

Cutter's Gold

A Dungeons & Dragons Adventure

Saltmarsh

This Adventure takes place in the lands surrounding Saltmarsh, a busy port on the South Coast of the Isle of Sky, situated in a secluded bay looking out across the deep blue wind-swept Azure Sea.

The Adventurers Guild

Saltmarsh is home to *The Guild of Crafty Adventurers*, a small private Guild whose elite dozen-or-so members seek *Adventure, Fame and Fortune*.

The Guild employs Adventurers and underwrites adventures - providing equipment, expertise and lucrative paid jobs by virtue of access to wealthy clientele seeking assistance with a range of adventuring tasks.

The Guild specializes in high-risk / high-reward Adventures requiring the paid services of skilled Adventurers, and takes a percentage of all Loot acquired on an Adventure.

Each Spring the Guild re-fills its membership, recruiting from nearby regions, replacing any members that have fallen to the many perils of adventuring in the previous year.

This has been a tough year for the Guild, as one Adventurer has succumbed to a mysterious withering ailment, and another four Adventurers have disappeared without a trace while undertaking a particularly risky job – with no word from them in over six months they are presumed dead.

Joining the Guild

To be granted an Apprentice membership you must be sponsored by a wealthy and respected citizen with Guild Association who can vouch for you, and who can pay the 500gp application fee.

If you meet these two requirements then you must pass a gruelling 3-day assessment which tests both your physical and mental fitness.

Spring is in the air...

It's early April, Springtime, and from the far reaches of Saltmarsh hopeful Adventurers have each secured a wealthy and respected Sponsor and travelled to Saltmarsh in the hopes of securing a coveted position within the Guild.

Your Sponsor has taken care of the financial arrangements; your job is to show up and prove that you deserve a position in the Guild.

The Adventure starts with the Players meeting on the Guild's Open Day.

You may be wealthy or poor, nervous or quietly confident, either way you are all subjected to the same selection process.

Create your Character.

United by a love of the Sea.

Whether you are from the Isle of Sky or further afield, what unites you all is a lifetime spent growing up near the sea.

The sea is in your blood, and your family's history has strong ties to the sea.

Consider this fact when fleshing out your character, and incorporate some aspect of this Maritime connection into your character's background or nature.

Fleshing out your Character

We will start the Adventure with all the Players meeting on a brisk Spring morning at Guild HQ for Sign-up, starting with a round-table where the potential candidates meet the Guild Master and introduce themselves.

To enter the Guild you must be prepared to answer the following 10 Questions:

Question 1: What is your Name?

Feel free to pick any name that you like, but avoid anything offensive.

Question 2: What Race are you?

Pick one of the following Races:

- Dwarf
- Elf
- Halfling (Hobbit)
- Human
- Dragonborn
- Gnome
- Half-Elf
- Half-Orc
- Tiefling

You can pick a race based on gut feeling or you can choose after reading through the Race descriptions in the *Players Handbook*.

Question 3: What Character Class are you?

Pick one of the following:

- Barbarian
- Bard
- Cleric
- Druid
- Fighter
- Monk
- Paladin

- Ranger
- Rogue (thief)
- Sorcerer
- Warlock
- Wizard

You can pick any of these Character Classes - either go with your intuition or read through the Character Class descriptions in the Players Handbook and pick the one that appeals to you.

Don't concern yourself with all the options explained for each Class in the Players handbook, we'll get to that later.

You will all start the Adventure at Level 1, with Zero Experience Points, a.k.a. "XP"

Question 4: Where do you come from?

Here you get to change the world, as you get to make up the answer to this question, and I will add the location/details you describe to the scenario maps.

The only restrictions are:

- a) The location you describe must be either on the Isle of Sky or on an island within a days travel by boat from the Isle of Sky.
- b) You can't name "Saltmarsh" as your place of birth.

e.g. "I come from the fishing port of Penny on the Isle of Flax, a short boat-ride off the east coast of Sky."

e.g. "I live on the South coast of Sky in Cabin in the Effing Forest. It's a remote location and the journey to Saltmarsh took me 3 days on foot because I got lost in the Southern Marshes along the way."

Question 5: What is your background?

A short paragraph summarizing your background and key experiences that have shaped your character to-date.

Question 6: Why do you want to join the Guild?

Fame & fortune are the obvious answers, but perhaps your motivations are more nuanced or complex...

Question 7: Who is your Sponsor?

What position do they hold, and what is your relationship to your Sponsor?

You have strong ties to your Sponsor.

Your Sponsor must be a wealthy & respected citizen, but what is their true nature and motivation for sponsoring you? – are they sponsoring you out of friendship or do they have some hold on you?

Question 8 – What are your primary character Traits?

Pick two unique traits that define your character.

e.g. “I am Honest and Trustworthy – my word is my bond.”

e.g. “I’m shy and I don’t make friends easily, but I will lay down my life to protect a *true friend*.”

e.g. “If I’m being brutally honest I’ve grown up in a wealthy household, and I’m pretty lazy. This *adventuring lark* seems like the perfect way to prove to my father that I’m more than a ‘silk purse’ and ‘a shrunken codpiece’ as he frequently refers to me!”

Question 9 – What drives you?

Describe 1 primary ideal, the one that drives your character.

e.g. “I grew up poor, and the rewards from Adventuring will allow me to provide for my family.”

Question 10 – what do you consider to be your biggest character flaw?

e.g. “I like my ale, but I have a tendency to get exceedingly drunk and start fights with strangers.”

e.g. “I’m rather vain, and I like to acquire expensive trinkets, no matter who they belong to...”

Next Steps

Complete the 10 Question Summary, and send it to me, a simple plain text file will do.

I may ask you to clarify your answers.

The text file should be divided into 10 short sections/paragraphs, numbered 1 to 10 corresponding to the 10 questions above.

1. Name
2. Race
3. Class
4. Where I’m from
5. My Background
6. Why I want to join the Guild
7. Details of my Sponsor
8. My 2 Primary Character Traits
9. What drives me
10. My biggest character flaw

D&D is a *Role-Playing Game*, so you play the game as any character you choose, and you’ll be rewarded with Experience Points (XP) for both Role-Playing (staying in Character) Adventuring & Combat.

As you gain XP you Level up, gain more *Hit Points* - which makes you more difficult to kill, gain access to more Spells if you are a *Spell Caster*, get more *Loot* to buy cool stuff, and you can take on tougher *Monsters* and increasingly more challenging Adventures.

We are playing the Game using the latest Fifth Edition D&D Rules a.k.a. “D&D 5e”, so officially you should be referring to the lengthy explanation of how to create a new Character in the official *Players Handbook* D&D 5e reference manual.

There is no requirement for you to read through this Handbook at this stage, and you’ll pick up the basic rules of the game during the adventure.

We’ll be sorting out all the technical details once you’ve fleshed out the high-level description of your character.

Before we start the Adventure we need to complete your “Official Basic 5e Character Sheet” by filling in all the Race & Class-specific options, identify your Stats Proficiencies etc, and equip your character.

You can leave this to me or we can do this together before we start the Adventure proper.

We’ll be using miniatures during several parts of the Adventure. I have a large collection of Player Miniatures for you to choose from to represent your character on the gaming table, or you can bring your own.

Finally, feel free to bring your own set of dice: [D20, D12, D10, D8, D6, D4] , if you don’t have any then I have plenty that you can use.

Role-playing with a group of people for the first time can be a little daunting, but don’t worry too much, you are among friends, and there is no judgement, only Adventure, Fame & Fortune...

Stats Rolling Instructions:

So, the next step is to generate the 6 ‘Primary Statistics’ (a.k.a. “Stats”) for your character:

- ❖ Strength
- ❖ Dexterity
- ❖ Constitution
- ❖ Intelligence
- ❖ Wisdom
- ❖ Charisma

These terms are *actually a cause of a lot of initial confusion* for new Players, especially in England, because they were coined by a team of Americans who *have their own dialect* that they like to call “*American English*”.

In England we speak something that we like to call “English”, or more colloquially, “Plain English”.

Our “plain” form of English has a *certain Clarity of Interpretation* that is *notably absent* from our Danish emigrants who founded the great and illustrious *Colony of The Americas*” – don’t get me started on this topic, unless we are *down The Pub*, among friends, and we have *Permission to Talk Freely*.

The following Translations will help you to bridge this *Language Crevasse*, and I have included the Oxford English Dictionary Definition of these terms for clarity, in italicised quotation marks:

1. Strength

“The ability to apply a force and overcome a resistance. Strength is an essential part of physical fitness.”

All good, we all understand this, as it clearly refers to your *Physical Strength* – your ability to *pull pints* and *hold-your-own* in the *subsequent inevitable bar-fight*.

2. Dexterity

“Skill in using your hands or your mind.”

Ok, so there’s a minor miss-interpretation on this particular Statistic, as in D&D-Land this Statistic refers only to “using your hands”.

The *Intelligence* Statistic in D&D incorporates the notion of *Mental Agility*.

No worries, this seems like a reasonable & necessary simplification, so let’s *roll-with-it*.

3. Constitution

“The system of laws and basic principles that a state, a country or an organization is governed by. Your right to vote under the constitution.”

OK, so we have a *bit of a major dis-connect* in the name of this particular Statistic, as our distant relatives across the pond have actually used this word to describe a character’s *Physical Endurance*.

Equally confusing is the fact that, in *modern America*, this term is most commonly used to referred to an *Official Document*, penned by the illustrious members of the “The Constitutional Convention” assembled in Philadelphia in May of 1787.

I suggest that we simply overlook this minor ambiguity, no doubt a side-effect of a long and difficult boat ride, and simply remember that “*Constitution in D&D-Land means Physical Endurance*”.

All good, we’re related, so let’s cut them some slack.

4. Intelligence

“The ability to learn, understand and think in a logical way about things.”

That’s exactly what it means in D&D also, so *no confusion* on this Statistic.

5. Wisdom

“The ability to make sensible decisions and give good advice because of the experience and knowledge.”

Yep, that makes perfect sense.

However, in D&D-Land the use/application of this particular Statistic is the *source of Constant Confusion* in the Game, for the following reasons:

- ❖ You generate this Statistic when you *first roll your character*, at the *start of your career*, when you presumably have *very little actual experience* – as reflected in the fact that you have *Zero Experience Points (XP) at Level 1!*

- ❖ You only get to increase this Statistic at specific increments in the *Levelling-Up* of your Character, typically when you gain a specific Level that grants you the *Specific Ability to select a single Statistic to Increase by 1 Point*. Hmm.
- ❖ The Primary Statistic for Wizard's is "Intelligence".

Our British understanding of the *primary attribute of a Wizard* is largely derived from *Tolkien Lore*, where "Gandalf," our *goto-Wizard of Astari Origin*, literally means "Wise One". I doubt that Mr. Tolkien made this up for a Lark.

Which would naturally lead to the conclusion that a *Wizard's Primary Attribute* should in fact be *Wisdom* – which kinda actually makes more sense to *us Hobbits: "Wise-ardly"*

- ❖ The *primary Statistic* for Characters who choose the *Cleric Class* is, in fact, confusingly, *Wisdom*.

Things took a decidedly odd turn here...

Firstly, there are **No Clerics in Tolkien Lore**, and, if there were, I doubt that the *master story-teller* would have presented them as *uniformly wise and all-knowing*.

We can overlook this of course because D&D is of course based in a *Fantasy Medieval Setting*, and, as we all know from school, there have been Religious Leaders/Zealots for an awfully long time.

Calling them all *uniformly "Wise"* is *a bit of a stretch*, but let's again *Roll-with-it*, as we definitely don't want to upset *The Young Americans*.

However, it's all bloody confusing, *as it's a constant source of confusion in the game* – as frequently you are asked to roll *either an "Intelligence Skill Check" or a "Wisdom Skill Check"*.

Navigating the many pitfalls of this nuanced decision has been *an ongoing source of heated debates and confusion* in many-a-D&D game that I have run over the years!!

If you want to *Model "Learned Experience"* in your games, which is after-all a reasonably sensible Statistical attribute to model, then the D.M. & Player could decide, based on the character's *Age & Character Level*, what the corresponding *Learned Experience* would be.

But *this gets you in another equally divisive quagmire* – did their Character in-fact Learn the "*Best Decision*" (whatever that means) to solve a particular problem, based on their *past Experience*, or did they, in fact, habitually make the "*Wrong Decision*" (subjectively), due to either ignorance, stubbornness or *by virtue of habitual miss-direction*.

It's all too confusing, and in *my opinion* has *no place* in a *Fantasy Role-Playing Game* primarily aimed at *Youngsters* whose *Greatest Life Achievement* to-date is likely to be their *High Score in some Video Game*, which we of course both heartily support, endorse and praise.

So, I suggest that you Simply Ignore the Wisdom Statistic Completely.

It's simply too confusing, and so just substitute an *Intelligence Skill Check* whenever you are called to make a *Wisdom Skill Check*, neatly side-stepping the controversy, and avoiding conflict at the table, in a thoroughly British way.

***** This was supposed to be a Fun game – so do not ever, ever, ever, ever, lose sight of this fact - at your Peril! *****

6. Charisma

“(Charisma) is a quality possessed by some individuals that encourages others to listen and follow. Charismatic leaders tend to be self-confident, visionary, and change oriented, often with eccentric or unusual behaviour.”

Phew, so we are back on solid ground once more, as, in D&D-Land, this is pretty much exactly how this Statistic is used, although the *“eccentric and unusual behaviour”* aspect is overlooked.

No worries, it's both *simpler*, and *more fun*, to just *role-play* this *eccentricity*.

Generating the 6 Statistics for you Character

Now that we have bridged the Language-Chasm, we can finally get onto the job of generating *the Six Integers* - numbers in the range 3 to 18 - that define your Character's Abilities at the *start* of their *Adventuring Career*.

To do so, get hold of 4 *Industry-Standard Six-sided Dice*.

- Roll 4 Dice once and record the total of the highest 3 Dice.

- Do this 6 Times.

This yields 6 different whole numbers, with values from 3 to 18.

Now *decide which Statistic* should be assigned to *which of the six numbers*.

Don't add any of the Stats modifiers described in the Players Handbook at this point, we'll do that later.

When you've got the 6 Statistic Values assigned, email them to me, and I will *complete* your *Basic Character Sheet* for you, which you can do if you like, but means that you have to plough through the Players Handbook.

Feel free to take on this Advanced Accessibility Challenge if you have purchased this reference manual and feel *motivated* to do so – it's very much an *up-hill struggle*, and I *wouldn't personally recommend it for new players*.