

Knowledge Is Power

By: Mike Chapin

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Section 1: Overview

While the Knowledge skills are an important part of D&D, they are given only some rough guidelines for use. To be fair, though, it would require far more space than the PHB had available to fully cover them. That's where this book comes in. *Knowledge Is Power* expands upon the existing Knowledge skills and adds several new ones, and also delves into sages and researching information.

First, we'll go over the main Knowledge skill. Each separate Knowledge skill is explained in greater detail in Section 2 – all the information that would fall under the "Check" section is detailed there.

Knowledge (Int, Trained only)

Like the Craft and Profession skills, Knowledge actually encompasses a number of unrelated skills. Knowledge represents a study of some body of lore, possibly an academic or even scientific discipline. Typical fields of study are listed below.

- Arcana (ancient mysteries, magic traditions, arcane symbols, cryptic phrases, constructs, dragons, magical beasts)
- Architecture and engineering (buildings, aqueducts, bridges, fortifications)
- Combat and tactics (siege warfare, fighting styles, weaponry, small and large-unit combat)
- Dungeoneering (aberrations, caverns, oozes, spelunking)
- Geography (lands, terrain, climate, people)
- Groups and Organizations (history, leadership, members, deeds)
- History (royalty, wars, colonies, migrations, founding of cities)
- Local (legends, personalities, inhabitants, laws, customs, traditions, humanoids)
- Nature (animals, fey, giants, monstrous humanoids, plants, seasons and cycles, weather, vermin)
- Nobility and royalty (lineages, heraldry, family trees, mottoes, personalities)
- Religion (gods and goddesses, mythic history, ecclesiastic tradition, holy symbols, undead)
- The planes (the Inner Planes, the Outer Planes, the Astral Plane, the Ethereal Plane, outsiders, elementals, magic related to the planes)

Check: Varies by category. See the individual listings for more details.

Action: Usually none. In most cases, making a Knowledge check doesn't take an action - either the PC knows the answer or he doesn't. See Section 3 for rules on sages and researching topics, however.

Try Again: No. The check represents what the PC knows, and thinking about a topic a second time doesn't let him know something that he never learned in the first place.

Synergy: Varies by category. See the individual listings for more details.

Untrained: An untrained Knowledge check is simply an Intelligence check. Without actual training, PCs know only common knowledge (DC 10 or lower).

Specializations

In addition to broad fields of study, a PC can choose to specialize. For example, Herne the wizard has 15 ranks in Knowledge (arcana), but he is especially interested in ancient cultures, so he spends a good deal of time digging through old archives in search of spells and magics related to the lost Talenese Empire. In this case, he gains a bonus to checks related to Talenese magic – spells, magic items, etc. – but suffers a slight penalty to other Knowledge (arcana) checks – he's still picking up bits of arcane knowledge as it relates to his subfield of study, but he would tend to ignore things that don't apply directly to the Talenese Empire.

How this works in practice is that for every 5 ranks the PC gains in his chosen Knowledge skill, he gains a +2 bonus to checks related to his specialization, but suffers a -1 penalty to other checks using that skill. Going back to the example above, Herne would have a +6 bonus to identify a *rod of imperious might* (an item used by the emperor and leaders of the Talenese noble houses) or know what it does, but would suffer a -3 penalty to identify a *staff of withering*.

Each Knowledge skill is divided into several subcategories; a PC can choose to specialize in one of those, or can choose something entirely different. Loremasters gain an extra benefit – as one of their secrets, they can choose a second specialization in a given Knowledge skill. The level + Int modifier score for this ability is 11.

Synergies

While the "Synergy" heading covers common skill synergies, there are many individual instances where having ranks of knowledge in one category can help with checks for another category. For instance, attempting to identify an inevitable (an extraplanar construct) as such is a DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check. Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (the planes) would grant a +2 bonus to the check, since the PC has some knowledge of extraplanar beings.

Any synergy bonuses granted from having a specialization count double - +4 instead of +2. For example, a PC ranks in Knowledge (arcana) and a specialization in magic would gain a +4 bonus to Spellcraft checks instead of +2.

Knowledge DCs

The degree of knowledge granted, and the DCs set, are based on the relative obscurity of the information that the PC is attempting to discover or recall. A good guideline for assigning DCs is the bardic knowledge table, which is reprinted here, with a few changes.

DC	Type of Knowledge
5	Widely known to all but a few.
10	Common, known by at least a substantial minority of the local population.
15	Uncommon – not generally public knowledge, but can be found easily with a little searching.
25	Rare - known by only a few people, but can be found with some work.
35	Obscure, known by few, hard to come by – known mostly to learned scholars or knowledge buffs.
45	Extremely obscure, known by very few, probably forgotten by most who once knew it, possibly known only by those who don't understand the significance of the knowledge.

Feats

General Knowledge [General]

The PC has picked up some bits of knowledge here and there, from books, practical experience, or being taught.

Benefit: Choose two Knowledge skills. The PC treats those as class skills, no matter what class he has, and he gains a +2 bonus to both. These skills represent knowledge gained from hobbies, side interests, or fields of study he undertakes during downtime. Alternately, he can choose a specialization in an existing Knowledge skill instead of a new skill, but he won't get the +2 bonus.

This feat can be taken multiple times; each time it applies to two new Knowledge skills. If a PC adds a Knowledge skill as a class skill using General Knowledge, he can't go back later and add a specialization with that Knowledge skill with another choice of the feat.

Section 2: Knowledge Skills

Arcana

Knowledge (arcana) covers the theory behind magic, whereas Spellcraft covers its application. As such, it encompasses several fields of study – magic (arcane symbology, material components, spells); creatures (dragons and magical beasts); and items (constructs and magic items).

Identifying a spell based on its effects falls under the Spellcraft skill.

Magic

The PC knows a good deal about magic in general, or can choose arcane or divine magic. Choosing one type or the other simply grants an additional +2 bonus when dealing with that type; the specialization bonus still applies.

Arcane Symbology: A PC can identify summoning circles, runes, written spells, etc.

A simple DC 5 check will identify a summoning circle; the DC is increased based on the circle's complexity and if the PC attempts to discern what exactly the summoner intends to call with it. For example, a circle made with powdered iron could be identified as one used to summon either an air elemental or a demon with a DC 12 check; the circle's [power level](#) would require another check, at DC 10 + power level.

The PC can identify runes (those used to denote magical objects/powers, but that have no power of their own) with a DC 10 check. If the runes are part of a magic system, the DC is 20 to recognize them as magical, but a Spellcraft check is required to determine what they do.

If the PC came across part of a scroll bearing a *fireball* spell, he could make a check to realize that it is a spell of some sort. Another check (under the Magic subfield) could identify the spell itself. He could also identify a complete scroll or spellbook in another language, or a nonstandard spellbook - tattoos, strings of knots or beads, or a carved staff as a scroll or spellbook, though he wouldn't be able to tell what spell(s) were in/on it unless he could read the language or had knowledge of the magic system that uses the nonstandard "spellbooks". A good rule of thumb here is that a DC 15 check can identify an item as a spellbook or item used to cast spells (a "scroll"). The DM can increase this to 20 if the item is especially arcane – the strings of beads, for example.

Material Components: The PC can attempt to identify a spell based on the material components, or name which components a spell requires. The DC for this is the same as that for identifying a spell (see below).

Spells: A PC can tell what a spell does (general effects, range, school, and whether or not it has an effect on a construct – i.e., bypasses SR or not) on a successful check:

DC 10 + spell level for common spells (those in the PHB);
DC 15 + spell level for uncommon spells (those in other sources);
DC 20 + spell level for rare spells;
DC 25 + spell level for unique spells.

Common spells often encompass outside sources related to the campaign world – for example, if you're playing in the world of Shtar, any of the spells from *Arcane Strife* would be considered common, but those from another third-party source that the DM allows would be uncommon, or even rare. Rare spells are those that the DM deems so, or that are known to a handful of people (a mage and his apprentices, or a single organization). Unique spells are just that – spells created by, and known only to, a single person. The PC can't even attempt a check on such a spell unless he has seen it cast or written in some form, or has had it explained to him.

Creatures

Dragons: The PC can identify a dragon by sight with a DC 10 check (for dragons that aren't metallic or chromatic).

On a DC 13 check, he knows some useful information about a dragon of a given type, if it is common to the world (in a normal D&D world, this would cover metallic and chromatic dragons from the *Monster Manual*) – breath weapon, immunities, habitat, and general disposition. For every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information. The DC increases to 15 (or more) for specific dragons, depending on how well-known they are.

For example: Azarfellthinar the Flame, an old red dragon, has terrorized the northern kingdoms for decades, so a check to reveal information about him would be pretty low – DC 15. However, Azarfellthinar recently underwent the transformation to become a dracolich, so checks to determine his new abilities would be much higher – 25 to 30.

On a check of DC 13 + age category, the PC knows one or more abilities of a specific dragon – for example, that an 500-year-old (Old age category) green dragon is likely to be resistant to damage from nonmagical weapons (DR 10/magic), has the ability to make plants grow (*plant growth* as a spell-like ability), and is resistant to magic. Each 10 points over the DC reveals another piece of information about the dragon.

On a check of DC 15 + age category, the PC can make a rough guess at its age category (if the check succeeds by 10 or less, he still has a margin of error of plus or minus one category; if the check succeeds by 11 or more, he can tell exactly).

Magical Beasts: The PC can identify most magical beasts on a check of DC 5+HD.

On a check of DC 10+HD, he knows a bit of useful information about the creature – habitat, intelligence, diet, abilities, etc.; for every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information.

Items

The PC is knowledgeable in the construction of magic items and constructs and how they work, and often has one or more item creation feats himself.

Constructs: The PC can identify a construct on a DC 5 check, if it is a standard type – clay, flesh, iron, stone – and in a normal humanoid form. If the construct is a nonstandard form – a stone golem that looks like a lion – the DC is 10 if the golem is moving, or 15 if it's standing still (as it could be mistaken for a normal statue). Identifying a construct of another, less common type – shield guardian or homunculus – the DC is 12; identifying those of extraplanar origin – retrievers or inevitables – is DC 15.

Magic Items: The PC can attempt to identify a magic item by examination. A good rule of thumb here is DC 12, +1 per 5,000 gp of the item's market price – so a *wand of fireball* (6th level) would be DC 14, a *mantle of faith* would be DC 28, and a *staff of power* would be DC 54. Even on a successful check, the PC can only identify the item's general purpose and one ability; however, each 10 points by which he exceeds the DC imparts another ability or piece of knowledge about the item – a command word, side effects (if the item is cursed), etc.

If the check fails by 5 or less, the PC can still garner some information about the item, at the DM's discretion – the enhancement bonus on a magical weapon, for example, or one of the functions of a wondrous item. If the item has only one use, then the PC knows the item's general purpose, but not its specific function – for example, he could tell that a *ring of elemental command* is related to the elements somehow, but not whether it's designed to protect against them or command them.

Artifacts are a special case. Since they are often unique items with long histories, a PC can make a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20) to recall something about the item – what it is, one of its former owners, rumored powers, etc. The DC can be adjusted according to how obscure the item is – minor, non-unique artifacts would be DC 20, while unique ones would be around DC 25, and major ones around DC 30. Nothing short of a *legend lore* or similar spell, or actual experimentation, will reveal actual powers except in special cases, like finding a firsthand account of the item's use; even then, the account is likely to be distorted and/or exaggerated.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (arcana) grants a +2 bonus on Spellcraft checks. Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (history) grants a +2 bonus on checks to identify artifacts.

Architecture and Engineering

Knowledge (architecture and engineering) covers architecture (which race built a given structure, when it was built, etc.), and engineering (building siege engines, the best way to bring down a building, determining the soundness of a structure, etc.).

Architecture

The PC can draw up plans for the building of a structure – anything from a simple hut to an entire city - and has a general idea of how they are built.

The DC for drawing plans varies, but a good rule of thumb is DC 10, +1 per 1,000 square feet of space the structure occupies. On a failed check, either the structure is too complicated for the PC to draw, or there is some flaw in the plans that likely won't become apparent until building is started – an incorrect measurement, a low estimate on building materials, etc. This generally has little effect beyond delaying building – a DC 15 check by an engineer can determine the flaw – but the DM can determine other effects as necessary.

On a DC 10 check, the PC can determine which race built a given structure, if the race is one common to the campaign world. If the race no longer exists, the DC can be increased to 15, 20, or more depending on how long ago they lived and how many examples of their craft remain, or if they were obscure (geographically limited in scope, or extraplanar in origin).

On a check of DC 10+, the PC can determine when a structure was built, based on its architecture. The modifier for this roll is +1 per 100 years of age, though 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (history) grants a +2 bonus to the check; if the PC has detailed knowledge of the race/culture that built the structure, he gains another +2. A successful check doesn't give an exact year, just a general idea – within 25 years either way.

Engineering

The PC can construct all manner of things, from a cart to a castle. This subskill relates to architecture as Knowledge (arcana) relates to Spellcraft – theory vs. application.

On a DC 15 check, the PC can build (or help build) a siege engine. For every 5 ranks he has in this skill, he gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage (if applicable) inflicted by that engine, if he is part of the crew. If he gives special instructions to the crew on where to aim but is not part of it, they still gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls per 10 ranks he has.

On a DC 12 check, the PC can determine how sound a structure is – he can tell if a cave roof is about to collapse, for example, or whether or not the rope bridge will support the party's weight. This can be increased to 15, 20, or more if the structure in question has been specifically weakened without making it obvious – ropes partially cut through, stone weakened by magic, etc.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (architecture and engineering) grants a +2 bonus on Search checks made to find secret doors or hidden compartments, or traps that employ pits, sliding walls, or falling objects.

If you use the [variant crafting rules](#), having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (architecture and engineering) grants a +2 bonus on Craft checks to make buildings, structures, or siege engines.

Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (history) grants a +2 bonus on checks to date buildings.

Combat and Tactics

Knowledge (combat and tactics) covers all aspects of battle, large and small - arms and armor, fighting styles, and large- and small-unit combat.

Arms and Armor

On a DC 10 check, the PC can determine, with a round of examination, the overall quality of a given weapon or piece of armor— normal or masterwork, and whether or not the item has any damage that would reduce its effectiveness. On a DC 20 check, he can tell if it is magical, though not what enhancement bonus it has or what it does.

On a DC 10+ check, the PC determine, with a round of examination, the material of a given weapon or piece/suit of armor. In most cases, like iron, bronze, or steel, a check is not even necessary – this is for more exotic materials like dragonhide, adamantine, or elven steel. The DC increases by the relative rarity of the material.

On a DC 10+ check, the PC can determine who made a given weapon or piece/suit of armor, and when. The base DC of 10 is for still-living smiths, legendary smiths whose work is well-known, or smiths whose marks are fairly well-known. The DC increases for modern smiths who are less well-known (a smith in a small town), who lived long ago and/or are rather obscure and/or who have very few examples of their work left.

Fighting Styles

The PC has studied (and probably trained in) various fighting styles, and can identify them.

On a DC 15 check, the PC can determine someone else's fighting ability (level) in relation to his own – much worse, about the same, better, much better, etc. The PC must observe the other person training or in battle to make an accurate analysis; merely observing someone and making a judgment based solely on his gear and the way he acts and carries himself is a DC 25 check.

On a DC 15+ check, the PC can determine someone else's fighting style, and can apply this knowledge to counter it. He must observe the other being fight (himself or someone else) for at least three rounds, or train (go through forms or spar against imaginary opponents) for five rounds; if the check is successful, he gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and Armor Class when fighting that particular opponent. This bonus lasts for one day per level the PC has in a martial class (see below), or until the other person gains a level, whichever comes first. The modifier for this check is + or -1 per point of difference in their base attack bonuses; if the other person's level is lower, the DC is reduced, and if higher, it's increased.

Large-Unit Combat

The PC has studied large-scale combat (battalions and armies) and knows how such groups act and react, to the point where he could lead such a group in combat.

The check is the same as small-unit combat, except that the DC is 15, and bonuses apply only if the number of those involved on the PC's side is 21 or more. The DC increases by +1 per 50 people under the PC's command – there is no upper limit here. The PC must have a relatively clear idea of the battlefield *and* of the forces involved; making a plan without knowledge of the area and/or of the enemy increases the DC by +8 for each.

Small-Unit Combat

The PC has studied small unit (squad-level) tactics, and knows how such groups act and react, to the point where he could lead such a group in combat.

On a DC 12 check, a PC can set up a plan of attack that can grant a small unit (up to 20 people) a +2 competence bonus on attack rolls and saves for the next combat. Alternately, he can give commands during the first round of combat that also grant this bonus. The DM can increase this for a particularly good roll or plan. The PC must have some idea of the layout of the area and/or the enemy they are about to face in order to make a plan, or must be able to communicate with his comrades during the battle. If the battle changes significantly (the enemy receives reinforcements), the PC must make a new roll to account for the changes. If the check fails, he and his comrades lose the bonus.

The DC increases by +1 per 2 people on the PC's side involved over 6, up to 20 total – so 8 PCs would be DC 14, 10 would be DC 16, etc. Making a plan without knowledge of the area or of the enemy increases the DC by +4 for each. Being unable to communicate with comrades during the battle prevents the PC from making a check.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (combat and tactics) with a specialization in armor and weaponry grants a +4 bonus to Craft (weaponsmithing) or Craft (armorsmithing) rolls.

Special: Knowledge (combat and tactics) is a class skill for fighters and paladins.

Dungeoneering

Knowledge (dungeoneering) covers all natural areas belowground - caves, caverns, and the Underdark – and some of the odder creatures that reside there.

Aberrations

The PC can identify an aberration on sight with a DC 15 check. On a check of DC 10 + HD, he can recall some useful bit of information about the creature – intelligence, diet, abilities, etc.; for every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information.

Caves and Caverns

The PC has studied caves and caverns, and often spends a good time underground spelunking (exploring caves).

On a DC 10 check, he can identify a potentially dangerous area – unstable floor/ceiling, the lair of a monster, etc.

On a DC 15 check, he can estimate the size of a cavern from the echoes of sound, to within 10 feet. This works only for spaces up to 100 feet in radius – larger than that, and the sound waves become too attenuated to accurately guess size.

Fungi and Oozes

The PC has studied various slimes, molds, and fungi, and is intimately familiar with their abilities and habits.

The PC can identify a sentient fungus creature (shrieker, phantom fungus, violet fungus, etc.) or ooze on sight with a DC 5 + HD check. On a check of DC 10 + HD, he can recall some useful bit of information about the creature – intelligence, diet, abilities, etc.; for every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information.

On a DC 10+ check, the PC can identify normal fungi (to include green slime and yellow and brown mold) and can tell whether or not they are safe to eat, and what other properties they have, if any. The DC increases according to the relative rarity of the fungus, slime, or mold in question – yellow and brown mold would be around DC 15, and flux slime (from the ELH) would be around DC 30.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) grants a +2 bonus to Survival checks in natural underground settings.

Geography

Knowledge (geography) deals with not only the locations of things, but also knowledge of the general terrain, climate, and peoples of a given area. Specializing in this skill means the PC has intimate knowledge of a given area – a nation or region up to 1,000 square miles in size. He can name and pinpoint even small towns, landmarks, or other points of interest that don't appear on most maps, can answer questions about most sentient humanoid races in the area, and knows the terrain and the predominant climate for a given time of the year.

This skill also depends on how well-traveled the world is; on some worlds, the PCs know of and travel on only one or two continents, while on others, they go all over the globe. A rule of thumb here is that knowledge of another continent/region increases the DC by 5 if it is close (North America and Central America, for instance), 10 if it is further away (North and South America), or 15 or more if it's on the other side of the world (North America and, say, southeast Asia). The DC is also increased by 5 if the world is well-traveled (all continents have been explored), 10 if it is moderately traveled (most continents), 15 for somewhat traveled (the continent the PCs are on and one nearby), or 20+ for barely traveled (the one the PCs are on, or even just a small portion of that).

These numbers are only guidelines – they can be adjusted according to the campaign world. For example, if a mage order has set up a wide network of portals to enable fast transport to most places on the globe, or people can teleport along ley lines, then the DCs would be significantly lower, as information would flow more freely. On the other hand, if most of the world is covered in heavy forest, or there is little magic and people don't travel much, the DCs would be increased by 10 or more.

"Region", as stated below, is a fluid term – there are no real guidelines for defining a region, but it should be no more than 500 square miles.

This skill is contrasted with Knowledge (local), which is applied to a specific area up to 50 square miles in size.

On a DC 5 check, the PC can place a metropolis (as defined in the DMG, Chapter 5) on a map, to within 10 miles of its actual location. The DC goes up by +3 for each smaller size population center (DC 8 for large city, DC 11 for small city, etc., all the way to DC 29 for thorp).

The above also applies to landmarks – large or well-known landmarks like the tomb of a famous hero or past ruler, or a major geographical feature like a mountain, would be DC 5, increasing in difficulty to small or obscure things like a silver mine that played out a hundred years ago and has been closed ever since, or a time-worn obelisk deep in the forest.

On a DC 10 check, the PC can name the major sentient races in the region. For each 5 points over DC 10, he can recall one extra piece of information about a given race.

On a DC 10 check, the PC knows the general climate for a given time of year in a region. On a DC 15 check, he can tell whether or not the area is prone to unusual activity – tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.

On a DC 10 check, the PC knows the general terrain of a given region – plains, mountains, hills, forest, etc. On a DC 15 check, he can give specific information – heavy forest, high mountains, rugged hills, etc.

On a DC 10+ check, the PC can name major nations, cities, or landmarks, and knows where in the world they are located. The DC is 10 for large nations, or those closest to his home, and increases the further away and/or the smaller they are.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (geography) grants a +2 bonus on Survival checks made to keep from getting lost or to avoid natural hazards.

Groups and Organizations

Knowledge (groups and organizations) deals with organizations large and small – everything from the local thieves' guild to the Imperial Legion, or even tribes or groups of savage humans or humanoids (the Red Skull orc tribe, for instance). Those with ranks in this skill know something of their goals, members, leadership, symbology (if any), methodology, etc. Specialization in this skill means the PC has chosen one specific group to focus his studies on.

On a DC 10 check, the PC can recall one of the following bits of information about a well-known group, like the local city watch, a famous mercenary company, or a major religious order: leader, general race of members, any famous members, the group's goal(s), their method(s) of operation (to include signature weapons), their symbol (if any), and any groups that are allied/opposed to them. For each 5 points above the DC, the PC can recall another piece of information. Finding out anything besides this increases the DC by 10 or more, depending on the specificity of the information (the name of the local watch captain's wife, for instance, is +10; the name of the captain's pet dog when he was a child is +20).

The DC increases according to the relative obscurity of the group, as well as how long ago they existed:
DC 15: City watch in another major city, the order of a lesser god, an openly-operating class guild, or a well-known illegal organization (thieves' guild, etc.)

DC 20: Small mercenary company (up to 500 members), famous adventuring groups, orders of demigods.

DC 30: Lesser adventuring groups, less well-known illegal organizations.

DC 40: Secret organizations (most assassins' guilds).

A good rule of thumb is to increase the DC by 5 for every 100 years since the group last operated.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (local) grants a +2 bonus to checks to recall information about local groups.

History

Knowledge (history) deals with, obviously, history – modern (within the last 50 years); recent (50-500 years ago); and ancient (500+ years ago). Knowledge of history means the PC can give dates and locations of significant events, as well as who was involved and what happened. He may also know about the history of magic items or religious artifacts. The PC can specialize in one of the time periods noted above, or in a specific time period in history – the rise and fall of the Talenese Empire, for example.

On a DC 10 check, the PC can recall a major event that happened during the time period, or a famous person who lived during that time. For each 5 points above the DC, he can recall another piece of information.

On a DC 10+ check, he can recall specific information – for example, who fought in the Battle of Fallon's Crossing 350 years ago. The DC is increased by how long ago the event occurred or the person lived (+5 per hundred years is a good rule here), and how obscure it was – recalling the events or name of a major battle would be +2 to +4, while trying to name the leader of an obscure adventuring company would be +10 to +15 or more.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (history) grants a +2 bonus on bardic knowledge checks.

Local

Knowledge (local) deals with a small geographical area – up to about 50 square miles. As with Knowledge (geography), the PC knows something of the terrain, the inhabitants, and the locations of points of interest; this skill goes into more detail, however – the PC knows about local laws, legends, customs and traditions, and groups and organizations, including tribes of humanoids or other creatures in the area (the large green dragon lairing in the nearby swamp, for example). Since Knowledge (local) is such a focused skill, it is hard to specialize further in it.

On a DC 5 check, the PC can recall one piece of basic information about the area that is commonly known – laws, customs, the name of a group operating in the area, etc. For each 5 points above the DC, he can recall another piece of information.

The DC increases according to how obscure the information is – see Knowledge (Geography) for some guidelines.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (local) grants a +2 bonus on Gather Information checks. Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (groups and organizations) grants a +2 bonus to recall information about local groups.

Nature

Knowledge (nature) covers all things related to nature and the wilderness - animals, fey, giants, monstrous humanoids, plants, vermin, etc. The PC can specialize in a specific creature type listed above, in the study of plants (botany), or in a terrain type – mountains, forest, jungle, plains, tundra, aquatic, etc.

Creatures

This covers all creatures listed above (except plant creatures – see below). The PC can identify a creature of the given type on sight with a DC 10 check. On a check of DC 10 + HD, he can recall some useful bit of information about the creature – intelligence, diet, abilities, etc.; for every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information.

Plants

The PC can identify most plants by sight on a DC 7 check (the DC increases for uncommon or rare specimens). On a check of DC 10+, he can recall the plants properties, if any, and any uses to which it can be put.

The PC can identify plant creatures on a DC 12 check; on a check of DC 10 + HD, he can recall some useful bit of information about the plant creature – intelligence, diet, abilities, etc.; for every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information.

Terrain

The PC has a great store of knowledge about one terrain type. All Knowledge (nature) checks pertaining to that terrain type – plants and animals that can be found there, normal weather patterns, etc. – gain the specialization bonus.

On a DC 10 check, the PC can tell whether or not a creature or plant is native to the area; likewise with weather patterns.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (nature) grants a +2 bonus on Survival checks made in aboveground natural environments (aquatic, desert, forest, hill, marsh, mountains, or plains).

Nobility and Royalty

Knowledge (nobility and royalty) deals with the nobility and those of royal blood, even those who were once noble but have fallen on hard times, or who were stripped of their titles for whatever reason. Those knowledgeable in this field can name off lineages, heraldry, family mottoes, who's related to whom and how, how to address people of a given rank, and even know a bit about individuals in the great houses. A PC can specialize in heraldry in general, or a noble house in specific.

Heraldry

The PC knows all the symbology used in heraldry - common, uncommon, and obscure.

On a DC 5 check, the PC can identify the house for which a given coats of arms belongs, or describe (and draw) a house's heraldry, if the house is one that is currently in existence and personally known to the PC. The DC increases to 10 for houses that are not directly known by the PC (read about them in a book or heard of them, but never seen them personally), and 15+ for minor or obscure houses, or those that are no longer in existence (+5 DC for each 100 years since the house disappeared).

On a DC 10 check, the PC can draw a coat of arms from a description.

Noble Houses

The PC knows all the members of a given noble house, past and present, and many of their personalities as well. There is a chance he even knows some secrets of the house. People specialized in this subskill are often genealogists or historians retained by the house to keep track of its history and settle disputes or answer questions of lineage and relationships with other houses.

This skill is difficult to assign DCs to, since there is such a broad range of items that pertain to it – who belongs to the house, their relationships to each other and other houses, their personalities, habits, and mores, and even the dirty little secrets every house has. A good rule of thumb here is to use the bardic knowledge chart at the beginning of this guide and assign DCs on a case-by-case basis.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (nobility and royalty) grants a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks.

Religion

Knowledge (religion) covers all things related to the church - gods and goddesses, mythic history, ecclesiastic tradition, holy symbols, and undead. A PC can specialize in one particular faith or undead.

Gods and Pantheons

The PC is familiar with gods living and dead, and even those who have been forgotten for long ages or who belong to races other than his own.

On a DC 5 check, the PC can name the major gods of his race, and their portfolios. The DC increases for gods of other races and nations (if they follow different deities) – common races (orcs, gnolls, giants) or neighboring nations are DC 10-15, while less common races (troglodytes, kuo-toa, drow) are DC 20+. Note that if the PC belongs to a humanoid race, human and demihuman gods would be DC 15+, as humanoids seldom concern themselves with other races' gods.

On a DC 10+ check, the PC can recall a piece of information about a dead god or his followers – portfolios, locations of major temples, holy symbol, holy days, etc. The base DC is for major gods that have recently (within the last hundred years) been slain or otherwise faded away; for each additional hundred years, increase the DC by +5. If the god was a lesser deity or demigod, increase the DC by another 5-10.

Faiths

The PC is conversant with the following of a particular god(dess), probably because he is part of it.

On a DC 10 check, the PC knows a useful piece of information about a church (not a particular temple, but the following of a given god in general) – the leader of the faith, where the major churches and temples are located, their holy symbol, rituals and holy days, and even some of the history. For every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information.

PCs can specialize in dead gods' faiths, though most see little use in this, as the gods are dead.

Undead

The PC is familiar with undead of all types - how to create and destroy them, their habits, abilities, and appearance.

On a DC 10 check, the PC can identify a common undead creature (anything from the *Monster Manual*, or that the DM deems common to the campaign world) on sight. This DC increases relative to the creature's

uniqueness – less common undead are DC 15, and very rare or unique undead are DC 20+. On a check of DC 10 + HD, he can recall some useful bit of information about the creature – intelligence, diet, abilities, etc.; for every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (religion) grants a +2 bonus on turning checks against undead.

Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (history) grants a +2 bonus to checks to recall knowledge about dead gods and their followers.

The Planes

Knowledge (the planes) covers all the planes besides the Prime – Inner, Outer, Elemental, Astral and Ethereal, their denizens, and planar magic. It is, perhaps, one of the broadest knowledge categories besides Knowledge (arcana); due to the sheer wealth of knowledge to be had here, there are many who specialize in subskills.

A PC can specialize in a given set of planes – Inner, Outer, Elemental, or Astral and Ethereal – or in a group of creatures that come from those planes – fiends, elementals, angels, etc.

Planar Denizens

The PC is especially knowledgeable in a specific group of planar beings. Generally speaking, he can choose one alignment axis (good, evil, lawful, chaotic), elementals, or denizens of the Astral and Ethereal planes as a focus of study.

On a DC 10 check, the PC can identify a common creature of that type (anything from the *Monster Manual*, or that the DM deems common) on sight. This DC increases relative to the creature's uniqueness – less common outsiders are DC 15, and very rare or unique ones are DC 20+. On a check of DC 10 + HD, he can recall some useful bit of information about the creature – intelligence, diet, abilities, etc.; for every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information.

Planes

The PC is especially familiar with a given subset of the planes.

On a DC 10 check, the PC knows one useful bit of information about a given plane – planar traits, rough geography (terrain and weather, if any), and what kind of creatures can be found there, including demon lords and divine beings. For every 5 points over the DC, he can recall another piece of useful information.

Synergy: Having 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (the planes) grants a +2 bonus on Survival checks made while on other planes.

Section 3: Sages and Research

Sages

Sages are generally either experts (the NPC class) or bards, clerics, or wizards with levels in Loremaster. For purposes of this guide, the former are called "expert sages" and the latter are called "Loremaster sages", as their knowledge pools vary widely, and Loremasters are generally more informed on esoteric topics, since spellcasting ability is a requirement of the class. A third type, called "nonstandard sages", are simply members of PC classes who have one or more Knowledge skills and may possess a fair bit of knowledge on the topic, but aren't active sages. Bards, clerics (religion), druids (nature), and wizards are the most likely classes to be nonstandard sages.

To create a random sage, follow these steps:

Type: Generally Expert or Loremaster. Lower-level sages can be simply those with lots of knowledge (see Section 4 for examples of nonstandard sages), but sages of Accomplished or Master rank will always be experts or Loremasters.

Race: DM's choice, but this often has a bearing on what Knowledge skills the sage will have. For example, an elf is not very likely to know much about dwarven architecture, but he will probably be a good source of information on magic.

Int Score: 10+1d6 for nonstandard sages, 10+2d4 for expert sages, or 12+2d4 for Loremaster sages. These can be assigned instead of rolled randomly. Other ability scores are of little importance, though the DM can generate them as he sees fit.

Areas of Knowledge: Sages of all types can have a combination of Knowledge skills and specializations equal to their Int bonus +1 – these are minor and major fields of study, respectively. The actual number of minor and major fields a given sage will have varies:

Sage	Minor Fields	Major Fields
Nonstandard	1-2	0-1
Expert	1-3	1-2
Loremaster	2-4	1-3

The number of fields is limited by the sheer wealth of knowledge that is available – a greater number of fields of study becomes too broad to handle.

A sage can choose any combination of minor and major fields that adds up to the total (for example, a sage with Int 15 can have three fields total), but the number of major fields cannot exceed the number of minor fields. Loremasters will always have ranks in Knowledge (arcana) and Knowledge (the planes), and will often specialize in subsets of one or both of those.

The number of ranks in a Knowledge skill for a minor field (skills for which the sage is not specialized) is level+1d3; major field skills are always maximum ranks. These skills can be assigned instead of rolled randomly, if the DM wishes, to more closely reflect the minor and major fields of study.

Level: There are four "ranks" of sages, based on character level: Novice (5-9), Journeyman (10-14), Accomplished (15-19), and Master (20+). To randomly determine a sage's level, roll 2d4+4 for nonstandard sages, 3d6+2 for expert sages, or 3d6+5 for Loremaster sages. A sage's character level will never be below 5th – anyone below that has not gathered enough knowledge to go into business for himself. Experts of lower level often apprentice to established sages, or spend their time wandering the world or doing their own research, gathering the knowledge they require.

Master sages should be specifically created by the DM, not randomly rolled.

Fees: A good rule of thumb is that a sage charges 25 gp per rank he has in a given Knowledge skill, multiplied by his level of knowledge: x1 (Novice), x2 (Journeyman), x3 (Accomplished), x4 (Master). These prices go up even further for questions in their specialties – x1.5 to x2 is a good range. Specifically created sages can charge more or less, as the DM sees fit.

Note that this is the standard fee simply for answering a question that requires no thought – the sage will charge this much or more each day if he has to research the information himself.

Chance of Success: Just as every sage varies in fields of study and amount of knowledge he has, so too does every sage have a varying chance of answering questions. Master sages, obviously, have a greater wealth of knowledge to call upon – their own and others' – than a novice, but they also charge far more. Generally speaking, a sage can answer any question with a DC equal to or less than his ranks in the appropriate Knowledge skill, or his Int score, whichever is higher, without having to make a roll. Anything over the base DC (noted on Table 3-1) requires a roll.

Finding the Right Sage

Most PCs will try to find the cheapest sage they can, but as with any service, cheaper is not always better. Table 3-1 notes the minimum level at which a sage can answer a question at the given DC. There is a limit to every sage's knowledge, however, beyond which the information is too obscure for him to find – this is noted as the Max DC. A novice sage, for instance, would have no chance of knowing (or finding out) the name of the leader of a small cult that existed for a brief period 1,000 years ago (DC 35-40).

Consulting a higher- or lower-level sage decreases or increases the DC by 3 per rank, respectively – consulting a master sage about the above question would be DC 12, while asking a novice sage would be DC 21.

Table 3-1: Sages

Base DC	Source	Max DC
15	Novice	25
20	Journeyman	30
25	Expert	35
30+	Master	--

Base DC: The DC of information the PC is seeking.

Source: The lowest level sage the PCs can consult without increasing the DC.

Max DC: The highest DC for a Knowledge check for which someone can consult a sage of a given level. This is the base DC, not the one modified for the sage's level (see above).

Research

Sometimes PCs want or need to undertake their own research – they don't have the money to consult a sage, or are seeking something they want to keep to themselves. Researching information for a question is much like researching a spell – it costs time and money, though both vary depending on the resources available. Seeking out information is easier with a well-stocked library and a broad range of resources, as reflected by those provided by a large city as opposed to a smaller one. Generally speaking, a PC stands the best chance of finding a piece of information at a given DC in the population center listed on the chart below (the Base DC), or any one higher on the chart.

Table 3-2: Research DCs by Source

Base DC	Source	Max DC
5	Village	20
10	Small town	25
15	Large town	30
20	Small city	35
25	Large city	40
30+	Metropolis	--

Base DC: The DC of information the PC is seeking.

Source: The smallest population center where someone can search for information without increasing the DC.

Max DC: The highest DC for a Knowledge check for which someone can do research in a given population center. This is the base DC, not the one modified for size of the source (see below).

Example #1: Karrena the PC rogue is trying to find out where the kingdom's mints are located, so she and her friends can steal the tap and die sets used to mint the coins. The DM rules that this isn't fairly well known, but it's not a closely-guarded secret, either, so he gives it a DC of 15. Doing some research in a large town has a good chance of turning up the information.

Example #2: Herne the PC cleric is trying to find information on an old statue he and his friends found in a ruined temple dating to around 500 years ago, during the height of the Salamancon civilization. He knows it has some sort of religious significance, but not what. The DM has assigned a DC of 25 to the check – it belonged to a fairly powerful religious order when the city was still inhabited, but few records remain after they were wiped out, and it was 500 years ago. Herne would have to go to a large city to find the information he's seeking.

Obviously, going to a larger population center grants a better chance of finding the information in question – with greater size generally comes better and more varied resources - and this lowers the DC by 3 per category over the minimum – doing the research in a metropolis would reduce the DC in Example #1 to 6, or Example #2 to 22. PCs can also attempt to find information in a smaller population center (if they don't have access to a larger one, for example), but this increases the DC by 3 per category – if Karrena tried to find the location in the library of a small town, the DC would be 18. This is subject to the Max DC noted above – Herne would have no chance of finding out anything about the statue in a village, since the information he seeks is DC 25 and the village's max DC is only 20.

Having access to resources that are specifically geared toward the search, or that are comprehensive in general (a fantasy analog of the Great Library of Alexandria or the Library of Congress) also reduces the DC – for example, if Herne were to search through the archives of his temple in the capital city, he would stand a greater chance of coming across references to the religious order and/or the city where the statue was found. These are situational modifiers, but the bonus granted should be no more than +10.

Comprehensive sources should be unique in nature – even if someone in the campaign setting has invented the printing press or another method of rapidly copying books and scrolls, a massive source like this is very hard to create and maintain. Most libraries of this sort have exorbitant access fees – lots of gold, or new books/information – or monthly or yearly "dues" people can pay to have access anytime they need it. These fees should be set by the DM according to the campaign world.

Research Time

Generally speaking, researching a question, whether a sage or a PC, takes 1 day per 2 points of the DC over 8. DCs under 10 take half a day of research. Each day of research costs 100 gp – this covers materials, access fees, and miscellaneous expenses incurred. Half a day of research costs 50 gp.

Section 4: Sample Sages

This section has two sample sages for each ranking – Novice, Journeyman, Accomplished, and Master. Each is given a level, an Int score, minor and major fields, and a brief write-up of their personality for role-play purposes, including circumstances under which they might reduce their rates. The DM is encouraged to use these as a base for creating his own sages. Several are nonstandard sages – they were included for a bit of variety, and to illustrate the point that not all sages have to be experts or Loremasters.

Generally speaking, Novice sages are usually either nonstandard or experts; Journeyman sages can be nonstandard, experts, or Loremasters, with the majority being experts; Accomplished sages are either experts or Loremasters (more of the latter than the former); Master sages are always Loremasters.

Novice Sages

Larendanwyn: Male half-elf Rog 7, Int 14

Minor Fields: Groups and Organizations, Local

Major Fields: Groups and Organizations (local thieves' guild)

Larendanwyn (Laren for short) is a little weasel of a man with a vast store of knowledge about the local thieves' guild, gained from his time serving with them. After he was kicked out for stealing from fellow members, he decided he would get back at them and go into business for himself – selling information about the guild to interested buyers. He had to move to another city, of course, and doesn't advertise his presence or his services, but word is getting around. He charges an exorbitant fee (up to twice normal rates), but his information is solid. It is only a matter of time, though, before the guild catches on and has him dealt with or the city watch gains enough information to shut the guild down themselves.

Glorin Stoneshield: Male dwarf Ftr 5/Exp 6, Int 14

Minor Fields: Local, Nature

Major Fields: Nature (humanoid tribes)

Glorin started his career as a fighter in an adventuring band, battling orcs, goblins, trolls, and the occasional giant in the hills around their home city. After a particularly disastrous outing during which two of his friends were killed and he himself received a blow to his knee that crippled him, he decided to retire. He spent some time in the taverns, spending the gold from past missions on ale, and told stories to other adventuring types, until he was running low on money and had no idea how to get more. Then it hit him – he could sell his hard-won knowledge of the humanoid tribes to those who continued to fight them. He has since turned into a moderately prosperous sage, trading information with soldiers, adventurers, and travellers alike. He's just as likely to take payment in kegs of ale as gold, but his information is always good.

Journeyman Sages

Shialia Greenleaf: Female elf Drd 12, Int 14

Minor Fields: Nature

Major Fields: Nature (botany)

While Shialia is a druid and doesn't normally act as a sage, she has an almost encyclopedic knowledge of plants, and so is often consulted on matters of botany. She charges the standard rate, or half that if the person seeking knowledge also brings samples of plants she doesn't have.

Skeltan Tongar: Male human Exp 10, Int 17

Minor Fields: History, Nobility and Royalty

Major Fields: Nobility and Royalty (noble house)

Skeltan is the court historian for a small kingdom. His job is to keep records of the royal family and all their widespread relatives – their lives, deeds, offspring, and relationships to each other. He receives a stipend for his work, and supplements it by hiring himself out to others interested in learning about the royal family. He does not part with scandalous or secret information, however – he has been working for the court for quite a long time, and is very loyal to them.

Accomplished Sages

Jurastus Tor: Male human Exp 15, Int 17

Minor Fields: Groups and Organizations, History

Major Fields: Groups and Organizations (military units), History (military history).

Jurastus is a crusty old historian who has spent most of the last 30 years studying military conflicts old and new. He's more than happy to talk about past wars with other historians or those interested in hearing his stories – he'll reduce his normal rate slightly for stories of battles the customer has been involved in.

Omar Nyskim: Male halfling Brd 12/Loremaster 5, Int 17

Minor Fields: Arcana, History

Major Fields: Arcana (items)

Since he was a child, Omar showed a talent for music and a thirst for knowledge. When he was old enough, he set out to find his fortune as a bard, gathering songs and lore as he went. He became fascinated with magic items – artifacts in particular – and began to study them in more detail. He uses his status as a bard of some renown to gain access to libraries and other places most normal people couldn't go, exchanging songs, tales, and knowledge of his own for the opportunity to do more research.

Master Sages

Acadan: Male lich Wiz 18/Loremaster 8, Int 22

Minor Fields: Arcana, Dungeoneering, The Planes

Major Fields: Arcana (magic), Dungeoneering (aberrations), The Planes (the Outer Planes)

Acadan is a specialist conjurer wizard interested in Limbo and similar planes. As part of his studies, he has accrued a vast store of knowledge relating to chaos and entropy, including creatures and magic. His tower is located on its own demiplane, a place that can change itself according to the whims of its master. Acadan does not look kindly on intrusions, but is willing to part with his knowledge for 200% of the standard fee, provided the ones seeking it don't pester him too much (more than once a month).

Shalindra Daystar: Female Half-elf Clr 17/Loremaster 6, Int 18

Minor Fields: Arcana, Religion, The Planes

Major Fields: Arcana (divine magic), Religion (church of Anxto, undead)

Shalindra is a retired high priestess of Anxto, god of the sun. After many years of service, she had gathered much knowledge in her fight against undead, so instead of moving to a quiet house in the country, she moved to a monastery and there continues to research new ways to combat undead. She has since branched out into studies of divine magic, which has always fascinated her, and is writing a treatise on the history of the church. She charges a nominal fee for worshippers of Anxto – enough to cover expenses plus 10% - or half the usual rate for non-worshippers. All those who seek her services must first apply to the church and be approved by one of the senior priests there before going to see her; this weeds out those who could potentially harm or kill the priestess.

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