

# Receding Rules



## A Selection of House Rules – As Curated by Telecanter

I started a blog because I was excited by innovative rules being posted by smart gamers. It's been more than a year of blogging now and I wanted to share some of the best treasures I've found. I've already blogged individually about all of these and several of them are well known across the blogging community, but I wanted to celebrate these in one place, in one document. This document is meant for the gamer that starts a blog tomorrow and has missed out on all the discussion of these rules so far. It's meant as something that can be shared from computer to computer and not be lost to link rot.

Six rules follow that are simple to explain, simple to implement, and add an incredible amount to the game in comparison to that simplicity. In addition, most address areas of D&D that have always been a little too abstract for the tastes of many players and DMs. A seventh rule is my own. I hope its inclusion is seen as a humble attempt to add something to this effort, and not a claim that it deserves the praise that the other six do. I'm sure I missed other rules deserving of inclusion here, I apologize for that. Let's consider this selection a start that can be expanded later. Thank you all,

Telecanter

## Shields Shall Be Splintered

Trollsmyth

“Any time you take damage in combat you can opt to sacrifice your shield to avoid it.”

Shields crafted from the wood of the rowan tree can be sacrificed for a successful save versus any spell.

Magic shields can absorb multiple blows, but will be destroyed once their limit is reached.

I'll be as bold as to say that this rule made shields real for the first time in D&D. Oh, they were always there, the way helmets and gauntlets are still there; assumed in the abstraction. But now players can feel the heft of it on their arm, or they'll *want to* each time they enter battle, each time they get hit.



While it might still be interesting to use this rule without Shields Will Be Splintered, I see the two going hand in hand; in the right situations a player will have to decide between sacrificing their shield and holding the line.

## Simple Combat Maneuvers

Joshua Macy

“Tell me what you want to do to your opponent before you roll to hit. A critical means that happens, a normal hit means your foe decides whether to let that happen or take damage instead.”

Possible maneuvers to try:

- Disarm
- Knock Down
- Push Back
- Switch Positions
- Slip Past, etc.

## Shield Walls

Trollsmyth

“Fighters that form a shield wall anchored on a leader gain +2 to their armor class for as long as they maintain it.”

Advancing into melee or making a fighting withdrawal may require a morale check.

The wall is broken if the leader is incapacitated, if any member fails morale or sacrifices a shield.

This rule makes a fighter's charisma more of a factor, it makes hirelings and their upkeep much more important, and it brings tactical formation fighting into the game where, outside of mass combat, it's been largely absent.

The innovation here is the decision point, which allows tactics to enter the abstracted battle without overwhelming it. It also allows for context to affect the decision without trying to codify all possibilities.

## Simple Ammo Tracking

Telecanter

“After every battle in which you use your missile weapon give me one of these poker chips— out of chips, out of ammo.”

The idea here is that those combats in which players throw dozens of darts will be balanced with those that they throw one. Hopefully this will simulate the tension of running out of ammo without your players having to keep track of every missile.

## The Good-At System

Bohemian

“At generation, choose one thing that your character is really **Good At**.”

The **Good At** can literally apply to *anything* that you come up with. Possibilities:

Picking Pockets  
Spotting Traps  
Herbalism  
Running Away  
Working With Animals  
Lying, etc.

Being **Good At** something doesn't just mean you know how to do something, but that you are an expert at it.

You can choose a second **Good At**, but only if you're willing to take a roughly equivalent **Bad At** as well.

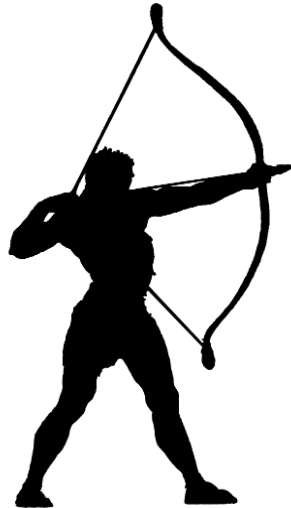
Since the beginning of play, people have craved more detailed knowledge of what their characters can do than is provided by the broad brush strokes of class. This system avoids having to detail every possible skill a person might have and allows players to draw in abilities that would *never* find their way onto a traditional rpg's skill list. Brilliant.

## Simple Languages

Welleran

“You can invest as many points into languages as you have intelligence—more points meaning more fluency.”

0 - gestures only  
1 - no verbs, only proper nouns  
2 - no verbs  
3 - one verb per sentence  
4 - fluent with an accent  
5 - native fluency



Literate characters will generally have a reading (but not writing) ability of 1 level higher than their spoken level.

A 5 in a language may grant 3 in the various dialects of that same language.

Language families might be handled similarly, related tongues understood at 3 levels lower.

Languages haven't been seen as much of a problem at the table, but from my experience they were always treated as binaries; either you knew Dragon or you didn't. This system allows for the complexity of knowing *some* Dragon and can even result in two players trying talk to each other across the table with different levels of fluency.

## List-Based Encumbrance

James Edward Raggi IV

“Every item you carry takes up a line on your equipment sheet— each benchmark you pass means you're moving slower.”

Armor can be factored separately.

Worn items can be ignored.

Awkward or oversized items might impose additional penalties.

The genius of this idea is in abstracting levels of weight to lines on a sheet of paper. It, like most elegant solutions, is a matter of granularity; yes a sword weighs more than a potion, but that is not the level of detail we want to deal with if it requires us to do math every time we pick up new gear. An item takes a slot. That's it.

EQUIPMENT		
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	+1 Enc
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
	11	+1 Enc
	12	
	13	

## References

### **Shields Shall Be Splintered**

<http://trollsmyth.blogspot.com/2008/05/shields-shall-be-splintered.html>

### **Shield Walls**

<http://trollsmyth.blogspot.com/2010/04/playing-with-sword-and-board-fighter.html>

Also see this post that fleshes out the basic idea:  
<http://vaultsofnagoh.blogspot.com/2010/04/thiefless-d.html>

### **Simple Combat Maneuvers**

<http://webamused.com/bumblers/2009/07/31/super-simple-combat-maneuvers/>

### **Simple Ammo Tracking**

<http://recedingrules.blogspot.com/2010/04/simple-ammunition-tracking.html>

### **The Good-At System**

<http://www.swordsandwizardry.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=942&st=0&sk=t&sd=a&>

### **Simple Languages**

The original location is lost to a forum move, but it was located here:

<http://www.knights-n-knaves.com/phpbb/viewtopic.php?t=5264>

### **List-Based Encumbrance**

This is the closest I could find to the germination of the idea:  
<http://lotfp.blogspot.com/2010/02/im-idiot.html>

Here is the character sheet incorporating it:  
<http://www.lotfp.com/RPG/uploads/pdf/CharacterSheeta4.pdf>

## *Also for Your Consideration*

### **Gaining Experience**

“You get 1 XP for each gold piece you bring out of the dungeon and *spend*.”

or, simplifying the process with a different approach:  
“You get 100xp per monster hit die you kill.”

Read this excellent post on how the game has handled earning xp historically:  
<http://muleabides.wordpress.com/2009/10/08/wine-women-and-song-experience-points/>

### **Carousing**

<http://jrients.blogspot.com/2008/12/party-like-its-999.html>

### **Lucky Number Kung Fu**

<http://dndwithpornstars.blogspot.com/2009/11/lucky-number-kung-fu.html>

### **Choose-Your-Own Rogue**

I extended Bohemian's simple skill idea into a class that will hopefully incorporate any archetypal thief-like characters you can envision:

<http://recedingrules.blogspot.com/2009/06/house-rules-rogues-ii.html>

## *Requesting Elegant Solutions*

### **Psionics**

Visions, mind-reading, mental combat all seem archetypal an not really satisfied with a Vancian system. No point Systems.

### **Grappling**

Where are the simple rules for boxing, wrestling and martial arts? Lucky Number Kung Fu above is an interesting start but I think more can be done here.

### **Mass Combat Rules**

I've never seen one you could just pick up and play.

### **Trade Rules**

Perhaps this falls under dominion rules, but it could be fun for players to try their luck investing their dungeon spoils.

### **Political/Social Intrigue Rules**

An abstract system of social or political maneuvering that made it game-like might be a boon to DMs and players.

### **Non-Vancian Magic Mechanics**

Not instead of a Vancian system, but to add interesting new types of magic and casters. No point systems.

## *Sincere Thanks To*

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<http://recedingrules.blogspot.com>

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