

MULRAH: Microlite20 with Utilities Leveraging Role-playing Advancements Heuristically

MULRAH is a role-playing game that plugs indie-style rules into a modified Microlite20, fully compatible with the Primary Fantasy SRD rules (see license). Brackets [] indicate Notes.

The Basics

Apart from the optional rules (boxed text), most of this section is similar to Microlite20. Stats and Skill are a little different, and how Characters get Experience Points (XP) has a name (Keys) and can vary. With a couple adjustments, you could play MULRAH with these rules alone.

Core Mechanic: Whenever the outcome of a task is uncertain, a player will roll a 20-sided die (d20) plus modifiers (Stats, Skills) against a Difficulty Class (DC). Exceeding the DC indicates success.

Player Characters (PCs) start at **Level 1** with **3 Stats**, **Hit Points (HP)**, a **Skill Expertise**, and **2 Keys**.

Stats are **Strength (STR)**, **Dexterity (DEX)** and **Mind (MIND)**. Roll 2d4-4, assign to a Stat, and then repeat [1]. $HP = d8 + STR$ per Level. If HP reach 0, the Character falls unconscious and must roll lower than $10 + 2 \times STR$ every round to avoid death. HP lost due to wounds recovers at a rate equal to $1/2$ Character Level (round up) per night rest.

Skills [5] provide a +4 bonus to any related Task. Each Character can have one Skill, reflecting his background. Players are free to create a Skill based on any profession, craft, or upbringing, but the following four are the default starting points, each with a handful of associated Skills from the Primary Fantasy SRD and other sources. [2]

MULRAH Skill	Primary SRD or Other Skills (Stat)
Knowledge	Appraise (MIND), Decipher Script (MIND), Knowledge (MIND; pick type), Literacy (MIND), Research (MIND)
Survival	Handle Animal (MIND/STR), Heal (MIND), Ride (DEX), Swim (STR), Survival (MIND)
Physical	Balance (DEX), Climb (DEX/STR), Jump (DEX/STR), Swim (STR), Tumble (DEX)
Subterfuge	Disable Device (MIND/DEX), Escape Artist (DEX/STR), Forgery (DEX), Gambling (MIND) Open Lock (DEX), Sleight of Hand (DEX)

Optional Rules for Skills

Improving Skills: Tally failures in each Skill, and, at the end of each session, roll a d20 against the accumulated tally. If the roll is less than or equal to the tally, then the Character has learned from the failures, gains +1 in that Skill, and resets the tally.

Stakes: Failing at a Task leads to d6 loss to HP per increment of failure or a Minor Consequence (see below) *but not necessarily failure of the task itself*. Failing a roll to climb a wall could mean the Character takes damage or loses her grappling hook, but still makes it to the top.

Skill Challenges are useful for engaging the entire party in a common goal. Success requires that players complete $(2 + 2 \times \text{Complexity})$ Tasks successfully before failing 3 times. GM selects Complexity (1 to 5). $DC = EL + \text{Base}$ (5 - Easy, 10 - Medium, 15 - Hard).

Level Advancement occurs when XP equals 15 [4]. Reset XP to 0 after advancing. With a new Level, gain $(d8+STR)$ HP. Every 5 Levels, a Character gains a **Leveling Bonus**, which allows him to add +1 to a Stat or gain a new Aspect (see below). A Character can save her Leveling Bonuses and then use two of them (at 10th, 20th, etc. Level) to gain a new Ability (see below), essentially "multi-classing."

Keys are goals for which characters gain XP. By default, each Character has the **Key of Conquest**, which garners 1 XP per Hit Dice (HD) or Levels of opponent defeated plus 1 XP for each doubling of foes. Divide sum by Character's Level. Each Character may also pick an additional Key from the list of optional ones below. See Sweet20 for more.

- **The Key of Glittering Gold** gives 1 XP for every 100 gp the Character gains, divided by his Level.
- **Keys of Alignment** (Law vs. Chaos, Good vs. Evil) act like the Key of Conquest but earn double the XP for defeating foes of the opposite Alignment and none for those of the same Alignment.
- **The Key of Conflict** provides 1 XP for every Consequence (see below) taken over the course of a session.
- **The Key of Challenge** provides 1 XP for every Complexity Level in each Skill Challenge the PCs overcome.

Conflicts

Conflict is where many "indie" games diverge heavily from traditional RPGs, and MULRAH is no different. In Microlite20, Combat is the primary form of Conflict and has its own set of rules. In MULRAH, Combat is just one type of Conflict and is governed (mostly) by the same overarching rules that resolve other forms of Conflict.

Conflict Resolution: Conflicts begin whenever one Character attempts to avoid, influence, change, or harm another Character. The players and GM agree upon what the Conflict will decide; these are the Stakes. Conflicts are resolved with a single d20 roll for each side (*not* each character), plus the lead character's relevant Stat and Ability (see below) as well as situational modifiers. The side with the higher total wins; ties go against the instigator. One fourth the difference determines the number of **Minor Consequences** (see below) the losing side must take as a result of the Conflict.

Types of Conflict: Conflicts can happen in one of four levels.

1. **Stealth:** Notice, avoid, or otherwise minimize the risk of a Conflict before it begins; includes Disguise, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Spot, Search, steal, etc.
2. **Communication:** Talk through a Conflict; includes Diplomacy, Intimidation, haggling, persuasion, taunting, etc.
3. **Brawling:** Physically fighting without the intent to incapacitate; includes shoving, wrestling, hitting sword hilts, etc.
4. **Combat:** Fighting with intent to incapacitate; includes stabbing with the blade of a sword, shooting a gun, etc. When setting Stakes for Combat, each Character must "ante up" HPs in order to participate in the Conflict. These HPs are added to the rolls and modifiers for each side. The losing side automatically loses all HPs wagered, while the winning side also loses wagered HPs, less the amount by which they won the Conflict.

Extending Conflicts may need to happen if the PCs aren't getting their way or feel a specific Conflict needs to go into more detail. There are two ways to do this:

1. **Escalation:** Any character can shift from one of four types of conflict to another (see above). All d20s are immediately rerolled, and this character becomes the instigator.
2. **Pain:** Only at a player's (not the GM's) request, a Conflict can be handled in a task-by-task manner. In this case, each individual rolls a d20 for each action (**Attack**), modified as above but compared to a static target number of $10 +$ the opponent's relevant Stat and Abilities (**Defense**). Success costs the opponent a Consequence or, in the case of Combat, damage to HP as determined by the type of weapon less the victim's Armor Bonus.

Abilities provide bonuses during Conflicts and improve as a Character Levels. Players select two Abilities for each Character by combining a Conflict Type (above) with a Style (below). A Character who takes the exact same Ability twice can either have the bonuses stack or gain an extra action per Round, as long as that action is related to the Ability. **Style** indicates the type of bonus the Character gets.

- **Aggressor:** Add Level to all Attacks.
- **Defender:** Add Level to all Defense.

- **Specialist:** Select a specific discipline within the Conflict Type (e. g., Taunting, Kung Fu, Crossbows, etc.) and add Level to both Attacks and Defense only when engaged in this specific Conflict.
- **Opportunist:** Reroll up to Level/2 times per game session.
- **Hero:** Add Level to any roll once per Conflict; add twice Level to any roll once per game session.

Consequences result from Conflicts or can be taken (up to four at once) instead of any major hit to HP or SP. They can be either a -1 to a Stat of the player's choice or a temporary Aspect, if Aspects are being used.

- **1st Consequence** = Mild Wound or Short-Term Insanity. can absorb loss of up to 1/4 HP or SP, fades upon winning a Conflict.
- **2nd Consequence** = Moderate Wound or Long-Term Insanity, can absorb loss of up to 1/2 HP or SP, fades with a night's rest.
- **3rd Consequence** = Severe Wound or Long-Term Insanity, requiring 2d6-4 weeks to heal; 0 = 6 days, -1 = 5 days, -2 = 4 days, -3 = 3 days; can absorb loss up to 3/4 HP or SP.
- **4th Consequence** = Permanent Wound or Indefinite Insanity, only removed with magic or other extraordinary measure.

Other Optional Rules

Aspects are non-mechanical parts of a Character that a player wants to influence the story. An epithet, quote, relationship, possession, or anything else can be an Aspect. Characters start with one Aspect in the 1st Level and can gain more with Leveling Bonuses. For each Aspect, a player gets a Story Point (measured with a poker chip or other counter) at the beginning of each session. At any time during the session, the player may invoke an Aspect prior to any die roll by describing how it comes into play and spending a Story Point, thereby gaining a +4 to the roll. The GM or any other player may also invoke that Character's Aspect(s). If the player refuses, then she must spend a Story Point; if she accepts, then she gains a Story Point.

Sanity Points (SP) = 8 + MIND + Level/2. Whenever a Character has a horrific experience, he must roll lower than his SP on a d20 or lose a SP. When SP reach 0, he goes permanently insane.

Final Stand kicks in at the player's request when her Character reaches 0 HP. Upon regaining consciousness, her Character remains at 1 HP and recedes, unable to attack or be harmed, into the background. In a final, climactic encounter that the player chooses as her Character's "final stand," the Character instantly regains all HP and doubles all roll bonuses. At the end of the encounter, the Character must retire.

Setting-Based Character Creation has players build their Characters as the GM describes the recent history of the setting. During each of six historical periods the GM demarcates, players relate what their character was doing during that time and pick one trait (Skill Expertise, 2 Keys, 2 Abilities, or Aspect) their Character gained as a result.

The World Beyond

The World Beyond is a sample fantasy setting for MULRAH. Goblins and Reptile Men replace Elves and Dwarves, and Alchemy replaces Arcane Magic. All PCs in the World Beyond must select a Race, Religion, and Nationality. Races besides Humans/Goblins are rare and at -1 to Skills.

- **Humans** have spread their religion through out most of Ytarria. Three Christian nations (Megalos, Caithness, Cardiel, and Araterre) and two Muslim nations--al-Wazif (Sunni) and al-Haz (Shi'ite)--exist. Judaism is the third most common religion, but Jews are spread among the six kingdoms. The Megalan Empire's closest rival is al-Wazif, with Cardiel being a much-disputed realm with a diverse, relatively egalitarian society. Caithness is a sparsely populated frontier with weak mana (and thus no magical characters) to the West. Araterre is an island nation of seafarers to the South.
- **Goblins** (-2 STR, +1 DEX, +1 MIND, +1 Skills) are the second most populous Race on Yrth and comprise a substantial portion of the mercantile class in most cities, particularly in southern Megalos (Yibyorak and Sho'joor). Most have assimilated to the prevailing religion of the surrounding Humans (Christianity, Islam, Judaism), but a rare few follow cult deities of their former world.
- **Twadyn/"Gnomes" and Halflings** (+1 DEX) are surface-dwelling herders or farmers. They live peacefully alongside Humans and Goblins, usually in rural areas. Many have difficulty distinguishing between the Elder Race of Gnomes and Halfling newcomers. The former tends to live near their Dwarven cousins in Zarak and worship the ancient elemental deities Hubabeh (Air) and Hsaragg (Water), while the latter hail from the slightly warmer, weed-growing climates of Megalos, where Christianity is prevalent.
- **Reptile-Men** (+2 STR, -1 MIND) are most prevalent in the Steppes of Arachine but can be found in any plain or swamp area. Little is known of the religious ways of most Reptile Men. Descendants of those who assimilated with Human nomads in the early days of Islam live alongside Humans in the Muslim nations.

Magic exists in the World Beyond in two forms.

- **Divine Magics (Ability)** provide access to Divine Spells of 1/2 the caster's Level and Turning Undead. Each spell costs HP = 1 + 2 x the Spell's Level, a loss that can be healed **only** after 8 hours rest. A player-chosen "signature spell" for each Spell Level above 0th costs 1 less HP. Turn Undead requires a successful Magic Attack and can be used (2 + Level + MIND) times per day. DC is the current HPs of the Undead, destroyed if DC exceeded by 10. Casters cannot use 2 weapons at once.
- **Alchemy (Ability)** is a Goblin method of accessing Arcane Spells. With access to water, Alchemist's Ingredients (5 gp per use per Level), and a successful roll of d20+Level+MIND vs a DC of 10 + 5 x Spell Level, an Alchemist can create potions for spells of a Spell Level up to 1/2 the Alchemist's Level. These potions can be used up to 24 hours after creation; a potion with no expiration adds 25 to the DC. Each subsequent potion created in a day adds +2 to the DC.

Classes are simply pre-determined combinations of Skills and Abilities and are entirely optional in the World Beyond. They are noted here to demonstrate equivalencies between MULRAH and Microlite20.

- **Fighter:** Physical, Combat (Any 2)
- **Cleric:** Knowledge, Divine Magic, Communication
- **Rogue:** Subterfuge, Stealth, Combat (Specialist: Light Weapons)
- **Alchemist:** Knowledge, Alchemy, Stealth or Communication
- **Ranger:** Survival, Brawling, Combat (Specialist: Bows)
- **Paladin:** Physical, Divine Magic, Combat
- **Druid:** Survival, Divine Magic, Stealth
- **Bard:** Knowledge or Subterfuge, Communication (Any 2)

Notes

1. To convert from the Primary Fantasy SRD rules, use the relevant Ability Score's bonus. From older versions, Stat = (Relevant Ability Score - 10)/2.
2. Note that MULRAH splits Microlite20's Subterfuge Skill between the Subterfuge Skill and the Stealth Ability. Microlite20's Communication Skill is now an Ability.
3. In MULRAH, anybody can try to sneak up on someone, but only those with Stealth will have any real success.
4. This amount is calibrated to the XP amounts (divided by 100) in Erin Smale's "Building the Perfect Class." All Characters have the same progression of Hit Points (d8 per Level = 2 XP) and weapon/armor restrictions; none progress in "Saving Throws" or Combat outside of Abilities. Abilities are essentially a Combat Progression of +1/Level, worth 4 XP, slightly more than Smale's Special I/II abilities. Thieves' Skills, which include about twice the number of skills as a MULRAH Skill, are worth 4 XP in Smale's calculation, so MULRAH Skills count for just 2 XP. Leveling Bonuses are worth 4 XP.
5. As they stand, Skills are relatively unimportant, and story-oriented or "old school" groups may wish to ignore them altogether. The former group will want to focus instead on Conflicts while the latter will look for player skill (e.g., describing exactly how and where you are looking for traps rather than just rolling for it) to navigate these situations. They remain in the Core Rules because of the numerous optional modern rules that can make using them unique and fun.

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