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Cover

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In this issue

Submission Guidelines

Format

Text submissions: Please send text submissions to the Editor via email as a Rich Text Format (RTF) attachment (first preference), in any major word processor format, or plain ASCII text if formatting is not necessary. If you do not have e-mail, send text submissions on a 3.5" IBM-compatible floppy disk (disks will be returned at our expense). If you do not have a computer, send typed or legible hand-written manuscripts, preferably double-spaced.

Artwork: Please send a quality scan at a minimum of 300 dpi in GIF, JPEG, PNG, or MS-Windows bitmap format (please send bitmaps as a zip file!) to the Editor via email or disk. We also accept good quality photocopies (please don't send us originals!). Black and white inked works please – no pencils. A4 size is preferred.
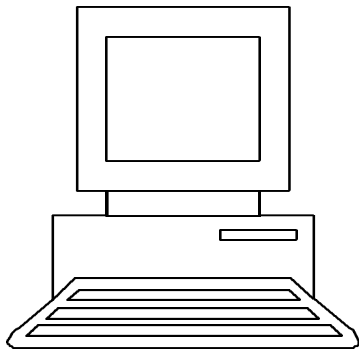
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Content

What we want: The Queensland Wargamer is a forum for people to express their views and ideas about gaming. Any contributions that are in some way related to any form of gaming will be considered: reviews, rules clarifications or changes, fiction, discussions about games or gaming, articles on history, mythology and the like, artwork, etc.

Standards: Your submission will be reviewed before publication by the Editor, who may request changes to its content or style. All contributions must meet the standards set by the University of Queensland Union and enforced by Clubs and Societies: sexist, racist or homophobic material is unacceptable, and will not pass the mandatory inspection. Non-inclusive language (i.e. the generic "he") comes under this prohibition. We recommend that you either avoid sentence structures that require the generic first person (for example, recasting your sentence in the plural, using proper nouns), consistently alternate between "she" and "he", or consistently use "they" in your submission.

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Diplomacy is just a game – or is it?
Boardgaming

Brett Chatterton (BWChatt@caltex.com.au)

How many times have you been playing a boardgame and heard someone say, "Relax, it's just a game"?

Diplomacy is more than a game, particularly when played in a DAANZ (Diplomacy Association of Australia and New Zealand) tournament environment. It should, in fact, be considered a sport.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines sport as: "amusement, diversion, fun; pastime or game". By this definition Diplomacy certainly qualifies. In Australia and New Zealand we tend to think of only outdoor activities being classified as sports, but would anyone deny that snooker, darts or ten pin bowling are sports? Try telling Eddie Charlton that he is not really playing a sport! In fact, Chess is the national sport of Russia. So, why not Diplomacy?

From a very young age I have played many, many board games. Of those, two are easily set apart from all the rest: Chess and Diplomacy. One of the reasons these games can be set apart is because participants approach these games very differently to the way other board games are approached. Each of these games facilitates a sense of struggle and competition to the highest degree. The intensity of emotion and stress experienced by the players of these games, particularly in a tournament environment, is unlike any other board game experience I have had.

Let me give you an example. When was the last time you shook hands with someone after a game of Risk, Carcasonne or Settlers? Probably never. However, it is a common occurrence for participants to shake hands after a tournament game of Diplomacy or competition chess. Why do we do this? I would suggest that it is because both parties are acknowledging an adversary, and extending a handshake is a physical way of re-affirming a normal social bond now that the competition is over. It is a common aspect of playing sport. Occasionally competitors refuse to shake hands after sporting events: this is seen as unsporting and is an indication to the group that not all is well. Fortunately this rarely happens at Diplomacy tournaments, though we have had our moments.

Every day the back pages of the newspapers are filled with sports-related controversy. We are constantly plied with reports about players, coaches and officials bending the rules. Spectators and observers judge these individuals and assess their actions against their personal paradigm of what is sporting and what is not. In this area more than any other, the sport of Diplomacy resembles the sporting world portrayed by the media. Our sport is constantly awash with drama and controversy. While we may not be as susceptible to the drugs and sex scandals witnessed in other sports (not through lack of trying) we are, nevertheless a controversy ridden sport. Accusations of Cartels, cross-boarding, results tampering, threats of physical abuse, Flying Dutchmen, duplicate orders, impersonating other players – we have had it all. The Fine Cotton affair is nothing compared to some of the incidents witnessed at diplomacy tournaments. This sort of behaviour is unavoidable when people are passionate about their sport.

For some time, I have pondered why people go to such lengths to win a Diplomacy game and/or tournament. It is not uncommon to meet people in the hobby who want to win at all costs. This approach was hard to reconcile with normal boardgaming activities. It was not until I viewed DAANZ tournament diplomacy as a sport that I began to understand certain aspects of the behaviour. All of a sudden the seemingly bizarre behaviour that is witnessed across the room or across the board is not any different from that observed at the local footy or cricket field. Suddenly it all made a little more sense.

So, if you find yourself agreeing with me, the next time somebody says to you, "Don't worry, it's only a game," let them know that Diplomacy is much more than a game, Diplomacy is a sport.

The Interplanar Trading Consortium
An organisation for 3.5 edition Dungeons & Dragons

Andrew Bautovich (bauto666@hotmail.com)

On the world of Krynn, on the continent of Ansalon, steel pieces are the standard currency. Gold is practically worthless. There is little or no magic. On the world of Toril, on the continent of Faerun the gold standard is dominant. Practically every peasant has a magic item of some description. Any wizard with a *Gate* spell can journey between them.

There are simple laws of economics that apply anywhere in the universe. One of these is valuation. So why is it that each Dungeons and Dragons campaign setting isn't accosted by travelling wizards with a wagon full of commodities? The reason is simple. One organisation already has a monopoly on the industry: The Interplanar Trading Consortium.

The Interplanar Trading Consortium is a useful add-in for almost any campaign or campaign setting. On a basic level, there is no better place for the PCs to trade goods, wealth and magic items effectively. For high level (or epic level) PCs there are very few places that have the sheer net worth to deal with them effectively. The ITC has the largest liquid reserves of any organisation on the Planes. Not to mention the hundreds of guardians employed by the consortium to travel with its treasures, scouting opportunities and corporate head-hunters (both figurative and literal). So, if you're looking for something new to spice up your campaign or a seed for a unique campaign itself – try the ITC. No-one else comes close.

The Past

The ITC was founded on Toril in the year 1114, by the Wizard Woolworth the Wondrous. A magical accident (involving a basilisk, a *brazier of elemental summoning*, two rings of *teleport* and one very confused badger) catapulted the conjuror to Krynn in the year 254 A.C. There, he discovered that his small purse of gold (about a year's wages for the average Faerunian peasant) was worth less than his belt buckle. The belt buckle gave him enough money to buy a meal and some spell components, and he quickly *gated* back to his home. 3 days later he returned with a wagonload of steel which he traded for four wagonloads of gold. He gated back again. Using that money he bought 16 wagonloads of steel ...

The rest is history.

Woolworth branched out his operations from this simple trade. He began to sell magic items to that low-magic world. He became one of the richest men on Toril. He was a success.

Selling his tower, and purchasing the services of a high-level psion (his first partner), he created a new demiplane to house the company offices. He used a king's ransom in wealth to establish *portals* to every world he could find. Everywhere there was trading to be done, he did it.

The company management under his leadership expanded. A board of directors was established. He borrowed operating principles from every world to create the most successful company in the history of time.

Word got out of course. Planar travellers everywhere heard about the wonder company and tried to emulate it. Luckily Woolworth had planned for that eventuality. He hired giant planar armies and muscled the competition out of business. Small time traders sometimes escaped his notice, but every other attempt at a major consortium was either absorbed or destroyed.

The Present

Since that time, what became known as the ITC has become perhaps the largest organisation in the universe, with offices on Oerth, Toril, Krynn, Sigil, Union and anywhere else where there is a profit to be made.

Woolworth himself (who spent a great deal of wealth in becoming young, immortal and having abs on which you could grate cheese) retired to another of his ventures, the Demiplane of Martinis, where he now lives full time. Although he still owns 51% of ITC stock, he allows the company to be managed exclusively by the rest of the board.

The Interplanar Trading Consortium deals in everything, from arms to real-estate, commodities, even luxury goods. Its greatest asset is its ability to exploit the cultures with which it trades. A good example of this is a recent trading deal in which the Consortium was contracted to deal with the world of Eonary's owlbear infestation. The dead owlbears were then transported to the world of Ohce, where owlbear is the most expensive and highly regarded delicacy. In this way, rather than buy goods, the organisation was paid to take them away. The ITC cannot lose.

More often than not the ITC attempts to keep its activities secret. Most worlds, even where the ITC's work is rampant, do not even know of its existence. They just sit back and marvel as one company somehow makes money regardless of conditions.

The company is now, perhaps the wealthiest organisation in existence. It can (and does) buy and sell worlds when it needs to. It has a finger in every pie, and the future looks bright.

The Board

The board is currently comprised of 9 members, each with separate portfolios to manage. They are:

1. Arazas – Head of Mergers and Acquisitions

When it comes to aggressive strategy, you can't go past Arazas. Discovered on the Prime Material Plane in the early days of the consortium, Arazas is a Vampiric Beholder with many years experience as a Sorcerer of great power. When it comes to business practices, Arazas is not so much cutthroat as he is bite-throat. He works for the ITC out of ambition, not greed.

Despite his conniving and deceptive nature, which he uses to full effect in business, he does not act outside the wishes of the board. He will not be the first board member whose position is terminated. Permanently.

2. Beblith – Devourer of Souls, Lord of Accounting

Straight from the pits of Baator (the Nine Hells), comes Beblith the Baatezu, Lord of Accounting. Unlike most Baatezu, Beblith is more skilled with a stylus and parchment than a flaming sword. Innately skilled with mathematics, Beblith knows he has found his niche with the ITC. Practically immortal, he is usually meek and mild mannered until his demonic temper gets the better of him.

Sidebar– For Your Campaign Setting

Forgotten Realms®

The ITC is very active on Faerun. It has offices in almost all the major cities from Lantan to Thay. Some, like the offices in Waterdeep and Suzail, are aware of their planar roots. Some, like those in Mulhorand and Thay, believe they are just dealing with a secret Faerunian organisation. Very few suspect they might be dealing with both.

Dragonlance®

On Krynn, the ITC operates behind a veil of secrecy. Based in Palanthas, the ITC operates as the Starsea Trading Company, run by humans and Silvanesti elves. It is considered particularly mundane, except for eccentricities like the constant acquisition of near-worthless gold and constant exploratory missions away from Ansalon.

Greyhawk®

Oerth is home to many ITC enterprises, with its head offices in the City of Greyhawk but with elements in Nyrond, Keoland, Ahlrissa, and even Perrenland. Caravans, both mundane and magical travel, between all these locations, and occasional business is done with the smaller lands.

Ravenloft®

The ITC's activities in Ravenloft deserve special mention. Whilst they have no ability to contact planar head office, the ITC has many delegates stranded in Ravenloft trying to make a living. Many of them impotently rage at the discovery of clockwork and gunpowder in a place where they cannot export it. Some early bargaining with the Vistana have allowed them some transport capabilities and they bend their mercantile skills to the acquisition of an exit from the Demiplane of Dread.

The Planes®

Along with the ITC's head offices in its own demiplane, the ITC's two largest offices in Sigil and Union are located here. Representatives of the Consortium are practically everywhere, from Celestia and Elysium to Baator and the Abyss. The Planes is perhaps one of the best environments to utilise the ITC.

3. Cthulhu – Head of the United Way Campaign

H.P. Lovecraft's terrifying creation has other tasks besides the one the author dreamed. In this case, the task is to maintain company morale and manage its interaction with the community. Though little more than a maw and tentacles, Cthulhu is reputedly excellent at this job. He is paid in people, but for the ITC people are little more than a very cheap commodity.

4. Tamoe – Head of Sales

Tamoe is a Solar, formerly in the service of Waukeen, the Faerunian God of Wealth, now having left to pursue this once in a lifetime (even for an immortal Solar) business opportunity. While she often delegates much of her work to her department the larger and more important deals she usually handles personally. Few can resist her angelic beauty, aura of pure goodness, and shrewd negotiating skills.

5. The Hecatoncheires – Master of the Mail Room

The only of its kind that exists for a reason besides pure destruction, The Hecatoncheires has no other name, nor, as far as can be assessed, any interested in running the company. It is content merely to reside in the mail room and sort the millions of pieces of correspondence that the ITC receives constantly. The Hecatoncheires is not paid, nor does it draw on any of the ITC's other resources. It seems happy to have an existence where it is not constantly hunted by power hungry adventurers or paranoid deities.

6. Rubal – "Head" of Development

Not to be confused with Engineering, Rubal oversees the ITC's real property assets, including its planar stock and its almost limitless real estate on almost every world. Rubal was the psion who originally aided Woolworth in the development of the ITC and has now reached a state of Psionic Demilich-dom. One of the consortium's stalwarts, Rubal is considered to be the advisor of the company and one who is usually best heeded when considering its future direction.

7. Centori – Head of Marketing

Centori is both ancient and powerful, being a Prismatic Great Wyrm from the Outer Planes. His voice is like trumpets and his glory is wondrous to behold. Lesser beings, which is practically whomsoever he encounters, weep at his majesty. He has been a steed for gods, and has seen pantheons rise and fall. His task within the ITC is twofold. Firstly he maintains the company's stranglehold on the planar trading arena. The arrival of Centori is usually enough to terrify or impress other organisations into submission. His second task is to represent the company on various worlds to drum up and maintain business on various worlds, continents, and planes. His coming inspires everything from religious worship to formal advertising banquets in which he extols the company's virtues.

8. Illythichyx – Human Resources Manager

A paragon mind-flayer, Illythichyx manages the ITC's personnel, a task equal to rulership of a large world. Although all personnel are delegated to various departments Illythichyx oversees them all, from wages, to hiring and firing, even birthday celebrations and retirement packages. Using its mighty psionic powers and some ludicrously expensive artefacts, Illythichyx keeps a psionic tap on almost every member of the organisation, ensuring that each one is complying with company regulations.

9. Proteo – The C.E.O.

Since the retirement of Woolworth the real management of the company has been entrusted to one being. Proteo was in fact a project of Woolworth, one of his last. Marshalling the greatest of his Archwizardly powers, and through some clever tricks, Woolworth revived Proteo, a dead proto-deity. Now powered by the worship of millions, Proteo is one of the most powerful and revered deities in the universe. He has no other tasks, desires, or portfolios beyond the management of the ITC, and for that reason is usually ignored or used as a mediator by other deities. Perhaps one of the universe's most involved deities, avatars of Proteo manifest wherever the company needs him and his mega-consciousness ensures no aspect of the company's management is ignored.

The Employees

An equal opportunity employer, the Consortium has employees from all parts of the universe, all, regardless of alignment or heritage, bound to the common purpose of serving the consortium.

First and foremost, the great majority of Mercane serve the ITC. The elderly have been raised to administrative positions, whilst the young are raised and educated in the company's day-care facility. Most of the Mercane serve as

travelling salesmen and brokers for the Interplanar Trading Consortium, and most have their first contact with the organisation through them.

Almost anyone can be contacted by the ITC at any time. Once spotted, talent is usually pursued aggressively. Some of the mightiest beings in the Planes work side-by-side with savant peasants who have a knack for trading.

There are five ground rules to serving in the Consortium.

1. All employees (though not subcontractors) must worship Proteo, thus ensuring the Consortium's continued survival.

2. No employee is to harass, blackmail, slay or harm in any other way another member of the ITC.

3. No-one is to steal from the organisation.

4. There is to be no trading that may harm future trading. Any employee who completely ruins the economy of a world without good reason will be reprimanded.

5. Regardless of the situation, no employee is allowed to use the ITC's resources to further their own interests.

For your campaign

1. Welcome Aboard

The PCs are hired onto the ITC at ground level, and are required to act as bodyguards for a company of traders who work for the ITC. They are sent (either on their homeworld or on the planes) to contact specific individuals and make specific trades. This forces them into situations with corrupt officials, battle torn kingdoms and in some cases terrifying locations,

not to mention the hardships that face a caravan on the road …

2. Personal shoppers

Sometimes the ITC needs something specific. When this occurs, it's time for the PCs to saddle up. Lost artefacts and rituals long hidden from sight in some horrible dungeon, guarded by fierce monsters and fearsome traps must be acquired before the buyer takes their business elsewhere. The ITC sends the PC's on these hunts to recover certain one-off items, both paying them and allowing them to keep other items they find on their journey. This works well as both a single adventure or as part of an interlinked campaign.

3. Housekeeping

Every organisation has its problems, and one as large as the ITC is no exception. When employees go bad, they need to be stopped and brought to justice. To that end Human Resources keeps a list of powerful bounty hunters on call to track and discipline unruly individuals. If the miscreants are smart (and they usually are), they've done some planning and some embezzling, which makes the chase so much more exciting.

4. Scouting

The universe is limitless. New worlds are being discovered all the time. What are their trading potentials? What assets do they have? What are their peoples like? Their political situation? Environment? There's only one way to find out … and that's when the PCs are sent in. As explorers, their task is to establish a foothold for trading and move on. More often than not, that's harder than it sounds.

Customising the Consortium

In what capacity you which to use the consortium is up to you. Some suggested methods are detailed below.

1. Employer

The PCs work, full-time, for the ITC as bodyguards, merchants or explorers. They are on the permanent payroll and as the campaign progresses gradually rise through the ranks as they gain in power and skill. They should become familiar with recurring NPCs who work above, for or with them, and the Consortium is treated as a neutral organisation which employs them.

2. Benefactor

The PCs work for the ITC, but as sub-contractors. They should know as much or as little about the organisation as you choose, but should only have contact with specific agents. The company's day-to-day affairs have little to do with them and the ITC can be seen as an abstract figure, only used as a kick-start for an adventure or campaign.

3. Stop-Off

After an adventure is done, what is to be done with the booty? Very few adventurers consider what to do with the 30000 gold pieces found in the Dungeon of Maktet, or the effect that it would have on the delicate rural economy of the Hamlet of Batim. No to mention the difficulty of lugging that filthy lucre around. The ITC comes in handy, as it is both willing to store material assets, and trade them for other items from the general (like gems) to the specific (the Paladin needs a *holy avenger*, not a *wand of wonder*!). The organisation

should be presented as unquestionably reliable and trustworthy, so the PCs don't worry about their wealth and get back to the adventuring.

4. Hidden Enemy

Whilst the organisation is presented as a normal business, if the DM chooses it can be unconscionably fiendish. After all, many of the board members are monsters, and total domination of the universe is not an unheard of goal amongst the adventurers' enemies. A DM can start with the PCs thwarting the wiles of one tiny branch of the ITC then slowly uncovering how vast and mighty the evil organisation is. If presented in this way the ITC should be painted as a horrendously evil and megalomaniacal group.

In closing …

The ITC, while described in its basic state here, is vast. It is very much your own concept. It offers an opportunity for a campaign with a real difference. It can throw the PCs into an arena of intrigue and plotting, or their task can have nothing to do with the trading, just the hunt and the kill…it's up to you.

Happy trading!

2004 QUGS Chess Grand Prix
Standings as at 31 August 2004

Nik Moore (s371532@student.uq.edu.au)

Tournaments So Far

Date	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
10 March 2004	Alex Twolsie	Ben Roberts	Dion Sampson
7 April 2004	Stephen Chandler	Brendan Griffer	Nikolas Moore
12 May 2004	Jonathan Humphrey	Dion Sampson	Brendan Griffer
26 May 2004	Brendan Griffer	Dion Sampson	Stuart Holt
2 June 2004	Dion Sampson	Sean Karita	Nathan Anderson
9 June 2004	Stuart Holt	Brendan Griffer	Pablo Urbani
4 August 2004	Brendan Griffer	Dion Sampson	Stuart Holt

Overall Rankings

Player	First Place (5 pts)	Second Place (3 pts)	Second Place (1 pt)	Total Points (max 35 pts)
Brendan Griffer	2	2	1	17
Dion Sampson	1	3	1	15
Stuart Holt	1	0	2	7
Jonathan Humphrey	1	0	0	5
Alex Twolsie	1	0	0	5
Stephen Chandler	1	0	0	5
Sean Karita	0	1	0	3
Ben Roberts	0	1	0	3
Pablo Urbani	0	0	1	1
Nathan Anderson	0	0	1	1
Nikolas Moore	0	0	1	1

d20 House Rules

For 3.5 edition Dungeons and Dragons

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Almost every role-playing group ends up with some house rules that supplement or replace part of the published game system being used. Here are 20 such rules for 3.5 edition D&D, ordered by the sequence in which they come up in the *Player's Handbook*, along with a short assessment of the pros and cons of using them.

1. Ability Score Increases

Characters do not add 1 point to any ability score every 4 character levels. Instead, characters gain 1 point every character level, which they allocate according to the ability score point buy rules in the DMG. Extend that table as follows: +4 points for 19, +4 points for 20, +5 points for 21, +5 points for 22, +6 points for 23, and so on. Scores below 9 still cost 1 point for each ability score: 1 point does not raise an ability score of less than 8 to 9. The ability score increases once the character has allocated sufficient points to the score.

Pros: this allows characters to improve their more average ability scores at a faster rate.

Cons: raising ability scores above 20 now takes longer. Creatures that improve by HD instead of by character level are disadvantaged, as they presumably still use the 1 point every 4 HD rule.

2. Base Defence Bonus

A character's class and level grant an innate bonus to Defence. This bonus measures the character's combat savvy and applies in all situations, even when the character is flat-footed or would otherwise lose their Dexterity bonus (if any), unless the character is helpless.

Base Defence Bonus progression

Level	Good	Average	Poor	Level	Good	Average	Poor
1	+2	+1	+0	11	+7	+5	+3
2	+3	+2	+0	12	+8	+6	+4
3	+3	+2	+1	13	+8	+6	+4
4	+4	+3	+1	14	+9	+7	+4
5	+4	+3	+1	15	+9	+7	+5
6	+5	+3	+2	16	+10	+7	+5
7	+5	+4	+2	17	+10	+8	+5
8	+6	+4	+2	18	+11	+8	+6
9	+6	+5	+3	19	+11	+9	+6
10	+7	+5	+3	20	+12	+9	+6

Creatures with the dragon, fey and outsider types have good Base Defence Bonus (BDB) progression, as do bards, rogues and monks. Constructs and undead have poor progression, as so barbarians, wizards and sorcerers. All other creature types and PHB classes have average progression.

Pros: this keeps AC closer to the primary attack bonus, which means secondary attacks hit less often and fights last longer. It reduces the advantage of the "first strike", and increases PC survivability

Cons: combats last longer. Characters who do not get +1 BAB per level or who are not optimised for combat are less likely to hit opponents with their primary attacks. High CR creatures like dragons and outsiders need to have their natural armour bonus reduced: high natural armour is the mechanism used in the standard rules to make hitting such opponents a challenge at high levels, and leaving their natural armour bonus unchanged while adding an additional defence bonus can make them unhittable. As a rule of thumb, removing one third (33%) of the natural armour bonus seems to keep overall AC at a reasonable level.

3. Multiclassing and Attack/Save bonuses

Multiclassed characters stack class levels with the same Base Attack, and Save Bonus progressions when determining their total bonus. If using house rule 2 (Base Defence Defence), this also applies to Base Defence.

For example, a cleric 5/rogue 5 character has 10 levels of average BAB, not 2 sets of 5 levels (+7 instead of +6); a barbarian 2/ranger 4 has 6 levels of good Fortitude save (+5 instead of +7), 4 levels of good and 2 levels of poor Reflex save (+4 either way), and 6 levels of poor Will save (+2 instead of +1).

Pros: this removes the ability to multiclass as a way of artificially boosting saving throws. When multiclassing, it improves poor saves and weakens good saves.

Cons: it's harder to work out whether a character's base bonus improves when they gain a level.

4. Bards and Evasion

Rogues and monks get Evasion at 2nd level, while Rangers get Evasion at 9th level. Bards are the only PHB class with a good Reflex saving throw that doesn't get Evasion. They should get Evasion as a class special ability at 9th level.

Pros: this strengthens the bard class.

Cons: you may think the bard class is already too powerful.

5. Skills – Bardic Knowledge

Bards gain a +2 bonus at 1st level to all Knowledge skill checks, trained and untrained, because of their broad experience and dedication to learning. This bonus increases by +1 at 3rd level and every three levels thereafter.

Pros: at present, Bardic knowledge works in parallel to Gather Information and the Knowledge skills. This change simplifies the ways characters can obtain information through a dice roll during an adventure, which reduces adventure-planning (no need for a list of Bardic Knowledge DC checks as well as a Gather Information or Knowledge list).

Also, whether or not Bardic Knowledge works is beyond the player's control: in my opinion, giving characters abilities that only work when the plot requires or permits is unsatisfying game design.

Cons: you may prefer the current mechanism for Bardic Knowledge.

6. Skills – Rushed Intimidate Checks

Changing another character's behaviour usually requires 1 minute of interaction. However, a rushed Intimdate check can be made as a full-round action, but you take a –10 penalty on the check.

Pros: this is an exact copy of the rule for rushed Diplomacy checks (the other way to change behaviour through skill checks). It allows characters to "give a steely glare" or "tell him to stop **right now**", both things that can't be done by the book.

Cons: Intimidate can give a lower DC to make someone friendly than Diplomacy. That said, it's easy to get +6 in synergy bonuses to Diplomacy, and the effect continues to work for more than the next hour.

7. Skills – Searching for Traps and Secret Doors

Characters of all classes can attempt to search for traps with a DC or 21 or higher, not just rogues.

In addition, although it is more difficult than actively searching a 5-foot-by-5-foot area, characters can make a Search check to passively notice small details and irregularities in objects they are near without using an action. When moving at up to one-half normal speed (that is, walking), characters take a -5 penalty to any Search check to notice a hidden door, trap or other feature within 10 feet. When moving at a speed greater than one-half but less than full speed (that is, hustling), there is a -10 penalty. It is practically impossible (-20 penalty) to passively search while running or charging.

Pros: this greatly speeds up play when you have a cautious rogue who insists on constantly checking for traps (by the book, you can search a 5ft square as a full-round action). It also models the highly experienced person who can spot things at a glance.

Cons: traps are less likely to be missed by a skilled character, because the player doesn't have to pick when the character does and doesn't search.

8. Feat – Accurate Attack

You can make exceptionally accurate attacks with ranged and light melee weapons.
Prerequisite: Dex 13+, plus Weapon Finesse if you wish to use this feat with light melee weapons.
Benefit: As described for Power Attack on page 98 of the *Player's Handbook*, except that the character may use either a light melee weapon or a ranged

weapon. If using a ranged weapon, the target must be within 30 feet: it is not possible to strike with deadly accuracy from beyond that range.
Special: A fighter may select Accurate Attack as one of her fighter bonus feats.

Pros: this benefits archers, and to a lesser extent finessed rogues (who get most of their damage output from Sneak Attack). It allows these characters to overcome DR more easily.

Cons: archers are already a powerful combat choice, as they routinely get an extra attack over other combatants through the Rapid Shot feat (unless you use house rule 11, the Flurry of Blows feat) and are usually protected from melee attackers.

9. Feat – Combat Expertise

There is no limit other than your base attack bonus (BAB) on the penalty you take to attack and the dodge bonus you take to your Armour Class.

Pros: this allows characters to boost their AC enough that primary attacks may miss.

Cons: if characters are reduced to rolling natural 20s to hit, there's no reason not to Power Attack (or Accurate Attack, if using house rule 8) with all your BAB so that when you do hit, you do a lot of damage. Modifying the Combat Expertise feat may exacerbate this existing problem.

10. Feat – Emulate Item Creation

You can create magic items even though you cannot cast magic spells.
Prerequisite: 5 ranks in Use Magic Device.

Benefit: You can select and use Item Creation feats if you have 5 ranks in the appropriate Craft skill, or 5 ranks in Decipher Script to select the Scribe Scroll feat.

To create a magic item without using magic spells, the character must succeed at the appropriate Craft or Decipher Script check and a Use Magic Device check. The DC for both skill checks is 20 + the magic item's caster level. The character can take 10 on the Craft or Decipher Script check, but not on the Use Magic Device check.

If either skill check fails, the character has failed to create the magic item, and all materials used and XP spent on the item are wasted. Any additional skill checks (such as a Use Magic Device check to emulate an ability score) must also be successful. Substitute character level for caster level when determining whether the character meets the prerequisites to create the magic item.
Normal: You must be a spellcaster to use Item Creation feats.

Pros: this allows characters who are not spellcasters to create magic items, such as Dwarven warrior-smiths. Now they can take a level-drop into rogue or expert to get Use Magic Device as a class skill and the skill points to get a reasonable number of ranks in UMD.

Cons: given how hard it is to make the Use Magic Device check reliably until high levels, this feat is unlikely to be attractive to most players. A level-drop into wizard gets access to Scribe Scroll, after all. You may prefer to model Dwarven warrior-smiths who make magic swords and armour as experts with a prestige class.

11. Feat – Flurry of Blows

You may strike more often, but at the cost of accuracy.
Benefit: You can make one extra melee attack per round at your highest Base Attack Bonus, but each attack (the extra one and the normal ones) suffers a -2 penalty. You must use the full attack action to use this feat.
Special: A fighter may select Flurry of Blows as one of her fighter bonus feats.

Pros: this allows single-weapon melee combatants to make as many attacks a round as an archer or a two-weapon fighter, and for the same cost (1 feat, -2 to hit with all attacks).

Cons: Rapid Shot and Two-Weapon Fighting both require better than average Dex (13 and 15 respectively). More characters can take this feat.

12. Feat – Improved Demoralise

You are skilled at weakening your opponent's resolve in combat.
Prerequisite: Str 13+, Power Attack.
Benefit: You can make an Intimidate check to demoralise an opponent as a move action.
Normal: Demoralising an opponent is a standard action.
Special: A fighter may select Improved Demoralise as one of her fighter bonus feats.

Pros: as written, you can't demoralise an opponent and get any benefit (they recover as the start of your next action). This feat mirrors the benefit of Improved Feint.

Cons: This may encourage high-level fighters to make one attack and demoralise an opponent rather than make a full attack sequence.

13. Injury and Death

Hit points measure how hard it is to injure or kill a character. Characters are not adversely affected by losing hit points until they reach 0 hit points or below. At that point, the character is staggered, and can only perform a partial action each round.

When a character's hit points equal negative Con (that is, -12 for a character with Con 12), the character is disabled: they can only perform a partial action each round, and if the action is strenuous they lose 1 hit point and pass out.

A character who has fewer hit points than negative Con is unconscious and dying: characters die when their hit points equal two times negative Con (that is, -24 for a character with Con 12).

Pros: characters are harder to kill. They are less likely to die in one hit. There is a wider range of HP values on which a character's injuries limit but still allow them to act (at present, only 0 HP does this).

Cons: character's opponents are also harder to kill. Abilities that let characters act while unconscious (such as Diehard and Ferocity) are more valuable. Creatures without Con scores (undead and constructs) are comparatively slightly less powerful than before.

14. Natural Healing

Characters on positive hit points regain 1 + Con bonus (minimum 1) hit point per character level per hour.

Characters on 0 or less hit points regain 1 + Con bonus (minimum 1) hit point per day of rest. Complete bed rest doubles the number of hit points regained.

Pros: characters recover more quickly from injuries that haven't reduced their ability to act (see house rule 13, injury and death). Characters with a high Con bonus recover more quickly than characters of similar level but lower Con. Characters don't depend on magic to recover from injuries.

Cons: adventures with gaps between encounters are less resource-intensive, particularly if the players can control when encounters occur.

15. Turn Undead

All undead creatures within 60 feet of the character attempting to turn undead must make a Will save against the character's turning DC (10 + cleric level/2 + Cha bonus), and if they fail the saving throw they must flee or cower. Undead that fail the saving throw by 10 or more are destroyed. Characters with 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (religion) have a +1 DC bonus.

Pros: turn undead uses the same mechanic as other supernatural abilities (10 + HD/2 + characteristic bonus). There's no need to refer to a special chart, or roll twice (once for most powerful undead affected and then for HD of undead affected). Undead do not become impossible to turn at higher levels (undead HD tends to be too far above CR for clerics of an appropriate APL to be within 4 levels of the creature's HD – for examples, see Nightcrawlers, Nightwalkers, and all the high-HD undead from the Epic Handbook).

Cons: low-level clerics can turn high-HD undead (because a 1 on a saving throw is always a failure). High-level clerics cannot guarantee that they will destroy low-HD undead.

16. Effective Caster Level

A multiclassed spellcaster adds +1 to their effective caster level for every 2 levels in other classes when determining their effective caster level. This bonus cannot exceed the spellcasting class level: any additional effective caster levels are ignored.

Pros: multiclassed spellcasters are not as weak at high levels. Challenges that require single-classed characters to succeed at dispel checks and overcome Spell Resistance are more achievable for multiclassed spellcasters. As spellcasting classes improve BAB to help characters handle high level challenges, it's appropriate for non-spellcasting classes to improve effective caster level for the same reason.

Cons: level-drops into spellcasting classes at high levels are more advantageous than before. It can be harder to work out whether a character's effective caster level improves when they gain a level.

17. Spellcasting in Armour

It is difficult to cast spells with Somatic components while in armour the caster is not proficient with. The character must make a Concentration check (DC 15 + the level of the spell being cast) and apply the appropriate Armour Check Penalty to the check. This applies to casting all types of spell, and replaces Arcane Spell Failure.

Pros: this brings the check for casting spells in armour in line with other checks made for disruptions to spellcasting. It explains why bards don't make ASF checks in light armour

(they're proficient with light armour).

Cons: a level-drop as fighter allows a wizard or sorcerer to cast spells in heavy armour. That gives them +4 armour bonus over *mage armour*, though their movement and carrying capacity are reduced and their access to spells is one level behind a single-class caster. You may not consider that enough of a trade-off.

18. Spell – *Neutralise fear*

Neutralise fear is a 3rd level conjuration [healing] spell on all PHB class spell lists. It is the same as *neutralise poison*, except that the spell removes any continuing fear effects and makes the creature immune to any fear effects it is exposed to during the duration of the spell. This spell can instead remove the fear effect in a creature or object that can cause fear for the duration of the spell, at the caster's option.

Pros: given there are higher level spells like *heroes' feast* that confer immunity to fear attacks plus other benefits (including immunity to poison attacks), it's reasonable that there should be a lower level spell that only confers immunity to fear.

Cons: this can reduce the risk involved in encounters with creatures that use fear attacks, like dragons and ghosts.

19. Death Attacks

Death attacks usually (but not always) allow the victim a Fortitude save. If the save succeeds, the victim takes 1d6 damage, plus +1d6 for each spell level above 2nd: that is, 1d6 if a 1st or 2nd level spell, 2d6 if a 3rd level spell, 3d6 if a 4th level spell, and so on. If the save fails or the spell does not allow a saving throw, the victim takes 2d6 damage per caster level.

As by the book, *raise dead* does not work on someone killed by a death attack, but *resurrection* does. *Death ward* protects a character from death attacks.

Pros: this removes the largest group of "save or die" effects, where survival depends on one roll. The damage effect is modelled on *disintegrate*, which was a "save or die" in 3.0 but isn't in 3.5.

Cons: you may prefer to keep "save or die" effects for death attacks. Other "save or die" effects that you may wish to modify include the *vorpal* weapon property and some poision-based attacks (notably *cloudkill*).

20. Energy Drain Attacks

Replace energy drain attacks with a 1d4 Con drain attacks. Undead still regain 5 HP on a successful hit.

Enervation becomes a 1d4 Con drain. *Energy drain* becomes a 2d4 Con drain.

Raise dead and *resurrection* always cause 2 points of Con drain, which can be recovered like any other ability drain. They never cause level loss.

Pros: this simplifies the effect of energy drain attacks, and removes the inequity of the effects of level drain (essentially, -1 to everything every level, regardless of actual BAB, save bonus, and so on). Characters who are killed no longer receive the "permanent penalty" of also losing one level and "forgetting" how to cast certain spells, skills they invested ranks in for the first time, and so on.

Cons: you may prefer to keep energy drain effects, or prefer to make characters who die return as a weaker character.

Credit where credit's due

Tim Woodhams told me about house rule 1 (ability score increases), which he credits to Ian Baynard.

The other nineteen house rules (2 through 20) are my own ideas, and I use them all in my current weekly D&D game. I also use a substantial number of other house rules: the full set are available on my website at http://www.uq.net.au/~zzjohnsg/potestas.htm.

As with all house rules, you shouldn't make changes to a game system without first thinking about the possible consequences. I expect that some of these house rules work well in my game because they interact with each other in positive ways. If you implement a change in isolation from other changes, the overall impact may well be negative. Likewise if you make a change that removes something you like from the rules.