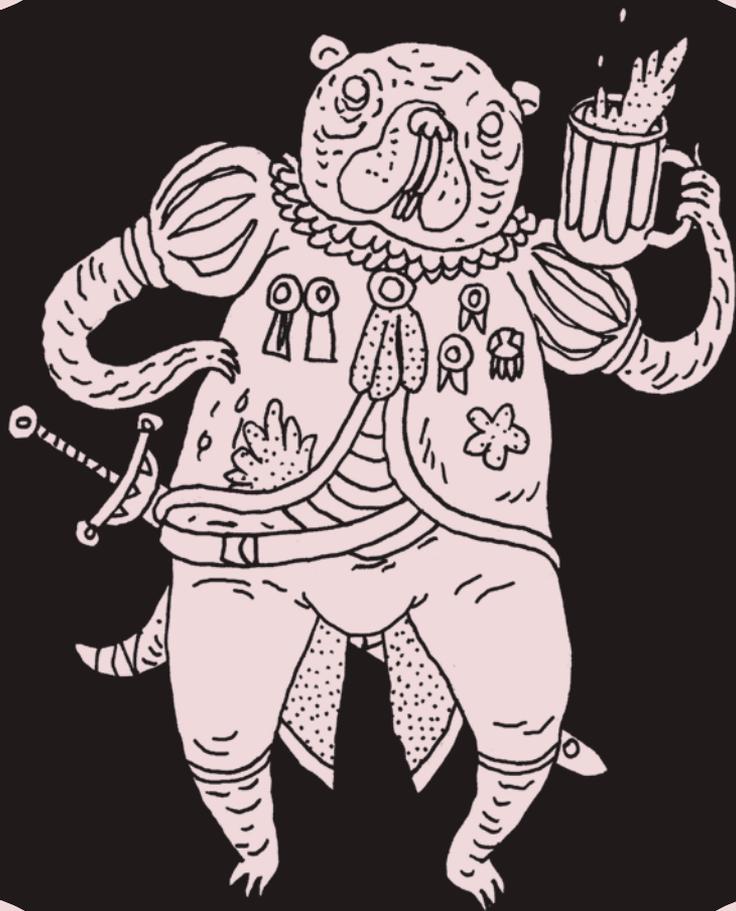


THROUGH ULTAN'S DOOR PRESENTS:

Downtime in Zyan

ACTIVITIES BETWEEN ADVENTURES





Exordium

I am the Viscount LeGrande, one of the mole rat people who appear throughout these pages. Since you, honored reader, hail from foreign shores, allow me to provide a proper introduction. We mole rats live in well-appointed chambers in the massive root ball warrens at the top of the inverted White Jungle hanging from the flying island of Zyan. Compared to those of your stature, we are diminutive, with pink, pleasingly wrinkled skin, and lively twitching whiskers. Although, unlike you, we never wear pants, we dress as befits our stations with epaulets and medals, and arms as the occasion demands. We are a refined people with a strong sense of honor and decorum. We are prone to romantic dispositions — heroes and scoundrels alike. We will be your guides to the enchanting topic of downtime activities.*

What is downtime, you may wonder? Assuming you are a bold soul, downtime is the time between your adventures. During this time, you may pursue various significant activities that take effort and produce tangible results. It is an opportunity to make something of yourself, leave a lasting mark on your world, and acquire a potential edge for your future adventures. Although the following list compiled by our scholars is capacious, you may from time to time embark on actions not well-captured here. Do not give in to the base instinct to restrict and confine yourself. Such captivity of the imagination is the refuge of base and ignoble spirits. Even scoundrels must be allowed to dream!

**In this edition, pants have been added to the molerats out of deference to delicate human sartorial tastes.*



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DOWNTIME THEORY



This system was written for classical or old school play. In this play style, the focus of the game is adventuring, understood as the cooperative exploration of fantastic and perilous spaces. Such adventuring occurs in an open world — what is sometimes called a “sandbox” — where the player characters make their own decisions about what adventures to pursue with no pre-existing plot arcs or adventure paths. The only intrinsic direction of the sandbox comes from lures to adventure that tie the accumulation of experience points to the extraction of treasure from wondrous and lethal places. One may play in this style games of any length, from sprawling campaigns that last a decade to one-shots occupying a single night. This system is written for campaigns that run long enough for characters to develop over time.

The classical style of play leaves a white space between adventures that is handled haphazardly, often at the start of the session, as the players decide what their priorities are and take incidental actions before setting out on adventures. As a campaign develops, however, this white space becomes more important as players increasingly pursue self-directed goals that motivate more and more of their activity in the sandbox. After many years of playing in this style, I have become convinced that old school play has never developed a very good way of handling this crucial white space.

I designed my system of downtime activities by generalizing what my most engaged players do between adventures that contributes to fun and dynamic campaigns. The most engaged players do not begin their play at the mouth of the dungeon: between adventures they pester the GM by developing schemes, following leads, fostering relationships, building institutions, and messing with the campaign world. This system of downtime activities provides a scaffold that supports less enterprising (or pushy) players in this more freeform creative space. It also provides help for a GM, who otherwise can be easily overwhelmed by the creative engagement of their players.

One way I like to think about this system is by comparison with the campaign arc of early play. Early play was divided between two different campaign modes, the adventuring of the early and mid-campaign, and the domain play of the late campaign. Domain level play, drawing inspiration from the wargaming roots of the early hobby, allowed players to spend the huge piles of gold they had accumulated, leaving their permanent mark on the campaign world as they claimed demesnes, constructed castles, engaged in political intrigue, amassed armies, and fought wars. But it also involved achievements specific to one's class that became available when one acquired "name level": the opportunity to start thieves' guilds, found temples or monasteries, research new spells, and create magical items. The system of downtime activity presented here dismantles the barrier between these two phases of play, allowing the active involvement with the campaign world characteristic of domain play to percolate backwards through the entire campaign. It encourages players to spend their hard-won treasure, pursue longterm goals, and leave their mark on the evolving world starting at the end of their very first session of play.

Another way I like to look at it has to do with the collective and the individual. In the style of classic play for which this system was written, the focus in adventuring is on the cooperative exploration of fantastic, perilous spaces by the party, rather than the exploration of the individuality of party members. While such collective exploration under conditions of high peril is pleasurable, it can also feel limiting at times when one might wish to develop one's character in unique ways or accomplish things as an individual. The system presented here allows players to continue their cooperation in downtime, but it also allows them to chart their own way through the space between adventures, pursuing idiosyncratic individual schemes separate from their comrades. In this way, player characters can develop separate experiences, dreams, and aspirations. By proceduralizing downtime, this more individual phase can be resolved quickly at the start of a session or between sessions in a play by post mode, allowing the focus at the table to remain primarily on the cooperative adventuring at the center of classic play.

If we think of a campaign as a living organism, and if we think of our collective play as its lifeblood, then this downtime system is less a separate mini-game and more the beating heart of the circulatory system. Downtime activities are designed to stimulate and be stimulated by adventures. Sometimes downtime activities provide hooks for adventure or resources that help the party overcome challenges, as when the party chases down

information from NPCs about a foe, engages in research about a location, or cultivates relationships with potential adventuring companions. Often the complications with downtime activities introduce evolving conundrums, new rivals, or ambiguous NPCs who stride from the space between adventures into the glorious chaos of the sandbox. Adventuring in turn provides players with the all-purpose means in the form of treasure that allows them to pursue their dreams in downtime. Sometimes adventuring unlocks exciting possibilities for new downtime activities, as when a new trove of information is uncovered allowing for enticing lines of research, or materials suitable for the fashioning of splendid artifacts are retrieved. There is a kind of circuit of play from downtime to adventures and back again. Looked at from the side of the GM, the system also encourages worldbuilding and sandbox design with a view to this two-way flow. If you put this system into practice, it will transform the way you run games.







THE SYSTEM



Downtime is a phase of play that happens between adventures. Downtime begins as soon as the party arrives back home after adventuring. Each downtime, characters may perform activities of daily living and run errands that can be quickly adjudicated on the spot. Each player character may also perform 1 downtime action drawn from the list of 10 actions that follows. What puts an action on this list is that it both takes time and is potentially significant in that it develops a character, leaves a mark on the campaign world, or provides a leg up for adventuring.

Downtime actions can be resolved at the table at the end of a session after an adventure has wrapped up, or at the start of a session before setting out on a new adventure. In face-to-face play, with a party of four to five players, I find that downtime takes about 30 minutes to resolve. An alternative approach is to resolve downtime in the time between your sessions.

To perform a downtime activity, the player must say *how* their character goes about doing the chosen action. If it seems like it has no hope of success, the GM will inform the player of this and make alternative suggestions. For all downtime activities, the player rolls 2d6 subject to modifiers to adjudicate the success of the action. Generally, a 6– is a failure, a 7–9 is a mixed success, and 10+ is a success.

The source of the base modifier added to this roll is specified in the description of each downtime activity. It is also possible to raise or lower the base modifier by a further +1/–1 based on situational advantages or disadvantages. If the GM has reason to think that something would be harder or easier than usual in the circumstances, then the modifier will apply. Furthermore, any player may forgo their own downtime action to aid another player's downtime action, adding a further +1 to the roll provided they can make a plausible case that their skills and efforts would assist in some meaningful way. As many player characters who wish to contribute may do so. But the total modifier for any downtime roll can never exceed +3/–3.

In some cases, the base modifier for the downtime action comes from ability scores. Whatever system you are using, it is important that ability score modifiers be tightly circumscribed, mainly to the +1 or -1 range. If you are using B/X or AD&D ability scores, then it is suggested that in place of ordinary modifiers you use this table for the purposes of downtime:

3	-2
4-7	-1
8-13	0
14-17	+1
18	+2

Especially when coming from classic play, the question may arise whether the players can have “hirelings” or “retainers” perform multiple downtime actions for them. The answer is a firm “No”. Some downtime activities cannot be farmed out since they involve the player character intimately. Furthermore, this system, including the downtime activities of cultivating a relationship and building an institution, is intended to replace the typical “paid labor” model of the relationship of player characters to NPCs. The player’s companions are people with whom their PC has cultivated a relationship. If the player characters have access to a major supply of labor they can trust, it will often be through some institution they have built. Instead of granting a player character an extra downtime action, such resources can be drawn on to provide a fictional modifier to downtime rolls. At the end of the day, players should also understand that this system imposes a certain resource management aspect on play that is essential to making the choices between sessions matter. Like other rules, it is not 100% realistic, but it serves to dramatize the fact that life is short and there’s never enough time.



BUILDING AN INSTITUTION

Institutions are any kind of ongoing enterprise with fortunes that rise or fall. Examples include a teahouse, theater troupe, garrison, mercenary outfit, criminal gang, guild, or orphanage. Since much open world play revolves around factions associated with institutions, players often develop a keen interest in helping along the enterprises of some and hindering those of others. As play evolves players also often wish to found their own institutions. This downtime activity allows a PC to bolster an existing institution or build a new one from scratch.

When the players decide to build an institution, the GM creates an institution tracker. If the players are bolstering an already existing institution, then the GM decides which step on the tracker it currently occupies. The GM should also take this opportunity to develop some quick notes on the institutional scene as it exists, jotting down a few lines about rival institutions. The player and GM should agree on the fictional and mechanical advantages for moving up the track based on what the institution is and how much of a stake the character has in it. Robust support for an institution gives one access to the goods and services available through the institution free of charge. It may also aid in other downtime rolls, such as cultivating relationships or gathering intelligence, or result in a share in profits if it is a business or criminal enterprise.

Institution Tracker

- 1. Inconsequential:** The institution is a small fry, a little known, bottom rung institution, barely hanging on, in need of much love and care to develop, for example, a backroom noodle shop, a gang of hungry street hustlers, or a dingy fortune teller's shop. To attempt to advance the institution, the character must invest 500 GP in the institution.
- 2. Minor:** The institution is a decidedly lesser quantity, easily forgotten, for example, a shrine to a dwindling faith or a new gang with a small and threatened turf. To attempt to advance the institution, the character must invest 1000 GP in the institution.
- 3. Middling:** The institution has carved out a place for itself as part of the scene, for example, a small but active temple or a lively neighborhood bar. To attempt to advance the institution, the character must invest 2500 GP on the institution.
- 4. Major:** The institution is a major part of the scene, a generally known point of reference, for example, a gang that has cornered some racket or a bustling steak house. To attempt to advance the institution, the character must invest 5000 GP on the institution.

5. **Influential:** The institution shapes the scene, setting the trends, and exercising major influence, for example, the temple of a meteorically rising faith, or a theater troupe with an avid and enthusiastic following among the city's aesthetes. To attempt to advance the institution, the character must invest 10000 GP on the institution.
6. **(In)Famous:** The institution has great renown and may be known outside the locale of its operation. It's the kind of institution that is an object of fear or fascination, for example, the thieves' guild in Lankhmar, or a puppet theater shaping the very fabric of childhood in a city. The character must invest 25000 GP on the institution.
7. **Legendary:** There is nowhere higher to go. The institution is known throughout the campaign setting. It is an extraordinary institution, one of a kind, the stuff of song or tales.

To perform the downtime action, the player must first describe how their character is trying to found or bolster the institution. The GM must agree that the activities being described are within the power of the character and would plausibly strengthen the institution. The character must also make a cash investment corresponding to the level of the institution. If the character is attempting to found a brand new institution, the cost is 250 GP. The base modifier for the roll is determined by extra expenditures: the player receives +1 for each additional ½ the required investment spent, up to a maximum of +2. The player then rolls 2d6 adding the modifier.

- 6- **No Growth:** The institution tracker does not advance. If it is a new institution, it fails to take hold.
- 7-9 **Growing Pains:** The institution tracker advances one step but is subject to growing pains.
- 10+ **Growth:** The institution tracker advances one step.

Growing Pains (1d10)

1. **Envy!** Less successful rivals resent the newfound success of the institution. They begin circulating unsavory rumors about the institution that threaten to undermine the whole operation. Something must be done to bolster the institution's reputation in the next 3 downtimes or it will lose its newfound gains, falling one step on the institution tracker.
2. **Competition!** New peer rivals step up the competition, ruthlessly cutting prices or stealing current patrons, in an effort to strangle the upstart. Something must be done to overcome this problem in the next 3 downtimes or it will lose its newfound gains, falling one step on the institution tracker.

3. **Emulation!** The sudden rise of the institution has led to rampant emulation. Whatever your institution's thing is, suddenly everyone is doing that thing, in the most aggravating way possible. Unless the institution somehow distinguishes itself in the next 3 downtimes, it will lose its newfound gains, falling one step on the institution tracker.
4. **Puritanical Opprobrium!** The rising institution has been chosen as an example of the rot within society by some zealous sect, grasping politician, self-righteous reformer, or two-bit orator. There are rising protests, speeches, or boycotts against the institutions. Something must be done in the next 2 downtimes or it will lose its newfound gains, falling one step on the institution tracker.
5. **Shortage!** Owing to its recent success, something necessary for growth of the institution is now in short supply. Whatever is in short supply will have to be provided in the next 2 downtimes or the institution will lose its newfound gains, falling one step on the institution tracker.
6. **Blackmail!** A NPC or faction blackmails the character, threatening the institution to try to get the character to do something for them. If the action is not performed by the end of the next downtime, the institution will lose its newfound gains, falling one step on the institution tracker.
7. **Sabotage!** Peer rivals engage in some act of sabotage to ruin their new competitor, e.g., arson, spoiling or poisoning supplies, sneaking a giant spider in the basement, or cursing customers. Something must be done to overcome this problem by the end of the next downtime or it will lose its newfound gains, falling one step on the institution tracker.
8. **Unwanted Legal Attention!** The growth of the institution attracts the attention of the authorities, who busy themselves with inspections, assessing fees, and so on. To acquire the necessary licenses, the PCs must pay the level of the institution x 300 GP by the next downtime (or find some other solution) or have the institution shuttered.
9. **Unwanted Criminal Attention!** A criminal outfit notices the success of the institution and decides to shake it down in some aggravating and ongoing way. The character must pay the current institutional level x 100 GP per downtime until the criminal problem is resolved or it will fall one step on the institution tracker for each missed payment.
10. **A Dangerous Offer!** An institution of one rank higher offers an alliance with the upstart. Accepting means accruing the even more powerful enemies of this institution who will react on the next downtime. Declining means that the higher ranked institution will seek revenge in the near future.

CULTIVATING A RELATIONSHIP

This downtime activity allows a character to form or deepen a relationship with an NPC. To perform this action, the player must identify an already existing NPC or describe a new NPC in collaboration with the GM. For example, perhaps the player wishes their character to form a relationship with one of the so far undistinguished soldiers camping near the PC's village. The GM and player might both contribute some details about the soldier.

When a new relationship is formed, the GM will create a relationship tracker for the NPC that has five steps (Stranger/Acquaintance/Associate/Friend/Intimate). Advancing on the tracker represents a thickening of the relationship, and brings with it benefits, including access to information, favors, and the possibility of bringing the NPC along as an adventuring companion.

Relationship Tracker

- 1. Strangers:** Do I know you? This is where all relationships begin. Receive -2 on attempts to recruit them for adventures and gather intelligence.
- 2. Acquaintances:** Someone you know from around the way. Receive -1 on attempts to recruit them for adventures and gather intelligence. The NPC will do courtesies.
- 3. Associates:** There is some lesser bond, shared experience, a minor debt of gratitude, etc. Receive $+0$ on attempts to recruit them for adventures and gather intelligence. The NPC will do small favors.
- 4. Friends:** There is a serious bond, real pleasure in one another's company, a common cause, a major shared experience, a debt of real gratitude, etc. Receive $+1$ on attempts to recruit them for adventures and gather intelligence. The NPC will do big favors.
- 5. Intimates:** There is a deep bond between you, like true or very old friends, or those who fought in war together, or lovers, or someone who looks up to you with profound respect. Receive $+2$ on attempts to recruit them for adventures and gather intelligence. The NPC will risk suffering serious harm, injury, death, or loss of station on behalf of the PC.

To cultivate a relationship, the player must say what happens during the downtime between their character and the NPC to create or deepen the relationship. This will often be some action the character performs with this intention, but it can also be some situation or happenstance that brings the two together. If an already existing NPC would not be open to forming a relationship, then the GM will inform the player in advance that a negative situational modifier will apply or that it is impossible.

The player then rolls 2d6 adding a base modifier equal to their ability modifier for charisma. Situational modifiers come from things like the character's standing with a faction to which the NPC belongs, a difference in station between the character and NPC, or perhaps a thoughtful gift or welcome news from the character.

6– Not Clicking: The relationship tracker does not advance.

7-9 Two Way Street: The relationship tracker advances one step if the PC meets the NPC's need.

10+ Deepening: The relationship tracker advances one step.

Relationships are a two-way street, so on a 7-9 for the tracker to advance to the next step, the PC must reciprocate by meeting some need of the NPC. This request will generally be commensurate with the new level of relationship. For acquaintances it may be a courtesy, or minor intelligence to be gathered. For friends it might be a big favor. Just as characters may attempt to recruit NPCs to adventure, the NPC may attempt to recruit the party to undertake a risky but rewarding task. If the character accepts the relationship tracker advances.

Adventure Companions

If the player wishes to recruit an NPC as an adventuring companion for a given session, the GM will first decide whether this is feasible, keeping in mind that the very powerful or those with pressing business will not generally be willing to go adventuring. Should the GM determine it to be within the realm of possibility, the player rolls 2d6 applying the base modifier for the listed level of relationship. The roll can be further modified by situational modifiers up to +1/–1, including a generous or miserly share of treasure offered by the party. Note that recruiting an adventuring companion is not a downtime action and can be done in addition to a downtime action.

6– Unwilling: The NPC declines the offer to go adventuring.

7-9 Willing: The NPC assents to go adventuring.

10+ Enthusiastic: The NPC assents to go adventuring and receives +1 on morale.

Adventure companions are generally controlled in play by the player whose character recruited them, although the GM may take control at any time. If combat is going badly, or if asked to perform a harrowing or odious task, test morale by rolling 2d6 with a base modifier set by the relationship tracker and further a situational modifier based on how bad the situation is from the point of view of the companion. On a 6– the companion balks.

GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

This downtime action allows a player to gather information from other people. The player first specifies what they want information about and whom they will consult. The player will then say how they go about trying to elicit the information. Do they share war stories and buy the mercenary outfit free rounds of drinks to learn about a certain enemy they've faced? Or maybe they want to track down rumors about a traveling caravan by bringing trade goods to an outpost? The GM should decide if there is any chance the relevant group might know *something* about the issue, erring on the side of the player if in doubt. If the GM firmly knows they wouldn't, they should treat the player's roll as a failure.

To perform the downtime action, the player rolls 2d6 adding a modifier based on the character's highest relationship tracker with NPCs who might be able to introduce them to relevant people or help them track down the information (p. 12). If there are none, then the character is trying to gather intelligence from strangers (-2). If there is more than one relevant NPC with whom the PC has a relationship of acquaintance or higher, then add a situational modifier of +1. Other situational advantage might come from being respected by a given faction the character is gathering information from, having juicy gossip they'll love to hear, or spending significant money to grease palms.

6- No Intel: The character doesn't find what they were looking for, but the GM will provide an interesting rumor about something else.

7-9 Shaky Intel: The character finds what they were looking for, but the GM has the option of mixing the truth with one piece of ambiguous or misleading information.

10+ Solid Intel: The character finds accurate, real information about what they were looking for.

The player may also use this downtime activity to turn up something interesting, in the spirit of "throw something fun my way." In that case, they no longer have to say what they're trying to learn, nor do they have to roll. The GM should take this as an opportunity to provide them with a good adventure hook or exciting piece of gossip.

LEARNING A SKILL

Characters will sometimes want to learn some skill, whether it's a language, sailing, becoming a card sharp, or the daunting art of riding giant crows. This is true even in games where there is no skill system. When the player declares the intention to learn a new skill, the GM should decide whether this is possible. As a rule of thumb, the GM should not allow class powers such as thief skills or the ability to use scrolls to be learned in this way. The GM should create a skill tracker with a number of steps corresponding to the complexity or difficulty of learning the skill: easy (1), challenging (3), and hard (5).

The player then rolls 2d6 with a base modifier set by the skill of the teacher. No teacher (-1), competent teacher (0), skilled teacher (+1), and master teacher (+2). Further situational modifiers might come from a relevant ability score or from experience.

6- **Not Catching On:** The skill tracker does not advance.

7-9 **Steady Progress:** The skill tracker advances one step.

10+ **Leaps and Bounds:** The skill tracker advances one step. Treat the next attempt to learn this skill as Steady Progress (no roll necessary).

When the tracker is complete the player acquires the skill. For skills that plausibly come in degrees, one can treat the tracker as providing different levels of proficiency. For example, a five-step tracker for learning a language might work like this: 1 Basic Proficiency/3 Advanced Proficiency/ 5 Fluency. This is a good way to make languages matter in a game, without making them a huge barrier, since anybody could pick up the basic proficiency needed for limited communications in one or two downtimes.



MARTIAL TRAINING

In war as in peace, practice makes perfect. There are two ways to engage in martial training: keeping in form and mastering a technique. Keeping in form might involve sword play with a dueling partner, sweaty knife work alone in a darkened barn, or shooting a bow on a range. Mastering a technique is about learning secrets of war from masters of the art through intense instruction.

Keeping in Form

Anyone may spend a downtime practicing at arms. The player must choose a weapon type (sword, knife, bow, etc) with which their character practices. They roll 2d6. Although any class may keep in form, only fighters (or fighter sub-classes) receive a base modifier equal to $1/3$ their level rounded up. Situational modifiers are granted for having a training partner. If the character is assisted by another player character as a training partner, both may take the downtime action adding +1 to their roll.

6- A Little Rusty: Pick one: +1 to hit, +1 to damage, -1 AC (melee) or +10 ft range (missile) until the next downtime.

7-9 In Good Form: Pick two from the above list.

10+ In Top Form: Pick three from the above list.

Mastering a Technique

One may also work with a master to learn more sophisticated and esoteric fighting styles. To do so, a player character must first find a teacher who knows the relevant art. Such martial masters are few and choose their disciples well, often requiring them to prove themselves through adventures or feats of arms. Should someone find a martial master willing to instruct them, the GM will create a martial tracker corresponding to the potency of the art.

To master a technique, the player rolls 2d6. Although any class may master a technique (provided they can use the weapons involved), only fighters (or fighter sub-classes) receive a base modifier equal to $1/3$ their level rounded up.

6- Mastery is Elusive: The martial tracker does not advance.

7-9 Getting the Hang of It: The martial tracker advances one step.

10+ Mastering the Technique: The martial tracker advances one step. Treat the next attempt to master this technique as Getting the Hang of It (no roll necessary).



Sample Techniques

Depending on the system you are using, different martial techniques will make sense. They should provide modest but real benefits. Here are some sample techniques.

Serpent's Strike (3 Steps)

This technique allows its user to draw their sword with unbelievable rapidity, forcing a surprise check (3 in 6) against those who were not suspecting an attack.

Red River (4 Steps)

This gory killing technique allows its user to force a morale check against enemies once per combat upon slaying a foe, even if they would not otherwise check morale at that time.

Revenant's Wrath (5 Steps)

This strange technique allows its user to fight five rounds after their heart has stopped through sheer force of will. Should the combat end before the 5 rounds is up, the dying character may deliver a farewell speech before collapsing. Healing will not avail them for they are already dead.

RESEARCH

This downtime action allows one to acquire lore or knowledge through study. To research a topic the player character must have access to a trove of information. Most often, this will be a library, grimoire, or an archive of some sort. But the trove could be any source of information from which the answers to questions can be researched, whether this takes the form of translating runes on ancient obelisks, or alchemical or scientific experimentation. Each trove of information has one or more subject matters (a small personal library would have several, a huge library a dozen).

To perform the downtime action the player must formulate a question they would like to investigate that falls within the subject matter of the trove. The GM then writes up a research tracker for that question in advance. This research tracker is kept secret since it represents the revelation of information through the progress of the investigation. Each step is an entry that reveals progressively deeper information in answer to the question. The steps on the tracker need to be interesting, enticing, and promise at least some actionable intelligence. (If the answer to the question is quotidian or irrelevant, then the GM should make it a 1 step tracker.)

For any open question, a character can spend a downtime action investigating the topic. To see whether they make progress, the player rolls 2d6 adding a base modifier equal to their intelligence ability modifier. Situational modifiers might come from alternate sources of information or background knowledge of the relevant subject. The results are the following:

6– Stymied: The research tracker does not advance.

7-9 Shaky Research: The research tracker advances one step, but info may be uncertain.

10+ Solid Research: The research tracker advances one step.

On a **Shaky Research** result, the character advances one step on the research tracker, but the GM reserves the option to introduce one uncertainty, ambiguity, or misleading piece of information along with the truth. The GM should not reveal whether they have exercised this option.

You can put some nice twists on a research tracker. For example, you can have *branches*, where a step for one question opens another question with its own tracker. You can also set up *walls* that require the players to acquire new sources of information to make further progress, for example, consult a specific text. If there is a wall, the GM should tell the players clearly what their research reveals they must do to make further progress on a question.

Research Example

Suppose the party has acquired the Third Puzzle Scroll, a powerful but perplexing artifact. They suspect that to unlock its full power, they will have to acquire the first two puzzle scrolls. Having access to a trove of information (a library) with the subject of history, a character begins to investigate the question “Where are the first two puzzle scrolls?” The GM decides on a 5-step tracker, since there is meaty lore and a couple of exciting adventure hooks in the service of a major campaign goal.

Step 1: A section of *Testimony of the Senses* discusses the wonders seen by Balzabo the Theoricus in the legendary Library of Worms at the Monastery of Larsa two centuries ago. He describes in detail the first two Puzzle Scrolls, unfortunately dwelling more on aesthetics than substance.

Step 2: According to standard histories, the Monastery of Larsa was destroyed by the People of Ash a century ago, fire worshipping minotaur berserkers. It is said that the knowledge of a thousand generations went up in flames, a pleasing sacrifice to their burnt gods. However, *Captivity Amongst the Savage Bulls*, an account of Umut, a librarian who served for 10 years under their harsh dominion, testifies that certain treasures were rescued from the fires by the Ash Scholars, including the Second Puzzle Scroll. Sadly, there is no mention of the First Puzzle Scroll having escaped the fire.

Step 3: According to Nabi, the court poet of the Ignatur, in his *Songs of the Ziggurat*, the increasingly paranoid Ignatur turned the power of his nomadic empire to building the Labyrinthine Ziggurat to hide his treasures, including the Second Puzzle Scroll. The ziggurat is a maze of dizzying volcanic glass hidden in the Desert of Shifting Sands, near the ancient city of Qaz. In addition to the current question, you may now also pursue the branching question, “What are the secrets of the Labyrinthine Ziggurat?” (Branch)

Step 4: The First Puzzle Scroll was not burnt after all! A stray textual reference reveals that twenty years before the burning of the Monastery of Larsus, the wizard Alangstrum, Piercer of Veils, quietly removed the First Puzzle Scroll for obscure reasons. Several of the texts you have been consulting refer you to Alangstrum’s introduction to *Priaducts and Other Ways Hither and Yon*, a book sadly not found in your library. Perhaps you could make further progress if you could locate a copy of this rare text. (Wall)

Step 5: You’ve got it! In the introduction to *Priaducts and Other Ways Hither and Yon*, Alangstrum obliquely suggests that he opened a priaduct to Wishery. There he placed the first puzzle scroll in a shaded grotto on the Hooded Isle in the Sea of Palimpsests, where the veil of reality wears thin, and four worlds flicker through like flames behind a thin parchment.

REVELRY

Revelry is a downtime action in which a character flush with gold spends it on wild revelries, whether a feast lasting many nights, raucous tavern crawl, or the extended use of mind-altering substances. The player describes where and with whom their character intends to share their revelry keeping in mind that it must involve the expenditure of large sums. The character spends up to $\text{Level} \times 1d4 \times 50$ GP. This excess provides a rich and memorable experiences. They roll 2d6 adding a base modifier equal to their constitution modifier.

- 6- **Some Regrets:** Receive 1 XP per GP spent but roll on the Revelry Mishaps table.
- 7-9 **Wild Experience:** Receive 1 XP per GP spent.
- 10+ **Something to Remember:** Receive 1 XP per GP spent and roll on the Revelry Boons table.



Revelry Mishaps (1d8)

- 1. Hangover!** The player suffers -1 on all physical actions next session. The player should describe the hangover and their character's appearance at the start of the session.
- 2. Brawl!** The character starts the next session $1d4$ HP below maximum (min. 1). The player will collaborate with the GM to say who the fight was with and how it ensued.
- 3. Lost Possession!** The player should dice randomly to see which item from their character sheet they lost. If it is an important item, the GM will determine who has it. The character may use the Gather Information downtime action to reveal this information (p.14). An adventure or confrontation will usually be required to recover it.
- 4. Acting the Fool!** The player should describe the embarrassing public episode that led to their character's new bad reputation. They receive -1 on all reaction rolls and attempts to cultivate relationships in the area. This condition can only be removed by succeeding at an adventure that cultivates their renown in the area.
- 5. Secret Divulged!** The character lets slip something crucial they shouldn't have, like the location of a dungeon, or the possession of a magical weapon. This will come back to haunt them. The player and GM may collaborate on the secret revealed and the GM will decide who has heard, placing the information in the hands of a rival, or the authorities, or creating a rival adventuring party.
- 6. Offense Given!** Either lose 1 tick on a relationship clock or acquire a new rival. The player will narrate who is offended and how in collaboration with the GM.
- 7. Financial Loss!** The character failed at gambling, or made a very imprudent investment, or was conned. The player will narrate this loss in collaboration with the GM. They lose $\text{Level} \times 1d4 \times 50$ additional GP with no additional XP gain. If they cannot pay, they are now in debt to unsavory characters who will blackmail the character into going on adventures or performing other services for them.
- 8. Illness!** The character has acquired some long-term illness from their revels, whether a parasite from street food, a sexually transmitted disease, or an allergic reaction. The effect should be mild but real. Examples might include needing to eat double rations (for a parasite) or a 1 in 6 chance each session of fevers giving a -1 on all rolls (disease). The cure will usually require an adventure to locate the necessary elements of the cure (rare salts, curative springs, etc).

Revelry Boons (1d8)

- 1. Magical Night!** After a magical night, the character feels like they're still walking on water. They may take +4 on saving throws for the next session.
- 2. Carousing Patron!** The drinks were freeing flowing over the course of the night, but many of the expenses were covered by a drinking companion. The character retains half the GP spent on carousing but takes the full XP reward.
- 3. Experience of a Lifetime!** The character will never forget this night. The player should share with the group one memory or image or scene from the evening that their character will carry with them forever. They acquire an additional 50% experience bonus from their carousing expenditure.
- 4. Drinking Friends or Romance!** The character shared some special times with an old friend or made a new one. Increase the character's relationship tracker by one step with this person. The player may pick the NPC, or if it's a new friend make a proposal to the GM and open a tracker at the acquaintance level.
- 5. Golden Opportunity!** During their revels, the character finds a unique opportunity to set back the interests of a rival by going on an adventure. If the character has no rivals, treat this as the following result.
- 6. Secret Information!** While under the influence, someone lets slip a secret of some significance. The GM should provide the player with real actionable intelligence, ideally in the form of an adventure hook, or at the least something very amusing (and potentially compromising) about a known NPC.
- 7. Business Prospects!** During the revelries, the character is presented with a one-time opportunity to found a new institution. They may pay half price in the next downtime to Build an Institution and take +1 on the roll.
- 8. Living Legend!** It was legendary night, and the character did something amazing that the player may narrate. What the character did is now the talk of the town: receive +1 to reaction rolls and cultivating relationships in the region until their reputation changes.

SPELLCRAFT

Wizards hunger to learn ancient sorceries and invent their own spells. Clerics too often aspire to secret knowledge of the divine, hoping to bring forth unique miracles as living manifestations of their intimate relationship with their god.

Learning a Spell

Magic-users learn spells from spell books. When a magic-user gains a level, they may learn a single spell they already have in a book for each new spell slot in a single downtime action (no roll or spell tracker required). At other times, when a character declares they are learning a spell, the GM creates a spell tracker with the number of steps corresponding to the level of spell. When the tracker is completed the spell is known and may be memorized from the book.

Clerics by contrast have access to the entire normal spell list without the need for learning from books. However, to learn a novel spell that is not on that normal list, a cleric must open a spell tracker as a magic-user would. There are two possible sources from which new cleric spells might be learned. The creator of a spell may teach it to their disciples, who may in turn teach it to others. In this way, clerical spells often pass from prophet to disciple, and on to disciples of the disciples. Or clerics may learn the new spell from a holy book in which the spell has been inscribed. In that case, they cannot impart the magic to others, who must also learn from the book. Once a cleric has learned a new spell, it is permanently added to their spell list and they no longer need to consult the book.

For each downtime action spent learning the spell, the player rolls 2d6. The player receives a base modifier on the roll equal to the difference between the maximum level of spell they can cast and the level of the spell they are learning. A situational modifier of +1 is provided by being instructed by a teacher who already knows the spell, even if one is learning it from a book.

- 6– You Are Not Ready:** The spell tracker does not advance.
- 7-9 Slow Mastery:** The spell tracker advances one step.
- 10 Rapid Mastery:** The spell tracker advances one step. Treat the next attempt to learn this skill as Slow Mastery (no roll necessary).

Creating a New Spell

Magicians of any ambition hunger to pull from the depths of secret knowledge unknown sorceries, and divines of any stature work unique miracles for which they alone are known. To meddle with such higher mysteries is a dangerous affair. Not a few potent sorcerers and saints were undone by inquiring in things better left unknown.

To research a new spell, a player must first write up a spell description in the style of the rules employed in the campaign. Clerical spells should be aligned in some way with the nature of the cleric's deity. The GM will decide if the spell is over (or under) powered for its level and will suggest emendations required to make the spell viable. Note that a character cannot create a spell they would not be able to cast. The character must then make initial expenditures amounting to 500 GP per spell level for a magic-user and 1000 GP per spell level for a cleric. For a magic-user this represents materials for research. For clerics this expenditure is to perform a great ritual consecrating a holy place or altar, where further meditation or offerings may be given. The rest of the spellcraft rolls for creating this spell happen in meditation or ritual at this holy place.

The GM will then create a new spell tracker with a number of steps equal to the spell level +2. The character may research the spell by rolling 2d6. The player receives a base modifier on the roll equal to the difference between the maximum level of spell they can cast and the level of the spell they are learning. A situational modifier is provided by being favored or disfavored by the diety (for clerics) or by possessing something that facilitates or hinders research (magic-user). Note that this is a dangerous affair, for should the caster roll snake eyes on any result, they must roll on the magical disaster table.

Snake Eyes — Total Disaster: Roll on the magical disaster table.

6— This is Going Nowhere: The spell tracker does not advance.

7-9 Arcane Speedbump: GM determines something required to advance one step on the new spell tracker.

10+ Insights Flowing: Advance one step on the new spell tracker.

For the result of **Arcane Speedbump** the GM will specify something special required for the research to advance. For a cleric this might be a special service to the deity. For a magic-user this might be a special ingredient or instrument acquirable by adventuring. The GM can also opt to simply specify a sum of gold equal to the level of the spell x 300 GP representing further sacrifices or research materials.

Once the tracker is complete, the creator of the spell counts as having learned the spell. However, if they are a magic-user the spell exists in the form of notes that must be incorporated in a spellbook before it can be memorized.

Magical Disaster (1d8 + Spell level)

2. The spell in its current incarnation proves too unstable to capture. You know in your heart that you have failed. Luckily, your preparations can be salvaged as a one-time scroll of the spell being researched.
3. Frustrated with your failures, you fall asleep to be visit by your spell in your dreams who bids you farewell. The spell now exists only in your memory as a one-time memorized spell. Start the next session with the spell memorized.
4. As you try to wrestle some part of the spell onto parchment or into your soul, the magic vanishes with a sizzle, disappearing. Erase all progress on the tracker. Back to the drawing board!
5. You have a near catastrophe as the spell inflicts a wound on the skin of reality. You are able to contain the disaster but only by exhausting your mind. Until the next downtime, you lose one spell slot of your highest level.
6. Something is wrong. You feel the heavy presence of the spell in your mind, but you cannot get at it. It has taken on a life as a parasite, reaching its feathered tendrils deep into the recesses of your mind, making itself *very* comfortable. It cannot be cast, but occupies a spell slots of the relevant level. Your mind or soul may be cleansed with a 3-step spiritual exercise (p.31).
7. Your thoughts dwell more and more obsessively on the spell. By the time you realize something has gone wrong it's too late. The spell has colonized your mind. It is now the only spell you are able to memorize! (You may memorize it multiple times, but spell slots of other levels must go unfilled.) The only way for you to free yourself from this obsession is by completing research for this spell.
8. The spell leaps from the pages of your notes or from the very heavens to hang in the air as a disorganized luminous sigil for one beautiful moment before it is cast on you with inimical intent (if applicable)! All progress on the spell is ruined.
9. As 8, but if the effect of the spell is a negative effect with a duration, its effect is permanent until remove curse is cast by a cleric of higher level than the caster. If the spell does damage, triple it.
10. Working on the spell, visions flood your mind in a revelation of shapes and forms like abstract art for hours on end. Rightly or wrongly, you believe with a strange confidence that the visions have come from your deity (cleric) or a cosmic entity (magic-user). Once per session for the next 1d10 sessions, the character is subject to an illusory vision at inopportune times. These visions seem like they are trying to communicate something of vital importance.

11. Your ministrations produce an unwelcome vibration in a heavenly sphere. The harmonics are too much for your vulgar material to contain. Your flesh mutates in an unpleasant or inconvenient way. Collaborate with the GM to say how.
12. Your research tears open a rent in reality that leads elsewhere. The GM will determine the nature of the portal and where it leads. This portal remains open for 3d6 days, allowing entities during this time to travel freely either way.
13. The spell has invoked chaos upsetting the ecology of some distant world or celestial sanctum. You have earned the enmity of beings from that higher reality. Terrible huntsmen now pursue you. The GM should prepare a rival adventuring party of otherworldly slayers. The GM should secretly roll 1d20 to determine how many sessions before the huntsmen appear.
14. The disaster happens swiftly. You think you have it under control. But you are wrong. Soon it is standing before you: a terrible reflection of you that you cast like a shadow (or does it cast you?) in another dimension. It looks identical to you and has all your powers. It can do everything you can do, and if you do not slay it this instant, this inimical entity will escape and sew endless havoc in your form, trying to undermine and usurp your station.
15. Your ruined spell has served as conduit for a demon who will torment you until you agree to do its bidding. If you refuse it will take slowly what you love most and deliver strength to your most hated enemy, unless you can find a way to banish or defeat it.
16. Unquenchable black flames pour forth from the faulty broken sigils you have crafted or from the spaces between the words of your uttered prayers. Silent and stuttering they cover your body and spread in a strange conflagration in a half mile radius, withering and aging everything they touch. Anyone touched must save vs death. If they survive, they permanently age 10d6 years from the temporal flames. Inanimate objects are likewise aged
17. For your terrible transgression, tampering with the deepest layers of reality, the original guardians — chthonic angels who dwell in the foundations — have snatched you from the face of the earth, casting you into the Emerald Fane beyond space and time. Even to utter your name is dangerous now.

Writing a Spell Book

An ordinary written sentence is a potential meaning that is only actualized through reading, when it is grasped in thought or speech by the reader. But spells share something of the nature of God's mind: for them the distinction between potentiality and actuality breaks down. For a spell to exist in any form it must already be working magic. Like a coiled spring, spells may only be contained by countervailing forces. Only years of training enables a mage to hold them within their memory, and only a rich connection to the divine allows the soul of a priest to serve as the vessel for miracles. To embody spells in a worldly substance is no simple task. Not just any materials may house them, but only those of special arcane or holy quality.

The original vessel of their containment must be a splendid artifact. Within its pages, the spells must be surrounded by a prison architecture worthy of Piranesi, whether they are embedded deep in abstruse theoretical discussions, sung by the heroes in an epic poem, implicit in arcane legal discussions of holy commandments, or surrounded by shackles of illumination and incredible artistry. Once brought into the world, such texts can be copied by those of lesser skill, although the spells are often corrupted in the process.

To create a new spell book, the magic-user or cleric must first commission a master artisan to create a book as a splendid artifact (p.29). They must pay the artisan for the creation of the book according to the number of spell levels it may contain. A 2500 GP spellbook can contain 2 spell levels. For each additional 2 spell levels contained, double price of the book. The player specifies which spells the book will contain. For magic-users these can be a mix of any spells the magic user knows, including a mix of newly researched spells from notes and older spells. For clerics, the spells included must be ones the cleric created through spellcraft.

Upon launching the project, the player must name the book, and describe the theme and nature of the book, including the surrounding material that contains the spells and binds them together. The book's theme must explain how all the spells selected fit together in one thematically unified text; you cannot just slap any old spell alongside any other spell and join them with filler text — such ramshackle bonds could never hold potent sorceries together in one volume. Once completed, the book will become a known item in the campaign world, attracting the interest and envy of other wizards or clerics. To make such a book is to leave one's mark on the campaign world forever.

Copying a Spell Book

To copy an existing spell book, one must commission a copy. Doing so takes 1 downtime action. Such copies are not splendid artifacts. The player must explain how the appearance of this evidently cheaper copy sadly departs from that of the text copied. Upon completion there is a 25% that one of the spells in the text is corrupted and cannot be used. Dice randomly for which. Copies of copies are possible as well, with the same costs and odds of failure.



SPLENDID ARTIFACTS

A splendid artifact is imbued with the idiosyncratic vision of a true artist who employs the deepest lore of their craft to breathe life into rare materials. At the highest levels, craft itself passes into magic, for the artisan speaks the hidden language of things, and their creations are set apart from mundane objects by unusual properties. The slumbering enchantment of their creations may be awakened by memorable events in which they play a role.

To commission a splendid artifact, a character must first find a master artisan who is willing to undertake the project. Locating such a rare individual and convincing them to perform their service usually requires an adventure. For example, it might involve earning the gratitude of a retired swordsmith by righting a great injustice against him, or rescuing a master artisan from the depths of squalid criminal entanglements, or receiving permission from the Queen to employ her master tailor.

To this willing artisan, the character must bring remarkable materials to be incorporated into the item. Some examples of remarkable materials might be a star opal pried from a mummy's crown to set into the pommel of a dagger, or dragon scales to make armor, or bolts of cloud silk from the floating manse of a spirit of the air for the sewing of glorious evening wear. Once a willing craftsman has been located, the character must also pay them a fee that befits their skill: 1000 GP or 100 times the normal cost of the item, whichever is higher. The player then rolls 2d6. There are no modifiers to this roll.

6- **Quality Takes Time:** The item will be finished at the end of the downtime after next

7-9 **Almost Done:** The item will be finished at the end of the next downtime

10+ **The Work is Complete:** The item is finished at the end of this downtime

Upon completion, the player must describe the item to the group, name it, and state a special property of the item. Others will notice the items and speak about it. It will become an object of envy, desire, and respect. Strangers may recognize and admire the artisan's work. Rival adventuring parties may try to take it. All splendid artifacts are preternaturally sturdy and function superbly. They do not break under ordinary circumstances and may survive even remarkable damage. Here is an additional list of suggested special properties the player may pick from, or they may collaborate with the GM on an alternative.

Melee Weapon: +1 to hit or +1 to damage or effectiveness against a creature type normally immune to weapons (e.g. spirits, demons, undead, etc.)

Ranged Weapon: +1 to hit or +1 to damage or +20% range

Armor: +1 to AC or one class lighter than normal

Shield: Reflects like a mirror or embeds a hooded lantern or -1 to enemy morale checks

Garments: +1 to reaction rolls or ingenious hidden pockets or resistance to some element

Thieves Tools: +10% to lock picking or +10% to find/remove traps

Holy Symbol: Turn undead as one level higher or +1 morale for adventuring companions

Books: May contain spells. See spellcraft (p.23)

Although it has special properties, a splendid artifact is not yet magical. When a splendid artifact plays a role in a wondrous, epic, or improbable event, its magic is quickened. The enchantment that results is influenced by the remarkable materials from which it is made, the intentions and artistry of its maker, and the events that birthed it.

When a party member is carrying a splendid artifact that plays a role in a remarkable adventure, its magic may be quickened. The GM and player of the character must agree that the events that transpired were worthy to live on in song. The GM should then decide on the magic that has been kindled in consultation with the player. As a rule of thumb, the more remarkable the splendid artifact and the more worthy the tale, the greater the magic kindled. Try to make the magic unique, fitting some combination of the spirit of the materials, the craftsman, and, above all, the event that gave it birth.

For example, perhaps a character extricates the party from certain death by using their splendid robes looted from tombs to convince a band of knights that they are the Queen. This might kindle the slumbering magic of the robes, granting the wearer the power once per day to cast command as they assume the noble stature of dead royalty. Or perhaps a character, wielding a morning star crafted from a meteorite by a brutal master smith, slays a powerful and wily ogre mage. It might acquire the ability to steal one memorized spell from each mage it slays.

Perhaps in your world every magic item comes with an origin story like this. In that case, I recommend striking spells identifying the nature and workings of magical items (*identify*) from the spell list. Instead try this: one identifies a magical object and its powers only by learning the story of its birth, using the downtime action of research.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

A paladin has broken a vow of her order and wishes to regain her purity by embarking on a quest. A priest devotes himself to the study of a perilous branch of the holy law to acquire powers over a particular demon. A monk has come upon a place of the ancients and wishes to meditate there to understand its nature. A character wishes to offer spiritual counsel to a troubled soul. This is an open-ended system for engaging in spiritual exercises like these.

A character of any class may pursue a spiritual exercise. To do so, the player must specify what mechanical or fictional effects achieving their goal will produce and say through what spiritual exercises their character will be pursuing this goal. The goal and method of pursuit must be spiritual or mystical in a broad sense, although they need not be narrowly religious. The GM decides if it is feasible and creates a spiritual exercise tracker with a number of steps corresponding to the potency of the intended result.

Spiritual Exercise Tracker

Minor Effect (1 Step): a one-time small benefit or situational modifier. For example, a paladin prays to her deity to master her fears of the demons of the night, giving her the ability to re-roll failed saving throws against fear they induce on the next adventure.

Moderate Effect (3 Steps): a small benefit perhaps accomplishing a minor campaign goal. For example, spiritually counseling an artistically blocked artisan so that they can resume creating splendid artifacts.

Major Effect (5 Steps): a benefit perhaps accomplishing a moderate campaign goal or providing a permanent benefit. For example, a fighter with an alignment opposed to a magical sword wishes to struggle with the blade on the spiritual plane where it dwells. A successful completion of the spiritual exercise means that each will change their nature to become compatible.

To perform the action, the player rolls 2d6, adding a base modifier equal to the character's wisdom modifier. Situational modifiers might come from consulting with a spiritual guide or using an excellent location for the spiritual exercise. If progress would finish the spiritual exercise tracker, ignore any result of spiritual conundrum.

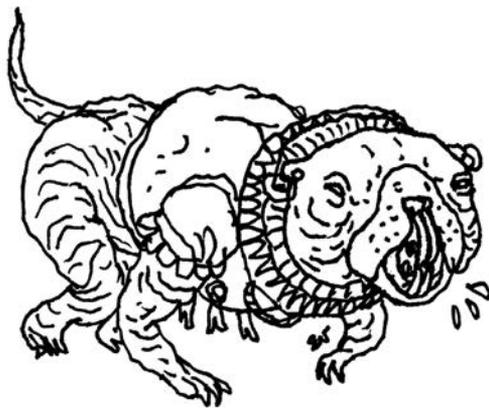
6– Spiritual Impass: Do not advance the spiritual exercise tracker.

7-9 Spiritual Conundrum: Advance the spiritual exercise tracker one step and roll on the Spiritual Conundrums table below.

10+ Clarity of Spirit: Advance the spiritual exercise tracker one step.

Spiritual Conundrums (1d8)

1. **Unwelcome Realization!** The character learns something about themselves or the world that they would rather not know. The player and GM may collaborate to say what this is.
2. **Troubled Spirit!** Until further progress is made on the tracker, the character loses the use of one significant class power.
3. **Vow!** To make further progress on the spiritual exercise, the character must make and maintain a significant and inconvenient vow for the remaining duration of the exercise. The player and GM will collaborate to specify the vow.
4. **Purity!** To make further progress on the spiritual exercise, the character must purify themselves. This GM will explain how. It will usually require some sort of adventure.
5. **Sacrifice!** To make further progress on the spiritual exercise, the character must perform a sacrifice costing their level x 200 GP.
6. **Pilgrimage!** To make further progress on the spiritual exercise, the character must make a pilgrimage to some site specified by the GM as an adventuring goal.
7. **Renunciation!** To make further progress, the character must permanently renounce some worldly possession, companion, or pursuit. This must be something the character values, which is a felt cost to abandon.
8. **Spiritual Foe!** During this exercise, a spiritual foe is revealed to the character. To make further progress, this foe must be defeated in the real world. The GM will identify this foe.





DOWNTIME AS WORLDBUILDING



When leveraged to full effect, this system of downtime activities can transform how a GM creates a campaign world and preps sessions. Rather than producing mind-numbing demographic data or tedious lore, when prepping your campaign try responding to these 10 prompts. They will help you develop your setting, create your starting community, and stock your map with sites of exploration and treasure that encourage the use of downtime activities.

1. Name one institution at each level (insignificant to legendary) operating in the starting community where play begins. Be sure to include one for revelry, one with a trove of information for research, one where a certain useful skill might be learned, and one where a martial technique might be mastered.
2. Name three master artisans that currently reside in or near the starting community where the campaign begins. Include one blacksmith, one bookmaker, and one that is more fanciful, like a haberdasher, jeweler, or a glazier. Specify the distinctive character of their creations, as well as the terms of their service in the form of adventure hooks.
3. Name one rival adventuring party that operates in the area. Give one member a formidable martial technique and decide who taught it to them. Give one member a splendid artifact and decide who created it and how they got it. Give one member a strange or rare skill. Give one member a magical book and decide what spells it contains and who wrote it.
4. Create one secret location where spiritual exercises can be performed that produce a specific benefit, for example a sacred grove that allows one to commune with nature, or a field of psychedelic mushroom that induces prophetic visions.

5. Create one secret location with a trove of otherwise inaccessible and valuable information, like an ancient observatory of celestial phenomenon that allows one to research the stars or cosmic events, or a ruined manse containing a family library that allows one to research ancient noble lines, including the locations of familial estates and their rarer holdings.
6. Create one secret location where special revelry can be engaged in, like a witch's bathhouse, fey parade ground, or feast hall of ghostly warriors. Place this secret locations on the map and decide what special benefits (and perhaps perils) such revelry provides.
7. Name three legendary institutions from the past that no longer exist. What ruins are associated with each? Place these ruins on your map as the starting sites of exploration for your campaign.
8. Name three prolific master craftsmen of the distant past. Decide how you can recognize the splendid works of each. For each, name and describe one splendid artifact they created and one magic item they birthed. Place these magical and splendid artifacts in the three sites of exploration, or in the hands of NPCs.
9. Name one tragically lost magical book. Identify its author and craftsman. Decide what the book looks like and what spells it contains. Decide what legend is told about its loss. Place this book in one of the sites of exploration and decide how it got there.
10. Think of one remarkable material that could be used to fashion splendid artifacts, like wood from the first tree, a meteorite full of rare and potent metals, or a fey fabric. Place this material in one of the sites of exploration as treasure.





FURTHER READING



If you want more downtime actions that fit with this system, the single best place to go is Ava Islam's *Errant*. Islam has produced a rich array of downtime actions on the model of my system: alchemy, taming animals, making proclamations (disseminating information or starting rumors), and holding funerals.

I also highly recommend Nick Kuntz's "finding the right buyer" action on his blog *Underworld Adventurer*, which brings my system to bear on the recurring conundrum of how to liquidate antiques and other rare items recovered through adventuring. Nick Whelan's library research presented in his posts "Bookshelves" and "A Better Use of Bookshelves" on *Papers and Pencils* are the most elegant lightweight alternative to the heavy GM prep rules on research presented here. I also recommend Joseph McCroo's "Name This Alchemy Book" for *His Majesty the Worm*.

In writing the rules for revelry, I benefitted from the large set of carousing rules developed on blogs, beginning with Jeff Rient's post "Party Like It's 999" on *Jeff's Gameblog*, Gus L's rules in "Carousing Tables — HMS Apollyon Player's Guide" at *Dungeon of Signs*, and Nick Kuntz's carousing rules in "Downtime Activities at Underworld Adventurer: Carousing and Finding a Buyer" at *Underworld Adventurer*. I took the name "revelry" from *Crowns* by Reese Surlis.

While thinking about this system over the last couple of years, I also benefitted from the very focused downtime rules in John Harper's *Blades in the Dark*, Johnstone Metzger's delightful downtime rules in *The Nightmares Underneath*, the *Rules Cyclopedica* inspired domain rules in Todd Leback's *Into the Wild*, and Courtney Campbell's extensive downtime system in *Downtimes & Demesnes*. All are worth a look.



C R E D I T S

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Coda

Well, dear friends, we have reached the end of our tour of downtime activities. It has been our pleasure — no, honor! — to serve as your guides. I will not hold you back with further remonstrations. Perhaps you wish to found an institution now? Why not? What are fortunes for but to be spent on worthy endeavors? In parting, know that the relationship that you have cultivated with me is real and abiding. As proof, I hereby issue you an invitation. Should you find yourself in the lightless brambles of the White Jungle, you will find a warm welcome in the root warrens of my people. Queen Bethany herself may greet you if she is not occupied with affairs of state. How often do you have the opportunity to meet a Queen, much less one of her towering (if diminutive) stature? I will take tea and tuber biscuits with you. We may regale one another with tales. Should you wish for revelry, I have an especially fine mushroom brandy that I think you will enjoy. I've been saving it for just such an occasion. Why I think I know a few rakes who might wish to join us in some escapades!

Yours Ever,

The Viscount LeGrand

THROUGH ULTAN'S DOOR

DOWNTIME IN ZYAN



Activities Between Adventures