

Planar HERO

A Planescape reference for the HERO System

This is the second edition of the Planar HERO guidelines. In the first edition, we spent a great deal of time familiarising the reader with basic concepts of both Planescape and the HERO rules. In this version we eschew such an approach. Readers of this document may be unfamiliar with the Planescape setting; we do not consider it in our scope to transmit such data. Information on the setting and its themes can be found in a variety of sources, including the original D&D 2e material, websites such as www.mimir.net and www.planewalker.com, and to a lesser degree in D&D 3e materials such as the Manual of the Planes. As a guide for a HERO campaign, we must assume readers are familiar with such rules, or they could make no use of the document.

Instead, we seek to be a medium.

Planar HERO is intended as a reference and set of guidelines for moving material and concepts from Planescape materials into the HERO ruleset. Thus, the document may be used for transferral of D&D material, 2e or 3e, into HERO. We feel there are two approaches to such a conversion. First, material may be converted by concept. In this method, one takes the original D&D source and replicates its theme and purpose in HERO rules. This approach requires little input from us, if one is familiar with both source and destination rules.

The second approach, which this document will cover in greater detail, is a conversion by mechanics. In this method material is analysed in a mechanical fashion, looking at such things as probability of success and average damage. Once it is understood in a more complete fashion, these mechanical ideas represented by a character or ability can be rebuilt in HERO, matching more closely to the mechanics in the source material. Planar HERO intends to provide conversion guidelines, as well as converted mechanics, for both D&D 2e and 3e.

We feel 2e must be covered as that is the language which the original Planescape material was produced in. We will give a general treatment to the 2e Player's Handbook, so that 2e mechanics can be more properly understood in a HERO perspective, before moving on to the mechanical data found in the Planescape books and manuals.

We feel, after that is complete, that 3e must be covered as well. This is for two reasons. First, some new material has been produced for 3e that can be relevant and interesting in a Planescape campaign, including new Planescape material in documents such as planewalker.com's 3e Planescape Campaign Setting. Second, we feel that many D&D players have converted their characters and campaigns to 3e (or began playing in said edition), and thus will have great need for a 3e to HERO conversion.

This first document will cover guidelines and explanations for converting material from 2e and 3e to HERO. Future instalments will give detailed conversions of many Planescape and Planescape-relevant materials from these editions.



Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Second Edition

Our first order of business is ability scores, as these tend to form the foundation of a game system.

Ability Scores

AD&D has six: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Each one ranges from 1-25, with the normal human limits being 3-18 and average scores tending between 8-10.

HERO has eight primary characteristics: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Body, Intelligence, Ego, Presence, and Comeliness. Each one ranges from 1+, with the normal human limit being 20 and average scores being 10.

We feel that, for the most part, the six AD&D abilities should map to seven of the HERO characteristics. Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, and Intelligence cross over directly. Wisdom is represented essentially by Ego, and Charisma is covered by Presence and Comeliness (most likely, more towards Presence). Body will be covered later, when we discuss hit points.


Simply knowing which ability scores match which characteristics is not enough, however. We must also understand what value of ability score should denote what value of characteristic. To do this, we must look at the ability tables.

Strength

We see that a character's Strength provides hit probability, damage adjustment, weight allowance, maximum press, open doors, and bend bars/lift gates. The hit probability does not match with what a HERO character's Strength provides, though it will be relevant later, in discussions of OCV. Note for now, however, that an AD&D character's Strength can give it between -5 and +7 hit probability. Each +1 (or -1) granted is a 5% difference in ability to hit. The damage adjustment ranges from -4 to +14, with each +1 (or -1) representing a single point of damage.

In HERO, a character's Strength does contribute to damage dealt: every 5 points of Strength grants 1 DC of hand-to-hand damage. Weight allowance and maximum press are related to the concept of encumbrance and carry weight, which a HERO character's Strength also provides for, as per the Strength table. Open doors and bend bars/lift gates are also a related concept, being the might a character can exhibit on her environment through force. Each point of open doors represents a 5% chance of success at the task, while bend bars/lift gates is conveniently already expressed in percentages. There are two ways HERO handles this, that being the Strength roll and the Strength damage, referenced above with regards to the damage adjustment, with a preference being given towards the Strength damage. Each of these attributes must be examined individually, as the bonuses given by varying Strength scores do not scale the same in both systems. Hit probability, as mentioned earlier, is not mirrored in effect by HERO's Strength, so we will leave that for now.

A character with a Strength of 1 has a damage adjustment of -4. This increases to -2 at Strength 2, -1 at Strength 4, and "none", or +0, at 6. Strength scores between 6 and 15 do not grant a damage adjustment. The damage adjustment becomes positive at +1 for Strength 16, +2 for Strength 18, +3 for Strength 18/01, +4 for Strength 18/76, +5 for Strength 18/91, and +6 for Strength 18/00, which brings us to the normal human maximum. Beyond this, the damage adjustment increases by 1 each point of Strength from 19-24, and jumps to +14 at the system's maximum, Strength 25.



In HERO, a character's Strength provides 1 DC of damage for every 5 points. 1 DC of damage can mean two things, depending on whether we speak of normal damage or killing damage. For normal damage, 1 DC is equal to 1d6 damage (an average of 3.5). For killing damage, 3 DCs are equal to 1d6 damage (an average of 3.5). 1 DC is 1 damage, and 2 DCs are ½d6 damage (an average of 2).

If we consider contribution to normal damage, every +3 of damage adjustment is equal to 1 DC. For contribution to killing damage, every +1 of damage adjustment is equal to 1 DC. In AD&D, however, the distinction does not exist. A club (considered normal damage in HERO) deals damage equivalently to a sword (killing damage in HERO).

One way to look at it is to determine whether the character in question typically uses a normal damage attack or a killing damage attack when using her Strength, and convert the damage adjustment accordingly. A simpler way is to assume that AD&D combat tends to be more lethal, so Strength should be considered a contribution to killing damage DCs. The main trouble we face is that in HERO a character's Strength contributes some amount to damage unless it is 2 or less. Our suggestion is that you should assume the no damage adjustment Strength scores to be equivalent to Strength 10, and then apply the damage adjustment modifiers to determine Strength DCs higher or lower than the base 2.

Example:

- AD&D Strength 3-5 is HERO Strength 5.*
- AD&D Strength 6-15 is HERO Strength 10.*
- AD&D Strength 16-17 is HERO Strength 15.*
- AD&D Strength 18 is HERO Strength 20.*
- AD&D Strength 18/01-18/75 is HERO Strength 25.*
- AD&D Strength 18/76-18/90 is HERO Strength 30.*
- AD&D Strength 18/91-18/99 is HERO Strength 35.*
- AD&D Strength 18/00 is HERO Strength 40.*
- AD&D Strength 19 is HERO Strength 45.*

Though this method appears reasonable up through Strength 18, it appears to scale too quickly beyond that. However, scaling Strength as though it contributed to normal damage DCs would raise it too slowly.

At this point it would appear reasonable to combine the two - up to AD&D Strength 18, use the progression outlined above. Beyond that, consider that every 3 additional points of damage adjustment increases Strength by 5. This would give us AD&D Strength 18/01-18/99 is HERO Strength 25. AD&D Strength 18/00-20 is HERO Strength 30. AD&D Strength 21-23 is HERO Strength 35. AD&D Strength 24-25 is HERO Strength 40. This seems more reasonable, but remember that we have more to look at before coming to a final decision.

Weight allowance is the amount of weight a character can carry without being encumbered. This is the same as encumbrance in HERO, represented by 10% of a character's lift. Maximum press is the most a character can possibly lift; the same concept is outlined under lift on HERO's Strength table.

Though AD&D uses pounds and HERO kilograms, a fairly straightforward comparison can be made. We begin with maximum press. AD&D Strength 1 is 3 lb.; this is equal to a HERO Strength of -23. AD&D Strength 10-11 is 115 lb.; HERO Strength 5. AD&D Strength 18 is 255 lb.; HERO Strength 10-11. A cursory examination indicates that this does not match up in any way with the values indicated by

damage adjustment. As encumbrance and weight are typically only a marginal part of most games, we feel this aspect of AD&D Strength not be considered when determining HERO Strength.

Our last category is open doors and bend bars/lift gates, covering a topic known in newer editions as the “*Strength check*”. While preference is given to other methods in HERO, for calculation purposes we will prefer to compare this with HERO’s Strength roll. AD&D Strength 1-2 is open doors 1, a 5% chance of success. In HERO, a 5% chance of success would be 5-, which is not possible. The lowest possible characteristic roll is 9- (Strength <5), a 37.5% chance of success, so let’s move up to that. 37.5% most closely maps to an open doors of 7, which is Strength 12-13. Our next probability of success is 50%, which is a Strength roll of 10- (Strength 5). This is AD&D Strength 17. It quickly becomes clear here that HERO’s rolling system does not map well to AD&D’s flat steps of 5% increase. Likewise, bend bars/lift gates increases in probability too slowly to match with HERO skill rolls.

To all appearances, damage adjustment is the only reliable connection point between AD&D Strength and HERO Strength. As such, we use the analysis given above to produce this chart.

| AD&D Strength | HERO Strength |
|---------------|---------------|
| 3-5 | 4-7 |
| 6-15 | 9-12 |
| 16-17 | 14-17 |
| 18 | 19-22 |
| 18/01-18/99 | 24-27 |
| 18/00-20 | 29-32 |
| 21-23 | 34-37 |
| 24-25 | 39-42 |

Dexterity

Dexterity provides reaction adjustment, missile attack adjustment, and defensive adjustment. Reaction adjustment is a function of perception, which is not covered by Dexterity in HERO. Missile attack adjustment modifies the character’s chance to hit with ranged attacks, similar to Strength’s hit probability. In HERO, Dexterity covers both of these through formulation of OCV. As such, an AD&D character’s hit probability from Strength should be considered here, as well. Defensive adjustment modifies the character’s armour class, as well as some saving throws. This is, in essence, modification to a character’s DCV, which is provided for by HERO’s Dexterity.

As mentioned, we shall skip over reaction adjustment for now.

A Dexterity of 1 provides a missile attack adjustment of -6. Dexterity 2, -4. Dexterity 3, -3. Dexterity 4, -2. Dexterity 5, -1. Dexterity 6-15, +0. Dexterity 16, +1. Dexterity 17-18, +2. Dexterity 19-20, +3. Dexterity 21-23, +4. Dexterity 24-25, +5. Strength performs a similar function with hit probability, though we find it unnecessary to list them all out. Since these are both factors in finding OCV (and, thus, this component of Dexterity), we suggest taking the average of these modifiers for the final “to hit” modifier.

In this way, an AD&D character may have a hit modifier ranging between -5 and +6. Each +1 (or -1) of hit modifier represents a 5% modification of chance to hit. In HERO, an average character (one with a Dexterity of 10) has an OCV of 3. Against another average character, she will have a 62.5% chance of successfully striking. Decreasing her OCV by one reduces her chance to hit by 12.5%, while raising it by one increases her chance to hit by 11.57%. These percentages both decrease as we deviate further from average (each single-point reduction or increase being statistically less significant).

According to our hit modifier values, the combination of Dexterity and Strength can modify chance to hit by 25% less or 30% more. 25% less likely to hit the average in HERO corresponds to an OCV of 1, while 30% more likely to hit the average in HERO corresponds to an OCV of 6. In this way, we suggest



the following values. Hit modifier -5 to -3, OCV 1. Hit modifier -2 to -1, OCV 2. Hit modifier 0 to +1, OCV 3. Hit modifier +2 to +3, OCV 4. Hit modifier +4 to +5, OCV 5. Hit modifier +6, OCV 6. Each point of OCV corresponds to 3 points of Dexterity, such that we range from Dexterity 3 (-5 hit modifier) to Dexterity 18 (+6 hit modifier).

Defensive adjustment is, in many ways, similar to the above missile attack adjustment and our custom “hit modifier”. It ranges from +5 at a Dexterity of 1 to -6 at a Dexterity of 24-25. As an AD&D character’s armour class starts at 10 and decreases, a positive defensive adjustment is poor, while a negative one is good. Like the hit modifier, each point of defensive adjustment corresponds to a 5% increase (or decrease) in chances of being hit. This is directly correlative to DCV, which is calculated the same as OCV (in fact, based solely off Dexterity, a character’s OCV and DCV will be identical). Defensive adjustment ranges from 25% more likely to be hit to 30% less likely to be hit. This is the same range of percentage for the hit modifier, above, and thus will produce the same range of DCV.

Unfortunately, it is highly unlikely that a character will have the same hit modifier and defensive adjustment. We suggest that one value is simply chosen over the other to determine HERO Dexterity; if required the difference can be made up for later with Combat Skill Levels.

| Hit/Defence Mod. | HERO Dexterity |
|------------------|----------------|
| -5 to -3 | 2-4 |
| -2 to -1 | 5-7 |
| 0 to +1 | 8-10 |
| +2 to +3 | 11-13 |
| +4 to +5 | 14-16 |
| +6 | 17-19 |

In the table, remember that the defensive adjustment and hit modifier have opposite signs to represent the same value. We have chosen to list from -5 to +6, simply invert the sign if you’re converting based on defensive adjustment.

Constitution

Constitution provides hit point adjustment, system shock, resurrection survival, poison save, and regeneration. While HERO’s Constitution contributes to Stun, AD&D’s concepts of hit points and hit dice are different enough from HERO’s Stun and Body to deal with them in their own section. System shock may have some faint similarities to Power Defence, but is not much of a function of HERO’s Constitution. Resurrection survival is not a likely part of HERO’s life-restoration mechanics, and if it were it would not likely be tied to Constitution. Poison save is likely to be best represented by armour or power defence, based on the poison’s effect. Regeneration, while purchasable as a power, is also not tied to HERO’s Constitution.

In short, we see that AD&D’s Constitution does not directly provide mechanical benefits that can be tied to HERO’s Constitution. A similar problem arises with Intelligence and Charisma. Our suggestion is to make an assumption: For characters who use a particular ability score, the number of one score is as relevant as the same number of another. In this way, the Strength conversion table can be used to provide for HERO analogues of Constitution, Intelligence, and Charisma, as well.

Wisdom

AD&D’s Wisdom provides one ability that can be correlated to HERO’s Ego: magical defence adjustment. This is approximately equal to ECV. Magical defence adjustment ranges from -6 to +4, and affects likelihood of being affected by mental magic the same as Dexterity’s defensive adjustment. As

| Wisdom | Ego |
|--------|-------|
| 1-3 | 2-4 |
| 4-7 | 5-7 |
| 8-15 | 8-10 |
| 16-17 | 11-13 |
| 18-25 | 14-16 |

such, we feel that similar guidelines can be used to determine a character's Ego based on Wisdom.

Races

Now that we have a baseline for ability scores, we can move on to races. In AD&D, all races other than humans have a number of special abilities.

There are also a number of racial rules that we feel are not relevant within the HERO ruleset. The first are racial ability requirements - the idea that each race has a minimum and maximum for each ability score. The second are class and level limits - the idea that each race may only be a member of certain classes, and only rise to a certain level in said class.

We feel that, as each race has a group of abilities that apply to every member of the race, each race in AD&D can be represented by a package deal. Most of a race's abilities can be built with HERO powers. Many races will also have ability score adjustments. These can also be placed into the package deal; though the question arises as to how much of a HERO bonus should be granted.

We suggest that the number must vary based on the ability score in question, with reference to the ability score conversion tables for guidelines on what an appropriate increase within both systems would be. Though the AD&D racial entries speak of languages appropriate for the various races, these should not be included in the package deal. The languages a character knows are based more on society and environment than race. (An elf raised among dwarves likely won't speak any elven.)

Classes

Most of an AD&D character's abilities come from her class. First, a few AD&D concepts must be abandoned in the step to HERO. One is the idea of ability minima - ability score prerequisites for entering a class. HERO possesses no prerequisites. Another is level. Truly, HERO characters do not have a class. We may simply need to refer to a class' granted abilities to convert a character.

Extra Attacks

An AD&D warrior of sufficient level may gain extra melee attacks. The simplest way to represent this is with the power advantage Autofire. For simplicity, apply the advantage to the character's purchased melee weapon. For a more accurate portrayal, use Autofire as a naked advantage. Alternatively, this can imply an increase in Speed. For every extra attack in a round the warrior should gain, increase Speed by 1.

Spells

Some classes gain spells. Spells can simply be built as powers. To represent a character with multiple spells of which only a few can be used at a time (say, in a single day), we suggest the design of a Multipower.

AD&D spellcasting is a complicated affair, often requiring the use of Gestures, Incantations, Foci, Extra Time, or other disadvantages. HERO does not have the same limitations on power use that AD&D does. To represent this feel, a few approaches can be taken. Using the Multipower suggestion above, the terms of the Multipower can dictate that its powers can only be changed once per day. Spells may also draw from a special Endurance Reserve that recharges once per day, or have limited daily Charges.





Psionics

Psionics (not in the Player's Handbook, but mentioned because Planescape is a fairly inclusive setting) gain psionics, which in many ways can function as spells. Psionics have a pool of psionic strength points, which are fairly closely related to an Endurance Reserve. Though the point pools are unlikely to match up exactly, a reasonable approximation can be made by determining how often certain psionics can be used and make that number match in both AD&D and HERO.

Thievery

Rogues (and, to a limited extent, rangers) gain special thieving skills. These can largely be represented by skills in HERO. Thieving skills are given in a percentage. This percentage can be converted in a reasonably direct fashion to HERO's skill numbers. We will cover this in more detail when we arrive at proficiencies, below.

Hit Points

AD&D characters are granted hit points by their class (modified by Constitution). They are handed out in a somewhat random and haphazard fashion, through the roll of one or more hit dice. More important for our purposes than hit point acquisition, however, is hit point total.

In HERO, a character's health is represented through two scores, Body and Stun. Stun is closer to AD&D's conception of hit points, though Body cannot be neglected. Ignoring the effects of Constitution, we make the following observations. A warrior, on average, will have 5.5 hit points per level up to level 9 (middle value 27). A wizard, on average, will have 2.5 hit points per level up to level 10 (middle value 13). A priest, on average, will have 4.5 hit points per level up to level 9 (middle value 22). A rogue, on average, will have 3.5 hit points per level up to level 10 (middle value 19).

An average HERO character's Stun is 20 (reasonably close to the middle value for average hit points). This gives us a general suggestion that AD&D hit points are approximately equivalent to HERO Stun.

We understand this breaks down at very low levels, however (especially in the case of the wizard). Our suggestion is to allow any character with less than 20 hp have 20 Stun (or Stun as calculated from the base characteristics, whichever is less), with hp converting directly to Stun beyond that.

Body does not have a direct analogue in AD&D. Our general suggestion is to set it equal to the character's AD&D Constitution score.

Alignment

One cannot speak of D&D (and, especially, Planescape) without mentioning alignment. While it is perfectly acceptable to ignore alignment in a mechanical sense and use it solely as a roleplaying tool, we feel a more faithful conversion would be to represent alignment through a psychological limitation. Alignment as psychological limitation should have a frequency of common. The severity we leave to the decision of each individual character.

Proficiencies

AD&D characters may have proficiencies. As they are listed as an optional rule, skip this section if the campaign in question did not utilise them. Proficiencies come in two types: weapon and nonweapon. Weapon proficiencies are directly analogous to the Weapon Familiarity skill. Warriors with weapon specialisation gain a few benefits. First, they gain multiple attacks faster. This is covered above.

Second, they gain bonuses to attack and damage rolls, which can be represented by Combat Skill Levels.

Nonweapon proficiencies are largely analogous to various skills in HERO. Nonweapon proficiency rolls are based off an ability score, often with a modifier. Considering the average to be 10 (average ability score, no check modifier), characters have an average of 50% chance of success. Considering the average skill in HERO to be 11- (average characteristic), character's have an average of 62.5% chance of success. Given the +1/-1 AD&D roll discussion above under Dexterity, we can model the following chart to suggest conversion between AD&D proficiency and HERO skill. A similar model can be used for thieving skills, if converted to the same number system proficiencies uses.

| AD&D Check | HERO Skill |
|------------|------------|
| 1-9 | 9- |
| 10-11 | 10- |
| 12-14 | 11- |
| 15 | 12- |
| 16-17 | 13- |
| 18 | 14- |
| 19 | 15- |
| 20 | 18- |

Weapons

Weapons in AD&D have a number of properties. Their cost and weight are not particularly relevant to our purposes. Weapon size suggests whether a weapon is one-handed or two-handed (for the Required Hands limitation). Generally, S and M weapons are one-handed, L weapons are two-handed. A weapon's type is not of great mechanical importance, nor is its speed factor (though a high speed factor could suggest the Extra Time limitation). Most relevant, for our purposes, is the weapon's damage. Now, the HERO System rulebook contains a number of predesigned weapons, and more can be found in *The Ultimate Martial Artist*. However, sometimes one must convert an unusual weapon personally.

The first question is whether the weapon should do normal damage or killing damage. This is not a question the AD&D rules can answer for us. It's largely a question of our common sense. Do we feel the weapon should be able to easily slay a person? If so, it should do killing damage. If not, consider it to be normal damage.

With this determination out of the way, we can move on to how much damage. AD&D weapons deal different damage to large creatures than to small or medium ones. This is a distinction we feel is best left out of Planar HERO, so we just use the S-M value.

The damage conversion is simple if we remember to use averages. All HERO damage dice are d6, which has an average of 3.5. The following chart displays conversion of AD&D weapon damage to HERO damage dice. Similar conversions can easily be made for spell damage.

| AD&D Damage | HERO Damage |
|------------------|-------------|
| 1, 1d2, 1d3-1 | 1 |
| 1d3, 1d4 | ½d6 |
| 1d4+1, 1d6 | 1d6 |
| 1d6+1, 1d8 | 1d6+1 |
| 2d4, 1d8+1, 1d10 | 1 ½d6 |

Armour

Armour is a more complicated issue. In AD&D, armour increases a character's armour class (through reduction; a lower AC is better in AD&D), which is an abstract representation of how difficult a character is to harm with a weapon.

In HERO, this quantity is divided in two: how hard a character is to strike (DCV), and how hard the character is to harm (PD, ED). In HERO, wearing armour does not increase one's DCV. Wearing armour increases one's PD and ED.

Referring to HERO's predesigned armour, we can see that boiled leather armour provides 3 defence, scale provides 5, and full plate provides 8. Comparing with AD&D armour, leather provides an AC bonus of 2, scale 4, and full plate 9. In a general sense, the bonus to armour class from AD&D armour is reduced by 1, and provides that much defence (PD and ED) as HERO armour. Shields in HERO do provide DCV, as they ward away blows. Shields are detailed in HERO's equipment chapter, but a cursory examination indicates that every point of AC provided by a shield should increase DCV by 1.

All AD&D characters have a THACO. THACO is compared to armour class (in a method vaguely analogous to comparing OCV and DCV) to determine the number needed on a d20 to successfully strike.

Unlike earlier to-hit modifiers based on Strength and Dexterity, THACO is provided through training, not natural talent. As such, modifying a HERO character's Dexterity (and thus natural OCV) based on THACO would be inappropriate. We feel that THACO should be represented by Combat Skill Levels.

Having thus determined, we now need to know how to convert the values. We return to the discussion of average to-hit values and rolls covered above. Starting (one could say "average")

characters have a THACO of 20. Average characters also have an AC of 10. This leads to a 55% chance of success to hit. Each increase (which is a reduction in number) of THACO increases the chance to hit by 5%. As mentioned earlier, one average HERO character striking another has a 62.5% chance of success. Using the mathematical logic presented earlier, we provide the following chart for converting THACO to an appropriate amount of Combat Skill Levels.

| THACO | CSLs |
|-------|------|
| 20-19 | 0 |
| 18-16 | 1 |
| 15-14 | 2 |
| 13 | 3 |
| 12 | 4 |
| -1 | +1 |

Saving Throws

The most complicated issue, we feel, is AD&D's saving throws. These are intended to cover a wide variety of attacks and effects that armour class cannot protect against. In HERO, these can cover a variety of defences, and we feel it would be difficult to convert, by number, the effects of these varied defences. Indeed, these are meant simply as a generic defence against unusual attacks granted to all characters. We feel that this generic protection against all forms of attack is inappropriate to hand out to everyone, and thus the concept would best be avoided in Planar HERO.

Magic Resistance

Magic resistance has an issue in HERO representation - AD&D spells have a wide variety of effects which cannot be grouped into a single HERO defence. However, most creatures and characters have other ways of defending against most normal attacks (via DCV, PD, and ED). Special resistance to magical effects should be replicated through HERO's unusual defences (Power Defence, Flash Defence, possibly Mental Defence). Magic resistance is listed as a flat percent of success. We suggest that each 5% correlates to 1 point of defence in the chosen defences.





Dungeons and Dragons, Third Edition (Revised)

Having completed our review of converting from AD&D, we can move on to a similar review of D&D v3.5. In many ways this will be easier, as things were noticeably more codified and streamlined in this edition.

Ability Scores

As before, we begin with ability scores. D&D, like AD&D, has six ability scores, and we feel they can map to HERO's ability scores the same way. *(For those who skipped the section on AD&D: Strength to Strength, Dexterity to Dexterity, Constitution to Constitution, Intelligence to Intelligence, Wisdom to Ego, Charisma to Presence and Comeliness.)*

In D&D each ability score provides the same benefit, simply applying it to different things. Every 2 points above the average score of 10 provides a +1 to anything the ability influences, every 2 points below a -1. Human maximum remains 18, though (like HERO) there is theoretically no maximum for ability scores any longer.

Strength

Let us begin with Strength. Strength influences three basic things: melee attack rolls, damage rolls, and Strength-based checks. As with the previous edition, we find Strength's addition to attack rolls to be incongruous with HERO's design, so we shall ignore it for now. Addition to damage is something we can expect from HERO's Strength, however. Every 2 Strength above 10 provides +1 damage (and every 2 Strength below 10 provides -1 damage).

A discussion on damage in HERO and comparisons to D&D damage follows that is essentially the same as presented under AD&D. Readers already familiar with the logic may proceed to the next topic, regarding skill checks.

In HERO, a character's Strength provides 1 DC of damage for every 5 points. 1 DC of damage can mean two things, depending on whether we speak of normal damage or killing damage. For normal damage, 1 DC is equal to 1d6 damage (an average of 3.5). For killing damage, 3 DCs are equal to 1d6 damage (an average of 3.5). 1 DC is 1 damage, and 2 DCs are ½d6 damage (an average of 2). If we consider contribution to normal damage, every +3 damage in D&D is equal to 1 DC. For contribution to killing damage, each +1 damage is equal to 1 DC.

In D&D, however, the distinction does not exist. A club (considered normal damage in HERO) deals damage equivalently to a sword (killing damage in HERO). One way to look at it is to determine whether the character in question typically uses a normal damage attack or a killing damage attack when using her Strength, and convert the damage modifier accordingly. A simpler way is to assume that D&D combat tends to be more lethal, so Strength should be considered a contribution to killing damage DCs.

The main trouble we face is that in HERO a character's Strength contributes some amount to damage unless it is 2 or less. Our suggestion is that you should assume the no damage modifier Strength scores to be equivalent to Strength 10, and then apply the damage modifiers to determine Strength DCs higher or lower than the base 2.



Example:

D&D Strength 10 is HERO Strength 10.

D&D Strength 12 is HERO Strength 15.

D&D Strength 14 is HERO Strength 20.

This appears to scale too quickly (using Strength modifier as an assumption of normal damage DCs).

However, we feel that using Strength modifier as killing damage DCs would scale too slowly. For damage considerations, we suggest a compromise: every +2 Strength modifier is equivalent to +5 Strength in HERO. Before we can make a conclusive decision, however, we must also analyse Strength's effects on skills.

Strength-based Skills

A character with average Strength will have a +0 on Strength-based skills (assuming no training). The difficulty of an average skill check is 10. Thus, our average D&D character will have a 55% chance of success. An average HERO character has a 62.5% chance of success (11 or less on 3d6). It takes 2 points of D&D Strength to increase the roll by 1 (5%). It takes 5 points of HERO Strength to increase the roll by 1 (a varying %, based on how high the skill already is).

A brief analysis indicates that a D&D character should have a Strength of 12 for the approximately same chance as a Strength 10 HERO character. D&D Strength 20 would correspond to HERO Strength 15 and D&D Strength 24 for HERO Strength 20. This is somewhat inconsistent with the damage analysis.

For now we will consider the skill correspondence to be the more relevant of the two, but let's save final judgement until we've looked at Dexterity.

Dexterity

D&D Dexterity contributes to ranged attack rolls, armour class, Reflex saving throws, and Dexterity-based checks. Interestingly, Dexterity affects all of these exactly equally, in terms of number applied and chance of success. One will find that the same applies to all benefits provided by ability scores, with the exception of damage bonus from Strength and bonus spells (a concept which has no reason to be tied to any of HERO's characteristics). As such, we suggest usage of a single chart for all ability scores, based on modifier.

| Ability Modifier | HERO Characteristic |
|------------------|---------------------|
| -5 to -1 | <3 |
| 0 to +1 | 3-7 |
| +2 to +4 | 8-12 |
| +5 to +6 | 13-17 |
| +7 | 20 |
| +8 | 25 |
| +9 | 30 |
| Add. +1 | +5 |

Races

In D&D, all races have a number of special abilities. There is also a racial rule that we feel is not relevant within the HERO ruleset - favoured class. We feel that, as each race has a group of abilities that apply to every member of the race, each race in D&D can be represented by a package deal. Most of a race's abilities can be built with HERO powers. Many races will also have ability score adjustments. These can also be placed into the package deal; though the question arises as to how much of a HERO bonus should be granted. We suggest that the number must vary based on the ability score in question, with reference to the ability score conversion table for guidelines on what an appropriate increase

within both systems would be. Though the D&D racial entries speak of automatic and bonus languages, these should not be included in the package deal. The languages a character knows are based more on society and environment than race. (An elf raised among dwarves likely won't speak any elven.)

Classes

Classes grant a number of standard abilities, as well as varying class-unique powers. Class-unique abilities can largely be handled on an individual basis as powers. It is standard abilities that every character will have that this document is most interested in. Some classes (most notably prestige classes) have requirements for entry. As HERO does not have any sense of prerequisites, we feel these should be removed.

Hit Points

All classes gain a number of hit points each level, based on a combination of hit dice and Constitution score. Discounting Constitution, characters may have 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, or 1d12 hit points per level. Using averages, this gives a hit point range (over 20 levels) of 2-50, 3-70, 4-90, 5-110, and 6-130, average values being 26, 36, 47, 57, and 68. As a final average, we determine that the average number of hit points is 47, nearly double the amount of average Stun (20). This leads to a suggestion that every 2 D&D hit points are worth 1 Stun. However, this causes distinct problems with low-level characters. We suggest that characters with fewer than 40 hit points use the base 20 Stun (or whatever their base Stun calculates to, whichever is higher).

Base Attack Bonus

Each class also gains base attack bonus. Base attack bonus (BAB) is compared to armour class (in a method vaguely analogous to comparing OCV and DCV) to determine the number needed on a d20 to successfully strike. Unlike earlier to-hit modifiers based on Strength and Dexterity, BAB is provided through training, not natural talent. As such, modifying a HERO character's Dexterity (and thus natural OCV) based on BAB would be inappropriate.

We feel that BAB should be represented by Combat Skill Levels. Having thus determined, we now need to know how to convert the values. We employ a discussion of average to-hit values and rolls to determine such. Starting (one could say "average") characters have a BAB of +0. Average characters also have an AC of 10. This leads to a 55% chance of success to hit. Each increase of BAB increases the chance to hit by 5%. As mentioned earlier in the document, one average HERO character striking another has a 62.5% chance of success. Using the mathematical logic presented earlier, we provide the following chart for converting BAB to an appropriate amount of Combat Skill Levels. BAB has the additional effect of granting additional attacks per round. Though not a perfect match-up, we suggest that each iterative attack increases Speed by one. (Note that this does not apply to abilities such as a monk's flurry of blows.)

| BAB | CSLs |
|----------|------|
| +0 to +1 | 0 |
| +2 to +4 | 1 |
| +5 to +6 | 2 |
| +7 | 3 |
| +8 | 4 |
| Add. +1 | +1 |

Saving Throws

D&D characters also gain saving throws, though these are not as random and haphazard as in AD&D. D&D has three saves: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will.

Reflex saves cover area attacks, which in HERO a character must dive for cover to avoid. As such, Reflex saves need no conversion to HERO.

Fortitude saves cover affects to the body, such as blinding, poison, or transmutation. These effects can be negated through Power Defence or Flash Defence.

Will saves deal with effects targeting the mind. This is best covered through Mental Defence.

However, as discussed under AD&D, these are special defences in HERO, which not every character is assumed to possess. As such, we feel that D&D's general approach to allowing defences of all kinds be possessed in great degree by all characters to be inappropriate.

We do observe that many races or classes could grant a saving throw bonus, however. This sort of specialised defence we find acceptable. Therefore, characters which have a bonus to saving throws other than from an ability score or base saving throw progression may convert them into the above-mentioned defences. Our suggested rate is 1 point of defence for each +1 to the save (this will match up with spell resistance, below).

Bonuses to AC

Some classes or abilities grant bonuses to AC. We suggest these be converted to defensive Combat Skill Levels at the same rate as base attack bonus, above. There are essentially two types of AC bonus - protection from being struck (such as a dodge bonus), and protection from being harmed (such as an armour or natural armour bonus). The first should be represented as Combat Skill Levels, as discussed above. The second should be represented as Armour, as discussed below. For simplicity, we suggest stacking together all the AC bonuses of each group to determine the total HERO defence.

Spells

Many classes grant spells. Spells can simply be built as powers. To represent a character with multiple spells of which only a few can be used at a time (say, in a single day), we suggest the design of a Multipower.

D&D spellcasting is a complicated affair, often requiring the use of Gestures, Incantations, Foci, Extra Time, or other disadvantages. HERO does not have the same limitations on power use that D&D does. To represent this feel, a few approaches can be taken. Using the Multipower suggestion above, the terms of the Multipower can dictate that its powers can only be changed once per day. Spells may also draw from a special Endurance Reserve that recharges once per day, or have limited daily Charges.

Psionics

Psionic classes (not in the Player's Handbook, but mentioned because Planescape is a fairly inclusive setting) grant psionic powers, which in many ways can function as spells. Psionics have a pool of power points, which are fairly closely related to an Endurance Reserve. Though the point pools are unlikely to match up exactly, a reasonable approximation can be made by determining how often certain powers can be used and make that number match in both D&D and HERO.

| D&D Skill | HERO Skill |
|-----------|------------|
| -3 to -1 | 9- |
| +0 to +1 | 10- |
| +2 to +4 | 11- |
| +5 to +6 | 12- |
| +7 | 13- |
| +8 | 14- |
| Add. +1 | +1 |

Skills and Feats

All characters have two further things: skills and feats. Feats can simply be converted using other guidelines in this document (including the idea that HERO does not have prerequisites). Skills can be converted using the chance of success method employed elsewhere in this document, outlined in the chart to the right.

Equipment

Equipment can be converted as in AD&D. Each point of AC bonus from armour becomes a point of defence from armour. Each point of AC bonus from a shield becomes a point of DCV bonus. Weapon damages use the following chart for damage conversion. Reach weapons gain 1" Stretching, limited as detailed in the HERO System rulebook.

| D&D Damage | HERO Damage |
|------------|-------------|
| 1, 1d2 | 1 |
| 1d3, 1d4 | ½d6 |
| 1d6 | 1d6 |
| 1d8 | 1d6+1 |
| 2d4, 1d10 | 1½d6 |
| 1d12, 2d6 | 2d6 |

Special Abilities

Characters may also possess a number of standardised special abilities, which we will cover briefly below to aid in the conversion process.

Ability damage

Ability damage is represented by the Drain power, converted using the damage chart, above, with the reminder that Drain removes character points worth of a characteristic. Ability drain has the distinction of being permanent, which initially would suggest Transform. However, Transform isn't particularly well-designed to handle characteristic loss. Instead, we suggest use of Drain, with a very long recovery time.

Alternate form

Alternate form can be built with either Shape Shift or Multiform, depending on the complexity of the differing form.

Blindsight and blindsense

Blindsight and blindsense can be represented with Enhanced Senses, most likely Active Sonar, Spatial Awareness, or Radar.

Breath weapon

Breath weapon is most likely an Energy Blast, using Area of Effect to achieve the desired shape.

Change shape

Change Shape can be modelled with Shape Shift (it shouldn't be complex enough to require Multiform).

Energy immunities

Energy immunities cannot exist in HERO. Instead we propose granting a very high level of defence against the stated energy type, probably in the area of 40-50.





Constrict

Constrict is a special attack that requires the target to be grabbed (or Entangled, depending on the creature) first.

Damage reduction

Damage reduction can be built as (usually limited) armour. As damage reduction is specified as only working against normal weaponlike attacks, it needs only be PD. Each point of damage reduction is a point of Armour.

Darkvision

Darkvision is an Enhanced Sense, most likely represented as Infrared Perception.

Disease

Disease appears complicated, but it can be simple if the effects are observed. Most diseases deal ability damage (which, as above, is a Drain) over time (a certain amount each day). This can be represented with Continuous and Extra Time (1 day).

Energy drain and negative levels

Energy drain and negative levels cannot be represented in a direct fashion in HERO, which has no levels. However, a form of it can be built with Transfer Body - 1d6 per negative level that would be bestowed.

Ethereal existence

Ethereal creatures actually exist on a separate plane (the Ethereal plane), but due to the nature of the plane may still view the normal world (the Material plane). Ethereal creatures cannot affect things on the Material plane, but Transdimensional or Affects Desolidified (Ethereal) powers can affect ethereal creatures.

Evasion and improved evasion


Evasion and improved evasion relate to a character's ability to make Reflex saves. While these do not exist in HERO, the concept is that the character can dodge area attacks better. As such, they can be represented by Skill Levels (use 2-point skill levels for dive for cover rolls). A character with evasion has one of these skill levels; a character with improved evasion has three.

Fast healing

Fast healing can be built with Regeneration. Though the fastest a HERO character can regenerate is every Turn, consider that 2 points of fast healing converts to 1 point of Regeneration.

Gaseous form

Gaseous form is a limited form of Desolidification (doesn't allow passage through solids or liquids, doesn't prevent against damage) with linked Flight and Armour (10 PD, doesn't work against magic weapons).



Gaze attack

Gaze attacks have a variety of effects, but they are all transmitted the same way: Area of Effect (Radius), No Range, usually No Normal Defence, usually Personal Immunity.

Improved grab

Improved grab is a Linked grab or Entangle (depending on the creature).

Incorporeal existence

Incorporeal creatures have Desolidification. Usually their attacks can affect other creatures, which requires these attacks to have Affects Physical World. Incorporeal creatures tend to be innately that way, which requires their Desolidification to have Inherent.

Low-light vision

Low-light vision is an Enhanced Sense, best represented by Ultraviolet Perception.

Paralysis

Paralysis is best represented by an Entangle, though it should be designed to last a number of Segments rather than be breakable.

Poison

Poison is a Linked attack, generally a Drain (see ability damage, above).

Regeneration

Regeneration is limited Regeneration (it doesn't work with certain kinds of damage), with the additional ability of Resurrection (limited similarly to the Regeneration).

Energy resistance

Energy resistance is limited Armour (ED, only works against certain types of damage). Consider that each point of resistance translates to a point of Armour.

Scent

Scent is a set of Enhanced Senses to apply to Normal Smell: Discriminatory and Targeting Sense.

Spell resistance

Spell resistance has an issue in HERO representation - D&D spells have a wide variety of effects which cannot be grouped into a single HERO defence. However, most creatures and characters have other ways of defending against most normal attacks (via DCV, PD, and ED). Special resistance to magical effects should be replicated through HERO's unusual defences (Power Defence, Flash Defence, possibly Mental Defence).

Spell resistance is given as a number, which sets a target DC for the spellcaster. This is generally calculated by formula based on the difficulty of the creature in question. We suggest that you subtract the character's CR (which, for player characters, should be their level) from the spell resistance. This remaining number translates directly into the chosen defences.



Swallow whole

Swallow whole is a special form of Entangle, usually with extra damage Linked to it.

Telepathy

Telepathy can be built with Mind Link or Telepathy (Communication Only), depending on whether the recipient must be willing to communicate or not.

Tremorsense

Tremorsense is an Enhanced Sense: Detect Motion, Range, Sense, 360-Degree Perception, Requires Contact with Ground (17 active points, 11 real points).





Credits

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PLANEWALKER CØNVERSION