

HOVERING ON DEATH'S DOOR RULES

"Less deaths, more permanent damage"

(Source unknown)

DEATH

A character has a death point that is equal to the negative of his Constitution. Thus a character with a 11 Constitution would have a death point of -11. If for any reason a character's hit points goes below his death point, the character dies.

When a character reaches 0 hit points, he becomes unconscious. This unconscious state is accompanied by shallow breathing, faint heart beat, etc..

When a character has negative hit points (i.e. below 0), then he must make a system shock each round until he dies or his hit points are restored to 0 or above. If the system shock is successful, then the character still has a chance for survival. If the system shock is failed, then the character's Constitution is permanently lowered by 1. Because his Constitution is lowered by one, the character's death point is raised by 1. Thus the character with 11 Constitution who failed his system shock now has a 10 Constitution and a death point of -10.

Note that if a character's hit points goes below his death point because of the loss of Constitution then he is dead. Also, if a character's Constitution becomes 0 then the character dies as well. Such loss and death are caused from bleeding, shock, convulsions, non-respiration, and similar causes.

The only way to prevent loss and death is to raise the character's hit points to 0 or higher through aid. Aid consists of binding the wounds (healing proficiency), administering a draught (spirits, healing potion, etc.), magical spells (cure light wounds, etc.), or otherwise doing whatever is necessary to restore life. This initial healing will restore any hit points and can very well restore hit points above 0.

COMING BACK FROM THE DEATH EXPERIENCE

When a character recovers from having under 0 hit points, certain abilities are temporarily lowered for a number of days equal to the lowest number of hit points he had. Thus a character that had hit points of -6 before being healed would now suffer the lower ability scores for 6 days.

Strength is temporarily lowered for a number of days equal to the lowest number of hit points he had. Thus a character that had hit points of -6 before being healed would now suffer a -6 to his Strength.

Dexterity is temporarily lowered for a number of days equal to the lowest number of hit points he had divided by 2. Thus a character that had hit points of -6 before being healed would now suffer a -3 to his Strength.

Note that no ability can be lowered less than 1. Also, all memorized spells are lost. Finally, all saving throws are made at -1.

Other than these effects that weaken the character, the character can continue on as usual.

OPTIONAL PERMANENT DAMAGE

If a character's Constitution is lowered by a fourth of the original Constitution, then scarring could result (Table 1). If a creature's Constitution is lowered by half of the original Constitution, then the loss of a body part could result (Table 2).

TABLE 1: SCARRING

ROLL	AREA OF EFFECT	ROLL	AREA OF EFFECT
01-39	Torso	70-79	Leg, left
40-49	Head	80-89	Leg, right
50-59	Arm, left	90-00	No scar
60-69	Arm, right		

TABLE 2: LOSS OF BODY PART

ROLL	AREA OF EFFECT	ROLL	AREA OF EFFECT
01-04	Arm, left	50-59	Hand, right
05-09	Arm, right	60-64	Eye, left
10-14	Leg, left	65-69	Eye, right
15-19	Leg, right	70-74	Ear, left
20-29	Foot, left	75-79	Ear, right
30-39	Foot, right	80-89	Roll on Table 1
40-49	Hand, left	90-00	No loss of body part

NATURAL HEALING

Characters heal naturally at a rate of 1 hit point per day of rest. Rest is defined as low activity-nothing more strenuous than riding a horse or traveling from one place to another. Fighting, running in fear, lifting a heavy boulder, or any other physical activity, prevents resting, since it strains old wounds and may reopen them.

If a character has complete bed-rest (doing nothing an entire day), he can regain 3 hit points for the day. For each complete week of bed rest, the character can add any Constitution hit point bonus he might have to the base of 21 points (3 points per day) he regained during the week.

In both cases above, the character is assumed to be getting adequate food, water, and sleep. If these are lacking, the character does not regain any hit points that day.

ROLE-PLAYING IN THE HERE-AFTER

What happens to your favorite PC when he dies? You roll a new one! I hear you cry, but why must death be the end of role-playing? Almost all RPGs have a plethora of religions, from Central American to Norse mythologies, each of which stresses an after-life in one form or another.

In the case of the Norse religion the valorous dead were raised from the field of battle by Valkyries and carried to Valhalla, where they were allowed to fight and drink until the end of the world (Ragnarok) after which man would be born anew as a god-like being. Many religions stress that after death the soul must undertake a perilous journey or quest to reach its final resting place or paradise. The soul usually undertakes this journey either with or without possessions. Possessions are normally those grave goods buried with the deceased, e.g. weapons, food, wine, money, etc. Those buried without grave goods or those who were not given a proper burial rite would have to undertake this journey naked and unarmed, but would be able to improvise such items as needed upon the way. The journey could be a way of testing the soul for virtue, bravery, kindness, honesty, etc. Many grave goods, especially

those of the nobility, included effigies or statues to serve the dead on their journey.

Other religions preached that upon death each soul was placed on trial and had to prove itself innocent of crimes such as greed, cowardice, dishonesty, etc.. If the soul proved itself innocent it was allowed either access to paradise or reincarnation, depending on the religion. Guilty souls were either condemned to everlasting hell or were completely destroyed.

Some religions believed that the souls of the evil did not depart the world of the living until they had righted their wrongs.

ROLE-PLAYING IDEAS

The idea of the quest to find paradise is a good role playing theme that only needs the imagination of the DM to flesh it out.

Another idea for role playing is the discharge of a soul debt. A soul debt applies to those beings, usually evil, who have pledged their souls to demons or evil deities for power during their lives, or those who have been tricked into selling their souls into the service of evil. The latter provides the best possibilities for role playing, fight of the soul to escape from the nether planes back to their own place of eternal rest.

Many evil beings steal the souls of those they kill e.g. Nighthags who sell the souls to evil beings from the lower planes. The theme of this could be the escape of the soul from the clutches of these beings before they are sold.

The last role playing theme is probably the most obvious. Yes, you've guessed it, the UNDEAD. Things such as good vampires and liches fighting their evil contemporaries. PC souls trapped in their bodies against their will and trying to gain their eternal rest.