

MAKING MAGICAL ITEMS:
A SENSIBLE APPROACH

by
Bryan J. Maloney
<bjm10@cornell.edu>

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The following is a method I've used to make the creation of magical items in AD&D a great deal more sensible than the nonsense currently available. To be blunt, there is no way to reconcile the vast amounts of enchanted items available in official TSR-published materials with the extreme difficulty had in producing these items. It's obvious to me that absolutely no intelligent thought has been put into this question by the powers that be at TSR. Thus, it is up to us benighted lower forms of life called "gamers", whom TSR appears to give the same consideration as would a dog its fleas, to propose more intelligent, workable solutions.

This method relies upon two families of spells. "Enchant an Object" no longer exists, although "Permanency" is still an optional component to use with both spell families. Without further ado:

PRESERVE THE MASTER'S MARK OF THE FIRST RANK (Enchantment, Invocation)

Level: 1
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 season
Casting Time: Special
Area of Effect: 1 item
Saving Throw: None

This family of spells explains much of what the ignorant call "magic weapons" and "enchanted armor". In truth, the magic of these items is far more wondrous than the mere castings of a mage. These items are examples of the finest that a master crafter can make. The sadness is that such extreme quality can rapidly be worn away by heavy use. For example, a truly magnificent sword, of exceptional edge, will last longer and keep a better edge than most swords, but it will lose the absolute "incredibleness" that its maker's hand gave. This spell preserves that state for a time, postponing the inevitable for a little while.

The rite must be cast upon an item straight from the Master's hand. It will not improve an item's quality, but it will keep it at peak condition. This spell can postpone the day of deterioration for its duration. The casting time is one week per Rank per pound weight (or fraction thereof) of the item. A Ninth Rank enchantment would take nine weeks per pound weight of the target item. This spell cannot restore items, only prevent their inevitable deterioration. When under the effects of this spell, weapons and armor are considered "magical" for the purposes of effecting unusual monsters. The spell has no effect whatsoever on an item of ordinary quality. This spell cannot be re-cast upon an item. Only the first casting has any effect. However, each successively higher Rank of this spell has a duration double the preceding Rank. Thus the Second Rank lasts two seasons, and the Ninth Rank lasts 256 seasons (or 64 years). Each Rank must be learned as a separate spell, since each Rank is far more elaborate than the previous.

Due to the semi-divine nature of this kind of creation, the Permanency spell cannot be truly permanent for Preserve the Master's Mark. Instead, it extends the duration of the spell tenfold. It takes a full Wish or divine intervention to render Preserve the Master's Mark a truly permanent effect.

Human skill is sufficient to manufacture weapons and armor of up to an initial +2 bonus. This is the extreme of human ability, perhaps one craftsman in a kingdom could do this. The best craftsman in a duchy or province could produce items with a +1 bonus. The best in a County or moderate size city could produce items that had a +1 bonus on a single function of the item (thus, a sword could be +1 to hit or +1 to damage or a +1 Speed Factor bonus).

There are stories of crafters who have learned skills from Dwarves or other supernatural beings. These crafters can make weapons and metal armor of up to +3. There would be one human crafter on a continent who could perform this. The greatest Dwarven crafter in the entire world could produce items with a +4 bonus. The "Enchanted Weapon" Wizard spell can be cast upon these weapons cumulatively with its innate bonuses. Preserve the Master's Mark will not extend the duration of Enchanted Weapon.

A weapon or piece of armor will lose one point of bonus over six months of use. It will lose the second point over the next six years of use. It will not deteriorate further if not abused. The semi-divine nature of this sort of quality (it is from a true act of creation, after all) means that bonuses cannot be restored by any means short of divine intervention or complete reworking of the item by a crafter of equal or greater skill. If Preserve the Master's Mark is upon the item, it will not begin to deteriorate until the duration of the spell expires.

Care by a craftsman capable of making an item of that quality will maintain the item, but such craftsmen are rare and their time is expensive. Non-Enchanted high quality items cost 20 times as much for a +1 bonus or equivalent, 400 times as much for a +2 bonus. An item made by a crafter of legend (+3 bonus) is a matter of exorbitant auctions, intrigue, and warfare and has no set price.

ENCHANTMENT OF THE FIRST CIRCLE (Enchantment, Alteration)

Level: 2
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Until Expended
Casting Time: Special
Area of Effect: 1 item
Saving Throw: Special

This spell is the lowest level version of a spell that transforms an inanimate object into a vessel capable of holding a magical effect. There are eight Circles of Enchantment, each corresponding to a higher spell level. That is, there is a third level "Enchantment of the Second Circle", a fourth level "Enchantment of the Third Circle", up to a ninth level "Enchantment of the Eighth Circle". Each Circle of this spell must be learned separately, since each is much more elaborate than the predecessor.

The ritual must be cast upon an object and requires that the object be intact and new-made, not ever used for its purpose. The object need not be costly in and of itself, but it has to be the top of a craftsman's art. Casting time is one day per pound weight of the item or fraction thereof.

Once the spell is cast, the item may have spells cast into it. The spells cast into the item must be of a lower level than the Circle of Enchantment used. Thus, the First Circle can be used for enchanting items that contain first-level spells. For the purposes of duration, variable damage, etc. it is assumed that the inserted spells are cast by a mage of minimum level capable of doing so. If the mage wishes to have the benefits of a higher class level, the spell is considered to be of a level equal to the spell level most recently gained at the mage level applied.

For example, a one-turn duration Light would be considered first level. A three-turn duration would be considered second level, a five-turn duration would be considered third. A five-die fireball would be considered third level, but a 20-die fireball would be considered 9th and be beyond the capacity of any version of this spell (unless you allow 10th level spells to permit an "Enchantment of the 9th Circle").

The number of total charges an item may hold is inversely related to its weight in pounds. See Table I. This table is derived from the equation $Charges = 90 * \ln((weight - 0.25) * -0.5545)$, where weight is the object's weight in pounds avoirdupois (US pounds). The fact that capacity is inversely related to size has been dubbed the Substantiability Paradox by followers of Trismestia the Great. It takes one day per charge to charge an item. This makes a 7-pound item the most efficient on a charge vs. time basis. This characteristic has been used as evidence to justify the special magical status of seven in many traditions.

Items created by this method can be recharged, but only to half their capacity (rounded up). This halving occurs every time an item is recharged, thus a 1 ounce wand could have 100 charges at creation, 50 at first recharge, 25 at the second, 13 at the third, then 7, then 4, then 2 then 1 at the seventh and further recharges. To prevent this diminuation of capacity, the item must also have Permanency cast upon it at the time of creation. Most mages don't bother with this, since it is usually far easier to make a new item, and the charge capacity diminuation ensures that their customers keep coming back for new items.

An item may not be recharged with a different effect than what had previously been placed upon it.

Table I. Maximum number of total charges.

Weight	Charges

1 oz	100
2 oz	96
4 oz	90
8 oz	78
12 oz	68
1 lb	59
2 lb	34
3 lb	20
4 lb	11
5 lb	6
6 lb	4
7 lb	2
8+ lb	1