

SEARCHERS OF THE UNKNOWN

D20 STYLE

A minimalist way to play 3E style D&D

Concept

In the original Searchers of the Unknown rules, the lower the die roll the better. These rule alterations change the mechanics slightly to reflect a general “higher is better” philosophy; which for some players may be more intuitive.

Build a PC

As a minimalist option, assume PC’s are dungeon crawlers, delvers and swordsmen. Clerics rule churches and wizards laboratories, or could be villains, but don’t venture into dungeons.

1° Choose an armor. This determines your PC’s armor class (AC) and movement rate (MV).

Armor	AC	MV
No armor	10	12
Leather armor	13	9
Chainmail	15	6
Plate mail	17	3
Shield	+1	-1

2° Roll for hit points, 1d8 per level (HD). So, roll 1d8 for a PC starting at level 1.

3° Choose three weapons, or two weapons and a shield

Weapon Description	D
Small weapons Easily concealable (dagger, sling, ...) 1d4	
Range weapon Bow, crossbow...	1d6
Melee weapon Mace, sword, hammer,...	1d8
2-handed weapon 2-Handed sword, polearm, ...	1d10

4° Number of attacks (AT) is 1 at start, then rises to 2 at level 5, 3 at level 9, and so on. When a PC kills a monster, he can make another attack at the end of the same round.

5° Choose a name and a description. Choose a race, like human, dwarf, hobbit or elf (it has no rules effect, but it adds fun in the game). Imagine what he was before becoming an adventurer. Your PC is ready.

Example of character sheet: Humphrey the bald (AC 15 MV 6 HD 3 hp 14 #AT 1 D 1d10 with a voulgüe).

Fighting

1° Initiative: Each combatant rolls 1d10+ AC. The **lowest** score has initiative, then each one attacks in ascending order. So a lighter armored fighter has a better chance to strike first. If one has several attacks (AT), he rolls initiative several times.

2° Attack: roll 1d20. If the score plus your level is **equal to or greater than** your opponents AC, you hit. Example: to hit an orc with AC 14, a 3rd level adventurer needs an 11 or greater.

3° Damage: When you hit an opponent, roll the damage (D) dice. Deduct the result from your opponents hit points (hp). At or below 0, monsters are dead, and PC’s are knocked out.

Monsters could kill them easily, but they won’t. Instead, they keep them as prisoners. This is just more pulp-like.

5° Morale: If outnumbered, after the first death, and when reduced to one-half or fewer hit points, monsters check for morale. The DM rolls 1d10. If the result is over the monster’s hit dice, he will withdraw or surrender to get a better position.

4° Rest and bandages: Afterwards, all hit points (hp) are restored back to their initial score. After all, hit points reflect the capacity to avoid or withstand hits. If a PC has been sent below 0hp, he may need a longer rest (or even healing magic - like a potion of healing), because he’s wounded.

Adventure

1° Stealth & stunts: sneaking up on a monster, hiding in shadows, moving silently, climbing or swimming are easier when wearing lighter armor. For each such action, roll 1d20 **equal to or over the character’s AC - level.** So a 4th level adventurer with leather armor and a shield must roll a 10 or over to climb a cliff. For very difficult actions, the DM may choose 1d10 rather than 1d20.

2° Saving throws: when such a roll is needed for any reason, **roll 1d20 and add the characters level; trying to obtain a total over 15.** So a 7th level adventurer must roll over 9 to escape a magical charm from a harpy. This “d20 plus level =15+” rule applies to every other action not covered by the “stealth & stunts” rule, and fits the common adventurer’s knowledge like searching for secrets doors or picking locks.

3° Dangers: If something could kill a man, like a fall, a fire, or a trap, it does 1d8 points of damage. If it could kill a horse, 2d8. If it’s could kill an ogre, 4d8. No more.

4° Magic: Most spells are self descriptive. As a rule, a spell will last for one fight, or one day for non-fighting spells; their range is one dungeon room, and their area of effect is also one room, or one target per spell level, whichever best applies. Damage is treated as in the “dangers” section. PC’s may use spells from scrolls, only once, if the spell level is below or equal their own level.

Experience

PC’s start at level 1 with 1 Hit Dice. Each time they defeat a monster, by killing it or another method, they gain 100 experience points per monsters hit dice, shared between the party. The number of experience points needed to level up is 2000 x the current level. There are no limits to levels. Gaining a new level means better rolls for fight, save and actions, and 1d8 more hit points. The player rerolls all hit points. If the new score is higher than the old one, he keeps the new total. If not, he keeps the old.

And now, for sure, fight on!

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