



Penndragon

6th Edition

Rules Preview



What follows is a summary of the core rules for Penndragon 6th edition.

Dice: Use a twenty-sided die (1D20) for resolution, multiple six-sided dice (D6) for damage.

Value: The level of a Statistic (e.g., Characteristic, Skill, Trait, or Passion) is rated between 1 and 20. The higher the value, the better. Situational modifiers may increase or decrease the value of the Statistic.

Glory & Honor

The object of the game is to collect Glory, which comes from doing great and notable deeds. Honor is a measure of the character's integrity, which can rise and fall as they live up to ideals or cut corners for practicality. A character who loses too much Honor is no longer considered a knight.

Use a single twenty-sided die to resolve all tasks.

Glory always increases; Honor may increase or decrease.

Resolution System: Unopposed

Used when success is based entirely on the character's own actions. Roll 1D20 versus the value of the Statistic. If the Statistic value is written as 20 (+x), add the value of (+x) to the die roll to determine its final result. The final number of the die roll is compared to the target value to determine the outcome.

- ✦ **Critical Success:** Exactly the target value—often confers an additional benefit beyond a success.
- ✦ **Success:** Less than the target value.
- ✦ **Failure:** Higher than the target value.
- ✦ **Fumble:** A natural 20—a spectacular failure causing problems.

Note that if a target value is 20, it becomes impossible to fumble, and that a modified dice roll greater than 20 counts as a result of 20 and is a critical success.

Resolution System: Opposed

Used when success is contested between two factors. Most combat rolls are opposed. Both opponents roll 1D20 versus the relevant Statistic

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(which is not always the same between the two) as with unopposed resolution, and then compare their outcomes as follows.

- * **Win:** Score a success or critical success, and a higher final dice roll than the opponent's. In combat, this means you hit your enemy.
- * **Tie:** A success for both opponents that is exactly the same final dice roll, or both roll a critical success; the situation is unresolved for the moment, but additional effects (such as damage or weapon breakage) may be triggered.
- * **Mutual Failure:** Both opponents fail; situation is unresolved.
- * **Partial Success:** Success, but a lower final dice roll than the opponent's; a minor benefit may be gained. In combat, you are hit and suffer damage but may gain protection from a shield or your weapon.
- * **Loss:** Failure while the opponent succeeds. In combat, this means you are hit and suffer damage.
- * **Fumble:** Spectacular failure, regardless of opponent's result. In combat, your weapon is dropped or broken.

Characteristics

Five Characteristics quantify the character's physical attributes.

Size (SIZ): measures a character's relative height and weight, compared to others. SIZ factors into how hard you hit with your weapon, and how well you withstand blows. It is also the threshold value for determining Knockdown.

Dexterity (DEX): measures a character's agility and nimbleness. DEX keeps a character upright or on their horse when faced with the possibility of Knockdown, and determines the character's natural aptitude with many physical Skills.

Strength (STR): measures a character's physical power, and their ability to exert force or pressure on an object. It factors into how much damage you deal out in combat.

Constitution (CON): measures health and vitality. CON is important in determining how much of a beating you can take, and how quickly you recover.

Appeal (APP): measures the character's natural charm, presence, and physical attractiveness. APP also sets the default value for many social Skills.



*Traits and Passions
comprise the character's
personality and emotional tenor.*

*Characteristics
describe a character's
physical make-up.*

*Passions provide
significant bonuses
to Traits and
Skills, but may also
drive you Mad!*

No Intelligence Rating?

No Characteristics cover quantifying intelligence or any form of cleverness or wisdom. Traits and Passions are the measure of human emotions. Characteristics represent general attributes of the body. Skills measure specific and necessary cultural knowledge. Otherwise, characters know the minimum they need to function in their cultures and professions. When Player knowledge is lacking, Gamemasters should take a moment to explain things the character would naturally know as a person of their culture, time, and place.

Using Traits and Passions

Arranged in pairs of virtues and flaws, Traits determine a character's personality and may affect their actions. The higher the Trait value, the stronger the expression of that Trait. Traits over 15 are considered Famous, and push the character towards acting in a manner consistent with that Trait more often than not. Traits of 20 or greater are considered Exalted, and cause a character to act in a manner consistent with that Trait at all times.

Traits may be used to help guide (or dictate) character decisions, to pass a moral test, to provide in-game hints, or to influence another character. General guidelines are provided in the nearby boxed text.

Passions are used to give a bonus to Skills or Traits. They may be invoked when the object of the Passion is in danger (or seems to be), or when the character wishes to act in accordance with the Passion. For example, Love (Family) may be used when a member of the Player-knight's family is threatened. Each Passion may only be called upon once per day with an unopposed roll, providing a bonus to a single Skill or Trait with the effects lasting until the end of the current situation, or after an hour of time passes.

Passions may also be used not for Inspiration, but to decide a course of action consistent with the Player-knight's defined temperament or to resolve an inner conflict.

Trait Rolls in the Game

Modifiers may be applied by the Gamemaster to reflect the demands or pressures of the situation. Normal Traits may be rolled in any order the Player wishes. Famous or Exalted Traits must *always* be rolled first, and an unmodified Exalted Trait never fails.

- ✦ **Critical:** The character acts strongly in accordance with the Trait and takes an experience check. The Gamemaster may grant a relevant +5 modifier to a subsequent Skill or Passion roll.
- ✦ **Success:** The character acts in accordance with the Trait. The Gamemaster awards an experience check only if the action is somehow significant to the story or the characters.
- ✦ **Failure:** The Player rolls again, this time for the Opposing Trait, adjusted by any modifiers. If this roll is also a failure, the character acts however the Player wishes.
- ✦ **Fumble:** The character acts strongly in accordance with the Opposing Trait and gains a check to it. The Gamemaster may grant a relevant +5 modifier to a subsequent Skill or Passion roll.

Most Trait rolls help in deciding a character's behavior. These are called Decision Rolls. Some circumstances, often relating to supernatural forces, require Trait rolls, because they are special tests of a moral or spiritual nature; these are called Test Rolls. The Gamemaster may prompt players by having them make Trait rolls as a Game Hint Roll, such as asking a Player-knight to make a Suspicious roll. Finally, one character may try to influence another with a Trait versus Trait roll.



THE PASSION ROLL

Passions often prove to be the source of great and lingering heartache for characters, triggering crises of belief or commitment.

A failed or fumbled roll on *Table 1.1: Unopposed Passion Roll Results* is one way to trigger a Passion Crisis. A Passion Crisis may also occur when a character is Inspired or Impassioned and fails spectacularly at the task at hand (your lord is killed while under your protection), or when it becomes clear that the source of the Passion is no more (Saxon raiders murder your family), or the character will never have access to the source again (your beloved banishes you from their sight). The Gamemaster must determine when such events may trigger a Passion Crisis.

Regardless of the cause, a character suffering a Passion Crisis must make an unopposed roll against the Passion that triggered the crisis, applying any of the modifiers given below, to see if the character suffers an Affliction.

- ✦ **Critical success:** Madness
- ✦ **Success:** Melancholy
- ✦ **Failure:** No effect
- ✦ **Fumble:** Lose 1 point from the Passion

Modifiers to the Passion:

- ✦ **The character failed their task while Inspired:** +0
- ✦ **The knight has failed their task while Impassioned:** +5
- ✦ **The character is currently Inspired by the Passion:** +5
- ✦ **The cause of the Passion Crisis is due to the character's own action or inaction:** +10
- ✦ **The character is currently Impassioned by the Passion:** +10

The duration of a Melancholy or Madness Affliction depends on the value of the character's unmodified Passion, as follows:

- ✦ **Unsung (1-4):** Melancholy for 1D6 hours; Maddened for one week
- ✦ **Normal (5-15):** Melancholy one day; Maddened for 1D6 weeks
- ✦ **Famous (16-20):** Melancholy for 1D6 days; Maddened for 1D6 months
- ✦ **Exalted (20+):** Melancholy for 1D6 weeks; Maddened for 1D6 years

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Melancholy is healed instantly if the character takes at least 1 point of damage.

Most Passion rolls are unopposed. Roll for the Passion and consult *Table 1.1: Unopposed Passion Roll Results*.

Passion Results

✦ **Impassioned:** A temporary +10 bonus to a single Skill or Trait, chosen by the Player. The duration varies, but lasts until the situation that evoked the Passion roll ends. For example, in a duel between two knights, the bonus lasts until one is dead, knocked unconscious, or surrenders. In a battle, a Weapon Skill (or other Skill) bonus lasts

TABLE 1.1: UNOPPOSED PASSION ROLL RESULTS

RESULT	EFFECT
Critical	Impassioned; gain a check to Passion
Success	Inspired; gain a check to Passion
Failure	Passion Crisis; see p. 3
Fumble	Lose 1 point from the Passion

one Battle Turn. A Passion bonus may modify a series of successive First Aid or Chirurgery rolls resulting from a single fight or other source of trauma.

- ✦ **Inspired:** A temporary +5 bonus to a single Skill or Trait, chosen by the Player, while the situation persists (as above).
- ✦ **Melancholy:** A successful Passion Crisis roll. The character becomes Melancholic, suffering a -5 to all Skills and Passions for the duration, and gains 25 Glory.
- ✦ **Madness:** A critical Passion Crisis roll. The character goes Mad and is Out of Game. The Player must turn the character sheet over to the Gamemaster. They do, however, gain 25 Glory for their spell of madness.

Using Skills

Skills are a way of assessing the success of actions that characters can attempt to do in the game. Actions like eating, walking, and talking are automatic and do not require Skill rolls. A roll is needed for Skills only if they describe actions that hold an inherent chance of failure.

A failed Passion roll provokes a Passion Crisis, which may lead to Melancholy or Madness. The higher your Passion value, the more likely you will be crushed by the crisis—and the longer the effects will last.

Sword offers 3 points of Parry protection.

Spear gives +2D6 damage if used two-handed.

Maces deal +1D6 damage to opponents wearing mail armor.

Axes reduce the opponent's shield protection by 1D6, and shatter the shield on a 6.

A Skill roll is needed when an action is a contest, when the character is under strain, is being watched by nobility, is trying to hide something, and so on. No knight or lady is expected to master all or even most of the possible Skills.

Skills are listed alphabetically on the character sheet in two categories: Skills and Combat Skills. For the purposes of these quick-start rules, Gamemasters should use their best judgment in assessing which Skills apply to which tasks. Some notes:

- ✦ Attempting First Aid on yourself is done with a -10 Skill modifier.
- ✦ Folklore covers conversing with peasants to glean information as well as remembering bits of lore, including tales of the fair folk and other strange creatures of the wild.
- ✦ Hunting is used to pursue quarry and also when navigating across trackless wilderness, attempting to cover one's tracks, or identifying wild animals and plants.
- ✦ Recognize is used for all types of identification amongst the nobility: from recognizing a single face at court, to knowing to whom a coat of arms belongs, to recalling details about family lineages and enmities.

Combat Skills include Battle and Horsemanship as well as the ten Weapon Skills, which represent training in broad categories of weapon, some of which are defined here as follows:

- ✦ **Charge:** Applies whenever the knight is mounted and moving at sufficient speed to execute the Mounted Charge action.
- ✦ **Sword:** Covers any steel-bladed weapon with a protective crossguard and weighted pommel, either with one or two hands.
- ✦ **Spear:** Includes all long-hafted stabbing weapons intended for use in close combat, wielded with one or two hands.
- ✦ **Hafted:** Applies whenever a knight wields most hafted weapons (axes, maces, hammers) with one hand.
- ✦ **Two-Handed Hafted:** Applies to all hafted weapon types that are normally wielded with two hands—two-handed axes, hammers, and maces, as well as polearms.
- ✦ **Brawling:** A broad umbrella that applies to fisticuffs, wrestling, using knives, daggers,

Horsemanship Limitation

The Horsemanship Skill limits the applicable value of all Weapon Skills employed while riding. No effective Weapon Skill value may be greater than the rider's Horsemanship Skill value, although all Combat Modifiers still apply and may boost the limited value above the Horsemanship cap.

For example, a character with a Sword Skill of 18 and a Horsemanship Skill of 15 fights from horseback as if their Sword value is 15. If they gain a +5 height advantage against an opponent on foot, however, their effective Skill is boosted to 20.

May loose one arrow per Round out to 100 yards.

and other items at close distances, as well as all Grappling attempts.

- ✦ **Bow:** Dictates a character's aptitude with the bow, a missile weapon usually made of wood or horn, normally used by peasants for hunting and by foot soldiers in war. Knights normally do not use bows in combat, although they often use them for hunting.

Combat

The basic time measure for single or small-group combat is the Combat Round. This is a short, elastic unit of time—basically, the time required to conceive of and perform one action in melee. Combat Rounds continue in succession until everyone is done fighting, either through incapacitation, death, surrender, or flight.

The limit of one action per round means one *type* of action, not necessarily one unique physical movement, per round. A knight's entire round of combat is not merely a single blow, but an exchange of attacks and parries, or perhaps maneuvering for an opening before striking a coup de main.

The limit of one action per Combat Round is therefore a loose one, with several notable exceptions. A roll required of a knight as a reaction to another is not considered their action for that round, but a "free action." For example, a character whose Knockdown value is exceeded

Each character or monster may attempt one action per Combat Round in addition to moving.

must make a DEX roll that round, but this roll does not count as the knight's action.

The general point of the one-action limit is to keep the scenario moving swiftly. The Players and the Gamemaster must cooperate in this, or the game soon becomes bogged down in pointless combat minutiae.

COMBAT ROUND PROCEDURE

The combatant attempting the action is called the character (or monster); their adversary is called the opponent.

Each time personal combat is joined, both combatants simultaneously follow this procedure every round:

- ✦ **Step One:** Declare Combat Actions
- ✦ **Step Two:** Resolve Combat Actions
- ✦ **Step Three:** Winner's Outcome
- ✦ **Step Four:** Loser's Outcome
- ✦ **Step Five:** Combat Movement

Step One: Declare Combat Actions

Players declare Combat Actions at the start of each round.

In this first step, all Player and Gamemaster combatants state what they intend to do this round, including the weapon they wield, if any. Targets and opponents are named.

If timing is important, combat declarations are made in ascending DEX order, so that the lowest DEX declares first, and the highest last. If important, resolve ties with opposed DEX rolls.

Combatants within one yard of each other are automatically considered "engaged," and need not move to fight. Otherwise, movement must take place at the end of the round before combat can be resolved in subsequent rounds.



Height Advantage

Any time a character fights with the advantage of height, such as a horseman versus a foot soldier or a knight on a rampart attacking someone scaling the wall, a +5/-5 reflexive modifier applies in favor of the character with the height advantage. Note that when opponents are separated by more than a yard (in this case, of height), they are too far apart to engage in melee.

Other situations where this modifier applies include when one character has fallen to the ground and the other remains standing, or when a character fights while backing up a steep castle stairwell while fighting foes moving up toward them.

This modifier is negated if an unmounted combatant wields a two-handed spear or halberd against a mounted opponent. A mounted combatant using any weapon except a spear or lance cannot strike an opponent who is prone.

Step Two: Resolve Combat Actions

Any Combat Action declared in the previous step is now resolved, starting with the characters with the highest DEX if timing is important.

If a Skill or Combat Skill resolution is required for the action, it is made now. Generally, characters can either fight *or* move, but not both. Lance charges are an exception to this rule: knights must both move and fight during a charge, and that resolution takes place now, including the Combat Movement of anyone opposing a charging knight, even if on foot.

If combat occurs, both combatants roll their respective modified Combat Skills using opposed resolution (see “Resolution System: Opposed” on pp. 1–2). The results leave a winner and a loser, a tie, or two losers. In addition, critical successes and fumbles grant bonuses and impose penalties, respectively.

Mounted Charges

An effective charge requires a minimum distance of six yards between character and opponent to build enough deadly speed and momentum. A

Some weapons increase damage dealt. A critical success in combat adds +4D6 to your damage roll!

All charge movement is resolved during Step Two, including that of opponents.

Make a DEX roll to keep your feet or stay in the saddle when you take damage greater than your Knockdown value.

character and opponent who are charging each other must start at least twelve yards apart.

To execute this action, the character must be riding a combat-trained horse and not engaged at the start of the Combat Round. The charge must aim at a specific opponent. Roll Charge versus the opponent’s action; gain a +5 bonus if armed with a couched spear or lance (that is, with the rear portion of the shaft tucked between the right arm and body) against anyone not also using a couched spear or lance also executing a Mounted Charge action.

Step Three: Winner’s Outcome

The winner rolls a number of dice equal to their Damage Characteristic (or their horse’s Damage Characteristic, if charging), modified by their weapon type, if applicable. A critical success adds an additional +4D6 to the Damage Characteristic for this round.

The winner continues to **Step Five: Combat Movement**.

Step Four: Loser’s Outcome

The loser takes damage from the winner, and checks for Knockdown, Dropped/Broken Weapon, and Armor, Shield, and Parry protection, in that order.

Determining Knockdown

Whenever a character takes a blow, whether from a weapon in combat or some other source (such as riding into a tree limb...), the base damage—i.e., the damage dealt before the victim’s armor or other factors reduce it—is compared to their Knockdown value, which is the same as their SIZ Characteristic.

- ✦ If the damage is greater than the loser’s Knockdown, the Player makes an unopposed DEX roll, whether on foot or mounted. If a character or opponent suffers multiple possible knockdowns in a round, then each knockdown requires its own DEX roll.
 - **Critical or success:** the loser remains upright or in the saddle with no penalty.
 - **Failure or fumble:** the loser is knocked down. They begin next round on the ground. If mounted, they suffer 1D6 damage from the fall, and drop their weapon and shield.

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- * If damage is greater than twice the loser's Knockdown, then they are automatically knocked down without making a roll. If mounted, they fall and take 1D6 damage, and drop their weapon and shield.
- * If damage is greater than their horse's SIZ of 40 (for warhorses), then the horse is knocked down too! The character takes 2D6 damage from the fall, and drop their weapon and shield.

Dropped or Broken Weapon

A loser who fumbles their opposed weapon roll drops their sword or breaks their hafted weapon. They start the next round unarmed. A sword breaks any other non-sword weapon when the result is a tie.

Armor, Shield, and Parry Protection

Armor and shields absorb damage; parries block it. The total value of the loser's Armor Protection is subtracted from the winner's base damage. If the loser rolled a Partial Success, they may also apply the Shield *or* Parry protection value of their shield/weapon. The difference is the actual damage the loser takes.

Damage

Write the number of points of actual damage taken in the Wounds section of the character sheet and subtract this from Total Hit Points. Be sure to note each wound separately, as First Aid is applied to each individually. Always check to see what type of wound was inflicted.

To check for a Major Wound, compare the actual damage taken to the loser's CON. If the

Characters fall unconscious when their Current Hit Points fall below their Unconscious value, or when they suffer a Major Wound.

Swords break any non-sword weapon on a tie result.

Major Wounds occur when a character suffers a wound with a value greater than their CON.

damage taken is greater than this number, then the loser has suffered a Major Wound and falls unconscious. If mounted, they may attempt a DEX roll. Success indicates a gentle fall that does little or no damage; failure, a bad fall that causes 1D6 damage. They are out of the fight until they receive First Aid; they must also raise their Current Hit Points above their Unconscious Characteristic if below that value.

To check for unconsciousness, compare Current Hit Points to the loser's Unconscious Characteristic. If *below* this number, the loser falls unconscious. Again, they may make a DEX roll if mounted to avoid falling damage. They are out of the fight until they receive First Aid and raise their Current Hit Points above their Unconscious Characteristic.

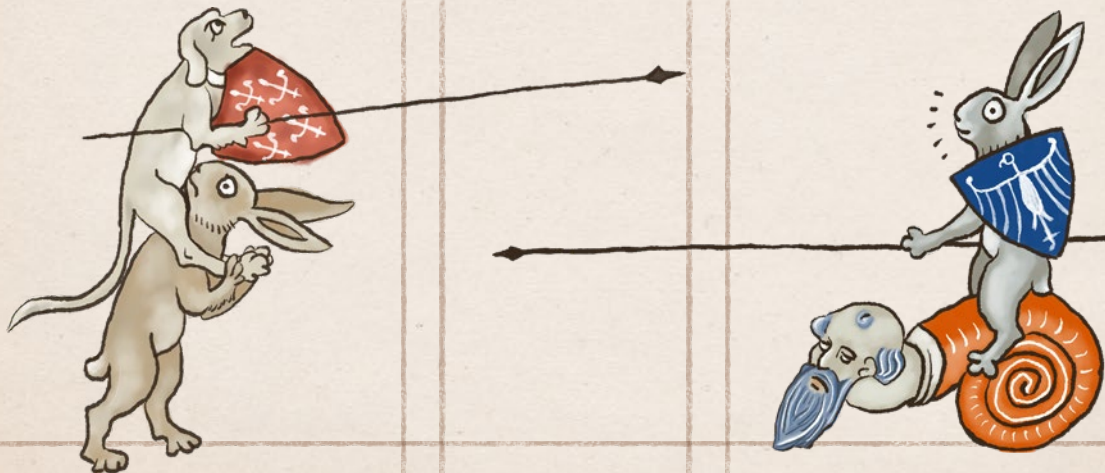
If a character's Hit Points drop to zero or less, they are mortally wounded and will die if not quickly rescued.

Characters who are unconscious or dying are also considered Debilitated (see below).

Step Five: Combat Movement

Characters who declared movement this round other than a charge now simultaneously move a number of yards up to their respective Movement Rate values. Characters are not required to move their full Movement Rates. However, once a combatant chooses to stop moving, they cannot move any further during this round.

Movement is used to determine whether a character has closed with an enemy so that they might engage in combat. Once two combatants are within one yard's distance, melee combat is possible. In most circumstances, breaking



movement down into round-by-round bits is altogether unnecessary. Miniature figures may be helpful to concretize distances for the Players' benefit, but such tools are certainly not essential as long as issues like facing are left out of the game and considerations of positioning are made in good faith.

Other kinds of movement actions taking place during this phase might require Skill rolls as determined by the Gamemaster. For example, a character wishing to have their horse leap an obstacle might be required to make a Horsemanship roll.

Healing

First Aid may be tried just once per wound, restoring a number of Hit Points equal to the wounded character's Healing Rate (or double that with a critical success). On a fumble, the character loses 1D3 Hit Points instead and becomes Debilitated.

Characters regain Hit Points equal to their Healing Rate each week.

Debilitated characters require a successful Chirurgery roll, too. A failure causes Deterioration: lose 1D6 Hit Points. (This loss cannot be healed with First Aid.) On a critical success, the character heals double their Healing Rate, while a fumble causes an additional 1D3 damage. A Debilitated character becomes healthy once they are back to half of their Total Hit Points or more.

Squires

Part of a knight's duty is to train young nobles at arms, courtesy, and the other Skills necessary to bear the title of knight. Squires graduate from the ranks of the pages around the age of fourteen and are given into a knight's service.

The purpose of this servant is to do all the labor necessary to make the character's life easier, such as tending horses, setting up camp, polishing armor, cooking, washing and mending clothes, and to perform any odd jobs around the edges, such helping to stand guard, sleeping by the door of their master's or mistress's bed chamber, or bearing a message someplace.

A squire owns no steed of their own, and no equipment other than the clothes on their back,

a knife, a bowl, a spoon to eat with, and a blanket to sleep under. Knights must provide for them.

Each squire deserves a name. Give them one.

The Squire's Skill

Sometimes Player-knights may call upon their own squire to make a Squire Skill roll for normal servant-type activities (making camp, tending horses, cleaning armor, etc.) and for combat-related duties.

The character must declare why they are calling the squire. Usually this is for one of three desired actions:

- * **First Aid:** the squire attempts to heal one or more wounds
- * **New weapon:** the squire brings forth a weapon requested by their knight, who rearms
- * **Fresh horse:** the squire brings forth a fresh horse for the knight to mount

Merely calling the squire does not instantly accomplish the desired action. First Aid requires the injured knight be pulled out of combat and several (1D6) minutes of treatment, perhaps involving partial removal of armor; mounting a horse usually takes one Combat Round, as does re-equipping a weapon.

Squires are handy assistants and may even save your life!