

# BASIC D20 NATURAL ADVANCEMENT

Basic d20 is a simplified version of the d20 system suitable for use in any d20-based campaign. This system has been designed for quick character generation and ease of play. The focus is to make it simpler for players. The GM, however, must be well-versed in the d20 system to make use of this set of rules. The normal Basic d20 system uses the concept of Power Points from *Mutants & Masterminds* for player character advancement. This document details a simple, alternate advancement system for characters.

## DEVELOPING ABILITIES

After each adventure, the GM should give each player twelve d4's to distribute among his character's six ability scores. The GM may choose how many dice are assigned to each ability or he can allow the player to assign dice. The number of dice assigned to each score is rolled and added to the advancement total for that ability score. When the campaign begins, the starting advancement total for all of the character's ability scores is zero. When a score reaches or exceeds 100, the ability score is raised to the next higher value and 100 is subtracted from the advancement total for that score. The maximum ability score modifier for a character is equal to his starting ability score modifier plus three.

For example, a character's ability score modifiers and advancement total are as follows:

Ability	Modifier	Advancement Total
Strength	+2	87
Dexterity	+2	23
Constitution	+3	45
Intelligence	+0	0
Wisdom	-1	51
Charisma	+2	0

After an evening of play, the GM awards the player twelve four-sided dice to distribute among his six ability scores. The player could assign two dice per ability score, but he really wants to raise his Strength. He assigns six dice to Strength and three dice to both Dexterity and Constitution each. He rolls 6d4 and gets '15' as a result. He adds 15 to 87 for a new total of 102. After notifying the GM, he changes his Strength to +3 and subtracts 100 from his advancement total, leaving it at 2. For Dexterity, he rolls 3d4 and gets a '7' which he adds to 23 for a new total of 30. For Constitution, he rolls 3d4 and is lucky to get a '10' which makes his new total 55. The modifiers above represent the character's starting ability score modifiers. Since the player has raised his character's Strength by one, he can only add two more before reaching his character's maximum ability score modifier.

Ability score modifiers can be raised to values higher than Starting Value + 3 through magic or other means, but cannot be naturally developed higher with advancement d4's.

## BROAD SKILL ADVANCEMENT THROUGH ADVENTURING

If the character successfully uses a skill in a significant way during an adventure, the player is entitled to check to see if the character's rank in that skill increases by one rank after the adventure. The DC for the advancement check is listed below. For reference, the average number of total checks to reach a certain skill rank is shown as well. Note that for an advancement check to be granted, the skill must be used in a situation where failure would have been detrimental to the character. The character cannot simply climb a wall every adventure in order to gain a skill check in Athletics. However, if the character is climbing a wall to escape a pack of hungry wolves, and is successful, then the player is entitled to an advancement check. There is no limit to the number of broad skill areas that may be checked per adventure, but only one check for each broad skill area is allowed per adventure. Advancement rolls are simple d20 rolls with absolutely no modifiers to the roll.

Current Skill Ranks	DC to Advance to Next Rank	Average Number of Checks to Reach Rank
0	1	0
1	3	1
2	5	2
3	6	3
4	8	5
5	10	6
6	11	8
7	12	10
8	14	12
9	15	15
10	16	18
11	16	22
12	17	26
13	18	31
14	19	38
15	19	48
16	19	58
17	20	68
18	20	88
19	20	108
20	20	128

Example: a character successfully uses his Fight skill area during an adventure. He currently has 10 ranks in Fight. The GM allows the player to make an advancement roll for Fight after concluding the night's adventure. The DC for the roll is 16. The player rolls a '13' on a d20. Since this is lower than the DC, the character's Fight skill remains at 10 ranks.

## **BROAD SKILL ADVANCEMENT THROUGH TRAINING**

Advancement through training costs time and money. To figure out the amount of time, simply find your current number of ranks on the table above. Note the “average total checks” for that rank. Next, find the desired skill rank and note the “average total checks” for that rank. Subtract the lower from the higher. This is how many quarters your character will need to train (there are four quarters in a year). Costs can vary from campaign to campaign, but for a normal “D&D-style” campaign, the cost for training starts at 50 gp per month, divided by the number of students training under the master. This figure allows the master to maintain a “common” level of upkeep (c.f. DMG 3.5, page 130). A master can train a number of students equal to one-fourth his Profession (teacher) rank and can only train up to his current rank in the skill being taught. Masters wishing to maintain better lifestyles will certainly charge more than a total of 50 gp per month. About 200 gp per month should be the upper limit. But how does one teach when enjoying that kind of lifestyle?

As a thought experiment, under this system it would take about 32 years of near-constant training and 19,200 to 76,800 gp to go from zero ranks in a skill to 20 ranks in only one broad skill area. It would take 640 years of constant training and up to 1,536,000 gp to go from zero to 20 ranks in all twenty skill areas. Obviously, it’s much better to advance through adventuring!

When using this system, the GM determines what, if any, masters are available for training characters and the skill ranks of those masters.

## **GAINING ADVANTAGES**

At the discretion of the GM, a character may gain a particular, desired advantage when they would have gained a Power Point under the old system if the roleplaying narrative allows for it. For example, if a tracker is traveling with the characters and one of the characters convinces the tracker to teach him the secrets of tracking, the GM can award that character the Track feat at the end of the adventure. Or perhaps a player says that he wants his character to develop the Power Attack feat. The GM decides to apply the penalty from Power Attack to that character’s attack rolls (without an increase in damage) for the entire adventure. Should the character survive, the GM will grant that character Power Attack. Spot awards of advantages are always at the discretion of the GM and under his terms.

Otherwise, gaining an advantage costs time and money, just like skill training. Gaining one advantage takes one quarter of the year and 50 to 200 gp per month during those three months of training. The master can teach a number of characters equal to one-fourth his Profession (teach) rank and must possess the advantage being taught. A character may work on an advantage the same quarter they work on a broad skill area as long as he is working under the same master.

## GAINING AND DEVELOPING POWERS THROUGH ADVENTURING

Characters that already have levels in powers can develop those powers through adventuring. The difference between developing powers and advancing skills is that you must accumulate a number of successful checks equal to the Power Point per Level cost of the power in order to advance that power one rank.

Current Level	DC for Successful Advancement Check
1	3
2	5
3	6
4	8
5	10
6	11
7	12
8	14
9	15
10	16
11	16
12	17
13	18
14	19
15	19
16	19
17	20
18	20
19	20
20	20

For example, a character with 7th level cleric spellcasting successfully uses his spells during the adventure. The GM says that the player is entitled to an advancement check. The DC for this check is 12. The player rolls a '17' which is a successful check. Since cleric spellcasting normally costs 3 PP per level, the player will need two more successful checks before 8th level cleric spellcasting is attained.

For exceptional use of powers during an adventure, the GM can authorize up to three checks for each power. In the example above, if the character had saved the party's bacon three times through clever use of clerical spellcasting, the GM might allow three checks instead of only one.

As with advantages, the GM always has the option of granting a level in a power outright as an adventuring reward. For example, a character discovers the Disks of Mishakal and spends time studying them. The GM then awards that character one spellcasting level in cleric (the equivalent of a 3 PP award).

## GAINING AND DEVELOPING POWERS THROUGH TRAINING

Gaining and developing powers through training works much like skill training as described above. The difference is that the times are multiplied by the normal Power Point costs per level. Some common PP costs per level are shown in the table below.

Current Level	PP Cost 1 per Level	PP Cost 1.5 per Level	PP Cost 2 per Level	PP Cost 3 per Level	PP Cost 5 per Level
0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	2	2	3	5
2	2	3	4	6	10
3	3	5	6	9	15
4	5	8	10	15	25
5	6	9	12	18	30
6	8	12	16	24	40
7	10	15	20	30	50
8	12	18	24	36	60
9	15	23	30	45	75
10	18	27	36	54	90
11	22	33	44	66	110
12	26	39	52	78	130
13	31	47	62	93	155
14	38	57	76	114	190
15	48	72	96	144	240
16	58	87	116	174	290
17	68	102	136	204	340
18	88	132	176	264	440
19	108	162	216	324	540
20	128	192	256	384	640

To use the table, find your character's current level in the power. Cross-reference to the cost per level and note the number in the table. Next, find the desired level, cross-reference to the cost per level and note this number. Subtract the lower number from the higher and this is the number of quarters your character must train to reach your desired level. The cost is 50 to 200 gp per month. A suitable master must be found, one who will train the character and has, at a minimum, the level desired.

For example, a character knows nothing of wizardry, but wishes to learn. He finds a suitable master. The master says he can train him for three years at a price of 3,000 gp and he will be a wizard spellcaster of 2nd level at the end of training. Even though it should only take 30 months, the character agrees.

## **ACCELERATED ADVANCEMENT**

If the GM desires accelerated advancement for characters, simply change all training quarters to months (or even weeks for extremely accelerated advancement). Monthly costs should remain the same, unless the time interval is changed to weeks. In this case, training costs should always be 50 gp per week.

## **POWER LEVEL LIMITS**

At no time can a character ever raise an ability score modifier, skill rank, or power level above the power or character level limit set by the GM regardless of the success of advancement checks. For example, the GM has set the current maximum character level at 3rd. A character with 3rd level druid spellcasting ability is not eligible to raise his druid spellcasting level until the GM sets the maximum character level to 4th level. Nor can he “save up” two successful advancement checks to raise his spellcasting ability to 4th as soon as the GM raises the campaign maximum character level.

## **DESIGNING ADVENTURES USING NATURAL ADVANCEMENT**

Obviously, players are going to want opportunities to use just about every skill and power they have to accumulate successful advancement checks. This makes adventure design very, very easy. You want to plan your adventures to include a variety of challenges, maybe one for each broad skill area if you’re truly ambitious! You also have to have enough opportunities to give each character a chance to gain an advancement check in the same broad skill area. For example, you may need to include a half-dozen “thievery” challenges to give every character a chance to gain an advancement check in Thievery if the party is full of rogues. Combat is easy to stage, so there should always be opportunities for Dodge, Fight, Parry, and Shoot to get exercised. If magic and traps are involved, then Fortitude, Reflex, and Will will be challenged. A successful Toughness save or significant hit point loss (more than 50% at least) will gain the character an advancement check in that area as well.

## **WHY ALL THE FUSS?**

The normal advancement system consists of the GM awarding a small number of Power Points per night’s adventure depending on character success, player roleplaying, and other factors. These PP are normally used as currency to buy additional ability score modifiers, skill ranks, advantages, and power levels with no bearing on what actions the character performed in the adventure. This system allows advancement only in traits which are used during the adventure or through specific training. This is a more “natural” system where the character develops those traits that he uses the most or those that he chooses to develop further through training and instruction. As always, but it bears repeating, the GM has total control over the advancement of all player characters in his campaign; the GM is the final arbiter of when an advancement check has been earned or when training is available under the natural advancement system.