3 Skills

Characters in **Tales of the Iron League** are distinguished from ordinary citizens by their expertise in the skills required to succeed as an adventurer. Peasants usually know a great deal about working the land, and a silk merchant doubtless has the experience to recognize the finer points of different fabrics, but these skills are unlikely to improve an Iron League member's chance of survival.

This chapter describes the skills available to characters and how they are used while adventuring. A future supplement will cover rules for skills that NPCs may be able to use; for instance, an adventurer may have a difficult time crafting a suit of armor, but for the right expert, such work would be routine.

Skill Checks

When a character attempts to perform a skillful task, the player rolls 1d20 and compares the result to the relevant ability score. Rolling lower is better; rolling higher is worse. To determine success, subtract the result of the die roll from the ability score; this number is called the **number of successes**. A negative number of successes means the attempt fails.

Positive numbers of successes fall into the following success categories:

# of Successes	Category	Description
0-1	Minimal	Can perform most basic tasks
2-4	Good	Succeeds for all but the most difficult tasks
5-9	Great	Performs complex tasks with high proficiency; excels at basic tasks
10+	Fantastic	Accomplishes the nigh-impossible; passes lesser tests with flying colors

IMPORTANT: Very basic, elementary tasks shouldn't require a skill check. The Game Moderator (GM) should ask for a check only if they think a competent person might fail and that there is a reasonable chance of this happening.

Having a good ability score is important, because the higher the score, the easier it is to roll below it. However, it's also important to have training, because a highly skilled character with an average ability score can succeed at tasks that an unskilled and novice adventurer cannot. You don't have to be proficient in a skill to attempt actions related to that skill, but it helps!

The skill checks described above apply when the character is unopposed by any other being; their success or failure depends only on how well they perform. Sometimes, however, success or failure will depend on another creature, where the character's efforts are countered by an opponent. This is called an **opposed skill check,** and it works a little differently.

Both the character and the opposing creature make skill checks and count successes. The one with the greater number of successes prevails. Degrees of success are dictated by how many more successes the character achieves than their opponent; degrees of failure are determined by how many fewer.

Some opposed skill checks use the same skill (e.g., a muscular Fighter struggles to free themself from the coils of a *giant constrictor snake*, so character and monster each makes a **Feats of Might** check). Other times they may use different skills (e.g., a slippery Halfling tries to squeeze out of the same monster's embrace, but they use **Feats of Agility** while the snake still uses Feats of Might). If neither individual achieves any successes, the status quo persists.

Each character class begins the game with proficiency in certain skills. Players can also customize their characters, both during character creation and during advancement at higher levels, to gain additional skill proficiencies.

There are four levels of skill proficiency. Having a skill at proficiency level 1 grants a +4 bonus to any ability score for the purpose of making skill checks. As a character's proficiency increases, so does their skill bonus, according to the following table:

Skill Level	Skill Bonus	Minimum Character Level
1	+4	1st
2	+7	4th
3	+9	7th
4	+10	10th

Normally when a character learns a new skill, they begin at proficiency level 1; however, if they are advancing to the necessary level and have enough custom points available, they may buy multiple skill levels at a cost of 2 custom points per level.

Helping

Some tasks can be performed by more than one person. If two characters work together to attempt to disable a trap, they may pool their expertise to try for a better chance of success. The GM determines how many people can assist with a task. Some jobs are so small and focused that they can only be done by a single person, while large projects could potentially involve the entire party of adventurers.

For group efforts, the players designate one of their number as the primary; anybody else who wants to pitch in is a helper. The helpers each roll the skill check. For each helper who achieves a minimal or better success, the primary adds +1 to their ability score for the skill check. For each helper who achieves a fantastic success, the primary adds +2 to their ability score. But if a helper fails by five or more, the efforts to help get in the way, and the primary subtracts -1 from their ability score for the purpose of the skill check.

All helpers roll their checks at the same time; other characters cannot join in if the results of the helpers are poor. Once the final adjustments to the primary's ability score are determined, the primary makes the final skill check roll.

One exception to group efforts may be using Feats of Might. If two or more can effectively work on a task that requires brute force, the GM may decide that nobody is a helper or a primary; everybody pitches in equally. Each participating character makes the skill check, and the GM adds up their successes to determine if the task was a success. The GM may rule that up to two characters may attempt to add their successes to get the five needed to force open a reinforced door. However, shifting a huge stone sarcophagus lid may require twenty successes or more, demanding a true team effort and possibly the use of tools!

Skills and Ability Scores

The skills commonly used in this game are detailed in the next section. Each skill has a default ability score; most checks will use that score when a character attempts a skill check. However, in some cases a different ability score is more appropriate for the roll.

For instance, Stealth skill checks are typically made using Dexterity, because being agile and body-aware is an essential part of hiding and being quiet. However, suppose an adventurer is fleeing through a dinner party and attempts to avoid pursuing constables, not by ducking down behind furniture, but by blending in with the other guests and attempting to insinuate themself into a conversation. This arguably should be a Charisma check, even though it is still a Stealth skill check.

The GM and players should discuss this as situations come up. In general, the GM should allow the player wide latitude when they argue that a particular ability score is most appropriate for any given skill check. If a player thinks their character's Strength ability score is the most appropriate for attempting to Intimidate a goblin, and

they argue that dramatically bending an iron bar into a pretzel is about as intimidating as it gets, let them roll the dice! The player needs to make a convincing case, however, and the GM is the final arbiter.

In many cases, more than one skill could apply to a task. The act of climbing up a rope, for instance, is commonly defined as a Feat of Agility, but a character with a **Profession** of sailor could argue that they had to climb the rigging every day at sea, and that skill should apply to this particular task.

Just as with which ability score to use, the GM should also offer leeway for players to define what their skills allow them to do. The players should make a reasonable argument for which skill they think should apply, and if that argument passes the smell test, the GM should allow it.

> ***Example:*** *Dondra the Dwarf and Theezil the Thief are crouching in a horizontal ventilation shaft, looking down on an evil temple through an iron grating high in the wall. They have hatched a plan to rescue Prince Purefoy, who is strapped to the altar and nervously awaiting his ritual slaughter by wicked chanting priests.*
>
> *First, Theezil will quietly creep up to the grating and use their skill with tools to quietly unlock it. Then both Theezil and Dondra will sling their belts around a nearby cable and zipline down, dropping among the evil cultists and taking them by surprise! They put this plan into action.*
>
> *Theezil worms their way right up to the edge of the grating. The GM decides this requires a Stealth check. Theezil's Dexterity is 14, but Thieves are proficient in Stealth 1. For this skill check, Theezil's effective Dexterity is 14 + 4 = 18. Theezil rolls an 18 – not a great roll, but it equals the target ability score for 0 successes. This is a minimal success.*
>
> *Under other circumstances, the GM might decide that a watchful enemy in the temple might see Theezil and sound the alarm. However, the cultists are distracted by their chanting and the ongoing ritual, so Theezil reaches the grating undetected and starts to work. They pull out their thieves' tools and start to work on picking the lock that secures the grating. They roll a 12 this time.*
>
> *Fortunately, this is another skill in which Theezil is proficient – Mechanisms 1 – but it's based on Intelligence instead of Dexterity. Theezil's Intelligence is 11, to which they add the +4 bonus for skill proficiency level 1. They only needed to roll under a 15, so they have beaten the check by 3 – a good success. Theezil manages to unlock the grating and quietly swings it out of the way.*
>
> *Next, the ziplining. Theezil loops their belt around the cable and leaps out into space, letting their body weight slide them down the line towards the terrible ritual going on down below. The GM decides this is a Feat of Agility, another Dexterity-based skill, so Theezil's target number is again 18. This time they roll a 5, succeeding by 13!*
>
> *This is a fantastic success. The GM rules that Theezil has nimbly zipped down the line and let go at the perfect moment, landing with catlike grace atop the altar itself, carefully not stepping on the bewildered prince, with dagger drawn and at the ready!*
>
> *Now it's Dondra's turn. They also loop their belt around the cable and swing down the line. The player argues to the GM that as Dondra is so muscularly built and their weight is a strain on their arms and shoulders, this check should really be a Feat of Might – a skill in which Dondra is proficient.*
>
> *The GM allows this. Dondra has a Strength of 13 and has the skill at level 1, so their target number is 13 + 4 = 17. Dondra rolls the check, and… oh no, a 20! Dondra fails to zipline down the cable, and the GM must quickly decide what the consequence of failure will be.*
>
> *The GM rules that rather than causing Dondra to lose their grip and fall, their belt snags on the cable midway down, and poor Dondra is left dangling twenty feet above a mob of furious cultists. Just as bad,*

> *Theezil is on the altar, all by themself, surrounded by evil priests whose surprise will not last for long! What to do?*

The available skills are summarized in the table below:

Table 3-1: TOTIL Skill Summary

Skill	Default Primary Attribute	Secondary Attributes
Build	Intelligence	Strength, Dexterity
Convince	Charisma	Intelligence
Deceive	Charisma	Wisdom
Feats of Agility	Dexterity	
Feats of Might	Strength	
Healing	Wisdom	Intelligence
Hearing	Wisdom	
Intimidate	Charisma	Strength
Intuition	Wisdom	
Knowledge	Intelligence	
Mechanisms	Intelligence	Dexterity
Perform	Charisma	Dexterity
Profession	varies	
Seacraft	Intelligence	Wisdom, Strength, Dexterity
Seeing	Wisdom	
Shenanigans	Dexterity	
Stealth	Dexterity	Charisma
Stonecraft	Intelligence	Wisdom, Strength
Streetcraft	Intelligence	Dexterity, Charisma, Wisdom
Turn Undead	Charisma	Wisdom
Woodcraft	Intelligence	Wisdom

Skill Descriptions

This section provides a description of each skill and examples of how to apply levels of success.

Build

Default Attribute: Intelligence – for planning and designing.

Alternative Attributes: Strength – for forging, hauling, and working with tools. Dexterity – for intricate work that requires a steady hand.

Description: The Build skill is used to create and repair objects worked from stone, brick, wood, metal, leather, cloth, or other building materials. It applies to creating or repairing large structures, weapons and armor, simple machines, garments, and any object with few moving parts. It generally does not involve small and intricate moving parts; these are covered by the **Mechanisms** skill.

The GM determines the tools and materials needed to do the job as well as the time required. Exceeding the necessary success level reduces the time taken to complete the task and may also increase the quality of the product.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Building a fence; mending a brick wall; sharpening a dagger; cutting and piecing together a simple robe; throwing a functional pot
- Good Success: Building a simple bridge; crafting a shield; making simple shoes; repairing a windmill shaft; blowing a glass bottle
- Great Success: Making a new mace; creating a new gown; building a sturdy cottage; forging a working plow blade; carving a dugout canoe
- Fantastic Success: Making a new suit of chainmail; creating a new tiara; building an ornate chapel; carving a marble bust; building a rowboat

Convince

Default Attribute: Charisma – for using charm and personality to win people over.

Alternative Attributes: Intelligence – for laying out well-reasoned arguments.

Description: A character uses the Convince skill when they try to sway the actions or opinions of others by using their likeability to appeal to reason. This skill applies to diplomatic negotiations, earnest bartering, or just making a good first impression.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Making a successful diplomatic introduction to those already positively inclined; negotiating a good deal with plenty of evidence to support your side; swaying an ally to support your cause when mutual interests are served
- Good Success: Making a successful diplomatic introduction to those neutrally inclined; negotiating a good deal with some evidence to support your side; swaying a neutral party to support your cause when mutual interests are served
- Great Success: Making a successful diplomatic introduction to those negatively inclined; negotiating a good deal with minimal evidence to support your side, or some evidence supporting both sides; swaying a rival to support your cause when mutual interests are served
- Fantastic Success: Making a successful diplomatic introduction when hostilities have already begun; negotiating a good deal with plenty of evidence to support the other side; swaying an enemy to support your cause when it is not clear how they would benefit

Deceive

Default Attribute: Charisma – for lying with aplomb.

Alternative Attributes: Wisdom – for intuiting a strategy of deception that takes advantage of the victim's weaknesses.

Description: A character uses the Convince skill when they attempt to influence another by telling the truth; the Deceive skill employs deception instead. When using this skill, instead of merely rolling to attempt to achieve a particular target number of successes, the subject of the deception rolls an **Intuition** check as well. Subtract the number of successes for the Intuition skill from the number of successes for the Deceive skill and use the adjusted result to determine success.

> **Example:** Scheming Sal is a flim-flam artist who is trying to con a wandering group of pilgrims into donating to a fake charity. Sal is pretty good at this; they have a Charisma of 14 and are proficient in Deceive 1. Their effective Deceive score is 14 + 4 = 18. They roll an 11, for a result of 7 under their attribute.
>
> Unfortunately, the pilgrims are led by Westrella the Wise, whose Intuition ability score is 15. Westrella rolls a 9 for their Intuition check – 6 under their attribute. For the Deceive check, Sal has achieved 7 – 6 = 1

> *under their attribute, for a minimal success. The GM might rule that Westrella is somewhat convinced but is guarded and needs to see some proof of good faith before they donate.*

Thieves can also use the Deceive skill to try to employ magic items that they could not normally use. In this case, the Thief rolls a Deceive check, and if their number of successes is equal to the **magic tier** of the item (see Chapter 9), they can activate one of the item's functions. For this to succeed, the Thief must have explored and understood the item's properties. If the item is a scroll, the Thief must be fluent with the language in which the scroll is written.

This process is not without risk. If this check fails by 3 or more, a charge or use of the item is wasted without any effect. If the check fails by 6 or more, some random, backwards, otherwise unfortunate effect occurs. This effect may be harmful to the Thief and their associates, as determined by the GM.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: The target believes a simple lie with circumstantial support; a more complex deception is received positively, but multiple results at this level are needed to achieve success
- Good Success: The target believes a relatively complex lie, particularly if circumstances make it believable; the target believes a simple lie without any supporting evidence
- Great Success: The target believes a simple lie even in the face of contravening evidence; more complicated deceptions are believed at face value
- Fantastic Success: Even the most elaborate tales become plausible, despite evidence and testimonials to the contrary

Feats of Agility

Default Attribute: Dexterity – for nimble movements of the body and limbs.

Description: This skill governs the use of gross body coordination, including nimbleness and speed. In general, if a character attempts to do something with their entire body, and the precision of their actions is more important than their manual strength, the Feats of Agility skill applies.

Climbing, jumping, swimming, diving, balancing, and bodily contortions are often activities for which this skill is applicable. This skill is also appropriate when attempting to wriggle free from bonds. When two individuals engage in a contest of agility, such as log rolling, each one makes a Feats of Agility check; the one who succeeds by more wins.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Scrambling up a steep slope; hurriedly climbing up a knotted rope; jumping a 10' gap; climbing a cargo net
- Good Success: Scaling a wall with plenty of handholds; hurriedly climbing up a smooth rope; jumping a 15' gap; walking across a narrow balance beam
- Great Success: Scaling a relatively smooth vertical surface; hurriedly climbing up a greased pole; jumping a 20' gap; walking across a tightrope
- Fantastic Success: Climbing while hanging below a horizontal surface; hurriedly climbing up a greased pole while in manacles; jumping a 20' gap blindfolded; crossing a river by leaping from rolling log to rolling log

Feats of Might

Default Attribute: Strength – for bursts of explosive power or steady forceful action.

Description: Just as the Feats of Agility skill governs the fine control of a body, Feats of Might comprises the body's gross muscular power. Slow, steady exertion of force is part of this skill, but so is the ability to explosively generate short impulses of muscular performance.

This skill commonly applies to activities like lifting heavy weights, bending iron bars, forcing doors open, ripping books in half, throwing massive objects, and toppling bookcases. When two characters have a contest of strength, such as a tug-of-war or an arm-wrestling match, each character makes a Feats of Might check, and the winner is the one who succeeds by the greatest amount.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Battering down a flimsy door; throwing a grappling hook up to 50' away; upending a human-sized stone statue; crushing a clay or wooden object with bare hands
- Good Success: Battering down a sturdy door; throwing a barrel of oil through an open doorway; lifting a closed portcullis; bending an iron bar
- Great Success: Battering down a reinforced door; throwing a strong opponent through a closed flimsy door; ripping the lid off a sea-chest; tearing a thick spellbook in half
- Fantastic Success: Battering down a sealed tomb door; toppling the pillars supporting the temple roof; dragging a large boat by its anchor chain; keeping a beam supporting a mineshaft's ceiling from collapsing in an earthquake

Healing

Default Attribute: Wisdom – for intuitively understanding where a patient hurts and how to ease pain.

Alternative Attributes: Intelligence – for identifying curative herbs.

Description: There are many magical means for healing wounds and curing various maladies, but the mundane arts of first aid and applying herbal remedies are still important. Having one or more party members who are skilled in the Healing arts can spell the difference between success and failure for an adventuring expedition.

Healing is usually not practiced quickly; the checks for this skill are generally made after a full night's rest. One person may treat up to six other characters plus themself using this skill. The healer need not be awake for the entire Full Rest but must spend at least 4 hours actively treating their companions.

The following effects can be produced using the Healing skill:

- With a minimal success, the healer can restore an additional 1 hit point (hp) to those treated after a Full Rest. This stacks with all normal resting healing effects; refer to Chapter 6. However, if they fail their check by 5 or more, 1 fewer hp is recovered.
- A healer can help treat the effects of diseases and poisons. When a healer makes a Healing check with minimal success at the end of a Full Rest, the patient receives an additional **recovery** roll. Additionally, when the diseased or poisoned character makes a recovery roll, the healer can help as if that roll were a skill check, applying their bonuses to the patient's recovery bonus. See the *diseased* and *poisoned* conditions in Chapter 7 for more information.
- By achieving a great success with a Healing check, at the end of a Full Rest a healer restores one lost ability score point in addition to any ability score damage healed naturally by resting.

A healer can produce only one healing result per patient per Full Rest. This means that a patient can receive additional hit points **or** treatment of a disease **or** a poison **or** restoration of an ability score – but if the patient needs several forms of care, the healer must choose which service to provide. The service is chosen before the skill check is made.

Hearing

Default Attribute: Wisdom – for sensitive acquisition and interpretation of auditory input.

Description: In **Tales of the Iron League**, all characters are assumed to have normal hearing for their species unless otherwise specified. However, some characters have trained themselves to efficiently use their auditory sense, picking out faint or subtle sounds and making sense of what they are hearing. Dwarves, who originated deep

below ground, have a well-developed sense of hearing born of the need to gather information about passageways outside their visual range, and all Thieves receive training in how to use their sense of hearing to warn them of dangers.

There are two kinds of Hearing skill checks: active and passive.

- An *active* check is when a player declares that their character is taking an action to intentionally listen. The player describes what the character is listening for (e.g., sounds in the distance or behind a door), and makes a normal skill check.
- A *passive* check is when the GM determines that a character might be able to hear something even if they're not actively trying – perhaps an invisible elf is trying to sneak past them, or maybe faint conversation is audible down the tunnel ahead.

The GM should write down each character's Hearing skill score, as well as whether they have proficiency, and keep that information handy during play. For passive checks, the GM secretly makes a Hearing roll on the character's behalf. Since the character isn't concentrating on listening, they suffer a -4 penalty to their Wisdom score. If the Hearing check succeeds, the GM tells the player what they heard; otherwise, the GM says nothing, and never lets on that there was anything to be learned.

When a character makes a Hearing check to detect somebody who is being stealthy, the sneaky person makes a **Stealth** roll. They are detected only if the Hearing check succeeds by more than the Stealth check.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Hearing sounds of conversation down the hall; perceiving footsteps on the floor above in a wooden building; making out normal conversation on the other side of a closed door; knocking on a wall and detecting a hollow space on the other side
- Good Success: Hearing sounds of conversation across the street; understanding words spoken down the hall; hearing whispered conversation on the other side of a closed door; identifying the sound of a gurgling stream across several fields
- Great Success: Hearing sounds of conversation a block away; understanding words across the street; identifying the breathing of a living creature on the other side of a closed door; perceiving the ticking of a clockwork trap inside a closed box
- Fantastic Success: Hearing sounds of conversation across a working sawmill; understanding words spoken a block away; hearing tumblers fall when the dial turns on a combination lock; recognizing the sound of *undead* creatures on the other side of a closed door

Intimidate

Default Attribute: Charisma – for using a forceful personality to disconcert enemies.

Alternative Attributes: Strength – for threatening displays of physical might.

Description: The Deceive and Convince skills appeal to the brain's higher functions, but Intimidation is much more primal. A character who uses the Intimidate skill harnesses the power of fear to motivate others to do what they want.

Intimidate is always an opposed skill check. Both the skill's user and their target roll Intimidate checks. The target's number of successes is subtracted from the intimidator's number of successes to determine the effect.

When an Intimidate check is made against a group, it affects all who can potentially see or hear the attempt. Only one roll is made for the group, using the score of the target with the best Intimidate score, which increases by one point for every member of the group above one.

> *Example: Devilish Darien, a Thief, has decided to Intimidate a group of five kobolds who are rummaging through their tent. They are assisted in this endeavor by Formidable Farlah, a Fighter. Darien will be the primary, and Farlah will be the helper.*
>
> *The two decide that Darien will shout threats at the kobolds, warning of them of the doom that will befall them if they do not confess who sent them and what they're after. Meanwhile, Farlah will punctuate this sermon by crushing a clay statuette with their bare hands and growling.*
>
> *As the helper, Farlah rolls first. The player chooses to use their Strength attribute when rolling their Intimidate check. Farlah isn't proficient in this skill, so they're just rolling using their Strength of 16. They roll a 1 – a fantastic success! This amazing show of raw strength allows Darien to add two to their number of successes.*
>
> *Next, Darien makes an Intimidate check, using their Charisma of 14 as the base attribute. Devilish Darien is proficient in Intimidate 1, so they must roll under 14 + 4 = 18. They roll an 11, for 7 successes of their own, plus 2 more from Farlah, for a total of 9 successes – not bad.*
>
> *However, Intimidate is an opposed check. Darien is counting on kobolds being basically cowardly creatures, but they don't know that one of the kobolds is Grommorq, a sub-chieftain. Grommorq is an exceptional kobold, used to bossing their underlings around; they have a Charisma score of 14 and are proficient in Intimidate 1.*
>
> *To resist Darien and Farlah's frightening display, Grommorq makes their own Intimidate check, aiming for under 14 + 4 = 18, and they roll a 12. That's 6 successes, but since there are four other kobolds in the group, the success total rises to 10. That exceeds the number of successes Darien achieved, so although most of the kobolds are individually timid, their backbones firm up behind Grommorq's example. The kobolds growl and attack!*

Intimidate can be used against animals or monsters that are incapable of communication. In this instance it is an opposed roll, and success triggers a morale check (see Chapter 7). The GM should take the degree of success into account when determining the outcome of any morale failures; a minimal success might result in hesitation, which a fantastic success could lead to the creature fleeing, never to return.

When the Intimidate skill is used against monsters or characters capable of reasoning and communication, the results are more flexible. If the intent was only to generate a morale check, the results are the same as those for unintelligent creatures. However, if the intimidation is coupled with an attempt to extract information or compel action or inaction, the GM must make a judgment call.

In general, extracting simple information that is basically harmless to the target and its associates requires minimal success. More complicated information, or information that the target knows would be bad to reveal, requires a good or great success. Compelling a guard to stand by and do nothing while a vault's contents are stolen requires a great success; intimidating a Goblin into going into its lair and luring its fellows out into an ambush would need a fantastic success.

Intuition
Default Attribute: Wisdom – for sensing things difficult to detect by tangible means.

Description: The two most important senses of perception, Hearing and **Seeing**, have their own skills. All other senses, including an elusive sixth sense that defies scientific explanation, and the brain's ability to pull the input of all these senses together, fall under the umbrella of Intuition. An intuitive character can draw conclusions about the world that others cannot, often without being able to put into words exactly how they arrived at their findings.

Intuition is the skill used to sense the presence of magic in a physical item and perhaps understand some of its properties. This requires close and prolonged contact with the item. The character must physically touch the item to feel its vibrations, sense its warmth, and note its effect on their nervous system.

After ten minutes of contact, a minimal success on an Intuition check reveals whether the item has magic properties. If the character fails this check, they can try again (taking another 10 minutes), but if they fail the second Intuition check by five or more, they will never succeed at discerning that item's magical properties until they gain another level of proficiency.

Even longer contact is required to intuit a magic item's specific properties. After four hours of contact, if a character makes an Intuition check by successes equal to the item's **magic tier** (see Chapter 9), they can learn one property of that item. A failed check can be retried after another four hours, but again, if the check fails by five or more, the character will never succeed until they gain another level of proficiency. Spells exist that can achieve the same result in a much shorter time; see Chapter 4.

Intuition can also be used to attempt to penetrate illusions. Illusion spells perfectly mimic sights and sounds; Seeing and Hearing skills cannot pierce them. It is context and intangibles that foil illusions. If a character suspects that what they are seeing or hearing is not real, they can make an Intuition check to disbelieve their senses. If they succeed by an amount equal to or greater than the caster's level, they can perceive the illusion for what it is.

Many illusion spells are automatically disrupted if a character physically touches an apparent visual manifestation, but for spells that state otherwise, touching the illusion grants a +4 bonus to the Intuition check to disbelieve. Characters can make multiple attempts to disbelieve, but each attempt is a **standard action**.

Intuition can be used to piece together multiple clues into a coherent picture, but the GM should not allow characters to overuse this. If the GM presents a puzzle or riddle encounter that they expect the players to use their own brains to solve, they should communicate that expectation clearly and not allow the players to defeat it by making an Intuition roll.

Intuition is a sense that works very well in the background. It can operate passively at no penalty for purposes such as seeing through lies. A character rolls under the full value of their Intuition score to counter a use of the Deceive skill; but disbelieving illusions is never a passive roll. Only an active attempt to pierce the magical veil can succeed.

Knowledge
Default Attribute: Intelligence – for book learning or accumulated lore in a specific area of knowledge.

Description: Knowledge is not a single skill, but a set of skills – knowing all things that can be learned and recorded by scholars. It is assumed that those proficient in this skill are generally knowledgeable on a wide variety of topics, possibly because they have read many books, or because they have received a formal education at the feet of sage teachers.

Practice of the Knowledge skill does not guarantee omniscience. A character can only use the Knowledge skill to recall a fact if somebody has already gathered that information and written it down. Some information may not be available to a character no matter how well they roll.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Knowledge that can be established through a minimum of research or asking experts. (What is the name of a particular nation's greatest queen? What is the longest river on the continent? What kind of animals do Orcs use as mounts? What is the name of the brightest star in the southern sky?)
- Good Success: Knowledge that would normally require substantial research in an extensive private library, or the help of a specialized sage. (What were the names of the generals on both sides of a battle from hundreds of years ago? What are the names of the closest forests to the headwaters of a particular river?

What monsters are known to haunt the slopes of a particular mountain? What deities are the kobolds known to worship?)

- Great Success: Knowledge that would normally require substantial research at the best libraries of the land, or the assistance of the people that the experts commonly ask for help. (Which plants are favored by highland gorillas for making their nests? What is the shape of the egg casings laid by giant water beetles? At what coordinates did an ancient treasure ship sink in shallow waters? What is the exact name of a powerful angel who is said to have saved a remote village from a century-old famine?)
- Fantastic Success: Knowledge that perhaps no other individual in the world knows. (Was Ardemore, the legendary archer of a millennium ago, left- or right-handed? When the Tower of the Ebony Archmage burned, which books survived the fire? What does a demon lord smell like? Are there planets around any of the stars in the sky, and if so which ones?)

Mechanisms

Default Attribute: Intelligence – for understanding complex moving parts.

Alternative Attributes: Dexterity – for work requiring steady hands.

Description: This skill governs the manufacture, service, analysis, manipulation, and breaking of mechanical constructions with small working parts. It is distinct from the Build skill, which relates more to static and simple objects; however, crossover applications may exist subject to the GM's judgment.

Some magical spells effectively create magical devices, using conduits of magical energy instead of physical wires and pulleys and gears. While these can only be created using spells, the Mechanism skill is also used to manipulate, analyze, and disable them. This is a difficult use of the skill – magical runes are hard to manipulate with physical tools, although it can certainly be done.

As with the Build skill, the GM determines the tools and materials required to do the job, as well as the time required. Exceeding the required success level reduces the time needed to complete the task, and may also increase the quality of the product.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Pick a simple lock; create a deadfall trap; jam a portcullis mechanism; build a block and tackle
- Good Success: Pick a complicated lock; disarm a trap triggered by a floor pressure plate; build a music box; create a pitfall trap with a locking lid
- Great Success: Solve a combination lock; disarm a magical alarm; build a poison needle trap; repair the rusting crank mechanism on an ancient weapon of siege warfare
- Fantastic Success: Pick a legendary lock; disarm a magical exploding trap; reset a gas trap to go off when a different combination is used on a lock; build a clockwork escapement

Perform

Default Attribute: Charisma – for the expressive and emotive practice of an art form.

Alternative Attributes: Dexterity – for graceful dancing or nimble playing of an instrument.

Description: The Perform skill is a set of skills, encompassing art forms in which the practice of the skill is the art itself. This skill covers disciplines such as dramatic acting, oratory, singing, the playing of a musical instrument, dancing, tumbling, painting, drawing, mimicry, or comedy.

Adventurers can use the Perform skill in several ways.

Firstly, a performance can be used as a distraction. A minimal success with Perform will draw the attention of a non-hostile crowd. To regain their ordinary level of alertness, an onlooker must make a successful Intuition check by at least the same number of successes achieved by the Perform check.

Secondly, performing in public in a city or town can provide a modest income. If a character uses the Perform skill in well-traveled public streets and squares of an urban area (see Chapter 10 for how these areas are defined), they can earn the following revenue for a full day's activity:

- Minimal Success: 1 silver piece (sp) in a small town; 2 sp in a large town; 3 sp in a city
- Good Success: 2 sp in a small town; 3 sp in a large town; 5 sp in a city
- Great Success: 3 sp in a small town; 5 sp in a large town; 8 sp in a city
- Fantastic Success: 5 sp in a small town; 1 gold piece (gp) in a large town; 2 gp in a city, as well as possible discovery by a performance company or wealthy patron

Profession
Default Attribute: varies

Description: This skill is different from others; it can only be chosen at the beginning of an adventurer's career, and each character can have only one Profession. A Profession is a skilled trade that the character had before they became an adventurer. This means that the Profession skill cannot be advanced beyond skill level 1; the character's level of accomplishment will never improve, because the character is no longer actively practicing that Profession.

Most skills focus on a related set of abilities and task types across a broad range of applications. A Profession gives the character experience with a broad set of abilities and task types, but only as applied within the narrow scope of their work. Accordingly, the character must choose a career specialty when they select the Profession skill.

The GM should allow a character a Profession skill bonus for a skill check roll provided the player can make a reasonable argument that the task their character is performing is similar to something they would have done as part of their profession.

> **Example:** Hannevar Hoopbender is a Halfling who has the profession of Sailor. For many years before they chose a life of adventure, Hannevar worked on sailing ships across Uroth, gaining an understanding of the many tasks that the crew of a masted vessel must perform. While sailing probably has little bearing on their new life as a member of the Iron League, they still might benefit from experience with:
>
> - *Strength checks, for swaying heavy bags of flour up through a trap door using a block and tackle;*
> - *Dexterity checks, for climbing rope ladders that resemble rigging;*
> - *Constitution checks, for holding their breath while swimming underwater;*
> - *Intelligence checks, for knowing what fashions are worn in various ports of call;*
> - *Wisdom checks, for seeing a water disturbance and intuiting the existence of submerged rocks; and*
> - *Charisma checks, for remembering and singing old sea shanties to amuse a crowd.*

The difficulty level of each check will vary for different Professions. Minimal successes will suffice for straightforward and basic tasks that a common practitioner of that job ought to be able to perform. Good and great successes are required for more complicated or less common tasks – jobs that only a very experienced and specialized professional would be able to complete. Fantastic successes should result in an outcome that even the most experienced member of that profession would be proud of, and that lesser practitioners would doubt the truth of unless they witnessed it with their own eyes.

Seacraft
Default Attribute: Intelligence – for amassing lore about navigating waterways and living on and near water.

Alternative Attributes: Wisdom, for noticing currents or strange aquatic plant life; Strength, for hauling up a heavy sail or reeling in a massive fish; Dexterity, for maneuvering a canoe through turbulent waters or splicing two cables together.

The Known Lands of Uroth are surrounded by ocean, but there is also a wealth of freshwater lakes and rivers that adventurers may need to navigate in the course of their explorations. No one single species lives near the water; in fact, almost all creatures need water to survive, and therefore many beings on Uroth have found it beneficial to learn the lore of the seas and the streams.

Seacraft is the skill used to know one's way around boats and ships, including how to maintain them, operate them, and navigate them. It is also a skill that can be used to understand currents and tides, to catch fish, to weave nets and tie knots, and to identify plants and animals native to the water.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Row a boat in calm waters; identify a common maritime creature; catch a small fish in a well-stocked stream; know whether the tide is high or low
- Good Success: Sail a small sailboat in mild weather conditions; identify a rare maritime creature; catch a large game fish on the open water; tell whether currents in a stream are dangerously rapid
- Great Success: Pilot a canoe through whitewater rapids; identify a maritime creature only found in legends and tall tales; catch a salmon in a mountain stream bare-handed; tell whether a shore bottom is too shallow for one's boat
- Fantastic Success: Captain a sailing ship through gale-force winds; know the properties of plants and animals only found in the depths of the sea; wrestle a crocodile and drag it onto shore; tell whether a dangerous storm will arrive in 24 hours

Seeing

Default Attribute: Wisdom – for keen eyesight, and the wits to use the sensory input.

Description: Almost without exception, members of the Iron League have at least normal vision and can see things both far away and up close. However, some individuals are specially trained to make sense of what they see and piece together subtle visual cues to notice much that others do not.

It is known that the elvish species has exceptional eyesight, and all Elf characters are proficient in Seeing. Additionally, Thieves make their living by staying one step ahead of pursuit and one inch below the executioner's blade; a keen sense of sight is a prerequisite for that class.

There are two kinds of Seeing skill checks: active and passive.

- An *active* check is when a player declares that their character is taking an action to intentionally look for something; when this happens, the player states what the character is looking for (e.g., looking for secret doors on a particular wall; trying to see movement on the battlements of a castle a quarter mile away) and makes a normal skill check.
- A *passive* check is when the GM determines that a character might be able to spot something even if they're not actively trying – perhaps they see a thin column of smoke in the distance, or maybe they recognize that a Thief is hiding in the shadows as they pass by.

The GM should write down each character's Seeing skill score, as well as whether they have proficiency, and keep that information handy during play. For passive checks, the GM secretly makes a Seeing roll on the character's behalf. Since the character isn't concentrating on looking for things, they suffer a -4 penalty to their Wisdom score. If the Seeing check succeeds, the GM tells the player what they saw; otherwise, the GM says nothing, and never lets on that there was anything to be learned.

When a character makes a Seeing check to detect somebody who is being stealthy, the sneaky person makes a **Stealth** roll. They are detected only if the Seeing check succeeds by more than the Stealth check.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Spotting movement atop a nearby battlement; noting a hairline crack in a wall that could indicate a secret door; identifying dark shapes in the fog as the approach of the city watch; noticing a low point in the fallen leaves ahead that may be a covered pit trap
- Good Success: Observing irregularities on the horizon that might be the sails of ships many miles distant; recognizing evidence of wear on one brick in a fireplace that suggests a secret mechanism; noticing that a nearby 'dead tree trunk' is trembling; identifying a slight discrepancy between two signatures indicating one is a clever forgery
- Great Success: Noticing that the wheeling 'birds' above a distant mountain may be much bigger than birds ought to be; recognizing that two tiny rivets in a chest's lock are actually a tiny needle trap; detecting subtle scratches on the inside of a lock, indicating it has recently been picked; spotting close-fitting joints in a staircase, warning that it might turn into a slide
- Fantastic Success: Noticing a faint shadow in broad daylight indicating the presence of an unseen person; detecting a faint tracery of glowing lines around the crown jewels – the mechanism of a magical trap; discerning that a blotch on the edge of the horizon is seven pursuing horsemen; despite the most cunning of workmanship, finding the secret bottom in a hidden drawer of the concealed writing desk in the Mad Mage's workroom

Shenanigans
Default Attribute: Dexterity – for fine control of the fingers.

Description: Feats of Agility applies when gross body coordination is required. Shenanigans is a skill of fine motor control, particularly when it comes to trickery – if fast finger-work or perfect timing is required to gull the gullible and confuse the gendarmes, then Shenanigans is probably the proper skill.

This skill involves such tasks as picking pockets, making small objects seem to appear or disappear, lifting things undetected, escapology, and making quick switches. Thieves, of course, must all be proficient in Shenanigans, but Halfling characters also are famous for being quick and nimble, and all are gifted with a light touch.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Slitting the coin purse of an unaware mark; palming a key left out on an open table; dealing cards off the bottom of the deck; freeing yourself with your hands bound behind your back
- Good Success: Removing a bracelet from the arm of a wealthy noblewoman; stealthily drugging a plate of food on a banquet table; swapping a card in your hand for another one up your sleeve; escaping when your entire body is tied to a chair
- Great Success: Removing the belt from the trousers of an alert watchman; carefully swapping the golden idol from the altar with a sandbag of equal weight; switching an entire deck of cards while cutting; slipping out of manacles and shackles
- Fantastic Success: Stealthily removing a bone from the jaws of a dozing guard dog; switching an heiress's diamond necklace for a paste forgery while she's wearing it; swapping a card in your hand for another one in your neighbor's hand; escaping after being wrapped in chains and padlocks and thrown into the river

Stealth
Default Attribute: Dexterity – for quiet, furtive movement of the body.

Alternative Attributes: Charisma – for hiding in plain sight.

Description: Stealth is the art of foiling the ability of others to perceive you or something else. This skill is commonly used to avoid detection by either visual or audible means. Stealth can also be used to conceal an object, build a camouflaged nest for others to hide in, follow somebody without being noticed, and even wear a disguise to avoid recognition (although either Deceive and Perform could also be used for this).

Thieves and Halflings are always proficient in Stealth, but the Ranger subclass of Fighters and some Elves are also talented at remaining unseen and unheard.

Seeing, Hearing, or Intuition can be used to detect a stealthy character, but characters can use only one of those senses at a time. When actively trying to detect a creature that is using Stealth to stay hidden, a searcher chooses either Seeing or Hearing and makes an opposed skill check.

If the Stealth check generates successes equal to or greater than the perception check, or if the perception check generates no successes, the stealthy individual remains hidden. If no character is making a concerted effort to see or hear a stealthy person, then the GM makes passive checks for those in range, choosing the most favorable skill to roll under; again, ties go to the individual who is hiding.

Circumstances may be favorable or unfavorable for using the Stealth skill. Use the following guidelines to apply modifiers for any perception roll used to find a stealthy individual:

Environment	Modifier
Dim light or shadow	-1 to Seeing
Dark or moonless	-2 to Seeing
Broad daylight or bright light	+1 to Seeing
Open ground or limited options for cover	+2 to Seeing
Hiding character cannot remain perfectly still	+4 to Seeing or Hearing
Continuous background noise	-1 to Hearing
Loud and distracting environment	-2 to Hearing
Uninterrupted quiet	+1 to Hearing
Echoing walls	+2 to Hearing

Most Stealth checks detected by Seeing and Intuition are opposed, but some Stealth checks detected by Hearing are not. Use the following difficulty guidelines for this type of Stealth check:

- Minimal Success: Open a normal door quietly; part a bead curtain quietly; open a normal window quietly; open a closed chest quietly
- Good Success: Open a heavy door quietly; avoid spooking horses; unlock a chain and padlock quietly; muffle the sound of breaking a glass window
- Great Success: Open a squeaky door quietly; pick a lock quietly; row a boat without making noise; muffle the sound of cutting a hole in a glass window
- Fantastic Success: Quietly raise a portcullis; climb a cathedral bell's pull-rope without ringing the bell; throw a grappling hook without making noise; muffle the sound of forcing a door

Stonecraft

Default Attribute: Intelligence – for amassing lore about stone and how to use or manipulate it.

Alternative Attributes: Wisdom, for noticing unusual stonework or sloping passages; Strength, for tunneling or digging.

Description: One of the environments in Uroth is the network of caverns, underground rivers and interconnecting passages that riddles the earth miles below the surface. So extensive is this labyrinth that it has its own ecology, and many forms of life have adapted to living there.

These include humanoid species; in particular, Dwarves and Shadow Elves have an intuitive understanding of stone constructions that serves them well as they navigate their ancestral homelands. This skill is called Stonecraft, and while it applies to stonework or rocky surfaces found in any context, it can be very useful for any character who spends a significant amount of time underground. It is also useful for understanding natural stone formations or stone constructions above ground.

Stonecraft is the skill of understanding rock in both its natural state and its worked form. It is used to intuit where natural passages are likely to lead, and to instinctively maintain one's bearings without external reference points. It is a substitute for the Seeing skill when used to look for traps and secret portals in stone construction. It is also the skill used for digging and mining; refer to rules for this in Chapter 5.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Find a secret door recessed in a stone wall; find a trap door concealed in a stone floor; know the approximate age of stonework and who might have built it; dig through earth without a collapse
- Good Success: Find a stone block trap recessed in a stone ceiling; find a hidden compartment in the base of a stone statue; know whether a stone construction is stable or where it might be vulnerable; dig through soft rock without a collapse
- Great Success: Sense subtle sloping in an underground passage; sense movement in underground rooms or 'elevator' chambers; know which direction leads to moving water or air; dig through sand or gravel without a collapse
- Fantastic Success: Sense approximately how far you are below ground; sense approximately what your orientation is below ground; know which direction leads to naturally occurring mineral deposits; dig through solid stone without a collapse

Streetcraft

Default Attribute: Intelligence – for knowing the ins and outs of urban environments.

Alternative Attributes: Dexterity – for eluding pursuit; Charisma – for interacting with locals; Wisdom – for following quarry.

Description: A character used to life in urban centers may sometimes find themself feeling like a fish out of water in a more naturalistic environment. The reverse is also true: a city is also an environment, and those unused to navigating its complexities and hazards are at a disadvantage. Streetcraft is the skill used by city natives to make their way safely and efficiently through an urban setting.

Streetcraft is used to infer knowledge of how and where to go in a city to find what you need. It also substitutes for interactive Charisma-based skills when seeking information from the inhabitants of a town or city. It is a skill that can be used both to follow persons through a crowd while remaining unnoticed and to elude pursuers that you have detected.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Know how to find the town's important entrances and exits; elude pursuit in a crowded market; imitate the local customs and speech; tail a contact unnoticed through a crowded market
- Good Success: Know how to find the town's important leaders; elude pursuit along a main street; extract commonly known information from locals; tail a contact unnoticed down a busy street
- Great Success: Know how to find the town's important businesses; elude pursuit in a public building; extract uncommonly known information from locals; tail a contact unnoticed down a sparsely populated street
- Fantastic Success: Know how to find the town's important criminals; elude pursuit in a narrow alley; learn carefully guarded secrets from locals; tail a contact unnoticed through a public building

Turn Undead

Default Attribute: Charisma – for exerting the force of will to thwart the *undead*.

Alternative Attributes: Wisdom – for sensing how to wield turning for maximum effect.

Description: It is known that all forms of *undead* creatures are sensitive to the power of deities, and these monsters may be affected when confronted by a holy symbol presented by a person with a strong personality. The person wielding the holy symbol need not be a Cleric but being skilled in the art of channeling the force of one's will through a holy symbol is helpful when attempting to effectively Turn Undead.

To use this skill, the wielder of a holy symbol holds it in one hand and presents it in the player's chosen direction. A holy symbol has the potential to affect all *undead* that can see it within a cone that is 30' long and 30' wide. Holy symbols supplemented by other equipment may have larger areas of effect; see Chapter 5.

The wielder uses the force of their will to invoke the power of the deity the symbol represents. They make a Charisma check, adding a bonus for their skill proficiency level. The turn check affects **Hit Dice (HD)** of undead equal to the amount by which the check succeeded. For example, a character with an effective Charisma of 13 who rolls an 11 on a Turn Undead check can affect two Hit Dice of undead.

Within the area of effect, the *undead* with the lowest number of Hit Dice are affected first, so in a mixed group of *skeletons* and *zombies*, all 1 HD *skeletons* are affected before any 2 HD *zombies*. An *undead* creature is not affected unless all its HD are turned.

> **Example:** *Clybin of the Icy Veil, a Cleric, confronts a group of five skeletons (1 HD each) and a shadow (3 HD). They hold out their holy symbol and attempt to turn. Their Charisma score is a 12, but since they are proficient in Turn Undead 1, their effective Charisma is 12 + 4 = 16.*
>
> *They roll a 10 on the turn check. They rolled 6 under their Charisma, so 6 HD of undead are affected. All five of the skeletons are affected, with only 1 HD left over. Since the shadow has 3 HD, the shadow is not turned.*

It is possible to botch a turn check. If a character rolls a natural 20 on a turning attempt, the corrupting power of the undead pushes back. Wooden holy symbols burst into flames and are destroyed; metal holy symbols will become too hot to touch without taking damage – see Chapter 5 for more information. Sensible Clerics always carry spare holy symbols. The only time this botched check is not a risk is when a character has the Casting Out class ability and uses a surge (Chapter 2) or when using Holy Water (Chapter 5).

Once one or more undead are affected by a turn check, the character makes a separate Wisdom check to determine effect. The skill bonus is not applied to this Wisdom check, regardless of whether the turning character is proficient in Turn Undead. However, if they are using the Casting Out class ability, the character's level is added to their Wisdom. The same effect applies to all creatures who were successfully turned, regardless of their level.

Consult the following table to determine the effect:

Table 3-2: TOTIL Turn Check Results

Turn Check Roll	Effect
5 or more above ability	For 6 rounds, the target will attack the turner last. If the turner is alone, they are able to attack. No further turn attempts may be made.
0 or more above ability	For 6 rounds, the target will attack the turner last. If the turner is alone, they are able to attack. More turning can be attempted.
1 or 2 below ability	The result above, plus target is at -1 to attack rolls as long as the holy symbol is visible.
3 to 5 below ability	The result above, plus target is at -1 to damage rolls as long as the holy symbol is visible.
6 to 10 below ability	The result above, plus target is affected as if a *fear* spell was cast on them. This effect lasts for 6 rounds.
11 or more below ability	Target is destroyed.

Characters with an evil alignment have another option when using the Turn Undead skill: instead of turning *undead* creatures, they may attempt to compel them. Only the Charisma check is necessary; if it affects any mindless *undead* creatures, those monsters follow the verbal commands of the wielder of the holy symbol, exactly as if that person had cast the *animate dead* spell.

If intelligent *undead* creatures are affected, they are permitted a morale check. Upon a failure, they follow the wielder's verbal commands. If their morale check succeeds, they may or may not choose to follow commands, but certainly will not attack the wielder.

Woodcraft

Default Attribute: Intelligence – for knowing the lore of green spaces and how to employ it.

Alternative Attributes: Wisdom – for tracking a creature's footprints through the wilderness.

Description: Woodcraft is the skill of knowing how to survive in a natural environment on the surface of Uroth, particularly in a woodland setting. The unquestioned masters of Woodcraft are the Sylvan Elves, who were forced to flee their settlements and live in the deep forest during the time of the Great Blight. However, Country Halflings and Rangers are also proficient at Woodcraft, and characters of all other types can learn this skill.

Woodcraft is the skill that gives characters knowledge about how to live in the wild: how to find food and water, how to locate shelter, or even how to build traps and structures. It is the skill used to find the tracks of creatures moving through the woods or to erase tracks that you and your companions have made. Woodcraft can be used to identify what other creatures exist in the environment from their leavings or other signs of their passage.

Example Difficulties:

- Minimal Success: Know animals indigenous to a given habitat; know how to create simple shelter; track a creature that passed by recently; identify the spoor of a common creature
- Good Success: Know edible roots and berries native to a given climate; know how to build simple structures; track a creature that passed by several days ago; identify the spoor of an uncommon creature
- Great Success: Know useful or medicinal herbs found in nature; know how to build or dig traps; track a creature that passed by several weeks ago; identify the spoor of a rare or unique creature
- Fantastic Success: Know about fey creatures likely to live in a territory; know how to improvise functional weapons; track a creature whose tracks have been partially erased by rain or snow; intuit unusual facts about quarry from its spoor

Languages

Speaking a language is also a skill, but the rules for speaking, reading, and writing in different languages work a little bit differently from other skills.

Every character begins the game with one or more native languages at the highest level of proficiency it is possible for them to have. However, characters can also begin to learn other languages. They speak and understand poorly at first, but in time they can improve their linguistic skills by gaining steps of language proficiency, possibly even to the point where they speak the language as well as their native tongue.

There are four steps of language proficiency as described below.

Smattering

A character with this level of proficiency speaks only a few words of the language and understands very little of what is said. They can slowly understand and convey crude concepts, but complex ideas are probably beyond reach, although spending time drawing pictures and using sign language may eventually be effective.

Characters who only know a smattering of a language cannot read or write it. This is the highest possible step of language proficiency for a character with a -3 Intelligence modifier, meaning that those with an Intelligence ability score of 3 can do little more than grunt simple words and point!

In game terms, if a character with a smattering of a language wants to convey a simple concept, they must make a successful Intelligence or Convince check (the player chooses which). To understand a straightforward idea, they must make a successful Intelligence or Intuition check (again, the player chooses which). Anything more complex will take additional checks and considerable time.

Halting

Halting proficiency in a language means that the character is beginning to understand how words and phrases are strung together. They still don't know much of the vocabulary, and the rules of syntax remain elusive. They can verbally convey and understand simple ideas, but complex ideas may be misinterpreted. The player must make a successful Intelligence or Intuition check to understand, and an Intelligence or Convince check to be understood.

Such a character is learning to read and even write a few words in the language, but they can correctly express or interpret only the simplest of verbs and nouns in written form, using the same checks described above. A character with an Intelligence modifier of -2 can never exceed halting proficiency in any language.

Working

A character with a working language proficiency can verbally express themself clearly but may stumble over the correct words and speak with an accent. They must make a successful Deceive check to convince a native speaker that they are fluent.

They can understand other speakers very well, provided they do not speak too quickly. They are somewhat less capable with reading and writing; simple concepts are easy, but they may misunderstand complex words and structure sentences confusingly. Simple written language is easy, but complex written notions require Intelligence or Convince checks to write and Intelligence or Intuition checks to read. A character with an Intelligence modifier of -1 cannot move beyond this level of linguistic proficiency.

Fluent

This is the highest level of language proficiency. Those who have reached this level have no trouble communicating with fellow fluent speakers; no checks are required to read or write, to speak, or to understand, and speakers have no discernible accent.

Advancing Languages

Characters first learn a new language at the smattering level and develop their proficiency by spending **custom points** on additional language steps. At first level, characters get three custom points to spend (see Chapter 2).

It costs one custom point to advance a language one step along the track towards fluency. However, learning a language takes time and practice – unlike skills, characters cannot improve any language proficiency by more than one step in any given level.

- At 1st level, a character may learn a smattering of the Goblin tongue and know that the phrase "bree yark" is a particularly offensive insinuation about a goblin's parentage.
- At 2nd level, our linguist might improve their understanding of Goblin by one step to halting; they could then question a goblin captive, asking simple questions about where they have laid ambushes along a trail.
- At 3rd level, having raised their Goblin proficiency by another step to working, the character could pose as a merchant who trades with goblins, and might even pore over Goblin hieroglyphs to understand a treasure map.
- Finally, at 4th level our character could complete their training in Goblin and be able to write a cunning missive to the Goblin King himself to lure him into a trap.

If a character with a negative Intelligence modifier spends custom points to increase their Intelligence score during level advancement, and this improves their Intelligence modifier, they immediately upgrade their proficiency in their native languages to their new maximum language step. They do not need to spend custom points for these improvements.

This is not true for any other languages that character may know. However, when their Intelligence modifier improves to a positive number, they instantly gain one free language step for each positive bonus which they can allocate to any of their non-native languages.

Note: There are some magic items that provide a bonus to the Intelligence ability score but using such items does not grant any additional language abilities.

List of Languages

The table below lists the languages commonly used on the world of Uroth. Starting or advancing characters can choose any of them as a language in which they can learn and improve. It is up to the player to determine how the character managed to advance a language skill; they might imagine finding a book that provides translation, or perhaps they encountered an NPC who tutors them.

Language	Description
Ancient Poldaran	A dead human language used in the Poldaran Empire over a thousand years ago.
Ancient Savar	A dead human language used in the Savarharad Desert thousands of years ago.
Angelic	The language of *angels*, used in the practice of Divine spellcasting.
Attainu	A human language spoken in Attapoor and its neighbors.
Common	A trade language spoken by many creatures, especially in the western half of Uroth.
Daemonic	The language of *demons*, used in the practice of Divine spellcasting.
Daraban	A human language spoken in the Daraban Empire and its neighbors.
Diabolical	The language of *devils*, used in the practice of Divine spellcasting.
Draconic	The language of *dragons*.
Dwarvish	The language of *dwarves*.
Elemental	The language spoken by the rulers of the Elemental planes.
Elvish	The language of *elves*.
Far Gaoloran	A human language spoken on the Beast Isles.
Fey	The language of forest spirits.

Giantish	The language of all types of *giants*, including ogres and trolls.
Gnollish	The language of *gnolls* and *flinds*.
Goblin	The language of *goblins*, *hobgoblins*, and *bugbears*.
Kobold	The language of the *kobolds*.
Lizard People	The language of *lizard folk*, *bullywugs*, *firenewts*, and other reptilian humanoids.
Magic	The language used in the practice of Arcane spellcasting.
Merfolk	The language common to species that dwell under the sea.
Orcish	The language of *orcs* and *ogrillons*.
Thieves' Cant	The secret language spoken by Thieves.
Undercommon	The language spoken by dwellers in the underworld of Uroth.

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies

It requires skill to wield weapons successfully, use a shield in combat, and be able to move effectively while wearing armor. Just like languages, these skills work differently from others. When a character or creature attacks in combat, they roll 1d20 to attack as described in Chapter 7. This roll is modified by the attacker's proficiency (or lack thereof) with the weapon they are using.

All character classes, and in some cases subclasses, receive starting weapon proficiencies during character creation. Players may use custom points to gain additional weapon proficiencies. A character who is not proficient with a weapon can still wield it; they just don't use it as well as a character who is proficient. A character using a weapon with which they lack proficiency rolls their attacks at -4, while those who are proficient receive no penalty.

Similarly, a character must have special training to use a shield in combat. If a character is not proficient with shields, they can still use one and gain its benefit to AC, but they attack with a non-proficiency penalty of -4. If a character wears a type of armor with which they are not proficient, they also receive a -4 non-proficiency penalty.

All non-proficiency penalties stack. If a Thief character chooses to masquerade as a knight in plate armor, carrying a shield and a longsword, and they are forced to attack somebody, they do so at a severe penalty of -12 to attacks because of the stacking non-proficiency penalties! These penalties can be reduced or even eliminated if the character spends custom points to learn how to use these items better.

In addition to non-proficiency with armor or weapons, other penalties may apply for their use. A Magic-user can choose to wear armor and use a shield, but they will never be able to cast spells while doing so. A Cleric who uses a weapon in violation of their holy orders soon finds find themself in trouble with their faith and deity, and they will likely suffer real consequences as a result.

Special Weapon Proficiencies

There are three additional weapon proficiencies that are not linked to the use of a specific weapon.

Improvised Weapon Fighting

Characters without proper weapons may need to improvise. Any heavy object can be used as a makeshift club; any tool with a metal head can penetrate armor; any pole that adds to an arm's reach can multiply the force a character can produce by bare hands alone. A character without proficiency in **improvised weapon fighting** makes each attack using an improvised weapon with a non-proficiency penalty of -4.

Taking this proficiency eliminates the non-proficiency penalty, but other penalties may apply; see Other Encounter Situations in Chapter 7 for details.

Two-Weapon Fighting

Wielding a weapon in each hand is possible but difficult. **Two-weapon fighting** is a specific weapon proficiency. Without this proficiency, every attack a dual-wielding character makes with each weapon receives a -4 penalty. This penalty stacks with all other penalties, such as other non-proficiency penalties.

Taking this proficiency eliminates the non-proficiency penalty, but other penalties may apply; see Other Encounter Situations in Chapter 7 for details.

Unarmed Fighting

An adventurer may sometimes find themself without a readily available weapon. In this case, they may attack by striking with their bare hands and feet. A character without proficiency in **unarmed fighting** makes each unarmed attack with a -4 non-proficiency penalty, which stacks with any other penalties.

Taking this proficiency eliminates the non-proficiency penalty, but other penalties may apply; see Other Encounter Situations in Chapter 7 for details.

Advancing Weapon and Armor Proficiencies

When using custom points to add weapon proficiencies (as described in Chapter 2), each weapon counts as a separate proficiency. Therefore, a character whose class gives them proficiency with all standard weapons could spend two custom points to learn to fight with a longsword. Other martial weapons would still be unfamiliar.

Note: It is not possible for a Halfling character to become proficient with weapons that have the *long* property.

Characters may also gain special weapon proficiencies, such as two-weapon fighting, improvised weapon fighting, or unarmed fighting, by spending custom points.

When using custom points to add armor proficiencies, each upgrade of one point of Armor Class counts as a separate proficiency. For instance, if a Thief character is proficient with AC 11 armor types, that character could use two custom points to become proficient with AC 12 armor. They must spend another two custom points to become proficient with AC 13 armor, and so on.

Note: Magic-users with armor proficiency have no non-proficiency penalties when using armor, but they are still unable to cast spells while wearing it. They may also not cast spells while using a shield, regardless of proficiency. This limitation is specific to Magic-users; other classes with spellcasting abilities may cast their spells while wearing any proficient armor.