

D&D Next Playtest #4 Module

Critical Wits “Alternative to Combat Expertise” Edition

by Tim Jenkins - <http://www.criticalwits.info>

Thank you for taking a look at this unofficial playtest packet module! This supplement is designed to allow testing of alternative game mechanics and assist with the D&D Next Playtest.

This is an unofficial document, which is not endorsed by Wizards of the Coast or the D&D Next design team. This document supplement requires the D&D Next Playtest Packet (12/17/12), which can only be obtained from the official D&D Next playtest website at <http://www.dndnext.com>. Participation in the official playtest is required for use of this supplement.

About

This playtest packet supplement is designed to test ideas posited in my article, “D&D Next: An Alternative to Combat Expertise”, which can be found at <http://www.criticalwits.info>. In the article, I set forth the idea that combat expertise should be removed as a feature of all weapon-using classes and replaced with a new mechanic based on scaling weapon damage, with the fighter retaining exclusive access to expertise dice. The article goes into these changes and the reasoning behind them in more detail.

Using This Packet

The contents of this packet are designed to supplement and replace the “Classes”, “Feats & Specialties”, and “Maneuvers” documents from the official packet. Use the “Classes” and “Feats & Specialties” documents provided, substituting in and modifying material from the original packet where directed. Remove the “Maneuvers” document.

General Changes

The following are some of the changes made in this module:

- Weapon-using classes now gain extra weapon damage dice as they level. These extra damage dice are applied to all weapon attacks - for example, if your character wields a longsword (1d8 damage) and is granted two weapon dice from their class progression, roll 2d8 instead of 1d8 when determining damage.
- Maneuvers have been removed from the game. All maneuvers have been reworked into feats.
- All feats that were once maneuvers and many pre-existing feats now have options for “fighter’s expertise”, allowing the fighter to spend expertise dice on added benefits.
- Two weapon fighting has been modified to suit the changes to scaling weapon damage: see the “Dual Wielding” feat for details.
- This module only addresses levels 1-10.

Class specific changes include:

- Fighters now have exclusive access to expertise dice (via the “fighter’s expertise” class feature) and gain bonus feats instead of maneuvers. Average fighter damage remains about the same, but varies depending on weapon choice.
- The rogue’s “Sneak Attack” talent has been reworked. Sneak attacks are now easier to use more often, and rogues no longer have to give up their advantage. However, rogue damage output overall has decreased slightly.
- Clerics remain mostly the same. Average damage is largely unchanged.
- The monk is not included in this module.
- Wizards are unchanged.

Goals of this Module

The primary goals of this module are to provide a simple alternative mechanic to Combat Expertise for class-based weapon damage scaling (one that is easier to keep track of), re-frame expertise dice as a fighter only mechanic (ensuring the fighter has a unique play style), and to break down the arbitrary and sometimes confusing distinction between feats and maneuvers (by removing maneuvers from the game, and adding fighter-specific benefits to feats that act like “maneuvers” in practice).

When putting together this packet, I tried to change as little as possible, and erred on the side of keeping things how they already are and avoiding adding new rules wherever possible.

Many feats and maneuvers have been combined (The “Spring Attack” maneuver and “Shift” feat, or the “Protect” maneuver and “Shield Bash” feat are now the same ability), some have been removed entirely (Such as the “Bull Rush” maneuver) and some have been renamed (“Disarm” and “Trip” to “Disarming Strike” and “Tripping Strike”).

Ideally, this focus on reducing the amount of different mechanics in the game and the push toward universal mechanics that are easier to understand makes for a smoother play experience with less confusing rules.

The focus has been entirely on the Combat Expertise mechanic, the fighter class, and feats/maneuvers - all other aspects of the game have been unchanged.

What to do Next

If you are so inclined, please try running a session or two using these alternate rules in place of the official rules provided. If you find that these game mechanics have made the game easier to play or to run, please mention the ideas this packet put forth in the official D&D Next playtest surveys.

Do not hesitate to discuss these rules with your friends and fellow playtesters and work them into greater conversations over the basic mechanics of D&D Next - even if the final game does not resemble this packet at all, this module has served its purpose if it influences the development of D&D Next in any positive way!

If you wish to contact me to discuss your experiences with this playtest module, feel free to contact me personally at Tim@battlestudio.com.

Other good places to discuss these changes include the comments section of the Critical Wits website or your own gaming forum of choice, as well as around the table with your gaming partners.

If you are a representative of Wizards of the Coast and find that any material presented constitutes a violation of the playtest agreement, contact CriticalWits@gmail.com - any offending material will be removed from distribution upon request.

Remember to check back at <http://www.criticalwits.info> for further developments regarding this packet, as well as continued insights into D&D Next's development, and don't forget to check the weekly Legends & Lore column at the official Wizards of the Coast website for updates on the game's development!

Have fun, and don't forget to participate in the playtest surveys, mess with your own rules, and help make D&D Next the best edition of Dungeons & Dragons yet!