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Ability Compendium I

Manual of Gainful Exercise

A Guide to the
Strength Ability

by

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and

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Ability Compendium™ I: Manual of Gainful Exercise

Credits

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A character's Strength modifier also applies whenever he scores a hit with a melee or thrown weapon, including a sling. A Strength penalty, but not a bonus, applies on attacks made with a bow that is not a composite bow. Only ½ of the normal Strength bonus is applied to a weapon used in a character's off hand, and 1½ times the normal Strength bonus is applied to a weapon used two-handed, other than a light weapon.

Clearly, a character with a high Strength score has a great advantage in melee. Not only is he more likely to hit with a melee attack, he causes more damage when he does hit. This advantage is particularly pronounced at lower levels, where a Strength bonus can be more important than the base attack bonus in determining a character's attack bonus.

To illustrate, consider a case where a character with a +1 base attack bonus is using a longsword to attack an opponent with AC 15 and 8 hit points. Including the possibility of critical hits, a character with Strength 11 (no bonus or penalty to melee rolls) will deal an average of just over 1.7 points per attack. It will therefore take him 5 attacks to defeat this opponent, on average.

A character with Strength 18 (+4 bonus to melee rolls) will deal an average of over 4.9 points per attack. He will take 2 attacks, on average, to defeat this opponent. He can defeat 2 to 3 times the number of such opponents as the Strength 11 character can, in the same amount of time.

BREAKING THINGS

When a character tries to break something with sudden force rather than by dealing damage, he uses a Strength check rather than an attack roll (the sunder special attack; see below). The DC of the check depends more on the construction of the item than on the material, and is modified if the item has lost half or more of its hit points.

Creatures get size modifiers on Strength checks to break open doors as follows: Fine -16, Diminutive

-12, Tiny -8, Small -4, Large +4, Huge +8, Gargantuan +12, and Colossal +16.

There are therefore two approaches to breaking down a door. The first is to attack the door with your weapon, using the sunder special attack. This strategy gradually cuts the door away, and can take several rounds or more. The second approach is to merely bash the door down off its hinges all at once. This requires a Strength check.

In either case, a high Strength score will help. Choosing an approach in a particular situation



attacks coming from anyone but you. You can even keep your opponent from speaking, which is a great way to deal with spellcasters. Your options are more limited when pinning an opponent, compared to simply grappling; the chief advantage of a pin is the opponent's reduced AC. If you pin an opponent, the rest of your party can deal a lot of damage.

When pinning an opponent, you can opt to:

- strike them with their own weapon;
- damage them with an opposed grapple; or
- move the grappled opponent as above.

One additional advantage comes into play with a pin: you can rip even well-secured items off the pinned opponent with a disarm attempt, although the opponent gains a +4 bonus to resist it. So if you need to get that ring off the wizard's finger or pull out someone's false eye, a pin can be the way to go.

Retrieve a Spell Component

This is an attempt to allow casters a fighting chance in a grapple, but given the high Concentration DC and 'no somatic components' elements of casting in a grapple, it doesn't provide much opportunity for use. If you're a caster who for some reason wants to be able to grapple, it's best to avoid spells with components that you'll have to waste a round fetching.

Use Opponent's Weapon

Usually this is not the best option for a grapple-based character, unless you know their weapon is highly potent, envenomed, or if you just want to humiliate them.

Being an Effective Grappler

So you want to build a grappling character? The first you need to remember is that the character should *not be Small*. Being Small not only restricts the maximum size of creatures you can grapple (no more than 1 size category larger), but also significantly reduces your chances of winning an opposed grapple check, as each size category larger

that your opponent is lands you a -4 penalty to the roll. On a d20 roll, a -4 penalty is huge.

Secondly, any character that wants to be an effective grappler should *take the Improved Grapple feat*. Not only does this operate in your favour defensively by preventing attacks of opportunity which might foil your grapple attempt, but also offensively by granting a +4 bonus to grapple checks. This is the equivalent of having 8 extra points of Strength with respect to grapple checks. Without Improved Grapple, using grapple as a primary tactic is simply unwise.

Having a high Strength is very advantageous to the grappler, the higher the better. Races that provide Strength bonuses can therefore be good choices for a grappling character.

Now that all that's out of the way, you're ready to start grappling. But when are the best times to get down and dirty?

Against a Single Opponent

If you are facing a single opponent, grappling can be a great tactic. Grappling can tie an opponent up for an entire combat, restricting its actions until it can manage to break free. Pinning the opponent and then ganging up on it will often spell its demise.

Against a Spellcaster

Most spellcasters aren't physically powerful, and thus overpowering them in a grapple is often easy. To add even more...injury...to injury, many spells are impossible to cast when in a grapple. So, grappling a caster not only attacks a weak point, but also disrupts a strong one. A character who focuses on grappling should always seek out opposing spellcasters if at all possible.

Against Ranged Attacks

If you're facing a large group of opponents, sometimes your best defence is to put one of their own between you and their weapons. Grappling one

STRENGTH CHECKS

When there is not a more specific mechanic to handle a particular situation, you typically use an ability check. Strength checks are used far more often in the d20 System™ than any other ability check.

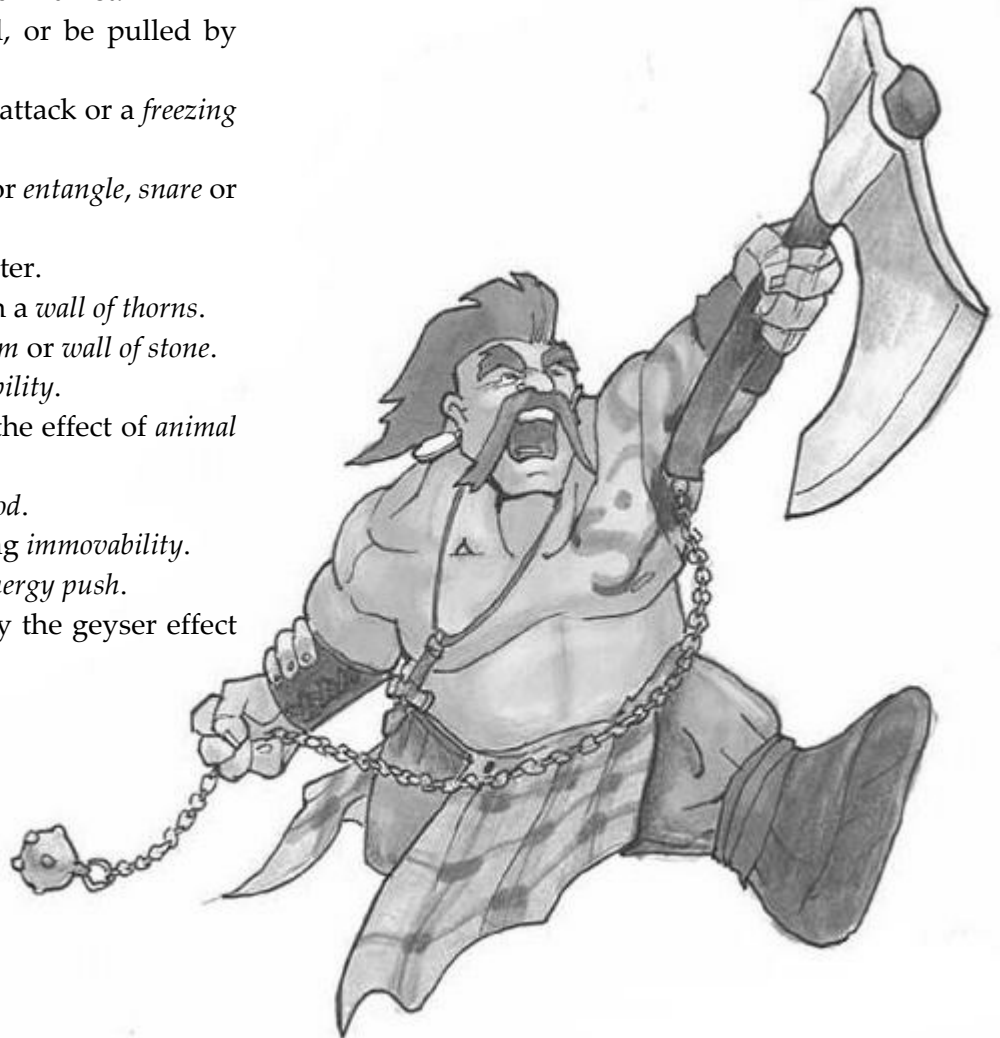
A simple Strength check is called for when you want to:

- Break down a door.
- Lift a portcullis, rotate a drawbridge winch, or winch the throwing arm of a catapult.
- Break manacles, a grate, *dimensional shackles* or *iron bands of binding*.
- Burst a rope, chain, net, or monstrous spider's or bebilith's web.
- Make a bull rush, overrun or trip attack.
- Resist a bull rush, overrun or trip attack.
- Hold on to a creature entangled in a net.
- Pull someone from quicksand, or be pulled by someone from quicksand.
- Break free from a roper's drag attack or a *freezing sphere*.
- Escape from a tanglefoot bag, or *entangle*, *snare* or *web*.
- Wade through fast-moving water.
- Slowly force your way through a *wall of thorns*.
- Break through a *wall of ectoplasm* or *wall of stone*.
- Move a creature using *immovability*.
- Burst enclosures when under the effect of *animal growth* or *enlarge person*.
- Move an activated *immovable rod*.
- Avoid being moved while using *immovability*.
- Resist being pushed back by *energy push*.
- Avoid being knocked down by the geyser effect of a *decanter of endless water*.

Clearly, some of these situations will rarely, if ever, arise for the typical character. On the other hand, some are quite common for a party of adventurers to encounter. What party has not had to break down at least one door in their careers?

Many of these situations are the bailiwick of the typical party's strong character or characters. Need a portcullis lifted? Ask the fighter. Need a door broken down? Call the paladin. Need a chain burst? Where's the barbarian?

But many of the situations which call for Strength checks affect all character types, not just the muscular ones. Resisting a bull rush or trip attack is not restricted to fighters and their ilk. Any character can benefit from a high Strength score; it's simply a matter of what you have to give up to get it.



LIONHEART EVOKER

The paths to arcane power are many and varied, but they usually fall within the realm of the mind. Not so for the lionheart evoker, who draws upon the power of his physique to mold raw arcane energy into deadly blasts.

Appearance: A lionheart evoker generally has a powerful or athletic appearance, and dresses in a way to accentuate it. His clothing needs to be light and allow for ease of movement, so swirling cloaks and robes are generally rejected in favour of simpler garb. Indeed, he often dresses more in the manner of a monk, or even a dancer, rather than a spellcaster. His exotic appearance and flashy magic provides a powerful mystique for these unusual arcane spellwielders.

Requirements

To become a lionheart evoker, a character must meet the following requirements.

Abilities: Str 13.

Base Attack Bonus: +2.

Feats: Empower Spell, Power Attack, Power Caster.

Special: During the level before gaining 1st level of lionheart evoker, the character must have cast nothing but evocation spells, including at least one spell of each of 1st, 2nd and 3rd levels.

Table XII: The Lionheart Evoker

Level	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	Martial casting, might magic	-
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0	Evoking attack	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1	Energy blitz 1/day	-
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Heart of giants	+1 level of existing class
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1	Evocation expert	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+5	+2	+2	Energy blitz 2/day	-
7th	+5	+5	+2	+2	Greater might magic	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+6	+2	+2	Weapon channel	+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+6	+3	+3	Energy blitz 3/day	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+7	+3	+3	Titanic offence	+1 level of existing class

Game Rule Information

Lionheart evokers have the following game rule information.

Hit Die: d6.

Skills Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Skills: Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Jump (Str), Knowledge (any)(Int), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Spellcraft (Int), Swim (Str).

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: Lionheart evokers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, but are not proficient with any armour or shields. A lionheart evoker must remain unencumbered and unarmoured. To be burdened in any way interrupts the movement of his body, which disrupts his unique spellcasting abilities. A lionheart evoker carrying any more than a light load loses the use of his class abilities.

Spells per Day: When each of 2nd, 4th, 5th and 7th through 10th levels of lionheart evoker is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever arcane spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. This essentially means that he adds the level of lionheart

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Manual of Gainful Exercise

Strength.

King of the abilities. It's always listed first, and its dominance in battle makes it a favourite among many players. The powerful fighter, though a simple concept, is an icon of fantasy role-playing games of all kinds.

In these pages you will find new uses for Strength-based skills, many new feats for high-Strength characters, three new prestige classes that focus on Strength as an ability, and discussion of all the advantages that can be drawn from a high Strength score in a d20 Fantasy game.



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