

# Hyborian Tales Rules

## Wounds and Healing

All characters start with one body hit per location, but can have more if they select the appropriate skills. If a location is reduced to zero hits it becomes *Stunned*. If a character's head or torso becomes *Stunned* then they are knocked unconscious. They can be revived by any other character who simply pours a small amount of "wine" down their throat (this can be represented by water or some kind of juice), but for the next minute they will not be able to fight, use skills or move more than a slow walk. If an arm becomes *Stunned* then the character must drop anything carried in that hand. The arm is useless for the next minute. If a leg is *Stunned* the character must fall over, but can still move by dragging the lifeless appendage behind him or with support from another person. No hopping. If both legs become *Stunned* then the character must be carried or drag himself along the ground with his arms. A location stops being disabled after one minute.

If a location reaches a number of negative hits equal to its starting total it is *Destroyed* (i.e. if a character has 3 hits per location then a location will be *Destroyed* when it reaches minus 3). If the head or chest is *Destroyed* then the character is dead (Unless Fate Points are used, see below). If a limb becomes *Destroyed* then it is unusable as per the notes for *Stunned* above, but it can only be restored to working order through extensive surgery and long term care.

Any location that is not *Destroyed* returns to full hits after each encounter, as though it were undamaged, so long as the character takes a quick drink of wine or other alcohol (represented by a non-alcoholic drink if possible). Characters in Hyborian Tales are not quitters. They simply keep on fighting as long as they have breath in their body and blood in their veins. Once the immediate threat is dealt with, they barely pause for refreshment before moving on to the next fight, trusting to their robust physiques that they will be capable of continuing despite multiple bleeding wounds... Unless a location has been *Destroyed*, no injuries are regarded as especially serious.

## Fate Tokens

Each character starts the game with a number of fate tokens that represent the fact that they are potential heroes, capable of great deeds beyond those of lesser men. Fate tokens can be spent in the following situations.

### Fearless

By spending a fate token, you may resist any *Fear* or *Terror* effect for the duration of one encounter.

### Left for Dead

If the character's head or chest locations become *Destroyed* he would normally die outright. If the character spends a fate point, the damaged location or locations are returned to zero hits, making the character *Stunned* instead.

### Mighty Strike

By spending a fate token, and roleplaying a powerful, heavily telegraphed two-handed strike from his or her melee weapon (perhaps with a battle cry or incoherent snarl of fury), a character can deal +1 damage on his or her next strike. This raises a weapon's damage to 2 hits, or to 3 hits if the character has either Weapon Expertise with the relevant weapon or Tiger's Strength.

### Reserves of Energy

By spending a fate token, you may gain one additional use of an Advantage which you could usually only use a limited number of times per day and whose uses you have otherwise exhausted for that day.

## SORCERY

Sorcerers may gain other uses for fate tokens – consult your friendly referee team if you are playing a sorcerer.

Once fate tokens are spent they are gone forever. A character may gain more fate tokens by performing heroic acts or achieving major goals, at the event organisers' discretion.

## Combat

### Heroic Combat

Combat in Hyborian Tales should be heroic in appearance and intent.

If you're wielding a two-handed sword and a slaving demon-beast charges at you, consider the following approaches to fighting him:

- A) You could tap-tap-tap him on the shoulder as fast as you can, treating the "two-handed sword" like the foam and fibreglass prop it is, aiming to make contact as often as possible in the few seconds it takes him to close the distance with you and get into clawing range.
- B) Or you could whirl your two-handed sword around your head as though it weighs and handles much like the real thing, give out a wordless roar of defiance and anger, and strike the creature on the shoulder (still safely and lightly, but with a real "telegraphing" of your intent).

So, which do you think looks better? (B) of course. And which will do most damage, and so be most effectively in the game? In Hyborian Tales, the answer is (B) again. Those little taps you did in (A) will be treated as the minor, paper-cut-like flesh wounds they would be if you used a real sword in such a tentative manner. No slaving demon-beast worth its salt will be stopped by such an attack. With (B), on the other hand, if you do it right, you may well find the creature is stopped dead in its tracks; at the very least, it will likely react and stagger a little, perhaps giving you sufficient time to get in another, more fatal blow.

Combat should observe the following three rules, to better facilitate an heroic style:

1. **The One-Second Rule.** You are not allowed to carry out several swift attacks, one immediately after the other, in the Hyborian Tales system. This is to preserve the play balance of the system. To provide an easy mechanism for every player to understand what is an acceptable speed for repetition of attacks, you must leave one clear second between delivering one blow and beginning another. It does not matter how many weapons you are wielding or what they are, you must leave one clear second between finishing one attack and starting another. This rule is not intended to be measured with stopwatches. It exists to allow players to legitimately ignore blows that follow each other without drawing breath. The only exception to the One-Second Rule is that characters with the Steeltrap Reflexes Advantage may ignore it completely, making attacks with any weapons held as fast as they are physically able.
2. **The Different Locations Rule.** When attacking an opponent, you may not hit the same location twice in succession, except the torso. A character with the Sword Mastery Advantage may ignore this rule completely, striking whichever location he or she chooses at any time, so long he or she is using an appropriate weapon (see Sword Mastery, p. XX).
3. **The Two Feet Rule.** The weapon should be drawn back two feet after each blow before beginning a new attack. If the weapon length is shorter than two feet then you should endeavour to draw it back about the length of the blade or haft. This rule applies to all characters within the game.

These three rules together ensure that much of the game's combat will be heroic and theatrical in appearance, rather than a purely competitive attempt to land as many blows as possible. It also allows for certain combat-oriented characters to buy Advantages that allow them to fight more rapidly and effectively, so as to offer a visible improvement in characters' fighting skills as they progress through the game rather than simply allowing them to deal more damage. However, it should be noted that even when a character has Steeltrap Reflexes, Sword Mastery, or both, combat should still appear heroic and theatrical if possible -- just faster!

As with all these rules, the most important factor is roleplaying, rather than the letter of the rules. No-one is going to be getting a ruler out to check that you drew your sword back a full two feet. Likewise, if your opponent is cowering behind a door-sized shield and you can only see one part of his or her body, feel free to aim at it repeatedly, rather

than worrying too much about the Different Locations rule. Make the combat heroic and dramatic, and no-one will complain if you don't always stick to the letter of the rules in the heat of battle.

## **Weapons**

All characters can use any weapon (ranged or melee) to inflict one point of damage with each strike.

Any weapon over 48" long must be wielded with both hands at all times, for the sake of both realism and safety. There are no specific benefits to wielding a weapon two-handed, except that it makes it somewhat easier to deal a Mighty Strike (see p. XX). Weapons shorter than 48" may be wielded with both hands if desired.

All LRP-safe weapons may be used. All players should check their weapons before each adventure, for problems such as: damage to the foam, hardened areas of foam, loose components, and core working its way through foam. If you are unsure as to how to check your own weapons, or if you believe one or more of your weapons may be unsafe, consult a referee. Never use a weapon that you believe to be unsafe, or suspect may have become unsafe. If a weapon becomes damaged during an adventure, let a referee know as soon as possible, so it can be removed from use. In general, "crew" weapons, or other weapons lying around, will have been checked by the referee team before the adventure, but if you wish to use such a weapon you should check it yourself at the earliest opportunity in case it has been damaged during the event.

## **Armour**

All characters can wear Soft Armour: leather, fur or padded armour. Note that the phys rep for this armour must resemble real armour; for example, stiff, thick, or lined/padded leather; real fur (or good quality fun fur sewn to a leatherette backing, so that it closely resembles real fur); or actual padding. A pair of gothy leather trousers or an old motorcycle jacket will not do, but a Civil War style "buff coat", padded jack, gambeson, fur cloak, or heavy LRP leather armour will be just fine. The referees' judgement is final on this matter!

Soft armour will give one armour point to each location covered. This armour is ablative, that is, the armour in any particular location will be destroyed as soon as that location is hit. It may be repaired by a character with the Tailor skill (see p. XX).

In order to wear heavier armour for increased protection the character will require an appropriate skill: Armour Level 1 for wearing a mail hauberk and/or helmet, and Armour Level 2 for wearing heavier armour such as a full suit of mail, scale armour, or plate armour.

Mail or scale armour reduces all damage dealt by one hit, except that after the first attack that hits a location, any attack that hits will still deal at least one hit of damage. Thus, an attack that would normally do one hit of damage still does one hit (except for the very first attack on a location, which does no damage); an attack that would normally do two hits of damage is reduced to one hit, and an attack that would normally do three hits of damage is reduced to two hits.

Plate armour, or a combination of mail and scale armour worn together, reduces all damage dealt by one hit. This will render the character totally immune to most physical attacks, other than Mighty Blows or attacks by characters with certain Advantages.

## **Shields**

All characters can use shields. Any shield will last more-or-less indefinitely (certainly the length of any typical adventure) unless it is struck by a character using the Cleave skill and wielding an axe-type weapon with both hands, at which point the shield is broken.

## **Damage Calls**

As a general rule, damage calls should be avoided, or if used at all, minimised. Given that this system is designed for a situation with a maximum of around eight player characters at once, crew will be briefed on significant special powers or damage of each player. To begin with, as a new character, you are welcome to remind them, but do it subtly. Rather than a barrage of "Double double double!" shouted like a wacry, you could mention as your eyes

meet the monster, “expert,” to signify that you have the Weapon Expert skill with your sword. After an adventure or two, most of them should know that if they see you with a sword of that length, you’re going to be hurting them.

Any damage calls interrupt the game’s suspension of disbelief somewhat, but a subtle “call” like this does so far less than hordes of people shouting “Double double double!” or worse “Blunt blunt blunt!” If you can make it clear what you’re doing by roleplay gesture and word, rather than by out-of-character damage calls, so much the better. For example, rather than calling “Cleave” as you break a shield, bring your axe down theatrically and dramatically, again meeting the opponent’s eye, making it clear that you are deliberately smashing the shield rather than aiming directly at the opponent. If need be, you could sneer, “Ha! Stygian dog, hiding behind your wooden wall will do you no good against my axe!” or something similar, but in most cases the opponent will get the message and drop the thing anyway.

## Psychological Effects

Certain creatures are so terrifying that they are able to cause characters to flee in horror by their very presence.

### Fear

Unnatural creatures or large monsters cause *fear*. If you are facing a fear-causing enemy then you should role-play appropriately, being unwilling to approach the creature or stay in close proximity to it for any length of time. For example, a character armed with a bow would much rather shoot a fear causing creature than engage it in hand to hand combat. You can overcome your fear and act normally by spending a fate point or if you possess the appropriate skill. Examples of creatures that cause *fear* include walking corpses, great apes, giant snakes or lesser demonic creatures.

### Terror

True fiends from the outer darkness evoke more than simple fear in human observers, but instead awake a deep primordial horror that shakes the very soul. These creatures cause *terror*. If you are confronted by a *Terror* causing creature then you should make every effort to flee the area and escape the thing’s presence. You cannot attack the creature in anyway, even with magic or missile weapons. If you spend a fate point then you can treat the creature as causing *Fear* instead and act as above.

Confronting *Terror*-causing creatures too often can have adverse effects on a character’s sanity, as too much exposure to sights man was not meant to witness can quickly unhinge even the strongest mortal mind.