

BASIC D20 DEFENSE

In Basic d20, there are two skills that relate to a character's defensive abilities, Dodge and Parry. A character's skill ranks in Dodge relate to his defense against ranged weaponry while skill in Parry relates to defense in melee combat. Characters can also use various armor and shield types to increase their defensive capabilities as well. The defense bonuses derived from skill ranks in Dodge and Parry operate like the Defense Bonus as described in *Unearthed Arcana* (among other places). The default system in Basic d20 is to use the higher of the character's Defense Score or Armor Class when an opponent attacks. Anytime the character would be denied the Dexterity bonus to AC, they are also denied their Dodge or Parry skill rank bonus to AC (but they can still use their armor and shield bonuses). However, the Dodge or Parry skill rank bonus to AC applies to touch attacks (whereas the armor and shield bonuses don't apply). This document will clarify the interaction between these various bonuses and offer a new way of combining a character's defense bonus from Dodge or Parry skill ranks with armor and shield bonuses.

DODGE AND PARRY DEFENSE BONUSES

The table below shows the recommended defense bonuses given a character's skill ranks in Dodge and Parry. The defense bonus derived from Dodge only applies when the character is under attack by a ranged or missile weapon. The defense bonus derived from Parry only applies when the character is under attack by a melee weapon or an unarmed opponent. The Dexterity ability score modifier is added to each of these defense bonuses. Characters with no skill ranks in Dodge or Parry only get their Dexterity ability score modifier as a defense bonus.

Parry and Dodge		Parry and Dodge	
Skill Rank	Defense Bonus	Skill Rank	Defense Bonus
1	Dex + 1	11	Dex + 7
2	Dex + 2	12	Dex + 8
3	Dex + 3	13	Dex + 8
4	Dex + 4	14	Dex + 9
5	Dex + 4	15	Dex + 9
6	Dex + 5	16	Dex + 10
7	Dex + 5	17	Dex + 10
8	Dex + 6	18	Dex + 11
9	Dex + 6	19	Dex + 11
10	Dex + 7	20	Dex + 12

ARMOR AND SHIELDS

The table below reproduces some parameters from the armor and shield tables in the SRD. Note the one change that has been made. In the SRD, there is a column for “Maximum Dex Bonus.” This has been changed to “Maximum Defense Bonus.” The significance of this change is that now armor, shield, and defense bonuses can be combined somewhat. A character with sufficient ranks in Dodge or Parry can apply the appropriate defense bonus derived from these skills to their AC while wearing armor (up to the limit of the armor type). Shields, other than tower shields, impose no limit to the defense bonus derived from Dodge and Parry.

Armor Table

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Maximum Defense Bonus	Armor Check Penalty
Light Armor				
Padded	5 gp	+1	+8	0
Leather	10 gp	+2	+6	0
Studded Leather	25 gp	+3	+5	-1
Chain Shirt	100 gp	+4	+4	-2
Medium Armor				
Hide	15 gp	+3	+4	-3
Scale mail	50 gp	+4	+3	-4
Chainmail	150 gp	+5	+2	-5
Breastplate	200 gp	+5	+3	-4
Heavy Armor				
Splint mail	200 gp	+6	+0	-7
Banded mail	250 gp	+6	+1	-6
Half-plate	600 gp	+7	+0	-7
Full plate	1,500 gp	+8	+1	-6

Shield Table

Shield	Cost	Shield Bonus	Maximum Defense Bonus	Armor Check Penalty
Buckler	15 gp	+1	--	-1
Light (wd/stl)	3 gp / 9 gp	+1	--	-1
Heavy (wd/stl)	7 gp / 20 gp	+2	--	-2
Tower	30 gp	+4	+2	-10

APPLICATION

Not all bonuses apply all of the time. As stated before, anytime the character would be denied the Dexterity bonus to AC, they are also denied their Dodge or Parry skill rank bonus to AC (but they can still use their armor and shield bonuses). However, the Dodge or Parry skill rank bonus to AC applies to touch attacks (whereas the armor and shield bonuses don't apply). The Maximum Defense Bonus due to armor limits the character even in situations where they are defending against a touch attack.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

First, a couple of formulae:

Combat Statistic	Formula
Melee Defense	10 + Parry Defense Bonus + Armor Bonus + Shield Bonus + Size Modifier
Ranged Defense	10 + Dodge Defense Bonus + Armor Bonus + Shield Bonus + Size Modifier

Melee Defense is the Difficulty Class for an opponent to hit you in hand-to-hand combat. It is analogous to Armor Class but only for melee and unarmed attacks. Ranged Defense is the Difficulty Class for an opponent to hit you with a missile, thrown, or ranged weapon of any sort. It is analogous to Armor Class but only for attacks from a distance. The Dodge Defense Bonus consists of the Dexterity ability score modifier and the extra defense bonus gained from having skill ranks in Dodge. The Parry Defense Bonus consists of the Dexterity ability score modifier and the extra defense bonus gained from having skill ranks in Parry. Both the Dodge and Parry Defense Bonuses may have an upper limit depending on the type of armor a character is wearing or if the character is using a tower shield.

Now for some examples:

Example #1: A character has a +2 Dexterity, Dodge 7 ranks, Parry 2 Ranks, and is wearing chainmail (armor bonus +5). Chainmail has a Maximum Defense Bonus of +2. Therefore, the character's Melee Defense is 17 (10 + Parry Defense Bonus (normally 4, but limited to 2 from the chainmail) + Armor Bonus (5)). The character's Ranged Defense is also 17 (10 + Dodge Defense (normally 7, but limited to 2 from the chainmail) + Armor Bonus (5)). His defense against touch attacks is only 12. If this character is expecting to get into a whole lot of ranged combat, he should lose the chainmail, because his Ranged Defense would still be 17 and he'd have more mobility (but his Melee Defense would be 14).

Example #2: The player of the above character decides to find a better armor type, given his character's ranks in Dodge or Parry. His Defense Bonus from Dodge is 7 (Dex + 5) and his Defense Bonus from Parry is 4 (Dex + 2). Looking at the armor table, he notes that leather armor allows a Maximum Defense Bonus of +6. He decides to start wearing leather armor (even though it makes him look like a thief). His new Melee Defense is 16 (10 + Parry Defense Bonus (4) + Armor Bonus (2)) and his new Ranged Defense is 18 (10 + Dodge Defense Bonus (6, the maximum for leather armor) + Armor Bonus (2)). His Ranged Defense is a little better, his Melee Defense a little worse, but he's moving faster now, his defense against touch attacks is much better, and it's a lot of weight off his shoulders (literally).