

Echelon

Character Creation

<http://www.echelond20.org/>

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Draft: November 12, 2012

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1 Overview

Creating a character in Echelon is pretty simple.

- Choose cornerstone talents appropriate for your level, updating character scores as needed;
- Choose capstone talents appropriate for your level, remembering to make sure that the prerequisites for each are satisfied;
- Choose common talents appropriate for your level, updating character scores as needed;
- Choose equipment (remember to get equipment that supports your talents, you'd feel silly showing up with Weapon Focus: Swords talent but no sword).
- Choose descriptive elements, including things like alignment if it's being used.

2 Character Scores

There are a number of scores, numeric values, used to help define each character and creature for play.

2.1 Primary Scores

All characters and creatures have these scores. These scores are applied to many things in Echelon.

Score	Description
Level	Raw measure of relative power. Higher-level characters are generally more capable than lower-level characters.
Level Bonus	Level/2 rounded down Used in many places.
Tier Number	Level/4 rounded up Used in some calculations where the power range of the character or creature is relevant and there is a distinct difference between tiers.

2.2 Trained Scores

The following scores are gained from training (taking talents) or directly derived from such scores.

Score	Description
Training Bonus	Cannot exceed Level/2 rounded up Bonus to specific types of checks gained through talents and typically added Level Bonus to find a derived value.
Martial Ability	Level Bonus + Martial Training Bonus How generally capable the character or creature is in combat. Used not only for attacking, but also defense and may be used as a resource for other abilities.
Casting Ability	Level Bonus + Caster Training Bonus How generally capable the character or creature is casting spells. Used to determine caster level for spells, spell availability, and so on.

2.3 Calculated Scores

These scores are calculated from Primary Scores and Trained Scores, and may be further adjusted by talents and equipment.

Score	Description
Hit Points	(Level + Martial Training Bonus) * Tier Number How hard the character or creature is to kill. May be further modified by talents such as Great Fortitude.
Armor Class	10 + Armor Bonus + Base Attack Bonus How hard the character or creature is to hit in combat. May be further modified by other talents. May change armor to provide DR instead of AC.

2.4 Saving Throws

Saving throws are typically used to avoid unpleasant effects, but there are places where they might be used more directly such as 'Turn Undead' being implemented as a contested Will check (both sides roll d20+Will to determine the winner).

It would be easy to replace all three of these with another set, such as the classic set of saving throws from previous editions (Breath Weapon, Spell, Rod/Staff/Wand, and so on). It would be necessary to replace some talents, but otherwise it would be fairly easy.

Score	Description
Fortitude Save	Level Bonus How well the character or creature can tough out systemic physical effects such as poison, fatigue, and so on. Improved by the Great Will talent.
Reflex Save	Level Bonus How well the character or creature can dodge or react to certain special attacks such as area effect spells or traps. Improved by the Lightning Reflexes talent.
Will Save	Level Bonus How well the character can withstand mental effects such as compulsions. Improved by the Iron Will talent.

3 Talents

Talents are the primary currency of character creation. Each character and creature has some number of cornerstone, capstone, and common talents.

3.1 Talent Slots

Level	Level Bonus	Tier Bonus	Tier	Talent Slots Available						Keystone
				B	X	H	M	C	L	
1	+0	+1	Basic	2	—	—	—	—	—	cornerstone
2	+1	+1	Basic	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	+1	+1	Basic	5	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	+2	+1	Basic	6	—	—	—	—	—	capstone
5	+2	+2	Expert	4	2	—	—	—	—	cornerstone
6	+3	+2	Expert	4	3	—	—	—	—	—
7	+3	+2	Expert	3	5	—	—	—	—	—
8	+4	+2	Expert	2	6	—	—	—	—	capstone
9	+4	+3	Heroic	2	4	2	—	—	—	cornerstone
10	+5	+3	Heroic	2	4	3	—	—	—	—
11	+5	+3	Heroic	2	3	5	—	—	—	—
12	+6	+3	Heroic	2	2	6	—	—	—	capstone
13	+6	+4	Master	2	2	4	2	—	—	cornerstone
14	+7	+4	Master	2	2	4	3	—	—	—
15	+7	+4	Master	2	2	3	5	—	—	—
16	+8	+4	Master	2	2	2	6	—	—	capstone
17	+8	+5	Champion	2	2	2	4	2	—	cornerstone
18	+9	+5	Champion	2	2	2	3	3	—	—
19	+9	+5	Champion	2	2	2	2	5	—	—
20	+10	+5	Champion	2	2	2	2	6	—	capstone
21	+10	+6	Legendary	2	2	2	2	4	2	cornerstone
22	+11	+6	Legendary	2	2	2	2	4	3	—
23	+11	+6	Legendary	2	2	2	2	3	5	—
24	+12	+6	Legendary	2	2	2	2	2	6	capstone

Talents have at least one tier of ability. A character who takes a talent at a particular tier gains all benefits (and detriments) of the talent from that tier and below.

3.2 Cornerstone Talents

Cornerstone talents provide a measure of what a character or creature *is*. These are often things that are inherently part of the character, such as race, but need not to be limited to this definition. “Warrior Born” indicates certain violent tendencies that make the character suitable to warfare, or a powerful bloodline.

Cornerstone talents may be upgraded from tier to tier or new cornerstone talents chosen.

For instance, the demonic elements in a character may increase over time as the character gains power. In this case the character might upgrade the Demon cornerstone talent on gaining a new tier and backfill the lower tier cornerstone talents by either adding a new cornerstone talent in the now-empty slot or by upgrading a talent from a lower tier and backfilling for that one.

It may seem odd that a ‘new’ cornerstone talent might be added sometime after a character’s career has started. There are a few reasons this could happen, though:

- A character has been repressing his natural violent tendencies, rejecting the fact that he is Warrior Born. Some event may have caused him to stop doing this, bringing his martial abilities to a new level.
- A character may have simply *not known* about his natural ability to perform magic but once he was exposed to spell casting he discovered he had a remarkably capability here.
- The character was a relatively normal warrior until bathed in the blood of a demon he helped slay. He has become tainted by the dark power in that blood and now exhibits unholy gifts.
- A wizard has performed a ritual; he placed his soul in his little finger and chopped it off, and until the hidden finger is found he is undying (or at least undead).

Cornerstone talents might be available to only certain ranges of tiers. A ‘Dwarf’ cornerstone might be suitable for a starting adventurer but not a lower-level character, but really have no path to pursue to become “more dwarfy”. In a case like this the talent should provide as much total benefit as any other talent would accumulate by Expert tier (so a ‘better than normal Expert tier’, by about the amount a Basic tier talent would provide). Other talents might start at even higher tiers (with lots of ability value ‘accumulated from lower tiers’) and extend for limited tiers.

3.3 Common Talents

Most talents are common talents. Common talents do not have prerequisites beyond making sense for the character – few humans have skin leathery enough to be considered natural armor.

Few *normal* humans, that is. It is incredibly important to remember that after Expert tier even those character ‘born of Man’ (originally human) are exceeding the bounds of what is possible in the real world. It may well be appropriate that a ‘human’ at the Heroic tier start taking abilities normally not reasonable at lower tiers. This can include ‘racial abilities’ from other races, such as natural armor, darkvision, and so on.

Many talents extend the entire range from Basic through Legendary, but this is not required. Some are simply too powerful for lower tiers and have no subset of ability that could reasonably apply, others lack powerful enough options that aren’t handled in other ways.

3.4 Capstone Talents

Capstone talent slots are gained at the top level in each tier and indicate achievement. Unlike other talents, capstone talents actually have prerequisites.

Also unlike other talents, capstone talents also tend to exist only at a particular tier. They are an acknowledgement of what the character had achieved by that point. Cornerstone and common talents can typically be upgraded, capstone talents cannot.

3.5 Talent Lists

The lists of talents will actually be tracked in other documents. They can often be grouped by related type (magic, combat, divine power, etc.) and by relative power (talents derived from *FantasyCraft* crafts are noticeably less powerful than talents derived from *Iron Heroes* mastery feats), so it makes a lot of sense to keep them separate for now.

4 Equipment

For now, use the standard RSRD equipment list. In the course of play a character can be expected to buy and sell things as normal. When creating a new character, a budget can be established and spent, or equipment suitable to the character's talents be assumed.

- A character with Heroic "Cutting Wind Combat Style" (sword-based combat style talent) will start with a "Heroic-tier sword" (but not a Champion- or Legendary-tier sword).
- A character with Master "Mounted Combat" can be expected to have a "Master-tier mount", probably something that flies.
- A character with Basic "Armor Proficiency" (which grants proficiency with medium armor) could expect to have a mundane suit of chain mail.

Off the top of my head, "Basic" gear is probably mundane, Expert might be masterwork. I would expect that RSRD-based games would normally start dipping into magic items after that (such as "+1 per tier above Expert"), but I don't have enhancement bonuses so that won't quite work. Needs more thought.

I might want to add "suitable equipment" to the tier definitions for talents.

I might also want 'signatures', clues that a particular creature or character has the talent at that tier. They might not be definitive, but could be helpful in describe a character. A Champion should *look* like a Champion.

5 Descriptive Elements

Age, height, weight, and so on, take from RSRD.

For now, take alignment from the RSRD.

These things have little mechanical effect (though alignment might if you take one of the alignment domain talents).