MAKING PROFICIENCIES MAKE SENSE

Source Unknown

Rules Changes for
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, 2nd edition

When something doesn't make sense, what do you do? You try to make it make sense -
either by researching and coming to grips with the reasons it exists as it is or by
changing it to make sense. The proficiency rule as defined in the Advanced Dungeons
& Dragons 2nd edition Player's Handbook did not make sense to me ... so I changed
them. Why would a character who goes up in level automatically receive HERBALISM at
a 15 or higher score? I felt this was not right, so, in my campaign they don't.

THE NEW SYSTEM OF NON-WEAPON PROFICIENCIES

Under the new system, if characters spend a slot on a non-weapon proficiency, they
get it at a skill level of 5. Each additional slot spent on that skill adds +2 to the
skill level, up to either 15 or the skill's base statistic, whichever is higher.
Once this ceiling is reached, each slot spent on a skill gives +1.

The modified table that I use in my campaign can be found in Table 1.

The number of weapon and non-weapon proficiencies a character starts with is modified
by his intelligence. On Table 4, "Intelligence", of the Advanced Dungeon's & Dragons
2nd Edition Player's Handbook (p. 16), there is a column labeled "# of Languages."
This number is for extra proficiency slots. When the character is initially created,
and only when it is initially created, these slots can be distributed between weapon
and non-weapon proficiencies. Afterwards, these proficiencies can only be used to
add to non-weapon proficiency slots.

For example, a priest with a wisdom of 16 buys RELIGION. He spends 1 slot. He now
has RELIGION at a 5. If he spends another slot on RELIGION, the skill jumps to 7.
After spending a total of 6 slots, he has RELIGION at a 15 (5+2+2+2+2+2). If he
spends one more slot, the priest will have a RELIGION of 16 (because 16 is equal to
the priest's wisdom, the skill's base attribute). After this, each slot spent on
RELIGION will only increase the proficiency by +1.

When a skill has a modifier, such as SPELLCRAFT (INT-2), the modifier is added to the
base skill level when first bought. So, a mage with a 12 intelligence who took
SPELLCRAFT would have it at a 3 on a d20.

Note: Proficiencies that require two slots under the old system, require two slots
in the new system to get the proficiency to base level of 5.

Skills that do not depend on characteristics, such as BLIND-FIGHTING and
MOUNTAINEERING, are skills that are picked up naturally with the proper number of
non-proficiency slots. For instance, a fighter spends 2 slots on BLIND-FIGHTING. He
now gains all the skills listed under the BLIND- FIGHTING proficiency.

If a character has a high characteristic, such as Intelligence, and then spends
proficiency slots on a skill that depends on this same high characteristic, then
there are high characteristic modifiers added to the character's abilities. These
high characteristic modifiers can be found in Table 2.

Suppose we redo the previous example of the priest learning RELIGION. He spends 1
slot. He now has RELIGION at a 8 (5+3 for a wisdom of 16). If he spends another
slot on RELIGION, the skill jumps to 10. Now, after spending a total of 6 slots, he
has RELIGION at a 17 (8+2+2+2+2+1).

In another example, a mage with an intelligence of 18 picks up the proficiency
SPELLCRAFT, spending one slot on it. The mage now has SPELLCRAFT at a 8 skill level
(5 - 2 + 5 = base skill (5) + skill modifier (-2) + the bonus for an 18 intelligence
(+5)).

Additionally, all adventurers pick up a smattering of many skills as they adventure.
This is reflected by giving all characters a base skill level of 1 for non-weapon
proficiencies that they have not bought.

EXCEPTIONS TO THESE RULES

There are two exceptions to these rules. Both take place only at the time of
character creation.

The first exception is a character can learn a modern language (with the Dungeon
Master's permission, of course) at INTELLIGENCE-1 for only one slot. This assumes
that the language learned is common and spoken by people where the character grew up.
Thus, elvish and dwarvish would be acceptable, but giant eagle or ki-rin might not
be. Additionally, the character will automatically know their racial tongue (such as
dwarvish, elvish, or perhaps, the language spoken in their country) and Common at the
start.

The second exception also depends on the Dungeon Master's approval. The character can
pick up a profession type skill at the base score. For instance, the background of
the character being created is that he used to be a cook for a inn. At 1st-level,
the character can pick up COOKING at his INTELLIGENCE (because COOKING is based on
INTELLIGENCE) for the cost of one slot. Or, if the character grew up in a monastery,
he could have RELIGION at his WISDOM-1 for one slot.

MULTI-CLASS CHARACTERS

A multi-class character starts with a number of proficiencies equal to the most
favorable class the character is. However, as the character gains levels, he gains
the number of non-weapon proficiencies of the least favorable class. Thus a
fighter/mage would start with 5 non-weapon slots (possibly modified by intelligence).
As he adventures, and gains a level in mage, he gains no new non-weapon slots. When
the character gains a level in fighter he gains 4 new non-weapon slots. This
reflects the more difficult training a multi-class character must go through when
learning the skills of two or more classes.

With regard to weapon proficiencies, a multi-class character starts with a number of
weapons slots equal to the most advantageous class he has. However, as he gains a
level, the character gains new weapon proficiency slots as the least advantageous
class. Thus, the aforementioned fighter/mage would start with 4 weapon slots, and
would gain the next new weapon slot at 6th-level. This is because the amount of time
that it takes to learn weapon skills is great and a multi-class character cannot
concentrate on learning just those fighting skills.

DUAL CLASSED CHARACTERS

Dual-class characters get their normal proficiencies according to what class and
level they are. For instance, take a mage who used to be a fighter. The character
starts off as a fighter. He gets 4 weapon slots and 4 non-weapon slots. He achieves
3rd-level before dropping class. He now has a total of 5 weapon slots and 12 non-
weapon slots. As he starts over as a mage, he does not get the 1 weapon slot with
which a mage starts, but he does gain the 5 new non-weapon slots. He now gains

proficiency slots as a mage; a weapon slot every 6 levels and 5 non-weapon slots
every level. This way a dual-class character is not penalized for a former career.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

With these rules, players in my campaign found that they developed there characters
in a more logical way. Everytime they went up a level, they were able to increase
their abilities at skills that they had. The players were developing their
characters as if they were actually learning new skills and getting better at them.
This added another layer of realism to the characters in that campaign.

The new system of non-weapon proficiencies also caused more book work. Now,
generating a NPC was more a matter of what has this NPC been doing? Where did she
pick up these skills? How does she know how to do these things so well? Also,
character creation took a little longer, especially if the new character was higher
than 1st-level.

However, I believe the pros outweighed the cons, so I implemented the system in all
my campaigns. The system made the PCs and the NPCs more three dimensional and more
fun to play. Since this system was introduced three years ago, several other
campaigns in my area have started to use this system. Players in all campaigns have
commented that they like this new system. And as a game master, I find that it makes
characters develop and grow more "realistically" and more like characters in books
and short stories.

TABLE 1: NEW PROFICIENCY SYSTEM

Class	# Weapons started with	Weapons gained	#Non-weapons started with	Non-weapons gained
mage	1	1/6	5	5/LVL
priest	2	1/4	4	4/LVL
psionicist	2	1/5	3	4/LVL
rogue	2	1/4	4	3/LVL
warrior	4	1/3	4	4/LVL

TABLE 2: PROFICIENCY HIGH CHARACTERISTIC MODIFIERS

Score	Modifier
3	-5
4	-4
5	-3
6	-2
7	-1
8-13	0
14	+1
15	+2
16	+3
17	+4
18	+5