



Fortune's Die Ability Scores

Introduction

This section describes the ability scores and how to use them. This is the annotated (A) version of the document. It contains the design notes in the text. For a shorter version which hides the design notes in tooltips, use the basic (B) version of the document. For a reference sheet, use the concise (C) version of the document.

Ability Modifier Basics

Each character has six ability scores that partially describe the character's capabilities and affect some of their actions. Each ability ranges from -5 to $+5$ and beyond. Characters generally start with a number between -2 and $+5$ in any given ability score. The terms ability score and ability modifier are used interchangeably throughout this book.

Each score is a modifier that you apply to the die roll when your character tries to do something related to that ability. You also use the modifier with some numbers that aren't die rolls. A positive modifier is called a bonus, and a negative modifier is called a penalty.

Abilities Below -5

When a creature's ability score would drop below -5 , the value for the ability score is set as **CRIPPLED**. Further damage to a **CRIPPLED** score has no further effect, and the score is treated as being a -5 for all purposes. This will have certain deleterious effects on the character, as noted below.

Non-abilities

Some creatures lack certain ability scores. These creatures do not have an ability score of **CRIPPLED**, they lack the ability altogether. The modifier for a non-ability is treated as if it were a $+0$.

The Six Ability Scores

The physical abilities are Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. The physical ability scores of a creature are considered Traits.

The mental abilities are Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. The mental ability scores of a creature are considered Features.

The differences between traits and features are covered in an Appendix. If you are using this module as a plug-in to your favorite **D20** system, use that system's definition of traits and features.

Strength (Str)

Strength measures your character's muscle and raw physical power. This ability is especially important for heavy melee damage dealers because it helps them prevail in combat. Strength also limits the amount of equipment your character can carry.

Any creature that can physically manipulate other objects has Strength. A creature with no Strength score can't exert force, usually because it has no physical body or because it doesn't move.

A creature whose strength is **CRIPPLED** is paralyzed. You apply your character's Strength modifier to:^{*}

- Melee attack rolls.
- Damage modifier with thrown and melee weapons.

Dexterity (Dex)

Dexterity measures hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity. This ability is the most important one for trap-breakers, and is very important for characters in combat. Any creature that can move has Dexterity. A creature with no Dexterity score or a **CRIPPLED** Dexterity is paralyzed and the creature automatically fails Reflex saves.

You apply your character's Dexterity modifier to:

- Ranged and Touch attack rolls.
- Defense Score[†], provided that the character is aware of and can react to the attack.
- Reflex saving throws, for avoiding Fireballs and other attacks that you can escape by moving quickly.

Constitution (Con)

Constitution represents your character's health and stamina. A Constitution bonus increases a character's hit points, so the ability is important for all classes. Any living creature has a Constitution. A creature without Constitution is nonliving. A creature with a **CRIPPLED** Constitution is dead. You apply your character's Constitution modifier to:

- Hit points gained for each level. (However, a character always gains at least 1 hit point each time they advance in level). If a character's Constitution score changes, the character's hit points also increase or decrease accordingly.
- Fortitude saving throws, for resisting poison and similar threats.

^{*}The skills for each ability score are left to the skills document.

[†]If you are using a standard **D20** system, this is your Armor Class.



Intelligence (Int)

Intelligence determines how well your character learns and reasons as well as a measure of memory. This ability is important for wizards because it affects how many spells they can cast, how hard their spells are to resist, and how powerful their spells can be. It's also important for any character who wants to have a wide assortment of skills.

Any creature that can think, learn, or remember has an Intelligence score. A creature with no Intelligence score is mindless, an automaton operating on simple instincts or programmed instructions.

A creature with a CRIPPLED Intelligence score is in a coma and mindless.

An animal has an Intelligence score of -5 or -4 . A creature of human-like intelligence has a score of at least -3 .

You apply your character's Intelligence modifier to:

- The number of skill points gained each level (min 1).

Wisdom (Wis)

Wisdom describes a character's common sense, perception, and intuition. While Intelligence represents one's ability to analyze information, Wisdom represents being in tune with the world and awareness of one's surroundings. Additionally, in worlds with active deities, Wisdom represents a character's connection with their deity. Wisdom is the most important ability for divine and nature spellcasters. If you want your character to have acute senses, put a high score in Wisdom.

Any creature that can perceive its environment in any fashion has a Wisdom modifier. Anything with no Wisdom score is an object, not a creature. Anything without a Wisdom score also has no Charisma score.

Anything with a CRIPPLED Wisdom score is in a coma and mindless.

You apply your character's Wisdom modifier to:

- Initiative rolls.

The original design of putting Initiative on Dexterity is obvious: Fast reactions means you act first. However, Wisdom represents both your awareness and attunement with the world around you, as well as having foresight to deal with expected and unexpected situations. Thus, putting Initiative on Wisdom favors the prepared and aware instead of the fast reaction.

Charisma (Cha)

Charisma measures a character's force of will, sense of self, or willpower. This ability represents actual strength of personality, not merely how one is perceived by others in a social setting. Charisma is most important for paladins, sorcerers, and bards. It is also important for clerics, since it affects their ability to turn undead. Every creature has a Charisma score.

Any creature capable of telling the difference between itself and things that are not itself has a Charisma. Anything with no Charisma score is an object, not a creature. Anything without a Charisma score also has no Wisdom score.

Anything with a CRIPPLED Charisma score has no volition of its own and automatically fails will saves. It can respond to simple commands but will otherwise simply sit without action until it dies.

You apply your character's Charisma modifier to:

- Will saving throws (for negating the effect of charm person and other spells).

The flavor of Charisma as force of will pushes the Will save bonus to it. With this change and moving initiative to Wisdom, every ability score has relevance to every character.

Ability Score Loss

Various attacks cause ability score loss, either ability damage or ability drain. Points lost to ability damage return at the rate of 1 point per day (or double that if the character gets complete bed rest) to each damaged ability, and the spells lesser restoration and restoration offset ability damage as well. Ability drain, however, is permanent, though restoration can restore even those lost ability score points.

While any loss is debilitating, having a CRIPPLED ability score can be devastating. See the individual ability scores for a description of what happens to a character when that score becomes CRIPPLED. A character's ability score cannot drop below CRIPPLED, which is one step below -5 . Having a CRIPPLED ability score is different from having no ability score whatsoever.

Some spells or abilities impose an effective ability score reduction, which is different from ability score loss. Any such reduction disappears at the end of the spell's or ability's duration, and the ability score immediately returns to its former value.

When an ability score changes, all attributes associated with that score change accordingly. If a character's Constitution score drops, then they lose 1 hit point per Hit Die for every point by which their Constitution modifier drops. A hit point score can't be reduced by Constitution damage or drain to less than 1 hit point per Hit Die. Exception: A character does not gain or lose skill points from Intelligence changes, unless the change is permanent.

Conversion

If you are using this rules module alone without the rest of the system, a small conversion is necessary to existing material. Whenever something lists ability score damage, divide the amount by 2 and round down.



When characters gain their ability score point every four levels, instead give them an ability bonus point. This will increase the amount of ability score improvement over the levels in the campaign, but makes each one significant.

Robert's Ramblings

What Was Broken

The ability scores are a holdover from the days when the scores were generated by 3d6 as the standard method. In those editions, each stat had a chart detailing the effects of each ability score point, with some major break-points. When the 3rd edition was created, the familiar ability scores were kept to keep the system recognizable, while introducing the very straightforward ability bonus system. Since the ability bonus is just half of (ability score minus ten), we're left with only two things in the system that cared about ability scores: ability score damage and ability score increases that were odd (such as the one every four levels). Removing the scores and just directly working with the bonuses is a simplification of the system's mechanics without losing any actual gameplay or complexity from the system itself.

In addition, the scores weren't well balanced to each other. By moving initiative to Wisdom and Will saves to Charisma, every score becomes relevant to every character in some way.

Fortune's Die

This document is a recreation of rules I worked up for my home campaigns back in the late 90's and expanded

in the early 00's, back when the current edition of **D20** was still Dungeons and Dragons 3rd Edition. I have revised it to fit within the larger framework between 3.5 and Pathfinder today.

These rules should fit neatly into any medieval fantasy **D20** campaign, and work with the existing Pathfinder and 3.5 rules. However, they are a small piece of a much larger project that we will be publishing in chunks, the *Fortune's Die* system. This system graduated from house rules to a full system in 2004 and was revised through 2008, when work stopped on it in recognition that the niche it would occupy had been already seized by the Pathfinder system. As Pathfinder has aged, the flaws it has carried with it from 3rd Edition are more evident, and we feel the time has come to address them with an updated version of *Fortune's Die*.

More Stuff!

We hope that this rules module makes your **D20** games smoother and more enjoyable. For other modules, visit us at <http://tinyurl.com/gmupenl>. To support work on future modules, choose 'Pay what you want' for this module or donate to us at <https://www.patreon.com/FortuynGames>. To try out our other stuff, check out <http://FortuynGames.com>.

Credits

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