

ENHANCING MUNDANE ITEMS FOR LOW LEVEL CHARACTERS, THAT WON'T BREAK YOUR GAME!


WARRIOR CLASS
WARRIOR CLASS WEAPONS

ROGUE CLASS
ROGUE CLASS WEAPONS



THE
WEAPON UPGRADE
Cheat Sheet
FOR D&D 5E

We've unearthed a formula so simple, it almost feels like cheating! Introducing the super simple, three-level system of "basic weapon upgrades"
(Cue the heavenly choir).



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ENHANCING BASIC WEAPONS

If you're anything like me, you may have some reservations around giving out magical weapons too early in a game. In my current campaign setting, magic items are a precious commodity that aren't just thrown out like candy from a Piñata. After all, what's the point of going on a dangerous quest to find a magical sword if you can just grab one off the clearance rack at Goblin Mart?

WHY USE THIS SYSTEM?

By investing effort and time into their weapons, players will grow more attached to them, helping them get drawn into the game at lower levels.

In addition, their choice between the "brutal" and "precise" options (which you will learn about shortly), will be rewarded every time they get to turn a 1 into a 5 or roll double the dice on a 19.

Finally, the different upgrade options, while very mechanically distinct, work out to very similar expected values for damage on any given attack. This means that characters who choose one option will not outpace characters who choose the other

UNDER THIS SYSTEM, THERE ARE 3 "LEVELS" OF NON-MAGICAL WEAPONS (ANY DAMAGE DIE). YOU CAN THINK OF STARTING WEAPONS AS LEVEL 0.

In the following guide article, we'll explore how to design upgrade paths that cater to different play styles and how to introduce low-level item upgrades in a balanced and meaningful way. Let's dive in!

THE EXCITING BIT:

THE 3 "LEVELS" OF NON-MAGICAL WEAPONS (ANY DAMAGE DIE):

LEVEL 1 - UPGRADE:

There are two options for a level 1 upgrade: you can upgrade your weapon to be "precise", which increases the critical hit range of the weapon by one; or you can upgrade your weapon to be "vicious", which allows the player to reroll 1s on the damage die (they must accept the reroll).

LEVEL 2 - EXTENSION:

Level 2 extends the level 1 upgrades: A "precise" weapon becomes "superior", further extending the critical range by 1, and a "vicious" weapon becomes "brutal", allowing rerolls on 1s and 2s.

LEVEL 3 - MASTERCRAFT:

The level 3 upgrade removes the effects of levels 1 & 2, and increases the damage die of the weapon by one step for a "mastercraft" weapon.

EXAMPLES:

The Fighter takes his longsword (1d8) to the blacksmith for upgrades. Preferring to strike at his enemies' weaknesses, he chooses to make a "precise" longsword. His longsword now scores critical hits on a roll of 19 or 20.

The Rogue, having already upgraded his dagger (1d4) to the "brutal" level two, decides to upgrade to a "mastercraft" dagger. Now, he carries a weapon that is as easily concealed as a dagger, but deals as much damage as a short sword. This weapon is almost (but not quite) as good as a +1 magic dagger.

NOTE:

You may not want to make all weapons upgradeable. For example, weapons with special effects, like whips and polearms, may be non-upgradeable.

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THE MATHY BIT:

For these numbers, we assume that a low-level character has a 16 or 17 in their primary combat attribute, and that their proficiency bonus is +2, resulting in a +5 to hit. We also assume that the average AC for their foes is 15.

1d4 weapon formula:

Basic starting item: Hit on 10, crit on 20, avg damage on hit is 2.5+3. Expected damage: $(10/20)(2.5+3) + (1/20)(5+3) = 3.15$

Precise: Hit on 10, crit on 19. Expected damage: $(9/20)(2.5+3) + (2/20)(5+3) = 3.275$

Vicious: Reroll 1s. Avg dice result on hit = $(1/4)(2.5) + (3/4)(3) = 2.875$. Expected damage: $(10/20)(2.875+3) + (1/20)(5.75+3) = 3.375$

Superior: Hit on 10, crit on 18. Expected damage: $(8/20)(2.5+3) + (3/20)(5+3) = 3.4$

Brutal: Reroll 1s and 2s. Avg dice result on hit = $(2/4)(2.5) + (2/4)(3.5) = 3$. Expected damage: 3.45

Mastercraft: Increased dmg die. Expected damage: $(10/20)(3.5+3) + (1/20)(7+3) = 3.75$
+1 Magical: Hit on 9, +1 damage. Expected damage: $(11/20)(2.5+4) + (1/20)(5+4) = 4.02$

WEAPON DAMAGE:



Regular weapons:

Mundane: 3.75
Precise: 3.93
Vicious: 4
Superior: 4.1
Brutal: 4.15
Mastercraft: 4.35
Magical (+1): 4.68

1d8 weapons:

Mundane: 4.35
Precise: 4.58
Vicious: 4.613
Superior: 4.8
Brutal: 4.8
Mastercraft: 4.95
Magical (+1): 5.33

1d10 weapons:

Mundane: 4.95
Precise: 5.23
Vicious: 5.22
Superior: 5.5
Brutal: 5.43
Mastercraft: 5.55*
+1 Magical: 5.98

1d12 weapons:

Mundane: 5.55
Precise: 5.88
Vicious: 5.83
Superior: 6.2
Brutal: 6.05
Mastercraft: N/A
Magical (+1): 6.63

*Upgrades to 1d12. An upgrade to 2d6: 5.85

NOW GO FORTH AND STAB!

TIE IT ALL TOGETHER

NOTES:

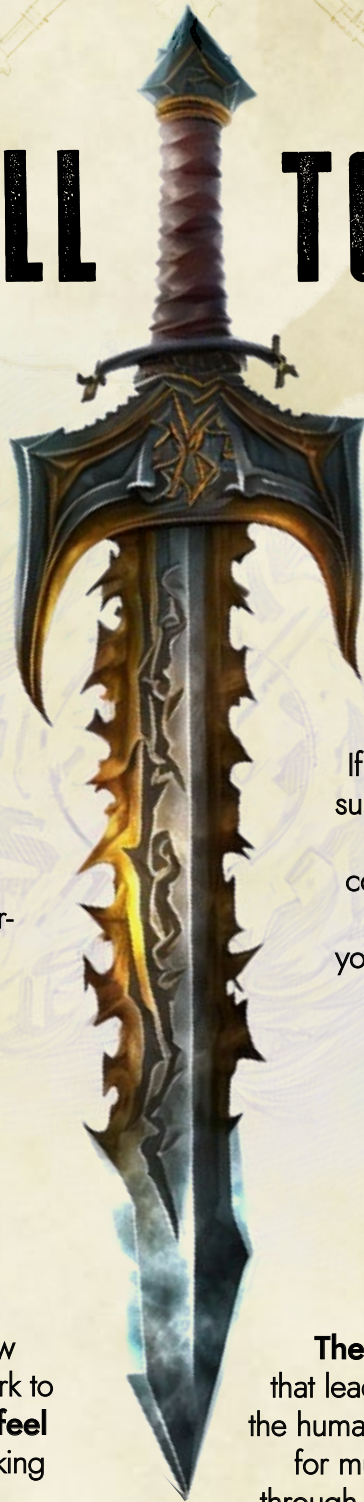
The cost of weapon upgrades should be very expensive, but not so expensive that it turns your adventure into the campaign to earn enough money to upgrade a sword. That said, they should have to work for it, and having to take on a side quest or two to earn the money may be right for you. It all depends on your personal preference.

A 1d12 weapon cannot be upgraded to Mastercraft level. Using a d20 as a damage die is just a little too powerful.

SIGN-OFF:

So there you have it, you are now equipped with a robust framework to upgrade low-level weapons that **feel** incredibly powerful without knocking your game out of balance!

We're confident that this framework will be a critical hit at your game table, providing your players with a rewarding experience but we'd love to hear your feedback to see how it's working for you in the field.



THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide! May your rolls always be in your favour, and your players never question your mathematical genius

If you enjoyed this guide and want to support us in creating even more epic content, we humbly ask that you consider visiting our Kickstarter page.

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THE
silence

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