

Raven's Brew

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nix

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Part I

What is this?

1 Context

Yeah this is DnD homebrew, mainly around the 2014 version, but also compatible with the 2024 version.

2 Values

2.1 Flavour

The main drive expressed through these rules is one for flavour, the irresistible urge to bring something into existence that feels great. Ways to perform cool moves and through doing so bringing a character to life that feels real, coherent, and evokes awe.

This interweaving of character fantasy and in-game behaviour will be a recurring theme throughout these rules. An assassin ought to assassinate, and thus the rules have to be there to not just enable, but support and incentivize the assassin specifically to assassinate.

2.2 Strategy

I like positional combat on battlemaps, and these rules bring new incentive to strategic positioning through the introduction of Focus, Vision and a new interactive action economy that offers a real trade-off between aggression and defence through the new defensive reactions, as well as between doing something now and doing something better later through surge dice.

2.3 Flow

When combat takes ages and some people got nothing to do, shit's whack.

2.4 Variety

If there are too few viable options to choose from, shit's whack.

Part II

Reworks

3 AC-less defence

AC-less: Creatures do not have an Armor Class anymore.

Missing attacks: An attack automatically misses its target if the attack roll isn't at least as high as the Missing Threshold.

Missing Threshold: The base Missing Threshold depends on the size of the creature: it's 0 for a gargantuan creature, 5 for a huge creature, 8 for a large creature, 10 for a medium creature, 12 for a small creature, and 15 for a tiny creature.

Damage Reduction: Instead of Armor Class, creatures have a Damage Reduction value. This value is subtracted from any non-spell damage the wearer takes that is not a critical hit.

Every bonus to Armor Class that is not the Dexterity bonus can be converted 1:1 into a bonus for Damage Reduction, unless otherwise noted.

Damage Reduction from multiple sources stacks. However, the prerequisites for each source must still be met. For example, the Damage Reduction now gained from the Barbarians Unarmoured Defence and a heavy armour will not stack, because the heavy armour still disables the Barbarians Unarmoured Defence.

Reactive Defence: There are now options to reactively defend against incoming attacks and other effects. These include **Dodging**, **Blocking**, **Parrying** and some parts of **Spell Manipulation**. The base mechanics of these are explained in the **Reactions** section.

Misses Any rule or feature that requires a missed attack to work also works if the attack does not deal damage because of damage reduction, blocking,

dodging, or parrying.

Cover: Instead of increasing the Armor Class of the creature that is behind cover, the Missing Threshold for attacks that target that creature increases by 2 for half cover and by 5 for three-quarters cover.

4 Reactions

Free Reactions: In addition to a Reaction, every creature also has a Free Reaction they can use. The options that are given for Free Actions may be used as a Free Reaction, if there is a trigger that plausibly allows for such a reaction, at the DMs mercy.

Reserving Actions: At the end of your turn, you gain 1 additional Reaction per remaining Action. If you were unable to use these Actions because you were Incapacitated, this conversion does not happen.

Reserving Bonus Actions: At the end of your turn, you gain 1 additional Reaction per remaining Bonus Action. If you were unable to use these Bonus Actions because you were Incapacitated, this conversion does not happen.

Reserving Reactions: At the start your turn, you gain 1 **Surge Die** per remaining Reaction. If you were unable to use these Reactions because you were Incapacitated, this conversion does not happen.

Reaction Timing: Unless otherwise noted, a Reaction can only be taken after a suitable trigger was announced, and only before its effects are applied.

4.1 New Reactions

Prey on the Vulnerable: If a creature that you can see and that is within your range receives one of the following conditions, you can take a Reaction to make an attack against that creature: grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious.

Tripping up: If a creature that you can see moves within your reach or attempts to move out of your reach, you can take a Reaction to make a shove attack against that creature to make it fall prone.

Reactive Defence: There are now options to reactively defend against incoming attacks and other effects. These include **Dodging**, **Blocking**, **Parrying** and some parts of **Spell Manipulation**, as detailed within their respective sections.

5 Vision & Focus

Vision: Many features in these rules rely on seeing something happen, and humanoids typically only see what happens in front of them, being just barely unable to discern what happens to 90 degrees to their left and right.

In combat, track and attend to the direction you look. Using miniatures on battlemaps works well for this, but any small thing that discernably points any direction will do.

Backstab Advantage: Whenever you decide to attack a creature that can't see you, you gain advantage on that attack. Against humanoid creatures, for example, that is usually the case when being behind their back.

Focus: You usually have something within your perception that you primarily attend to - this is what you focus on. You automatically switch focus to a creature when targetting them with a spell, attack, or other effect. You can only focus one creature at a time.

As long as you are focused on a creature, you can rotate with that creature's movement, if needed, to keep that creature within your sight. This way, for example, a humanoid can save their back from another creature's attacks, leading to the attacker not receiving Backstab Advantage.

Switch Focus: You may use a Free Action to Focus another creature of your choice. You may use a Free Reaction to Focus another creature that you notice moving towards you or being near you.

Losing Focus: You lose Focus if you receive any of the following conditions: blinded, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious.

A creature that you Focus may also make you lose Focus by applying the charmed or frightened condition to you, by successfully hiding behind full cover, or by spontaneously becoming unseen by you (be it through invisibility or teleportation, for example).

Escape Focus: To escape a creature's Focus, you can take a Bonus Action, making a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check contested by the creature's passive perception. This only works against creatures that are larger than you.

This can, for example, be used to be able to attack the back of a humanoid creature that previously focused their vision on you. This way, you can gain Backstab Advantage for your attacks against that humanoid.

Draw Focus: You can force other creatures to Switch Focus by drawing their attention to yourself, another creature or something else. This may occur as a side-effect of anything you do that is sufficiently noticeable, at the mercy of the player controlling the respective creature whose Focus is to be drawn.

If a creature does take notice and the controlling player decides it would be plausible that their creature's Focus could be drawn, the creature may make a Concentration check to resist having to Switch Focus. The Difficulty Class of this check is determined by the controlling player and the drawing player in a way that should be plausible for whatever was done to attempt drawing attention.

5.1 Example Scenarios

A Halfling cutthroat is looking to take out a Human guard they lead into an alley. They are currently looking at another, and the guard charges forward to strike. To escape the guard's focus, the nimble cutthroat swiftly maneuvers around the guard, using their bonus action to make a Dexterity

(Acrobatics) check against 13, the guard's passive perception. They succeed and stand behind the disoriented guard's back, able to attack the guard with advantage.

A Bard attempts to draw the attention of a bloodthirsty Gnoll that prioritizes the weak. They attempt to do so by faking a scream of pain and acting hurt & vulnerable. The DM controlling the Gnoll may decide that the attempt is automatically successful and make the Gnoll Switch Focus to the Bard ' they might also decide that the Gnoll might try to resist (for a reason) and roll a Concentration check contested by a Charisma (Performance) check by the Bard, only switching the Gnolls Focus if they lose the contest ' they might also decide that the attempt automatically fails (for a reason).

6 Aspects of Stealth

When using stealth, there are multiple aspects that can lead to being detected. Most commonly, being seen or heard is key to being detected, but scent may also play a role at some points, especially when a creature that may detect you has a keen sense of smell, like a wolf.

Passive Stealth (Scent): You have a base passive Stealth (Scent) score of 15. You can mask your scent to gain a bonus of +5 to this score, but you can also receive -5 to this score when giving off a strong scent that is uncommon for the place you are traversing.

The bonus might be given after applying herbs or some magic to yourself or by being washed. The malus might be given after taking a tour through the sewers, after a tough battle that left you wounded or after strenuous activity that left you sweaty.

When you try hiding from a creature that is close to you, both your Dexterity (Stealth) check and your passive Stealth (Scent) must be below the creature's passive perception. If the Dexterity (Stealth) check fails, you are heard or seen, as usual. If the passive Stealth (Scent) fails, the creature

smells you. This may only be a hint towards your presence (DMs choice) and may not lead to you being seen immediately, but it is reason for the creature to make a Wisdom (Perception) check to try and locate you. For some creatures it may be reasonable to have them be able to locate you based on scent alone, at the DMs discretion.

6.1 Example Scenario

A thief tries to sneak past a guard dog. They rolled a 21 on their Dexterity (Stealth) check and have a passive Stealth (Scent) score of 15, because they took no measures to mask their scent (no bonus) and do not smell strongly (no malus).

The guard dog has a passive perception of 12, so the thief gets close to passing him with ease, without a sound, but the guard dog has a keen sense of smell, bumping up his passive Perception for scent to 17. The guard dog smells something unusual as soon as the thief gets too close, and, trying to investigate that unusual scent, the guard dog rolls a Wisdom (Perception) check, resulting in a 19. The guard dog did not see or hear the thief through that, so the thief is still unnoticed and can pass without further worries.

Part III

New Stuff

7 Dodging

Dodging check: A Dodging check is a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check that is modified by the armour you're wearing as follows:

- While wearing light armour or no armour, the modifier is +5.
- While wearing medium armour, the modifier is +2 (+3 instead with Medium Armour Master).
- While wearing heavy armour, the modifier is +0.

Dodge: You can use your Reaction to try to dodge an attack that you can see and that targets you.

Make a Dodge check. If the result is at least as high as the attack roll, you successfully dodge the attack. It misses.

When trying to dodge a critical hit, you roll with disadvantage.

Dodge & Roll: You can use your Reaction to try to dodge an attack that you can see and that targets you or an area effect that encompasses you. Make a Dodge check and move to an unoccupied spot within 10 feet of you.

If you're trying to dodge an attack and the result is at least as high as the attack roll, you dodge successfully and the attack misses.

If you're trying to dodge an area effect and the result is at least as high as the DC of the effect and your movement makes you leave the area of the area effect, you succeed and are not affected. If you remain inside the area effect and it required a Dexterity saving throw, you automatically succeed

on the saving throw. If it required another saving throw, make the other saving throw as usual.

If the Dodge check succeeds, your movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

If the Dodge check fails, you fall prone at your target location.

If all spots within 10 feet are occupied, you fall prone in place, even if the Dodge check succeeded.

When trying to dodge & roll in response to a critical hit, you roll with disadvantage.

Evasive Stance: You can use your Action to focus on dodging attacks. You can use the Dodge Reaction (see above) and Dodge & Roll Reaction (see above) a number of times equal to your Proficiency Bonus without using a Reaction until the start of your next turn.

7.1 Rationale

Dodging isn't really a thing, let's change that.

To be more elaborate, in the base game, in many cases, Armor Class includes the Dexterity Bonus of a creature. This reasonably reflects some sort of ability to dodge ' what else would the Dexterity Bonus be good for when it comes to avoiding damage This is completely lost on many tables, as AC is often perceived to be nothing more than a coherent mass of all of this misses or all of this doesn't affect me. To add to that, defending against attacks is easily perceived as something passive due to the nature of AC, while dodging should imply activity on the defendant's side.

Implementing some sort of mechanic that allows for reactive dodging would be quite nice for multiple reasons. It (a) makes defending against attacks part of the action economy, giving more weight to proper defensive strategies, it (b) presents the swiftness of some characters in combat, giving more flavour to their character and differentiating it mechanically from other

characters, and it (c) gives the player the ability to actively avoid especially dangerous attacks while permitting weaker ones. This, in turn, allows for more aggressive encounter design.

Also, adding an option to dodge & roll would be nice, especially because swiftly jumping away from the point of impact of an attack is something that feels like it should be possible.

8 Blocking

Blocking: Blocking is a new skill that uses Strength or Dexterity, shield wielders choice, modified by the shields Blocking Modifier.

Your proficiency with shields applies to Blocking checks, and there is no way to become proficient in Blocking itself.

Additionally, it is now possible to apply expertise to shields, and when applied, this expertise also applies to Blocking checks.

Blocking Modifier: A usual shield has a Blocking Modifier of +5. To use a shields Blocking Modifier, you have to be proficient with shields.

Prerequisites: To use the features below, you need to wield a shield.

Block: You can use a Reaction to try to block an attack that you can see and that targets you.

Make a Blocking check. If the result is at least as high as the attack roll, you successfully block the attack. It deals no damage.

When trying to block a critical hit, you roll with disadvantage.

Defensive Stance: You can use your Action to focus on blocking attacks. You can use the Block Reaction (see above) a number of times equal to your Proficiency Bonus without using a Reaction until the start of your next turn.

9 Parrying

Parrying: Parrying is a new skill that uses the ability that you use your weapon with.

If you are proficient with the weapon you wield, you are automatically also proficient in Parrying with that weapon.

You can't be proficient in Parrying in the usual sense.

Expertise can be applied to Parrying regardless. Then, the Proficiency Bonus will be doubled for Parrying checks you make with weapons you are proficient with.

Prerequisites: To use the features below, you need to wield a melee weapon.

Parry: You can use your Reaction to parry a melee attack that you can see and that targets you. Make a Parrying check. If the result is at least as high as the attack roll, you successfully parry, reducing the attacks damage by the maximum damage of your parrying weapon.

If you are wielding more than one melee weapon, you can parry using multiple of those weapons at once. If the parry is successful, reduce the attacks damage by the sum of the maximum damage of each weapon instead.

If you reduce the attacks damage to 0, your weapons lock, giving the attacker disadvantage on their attack rolls until either of you make an attack with their locked weapon or either of you moves out of the others range.

When trying to parry a critical hit, you roll with disadvantage.

Parrying Stance: You can use your Action to focus on parrying attacks. You can use the Parry Reaction (see above) a number of times equal to your Proficiency Bonus without using a Reaction until the start of your next turn.

10 Spell Manipulation

Prerequisites: To use any manipulation reaction (see below), you need to have the Spellcasting or Pact Magic feature.

Using a manipulation reaction requires both somatic and verbal components.

You can only use a manipulation reaction when you can see the caster whose spell you manipulate.

Spell Manipulation: Spell Manipulation is a new skill that is rolled with your Spellcasting Ability. As a spellcaster, you are automatically proficient with Spell Manipulation.

Expertise can be applied to Spell Manipulation.

If you have access to multiple Spellcasting Abilities, you may roll Spell Manipulation with any of those abilities.

Spell Manipulation Bonus: Your Spell Manipulation Bonus is the number you add to the roll when making a Spell Manipulation check, depending on the Spell Manipulation skill as described above.

Thwart: You can use a Reaction to try to thwart a spell attack that targets you or a creature you can see. Make a Spell Manipulation check. If the result is at least as high as the attack roll, the spell attack misses its target.

You can spend one of your spell slots to improve your roll by three times the spell slots level.

When trying to thwart a critical hit, you roll with disadvantage.

Weaken: You can use a Reaction to try to weaken the effect of a spell that requires a saving throw. Choose one affected creature that is either you or that you can see. They add your Spell Manipulation Bonus to their saving throw.

You can spend one of your spell slots to turn the saving throw into a success.

Amplify: You can use a Reaction to amplify a spell that wasn't cast by you. Make a Spell Manipulation check against 10 + twice the spell level. On a success, the spell is cast as if it were one level higher.

You can spend one of your spell slots to automatically succeed.

Manipulative Stance: You can use your Action to focus on manipulating spells. You can use the Thwart Reaction (see above), Weaken Reaction (see above) and Amplify Reaction (see above) a number of times equal to your Proficiency Bonus without using a Reaction until the start of your next turn.

10.1 Rationale

It should be a fun option to play a caster.

To make a caster better suited for the new changes, new reactions should be added that fit the kit of any caster without making a caster too strong regarding the damage output. Therefore, we should focus on the identity of a caster: casting spells.

With this idea in mind, a caster can use their general understanding of magic in a way to alter the flow of magic around them. This can be used to enable a coven playstyle, which we rarely see, by buffing spells of each other. In addition, a caster gets new defensive tools, which are very situational, thereby leaving him in great danger of their martial enemies, looking at you, Rogue.

11 Surge Dice

A Surge Die is 1d6 that can be used for various effects that are described below. You can use one or more Surge Dice as part of an Action, Bonus Action, Free Action, Reaction, or Free Reaction. You can use more than

one surge die at once for the same effect. All unspent Surge Dice expire at the start of your next turn and at the end of combat.

When a Surge Die is used as a part of a contest, both parties may expend further Surge Dice at will to aid them in the contest after the other added one to their roll.

Power: Add the roll to an attack roll, ability check, or the damage you deal to one creature. If the Surge Die is added to the damage of a critical hit, it is not doubled.

Force: Subtract the roll from one saving throw you require one creature to make. This can be part of an effect that requires multiple creatures to roll a saving throw, but it only applies to one creature you choose.

Swiftness: You gain 10ft. of movement speed that you can immediately use.

Speed: Add the roll to your current Initiative. If you are first in the Initiative Order, subtract 20 from your Initiative beforehand. If you are doing this during your turn, this does not lend creatures that acted before you another turn after you in case you skip past them. If you are doing this outside of your turn and skip past the creature whose turn it currently is, you take your turn directly after them.

Tenacity: You gain temporary hit points equal to the roll until the start of your next turn.

II.1 Obtaining Surge Dice

Dying Struggle: When you drop below 25 of your maximum Hit Points, you gain an amount of Surge Dice equal to your proficiency bonus at the start of your next turn.

Kill Rush: If you kill an enemy, you gain an amount of Surge Dice equal to your proficiency bonus immediately.

Elation: If you land a critical hit, you gain an amount of Surge Dice equal to your proficiency bonus after applying the effects of that attack.

Part IV

Adjustments

In this chapter, several particular rules changes are described. In some cases, only parts of existing rules are changed, in others, entire features are replaced with other ones. The latter are then marked as replacement, signifying that the rules here fully describe the new feature. In some other cases, these rules offer an optional variant to an existing feature, which is then accordingly marked as a variant.

Deceptively, there are also some rare cases where new small features for some creatures are introduced here. These are accordingly marked as new.

12 Equipment

Shields: You benefit from half cover instead of gaining 2 AC. Remember that wearing a shield allows you to **block** attacks. Shields also have a Blocking Modifier of +5.

Armour: As explained in **AC-less defence**, the Armor Class of an armour will be converted to Damage Reduction. An armour that previously gave an Armor Class of 12, for example, will give +2 Damage Reduction instead of increasing the Armor Class of the wearer from the base Armor Class of 10 by +2.

Armours that allowed the wearer to add their whole or parts of their Dexterity modifier to their Armor Class do not give additional Damage Reduction based on that Dexterity modifier. Instead, **Dodging** is improved when wearing no Armour or Light Armour, and improved a bit when wearing Medium Armour.

13 Feats

These feat changes are based on the feat descriptions from the 2014 PHB.

Defensive Duelist (replacement): When you are using at least one finesse weapon with which you are proficient to parry, make the Parry Check with advantage. If you parry successfully, add your Proficiency Bonus to the reduced damage for every finesse weapon that you used to parry and with which you are proficient.

Dual Wielder: Instead of gaining a +1 bonus to Armor Class, you can utilize a parry better. Whenever you parry an attack and succeed, you can take a Free Reaction or Reaction to make an attack against the attacker with one weapon that was not part of your parry.

Medium Armour Master: Instead of increasing the Armor Class, the armour-based **Dodging** modifier increases from +2 to +3 when wearing Medium Armour.

Heavy Armour Master: Instead gives +3 Damage Reduction as described in these rules. The stat bonus remains.

Savage Attacker (replacement): When you roll damage for a melee weapon attack, add a d6 to the dice pool and ignore the lowest die result.

Shield Master: Instead of allowing you to add your AC to some Dexterity saving throws, you gain Shield expertise. This improves **Blocking**, as described there.

14 Spells

These spell changes are based on the spells from the 2024 PHB.

Shield: Instead only blocks the triggering attack or Magic Missile. However, the triggering attack will always be blocked.

Mage Armour: Instead gives +3 Damage Reduction.

Barkskin: Instead gives +5 Damage Reduction.

15 Fighting Styles

These fighting style changes are based on the fighting styles from the 2014 PHB.

Defence: As described in **AC-less defence**, this instead gives +1 Damage Reduction.

Protection (Variant): You can use your Reaction to protect a creature within 5 feet of you from an attack that you can see that targets that creature. The attack targets you instead. Make a Blocking check. If the result is at least as high as the attack's attack roll, you block the attack, taking no damage from it.

You can use your Action to enter a Protective Stance, focussing on protecting creatures close to you and yourself. You can use the Reaction described above and the **Block** Reaction a number of times equal to your Proficiency Bonus without using a Reaction until the start of your next turn.

16 Monk

Unarmoured Defence: Instead of being converted to **Damage Reduction**, your Wisdom modifier is added to your **Dodging** checks.

Patient Defence: May instead be used to enter the **Evasive Stance**.

Deflect Missiles: May be used without using a Reaction as one use of the **Evasive Stance**.

Serenity (new): When spending one or more Ki, you can instead spend the same amount of **Surge Dice**. You can also replace a part of the Ki cost with the same amount of **Surge Dice**.

For example, when spending 3 Ki, you may instead spend either 3 Surge Dice, 2 Surge Dice + 1 Ki, or 1 Surge Die + 2 Ki.

17 Fighter

Battle Master - Parry: When using the Parry Reaction, you can expend one superiority die. You add the superiority die to the parry check. If the parry succeeds, you increase the reduced damage by the maximum roll of your superiority die.

Battle Master - Evasive Footwork: When you move, you can expend one superiority die, rolling the die and adding the number rolled to your Missing Threshold until you stop moving.

Battle Master - Riposte: When you successfully block, dodge, or parry a melee attack, you can use a Free Reaction or Reaction and expend one superiority die to make a melee weapon against the attacking creature. If you hit, you add the superiority die to the attacks damage roll.

18 Rogue

Uncanny Dodge: You make Dodging Checks with advantage. If you fail to dodge, you take half damage instead of full damage. If you fail a Dodge & Roll or all spots within 10 feet of you are occupied when making a Dodge & Roll, you do not fall prone.

19 Ranger

Hunter - Uncanny Dodge: You make Dodging Checks with advantage. If you fail to dodge, you take half damage instead of full damage. If you fail a Dodge & Roll or all spots within 10 feet of you are occupied when making a Dodge & Roll, you do not fall prone.

Hunter - Multiattack Defence: When you use any Reaction to counter

a creature's attack, you may use a singular Free Reaction or a singular Reaction to counter all following attacks made by the same creature this turn. Eligible Reactions include blocking, dodging, and parrying.

20 Monsters

Reactions: Monsters have access to all of the new Reactions that they fulfil the prerequisites for.

Surge Dice: Monsters also get and can utilize Surge Dice.

Bonus Actions: Monsters that don't have any use for a Bonus Action will not convert it into an additional Reaction.

Parries: If a statblock of a creature features a parry reaction, it is replaced by the Parry Reaction above. Assume that the creature uses either its strongest wielded melee weapon or all its wielded melee weapons to parry, if possible.

Part V

Reflections

21 Balance

I don't know whether much of this is balanced. Nothing of this sticks out to me as broken or useless, do tell me where I'm wrong though.

22 Fun

We here at we-know-what's-best-for-you GmbH know what's best for you, and that is fun, and we firmly believe that fun can only be achieved in a game where all participating parties are involved in whatever is happening. These rules try to do this ambition justice by putting a focus on contested rolls, because two people in the same action are more than one. Additionally, there are more options to react to events in combat even when you are neither victim not perpetrator, leading to more participation and thus more room for fun.