

GOOD HITS & BAD MISSES

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Critical hits and fumbles are probably two of the most controversial subject areas in *D&D*. The most common procedure is for 20 to represent a "perfect hit" and 1 a "perfect miss," or a critical hit and a fumble, respectively. This is an overly simplistic system, and this seems to be the main problem. The problem is less severe with 20's—a character's strength and dexterity bonuses, along with any magical help coming from swords and the like, often combine to modify the die roll to or above the magic score of 20.

Stronger characters have a relatively better chance at reaching this score, so do higher-level characters (but only because higher-level characters will presumably have more powerful magic swords). Unfortunately, the problem is that a character who can only hit his/her opponent on a roll of a 20 will get critical hits as often as one who needs only a 10 or better.

When applied to fumbles, the simple system really falls apart. A roll of 1 is a fumble-period. An 18/00 strength, an 18 dexterity, a +5 sword, none of it will help. Or, if these *will* help, then what's the point of having the rule, since all one needs is a +1 dagger to boost any rolls of 1 up to 2, and your worries are over. And, if a 1 is always a fumble, a character will fumble 5% of the time, whether he or she is 1st, 5th, or 15th level.

The following variant system allows swords and dexterity to increase chances for a critical hit, and reduce chances for a fumble, without eliminating them entirely. Basically, any swing that hits can be a critical hit, and any swing that misses can be a fumble. The higher the die roll, the "better" the swing, and the more likely it will be critical. The system works as follows:

The character rolls the die normally, to determine if he/she has hit. If the roll is a hit, then the minimum score necessary to hit is subtracted from the roll, and the result is the percentage chance of the hit being a critical hit. If the swing is a miss, the result is subtracted from the minimum score needed to hit, and that is the chance of the swing being a fumble.

EXAMPLE: Ferdinand Orc-Punter, +2 hit probability due to strength, +2 sword, needs a 10 or better to hit Sorghum Orc. He swings, rolling a 14, +2 (for strength) +2 (for the sword), with the final result of 18. A hit! The chance of it being critical is 18 (the final result) minus 10 (the minimum score needed), which is 8 (the percentage chance of the hit being critical).

EXAMPLE: Sampson Numbfingers has +1 hit probability and a +1 dagger. He needs an 11 or better to hit a bugbear. He rolls 4+1+1=6. A miss. The chance he will fumble is 11-6, which is 5.

This system is nicely symmetrical, and works well. If the percentages seem too high, they can always be halved.

The tables below are for the various kinds of critical hits. The first table is primarily for swords, but is also used for poleaxes, ox-tongues, and the other large cutting weapons that pop up occasionally. The second table is for maces, with other fun things such as falling rocks being rolled for here, if desired. The table for critical hits against animals is used for all weapons. The missile fire critical hits table is also for thrusting weapons such as spears, and for daggers.

The fumble table is also for all weapons. Most of the results are minor, such as losing one's balance or dropping a weapon, but even

the nastier ones, such as "hit self," aren't unreasonable to allow for. If you've ever seen an SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism) tournament, you can probably understand how it can happen.

In using the charts, some referee input is necessary. When fighting an elephant with a dagger, it's not too likely that one of the elephant's legs will be lopped off by a critical hit.

Also, a character who is missing an arm or two won't be in very good condition, and is likely to bleed to death. Still, there are instances where the character insists on fighting to the end. In these cases, have the character roll a system shock check. If the check is made, then he/she can continue on fighting (provided he/she has the limbs necessary), although 1-3 pts. of damage are taken each round until something is done to bandage up the wound. If the system shock check is failed, the character falls unconscious due to pain for 1-12 rounds.

Critical Hit Effects Table-Edged Weapons

01-31	double damage
32-62	triple damage
63	shield destroyed (no effect if no shield)
64	shield destroyed (roll again if no shield)
65	helm removed (lose ear, stunned 1-6 rounds if no helm)
66	helm removed (lose ear, stunned 1-6 rounds)
67	voicebox punctured, no talking (no effect if helmed)
68-69	ear removed (no effect if helmed)
70	ear removed (helm removed if helmed)
71-72	eye removed (no effect if helmed)
73	eye removed
74	knee split; movement halved
75	knee split; no movement
76	fingers removed; dexterity reduced 1-5 pts.
77	leg removed at ankle
78	leg removed at knee
79	leg removed at hip
80	shield arm removed at wrist (no effect if shield)
81	shield arm removed at elbow (no effect if shield)
82	shield arm removed at elbow (no effect if shield)
83	shield arm removed at wrist
84	shield arm removed at elbow
85	shield arm removed at shoulder
86	weapon arm removed at wrist
87	weapon arm removed at elbow
88	weapon arm removed at shoulder
89	abdominal injuries; carrying capacity halved
90	chest injuries; carrying capacity halved
91	abdominal injuries; death in 1-6 days
92	chest injuries; death in 1-4 days
93	abdominal injuries; death in 2-12 turns
94	chest injuries; death in 2-8 turns
95	abdominal injuries; immediate death
96	chest injuries; immediate death
97	throat cut; immediate death (no effect if helmed)
98	throat cut; immediate death
99	decapitated; immediate death (no effect if helmed)
00	decapitated; immediate death

Critical Hit Effects Table—Blunt Weapons

- 01-31 double damage
- 32-64 triple damage
- 65-66 shield broken (no effect if no shield)
- 67-68 shield broken (roll again if no shield)
- 69-70 shield arm struck (no shield defense for 1-6 rounds)
- 71-72 shield arm broken; lose shield
- 73-74 weapon arm struck; hit probability -2
- 75-76 weapon arm struck; hit probability -4
- 77-78 weapon arm broken; no attacks
- 79-80 hand struck; dexterity down 1-5 points until healed
- 81-82 hand struck; dexterity down 1-5 points

- 83-84 chest struck; stunned 1-6 rounds
- 85-86 chest struck; ribs broken, lungs punctured; no movement
- 87-88 chest struck; ribs broken, heart punctured; death.
- 89-90 leg struck; fall to ground
- 91-92 leg struck; movement halved
- 93-94 leg broken; no movement
- 95 head struck; lose 1-6 pts intelligence (no effect if helmed)
- 96 head struck; lose 1-6 pts intelligence
- 97 head struck; lose 2-12 pts intelligence (no effect if helmed)
- 98 head struck; lose 2-12 pts intelligence
- 99 skull crushed; dead (no effect if helmed)
- 00 skull crushed; dead.

Critical Hit Effects Table—Missile and Thrusting Weapons

- 01-34 double damage
- 35-70 triple damage
- 71-72 shield arm struck (no effect if shield)
- 73-74 shield arm struck
- 75-76 weapon arm struck; hit probability -2
- 77-78 weapon arm struck; hit probability -4
- 79-80 weapon arm struck; no attacks
- 81-82 struck in abdomen; death in 1-6 days
- 83-84 struck in chest; death in 1-4 days
- 85-86 struck in abdomen; death in 2-12 turns

- 87-88 struck in chest; death in 2-8 turns
- 89-90 struck in abdomen; immediate death
- 91-92 struck in chest; immediate death
- 93 blinded in eye (no effect if helmed)
- 94 blinded in eye
- 95 larynx punctured (no effect if helmed)
- 96 larynx punctured
- 97 struck in head; lose 1-6 pts intelligence (no effect if helmed)
- 98 struck in head; lose 1-6 pts intelligence
- 99 struck in head; immediate death (no effect if helmed)
- 00 struck in head; immediate death

Critical Hit Effects vs. Animals

- 01-29 double damage
- 30-58 triple damage
- 59-60 limb removed at body; speed halved
- 61-62 limb removed at midpoint; speed halved
- 63-64 limb removed at midpoint; hit probability -2
- 65-66 limb removed at body; hit probability -4
- 67-68 limb removed at midpoint; speed halved, hit prob. -2
- 69-70 limb removed at body; speed halved, hit probability -4
- 71-72 throat cut; immediate death
- 73-74 decapitated

- 75-76 abdominal injuries; immediate death
- 77-78 abdominal injuries; death in 2-12 turns
- 79-80 abdominal injuries; death in 1-6 days
- 81-82 chest injuries; immediate death
- 83-84 chest injuries; death in 2-8 turns
- 85-86 chest injuries; death in 1-4 days
- 87-90 snout struck; immediate retreat
- 91-94 snout struck; hit probability -2 for 1-4 rounds
- 95-98 snout struck; hit probability -4 for 1-4 rounds
- 99 head struck; stunned for 1-6 rounds
- 00 head struck; immediate death

Fumble Effects Chart-All Weapons

- 01-19 slip; roll dexterity or less on d20 or fall and stunned for 1-4 rounds
- 20-33 stumble; roll dexterity or less on d20 or fall and stunned for 1-6 rounds
- 34-39 trip and fall; stunned for 1-6 rounds
- 40-44 off balance; roll dexterity or less on d20 or no action next round
- 45-49 lose grip on weapon; roll dexterity or less on d20 or no attack next round
- 50-54 lose grip; roll dexterity or less on d20 or drop weapon
- 55-59 lose grip; drop weapon
- 60-61 shield tangled with opponent (no effect if no shield)
- 62-63 shield tangled with opponent; neither attacks next round
- 64-65 weapon tangled with opponent; no attack next round
- 66-69 weapon knocked away-roll d8 for direction, d10 for distance in feet
- 70-74 weapon breaks (base 100% chance -20% for each "+" or ability of weapon
- 75-76 hit self; half damage
- 77-78 hit self; normal damage
- 79-80 hit self; double damage
- 81-82 hit friend; half damage
- 83-84 hit friend; normal damage
- 85-86 hit friend; double damage
- 87-88 critical hit, self
- 89-90 critical hit, friend
- 91-92 twist ankle; half speed for 1 turn, roll dexterity or less on d20 or fall
- 93-95 helm slips; roll dexterity or less to fix, hit probability -6 until fixed
- 96-97 helm slips; roll dexterity to fix, no attacks until fixed
- 98 distracted; opponent's next attack at +3
- 99 roll twice, ignoring rolls of 99 or 00
- 00 roll three times, ignoring rolls of 99 or 00

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