

13TH AGE 2E:
CHANGES FROM
1E WORTH
MENTIONING



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Despite many changes, the *13th Age* 2E rules are compatible with the classes, treasures, and monsters of 1E.

This list of changes therefore has two main purposes.

First, for players familiar with 1E, we're calling out shifts that might be easy to miss if you're skimming the rules.

Second, we're highlighting a few of the big changes for people who want an outline before reading.

We've provided page references to many of the changes and new concepts mentioned below. Once you've got the books, these references are repeated in the index at the back of both the *Heroes' Handbook* and the *Gamemaster's Guide*. As in 1E, the index is also the glossary.

Reading order: We intend readers to start with the *Heroes' Handbook*, which is why it starts with Chapter 1 while the *Gamemaster's Guide* starts with Chapter 8.

ARCS REPLACE DAYS

Days are gone, replaced by arcs. We got a lot of feedback from players questioning 1E's use of the word 'day' as our adventuring time unit. 'Daily' spells and powers confused people, since we weren't using the words 'day' or 'daily' in any commonly understood meaning of the words. So we've changed our terminology. The three or four battle period that leads to a full heal-up is now known as an arc. Powers that were daily powers are arc powers, usually written as 1/arc. Some powers are 2/arc or arc/desperate. (*HH*: 307 for arcs and full heal-ups; *HH*: 56 for usage patterns.)

HH: INTRODUCTION

The **Orc Lord** isn't in the list of icons is that in our default setting because the Orc Lord is dead. See Chapter 5 of the *Heroes' Handbook* for details. Of course, your campaign might decide that the Orc Lord is very much alive. (*HH*: 256)

HH 1: EXAMPLE OF PLAY

We didn't really do examples in *13th Age* 1E. This new example of play is also an example of campaign set-up and character creation. It includes two pages of an annotated character sheet as character creation guidelines.

HH 2: CREATING CHARACTERS

There's a new **default ability score array** that goes a bit beyond the array we introduced in *13th Age Glorantha*. We recommend using the standard array, though the point-buy and roll 'em methods can be found in these appendices. (*HH*: 24)

Icon relationship dice: You start with 3 relationship dice with the icons, and that's now all most characters get. Along with overhauling the icon relationship rules, we got rid of the rule that all player characters get more relationship points at champion and epic-tier. If you want more points, there are ways, but it's not automatic. (*HH*: 216)

HH 3: KIN

Many changes, starting with no longer using the word 'race.'

Ability scores are no longer based on kin and class. Every character gets +2 to any 2 ability scores. You'll choose based on your class, of course, and most any kin can muster the ability scores required by any of the classes

More kin powers: Each kin has choices now. Each of the world's widespread kin have a choice of three possible kin powers. The uncommon kin have at least two kin powers, sometimes more.

Troll-kin is the new name for half-orcs. We got tired of orc baggage and the default stories of both troll-kin and orcs have changed. (*HH*: 42)

Humans had a great deal in 1E, getting quick to fight and a bonus feat. Now the bonus feat is a separate kin power, humans don't get double the juice from their kin power. (*HH*: 30)

HH 4: CLASSES

We'll look at some of the general changes before talking about specific classes. We're listing some changes that occur in specific classes, but don't assume that anything is the same as it was in 1E or the earlier 2E playtests.

Ability score improvement: We tried a couple versions in playtesting and eventually went back to the fun pattern of choosing which ability scores to improve as you rise in level, but with a twist. At 4th level, as in first edition, you can improve 3 ability scores by +1. At 7th you improve 4 ability scores, and at 10th level you get to improve 5 scores. In other words, you don't have to improve all your ability scores unless you choose to. If your character concept suggests that one of your ability scores should stay low, you can arrange that.

Ability score modifier bonuses are quadrupled at epic tier: At 8th, 9th, and 10th level, you add quadruple your ability score multiplier to hit points and damage, instead of triple the score the way the original edition did it. There's also an epic tier adjustment for hit points, recoveries, and weapon damage: a +5 bonus per epic level, so +5 at 8th, +10 at 9th, and +15 at 10th level. (Gamma playtesters take note, 2E cut the bonus in half.)

Weapon-using PCs needed a boost at high levels to keep up with spellcasters, and all high level characters were suffering from recoveries that provided too few hit points.

Many spells now have even levels: Spellcasters now cast all their spells at the highest level the spell has available instead of only having odd levels. We'd tried this in *13th Age Glorantha* and liked the simplicity. No more selecting some spells you have to cast weaker versions of. You get to cast all your spells at the highest level available to you.

In the case of the cleric and wizard, this means that we've also reduced their total number of spells a bit at many levels, but since all their spells are going to be cast at their level (or perhaps one below if the spell is focused on damage effects), the casters' power level probably hasn't gone down.

Some spellcasters start with a set number of at-will spells: Sorcerers and wizards start with two at-will spells, plus a number of other spells they can choose freely. Vestment clerics start with one at-will spell.

BARBARIAN

Our playtests went back and forth about how to handle barbarian rage. We settled on a version that increases your crit range when you are raging instead of improving your accuracy by rolling a second d20. Some of the barbarian's talents acquired a few more potential choices during play. It's still simple, but potentially a bit more involved than in 1E. (HH: 64)

BARD

Speaking of being more involved than in 1E . . . The bard is redesigned around the concept that bardic magic is associated with mastery of certain styles of instruments, abstracted as talents. Don't expect that anything about the 1E bard is the same in 2E.

One thing that might be easy to miss: **song mechanics changed.** You now only get the final verse effect if you try to sustain the song and fail to sustain. If you decide not to sustain the song, it ends without its final verse effect, but you're free to start a new song that turn. (HH: 71)

CLERIC

The *heal* feature got a major reworking, and it's now affected by a choice that clerics make between using heavy armor and wearing light armor. Several factors hinge on this Armor OR Vestments choice, and you can't play a cleric without thinking about it. (HH: 98)

Turn undead is now a class feature! You'll want to read that. (HH: 98)

Otherwise, the experience of playing a cleric is similar to what it was in 1E.

FIGHTER

As a rule, the fighter no longer uses flexible attacks. Its maneuvers build on its basic melee attack.

But there's a talent that handles flexible attacks properly, they end up working quite a bit better than in 1E. (HH: 118)

The fighter also has a new feature called Momentum that's a pretty big deal. And it can work well with flexible attacks. (HH: 114)

If you were with us for the playtests, you should know that you'll no longer find the Bow Fighter talent or the Combat Rhythm talent in the class. The goal is to handle the Bow Fighter option well (instead of half-assed) in an upcoming book. Combat Rhythm didn't have good effects on play, and ended up replaced by the fighter's new Momentum feature.

PALADIN

Lay on Hands is now a class feature instead of a talent.

We changed a few names of **paladin talents**, partly because a couple words didn't mean exactly what we thought they meant when we wrote the first version.

Smite damage is improved.

There are a couple epic talents.

This isn't really the type of information that belongs in this update! Which means the paladin is still a very simple class.

RANGER

Rangers now have a class feature called **Tracker** that covers wilderness tracking instead of forcing them to take a talent to be good at it. (And there's advice to cover urban rangers.)

Likewise, the **terrain stunt** effects are a feat now, not connected to a talent.

Speaking of talents, the ranger class has a new **talent structure**. Talents are classified as caster talents, hunter talents, or warrior talents, and having a single talent from a category gives you a special power or a bonus.

The **Animal Companion** talent now counts as two talents and is entirely reworked. Gamma playtesters can be assured that the version we tried in that draft was hated and is replaced. (HH: 142)

ROGUE

The biggest change: a choice between Sneak Attack and Rush Attack.

Or wait, possibly the biggest change is that the rogue's version of Momentum is gone, replaced by Bravado, a resource that accumulates when you hit with an attack and does not go away when you're hit, the way Momentum did. (HH: 151)

The Shadow Walk talent works better, with an option to spend a point of Bravado instead of rolling the attack. (HH: 153)

SORCERER

Like all the spellcasters, their spells now have dice or average damage as damage expressions, they no longer add an ability score to their spell damage.

When sorcerers gather power, they can now use one of their limited-use **overspill** benefits that are associated with each sorcerer class talent.

We removed the old Access to Wizardry feature. If you want access to wizardry, take Arcane Heritage.

Sorcerers' **breath weapon** spells work very differently. (HH: 162)

Quite a lot of changes in the sorcerer spells; don't assume any of them work the same.

WIZARD

High Arcana's *counter-magic* works a bit differently. It's now always relevant to all manner of magical effects, not just spells, but bigger and tougher enemies have some ability to resist Counter-Magic now.

Pretty much all the wizard talents got juggled and revised. Vance's Polysyllabic Verbalizations is especially interesting.

Magic missile is now a bonus spell you acquire by taking an adventurer-tier feat. It improves as you rise in level, and improves more if you take its associated champion and epic feats. (HH: 185)

HH 5: UNIQUE HEROES

There are changes to specific feats in this chapter but few systematic changes.

Feat acquisition: The default is now that you don't need to take lower-tier feats to take the higher-tier feat or feats associated with a spell, talent, power, or ability. The feats which do require lower-tier feats as pre-requirements call that out. (HH: 210)

There are also a few feats meant to replace lower-tier feats, so that it only takes one higher-tier feat to get the full effect.

Incremental advance: We've implemented the fix we originally made in *13th Age Glorantha*: each incremental advance can only be chosen once per level. There's no more exception for powers and spells, you only get one power/spell incremental advance per level. (HH: 221)

Increments when you're already at 10th level: You can get incremental advances when you're 10th level. Earlier in the class chapter, you may have noticed that each class had between two and three zenith-tier feats that can only be taken as 11th level incremental advances!

HH 6: ICONS & ICON CONNECTIONS

The icon information in the first half of this chapter relates to how your heroes will interact with the icons' organizations and magical power.

Icon connections: What used to be called 'icon relationship advantages' are now icon connections.

Icon connection rules: The second half of the chapter revises and clarifies the icon connection rules with many examples of how they can shape the narrative.

What 1E called "complications" with icon connections are now known as "**twists**."

Rolling icon dice much less often!: You roll for icon connections once an arc, not every session. Rolling icon dice looks like it did in 1E, you're still hoping for 5s and 6s, but 5s are not automatic twists. Instead, you roll for twists when you use the connection. (There's also a variant rule from Jonathan for rolling for icon connections.) (HH: 216 and 269)

You also get a single icon connection if all your dice miss, but when you use this automatic connection, you also experience an automatic twist. (HH: 269)

There's also an option to use an icon connection in combat. It's not the most powerful or interesting way of using the connection, but it can be done. (HH: 288)

HH 7: COMBAT RULES

It can be tough to notice all the changes in combat rules. Here are some things you might miss on a quick skim.

Opportunity attacks against ranged attackers:

Characters using ranged spells and ranged attacks now take opportunity attacks from engaged enemies no matter who the spell or attack targets. You can't avoid an opportunity attack just by targeting an enemy you're engaged with. (HH: 296)

Grabs use the rules we started adding to books after the core book: The GM screen and 13th Age Glorantha and Bestiary 2 all suggested these rules instead. Now it's official. (HH: 310)

Intercepting is now an interrupt action: Characters get one interrupt action a round when it's not their turn, and now intercepting counts as an interrupt. (HH: 296)

Interrupt actions can be taken before your first action in the round: Maybe you already played this way. Now we made it clear.

There's a **combat assist action** when you feel that your own actions aren't likely to succeed. (HH: 298)

Saves against temporary effects that aren't save-ends effects: If an effect gives you a bonus save when you are suffering from an effect that does not offer a chance to save, but will instead end at the end or beginning of a turn, you can use the bonus save to try to end that effect. In most cases, this bonus save is going to be a normal save. We facilitated this rule by referring to both save-ends effects and effects with definite end points as temporary effects. It sounds technical but the actual rules turned out smooth. (HH: 311)

Ongoing damage and crits: A critical hit with an attack that deals ongoing damage now doubles the ongoing damage as well. (HH: 312)

Necro damage: What we used to call negative energy damage is now called necro damage. (HH: 58)

Confusion: Confused creatures still attack one of their allies, but it's a half-damage no-trigger attack with a sizeable amount of corner case advice for people who appreciate that type of advice. (Conditions on HH: 308)

Stun: Stunned creatures now have a chance of taking one action on their turn. Something to hope for.

Vulnerable: Vulnerability no longer has anything to do with increasing the crit range. Attackers now add bonus damage equal to double the attacker's level against the vulnerable target, hit or miss, so there's always an impact when a target is vulnerable. (Unless the attacker rolls the dreaded 1.)

The five-skulls rule for death and dying: There's a new wrinkle in the death and dying rules. The first edition's stabilization rules were deliberately left out and now dropping multiple times in the same battle can kill you. (HH: 305)

"Fleeing and taking a campaign loss" has been replaced by friendlier terms: No one wanted to flee from battles and

take a campaign loss. The words gave the wrong impression that you'd lost the campaign. So we cleaned up the terminology and provided many examples of what happens when the heroes **retreat and take a narrative loss.** (HH: 299)

Epic tier damage dealt by PCs: It used to be that 8th level PCs added triple their ability score modifier to weapon damage. Now they add **quadruple** their ability score as their ability score modifier.

All the spots where weapon-using heroes added triple an ability score modifier when they were epic level? That's quadruple the ability score modifier now, and we have printed that out clearly in spells. (HH: 58)

Epic bonus to hit points and recoveries and basic attack damage: The math for characters' hit points and recoveries and basic attacks dropped off at epic tier, even with quadruple the ability score being added. You also add +5 per epic level to both your recoveries and your damage with basic attacks.

Two-weapon fighting, when done right, now automatically hits on a natural 2 instead of just allowing you to reroll the attack. (HH: 314)

There's an **honorable combat option** for fights that don't have to be to the death. (HH: 314)



GMG 8: DRAGON EMPIRE

We added a section on the default history of the ages, bringing together bits that were scattered in 1E. (GMG: 30)

The geography section has new art and some revised wording, but not a lot that's new or truly changed except for three new locations on the map created by our backers: Crab God Island, Traversorwen, and Wonderton.

GMG 9: RUNNING THE GAME

The chapter now contains a lot more advice about starting campaigns, customizing your campaign's icons, running adventures, and setting up encounters. It also has a great deal of advice and rules for setting up fair battles.

Build battles using battle level, not player character level: We simplified the way our building battles table looks and operates. We also changed the math for how battles are built for bigger adventuring groups. The building battles section looks like it has a lot of tables, but the biggest table shows the battles built in the examples. (GMG: 41)

Some arcs you fight four battles. That's easier and it's generally recommended for beginning groups.

Other arcs you fight only three battles, in which case the battles are built as if the heroes were one level higher than they actually are.

The GM advice includes guidelines for **starting fights** and simpler rulings on **surprise** and ambushes. We're not believers surprise rounds any more. You'll see that we prefer using initiative bonuses when one side has the drop on the other. (GMG: 50)

GMG 10: MONSTERS

The monster chapter changes mostly speak for themselves, I think, starting with revisions that aimed to make every creature memorable or interesting.

We brought **weaklings and elite** creatures in from our earlier supplements.

The **Monster Abilities** page covering burrowing, fear, and flight is rewritten or new. (GMG: 59)

Dragons now all have a breath-weapon related ability called *stoke*. Essentially, every time a dragon doesn't use a breath

weapon on its turn, the breath weapon gets more dangerous.

We also decided that the Random Dragon Abilities table was too random, frequently generating abilities that barely took effect. So we've replaced that table with dragon-tricks, effects that each dragon can use one or more of when they need them. (GMG: 93)

We've implemented a new tier-based approach to setting monsters' **initiative** bonuses. The numbers go up by 3s, and when a monster is notably quick or ponderously slow, you'll be able to tell. We won't always use that, the old way of doing initiative works fine.

The **DIY monster** section has a lot of new ideas and text, including sample powers for monsters of different roles. (GMG: 165)

Partly to help your own DIY efforts, our monster formatting now includes the expected baseline stats for defenses and hit points in small gray digits alongside each creature's actual stats.

GMG 11: TREASURE

Taking it from the top . . .

We **removed magic oils** and kept magic runes. There's nothing wrong with the original oil rules if you want to keep using them. (Magic oils give items a +1 bonus per tier for an arc, but no other power. They cost 2/3rds of what the runes cost.)

We now have a concrete suggestion for how many healing potions (or their gp equivalent in other one-use items) the heroes should have at the start of each tier. If you haven't had to use the healing potions you already had, you don't get new ones. (GMG: 171)

We ditched the word *chakra* in favor of **magic item types**.

The **default bonuses** of several magic item types improved quite a bit, mostly as an experiment in making magic items that compete with weapons and armor for adventurers' affections! Boots and cloaks and shields and even belts are now considerably more worthwhile. (GMG: 176)

Items that stay relevant: Most magic item powers now improve as the hero using the item rises through the tiers. The default power of an item that's from the item's type doesn't rise, so you still want higher tier items. But the power that makes an adventurer-tier item different from other items is still cool when you're an epic hero. Item powers that don't approve are effects that don't have to improve to stay relevant. (GMG: 177)

You can now only **attune** a number of true magic items equal to your level. We are no longer embracing the 'push past your level and get taken over by your items' quirks' trope. If your group loved that in 1E, you could of course bring it back for your game.

Attuning an item that's one tier more powerful than you is possible, but counts for two items against your level attunement limit. You can't attune an item that's two tiers above you. (GMG: 174)

The game plays better when magic items are unique:

By default, true magic items should be unique in the party. If one hero has a specific type of armor or weapon, don't give the same thing to another hero. Also, giving out magic items is now clearly under the GM's control unless they decide otherwise. (GMG: 172)

Item quirks are discussed, but there are fewer of them in this edition. Some quirks have been replaced with **quips** used when activating the item or with quiddities, a different style of personality trait. (GMG: 175)

Wands and symbols now extend to epic tier instead of being limited to adventurer-tier and champion-tier. Our apologies to loot books full of implements that were created before we'd made the jump.

There's a table called **the Panoply** that has suggestions for the minimum numbers and tiers of magical items that heroes should probably possess at different levels. (GMG: 173)

The chapter ends with the introduction of **temporary magical blessings**, gifts that can provide the heroes with temporary power instead of permanent magical items. (GMG: 191)

GMG 12: A BAD MOON & THE WRONG STARS

Our new introductory adventure.

GMG APPENDICES

The generic character sheet at the back of the book will soon be joined by class-specific character sheets available on the Pelgrane website. We're working on those sheets now.

--Rob Heinsoo, June 27, 2025

