

DragonNotes

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A regular feature for DragonQuest Players by Gerry Klug

At recent conventions and via player correspondence, I have been besieged with requests to design and incorporate a system for the creation of non-player characters and human opponents (guards, soldiers, etc.). I am often surprised at these requests, since they are asking for a "system," and I have always thought of the process of creating NPC's too important to leave to the randomness of any system. However, since so many of you request it, I will outline a simple method that I, if I were to use any system at all, would use.

First, a word concerning my view of NPC's within fantasy campaigns. They are the only source of information the players have about the world they exist in; a good GM will utilize these entities to control that flow of information so as to give his players just enough to keep their interest peaked. Since they are also the GM's big chance to role-play, he should enjoy them; thus their creation should be carefully accomplished. I create every NPC, enemy, and monster out of my head entirely. Possibly, this does not give the variety a die-rolling system might; however, I am assured of a certain consistency about these people. Players in my campaigns often have remarked on how believable my NPC's are; I can only hope that it is my fertile mind which has created such verisimilitude, not simply serendipity.

Remember also that in *DQ*, all skills, spells, and weapons are taught to the player characters by NPC's, and the GM can control what skills, spells, and weapons his player characters may acquire by limiting their availability. Thus, if a GM feels that a Web of Dragon Flames Spell (S-11, Fire Magics) is too powerful, just prevent any NPC from knowing it, or make the price for the purchase of such knowledge expensive. (I've had GM's complain to me about this very spell, saying it was too powerful, asked, "Who gave it to them?" They answered that they had. The only thing I could say was, "You deserve all you get!") So, on to the NPC and human opponent creation system. GM's should, of course, feel free to alter any of the following guidelines to fit his world.

The first quality I determine for any NPC is his relationship to the player characters. Will he aid them or oppose them? Or simply remain neutral to them? This decision affects every other decision I make. There should be more helpful NPC's than opposing NPC's, and about an equal number of neutrals as both of the above combined. So, if this was a D100 die roll,

01-33 Helpful

34-83 Neutral

84-00 Opposing

Note that the neutrals can change to become either Helpful or Opposed depending on their relationship with the player characters.

Next, the abilities of these NPC's should be determined. It will vary as to whether I determine the skills or the spells first, often depending on why I am creating the NPC.

Since NPC's function as teachers, there must be an adequate and varied population for the characters to negotiate with: First the GM must determine which "level" the NPC is — Mercenary, Adventurer, or Hero. Then the number of skills must be found by rolling D10-6 for Mercenaries, D10-4 for Adventurers, and D10-2 for Heroes. This is the number of skills they possess. For each skill, roll D20 on the table below to see which skill it is:

- 1 Speak a language other than Common
- 2 Speak a language other than Common
- 3 Speak a language other than Common
- 4 Write a language (GM's choice)
- 5 Write a language (GM's choice)
- 6 Write a language (GM's choice)
- 7 Alchemist
- 8 Assassin
- 9 Astrologer
- 10 Beast Master
- 11 Courtesan
- 12 Healer
- 13 Mechanician
- 14 Merchant
- 15 Military Scientist
- 16 Navigator
- 17 Ranger
- 18 Spy
- 19 Thief
- 20 Troubadour

Next the rank of each skill must be determined. This is related to the NPC's level again. For each skill (including Horsemanship and Stealth), roll D5-1 for Mercenary, D5+1 for Adventurers, and D5+3 for Heroes. Rank of 9 or above should be assigned by the GM.

Now determine whether or not the NPC is an adept. Roll D100; a 60 or less and the NPC is an adept. Now see what college, roll D10:

- 1 Ensorcelments and Enchantments
- 2 Sorceries of the Mind
- 3 Illusions
- 4 Naming Incantations

- 5 Air Magics
- 6 Water Magics
- 7 Fire Magics
- 8 Earth Magics
- 9 Celestial Magics
- 10 Necromantic Conjurations

The Colleges of Black Magics and Greater Summonings should only be assigned by the GM, never randomly generated. When choosing spells, talents and rituals, assume all General Knowledge to be known and randomly generate which Special Knowledge is known. To determine at what Ranks these are known, roll D5-1, D5+4, and D5+8 for all General Knowledge (Mercenary, Adventurer, Hero) and D5-3, D5-2, D5+1 for all Special Knowledge.

The armor, shields and weapons should all be chosen by the GM, with Ranks assigned as per Ranks with skills. The aspects of Physical Beauty and Handedness should be rolled using the original *DQ* tables.

The characteristics should be assigned by the GM according to the following pools: 85 points for Mercenaries, 90 for Adventurers, and 95 for Heroes. The maximum value in any one characteristic is 25-D5. Fatigue should be related closely to the Endurance assigned, and Perception diced for as follows: D5+5 for Mercenaries, D5+10 for Adventurers, D5+15 for Heroes. The GM should keep in mind which armor, shield, and weapon he has assigned to the NPC when he dollops out the characteristics, to insure the NPC is wielding a weapon he is eligible to, carrying weight he can actually carry, etc.

The Social Status is generated according to the rules in the original *DQ*, or more accurately, assigned according to the information already determined.

The Race of the NPC is generated by rolling D100 and consulting the following table, which the GM should adjust to match the population distribution in his world:

- 1-50 Human
- 51-70 Elf
- 71-90 Dwarf
- 91-95 Halfling
- 96-98 Orc
- 99 Giant
- 100 Shapechanger

There are a proliferation of tables in other publications which generate hair color, disposition, likes and dislikes, etc., and space prohibits me from creating my own (as enjoyable as that might be).

For each NPC and Monster in my world, I fill out copies of the file card such as appears on page 30 and keep them in a card file separated by type, place, race, or whatever other

classification makes sense at the time. This allows me to quickly pull out the NPC or Monster I need for an encounter without fumbling or slowing play. I try never to be unprepared for any encounter (random or planned) and this file helps me immensely in this regard. The card contains abbreviations which are explained as follows: **PS** = Physical Strength; **AG** = Agility (with modified Agility below the slash); **MA**= Magic Aptitude; **MD** = Manual Dexterity (with modified Manual Dexterity below the slash); **EN** = Endurance; **WP**=Willpower; **Armor**=Type and protection rating; **PC** = Perception; **TMR**=Tactical Movement Rate (users of the old combat system should substitute **APA**); **PB**= Physical Beauty; **FT**= Fatigue; **DEF/SHIELD/TOT** = Defense by Agility, Shield Defense, and Total; **RK** = Rank; **IV** = Initiative Value; **SC** = Strike Chance; **DM** = Damage Modifier; **Horse** = Horsemanship.

Name _____		True Name _____					
Race _____		Home _____					
		Aspect _____					
Notes: _____							

PS	AG	MA	MD	EN	WP	Armor	Languages/RK
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		_____

PC	TMR	PB	FT		DEF / SHLD / TOT		Skills/RK
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="text"/>		_____

Weapon	RK.	IV	SC	DM	Notes	College	
#1	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Talents/RK
#2	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
#3	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Stealth _____		Horse _____		Magic Resistance _____			

This card is reproduced in a 4"x 6" format, which is the size I use. To make your own cards, photocopy this example on a copier which will produce very rich, dark blacks. Take it to a "Quick-Print" place, one which does business cards, copying, etc., and have them print the example on the non blue lined side of a number of standard 4" x 6" index cards. The lined side is used for recording various information such as physical descriptions, spells, talents, rituals, etc. I print my cards in lots of 500, because many GM's that I know also use them.

Next issue I will expand character generation to include new characteristics, races, and heritage tables.