

ALTERNATE HIT POINT SYSTEM

by

Adam Winston
<yldchild9@aol.com>

This document details an Alternate Hit Point System that is more realistic than the one currently in use. Instead of characters growing "tougher", they learn how maneuver and block to lessen damage.

INTRODUCTION

I have been considering tinkering with the hit point system for a while now since it seemed sort of unrealistic. For example: The Ranger in my current campaign, thanks to lucky-rolls, being 7th level, and having a very good Constitution score, has more than 70 hit points! This has allowed him to stride through dangers that would have slain half a dozen normal men.

When characters gain hit points, I seriously doubt that it means they get too much tougher, it might even weaken them a little on the long run (multiple fractures, stab wounds and contusions can make a guy extra sensitive and weak unless magically healed). Whether you're experienced or not does change how many arrows you can take. But, with proper training and experience, characters can learn how to reduce damage; by moving half an inch as a blade whips by turning a potential lethal slash into a flesh wound and such. That is what I think hit points for human and demi-human PCs should really reflect.

STARTING OFF

When a character starts out at first level, it is assumed that they are at their peak, and this should be represented by their hit points. Just blindly rolling doesn't seem to work too much; I've had warriors with constitution scores of 14 come out with 1hp at 1st level, even normal 0-level humans average better than that!

At 1st level 2 methods are suggested:

- 1) Give the PCs maximum hit points. They've been training for most of their lives and are at their physical best.
- 2) Let them roll naturally, but consult the following table, which is based on Class and Constitution score, noting the range and rolling accordingly.

CLASS		CONSTITUTION SCORE		HIT POINT RANGE
-------	--	--------------------	--	-----------------

AVG				
-----	--	--	--	--

WARRIOR	1	1-7 (1d8-1; 1 minimum)
4.0	2-3	1-8 (1d8)
4.5	4-6	1-9 (1d10-1; 1 minimum)
5.0	7	1-10 (1d10)
5.5	8	2-10 (1d10; 1 is considered a 2)
6.0	9	3-10 (1d8+2)
6.5	10	4-10 (1d8+2; 3 is considered a 4)
7.0	11	5-10 (1d6+4)
7.5	12	6-10 (1d6+4; 5 is considered a 6)
8.0	13	7-10 (1d4+6)
8.5	14	8-10 (1d3+7)
9.0	15	9-11 (1d3+8)
10.0	16	10-12 (1d3+9)
11.0	17	11-13 (1d3+10)
12.0	18	12-14 (1d3+11)
13.0	19-20	13-15 (1d3+12)
14.0	21-23	14-16 (1d3+13)
15.0	24-25	15-17 (1d3+14)
16.0		

PRIEST	1	1-5 (1d6-1; 1 minimum)
3.0	2-3	1-6 (1d6)
3.5	4-6	1-7 (1d8-1; 1 minimum)
4.0	7	1-8 (1d8)
4.5	8	2-8 (1d8; 1 is considered a 2)
5.0	9	3-8 (1d6+2)
5.5	10-11	4-8 (1d6+2; 2 is considered a 3)
6.0	12-13	5-8 (1d4+4)
6.5		

7.0	14	6-8 (1d3+5)
8.0	15	7-9 (1d3+6)
9.0	16-25	8-10 (1d3+7)

ROGUE	1	1-3 (1d3)
2.0	2-3	1-4 (1d4)
2.5	4-6	1-5 (1d6-1; 1 minimum)
3.0	7	1-6 (1d6)
3.5	8-9	2-6 (1d6; 1 is considered a 2)
4.0	9-12	3-6 (1d4+2)
4.5	13-14	4-6 (1d3+3)
5.0	15	5-7 (1d3+4)
6.0	16-25	6-8 (1d3+5)
7.0		

WIZARD	1	1hp
1.0	2-3	1-2 (1d2)
1.5	4-6	1-3 (1d3)
2.0	7-10	1-4 (1d4)
2.5	11-14	2-4 (1d3+1)
3.0	15	3-5 (1d3+2)
4.0	16-25	4-6 (1d3+3)
5.0		

Or even give them a tiny bit more hit points.

Why be so generous with starting hit points? Because, like already said, these characters are at their peak, and this will be the most hit points they will probably ever have--as explained below.

CORE HIT POINTS AND EXTENDED HIT POINTS

CORE HIT POINTS -- Are those Hit Points that a character starts off with at 1st level. These hit points are the result of years of training and conditioning and reflect how much damage a person could physically take. A Fighter with 7 hit points being smashed with a club would perhaps receive a bad bruise, but a frail wizard with 3 hit points might receive a fracture. These Core Hit Points or CHPs ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT.

EXTENDED HIT POINTS -- These are the hit points that are added to character once they advance past 1st level. These hit points reflect on how through experience that the character has learned ways to lessen the damage. That same wizard, now at 3rd level has 9 hit points (3 CHP + 6 EHP), when hit by the club, by now he has learned how to maneuver into a position to lower the impact, perhaps he blocked the blow with his arm, and thus instead of a fractured collarbone, he only receives a bruised arm. Through turning the body, twisting, and going limp--the character can lessen the damage which is reflected by the extra hit points or EHPs, which are the sum of the CHPs and the hit points gained after 1st level.

FIGURING EHPS -- Figuring the character's extended hit points is fairly simple. First you add in the character's total CHPs, and then you find their extended hit points.

Unless you usually give characters full hit points every time they advance in level, it is best to stick with a normal dice roll for this one. When PCs gain EHPs, it represents how much they have learned during their adventuring, sometimes its a little, sometimes its alot. But in any case, its the Dexterity score that affects the EHPs, not Constitution. The Dexterity score is now used since EHPs depend more on reaction time and mobility than how tough someone is--besides, Constitution is still as important now, since it dictates the minimum number of CHPs a character as.

The following table shows the Extended Hit Point adjustment based on on Dexterity. The numbers in paranthesis apply only to warriors--this is taking into account that Warriors concentrate more on combat than really anything else, and thus are prone to become experienced in the ways of avoiding damage than anyone else.

DEXTERITY SCORE	EXTENDED HIT POINT ADJUSTMENT
1	-3
2-3	-2
4-6	-1
7-14	0
15	+1
16	+2
17	+2 (+3)
18	+2 (+4)
19	+2 (+5)
20	+2 (+5 All 1s rolled are considered 2s)
21-22	+2 (+6 All 1s and 2s rolled are considered 3s)
23	+2 (+6 All 1s, 2s and 3s rolled are considered 4s)
24-25	+2 (+7 All 1s, 2s and 3s rolled are considered 4s)

Warriors still roll a d10, Priests still roll a d8, Rogues still roll a d6 and Wizards still roll a d4 when determining extended hit points, plus the modifiers for Dexterity.

OPTIONAL: GRADUAL ACCUMULATION OF EHPs -- Since learning is a continual process, it might be reasoned that a person would accumulate EHPs continuously. A character just doesn't wake up one morning, with a light bulb (or torch or whatever) going off in his head telling him how to avoid a blow more accurately, and thus gains all his EHPs at once.

With this option, when rolled up at 1st level, roll again but for this time roll to see how many EHPs the character will have.

EXAMPLE: Bob the Warrior is rolled up with 8 CHPs, then you roll again using the Extended Hit Point system rolling rules. Bob rolls up 6, so by 2nd level Bob will have an additional 6 Extended Hit Points totalling 14 EHPs (8+6).

So, in order to award those hit points continuously, you figure how much experience is needed to 2nd level. Bob is fresh off and has 0 experience points and thus needs 2000 experience points to advance to 2nd level. So those 6 extended hit points will be awarded over 2000 experience points, so for every 333 experience points ($2000/6=333.333$), Bob gains another extended hit point until he maxes out with 6 of them at 2nd level. Then at 2nd level he rolls another 7--he needs 2000 experience to 3rd level so ($2000/7=285.7$), so for 285/6 experience points until 3rd level he gains another extended hit point.

CHPS AND EHPS, AND WHEN TO USE THEM

CHPs and EHPs are different things and should have their own location on a character sheet and tracked seperately. These different hit points come into play at different times.

CHPs -- Damage is done the PCs CHPs when the PC's guard is totally down, or when the PC is too restrained to be able to lessen the damage. Examples can include being attack while asleep, tied to a chair, or caught by suprise.

Since even high-level warriors have only a handful of CHPs they must be careful. A Warrior cannot lessen the damage if he is totally taken by suprise, like blindly walking into a bear trap. The first damage done to a PC who has failed their Suprise Check is taken from the PC's CHP. After that, the PC will no doubt to be paying attention and on guard, so the next round of damage will be done to the PC's EHP which are far more numerous. This also makes killing sleeping character cinche--it's always a good idea to have someone stand watch.

EHPs -- Are used in every other instance, but modifiers are not uncommon. A Wizard who slips behind a fighting Warrior and shots him in the back with Melf's Acid Arrow might to TWICE normal damage. Certainly the Warrior is on guard since he is in the middle of battle, but he is preoccupied with his immediate foes and thus will a hard guarding against

an Acid Arrow speeding towards his back as shown by his reduced AC for a back attack, and the double damage for not being able lessen the impact by much.

MONSTERS

I assume hit points for monsters are as whole figured differently. Many monsters are more powerful than humans in the first place--their hit points are generally not figured by their knowledge of how lessen the impact of a weapon used against it but rather its sheer toughness and stubborn refusal to die. So it would seem reasonable that for a common monster that 90-100% of its hit points are CHPs.

What does seem odd, is how some small creatures may have similiar hit dice to a creature many times its size. Size does have a large bearing on somethings hit points; when you become the size of a giant, a dagger is little more than a pin prick, but something like a Brownie, its like being stabbed with a short sword.

To represent this, it might a good idea to deviate from the standard d8 used to figure monster hit points and use those below.

SIZE CATEGORY	HIT DICE USED
T = Tiny	d4
S = Small	d6
M = Medium	d8
L = Large	d10
H = Huge	d12
G = Gargantuan	d20!!! (Dragon's are REALLY fun now!!)

CONCLUSION

This system has NOT been thouroughly playtested so I'm sure how exactly it will affect game play, but hopefully for the better. However, if this does not appear to be working for you and giving out unrealistic scores out (offhand, this seems to make the Rogue class slightly more appealing), then don't use it.

ENJOY!!!

Written by: Adam Winston
Feedback: Yldchild9@aol.com