



## CHAPTER ONE: ABILITIES

Through the dark night, the hero trails the assassin to a final confrontation in a squalid poorhouse, only to later emerge bloody but victorious after a vicious struggle to the death. Though he clutches the long-sought clue to the miscreant's identity—a bloodstained dagger bearing a strange device on the pommel—the challenge has only begun.

Sometime this night, the assassin's shadowy superiors will hear of their minion's untimely demise, but how soon? And how much of

a head start will the hero gain in his race to elude them? The dark streets he slips through operate under their own laws, the corrupt city watch still makes its random patrols, and in every shadow lurks a potential witness to a presumed killer fleeing the scene.

A dire situation, to be sure. Trailed by assassins, desperate to avoid capture by the authorities, the hero's future is uncertain. With a little luck, the escape might be possible—but just how lucky is he? And how will that luck run in the end?

### - LUCK -

Luck measures just how kind fate is to your character, determining whether circumstances always seem to conspire to defeat him, or whether things more often than not happen to go his way. Luck also reflects a character's ability to choose a favorable alternative from among several apparently random choices, or can allow a character to accomplish difficult objectives or avoid deadly mishaps when his abilities or training might not be up to the task.

### How Lucky?

As an ability, Luck works just like any other ability score, and has a typical range of 3–18. As with any other ability, a character's Luck score gives him a Luck modifier as shown on **Table 1-1: Ability Modifiers and Bonus Spells** in the *PHB*.

### Using Luck

The Luck ability offers GMs a tool for objectively determining how fate affects a character's life, particularly when factors that the

GM can't control (or simply hasn't planned for) come into play. As well, Luck can provide an effective way for players to minimize some of the more destructive whims of fate (see the following section—**Luck Points**).

### Luck Checks

A Luck check determines how some coincidence or chance event works either for or against a character, and uses the character's Luck modifier added to the result of a d20 roll like any other ability check. Unlike a normal ability check, though, on a roll of 20, roll once more and add the second roll to the first—but don't roll again if the second roll is also a 20.

In many cases, the GM will make the check secretly so a player isn't automatically aware that fate is in play. Generally, only the GM can call for a Luck check, and though players can ask for a check if they feel circumstances warrant, the GM has final say.

The DC for a Luck check depends on how likely a favorable outcome would be for the given circumstances if simply left to fate.

TABLE 1-1: EXAMPLE LUCK SCORES

Luck Score	Luck Modifier	Example
1	-5	Everything that can go wrong for the character will go wrong
2-3	-4	Likely to be killed by a flash flood in the desert
4-5	-3	Has one bad day after another
6-7	-2	Usually loses at cards
8-9	-1	Fate provides the occasional annoyance
10-11	+0	Not noticeably lucky or unlucky
12-13	+1	Fate provides the occasional favorable break
14-15	+2	Wins at cards without knowing the rules
16-17	+3	Leads a charmed life
18-19	+4	If lost in the desert, will find the only oasis
20-21	+5	Can trust to luck and get away with it more often than not

- **DC -5:** Any outcome normally guaranteed to occur—getting wet in the rain, being burned by fire, suffocating after being buried.
- **DC 0:** Outcomes which are virtually guaranteed—being robbed after bragging about your wealth in a thieves guild, finding a forge in a blacksmith's shop, attracting the attention of the local constabulary by uttering threats in public.
- **DC 5:** Outcomes that are highly likely—finding a room at a local inn on a typical day, meeting a traveler on a busy road, exposure to parasites in a filthy sewer, finding a particular mundane item for sale in a small town, finding criminals in a seedy tavern. For DCs of 5 or below, making a Luck check usually isn't worth the effort unless you want to play a failure for laughs.
- **DC 10:** An outcome just as likely to occur as not—disparaging a local lord in a busy place and having word reach his ears, finding a particular masterwork item for sale in a small town, stumbling onto a crime in progress in a bad neighborhood.
- **DC 12:** A normally even outcome weighted slightly by circumstance—disparaging the same local lord as above but not knowing that a member of the lord's militia is listening, being able to commit a crime in a bad neighborhood without attracting attention.
- **DC 15:** An outcome roughly half as likely to occur as not—choosing the right path when confronted by three possible escape routes with no idea which two lead to danger, trying to find a particular NPC by hanging around her favorite haunts.
- **DC 18:** An outcome that's fairly improbable—a spell of rain in the desert, trying to find an NPC by hanging around places you only think she might frequent.
- **DC 20:** An outcome that's downright improbable—a snowstorm in the desert, checking into an inn and just happening to get the room next to the NPC you're seeking.
- **DC 22:** An outcome that defies prediction—a ship arriving by happenstance to rescue a character stranded on a desert island that's located off the main trade routes.
- **DC 25:** An outcome that might be unremarkable by itself but which occurs at exactly the right moment—a character

who leaps out a window and lands in the back of a passing hay wain.

- **DC 30:** An unlikely and completely fortuitous outcome—looking down to discover a pouch full of gold or secret documents in the street.
- **DC 35:** A fortuitous outcome that arises as the result of a whole chain of unlikely events—a character who discovers that some trinket he's always carried is actually the key to the door of a secret crypt at the climax of an adventure.
- **DC 40:** An outcome so improbable that it defies belief—a character with a fully laid-out lower-class history discovers that he's actually the last scion of a noble family.

## LUCK IN THE GAME

It's important to note that for many of the actions a character might take, the degree of luck involved in any possible outcome will always be affected by other factors. Take, for example, the character who looks down to find a bag of gold at his feet. It's clearly sheer luck that sees the bag dropped where he could find it, but the relative ease of his finding it might well change depending on his having some prior indication that a bag of gold had gone missing in the area, or if he was making a Search check for some other object at the time.

As well, over and above providing a formal mechanism for working random chance into your game, Luck checks can be used in some specific ways.

### PICKING AN UNLUCKY CHARACTER

When there's a more or less equal chance for any one member of a party to be affected by some action, circumstance, or twist of fate, rather than the GM simply rolling randomly, each character can make a Luck check to determine which one is affected. In this way, ranged weapons which go astray, nonintelligent monsters who need to pick a single target, or traps and effects which normally hit creatures at random will all target the unluckiest characters.

### RANDOM ANNOYANCES

Anyone can have a bad day now and then, and if an extra level of sometimes-humorous realism fits your game, the GM can use Luck checks to throw small mishaps at characters. For example, characters exploring a steamy tropical jungle might encounter the



occasional falling coconut (or other suitably large and potentially funny produce). Every hour or so, a DC 15 Luck check might be required to avoid getting hit, with a failed check dealing some small amount of nonlethal damage (or perhaps just injuring a character's pride). Likewise, Luck checks could be used to avoid slipping in mud puddles, tripping on stairs, and other minor mishaps (though for any actions with serious consequences, saving throws or skill checks are probably more appropriate).

## COLLATERAL EFFECTS

When a character suffers a major or dramatic mishap (falling into a pit, failing a Climb or Jump check by a wide margin, and so on), you can use a Luck check (DC 15 to 20, depending on the violence of the mishap) to determine if any items the character wears or carries become damaged or lost.

**Example:** *If a boat carrying a character capsizes, a DC 15 Luck check will determine if that character inadvertently drops any items into the water, loses her grip on a weapon or shield, or has some piece of clothing torn off in the current (1d4 items lost on a failed check, with small items carried in pouches or pockets most likely to be affected).*

Likewise, possessions could be broken or lost when a character is subjected to massive damage (see **Chapter Eight: Combat** of the PHB). For items dropped or lost, the GM can choose or consult **Table 1-2: Items Dropped or Lost** as appropriate.

## OPTION 1: LUCK AS A SUBSTITUTION

One great way to use Luck in your games is to allow players to substitute their Luck modifier for another ability score. In this option, you could substitute your Luck modifier for Dexterity when making a Balance check, or Luck for Wisdom when making a Will save. While any check, even attack rolls and initiative for that matter, can substitute your Luck modifier, you are limited to



TABLE 1-2: ITEMS DROPPED OR LOST

d% Roll	Lost Item
01–35	Stowed item
36–60	Sheathed item
61–77	Item in hand
78–87	Jewelry (except rings)
88–92	Shield
93–94	Ring
95–100	Clothing

the amount of times you can use your Luck score in this way. Each character may substitute his Luck score a number of times per day equal to one-quarter his character level (minimum of once per day), so an 8th-level character can substitute Luck for any other ability twice per day.

**Example:** *Rob has a 12 Dexterity and an 18 Luck. His party fights a band of orcs, being careful to conceal the sounds of battle behind a well-placed silence spell. However, one of the orcs makes a break for it to alert the rest of the tribe. Rob has one opportunity to drop the orc. He makes a ranged attack with his masterwork longbow, but, he's not a very good shot, so he substitutes his Luck modifier for his Dexterity modifier when making the attack, giving him a far better chance of dropping the orc than he ordinarily would.*

## OPTION 2: LUCK POINTS

Luck points make a character's Luck score a tool for players, granting them a bit of control over the fickleness of fate by modifying any die roll they make during play. This ability tends to make characters slightly more powerful than normal, so luck points are most suitable for low-magic campaigns or particularly challenging scenarios where characters need all the advantage they can get.

Each day, a character receives one luck point for each point of positive or negative Luck modifier she has (so that a character with a Luck score of 10 or 11 receives no luck points, a character with 8 or 9 Luck has –1 luck points), which can then be spent to reroll any attack, check, or saving throw the player makes. In the case of negative luck points, the GM can call for the character to reroll any one roll of a d20, taking the worse result of the two. The decision on whether to spend a luck point to reroll is made after the original d20 roll but before the roll's resolution by the GM, so the player may have to decide whether to reroll without knowing whether the roll is a success or failure. Once the character rerolls, she can use either the new roll or the original, or can spend another luck point to reroll again (up to as many times as she has luck points available).

Any unused luck points are lost at the end of each day, and characters cannot save unspent points for later use. As well, luck points can't be spent when taking 10 or taking 20 on a skill check, as either of these approaches implies an attempt to beat the odds by removing luck as a factor.

## OPTION 3: LUCK TOKENS

In this option, using luck depends entirely on how much or how little your dice like you. Every time you roll a natural 20, you get a lucky token. Thereafter, you can spend your token to substitute

## VARIANT: KEEPING LUCK SECRET

As one possible variant, the GM can keep a character's Luck score secret, thereby always keeping the players wondering just when, exactly their luck will run out, or whether they have good luck or bad luck on their side. To take things further, GMs can generate a new luck score for a character at regular intervals, monthly, at the beginning of a new adventure, maybe even daily, to show just how fickle fortune is.

your luck modifier for any other Ability Score, just as described in Option 1. If you have a negative luck modifier, or no modifier, you may spend your lucky token, but instead of substituting the result, you reroll the check, apply the Luck modifier in place of the normal ability modifier.

Every time you roll a natural 1, you gain an unlucky token. The GM can use unlucky modifiers to apply your luck bonus to an opponent's roll, or apply your luck penalty to any roll of a d20 you make.

If you have an unlucky token, and then roll a natural 20, instead of gaining a lucky token you cancel the unlucky token. Likewise, if you have a lucky token and roll a natural 1, it automatically cancels out your lucky token. Note, characters with a negative or no Luck modifier who roll a natural 1 cannot spend a lucky token to reroll this result.

Use pennies, extra dice, marbles, paper chits, or even glass beads to mark your lucky and unlucky tokens.

## GENERATING A LUCK SCORE

The easiest way to generate a character's Luck score is to treat Luck as any other ability, so when creating a new character, a player will roll seven ability scores using whatever method the GM approves. In a campaign that uses a point-buy system, it's usually best to increase the number of points by just enough to allow the purchase of one additional ability score of 10. A player will then need to decide whether to spend the extra points elsewhere and have an unlucky character, or to increase a character's luck at the expense of other abilities. Alternatively, if your game uses a default array of ability scores for characters, add an additional score of "10."

Alternatively, Luck can be treated not as an ability but as a characteristic derived from a character's Wisdom and Charisma (add together, divide by 2, and round down to the nearest whole number). Wisdom represents a character's willpower, common sense, perception, and intuition—all things that lucky people tend to have in abundance. Likewise, Charisma represents force of personality and self-confidence, both key components of fortune. Since Charisma tends to be a throwaway ability for many d20 character

## FINE-TUNING LUCK

Granting one luck point per point of Luck bonus each day gives characters a modest boost in power, but to make the most of their luck, players need to be fairly choosy about when to spend their points. To give a bigger power boost, consider granting luck points every hour or every encounter, making them plentiful enough that characters can push the envelope a little, increasing the excitement level of the game by taking risks they might otherwise not take.

Alternatively, luck points could be granted only every week, month, or character level, making them precious enough that most characters will reserve them only for life-or-death situations.

## LUCK POINTS AND THE LUCK DOMAIN

Clerics with the Luck domain gain a +2 bonus to their Luck score, granting them the additional reroll described in the Luck domain entry.

classes, this averaging method tends to either give most players average Luck scores while concentrating luck points in those classes and characters which rely on Charisma, or to give players a reason to think about keeping Charisma high at the expense of other abilities. For example, paladins and evangelists (see **Chapter 3**) tend to have better than normal Luck scores under this system because both classes place an emphasis on Wisdom and Charisma.

If you're using this method, changes to a character's Wisdom or Charisma score (temporary or permanent) also change the character's Luck score and their Luck point bonus.

## LUCK SCORES FOR MONSTERS AND NPCs

If you're treating Luck as a new ability generated separately from a creature's other six ability scores, it's easiest to simply assign Luck scores of 10 (granting no luck points if you use the luck points rules) to most monsters. If you customize a monster by assigning its ability scores, you can always assign it a higher Luck score and give it a few luck points, just as you should assign Luck scores to NPCs the same way you assign their other abilities.

If you're treating Luck as a characteristic derived from a creature's Wisdom and Charisma scores, calculate a creature's Luck score and bonuses accordingly. Note that under this method, dragons (particularly older ones), fey creatures, and many outsiders will prove very lucky.

## FORTUNE-BLESSED AND FORTUNE-SPURNED TEMPLATES FROM THE ADVANCED BESTIARY

Green Ronin's *Advanced Bestiary* presents two templates, one favored by luck, and the other spurned, fortune-blessed and fortune-spurned, respectively. If you use both this book and the *Advanced Bestiary*, characters or monsters with the fortune-blessed template gain a +4 bonus to their Luck scores, while those with the fortune-spurned template take a -4 penalty to their Luck scores.