (round down) to the character's DB for this round, but not vs. missile attacks.
    - **Parry with Both Weapons:** The character may parry with both weapons instead of attacking. Add [Parry(Melee OB)+1] to the character's DB for this round, but not vs. missile attacks.
- **Note:** If a character attempts to Parry with an untrained weapon type, assess a -2 to Parry(Melee OB). If a character attempts to Attack with an untrained weapon type, assess a -2 to the Melee OB.

4. Movement
- A character's **normal Movement Rate** is 25' + (5' x Movement Bonus).

a) Move at a Run
- If a character does nothing else this round, he may run flat out (in a straight line only).
- To determine success, Roll 2D6 + Agility Bonus. A 5 or less means the character tripped and only moves 5' (a natural "2" is always a failure). Check to see if the character takes **falling** damage.
- On a 6+, the character is able to move up to 2X his normal movement rate this round.

b) Move & Quick Attack
- A character may move up to ½ his normal Movement Rate and attack (Missile or Melee; at -2 OB).
- If someone is running past, you can stop him by moving to within 5' of him and attacking in melee.

c) Move at a Walk
- A character may move up to his normal Movement Rate this round.

5. Other Maneuvers
- Attempt any other maneuver or activity the GM thinks can be accomplished in five seconds.
- Multiple rounds in a row may be needed to accomplish longer tasks.
- The attempted maneuver always fails if the character takes Damage during the round.
- A character may use this Action to try a **Perception roll** to see the whole tactical situation.
- A character may use this Action to **read a Spell Scroll** using Read Runes(Magical).
- A character may use this Action to **aim a missile weapon** for an additional +2 OB next round.

Notes:
- If not moving at a run, a character may **"shift"** one single item (sling a shield, draw a weapon, take out some herbs, etc.) while moving, but his distance moved will be reduced by 5' and only accessible items (not in a backpack) may be so "shifted." Generally, a character may have a one-hand weapon and a shield, two one-hand weapons, or a two-hand weapon accessible, plus one quiver/case/pouch of ammo for a missile weapon, and a dagger. Usually a missile weapon is carried in one hand to be considered accessible.
- **Terrain** may slow a moving character (going uphill, moving through brush or dense forest, crossing a stream, running through snow or deep sand, etc.). In these cases, decrease a character's movement by ½.
- **Partial darkness** (dark but with lantern, moonlight or nearby fire) will cut Movement by ½ and assess a -2 to Perception, Me OB and Mi OB.

- **Total darkness** only allows for 5' of movement per round and assesses a -4 to Perception, Me OB, and Mi OB (you have to feel your way as you go).
- **Falling** is handled as a Melee attack against the character. Start with a Me OB of [+0 – (DB of armor worn)] for a simple trip while running. Add +2 for every 5' the character falls. A successful Jump(General) maneuver will decrease the Me OB attack of the fall by [effective General Bonus].
- A character may **disengage from combat** by allowing an opponent a free attack on him and then taking a Movement Action. If any opponent moves within 5' and attacks him, the character must stop and will be in combat again.
- After combat, characters can try to **recover used missile weapons**. The recovery chance depends on both finding the item and the likelihood that the item is broken. Roll the chance on 1D6 for each. Hand thrown 1-4, Arrows 1-3, Bolts 1-3, and Sling pellets 1. If the item is magical, improve the chances by two (+2). If in darkness, decrease the chances by two (-2).

Cover & Concealment

Cover
Cover is placing part of your body behind a solid object to afford protection (more DB) from Missile Combat, Missile Spells, or Perception Skills (Spot Hidden, etc.). You may attack from behind cover with missile weapons, but with limitations: Slings (and thrown weapons using **default** rules, p. 10) may only be used from behind **Light Cover (DB +1)**; Bows (and regular thrown weapons) may be used from behind up to **Medium Cover (DB +2)**; Crossbows and Spells work from behind up to **Heavy Cover (DB +4)**.

Concealment
Concealment is hiding part of your body behind light materials (foliage, smoke, fog, fire, etc.) to make it difficult for opponents to Perceive you or target you with missile weapons, similar to **Cover** above. Concealment doesn't appreciably slow or block missiles if they do hit you, though. Therefore, whatever DB benefit the concealment gives you is added back in as Additional Damage if you are hit. In this manner, you are harder to hit (bonus to DB), but if hit you receive the **same** amount of damage (bonus to attacker's AD) as if you were hit without Concealment. Slings (and thrown weapons using **default** rules, p. 10) may only be used from behind **Light Concealment (DB +1, AD +1)**; Bows (and standard thrown weapons) may be used from behind up to **Medium Concealment (DB +2, AD +2)**; Crossbows and Spells may be used from behind up to **Heavy Concealment (DB +4, AD +4)**.

Light Cover/Concealment applies when roughly 30% of your body is obscured. **Medium** is roughly 60%. **Heavy** is roughly 90%.

Food & Water

Without food and/or water, characters will begin to take Damage. Characters will take [Endurance/20] Damage points per day without food and [Endurance/4] Damage points per day without water. These points cannot be "healed" per se. The characters need to receive some form of nutrition and hydration, and then actually rest to recover from this type of Damage. For each 10 points taken due to thirst and/or starvation, **all** stats take a -1 bonus until that Damage is healed. Characters recover from this type of Damage at 3X the rate they took it.

When faced with the situation of no food and/or water, characters in the wilderness may attempt to **Forage** for them. The GM will determine the effectiveness of gathering edible plants, hunting for meat and searching for water based on the character's skills and equipment, and upon the terrain and climate of the area. Foraging will reduce travel speeds by at least ½.

Healing

Physical Wounds
A character normally heals one Damage point per hour if resting or one Damage point every three hours if active. If a character is wounded by a sharp weapon (e.g. **not** from spell casting, falling, bare hands, staff, mace or sling), he will not heal and will instead lose one Damage point per hour until successful First Aid(General), Herbal(General) or Magical healing is applied to stop the bleeding. Successful First Aid or Herbal will also heal [1 + General Bonus] points (minimum of one point) when first applied to new damage (by treating for shock). A natural "2" rolled for First Aid or Herbal always fails and actually causes 1D3 additional Damage points.

Mana Points
Mages have a "Mana Pool" of points equal to (5 x Magical Bonus) to power their spells. If depleted, the Mage may then opt to use Endurance Points (i.e. take Damage). Mana Pool points replenish at three points per hour regardless of whether the Mage is resting or not. There are herbs and potions that can affect this. Endurance Points lost due to spellcasting heal the same as physical wounds.

Part III: Equipment

Coinage

The coinage system in MEAG is based on gold, silver and copper metals, and a factor of 10: 1 Gold = 10 Silver = 100 Copper coins. One Copper coin is roughly equivalent to $5 US in purchasing power. 50 coins (of any value) = 1 Encumbrance unit.

While most merchants in the larger cities will gladly accept coins for their goods, barter is the preferred form of commerce in many rural areas of Middle-earth. Many traders you will find in small towns and rural areas have little use for coins, and will only accept coinage for their goods on a limited basis, if at all. In addition, coins minted in the different nations of Middle-earth might carry more or less value than others. For example, it might raise a few eyebrows if your party attempted to spend your recently plundered Angmarean currency at a shop in Gondor and you may have difficulty finding a merchant willing to deal with you. As such, the prices listed below should only be used as a guide. If the item can't be bought, try to barter something of equivalent value for it instead.

As a general rule of thumb, when **selling** to a trader for coin, he will give you around 50% of the value of your used equipment. New items usually fetch 75% list price. When **bartering** with someone, you will generally get closer to 100% of the listed value for your goods (for 100% listed value of theirs), provided the other party is interested in what you have to offer and the item is in good repair.

Encumbrance

Item encumbrance is based on a combination of weight and bulk. One Encumbrance unit is roughly equivalent to one pound of weight, but bulkier items, which encumber a player more, may have a higher Encumbrance rating than what their weight alone would indicate. Each character has an Encumbrance Limit based on his Weight and Strength. The suit of armor, clothes and belt actually worn do not count against this total, but extras do. If a character exceeds this limit (up to 2x Encumbrance), his Movement Rate is only ½, and he may only defend himself while in combat (at DB -1). Exceeding the limit up to 3x, Movement Rate is only ¼ normal and allows defense only (at DB -2). Characters may briefly lift, but not move with, encumbrances between 3x and 5x their limit (on a Strength -3 to -5 roll to succeed). When Climbing or Riding, figure a character's weight then add **all** items carried **and** worn.

Weapons

Item	Type	Init^	Me OB	Mi OB	AD†	Encum	Price	Notes
Bare Hands	1h Me	-2	-2	NA	-3	0	0	**Take** one damage pt./DB of Armor punched
Dagger	1h Me/Mi	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	1s	Missile range 50'
Staff	2h Me	+1	+0	NA	-2	2	5c	auto +2 DB given when used, if trained
Spear (1h)	1h Me/Mi	+1	+0	-1	+0	3	2s	Used in one hand; Missile range 50'
Spear (2h)	2h Me	+2	+1	NA	+1	3	2s	Used with two hands
Shortsword	1h Me	+0	+0*	NA	+1	2	4s	* +1 vs. No Armor or Leather Armor
Sword	1h Me	+1	+0*	NA	+1	3	6s	* +1 vs. No Armor or Leather Armor
Longsword (1h)	1h Me	+2	+0	NA	+2	4	8s	Used in one hand (aka Sword of War)
Longsword (2h)	2h Me	+2	+1	NA	+2	4	8s	Used with two hands
Greatsword	2h Me	+3	+2	NA	+4	5	10s	(aka Two-handed Sword)
Mace	1h Me	+0	+0*	NA	+1	3	4s	* +1 vs. Chain or Plate Armor
Axe/Hammer	1h Me/Mi	-1	+0	-2	+1	3	3s	Missile range 50' (/aka War Hammer)
Battleaxe (1h)	1h Me	+0	+0	NA	+2	4	5s	Used in one hand
Battleaxe (2h)	2h Me	+0	+1	NA	+2	4	5s	Used with two hands
Greataxe	2h Me	+1	+2	NA	+3	5	7s	(aka Two-handed Axe)
Halberd	2h Me	+4	+2	NA	+3	6	10s	Polearm; may attack targets up to 10' away
Bow	2h Mi	+0	NA	+0	+0	1	4s	Missile range 200' (aka Short Bow)
Longbow	2h Mi	-1	NA	+1	+1	2	10s	Not from horseback; Missile range 300'
Crossbow	2h Mi	+1	NA	+2	+2	3	8s	Range 300'; takes an extra round to reload
Sling	1h Mi	-2	NA	+0	+0	0	5c	Missile range 100'; can be used w/ a Shield

^ Init is the Initiative Bonus for the weapon.
† AD is the Additional Damage the weapon does after the Combat Results are determined.

Note: ALL melee weapons may be thrown. If Mi OB = "NA" above, it has a **default** Mi OB of -4 and a missile range of 25'.

Armor

Item	DB	Encum	Price	Notes
Plate	+4	60*	200s	-4 Subterfuge, -2 Movement and -2 Magical Bonuses
Chain	+2	40*	30s	-2 Subterfuge, -1 Movement and -1 Magical Bonuses
Leather	+1	20*	6s	-1 Subterfuge Bonus
Shield	+2	6	3s	-2 Subterfuge Bonus, -1 Magical Bonus; DB only vs. frontal and left-side attacks
Staff	+2	2	5c	Using a Staff automatically gives this DB (if trained), but not vs. missile attacks

* The Encum. of the armor actually worn does not count as Encumbrance carried and increases warmth of clothes one level. (See Clothing in **Miscellaneous Gear,** p. 12, and **Hypothermia & Overheating**, p. 26).

Note: The DB and Movement effects of Armor are applied **after** defining a character's DB (average of Agility and Movement).

Herbs

Item	Healing	Prep†	Price	Notes
Wolfwort	1	+1	2c	Leathery leaves; also speeds healing by 2x for four hours
Fishfeather	2	+1	2c	Feathery plumes
Arroweed	3	+0	6c	Triangular seeds; also neutralizes any animal venom
Hart's Glory	4	-1	1s	Thin petals; also speeds healing by 2x for eight hours
Nightrod	6*	-2	3s	Small cones; * restores Mana Points *instead of* Endurance
Stagberry	6	-3	25c	Bitter berries; also speeds healing by 3x for eight hours
Snowbane	8	-2	8c	Fleshy leaves
Gemberry	12	-3	3s	Bright red berries; also neutralizes any plant poison
Athelas	18	-4	5s	(aka Kingsfoil); also cures any disease (natural or magical)
Queensfan	NA	-5	20g	Gold leaves; one leaf sets Damage = ½ Endurance, even if dead (< one day)
Sarah's Root	NA	-2	6c	Small bulb; when eaten, one prepared bulb equals a full day's rations
Mir-Melellen	NA	-2	1s	Nectar of Forest Rose; binding/amplifying agent used to make magic potions
Aule's Boon	NA	-3	3s	Bitter leaf; tea gives +1 Strength (plus Me OB & General) Bonus for two hours
Goodwort	NA	-2	4c	Small seeds; tea gives +1 General bonus for 1D3 hours
Bright Eyes	NA	-2	1s	Blue petals; tincture gives +2 Perception Bonus in darkness for four hours
Celandine	-10	-3	5c	Sap; on a sharp weapon it adds +10 Additional Damage to the attack (once/dose)
Snakeroot	NA	-2	1s	Root extract; ingested it causes an "Attack" of 2D6+2 (no DB) each of 2D3 hours

† Prep is the bonus to the Herbal Healing(General) maneuver to prepare/store the herb correctly; failure gives only ½ effect (points or duration). Prep can also be used as the bonus to Perception to find the herb in the wilderness or its availability when shopping.

Note: You can only have one dose of a specific herb or potion in effect at the same time. If the herb/potion only has an "instantaneous" effect, another dose may be taken right away.

Potions

Potions can be found, or made using the proper ingredients (See **Creating Potions,** p. 15), that heal, poison, or modify the stats of the person who drinks them. Any of the herbs listed above can be turned into a potion. If found for sale at all, they cost about 5x (minor) or 15x (major) the normal cost of the base herb, plus the cost of ingredients. Every four potions carried take up one Encumbrance unit.

Miscellaneous Gear

Item	Encum	Price	Notes
Cloak	2	4s	Keeps clothes dry to help prevent hypothermia in wet or snowy weather
Std. Clothing	3	1s	Protects from exposure from 85° to 55°F
Heavy Clothing	5	2s	Protects from exposure from 60° to 30°F
Winter Clothing	8	4s	Protects from exposure from 35° to 0°F; -1 Subterfuge and Movement Bonuses
Arctic Clothing	14	8s	Protects from exposure from 5° to -40°F; -2 Subterfuge and Movement Bonuses
Backpack	1	2s	Without a backpack, characters only have ½ the Encumbrance total normally available
Belt	1	5c	Required to hold one-handed weapons and pouches of pellets or herbs ready for use
Quiver	1	1s	Holds up to 24 arrows ready for use
Case	1	1s	Holds up to 20 crossbow bolts ready for use
Pouch	0	2c	Holds up to 30 sling pellets, or three different types of herbs, ready for use
12 Arrows	1	5c	Maximum of one quiver ready at a time; Extra arrows may be carried in a backpack
10 Bolts	1	5c	Maximum of one case of bolts ready at a time; Extra bolts may be carried in a backpack
15 Sling Pellets	1	1c	Maximum of one pouch of pellets ready at a time; Extras may be carried in a backpack
Food (one day)	1	3c	Wrapped trail rations; Extras may be carried since these rations will keep for several days
Water (one day)	4	4c	Skin holding one day's water, may be refilled in the field; Carry extras in a backpack
Camping Basics	1	4c	Flint, steel, tinder, cup, knife, etc.; Allows preparation of food that lasts one day only
Cooking Kit	3	1s	Pot, pan, utensils, herbs, salt, etc.; Allows preparation of food that will keep for several days
Rope	5	5c	30' of strong rope that will hold up to 400 Encumbrance Units.
Grapnel	3	5c	Attached to a rope, it's used to snag objects for retrieval or anchor the rope for climbing
Lockpicks	1	1s*	Picking locks or disarming traps is at Subterfuge-2 without proper tools (* not openly available)
Bedroll	5	5c	Oiled ground cloth plus blankets; a bedroll (or bed) is needed for a healing rest
Tarpaulin	5	5c	Oilcloth tarp (with ropes and pegs); Keeps clothes and gear dry when sleeping in rain or snow
Healer's Kit	5	4s	Contains herbs, bandages, needles and thread, etc. plus equip. needed to prep. herbs for use
Lantern	2	5c	Covered lantern; One pint of oil burns 12 hours; Gives +2 to Perception in darkness; 25' range
Oil Flask	1	2c	One pint of oil of suitable quality to burn in a lantern
Torch	10	1c	Bundle of 5 torches; Each torch burns one hour; Gives +2 to Perception in darkness; 25' range
Scribe's Kit	1	1s	Ink, pens and nibs in a wooden box, plus a few sheets of parchment in a leather folder
Pick	6	5c	Iron pick for digging
Shovel	5	5c	Iron shovel for digging
Pry Bar	3	6c	Steel bar for levering objects apart
Mallet	3	2c	Iron one-handed hammer for driving stakes and pegs, or hammering nails and spikes
Sledgehammer	7	5c	Iron two-handed hammer for breaking stone or wood, or driving large stakes and wedges
Wooden Stakes	2	1c	12 hardwood stakes, useful for anchoring ropes to the ground
Iron Spikes	3	1c	3 iron spikes, useful for anchoring ropes to cracks in rock
Axe	5	5c	Woodsman's axe for felling trees, chopping wood or cutting branches
Wedge	3	5c	Steel wedge; Helps with breaking stone or splitting logs
Pack Pony	(800)	5s	Mv(+2), DB(+1), End(55); Can carry 300 Encumbrance units with proper tack
Riding Pony	(800)	1g	Mv(+3), DB(+1), End(50); For Hobbits, Elves and Dwarves; Can carry 250 Encum. units
Draft Horse	(1800)	1g	Mv(+3), DB(+1), End(70); For drawing carts and wagons; Can carry 600 Encum. units
Riding Horse	(1200)	2g	Mv(+5), DB(+2), End(60); For Humans and Elves; Can carry 400 Encum. units
War Horse	(1200)	5g	Mv(+5), DB(+3), End(65); For Humans and Elves; Used to combat; Carries 450 Encum. units
Saddle and Tack	15	8s	Equipment necessary to ride or pack a horse or pony
Fodder (pony)	5	1c	One day; Stretch to two days if grazed for three hrs/day; A pony needs 3x normal water than PC
Fodder (horse)	10	2c	One day; Stretch to two days if grazed for three hrs/day; A horse needs 4x normal water than PC
Cart (1 horse)	(500)	1g	Can carry up to 1500 Encum units, but movement is ½ normal for a horse if not on a road.
Wagon (2 horses)	(1500)	3g	Can carry up to 4000 Encum units, but movement is ½ normal for a horse if not on a road.
Alchemy Lab	75	4g	Sturdy bench with required glassware, braziers, grinding and measuring equipment, etc.

Part IV: Spells and Magic

This represents the most commonly known (and taught) spells by the Free Peoples of Middle Earth. While adventuring, the characters may come across lost, hidden, secret, etc. spells along the way. The list is separated into Sorcery, Healer and Seer spells, but that just represents tradition. Any Mage can learn any spell, if he has a willing teacher and/or detailed writings, but characters will start out with spells from only one tradition, and learning spells from another tradition cost additional experience points (see p. 25).

Spell Use

- Mages have a **Mana Pool** of points equal to (5 x Magical Bonus) to power their spells. Once these are gone, the caster can opt to spend Endurance points (i.e. take physical damage) to power additional spells.
- The number in brackets [ ] is the cost in Mana/Endurance points for the caster to use this spell.
- The caster must touch his target, unless otherwise noted.
- For spells that operate at range, the caster must be able to see the target (as well as be in range), unless noted.
- For non-instantaneous spells, the caster may choose to end the spell's effects at any time before the spell's duration expires.
- To determine if a spell is **successfully cast**, roll 2D6 + (Caster's Magical Bonus). A result of 6 or better and the spell succeeds. A natural roll of "2" always fails (with a "U" result on caster); a natural "12" always works (and costs no Mana). This can also be expressed as performing a Cast Spell(Magical) maneuver with a Difficulty Level of 6.
- Spells cast on the caster himself, or on a **willing target**, just need to succeed. Spells cast on an **unwilling target**, but which don't cause direct damage, are resisted by the better of the target's Magical *or* Intelligence Bonus. Perform the same roll above, but subtract the Target's applicable bonus. Roll 2D6 + (Caster's Magical Bonus - Target's Magical *or* Intelligence Bonus). A result of 6 or better and the spell succeeds. A natural roll of "2" always fails, a natural "12" always succeeds, as above.
- Spells that cause **direct damage** will also require a **Ranged Spell Attack(Missile OB)** maneuver. Target's DB applies normally, unless noted. Each direct damage spell lists a Ranged Spell Attack (RSA) bonus to be added to the roll, as well as a bonus to AD. Roll 2D6 + (Caster's Ranged Spell Attack Bonus + Spell's RSA Bonus - Target's DB). A natural "2" or "12" is handled the same as with any normal missile attack. Damage Taken = (Ranged Spell Attack Result + Spell's AD).

Spell Lists

Sorcerer Spells

Analyze Item [3] Cast on an item, it allows caster to know the special properties (if any) of the item. Caster must touch item. Item "resists" with the Magical Bonus of the person who made it (GM will assign a number). One attempt/item/day. If the caster sees some of the item's powers in action first, then detailed info can be obtained at a +3 to the caster's Magical bonus. The success roll should be made secretly by the GM. A failure may give misinformation.

Concentration [3] Gives a +2 bonus to the Perception of the target character for 10 minutes.

Firebolt [5] Missile Attack [RSA = (+1), AD = (2 x Magical Bonus), Range 100']. Affects physical Undead, but does not affect Spirits. This spell causes light, flammable materials to ignite (e.g. cloth, thin wood, parchment, dry grass and leaves, lamp oil, etc.).

Ice Arrow [6] Missile Attack [RSA = (+2), AD = (2 x Magical Bonus), Range 100']. AD = (Magical Bonus) vs. physical Undead., but does not affect Spirits. AD = (3 x Magical Bonus) vs. creatures of a fiery nature.

Light [3] Cast on an object, creates light equal to a moonlit night (-2 to Perception, instead of -4) for 2D6+3 hours. Radius of 25'.

Lightning [6] **Defensive spell** / Missile Attack [RSA = Magical Bonus, AD = Magical Bonus]. **All** within 5' (Melee range) of caster are affected.   If spell damage is more than ¼ of the target's original Endurance points, the target is Stunned (cannot attack or move) for [Magical Bonus] rounds. Some foes (e.g. Undead) may be resistant to Stun.

Mage Lock [5] Seals a door or gate and adds [Magical Bonus] to the difficulty level to break it down by force, for one hour.

Mage Shield [4] On caster only, this spell doubles the caster's Magical Bonus for resisting hostile magic spells. This spell even adds the caster's normal Magical Bonus to his Defensive Bonus vs. spells that make a Missile Attack. Lasts for one day, or until one spell is successfully resisted/avoided.

Shield [4] **Defensive Spell.** This will increase the Defensive Bonus (DB) of the target character by +2 for six rounds.

Healer Spells

Calm   [4] Target is any normal, living animal or humanoid being. If successful, the Calmed being will not attack the caster, or those within 25' of caster, unless attacked itself. This will last as long as the caster is within sight of the target and the target is not attacked. Spell range is 100'.

Charm Beast   [5] Cast on any normal animal (hostile or not), it will befriend the caster and can be sent to fight the caster's foes. The animal will remain with the caster until involved in one fight, then it will leave peacefully. The caster may only have one Charmed animal at a time. Range 50'.

Grace   [3] Increases the General and Subterfuge bonuses of the target character by +2 for five minutes.

Healing   [4+X] Spell heals 4+X points of Damage immediately, then allows the target to heal 6 points per hour as long as the target is resting. Spell ends when the target is either fully healed or stops resting.

Rage   [4] This increases the target's Melee OB by +2, but adjusts his Defense Bonus by -1, for six rounds.

Shapeshift   [8] Caster assumes the shape of the totem animal of his clan/god/race/sect. Duration is 1D3+3 hours. When in animal form, caster only has a +1 Intelligence above the norm for that animal and can only indicate yes/no answers to simple questions. Friends of the caster are friends of the animal, foes of the caster are foes of the animal. In animal form, caster may not cast spells or use weapons.

Sleep   [6] If target is unaware of any foes (including caster), then spell will cause target to fall soundly asleep for 2D6+3 minutes (unless awakened by a very loud noise, deliberate shaking and/or taking Damage). Spell range is 50'.

Speed   [6] **Defensive Spell.** The target character of this spell may perform two Actions per round for three rounds.

Steady Aim   [4] Increases the target character's Missile OB by +2 for six rounds.

Sustenance   [6] This has the same health effects on the target as having eaten a full day's rations and a full day's water.

Seer Spells

Blessing   [9] Target character gets +1 to his Defensive Bonus (DB) until a "K" result occurs against him. Then the spell converts the result to a modified "U" result (just set Damage Taken = Endurance) and then ends. Caster cannot Bless himself.

Bind   [16] Binds oaths and curses. Person stating oath/curse and one(s) targeted (if any) must all be within 50' of the caster when spell is cast. Caster may be a party to the oath/curse. If a party to the oath/curse attempts to act contrary to oath/curse, he will suffer one Damage point per hour until he is back in line or falls unconscious. Oath/curse may not be structured as to immediately or directly damage or kill any party to it.

Ghostspear   [6] Missile attack [RSA = (+1), AD = (2 x Magical Bonus), Range 100'] that affects any (and only) Undead and Spirits. Target gets no Defensive Bonus from armor or shield vs. this spell.

Intuition   [5] When confronted with two to five choices, and limited information, gives caster a feeling for which is the "best" choice (based on simple criteria stated by caster). Momentary spell (on caster only), it just gives a single flash of insight. The success roll should be secretly rolled by the GM.

Seek   [2] On caster only, this spell will give the direction to any one (possibly hidden) material, item, or person (within 300'). The caster must have a sample of the material, a similar item, or an object belonging to the person (respectively). The spell only lasts a moment, then ends. Subtract from the die roll if the (material/item/object) held by the caster is not an exact match for the target. The success roll should be secretly rolled by the GM.

Shadow Sight   [2] Allows caster (only) to see beyond this world and perceive the spirit world, invisible objects/beings, and the auras of all beings. Perception for seeing in the physical world is at -2, though. Duration is 1D3+2 minutes. An aura shows a being's health, emotional state, race and any special state (animal form, cursed, etc.). A separate Magical skill roll (rolled secretly by the GM) determines how much the caster learns from an aura.

Spiritsafe   [4] **Defensive Spell.** On caster only, but all within 10' of caster take only ½ normal Endurance drain from Ghosts, Specters, Barrow-wights, Wraiths, etc. and resist Fear effects at +3. Duration is 1D3+1 hours.

Types of Mages

There are three main traditions of Mages: Sorcerers, Healers and Seers. **Sorcerers** are those that focus on bending elemental forces to their will. **Healers** focus on manipulating the properties of living things. **Seers** focus on the realms of prophesy, insight and the spiritual. Any character can learn any spell during play, but all begin the game with spells from only a single tradition.

Scrolls & Enchantments

The time and expertise necessary for learning to enchant powerful weapons, armor, rings, etc. is usually outside the scope of a role-playing scenario. The one exception would be single-use Spell Scrolls. These contain the power to cast one "pre-cast" spell and when successfully read aloud (by someone attempting a **Read Runes(Magical)** maneuver at DL 7) the spell is cast. A Mage (only) may put in one Mana point every 30 minutes when writing a scroll. After the time is spent to write the entire spell, the Mage must attempt an **Enchantment(Magical)** maneuver (at DL 9) to complete it (adjusted by conditions).

To make a scroll, the Mage needs ink made with gems and/or precious metals, plus a good quality medium. The material component cost of the scroll is one silver coin (or the equivalent in gold or gemstones) per point of Mana required to cast the spell. The metal or gemstones must be filed or ground into a fine powder and added to the ink before use. Any Scribe's Kit, in addition to standard ink, quills, and parchment paper, will contain scroll ink, a special thick ink suitable for retaining the precious metal filings or gemstone powder in suspension while the Spell Scroll is being written.

A good quality medium usually consists of sheets of parchment or vellum. But "scrolls" can even be written on wood, stone, metal, etc. if the runes are carved or etched into the surface first, and then filled with the proper ink. A Mage can cast a spell he doesn't know from a scroll and even learn the new spell by studying the scroll before using it. The ink of a Spell Scroll is consumed when cast, so only a carved "scroll" can be studied after use. Studying and learning a new spell requires the Mage to spend 50 to 75 XP per spell learned (see **Advancement**, p. 25).

Creating Potions

Characters can learn the various **Alchemy Formulae** necessary to turn any of the herbs listed in the **Equipment** section (p. 11) into either Minor or Major potions. Turning herbs into potions requires a successful **Alchemy(Magical)** maneuver, one dose of the herb and one dose of Mir-Melellen (to bind and amplify the effects of the base herb) to make one dose of potion. In general, a potion multiplies the effect (points of healing/damage, or duration for Stat bonuses) of the base herb (3x for minor, 9x for major), but is additionally (-1 for minor, -3 for major) more difficult to prepare than the base herb's **Prep** bonus (see p. 11). It takes an **Alchemy Lab** and one full day to prepare a minor potion, or three days to prepare a major potion, though up to eight doses can be made in the same batch (four potions = one Encum unit). Learning Alchemy Formulae can be done at Character Creation (by spending Skill Bonus Points or assigning training marks, see p. 21) or through Character Advancement (50 XP per formula), see **Advancement**, p.25.

An **Alchemy Lab** is an assembly of glassware (flasks, vials, etc.), measuring equipment (scales, etc.), stoneware (mortar and pestle, etc.), heat sources (candles, braziers, etc.), storage chests, timing equipment (hour glass, etc.) and more, all on one or more sturdy benches set up in a place protected from the weather. The weight listed for a Lab (see Misc. Equipment, p. 12) can also be used for a Lab that has been packed up for moving (you won't normally pack up the bench itself, but all the delicate equipment will need to be packed in sturdy boxes with plenty of padding, so it works out to be about the same). It takes about 4 hours to get an Alchemy Lab unpacked and ready to use once you have a suitable work area and furniture.

Detecting Magic

All characters with a Magical Bonus of +1 or higher have two chances of detecting a **magical object**, one when it's first seen (at 10' or less) and the other when it's first touched. Also, **magical beings** may be detected when they first come within 50' and **magic spells** may be detected at (100' x Mana Points spent) when they are cast. These detections are done through the **Sense Magical Object/Being (Magical)** and the **Sense Magic Spells(Magical)** maneuvers (see the Sample Basic Maneuver table on p. 6). The GM should make these rolls unless the characters are deliberately out looking for these things in a likely location.

Part V: Character Creation and Advancement

Here you will find the rules for creating your own MEAG character. On this page are the five different MEAG Player Character Races and five Professions for you to choose from. Select a Race, add the stat modifications of the desired Profession and then record the results in the "Stat" column of the Character Sheet beginning on the next page.

Player Character Races

Hobbit

Strength -2	Agility +2	Intelligence -1	Movement -2	Defense **	Endurance 40
Melee OB -3	Missile OB -1	General -1	Subterfuge +0	Perception -1	Magical -3
Height: ~3.5'	Weight: 120 + (20 x Strength) +/-10%		Encumbrance: 30% x Weight		

Dwarf

Strength +1	Agility -1	Intelligence +0	Movement -1	Defense **	Endurance 50
Melee OB -1	Missile OB -3	General -1	Subterfuge -3	Perception -2	Magical -3
Height: ~4.5'	Weight: 120 + (20 x Strength) +/-10%		Encumbrance: 35% x Weight		

Elf

Strength -1	Agility +1	Intelligence +0	Movement +0	Defense **	Endurance 35
Melee OB -2	Missile OB -1	General -2	Subterfuge -1	Perception -1	Magical -1
Height: ~6'	Weight: 130 + (20 x Strength) +/-10%		Encumbrance: 25% x Weight		

Half-Elf

Strength +0	Agility +0	Intelligence +0	Movement +0	Defense **	Endurance 35
Melee OB -1	Missile OB -2	General -2	Subterfuge -1	Perception -1	Magical -1
Height: ~6'	Weight: 130 + (20 x Strength) +/-10%		Encumbrance: 25% x Weight		

Human

Strength +1	Agility +0	Intelligence -1	Movement +0	Defense **	Endurance 45
Melee OB -1	Missile OB -2	General -1	Subterfuge -2	Perception -2	Magical -2
Height: ~6'	Weight: 130 + (20 x Strength) +/-10%		Encumbrance: 25% x Weight		

Player Character Professions

Scout

Strength +0	Agility +1	Intelligence +1	Movement +1	Defense **	Endurance +0
Melee OB +0	Missile OB +2	General +0	Subterfuge +1	Perception +2	Magical +0
			Encumbrance: -5%		

Ranger

Strength +1	Agility +1	Intelligence +1	Movement +0	Defense **	Endurance +0
Melee OB +1	Missile OB +1	General +1	Subterfuge +1	Perception +1	Magical +1
			Encumbrance: +0%		

Rogue

Strength +0	Agility +1	Intelligence +1	Movement +0	Defense **	Endurance -5
Melee OB +1	Missile OB +1	General +1	Subterfuge +2	Perception +1	Magical +1
			Encumbrance: -5%		

Warrior

Strength +1	Agility +1	Intelligence +0	Movement +1	Defense **	Endurance +10
Melee OB +2	Missile OB +1	General +1	Subterfuge -1	Perception +0	Magical -1
			Encumbrance: +0%		

Mage/Scholar

Strength +0	Agility +1	Intelligence +3	Movement +0	Defense **	Endurance -5
Melee OB -1	Missile OB +1	General +1	Subterfuge +1	Perception +2	Magical +3
			Encumbrance: -5%		

** Defense is defined as the average of Agility and Movement (round up). Determine a Defense after adding a Profession to a Race.

MEAG Character Sheet

Character Name _____ **Race** _____ **Profession** _____

Hair_____ Eyes_____ Height_____ Weight_____ Encumbrance Limit_____ Alignment_____

Stats and Skills:

Specialization: _____

_____

Base Stats: Stat + Skill +   Special   =   Total

_____

Strength   [_____] + NA + [_____] = [_____]

_____

Agility   [_____] + NA + [_____] = [_____]

_____

Intelligence [_____] + NA + [_____] = [_____]

Special Ability: _____

Movement   [_____] + NA + [_____] = [_____]

_____

Defense   [_____] + NA + [_____] = [_____]

_____

Endurance   [_____] + NA + [_____] = [_____]

_____

Skills: Stat + Skill +   Special   =   Total

Special Item: _____

Melee OB   [_____] + [_____] + [_____] = [_____]

_____

Missile OB   [_____] + [_____] + [_____] = [_____]

_____

General   [_____] + [_____] + [_____] = [_____]

_____

Subterfuge   [_____] + [_____] + [_____] = [_____]

Negative Trait: _____

Perception   [_____] + [_____] + [_____] = [_____]

_____

Magical   [_____] + [_____] + [_____] = [_____]

_____

_____

Endur.   Damage Taken   Mana Points (5 x Magical Bonus)   Total XP = Spent + Earned

[_____|_____]   [_____|_____]   [_____] = [_____] + [_____]

Native Language   Trade Language Rank   Trade Language Rank   Trade Language Rank   Trade Language Rank

[_____|**X**|**X**] [_____|__|__] [_____|__|__] [_____|__|__] [_____|__|__]

Equipment:

Armor	DB	Subt	Move	Magic	Notes	Encum	Price
_____	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	_____	[___]	[___]

Weapon	Type	Init	MeOB	MiOB	AD	Range	Notes	Encum	Price
_____	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	[___]	_____	[___]	[___]

Miscellaneous:

Item	Notes	Encum	Price
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]
_____	_____	[___]	[___]

Coinage: _____

Encumbrance Limit: [____]   Totals: [____] [____]

Skill Group Maneuvers:

[_____] Melee OB Skill Group

[_____] Unarmed Combat

[_____] Knives

[_____] Swords

[_____] Axe/Mace/Hammer

[_____] Spear/Polearm

[_____] Staff (w/ automatic parry)

[_____] Parry (w/ trained weapons)

[_____] Dual Attack (w/ trained weapons)

[_____] Missile OB Skill Group

[_____] Bows

[_____] Crossbow

[_____] Sling

[_____] Knives

[_____] Axe/Hammer

[_____] Spear

[_____] Pitch (stones, grapnels, etc.)

[_____] Ranged Spell Attack

[_____] General Skill Group

[_____] Climbing

[_____] Riding

[_____] Swimming

[_____] Jumping

[_____] Cooking

[_____] First Aid/Herbal Healing

[_____] Trade/Craft _____

[_____] Trade/Craft _____

[_____] Subterfuge Skill Group

[_____] Stalk/Hide

[_____] Pick Locks

[_____] Pick Pockets

[_____] Disarm/Set Traps

[_____] Forgery

[_____] Trickery

[_____] Art/Music

[_____] Perception Skill Group

[_____] Spot Traps/Hidden

[_____] Naturalism

[_____] Tracking

[_____] Persuasion

[_____] Detect Lies

[_____] Weather Sense

[_____] Navigation/Orienteering

[_____] Magical Skill Group[†]

[_____] Read Runes/Script[†]

[_____] Cast Spells*

[_____] Sense Magic Objects/Beings

[_____] Sense Magic Spells

[_____] Alchemy (Potions, etc.)[†]

[_____] Enchantment (Scrolls, etc.)

Notes: [†] Only Read Runes/Script and Alchemy can be used if a Character's Magical Skill Group bonus is less than +1.
* Cast Spells can only be used if a Character's Magical Skill Group bonus is +1 or higher **at Character Creation.**

Potion Formulae Learned:

Item	Healing	Prep[†]	Price	Notes
[__] Wolfwort	1	+1	2c	Leathery leaves; also speeds healing by 2x for four hours
[__] Fishfeather	2	+1	2c	Feathery plumes
[__] Arroweed	3	+0	6c	Triangular seeds; also neutralizes any animal venom
[__] Hart's Glory	4	-1	1s	Thin petals; also speeds healing by 2x for eight hours
[__] Nightrod	6*	-2	3s	Small cones; * restores Mana Points instead of Endurance
[__] Stagberry	6	-3	25c	Bitter berries; also speeds healing by 3x for eight hours
[__] Snowbane	8	-2	8c	Fleshy leaves
[__] Gemberry	12	-3	3s	Bright red berries; also neutralizes any plant poison
[__] Athelas	18	-4	5s	(aka Kingsfoil); also cures any disease (natural or magical)
[__] Queensfan	NA	-5	20g	Gold leaves; one leaf sets Damage = ½ Endurance, even if dead (< one day)
[__] Sarah's Root	NA	-2	6c	Small bulb; when eaten, one prepared bulb equals a full day's rations
[__] Aule's Boon	NA	-3	3s	Bitter leaf; tea gives +1 Strength (plus Me OB & General) Bonus for two hours
[__] Goodwort	NA	-2	4c	Small seeds; tea gives +1 General bonus for 1D3 hours
[__] Bright Eyes	NA	-2	1s	Blue petals; tincture gives +2 Perception Bonus in darkness for four hours
[__] Celandine	-10	-3	5c	Sap; on a sharp weapon it adds +10 Additional Damage to the attack (once/dose)
[__] Snakeroot	NA	-2	1s	Root extract; ingested it causes an "Attack" of 2D6+2 (no DB) each of 2D3 hours
[__] _____	____	____	____	_____
[__] _____	____	____	____	_____
[__] _____	____	____	____	_____
[__] _____	____	____	____	_____

Spells Learned:

Sorcerer Spells [__]

[__] **Analyze Item** [3] Cast on item, allows caster to know the special properties (if any) of item. Caster must touch item. Item "resists" with the Magical Bonus of the person who made it (GM will assign a number). One attempt/item/day. If caster sees some of the item's powers in action first, then detailed info can be obtained at a +3 to caster's Magical bonus. The success roll should be made secretly by GM.

[__] **Concentration** [3] Gives a +2 bonus to the Perception of the target character for 10 minutes.

[__] **Firebolt** [5] Missile Attack (RSA = [+1], AD = [2 x Magical Bonus], Range 100'). Affects physical Undead, but does not affect Spirits. This spell causes light, flammable materials to ignite (e.g. cloth, thin wood, parchment, dry grass and leaves, lamp oil, etc.).

[__] **Ice Arrow** [6] Missile Attack (RSA = [+2], AD = [2 x Magical Bonus], Range 100'). AD = (Magical Bonus) vs. physical Undead, but does not affect Spirits. AD = (3 x Magical Bonus) vs. creatures of a fiery nature.

[__] **Light** [3] Cast on an object, creates light equal to a moonlit night (-2 to Perception, instead of -4) for 2D6+3 hours. Radius of 25'.

[__] **Lightning** [6] **Defensive spell** / Missile Attack (RSA = Magical Bonus, AD = Magical Bonus). **All** within 5' (Melee range) of caster are affected. If spell damage is more than ¼ of the target's original Endurance points, the target is Stunned (cannot attack or move) for [Magical Bonus] rounds. Some foes (e.g. Undead) may be resistant or immune to Stun.

[__] **Mage Lock** [5] Seals a door or gate and adds [Magical Bonus] to the difficulty level to break it down by force, for one hour.

[__] **Mage Shield** [4] On caster only, this spell doubles the caster's Magical Bonus for resisting hostile magic spells and adds the caster's normal Magical Bonus to his DB vs. spells that make a Missile Attack. Lasts for one day, or until one spell is successfully resisted/avoided.

[__] **Shield** [4] **Defensive spell.** This will increase the Defensive Bonus (DB) of the target character by +2 for six rounds.

Healer Spells [__]

[__] **Calm** [4] Target is any living animal or humanoid being. If successful, the Calmed being will not attack caster, or those within 25' of caster, unless attacked itself. This will last as long as the caster is within sight of target and target is not attacked. Spell range is 100'.

[__] **Charm Beast** [5] Cast on any normal animal (hostile or not), it will befriend caster and can be sent to fight caster's foes. The animal will remain with the caster until involved in one fight, then it will leave peacefully. The caster may only have one Charmed animal at a time. Range 50'.

[__] **Grace** [3] Increases the General and Subterfuge bonuses of the target character by +2 for five minutes.

[__] **Healing** [4+X] Spell heals 4+X points of Damage immediately, then allows the target to heal 6 points per hour as long as the target is resting. Spell ends when the target is either fully healed or stops resting.

[__] **Rage** [4] This increases the target's Melee OB by +2, but adjusts his Defense Bonus by -1, for six rounds.

[__] **Shapeshift** [8] Caster assumes the shape of the totem animal of his clan/god/race/sect. Duration is 1D3+3 hours. When in animal form, caster only has a +1 Intelligence above the norm for that animal and can only indicate yes/no answers to simple questions. Friends of the caster are friends of the animal, foes of the caster are foes of the animal. In animal form, caster may not cast spells or use weapons.

[__] **Sleep** [6] If target is unaware of any foes (including caster), then spell will cause target to fall soundly asleep for 2D6+3 minutes (unless awakened by a very loud noise, deliberate shaking and/or taking Damage). Spell range is 50'.

[__] **Speed** [6] **Defensive spell.** The target character of this spell may perform two Actions per round for three rounds.

[__] **Steady Aim** [4] Increases the target character's Missile OB by +2 for six rounds.

[__] **Sustenance** [6] This has the same health effects on the target as having eaten a full day's rations and a full day's water.

Seer Spells [__]

[__] **Blessing** [9] Target character gets +1 to his Defensive Bonus until a "U" or "K" result occurs against him. Then the spell converts the result to just damage (character goes to a maximum of Damage Taken = Endurance) and then ends. Caster cannot Bless himself.

[__] **Bind** [16] Binds oaths and curses. Person stating oath/curse and one(s) targeted (if any) must all be within 50' of caster when cast. If a party to the oath/curse attempts to act contrary to oath/curse, he will suffer one Damage Point per hour until back in line or falls unconscious. This damage will not heal until he is obeying oath/curse. Oath/curse may not be structured to directly damage/kill any party to it.

[__] **Ghostspear** [6] Missile attack (RSA = [+1], AD = [2 x Magical Bonus], Range 100') that affects any (and only) Undead or Spirits. Target gets no Defensive Bonus from armor or shield vs. this spell.

[__] **Intuition** [5] When confronted with two to five choices, and limited information, gives caster a feeling for which is the "best" choice (based on simple criteria stated by caster). Momentary spell (on caster only), gives a single flash of insight. The success roll is rolled by GM.

[__] **Seek** [2] On caster only, this spell gives the direction to any one (possibly hidden) material, item, or person (within 300'). The caster must have a sample of the material, a similar item, or an object belonging to the person (respectively). The spell only lasts a moment. Subtract from the die roll if (material/item/object) held by caster is not an exact match for the target. The success roll to be rolled by GM.

[__] **Shadow Sight** [2] Allows caster (only) to see beyond this world and perceive the spirit world, invisible objects/beings, and auras of all beings. Perception for seeing in the physical world is at -2, though. Duration is 1D3+2 minutes. An aura shows a being's health, emotional state, race and special state (animal form, cursed, etc.). A separate Magical skill roll (rolled by GM) tells how much caster learns from an aura.

[__] **Spiritsafe** [4] **Defensive spell.** On caster only, but all within 10' of caster take only ½ normal Endurance drain from Ghosts, Specters, Barrow-wights, Wraiths, etc. and resist Fear effects at +3. Duration is 1D3+1 hours.

[__] [__] _____

[__] [__] _____

[__] [__] _____

[__] [__] _____

Creating a Character

1. Record Stat Bonus points
Select a character Race and add a Profession from the lists supplied (see **Player Character Races/Professions**, p. 16), and fill in the beginning stats in the **Stat** column of a blank Character Sheet. Make sure you determine a Defense value for your character.

2. Assign Skill Bonus points
Starting characters get six Skill Bonus points that can be added to the **Skill** column of their Skill Group stats: Melee OB, Missile OB, General, Subterfuge, Perception and Magical. At character creation, no more than three points can be added to any given stat (this may be exceeded later through Character Advancement). If you do not assign at least one point to a stat, it receives a -2 Skill bonus.

Instead of increasing a Skill Group, you may spend one skill bonus point to learn any combination of **two** of the following: A Spell, an Alchemy Formula, a Skill Group Maneuver (#6 below), or a Language Rank (see **Languages,** p. 24). For example, for one Skill Bonus point, you may buy two Spells, or you may buy one Alchemy Formula and one Language Rank, or you may buy one Spell and one Maneuver, etc. Your character must have a Magical skill bonus of +1 or higher, **as part of character creation**, to Cast Spells.

3. Shift a Base Stat
In addition to the six skill bonus points you can apply to your character, you may also shift one (and only one) point from one Base Stat to another (Strength, Agility, Intelligence, Movement and Endurance).
- A one-point increase or decrease in:
    - **Strength** also adjusts Melee OB and General bonuses up or down by one point.
    - **Agility** also adjusts Missile OB and Subterfuge bonuses up or down by one point.
    - **Intelligence** also adjusts Perception and Magical bonuses up or down by one point.
- When adjusting **Endurance**, one Base Stat point = 15 Endurance points.
- When adjusting **Movement**; one Base Stat point = 2 Movement points.
- **Defense** is not directly modifiable since it is defined as the average of your character's Agility & Movement bonuses, round up.

4. Record Racial and Gender Traits
Each race has a specific **Special Ability** (below), which provides a specific Stat Bonus when used, and a balancing **Negative Character Trait**. See **Character Traits** (p. 23) for details and examples. Also, apply any **Gender Traits** (p. 24).

Hobbits	- All have a +3 Magical Resistance, plus an appropriate Negative Character Trait.
Dwarves	- All have a +3 Magical Resistance, plus an appropriate Negative Character Trait.
Elves	- All have Elven Sight, plus an appropriate Negative Character Trait.
Half-Elves	- Elven Sight is allowed as a Special Ability, with an appropriate Negative Character Trait, but it's optional.
Humans (Beorning)	- Many have Animal Form (Bear) as a Special Ability (with Neg. Trait) and are taller/stronger than other Humans.
Humans (Other)	- The most adaptable Race. Humans have no set Racial Traits.

Resistance:	A Magical *or* Intelligence bonus (whichever is higher), but only for resisting magic spells or enchantments.
Elven Sight:	[Elves & Half-Elves only] +1 Perception, MeOB and MiOB in daylight, +2 under starlight or moonlight.
Animal Form:	Can take the form of any one animal (decide at character creation) once per day for up to four hours. When in Animal Form, the character retains his/her same Intelligence stat, but not the ability to speak or cast spells.

5. Choose Character Traits
Your character also receives **one each** of the following three Positive Character Traits (beyond any Racial Traits), and optionally a Negative Character Trait of your choice. See **Character Traits** (p. 23), for detailed examples.
Note: You may give up one of your Positive Traits in order to forgo taking a Negative Trait, e.g. one from your Race.
- **Specialization**: An area of interest and/or training (e.g. Healer, Scribe, Merchant, Smith, Hunter, Tracker, Farmer, Bard, etc.). A current or former job perhaps. This may give an extra bonus, usually to a particular Maneuver within a Skill Group or even a couple of Maneuvers (but only in certain circumstances).
- **Special Ability**: A talent or birthright (e.g. dowsing, eidetic memory, noble birth, sense of direction, lost heir, sense evil, second sight, luck, night vision, etc.) that may give a bonus to a stat in some circumstances.
- **Special Item**: An object (heirloom, gift, treasure, credentials; magical or not) that may give a bonus when used. e.g. Mages often create their own Mage Staff as part of their training (extends "touch" range and also stores 10 Mana points); and the silver star pin of the Rangers of the North gives +1 Defense, as well as being their credentials.
- **Negative Character Trait**: This is some sort of setback (Cursed, Greedy, Impulsive, Lame, etc.) that your character must deal with. It usually involves a penalty to your character's stats, and you should role-play this aspect of your character (or else the GM may award fewer experience points to your character). Taking a Negative Trait may be used to offset one Positive Trait to allow you to take a second one (with GM approval). Some of these Negative Traits are more prevalent among particular races, as is indicated in the Negative Character Traits list (p. 23), but you may choose most any Negative Trait from the list.

6. Choose Skill Group Maneuvers

On the Character Sheet there is a list of individual Maneuvers under a heading for each Skill Group. Next to each Skill Group and Maneuver there is a space [_] for a mark to be made. First, you should write your character's current overall bonus for each of the six Skill Groups (#1 above) in the appropriate box. Next, you should fill in any positive or negative bonuses to individual Maneuvers your character may have acquired through a Specialization, Special Ability or Negative Trait (#5 above). Last, you are allowed **12 Marks** with which to choose from the remaining Skill Group Maneuvers (place an "X" on 12 different unnumbered Maneuvers) to represent the Maneuvers your character has received training in up to now (see **Trained, Untrained and Standard Maneuvers**, p. 5). Note that you can also use one or more of these marks to "purchase" Magic Spells, Potion Formulae, or Language Ranks, instead of Maneuvers.

Here are guidelines on how to fill out the Skill Group Maneuvers on the Character Sheet:

1. If you have taken a Specialization or Special ability that gives you a positive bonus to a specific Maneuver, write that bonus in the appropriate box. This signifies that you are both trained in that maneuver, and have a special talent to perform it. **Add this bonus number** to the overall Skill Group bonus whenever your character attempts to use this particular maneuver. For example, a Bard is above average (+1) at both performing Art/Music(Subterfuge), and Persuasion(Perception) maneuvers. He would add a +1 to his overall Perception Skill Group bonus when attempting a Persuasion maneuver.

   Some Character Traits provide **Conditional Bonuses**. These represent maneuvers that your character has **trained,** but will only excel at (use the full bonus of) when the specified condition is met. For example, a Hunter has +1 to Spot Traps/Hidden (Perception) and +1 to Tracking(Perception), but only when in the wilderness. You should put an asterisk by these bonuses to signify that they are conditional, e.g., the Hunter would have a **(+1*)** next to his Spot Traps/Hidden(Perception) and his Tracking(Perception) maneuvers. *If this Hunter character had an overall Perception Skill Group bonus of +2, he would have a +3 bonus when Tracking his prey in the wilderness, but would be at +2 when tracking prey in any other environment.*

   A maneuver with penalties, e.g. due to a Negative Character Trait, is always considered **untrained** (-2 bonus), **in addition to** the listed penalty. These are permanent and can never be trained through Character Advancement. For example, a Naïve character has a permanent (-3) bonus (-1 bonus from the Trait and an additional -2 for untrained) to Detect Lies(Perception). He would add a -3 bonus to his overall Perception Skill Group bonus whenever attempting a Detect Lies maneuver.

2. If you choose to **train** a maneuver by spending one of your 12 Marks on it, **put an "X"** in the space. Your character is able to use it at the **same bonus level** as the overall Skill Group. *If the Hunter character in the example above chose to spend one of his 12 Maneuver Marks in Weather Sense, that means that he has been trained in that maneuver and would use it at the same bonus level as his overall Perception Skill Group bonus (+2).*

3. If you choose not to train a maneuver, **leave the space blank**. Your Character has **not been trained** yet in that maneuver and suffers a **-2 bonus** to the overall Skill Group bonus when attempting to use this maneuver. *If the Hunter character above decided not to train his Persuasion maneuver, he would suffer a -2 bonus against his overall Perception Skill Group bonus of +2, giving him a total bonus of +0 when performing a Persuasion(Perception) maneuver.*

7. Pick starting Equipment

Select basic equipment appropriate for your character and within your ability to carry. Some items may be limited by the GM. Each character also receives 50 copper coins (where 1 gold = 10 silver = 100 copper) for extra gear (one copper ~ $5 US). Unlike in most other systems, you don't need to purchase your starting equipment. Just select the durable equipment that makes sense for your character to have with him (with GM approval) and use your starting cash to buy consumables for the adventure.

(**GM guidance:** Determine how the player characters are starting out, based on their relationship to the local NPCs, to decide how "wealthy" the PCs are. Use your best judgment to keep the PCs from starting out with more than what is normal for NPCs of a similar class in a similar situation. In general, either none or all should start with mounts. Also, none should start with Plate armor (unless taken as a Special Item) and only Dwarves should be able to start with Chain, unless the scenario is to begin with the PCs already armed and marching to war, and then other Warriors might also have Chain.)

8. Determine Physical Traits and Languages

Fill in your character's appearance attributes. The formula for determining your character's Weight and Encumbrance Limit are found on the **Player Character Types** section (p. 16). Choose your starting languages from the **Languages** section (p. 24). Your Native Language is always at Rank 2. For your Trade Languages, put an "X" in the number of boxes corresponding to the number of Ranks you have learned in that language (one or two).

9. Elven and Half-Elven PCs

The PC race of Elves assumes the characters are Moriquendi (Nandor or Avari, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elf_(Middle-earth)). Sindar and Noldor Elves would be far more powerful, and therefore unbalanced, compared to other PC races. Also, Half-Elves are assumed to be the offspring of a Human and a Moriquendi Elf. All unions between Humans and either Noldor or Sindar Elves are well documented (and very rare), so offspring from these unions would also not make appropriate PCs. Half-Elven PCs can either be played as Humans with some Elvish characteristics or the reverse, depending on their background and upbringing.

Character Traits

Sample Specializations

Bard: +1 to Art/Music(Subterfuge) and +1 to Persuasion(Perception), while performing.

Blacksmith: +1 to Trade/Craft Metalworking(General).

Enchanter: +2 to Enchantment(Magical). An Enchanter is a specialized Mage who focuses on creating Spell Scrolls.

Farmer: +1 to Naturalism(Perception) and +1 to Weather Sense(Perception), when applied to crops and livestock.

Healer: +1 to First Aid/Herbal Healing(General), and +1 to Alchemy(Magical) (only for *healing* herbs and potions).

Hunter: +1 to Spot Traps/Hidden(Perception) and +1 to Tracking(Perception), when in the wilderness.

Merchant: +1 to Persuasion(Perception) and +1 to Detect Lies(Perception), but only when negotiating about trade goods.

Scribe: +2 to Read Runes/Script(Magical). A literate character (not necessarily a Mage) that professionally transcribes documents or manuscripts. This gives him a bonus to deciphering and using Spell Scrolls.

Soldier: +1 to the Melee maneuver of your choice. This can vary from a local sheriff (Unarmed Combat) to an elite Soldier of Gondor (Sword or Spear/Polearm).

Tracker: +1 to Tracking(Perception), and +1 to Stalk/Hide(Subterfuge), when in the wilderness.

Note: Generally, you may choose to specialize in **any one** specific Maneuver for a +1 bonus, or in **two** for a conditional +1 in each.

Sample Special Abilities

Authority: +1 or +2 social, legal, military or professional rank; may grant you hospitality or aid, but also includes duties.

Berserk: +2 Strength, +2 Me OB, -2 DB, will not Parry and "U" results become just damage; once/day for one combat. Cannot stop fighting until all foes you can perceive are dead/unconscious, have surrendered or have fled.

Constitution: Take ½ normal damage from [heat], [cold], or [poison/venom/disease] (decide at character creation).

Dowsing: Can "feel" the direction to a well-described item or person within (Perception x 300') range.

Eidetic Memory: +3 Intelligence when performing a roll to remember critical information, instructions or formulae.

Lost Heir: Unknown, hidden, taken or escaped heir to some position of power (and responsibility).

Luck: Once per game session, you may have any one adverse die roll, by or against you, re-rolled. Must take 2nd roll.

Night Vision: +2 Perception and Me/Mi OB whenever not in daylight; -1 Perception and Me/Mi OB in daylight.

Reputation: +1/-1 or +2/-2 with allies/enemies; may receive hospitality/hostility if recognized or revealed.

Second Sight: See spirits (ghosts, etc.) as if they were living beings; spirits will often recognize you have this ability.

Sense Evil: You can feel if any being that reveres Morgoth or Sauron is within (Perception x 50').

Sense of Direction: Always knows where North is and gets +2 Navigation/Orienteering(Perception) when above ground.

Sample Negative Character Traits

Some of the Negative Character Traits are more prevalent in particular races. This is indicated by the race name in [brackets] below, but most are seen among all races to one degree or another.

Cowardly: You shun combat. You are at -2 Me/Mi OB to the first attack you make vs. **each** opponent in any encounter.

Cursed: As per the Bind spell, you must (or must not) do something important or you start taking damage.

Distracted: You do not notice things around you. You have a -3 Perception Bonus to "Passive" Perception rolls, i.e. rolls the GM may have you make to see if you notice something you are not actively searching for.

Enemies: You have a group, or powerful individual, (run by the GM) that is actively looking to do you harm.

Gambler: You take risks. Besides gambling at the local tavern, you take risks in combat (hoping for larger shares of the loot). You may have certain individuals or groups (run by the GM) after you to collect on old debts.

Greedy: [Dwarves] You are always after the largest stake of the treasure. When buying goods, you always try to haggle. In combat, you always go after the wealthiest looking enemy. You are always the first to "loot the room."

Impulsive: [Beornings] You are brash and headstrong, and prefer action over words. If your party lingers too long (coming up with a sound plan of action, etc.), you will lose your patience and jump into action. They may perform a Contest of Skills, Persuasion(Perception) at a **(-4)** penalty vs. your Intelligence, to persuade you differently.

Jealous: [Half-Elves] You react poorly to anyone who seems smarter or more popular than you. You will resist any plan presented by a "rival," and will hate it if someone else steals your limelight.

Lame: Permanent disability to one or both legs; -1 to Movement, and -10 to Endurance for long distance traveling.

Naïve: [Hobbits] You are at -1 to Detect Lies(Perception). If you fail the check, you must act as if being told the truth. If friends try to persuade you differently, they must perform a Contest of Skills, Persuasion(Perception) vs. that of the other party (or else at -4 against *your* Intelligence), to get you to believe them.

Night Blind: [not Elves] -2 Perception, Melee OB and Missile OB when not in daylight.

Oath-bound: You have vowed to do (or not do) something and you take it very seriously. Some examples: use no edged weapons; never sleep indoors; own no more than your horse can carry; never refuse a request for aid; etc.

Proud: [Elves] You must be Lawful. You always act in a haughty fashion. You always avenge an insult. You always engage in a fair fight, and never take advantage of an opponent.

Phobias:	Unnatural fear of some object, creature or situation; -1 Intelligence (and corresponding -1 Perception and -1 Magical Skill Bonuses) and -1 Agility (with -1 Missile OB and -1 Subterfuge) when confronted.

Samples:

- Manaphobia:	[Humans, Hobbits] Fear of Magic. Suffer Phobia penalties while in the presence of a hostile Mage or an opponent wielding a powerful magic item.
- Spectrophobia:	[Dwarves] Fear of Spirits. Suffer Phobia penalties while in the presence of ghosts or other spectral Undead.
- Speleophobia:	[Elves] Fear of Caves. Suffer Phobia penalties while underground (natural or worked).

Stubborn:	[Dwarves] You always want your own way. Others may have to perform a Contest of Skills, Persuasion (Perception) at a **(-4)** penalty vs. your Intelligence, for you to go along with reasonable plans, if not *yours*.
Truthful:	You are at -1 to Trickery(Subterfuge). You hate to tell a lie (or are just bad at it). To tell a lie (including lying by omission), you must make a Trickery(Subterfuge) maneuver vs. your opponent's Detect Lies(Perception).
Unlucky:	Once per game session, the GM may "surprise" you with bad luck (make you miss a vital die roll, the enemy may show up at the worst possible time, etc.). If anything bad happens to the group, it happens at least to you.
Weak Willed:	You are easily persuaded, bullied, tempted, frightened, coerced, etc. You have a -2 to your Intelligence when resisting another's Persuasion(Perception) maneuver, or any Fear effect.
Weakness:	Take 2x normal damage from [heat], [cold], or [poison/venom/disease] (decide at character creation).

Gender Traits

Physical differences in player characters are also based on their gender. In general, females are 8% shorter and 20% lighter than males of the same race and ethnic group. You can extend this to say, everything else being equal, that females will have a -1 Strength (plus Melee OB and General), but a +1 Agility (plus Missile OB and Subterfuge) compared to their male counterparts. Encumbrance limit is affected by both the reduced character weight and by reduced Strength, but Defense may be improved due to increased Agility.

Languages

There are two ranks to each language. The first affords only a basic speaking knowledge of that language. The second is equivalent to being able to speak the language fluently. Characters who are trained in the **Read Runes/Script(Magical)** maneuver also become literate in a language, if a written form exists, as they reach rank 2 in that language. Use an **Intelligence** roll to understand normal written works. Only use a roll against **Magical** when trying to understand arcane texts or magical runes. Carved runes use a form called *Cirth*, while script is written in a form called *Tengwar*.

At Character Creation, each character receives one Native language for free at skill rank 2. A character may buy one or two ranks in various other Trade languages, but a player character's Native language is always at rank 2. Additional language ranks can be acquired by spending Skill points (2 ranks per Skill point) at Character Creation (p. 21), spending Maneuver "marks" (one per rank, p.22) or by spending 50 experience points per rank as part of Character Advancement (p. 25) during play.

In the time frame of a role-playing game, no character will be able to learn a new language well enough to be considered a native speaker. A true native speaker will always be allowed a Perception roll to detect if a fluent speaker (Rank 2) tries to pass himself off as a native speaker by using Trickery(Subterfuge). Only two characters speaking the same language at rank 2 require no **Intelligence rolls** (adjusted by complexity of concepts) to see if they understand each other. A character can only learn a language from someone else who knows it, and then only to the rank that the teacher knows.

As most games of MEAG take place between TA 2790 and TA 3018, we will begin with this as our standard for which languages are heard and learned most often. The **Humans** of Eriador (west of the Misty Mountains) and Gondor generally speak *Westron* as their native tongue. Dunlendings and the Hillmen of Rhudar speak their own dialects of *Dunael*, but a few will also speak *Westron*. The Humans of Rhovanian (east of the Misty Mountains) speak one of five dialects of *Northron,* but most learn some *Westron* for trading. The Humans of Rohan speak *Rohirric* and *Westron*. **Human Mages** will also learn *Quenya* (language of the Noldor) and/or *Adunaic* (language of Numenor) as their language of Magic (for books and scrolls). Magic can be learned without these languages, but must then be done through personal tutoring. The **Hobbits** of the Shire are fairly insular and speak their own dialect of *Westron*, but those of Bree will usually pick up some other languages, too. The **Dwarves** have their own native tongue (*Khuzdul*) but since they do not teach this to any other people, they will all learn (at least) *Westron* for trading purposes. Due to their frequent battles with the **Orcs**, Dwarves often learn a bit of *Orcish* to gain information. The **Elves** of Eriador and those of Lorien generally speak *Sindarin* as their native tongue. The Elves of Rhovanian generally speak *Nandorin* as their native tongue, but most will learn some *Sindarin*. Elves that come in contact with the Noldor and/or who practice magic will also learn *Quenya*. If an Elf travels much, he will pick up Human languages as he goes (esp. *Westron*). Elves often learn some *Orcish* due to their frequent clashes with the Orcs.

Orc tribes each speak their own dialect of *Orcish*, but can communicate with each other either by dropping down to a trade (basic) form of *Orcish* or using crude *Westron*. **Trolls** will usually speak a simplistic form of the local *Orcish* dialect and/or *Westron*. Only a few of the servants of Sauron (usually **Nazgul, Black Mages, Uruk-hai leaders** or **Olog-hai Trolls**) will speak true *Black Speech*, though some words of it find their way into the various *Orcish* dialects.

Alignment and Leaning

These are concepts drawn from Dungeons and Dragons (by TSR/WotC), but they mesh well with Tolkien's world view for Middle-earth. In general, **Alignment** (Good, Neutral, Evil) represents how well a character obeys the spirit of Eru's law on how the peoples of Middle-earth should behave (from empathetic altruism to sadistic selfishness). While **Leaning** (Lawful, Neutral, Chaotic) represents how well the character adheres to the letter of the law (and traditions) of the society to which he belongs (from model citizen to criminal). Each can be represented as a bonus, from +2 to -2, in each category. Whenever the concepts of Alignment and Leaning are applied, it is recommended that the GM adjust the experience points each character receives by how well (or poorly) the PC was able to accomplish his mission while staying "within character." If a PC completely steps out of character (e.g. a Very Good/Very Lawful (+2/+2) character murders a helpless innocent), then it is even justified to take away some experience points already awarded (as well as having the character deal with the in-game consequences of the action).

Advancement

MEAG is a non-leveled gaming system. You do not gain new skills or increase attributes by going up a level. Instead, you spend your earned **Experience Points (XP)** to buy new skills and attributes. Here are the available Character Advancements and their cost in XP:

XP Spent	Buys this:
50 points:	- A new Spell (within your selected tradition) - A new Alchemy Formula - A new Maneuver within a Skill Group - A new Language Rank
75 points:	- A new Spell from outside your selected tradition
100 points:	- A +1 bonus to a Skill Group - +5 points added to the Endurance Stat
150 points:	- +1 bonus to the Movement Stat (may affect Defense bonus)

300 points:	- A +1 bonus to a Base Stat (Strength, Agility or Intelligence) and any Skill Groups related to it
	  - A one-point increase in:
	     - **Strength** also increases Melee OB and General bonuses by one point.
	     - **Agility** also increases Missile OB and Subterfuge bonuses by one point (may affect Defense bonus).
	     - **Intelligence** also increases Perception and Magical bonuses by one point.

Notes: - A character must find a suitable scroll, book, or teacher and receive the appropriate training before actually spending the XP on advancement.
- Skill Groups are easier to improve at Character Creation than with Experience Points. When improving a Skill Group (even one that received a -2 bonus at Character Creation) with Experience Points, 100 XP buys a straight +1 bonus and no more; i.e. a -2 becomes a -1, a -1 becomes a +0, a +0 becomes a +1, and so on.
- Since a character's Defensive Bonus is the average of Agility and Movement (round up), refigure DB after making any changes to either.

(**GM guidance:** XP should be awarded evenly between the party members for handling encounters or accomplishing missions/quests. This is to encourage them to act cooperatively as to their strengths, and not competitively. Bonus XP may be awarded to a particular character for extraordinary performance (great ideas, great role-play, etc.) but this should be relatively rare. Here is a rough guideline to use in determining how many XP to award to each character: 10-15 XP per simple Random Encounter. 50 XP for hitting a major milestone. 100 XP or so when the party completes a mission/quest/scenario.)

Part VI: Optional Rules

This section presents optional rules that are not necessary to play the game, but can add additional depth to your role-playing.

Stunning Blows During Combat

If a combatant takes more than ¼ of his original Endurance points from a single attack, he is Stunned and loses his next Action (he may not Move or Attack, but can always Defend) whether it's this round or the next (depending on Initiatives).

Coup de Grace & the Law

In the heat of battle, the characters themselves do not know exactly when an opponent falls unconscious or dies (this is actually player knowledge from seeing the die rolls). Therefore, if a character gives a fallen opponent an extra hit during a heated melee ("just to make sure"), it is not looked down upon by the law. Taking a separate combat round to properly place a weapon for a killing strike against an unconscious opponent (handled as automatic death), though, is considered murder by nearly all societies.

Size & Scale

With player characters (PCs) that can vary significantly in size from each other, there will occasionally be questions of scale when discussing weapons, armor and equipment worn on the body. Generally speaking, equipment for Elves, Dwarves and Humans all weigh about the same (Dwarves may be shorter, but have a broader build than other races). Equipment made for Hobbits will be approximately ½ the size and weight of equipment made for Humans and Elves. Equipment sized for Human or Elf children will often fit Hobbits reasonably well. Equipment designed for Dwarves (except weapons and shields) will generally not fit any other PC race and vice versa. All races may use the weapons and shields of Dwarves without change. They will be somewhat small for Elves and Humans, and large for Hobbits, but not enough to worry about. For missile weapons, Hobbits and Dwarves may only use standard (Short) Bows, while Elves and Humans may also use Longbows (which are about six feet tall). Any race can use Crossbows, but if you want additional realism, state that Crossbows take (1 - Strength Bonus) extra rounds (minimum of one) to reload. Thus weaker PCs (with negative Strength bonuses) will be at a disadvantage using them.

The size of equipment from Orcs will vary a great deal, as Orcs range in height from 4' (for Snaga breeds) to 6' (for Uruk-hai). The GM will need to determine the relative size and usefulness of Orc equipment when the situation occurs. Equipment actually made for Trolls will be too big for any PC race to use, though Trolls occasionally "make do" with items made for other races (e.g. using a Human sword as a long knife, a Dwarf battleaxe as a hatchet, etc.).

Hypothermia & Overheating

Depending on a character's clothing (see the equipment list) and the weather (cold and/or wet), the characters can take damage from hypothermia if they don't have shelter or a fire. Characters at a temperature one level colder than the rating of their clothes take five Damage per hour, double that rate for each level colder they are exposed to. Getting their clothes wet (rain or snow) effectively moves them one level colder. A cloak prevents the damp from penetrating. Wearing clothes too warm for the weather has the effect of two Damage per hour due to overheating, if active. Double this rate for each additional level of clothing. For each 10 points taken due to hypothermia or overheating, **all** stats take a -1 bonus until that damage is healed.

Converting from other Systems

Converting characters from Middle-earth Role Playing (MERP), Rolemaster, or Call of Cthulhu (CoC) to MEAG, will require some approximation. In general, take a MERP/RM/CoC stat or skill level, divide it by "10" and subtract "4" to get an equivalent MEAG stat or skill bonus. Average the MERP/RM/CoC skill levels found in a MEAG Skill Group to get a group bonus. If one MERP/RM/CoC skill level stands out, then consider noting that as a Specialization for the MEAG character. Halve MERP/RM Hit Points to give a MEAG Endurance. CoC hit points should be doubled to give a MEAG Endurance. MERP/RM/CoC weapon, armor, OB and DB bonuses should be divided by 10 (round up) to get a MEAG bonus. For GURPS characters, Attributes and Skills should be multiplied by 2/3 and then subtract "7" to get an equivalent MEAG bonus, and then approximate Skill Groups as above. Spell lists from other systems will have to be greatly pared down to fit with the MEAG spell list. Magic is lower key in MEAG than in other systems. If you add new spells to the MEAG list, be careful they don't unbalance the game.

While MEAG is a non-leveled gaming system, it might be useful to be able to equate MEAG XP to other systems. One MEAG XP is equal to one LOR XP. 300 MEAG XPs is roughly equal to 10,000 MERP/RM XPs, which is the equivalent of going up one level (for Levels one through five at least). This can further be adapted to the leveled gaming system of your choice by setting 300 MEAG XPs equal to the XPs required to gain a level in that system.

Part VII: Setting

MEAG Setting

If you are using the original ICE Lord of the Rings Adventure Game modules ("Dawn Comes Early", "Darker Than The Darkness", and "Over The Misty Mountains Cold"), I find that it works best to set the time period at Third Age 2990, but you will need to adjust some of the encounters with NPCs if you do this. This is about fifty years after Bilbo Baggins had his great adventure (TA 2941) and returned to the Shire with the One Ring, but still almost thirty years before the events of the War of the Ring (TA 3018-19).

At this point, the Orcs and Wargs of the Grey and northern Misty Mountains are still reduced in numbers from the Battle of Five Armies and Sauron has been driven from Dol Guldor (TA 2941). Though he has openly declared himself in Mordor (TA 2951) and sent three Nazgul back to manage Dol Guldor, Mirkwood is a bit less dangerous than before. The liberation of the Lonely Mountain from Smaug (TA 2941) has greatly increased the traffic along the Great Road (mostly Dwarves traveling between Erebor and the Blue Mountains), and the rebuilding of Lake Town and Dale with Smaug's treasure has greatly increased travel and commerce along the River Running. Also, Saruman hasn't yet fallen under the spell of Sauron by using the Palantir of Orthanc (not until about TA 3000). Altogether, this means that NW Middle-earth is in the midst of a minor renaissance with goods and services more readily available, and opportunities for travel and exploration more common, than earlier or later in this part of the Third Age.

Another bonus is that most of the major players in the War of the Ring (except some of the Hobbits) are around.

- Bilbo (born TA 2890) is now one hundred, but might still be coaxed into an adventure if it's not too far from the Shire.
- Frodo (born TA 2968) is twenty-two, but not yet inclined to adventuring. You may be able to entice him into his first adventure.
- Sam (born TA 2983) is only seven, and Merry and Pippin have not been born yet.
- Barliman Butterbur is a boy of about twelve and helps his father, Otho, run the Prancing Pony Inn.
- Gollum, since about TA 2944, has been out seeking the Ring. By now he has encountered Shelob and is scouting Mordor.
- Gandalf is still traveling across Middle-earth fighting Evil and looking for clues to the nature of Bilbo's ring.
- Aragorn is about sixty years old, has already proposed to Arwen (TA 2980) and is out defending Eriador from Evil.
- Theoden is King of Rohan (since TA 2980). Grima Wormtongue has not yet become an advisor to the King.
- Theodred, son of Theoden, is young (about eighteen) and an able horseman.
- Eomer and Eowyn are yet to be born.
- Denethor II is Steward of Gondor (since TA 2984). Boromir and Faramir are still young boys (about ten and eight).
- Bain, son of Bard, is King of Dale (since TA 2977).
- Balin (with others) has established a Dwarf-colony in eastern Moria (since TA 2989) and will hold it until disaster in TA 2994.
- Dain is still King of Erebor (since TA 2941).
- Gimli is a young dwarf, about forty years old and living in Erebor.
- Legolas is still living in the Halls of the Elven King. He and Gimli may know *of* each other, but have not yet met.

All in all, this makes the environment reasonably familiar to those who have read the novels and/or seen the movies, but puts the players far enough away from the events of either story that they won't feel it necessary to involve themselves in those events – giving them greater freedom to choose their own path in the world.

Alternate Setting

SO WHERE AND WHEN DO YOU SET YOUR LOTR ADVENTURE GAME CAMPAIGN?

Okay, boys and girls, this is Steve Hess in full rant mode. I love Middle Earth, I love Tolkien's vision of reality, especially his Dwarves; hell, I'm on the waiting list for a large-sized post office box at Erebor. Gimme that ten thousand year history; gimme the overly-technical language of The Silmarillion and the English-countryside homespun simplicity of The Hobbit. I'll take it all in heaping portions. My own role-playing experience with Middle Earth is extensive, starting with home-grown AD&D stuff circa 1981, switching to MERP and Rolemaster by 1986. My collection of MERP adventures is, I believe, complete, as is my collection of Tolkien writings. I reread the trilogy once per year, every September, with touches on the other works in between. I've seen Movie #1 with my wife nine times, and plan to see it again as soon as the Two Towers trailer gets attached to it.

So where do I set my Middle Earth campaigns?

THIRD AGE 2790, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!! And here's why:

I. T.A. 2790 allows for maximum player identification with the world they know from the books.

Every realm present in LotR, T.A. 3018, is present in 2790 in almost exactly the same configuration, and 2790 is virtually identical to the world of The Hobbit. Smaug has occupied the Lonely Mountain for 20 years; the Necromancer rules from Dol Guldur; Gondor and Rohan are recovering from the Long Winter invasions of 2758-59, but are similar in frontier and strength to their War of the Ring counterparts; The Shire is a thriving community. Equally as important, the empty places of LotR are the empty places of 2790. Only ghosts parade down the ruined streets of Fornost Erain, called Deadman's Dike by the ignorant; Angmar is a wasteland, home to wolves and scavengers; Osgiliath is a shattered wreck; the Anduin Vales are home only to scattered Beorning settlements.

The major differences between 2790 and 3018?
1- Mordor is not formally occupied by the Dark Lord Sauron, and Mount Doom is quiescent. Orc-tribes and groups of Trolls most certainly infest the lower reaches of every ruined keep and citadel, and one or more Nazgul coordinate Sauron's efforts across the area.
2- Tharbad, old capital of Cardolan, is not yet deserted. Sacked centuries before by the armies of the Witch-king of Angmar, it has become a free-town of traders and thieves only a fraction of its former size.
3- Dol Guldur is at the height of its power, with Sauron (barely disguised as the Necromancer) in residence and in full control. Southern Mirkwood, and all the realms and wastes around it, are enormously dangerous, perhaps just as dangerous as the lower Anduin was with all the servants of Sauron searching for the Ring-bearer in early 3019…

II. And now, the Roster of Important Persons, In No Particular Order

Steward of Gondor?

- **Beregond**. He will rule to 2811. His father, Beren, was Steward when the Long Winter invasions occurred.

King of Rohan?

- **Frealaf Hildeson**, nephew of Helm Hammerhand, is elderly (d. 2798) and his realm has only begun to rebuild from the Dunlending invasion.

Thain of the Shire?

- **Fortinbras Took**. His son, Gerontius, who will become famous as "The Old Took" and the grandfather of Bilbo Baggins, was born this year.

Chieftain of the Rangers of the North?

- **Arathorn I,** great-great-grandfather of Aragorn II. He will roam the wilds of Eriador for another 58 years.

[Also, Gandalf is as active across Middle-earth in T.A. 2790+ as he is just before the War of the Ring. – Editor]

The realms of the Firstborn in 2790 are identical to their 3018 counterparts. Celebrian, wife of Elrond, departed over the Sea in 2510, so the cast of Rivendell is set. Lorien hasn't really changed since the War of the Last Alliance…and who can say for certain what transpires in the Grey Havens under the guidance of Cirdan the Shipwright? Pretty much everyone who goes there KEEPS GOING WEST…

I know what you're saying. You're saying, "Steve, you forgot something. What about the Dwarves?"

Yeah…I know. "What about the Dwarves" is the BIG question here, folks. "What about the Dwarves" is the CENTRAL, HUGE HONKIN' QUESTION. See, I love 'em, as I said earlier. I love 'em, their whole tragic history, their attitude problems, and especially their capacity for slaying Morgoth's creatures on an ongoing basis.

Determining the leadership of Durin's Folk in Third Age 2790 is a difficult matter. You see, sometime early in the year, King Thror, who had escaped from the sack of Erebor by Smaug with his son and grandson 20 years before, wandered away from Dunland and ended up as food for crows outside the East-gate of Moria with the name of his murderer branded on his forehead: AZOG. When Nar, his only companion, brought the news back to Thror's son, Thrain, he brooded for a week and then declared genocidal war against the Orcs of the Misty Mountains.

III. So, You Want the Real Reason?

This is the REAL reason that I love 2790 as a setting for games in Middle Earth:
The War of the Dwarves and Orcs is about to start!
Mass combat! Ancient treasures!
Hideously powerful creatures crawling out of the very depths of the earth!
Powers vast and terrible unleashed to destroy!

And all of it, all of it, taking place OUT OF SIGHT. The war was fought almost exclusively far underground, beneath the Misty and Grey Mountains, far from the sight of the surface world and all those curious Elves and Men.

Third Age 2790 allows players of a Lord of the Rings Adventure Game campaign to experience the full range of heroic adventure, from silent and solitary scouting all the way up to massive military campaigns involving creatures of Darkness and treasures of ages long past, WITHOUT IMPACTING THE HISTORY OF MIDDLE EARTH IN ANY WAY!

IV. Textual Analysis…

Very little has been published about the War of the Dwarves and Orcs. There are references to the war in The Hobbit and a description in Appendix A of The Lord of the Rings. As far as consequences are concerned, Rohan had to endure Orc refugees fleeing south, and their King Walda is slain by these Orcs almost a century after the W.D.O. was over. There's not a lot else to interfere with GM creativity.

That's it. I'm tired, the medication is kickin' in, and my vision's getting blurry. Email me if you have any questions, and remember: J.R.R. Tolkien himself said that 'other hands' would be writing about Middle Earth long after he was gone. Insofar as his children, grand-children, and their legal representatives will allow it, we are his inheritors as well.

Baruk Khazad!

Steve Hess, Parsippany, NJ, March 7, 2002

[This "rant" by Steve Hess is used with full permission of the author. – Editors]

Appendix A: Skill Group Maneuvers

Melee OB Skill Group   **- Fighting hand to hand with or without weapons**
Unarmed Combat   – all aspects of brawling without weapons (punch, kick, tackle, wrestle, grapple, bite, etc.)
Knives   – use small bladed weapons for stabbing, slashing and cutting
Swords   – use long bladed weapons for thrusting and slashing
Axe/Mace/Hammer   – use top-heavy weapons that are usually swung for impact or chopping damage
Spear/Polearm   – use long-hafted weapons, usually for thrusting attacks
Staff (w/ automatic parry)   – use a wooden pole to both strike opponents and block their attacks
Parry (w/ trained weapons)   – special training to use a hand weapon to block an opponent's attacks effectively
Dual Attack (w/ trained wpns) – special training to use two weapons to attack at once effectively

Missile OB Skill Group   **- Throwing or launching things to accurately hit and damage opponents**
Bows   – use various types of strung bows, drawn by hand, to shoot arrows with accuracy
Crossbow   – use a bow, mounted on a stock and released by a catch, to shoot bolts with accuracy
Sling   – use a leather or cloth sling, swung over the head, to hurl stones or pellets with accuracy
Knives   – throw small bladed weapons with accuracy
Axe/Hammer   – throw top-heavy weapons with accuracy
Spear   – throw balanced long-hafted weapons with accuracy
Pitch (stones, grapnels, etc.)   – throw rounded palm-sized objects, or lob larger objects, with accuracy
Ranged Spell Attack   – training in how to accurately direct missile attack spells at a target

General Skill Group   **- Larger scale maneuvers involved with various tasks of common life**
Climbing   – scaling surfaces and objects either with or without equipment
Riding   – packing, using, caring for and controlling various mounts
Swimming   – training in how to avoid drowning and travel to an objective when in water
Jumping   – training to maximize height and distance, and also in landing to minimize injury from a fall
Cooking   – training in proper use of cooking equipment and supplies to preserve and prepare food
First Aid/Herbal Healing – training in how to stop bleeding, set bones, dress wounds and use herbs to aid healing
Trades/Crafts   – training in occupation(s) by which a character can earn a living

Subterfuge Skill Group   **- Smaller scale, skilled maneuvers used to do things without others knowing**
Stalk/Hide   – moving or taking cover in a way to minimize anyone else noticing the character
Pick Locks   – training on how to open locks without the key, without destroying the lock
Pick Pockets   – lifting objects from, or placing objects in, someone else's possession without their knowledge
Disarm/Set Traps   – training in how to build, set, avoid, trip and unset various traps for both animals and people
Forgery   – training in creating authentic-looking, but false, versions of official documents to simple notes
Trickery   – using lying, acting, disguise, misdirection, mimicry, etc. to fool someone
Art/Music   – using showmanship, as well as actual skill and talent, to create a pleasing artistic expression

Perception Skill Group   **- Noticing, understanding and using knowledge gained from observation**
Spot Traps/Hidden   – noticing and recognizing subtle clues to reveal things deliberately hidden
Naturalism   – knowledge gained by observing how plants, animals and their environment interact
Tracking   – following, and gaining information from, traces left by animals and people
Persuasion   – using voice, expression, body language, etc. to guide the actions and attitudes of others
Detect Lies   – observing voice, expression, body language, etc. to gauge the truthfulness of others
Weather Sense   – using observation and experience to predict the weather over the next several hours
Navigation/Orienteering – using the sky, water, landmarks, topology, growth of plants and travels of animals to find your way

Magical Skill Group   **- Scholarly studies into the arcane knowledge of this world and the next**
Read Runes/Script   – literacy in both the common and formal written systems (if any) used by the languages you know
Cast Spells   – talent and training in ways to bend the magical energy within and around you to your will
Sense Magic Objects/Beings   – perceive the magical energies in nearby enchanted items and beings
Sense Magic Spells   – perceive the nearby use of magical energy to change the environment
Alchemy   – knowledge of the innate magical properties of plants and how to concentrate them into potions
Enchantment   – knowledge of how to imbue physical objects with structured magical energy