

# Hits: An Ars Magica Combat Variant

Combat in *Ars Magica* can be very deadly. This option gives characters and creatures a new trait called “Hits” which serves as a damage buffer that can be worn down before actual wounds are gained in combat.

## HITS FOR CHARACTERS AT START

Characters gain Hits based on their importance to the story. Strength, Stamina, Size, Combat Ability, Experience, etc. is already accounted for in the combat system, so these traits are not used when granting Hits to characters. Characters gain a number of hits based on their Personality Flaws, Social Status, and Story Flaws. A character’s Hits starts at zero and is adjusted by the modifiers below during character generation.

Virtue or Flaw	Hits Bonus
Social Status (Virtue or Flaw)	+1
Major Personality Flaw	+2
Minor Personality Flaw	+1
Major Story Flaw	+2
Minor Story Flaw	+1

Thus, a Grog would normally be limited to two Hits (one Social Status and one Minor Personality Flaw), while magi and companions could have up to six Hits (one Social Status, one Major Story Flaw, one Major Personality Flaw, and one Minor Personality Flaw).

Alternatively, the Storyteller can assign a fixed number of Hits based on story importance, with the recommended amount being two or three Hits for grogs, three or four Hits for companions, and five or six Hits for magi.

## GAINING HITS DURING PLAY

Hits should be increased in play when a character achieves something of story importance during the Saga. Examples are found below.

Achievement	Hits Bonus
<i>For grogs and companions</i>	
First time Ability 10 is earned	+1
Survives first adventure	+1
<i>For grogs</i>	
First time attacked while defending a magus	+1
First time being subject to an opponent’s magical effect	+1
First time being present while another grog dies in combat	+1
<i>For companions</i>	
Survives third adventure	+1
Survives sixth adventure	+1
Survives tenth adventure	+1
<i>For magi</i>	
Apprentice passes Gauntlet	+1
First time certamen is won	+1
First time a familiar is gained	+1
First time a talisman is made	+1
First time Twilight is entered	+1

The Storyteller can guide what sort of play is to be encouraged by the achievements that will grant additional Hits. A character should not earn more than five Hits over the starting amount determined during character generation.

## HITS FOR CREATURES

Creatures have a Hits total equal to the number of levels of “zero Fatigue Levels” they have or the creature’s Might Score divided by ten, rounded up, using the higher of the two. Creatures can have a Hits total of zero (such as small mundane animals).

## USING HITS

Run combat exactly as outlined in **Ars Magica Fifth Edition**. Whenever a character or creature with a positive Hits total would take a wound, their current Hits is reduced by a number corresponding to the wound level. See the table below.

Wound Level	Hits
Light Wound	1
Medium Wound	2
Heavy Wound	3
Incapacitating Wound	4
Dead	5

If the Hits total remains positive after being reduced, the character or creature suffers no ill effects. They do not gain a wound and are not impaired by the damage. If the Hit total goes exactly to zero, the character is rendered Unconscious and does not gain a wound. However, if the Hits total is reduced to a negative number, the character or creature is rendered Unconscious and suffers a wound corresponding to the Hits of damage remaining. For example, if a grog with three Hits takes an Incapacitating Wound, the grog’s Hits total is reduced to -1. That grog is knocked out and suffers a Light Wound.

Any damage received after the Hits total of a character or creature is reduced to zero or below follows the normal **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** rules. However, when a Storyteller creature is reduced to zero or below Hits the

Storyteller can decide whether that creature is knocked out, killed, dissipated (in the case of incorporeal foes), turns to leaves and sticks (for foes of the Faerie Realm), etc., suffering a condition that makes sense to the story.

## REGAINING HITS

A character’s Hits total is restored to its maximum value after one night’s sleep (or an equivalent period of rest), usually only once per twenty-four period. The Hits total for a creature should be restored by some appropriate method once during each day. For example, creatures of the Infernal Realm may have their Hits total restored at midnight.

## HITS IN THE GAME SYSTEM

Hits are not affected by any form of magic, Hermetic or otherwise. Consider Hits to operate under the Limit of the Divine since Hits represent a combination of divine favor, luck, importance to the Cosmos, and other such factors. Also, Hits cannot be restored with mundane medical arts. Hits are purely a game mechanic granting a level of plot immunity to characters and creatures.

## REASON TO USE HITS

Using Hits allows the Storyteller to run a more combat-focused Saga without worrying as much about long recovery times and sudden death. Giving players a resource that shows how close a character is to getting seriously damaged in combat allows the troupe to withdraw from potentially deadly combats with some warning before catastrophe. Or, a Storyteller could choose to use Hits in special situations, such as when the group is exploring Arcadia. This option could allow for a more adventurous Saga in keeping with many of the tropes established by other fantasy role-playing games.