

Swords

OF

The Silver Throne

For a thousand years the Elf King has brooded on the Silver Throne. His subjects busied themselves with pursuits of dangerous sorcery, the breeding of deadly dragons and the political machinations of their ancient empire. Every summer the mortals would come to raid the Elven Isles, but a hundred years ago, the raids stopped. Word came of a continent-spanning magical disaster. The life of the Elf King's subjects changed little—their summer amusements were gone but their introspections and self-refinements continued.

Now the call has come from The Silver Throne, the Elf King wishes to learn what became of the mortals. Some wagging tongues say that the King has finally gone mad, but the Lords and the Ladies of the realm ready themselves, seeking the coveted title—Sword of The Silver Throne.

THE SYSTEM

Characters are represented by a system of Attributes and Skills. Attributes are fixed and gathered into four groups of two; Skills are freeform and cover a specific application of an Attribute Group. Items have a Quality rating, enumerating how good that item is at performing its intended function.

Materials: Other than pen and paper, a player needs only a handful of six-sided dice. The GM will need d6s as well, in at least three colors/styles for terrain and enemy generation.

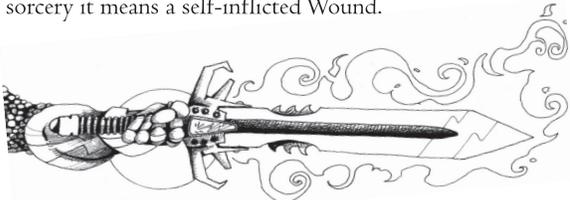
Unfavored Rolls: Unless otherwise specified, any roll of the dice will be unfavored. Simply roll a number of six-sided dice equal to the appropriate rating and use the highest value.

Favored Rolls: All skill tests, sorcery and magical item quality tests are made using favored rolls. Roll the dice as above, but for each additional matching number of the highest value, add one to the total. For example, if you rolled five dice and got: 6,3,4,6,6; your score would be 8 (6+1+1).

Best Result Rule: When making a favored test roll, it might be more beneficial to use a lower value than the highest rolled. Consider a roll of four dice: 6,5,5,5. Using the 5s gives a value of 7, compared to the 6. This is acceptable, a player can always use the best result.

Automatic and Default Values: If a character is surprised or unaware, the GM may use the rating value itself as an automatic result. To reduce die rolling, the rating plus two (or +3 for favored rolls) can be the default result.

Critical Failures: Whenever all the dice rolled are ones, this is a critical failure. For an item, it can mean breakage or loss, for a skill or attribute it may mean a Curse. In combat or sorcery it means a self-inflicted Wound.



CREATING A CHARACTER

You will buy ratings in four stages: Attributes, Skills, Items and finally Sorceries. You receive 50 points for Attributes and 20 points apiece for Skills and Items. Any leftover points may be used on Sorceries. Unused points from one section carry over, but you must use at least half of your points in each section.

Attributes: There are four Attribute Groups: Physical (Vigor and Stamina), Reaction (Agility and Speed), Mental (Wits and Wisdom) and Social (Spirit and Charisma). Each time you advance a rating in an attribute, you must pay points equal to the new rating. Thus a score of 3 in an attribute costs a character six points (1+2+3). Attributes may be advanced to any level.

Skills: Each Skill should represent a field of study with one or more specific applications. For example, any weapons your character wields will need a skill for that weapon type (or you will be making unfavored rolls to use that weapon). See the example characters for more skills. Creating a new skill costs three points. You must select an Attribute Group for that skill to belong to; any skill tests are based on the lower value of the two Attributes belonging to that group (this is called the Group Score). A skill may be advanced one time, place a + sign by the skill to indicate that you get one extra die when making a Skill test. An advancement costs two points.

Items: Each item has a Quality rating associated with it, these ratings work just like Attribute ratings. For three additional points you can make an item special (magical or other reasons), draw a dagger(†) next to the rating to indicate it receives a favored roll.

Sorceries: Work like items but are automatically favored for no extra cost. A sorcery should have a specific group of effects, sort of like a (magical) skill. See the Sorcery and Magical items section for more details.

Playing a Sword: You are immortal, many times older than the most ancient of mortals. Immortal does not mean deathless, you heal faster than a mortal but a spear point through your heart will grant you the true death as surely as it will a mortal.

Your long life means you have knowledge of sorceries and skills beyond the ken of mortal men. Remember that those mortals you encounter are those who stood against the horrors and survived. Do not be overconfident.

You are not a hero, exactly. Like a mortal might be fond of dogs but still willing to put down one stricken with madness, you will tolerate and perhaps help mortals. However your mission is to prove your worth to your King. Horrors and demons stalk the mortal lands. He has charged you with finding out why. You will need blade, sorcery and wits to seek the truth and confront the monsters.



TESTS

When a character attempts a risky action, a test must be made to determine the outcome. Characters with an appropriate skill or sorcery will use that rating, others will use the appropriate attribute. Tests must exceed the target number, either a static number (Easy-1, Moderate-3, Hard-5, Legendary-7) or the result of another test in order to succeed.

Vigor: Physical tests of strength and momentary exertion. Default test for unarmed combat and to bash down a heavy wooden door.

Stamina: Endurance and fortitude under duress. Default test to prevent Wounds or swim in armor for an extended distance.

Agility: Covers both fine manipulation and general body contortion. Default tests include avoiding attacks and picking locks.

Speed: Time to react and short bursts of running. Defaults test to react first in combat or escape from falling boulder traps.

Wits: Memory and problem-solving ability; book smarts. Default tests include working a sorcery and reading a dead language.

Wisdom: Mental clarity and good judgement; common sense. Default test for haggling and adjudicating disagreements between villagers.

Spirit: Inner fire and drive; the spark of life. Default test for avoiding demonic corruption and creating new magical items.

Charisma: Social skills; the ability to win friends and influence people. Covers public speaking and talking your way out of trouble.

Example: A character must bypass a locked door: Spells of Opening (sorcery) or Lockpicking (skill) will give better results than Agility or Vigor (attributes), but all are valid approaches.

Preparation: Normally attribute tests are unfavored rolls. If a character makes extensive effort to prepare for a test, the Gamemaster can rule that it will be a favored roll.



COMBAT, WOUNDS AND HEALING

Physical conflict with the corrupted denizens of the mortal world will often be unavoidable. Combat works as a series of tests:

Initiative: In some cases (ambushes, etc.) one side will clearly act before the other side. In equal battles each combatant should make a favored Speed test, with higher results going before lower ones. This is only done at the start of a combat or when conditions warrant a new turn order.

Striking: To make an attack, a character will test his weapon skill against the opponent's Agility (dodging), shield quality (blocking) or weapon skill (parrying). The gamemaster will determine which options are feasible. Unarmed combat works differently, see below.

Damage: A successful strike means you must test the weapon's quality rating against the opponents armor quality or Stamina. If the weapon is successful, then the opponent is wounded.

Wounds: A wounded character makes all favored test rolls as if they were unfavored rolls. A character who receives another wound is knocked out, they can be killed with another strike. Note that many enemies understand sorcery and won't kill when leaving a sorcerer alive would be more useful.

Unarmed Combat: For unarmed combat, the tests to strike and damage are combined into a single test of Vigor vs Stamina. All other rules apply.

Missile Weapons: The gamemaster determines if a missile weapon is in range. Firing into cover or melee counts as an unfavored roll. For firing into melee, a critical failure indicates a friendly target hit.

Healing: Appropriate sorcery can heal a wound immediately. Mortals heal a wound in 9-Stamina weeks, immortals in 12-Stamina days. A successful skill test can reduce this one step (weeks to days for mortals and days to hours for immortals). Healing is a Hard(5) test, and only one wound may be healed at a time: i.e. a knocked out character is healed to a wounded status and then must be healed again to an unwounded status.

FAILURES AND CURSES

In a non-combat test, taking a wound from a failure may be too extreme or hard to justify narratively. In most of these cases, a critical failure will result in a Curse affecting the relevant attribute group while in extreme cases any failure will result in a curse. For example, a character attempting to climb a steep hillside might receive a Physical curse on a critical failure, but someone attempting to scale a sheer wall might suffer a wound on a critical failure and a curse on any other failure. Sorceries may also curse a character.

Curses: A curse is like a wound that affects only one attribute group. All tests made with that attribute group are unfavored rolls. Another curse to the same group generates a wound instead. If a wounded character receives a curse, mark it as such; after the wound is healed the curse takes effect. For an unconscious character, the healing chain would be Wound, Wound, Curse.

Removing a Curse: A curse will go away in 12-(Attribute Group Score) days. A character with either a curse removal skill or relevant training skill in the group can reduce this to 12-(Group Score) hours by doing a Hard(5) test. Sorcery can remove a curse instantaneously.

ADVANCEMENT

Characters may advance by improving skills, sorceries and attributes. They may also gain new items, skills and sorceries. To do this, players will spend Experience Points (XP), which are won by completing challenges.

Challenges: For each challenge the characters face, the gamemaster should assign a challenge number (CN), usually equal to the highest rating or target number the characters faced. If the characters have ratings equal to or higher than the CN, they receive a single XP point if they succeed or half the CN (rounded down) as XP if they fail. When the CN exceeds the characters' ratings, then they receive all of the CN as XP if they succeed and half (as above) if they fail. All XP awards are per character, not per group.

Spending XP: When dramatically appropriate, the gamemaster will allow the characters to have an improvement session. During an improvement session each existing rating may be improved one step, and new things may be added as well. Improving attributes, skills and sorceries works just like character creation. Note that items may not be improved. New items can be bought (use same rules as Char. creation), and new skills and sorceries as well. The GM has final say on what is possible in each improvement session.

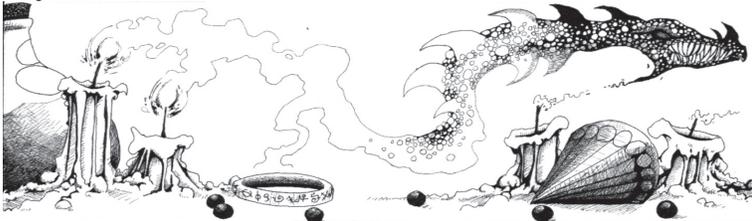
Table C.1 Basic Land Type Generation

How to use this table: Roll 1 Blue and 1 Red die, record terrain type and modify next roll as indicated. Modifier for each color stays in place until another roll changes it (e.g. by fourth roll you might roll Blue+2 and Red-1).

Terrain: (indicates predominate kind in area)
 A: Arable land, used to be (or is) farmland.
 C: Canyon, deep clefts in ground (maybe w/River)
 D: Desert (or tundra) low rainfall area
 F: Forest, primarily old growth woods
 H: Hills, broken lands, etc.
 M: Mountains, age/passibility determined by GM
 P: Plains, possibly pasture-land or meadows
 R: River, size and navigability determined by GM
 S: Swamp (or tidal marsh)
 W: Water, could be lake or ocean.

Next Steps: For each space on map, use C.2 to determine habitation. Most will be ruins, each habitation will have a size that affects the possible dangers in the area.

Blue:	0-	1	2	3	Red:	4	5	6	7+
0-	M (B-2)	M (B-2)	M (R-2)	C (B-2)	H (R+2)	D (B-2)	H (R+2)	M (R+1)	
1	H (B-2)	H (B-1)	H (R-1)	M (B-1)	H (R+1)	D (B-2)	H (R+2)	H (B-2)	
2	H (B-1)	P (R-1)	P (B-1)	V (R-2)	P (R+1)	F (B+2)	R (R+1)	P (R+2)	
3	P (R-1)	P (B+1)	A (B-1)	P (B+2)	R (B-2)	P (R+1)	P (B+1)	P (R+1)	
4	F (R-2)	F (B+2)	R (R-2)	A (B+1)	P (B+1)	P (R+1)	F (B+1)	A (B-1)	
5	S (B+1)	F (B+2)	P (B+1)	P (R+1)	A (B+2)	A (R+1)	A (R-1)	V (B-2)	
6	W (B+1)	S (B+2)	F (B+2)	F (R+1)	P (B+1)	F (B+1)	P (R+1)	W (R-2)	
7+	W (B+2)	W (R-2)	W (R-1)	S (R-1)	S (R-2)	F (B+2)	F (R-1)	W (B+2)	



SORCERY AND MAGICAL ITEMS

To invoke a Sorcery, a character makes a Wits test against the rating of the sorcery. If successful, a quality test is taken from the sorcery's rating and the gamemaster interprets the result as needed. If the wits test or sorcery test is a critical failure, the character takes a Wound. If either is a normal failure, then the character receives a curse to the relevant attribute group. For example, a failure of the sorcery Silver Tongues (which allows a character to speak multiple languages or be especially persuasive in one) would curse the Social group.

Using a Magical Item: Usually work like normal items and a normal failure does not produce any negative effects. However, a critical failure of a magical item will fail spectacularly, possibly wounding the user and onlookers.

Creating a Magical Item: To create a magical item, a sorcerer invests part of themselves into a well-crafted item, granting that item a specific sorcerous power. In game terms, the sorcerer must reduce their Spirit score by one, have an item of quality 3 or higher and must specify the exact sorcerous effect. While the sorcerer can later reimprove their spirit score, the link between the item and the sorcerer remains. If the item is destroyed, the sorcerer takes a wound, and if the sorcerer is killed, the magical item will fail spectacularly, as above.

TRAVELING AND ENCOUNTERS

The characters may spend much time in the desolate wilderness that predominates the mortal lands. Whenever the characters move into a new area (according to the gamemaster's map), they must make a travel check. They will test their best Mental or Reaction score (or relevant skill) against the wilderness (use the number part of PopC on table C.2 as the opposing result). Success means they avoid any hazards in the area.

If the players fail, the gamemaster will roll to see if there will be an encounter (use the Ruins test from C.2 for the land type to determine). For a successful encounter, the gamemaster will roll on C.3 Settlement Threat table (if there is a ruin in the area use the Settlement Size modifier, if not use a -2 modifier) and, if appropriate, generate enemies using the Enemies section.

If the players are in an area with an actual settlement, it is presumed that they will be heading to that settlement and will (eventually) confront the persistent threat generated when the gamemaster created the map.

Table C.2 Chance of Population Center, Ruins and Size

Terrain:	PopC (R):	Ruins (W):	Size (B):
Arable	3+	5+	1-2:F 3-4:V 5:T 6:C
Canyon	6+	3+	1-3:P 4-5:F 6:V
Desert	6+	2+	1-4:P 5:F 6:V
Forest	5+	3+	1-4:P 5:F 6:V
Hills	5+	3+	1-2:P 3-4:F 5-6:V
Mountains	6+	2+	1-3:P 4:F 5-6:V
Plains	5+	4+	1:P 2:F 3-5:V 6:T
River	4+	5+	1-2:P 3-4:V 5:T 6:C
Swamp	6+	3+	1-3:P 4-5:F 6:V

How to use this table: For each area on map, roll Red, White and Blue dice. If red die is equal to or higher than PopC, there was some sort of settlement. If white die is equal to or higher than Ruin then the place is in ruins. The blue die gives size of settlement, P is Post (trading or military, pop. is not permanent), F is Farm (or other small family settlement), V is Village (dozens to hundred of people), T is Town (hundreds to thousands) and C is City (thousands to tens of thousands).

Next Steps: For each settlement use C.3 to determine if a danger threatens that community. Then you can use the Enemy rules to create the threat.

Example: The characters are crossing a mountainous region. They will test their travel against a result of 6. If they fail to get a score of seven or better, the GM will need a 2+ in order to generate a threat. He succeeds and rolls again to determine the threat type. Since there is a ruin of a trading post there, the threat type roll is at -1. He rolls a 3 minus 1 for a final result of 2. The characters will face a Mundane Threat.

CREATING THE MORTAL LANDS

Swords of the Silver Throne is designed to be a sandbox style game, where the characters may travel anywhere and find adventure there. The following rules help the gamemaster create the sandbox. Remember that these charts are to help fill in blanks, a gamemaster wanting to have a certain encounter, terrain or threat in a certain area should make it happen and not rely on the dice.

General Concepts: You'll need three different six-siders (called white, red and blue on the tables). Some tables have persistent effects for the red and blue dice, it may be helpful to create a little chart ranging from -2 to +2 and use an indicator to record the current effect for each color die.

The Map: You can either use a square or hexagonal grid. When creating terrain go in a consistent pattern (e.g. from left to right on first row, then back right to left for the next row), this will help the persistent effects generate more realistic terrain.

ENEMIES

Both the characters and the mortals they encounter will be menaced by evil forces. These threats fall into three broad categories: mundane threats, horrors and demons. A mundane threat is an enemy that belongs to the world; it could be anything from a pack of wild animals to a rampaging ogre. A horror is a threat that comes from beyond the mortal world: undead warriors to a poison-breathing dragon. Demons are unique creatures: they prey upon mortals and are only found where mortals live (or once lived) — some can be subtle, subverting the free will of mortals for their own devious ends, others can be pronounced, living in castles of pure flame and demanding regular sacrifices from their thralls.

Each type of enemy has a base rating and each specific enemy has a threat level. The higher of these two provides the challenge rating for the encounter. The threat level is generated by rolling the base rating as a favored roll (if making demonic thralls use the demon's highest attribute instead). Enemies do not have specific attributes, they only have attribute group scores. Choose or roll on E.1, E.2 or E.3 to get baseline values. Then threat level is used as points to improve attributes, skills, items or sorceries. Or you can use one point to roll on E.4 or two points to roll on E.5. While the tables will create enemies with unique combinations of abilities, the gamemaster should strive to link the enemies together thematically.

Note that monsters in the game are often unique creatures or at least a unique group of creatures. While mortals across the land tell stories of goblins and ogres, every community has slightly different stories to tell. Other threats are even more unique, tied to the influence of a more powerful horror or demon. Even random encounters should have some thematic link to the most powerful demon or horror closest to the encounter site.

RUNNING SWORDS OF THE SILVER THRONE

This game is a sandbox-style game, meaning that it provides a toolkit to create characters, places and challenges but few things are set in stone. It is up to each gamemaster to determine exactly what the Elvish King expects from his Swords and who (or what) caused the apocalypse. What to do in the game is always up to the players. Also, the theme of the game is metal... as a musical genre, metal is always turned up to 11. Adventures are larger than life and heroes are often dark. Some stories are glorious triumphs of will and determination, some are tragedies of pride and hubris.

As the gamemaster, you are responsible for creating the world of Swords. Don't be afraid of inconsistencies or weirdness generated by all these tables. Use the wacky bits as creative fodder to make up something epic or gonzo (or epically gonzo). Challenge the characters with things they can handle, but just barely. Swords are immortal badasses, sometimes let the players see this but then also throw horrors and demons at them to challenge them. When creating adventures, bear these themes in mind: the world has been torn apart, mortals have begun to recover but demons and horrors stalk them.

Example: A mortal town is beset by an emotive demon of gluttony. The townsfolk always feel empty inside, so will the characters. The GM creates some Boar-man thralls (hybrid mundanes with a thematic link to the demon)

Friendly NPCs: On occasion, the GM may wish to introduce a friendly Non-Player Character. You can always create a full-fledged character, but you can also use the enemy rules and have the NPC's abilities abstracted.

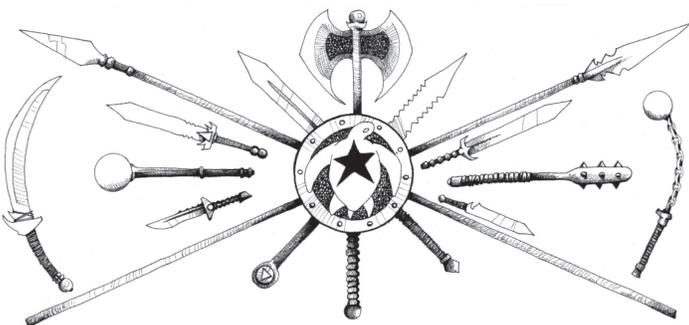


Table C.3 Settlement Threat

Roll:	0-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
Threat(R)	Non	None	M(3)	H(5)	H(7)	D(9)	D(11)	D(13)
Resp. (B)	U	U	A	A	R	T	S	R

How to use this table: For each settlement, roll on this table. Subtract one from your roll if the settlement is a ruin. Subtract 1 for the roll if the settlement/ruin is a Post or a Farm. Add 1 if the settlement/ruin is a Town or a City. M is Mundane Threat, H is Horror, D is Demon. Number in parenthesis is base rating for enemy. Pop. Response: U means threat hidden, A is accepting (no support), R is subtle resistance to threat, T is thralls of threat, S means folks actively support threat.

Next Steps: If there is a threat, use the enemy section to flesh out the threat.

Table E.1 Mundane Threats

Roll:	Red:	Blue:	White:
1	P:1 M:1	R:1 S:1	Animals R+1 M-1
2	P:2 M:1	R:2 S:1	S. Animal P+1 R+1
3	P:2 M:2	R:2 S:2	Hmnds M+1 S+1
4	P:3 M:2	R:3 S:2	S Hmnd A+1
5	P:3 M:1	R:3 S:1	Hybrids P+1 M+1
6	P:3 M:3	R:3 S:3	S. Hybrid A+1

How to use this table: Roll red and blue dice then pick or roll white die. Modify stats based on White die. An 'A' means all attributes improved, 'S' means solitary, others are groups. Based on type, add skills and weapons as below:

Animal: Track (M+), Hide/Evade (M), *Other Skill*, Natural Weapons (P/R+) 2
 Humanoid: Bluff(S), Survival (M), Tactics (M), *Other Skill*, Sword/Spear (P+) 2
 Hybrid: Track (M), Bluff(S), Survival (M), Tactics (M), *Other*, Bow/Spear (P+) 2

Next Steps: Use Threat Level to improve enemy (see main text).

Table E.2 Otherworldly Horrors

Roll:	R:	B:	W:
1	A:3	R+1	Ghost
2	A:4	S+1	Dragon
3	A:4	M+1	Elemental
4	A:5	P+1	Plant
5	A:5	R+2	Mortal
6	A:6	P+2	Alien

Table E.3 Demons (All start A:7)

Roll:	R:	B:	W:
1	P+2	Subtle	Envy
2	M+2	Showy	Greed
3	S+2	Impatient	Gluttony
4	R+2	Manipul.	Lust
5	M+3	Emotive	Pride
6	S+3	Planner	Wrath

How to use this table: Roll red and blue dice then pick or roll white die. Use type from White die to pick 15pts worth of skills. Note that mortal could mean a sorcerer mad with power or a normal doing hideous things. Alien is something unique or beyond the world, think Mythos, not flying saucers and rayguns.

How to use this table: Roll all dice. Red modifies base score of 7 for all attributes. Blue is demon's style, White is demon's theme. Demons have thralls that fit theme, they also corrupt the area and influence others with their theme (e.g. around a demon of wrath, chars. get extra dice for attacking in anger).

Next Steps: use table E.1's next steps.

Next Steps: 20pts: skills & E.4/E.5.

Table E.4 Mundane Twists

Roll:	Twist:	Effect:
1	Melee	Add/Q+1
2	Armor	Add/Q+1
3	Poison	Curse(A)
4	Ranged	Add/Q+1
5	Huge	P+2
6	Swift	R+2

Table E.5 Otherworldly Twists

Roll:	Twist:
1	Undead
2	Flying
3	Invisible
4	Sorcery
5	Invulnerable
6	Magic Weapon

How to use this table: Roll die. For items (i.e. 1,2,4) either add a new at Quality 1 or improve quality of existing by 1. Poison creates a curse, up to gamemaster to determine which attribute it affects. If poison comes up again for same enemy, it does wound instead of curse.

How to use this table: Roll die. Undead means special means needed to kill, Flying is hard to catch/hit, Invisible hard to find/detect. Sorcery: more rolls improve Q or add diff. kind. Invulnerable means normal weapons don't harm, special something needed. Magic Weapon is left to GM to elaborate on.

Next Steps: none needed.

Next Steps: none needed.