



# 21<sup>ST</sup> LEVEL HANDOUT

*An Epic-Level Handbook preview*

## UNOFFICIAL RULES FOR CHARACTERS BEYOND 20th LEVEL

Since we have not yet developed the rules for the proposed *High-Level Handbook*, we want to provide you with basic rules that you can use. These rules, while unofficial, are compatible with the rules we intend eventually to publish. Of course, you can run 21st-level play however you like. These rules represent our best guidelines.

### BASIC RULE CONCEPTS

1. Improvement per level slows down. If you don't decrease benefits per level, characters become hard to use. In 1973 D&D was designed to work up to about 10th-level. The new edition takes pains to make the game work more smoothly up to 20th level. Simply extrapolating the classes past 20th level however, can give you problems.

2. Levels past 20th scale infinitely. The 21+ rules don't have a natural cap the way the *Player's Handbook* rules do.

3. No level charts. Past 20th level, you don't look up your abilities based on your character or class level. If we charted features by level, we wouldn't be able to scale infinitely.

4. Scale XP normally. As with levels 1-20, the number of extra XP you need to go from one level to the next equals your current level times 1,000 XP. (We won't however, be printing an XP table for levels 21-10,000,000,000. Figure it out yourself.)

### LEVEL BENEFITS

At each level past 20th, you gain one benefit of your choice. The four basic benefits are:

- ♦ **Increased Ability Score:** Add +1 to any ability score. Since this benefit is available at every level, you no longer gain +1 to an ability score automatically every 4 character levels.
- ♦ **Increased Attacks:** Add +1 to all attacks. This increase does not give you additional iterative attacks (as increases to base attack bonus do).
- ♦ **Increased Spellcasting:** You gain the ability to cast a spell 1 level higher than your highest level spell (which might allow you a bonus spell of that level, as well). You have to already be casting spells that are the highest level for your class in order to take this benefit. You fill these higher-level spell slots either with metamagicked spells or simply with lower-level spells. Thus, a 21st-level wizard can have a 10th-

level spell slot. (If she has an Int of 30 or higher, she gains a bonus 10th-level spell, giving her 2 per day.) She can fill these slots with spells of any level or with (for example) an empowered (+2), maximized (+3), quickened (+4) *magic missile*. Such a spell deals about 33 damage as a free action.

- ♦ **Increased Class Features:** Gain the skill points and class features 1 level higher than your current effective class level. For example, when an 11th-level wizard/9th-level fighter achieves 21st-level, she can select "increased class features" as her benefit for that level. With that benefit, she could gain the skill points and improved spell progression of a 12-level wizard. The "increased class features" however, doesn't give you increased saves, increased attack bonus, ability increases, or feats. Classes, however, only go to 20th-level, so you can't use this benefit to increase your effective class level to 21 or higher. A single-classed character can't use this benefit. The "improved class features" benefit allows a multiclassed character to get class features all the way up to 20th level in each class.

### OTHER LEVEL BENEFITS

The design team isn't finalizing other benefits yet, but we intend that the *High-Level Handbook* will include lots of other benefits. Other benefits could include:

- ♦ +1 to all saves
- ♦ +20 hit points
- ♦ +10 skill points (spent as any class you have)
- ♦ Gain 2 feats (replacing the automatic 1 feat per 3 levels)
- ♦ 10 levels of new spells known (great for sorcerers)
- ♦ Create or enhance an artifact or signature magic item

The *High-Level Handbook* will also probably include powerful feats (including new metamagic feats) to give high-level characters more options.

## TREASURE

The DMG tells you the average value of an NPC's gear by level. This chart scales up with level the same way past 20th.

| Level | Gear GP Value |
|-------|---------------|
| 20    | 220,000       |
| 21    | 290,000       |
| 22    | 370,000       |
| 23    | 480,000       |
| 24    | 630,000       |
| 25    | 820,000       |
| 26    | 1,100,000     |
| 27    | 1,400,000     |
| 28    | 1,800,000     |
| 29    | 2,300,000     |
| 30    | 3,000,000     |
| 31    | 3,900,000     |
| 32    | 5,100,000     |
| 33    | 6,700,000     |
| 34    | 8,700,000     |
| 35    | 11,000,000    |

High-level characters tend to have fewer items, each of which is more powerful. For example, a *cloak of perfection* could have the following powers: +10 Armor (force); +5 resistance, deflection, and natural armor; +6 to each ability; SR 21; and damage reduction 5/+5. Its value would be a mere 1,114,000 gp, about a tenth of what a 35th-level NPC would have.

Very high level characters may also have resources other than gear. For example, in the *Forgotten Realms*, the Simbul rules a kingdom. These resources can have at least a nominal value to balance them against other resources.

## “AVERAGE” 35th-LEVEL HUMAN SORCERER

This is an unexceptional 35th-level human with 20 levels of sorcerer and 15 levels past 20th. She's based loosely on the “typical” sorcerer NPC written up in the DMG. She's gained 15 benefits, taking Increased Ability Score (Charisma) 9 times, and taking Increased Spellcasting 6 times.

| Abilities | Total | Breakdown*   |
|-----------|-------|--------------|
| Str       | 19    | (8+0+5+6+0)  |
| Dex       | 25    | (14+0+5+6+0) |
| Con       | 24    | (13+0+5+6+0) |
| Int       | 21    | (10+0+5+6+0) |
| Wis       | 23    | (12+0+5+6+0) |
| Cha       | 40    | (15+5+5+6+9) |

\* Roll + Raised + Inherent + Enhancement + Increased

**Hit Points:** 215 [6 + 19d6 + 140 + 3(toughness)]

**Armor Class:** 32 = 10 + 10 (bracers) + 7 (dex) + 5 (natural armor)

If armed with her +5 defending brilliant energy shortspear, she can add up to +5 to her AC (at the expense of her attack and damage bonuses); Dodge +1.

| Saving Throws | Total | Breakdown*          |
|---------------|-------|---------------------|
| Fortitude     | +20   | +6 + 7 + 5 + 1 + 1  |
| Reflex**      | +20   | +6 + 7 + 5 + 1 + 1  |
| Will          | +25   | +12 + 6 + 5 + 1 + 1 |

\* Base + Mod + Resistance + Competence (pale green ioun stone) + Luck

\*\* evasion

**Base Attack:** +10/+5

**Melee Attack:** +14/+9

**Ranged Attack:** +17/+12

## Melee Weapon

+5 defending brilliant energy shortspear

**Attack:** +20/+15\*; **Damage:** 1d8+11; **Crit:** 20/x3

\* ignore armor and enhancement bonuses to AC

**Intelligent:** Int 19, Cha 19, Wis 10; Speaks Common, Celestial, Draconic, Elven, and Infernal; Read all languages & *read magic*; Primary abilities: Sense Motive +10, grants wielder uncanny dodge (as 5th level barbarian), grants wielder evasion, can cast *cure light wounds* on wielder 1/day; Extraordinary Abilities: *shield* as the spell on wielder (3/day), *haste* (wielder only, 10 rounds, 1/day); Ego 24.

[Note that the sorcerer needs to make a DC24 Will save to dominate this egotistical spear. Luckily her bonus is +25, so she only misses on a 1.]

## Ranged Weapon

Two +5 returning brilliant energy javelins

**Attack:** +23/+18\*; **Damage:** 1d6+9; **Crit:** 20/x2; **Range Increment:** 30ft.

\* ignore armor and enhancement bonuses to AC

[Her attack bonus is low for a 35th level character, so she had brilliant energy weapons to compensate. Her shortspear defends, so she can apply some or all of its +5 bonus to AC instead of to attack and damage. If she's forced into combat, she's probably on the defensive.]

**Skills:** Concentration +31 (23+7+1), Knowledge (arcana) +16 (10+5+1), Scry +19 (13+5+1), Spellcraft +31 (23+5+2+1). [Bonuses include a +1 luck bonus on all skill checks.]

**Feats:** (in order acquired) Toughness, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Improved Initiative, Combat Casting, Dodge, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Empower Spell.

| Spell Level | Spells Known | Spells/Day (base+bonus) |
|-------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| 0           | 9            | 6                       |
| 1st         | 5            | 6+4                     |
| 2nd         | 5            | 6+4                     |
| 3rd         | 4            | 6+4                     |
| 4th         | 4            | 6+3                     |
| 5th         | 4            | 6+3                     |
| 6th         | 3            | 6+3                     |
| 7th         | 3            | 6+3                     |
| 8th         | 3            | 6+2                     |
| 9th         | 3            | 6+2                     |
| 10th        | 0            | 1+1                     |
| 11th        | 0            | 1+1                     |
| 12th        | 0            | 1+1                     |
| 13th        | 0            | 1+1                     |
| 14th        | 0            | 1+1                     |
| 15th        | 0            | 1+1                     |

**Example 15th level spell:** Empowered (+2), Maximized (+3), Heightened (+1) *meteor swarm*. If the meteors strike a single target, instead of 24d6 points of damage (average 84), they deal (24d6)/2+144 points of damage (average: 186), no saving throw. Four large meteors deal (6d6)/2+36 damage each, and eight small meteors deal (3d6)/2+18 damage each, Reflex save for half damage (DC35).

## Resources

The sorcerer's gear is mostly the basics, magic gear that affects her statistics. It doesn't include more unusual items, such as eyes of petrification, nor does it include intangible benefits (fiefdoms, strongholds, favors from gods, etc.). She should have about another 8,300,000 gp worth of resources.

| Resource                       | GP Value  |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Spear                          | 290,000   |
| Javelins                       | 400,000   |
| <i>cloak of perfection</i>     | 1,114,000 |
| tomes (+5 x6)                  | 825,000   |
| <i>ioun stone (pale green)</i> | 20,000    |
| <i>stone of good luck</i>      | 10,000    |

## DUNGEON MASTERING ADVICE

This advice works for campaigns of any level, but they're especially useful at higher levels.

1. Find ways to threaten the PCs without annihilating them. That way, the PCs can lose occasionally without being destroyed.
2. Develop villains that cannot be killed right off the bat, such as large organizations (think HYDRA from Marvel Comics, or demigods who manage to avoid being around). That way, the PCs can win battles without ending the war.
3. Develop long-playing epic campaigns, something that will last a loooooong time. Develop discrete episodes and adventures that, if solved, won't end the campaign right there, but will keep it going. Employ lots of mystery.