

The Verse of Tainted Scales

Social Contract

Respect and Safety

- **Safety First:** Everyone has a right to feel comfortable. We will use "Lines & Veils" as safety tools to address uncomfortable content immediately. Lines are subjects that are off the table and veils are subjects that may come up, but happen off screen and aren't described in detail. Anyone may add to the list, players and the GM will respect the list. This list may grow or be revisited throughout game-play.

Lines: _____

Veils: _____

- **Zero Tolerance (very hard lines):** Bigotry, racism, sexism, homophobia, and personal attacks (out-of-character) are not tolerated.
- **Respect Time:** Show up on time, prepared to play. If you cannot make a session, notify the group with as much notice as possible.

Playstyle and Table Etiquette

- **Shared Spotlight:** We all share responsibility for the fun. Avoid talking over others and allow everyone a moment to shine. Normalize role-playing with other party members and not just the GM/NPCs. Practice giving "the word" to your fellow adventurers; "What do you think about this, Boblin?"
- **Character vs. Player:** Keep in-character conflict separate from out-of-character relationships. "It's what my character would do" is not an excuse for ruining the fun of others.
- **Focus:** Stay engaged between your turns. You never know when you might use a reaction or have "the word" gifted to you. Don't miss these opportunities! Minimize distractions (phones, side-chatter) during the session.

Game Structure

- **GM Authority:** The GM is the final arbiter of the rules. If a rule is disputed, we will discuss it briefly and/or eventually, but the GM's ruling may stand for the session to keep the game moving. (See "Preserving Immersion" for greater detail on this point)
- **Party Cohesion:** Characters are expected to act as a team and have a reason to adventure together.
- **Open Communication:** If you are not enjoying the game, or have concerns, talk to the group or GM privately about it.

Logistics

- **Food/Drink:** Is permitted at the table, providing it doesn't become a distraction to game-play or interfere with start/end times.
- **Materials:** Players are responsible for their own character sheets, dice, and pencils.

Preserving Immersion

We've all been there. You're watching a movie or reading a book when out of the blue somebody in the real world asks, "Where's the Mountain Dew?" or "Did you know your socks are mismatched?" or "Would you like to hear about this really cool bird I saw yesterday?" It breaks immersion and if it happens too frequently it can spoil the overall experience of a story.

Although it's a "social game," dnd is also very much a collaborative (and often tenuous) story being woven simultaneously by several authors. Breaking immersion from this kind of story can be very difficult to recover from, so dialing it back or preventing it in the first place is a priority. The following rules are in the spirit of preserving the immersion for everybody:

- 1. Um, Actually....** There are a lot of rules (SO MANY RULES) in dnd to keep track of, and then house rules on top of that. Mistakes happen, however, sometimes mistakes happen on purpose for a narrative cause. At any rate, in cases where you feel RAW have been disregarded or misinterpreted, please respect the DM's ruling in the moment. Players are encouraged to make a note and bring up a ruling for discussion outside of gameplay (during a break or after session). These situations may result in redacting or redirecting a portion of the story after the fact, but that's a small sacrifice to pay for preserving flow-state during game-play.
- 2. For the Sake of Brevity.** There may be times during travel, exploration, or even combat, where an outcome becomes certain, and continuing to slog through would be tedious and dull: "for the sake of brevity" to the rescue! In these situations, things may resolve in a cut scene to better preserve flow, fun, and immersion.
- 3. Metagaming.** It often comes up that the player will have information that the character does not. Perhaps you played in a different campaign last year where you encountered a troll and discovered their nuance in regard to taking fire damage (or perhaps you read through the Monster Manual, because why wouldn't you?) You, the player, has that knowledge of Trolls, but your character may not. This is where a dice roll comes in handy to do a Nature or Arcana check to see if your character knows the thing or not. If you wish to take things a step further, you may ask the DM to roll any of these sorts of checks for you, simply revealing your reaction instead. This method of doing a check offers an ironclad willful suspension of disbelief since you literally don't know if you've critically failed or succeeded (or anything in-between) until after a situation resolves.

Creating Tension

For certain portions of exploration and dungeon crawling, we will be using the "Dungeon Turn" mechanic that was part of early dnd (1st and 2nd edition) core ruleset. These mechanics will be as follows:

The Dungeon Turn. While exploring some dungeons or hex-crawling wilderness out of combat, time will be measured in 10 minute increments called "stretches." At the start of a 10 minute turn, each player character starts an activity. The DM asks each player what activity they're taking, or uses a players description of their character's action to approximate what activity they're engaged in.

The Tension Pool. While Dungeon Turns are being used, time will be tracked with a pool of d6's visible to the players called the "Tension Pool." The pool starts at zero, and can never contain more than 6d6. 1d6 is added to the pool at the end of every 10 minute stretch. If the party does something overtly reckless the pool is rolled (minimum 1d6) and then replaced. Every time the pool reaches 6d6, the pool is rolled and resets to zero. If any d6 from the pool show a "1" when rolled, a complication arises for the party. This "complication" could be a random encounter, a physical or environmental effect, an effect that simply adds flavour to the scene, or anything else the lovely DM might imagine.

Example activities that can be completed in a 10 minute "stretch." Player characters take one of the following activities while exploring. This is by no means a complete list. Dms and players should feel free to collaborate on new activities at the table.

1. Casting a Spell

prerequisite: You pick a spell you can cast as part of the activity.

You spend the next 10 minutes casting a spell that has a casting time of ten minutes, or a ritual spell that has a casting time of 11 minutes or less.

Longer casting times. You can do this activity multiple stretches in a row to cast spells with a longer duration.

Rolling initiative. If you roll initiative while engaged in this activity, you can continue to cast the spell in combat by taking the magic action on each of your turns to maintain your concentration on the spell being cast.

2. Helping Out

prerequisite: You have proficiency with a skill or tool relevant to the check being made.

Choose a creature within reach. You grant that creature advantage on ability checks made during these 10 minutes.

3. Interacting

prerequisite: None.

You interact with an object or part of the environment for the next 10 minutes. This includes, but not limited to:

- Reading notes, tablets of instructions.
- Moving rubble or clearing a path
- Understanding an esoteric study, storage, or complicated device.

At the DM's discretion, these interactions may also require a skill check to succeed.

4. Keeping Watch

prerequisite: You can see and hear clearly

You stand watch, preparing for any eventuality, avoiding surprise by enemies or effect you can see or hear. If you roll initiative, you can use a reaction before your first turn to take one of the following actions: Attack (once), Dash, Dodge, Hide, or use the Magic action to cast a cantrip or use a magic item.

4. Loot Everything!

Prerequisite: you can see and hear clearly

You spend the next 10 minutes collecting any adventuring gear and valuables that have already been discovered or weren't hidden.

5. Move Quietly

prerequisite: None

For the next 10 minutes, a creature must succeed on a Wisdom (Perception) check to find you.

The DC is 8 + proficiency + stealth modifier.

6. Search Area

prerequisite: You can see and hear clearly

You spend 10 minutes searching a small room or an area no larger than 30 feet in any dimension.

Ability check. Make a Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Success. You find EVERYTHING in this room hidden by a DC equal to or lower than the result of your check, such as traps, secret doors, concealed loot and valuables, and any other hidden items.

7. Take Your Time

prerequisite: proficiency relevant to the task being attempted.

You spend the next 10 minutes taking an action (skill check) as an activity. By doing so, you add +5 to your roll along with any other relevant modifiers and proficiency bonus.

This action may stack with "Helping Out" to also give advantage on the roll, providing another PC is taking that action during this stretch.

8. Breather

prerequisite: None.

You spend the next 10 minutes doing absolutely nothing but catching your breath, gaining you the benefits of taking a "breather" as per the house rules.

Other House Rules and Mechanics

**N.B. These rules will apply to Players, Monsters, and NPCs*

Critical Hits

When you roll a natural 20 on an attack roll, the critical hit damage will be calculated as follows: Roll all of your damage dice as per normal, and add that total to the maximum damage that could have been rolled, then add any applicable modifier. As with any critical hit, this will apply to any damage dice rolled as part of the attack action, including sneak attack or a paladin's smite.

Critical Misses

When you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll, it will be handled on a case by case basis. Don't be surprised if a critical miss is followed by a dexterity save or sleight of hand check.

Other Nat 1's and 20's

For any other d20 test, a natural 20 does not mean an automatic success, nor does a natural 1 mean a guaranteed failure. Please respect the DM's rulings on a case by case basis for these rolls.

Flanking

A creature is flanked when 2 of its enemies are on opposite sides of it (when in doubt, draw an imaginary line between the enemies, and if they pass through the creature, it is flanked). When attacking a flanked creature, you gain a +2 to attack rolls.

Healing Potions

Players will have 2 options for consuming or administering a healing potion during combat. If using your Action, a healing potion will deliver its maximum healing potential. For example, a standard healing potion will restore 10 HP always, instead of 2d4+2. If using a Bonus Action, a healing potion will use dice rolls as normal.

The Breather (10-Minute Break)

There is no limit to the number of breathers you can take in a day.

- At the end of a breather, you can spend 1 hit die (only one).
- Any amount of combat or strenuous activities interrupt a breather.
- Six breathers in a row amount to a short rest.
- If pressed for time, the adventuring party can gain the benefit of a short rest in 10 minutes provided the PCs can all spend at least 1 Hit Die. Once they use a breather this way, it can't be done again until the characters complete a long rest.

Short Rests

A standard adventuring day will contain no more than 3 short (1 hour) rests. An interrupted short rest may not be recovered, however, as long as 10 minutes has passed it will be considered a "Breather" (see above).

Long Rests

A standard adventuring day will contain no more than 1 long (8 hour) rest. An interrupted long rest may be successfully completed by adding additional time (length of interruption) to the end of it.

Skill Checks

Simply describe your character's actions. The DM will ask if a skill check -- if any-- is required for a given situation. Never roll in anticipation, because it slows the game down, and a skill's passive score might be enough while a low number on the die will always count as a failure. Some actions might require proficiency in a given skill, tool, or instrument (DM's call).

Languages

Every character starts with 3 languages – Common, plus 2 standard languages. At your discretion, you may choose to not declare one or both of these other languages until the need to speak another (standard) language comes up in game. Once a language is chosen, there is no going back.

Mulligans

Once per adventuring level, if you have chosen a spell, weapon mastery, class feature, skill bonus, etc... but have not yet used it, you may swap that spell, weapon mastery, class feature, skill bonus, etc... for another viable choice that you could have made at that time. Once used, they are locked in.

Last but certainly not least:

This campaign will be taking place in the "Eberron" setting. Eberron is a place of pulp adventure and noir intrigue, where magic is a part of the very fabric of the world. Everything in D&D has a place in Eberron, but it might not be where you expect. **Much of what you think you know about species, technology, magic, environment, etc. may not be what you have learned in other settings. *Don't assume anything.*** Mortal creatures are products of culture and circumstances, rather than the direct influence of the Gods. You can't assume that a Gold Dragon is good or that a Beholder is evil.

The expected themes for this campaign will be:

- Pulp Adventure (eg. Indiana Jones, Star Wars, The Fifth Element)
- Noir Intrigue (eg. The Matrix, Blade Runner, The Fifth Element)
- Lovecraftian Nonsense (eg. Pacific Rim, Alien, The Fifth Element)