

Hawke's No Additional Rolls Critical System for d20 (All Versions)  
Based on AD&D 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, but modified to not add any additional Rolls  
Beta Version 20140926a

Though I run d20 games regularly, I miss the days of Role-master and MERP with the detailed critical systems. However, they required extra rolls, and were arbitrary in hit location.

I have wanted to have hit location and critical details for d20. I have used the old Original D&D rules from the Blackmoor Supplement with percentile for hit location. And some of my players that later have become DM's adapted that as well, having their players roll a d20 with percentile simultaneously. But it still lacked details for critical hits (other than just plain multiplying of damage).

I do not care for hit points just being totally abstract and not reflecting overall health (as 5<sup>th</sup> edition really emphasizes, and takes to an extreme that I totally disagree with, allowing them to completely restore all hit points from a single long rest!), and prefer something with some detail.

For decades I have just arbitrarily had players (and myself) add details to the attacks when they hit, describing a slash across the chest, or crunching sound to the arm, etc.

I also looked at Monte Cooke's d20 3.x publication best of d20, but that too was very lacking.

During the 1980s I pretty much bought every single AD&D 1<sup>st</sup> edition product ever made, then they started the whole process over again with 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, and I stopped buying TSR products until moving to Spokane in 2004. Meanwhile I played many other RPGs; MERP, Rolemaster, Twilight 2000, Call of Cthulhu, Star Wars, Star Trek, and scores of others, and not a single TSR/Wizards product during the interim. So I never actually played much of 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (other than the first players hand book, DMG, and MM when they first came out), and missed all the other supplements.

In recent years, as I have been working on my RPG Research project, I have been picking up used copies of 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition AD&D for very little money \$2 to \$9 per item typically.

I recently started looking through them and stumbled across the combat screen, that included the rules from the supplement Players Options: Combat Tactics. And within was a critical hit location system. I read the relevant section of the book, and realized here was something that possibly could work with all versions of d20, but it needs some improvements from the original.

The original just sets a wider crit range, but with more requirements, and then if a critical hit, then rolling to see which location is hit (1d10) between arms, legs, abdomen, chest, and head, and then again to determine the severity of the hit (determined by earlier rolls). It kind of works, but after play testing it with a few groups, it significantly slowed down combat situations, and not only made encounters take longer, it also slowed down the action so that players became less interested, rather than more. Once again that balance between detail and speed....

So, I thought about trying to make the system work without adding ANY rolls. I have been through other variants with only one roll (hit location for example) and that is okay, but the current beta versions I am testing requires ZERO additional rolls from the standard d20 to hit, and then damage dice.

This still has some problems that I am trying to work out, but the basic version is working well both with 1<sup>st</sup> Edition AD&D and with 3<sup>rd</sup> edition and 5<sup>th</sup> edition (I haven't ever found anyone willing to play 4<sup>th</sup> edition).

How many times have you rolled that d20, added the bonuses, and had an awesome total (though not a "Nat 20"), and thought "What a waste of a great roll" because then you just roll your normal damage dice. Wouldn't it be nice if the greater the d20 hit roll, there would be a gradient of increasingly more

severe consequences to the target being hit?

Of course, this works both ways, the PCs are at greater risk as well, which for my style of play/GM emphasizing R-O-L-E-playing over R-O-L-L-playing (aka hack 'n' slash, min-maxing, munchkin play, IMNSVHO) encourages players to find non-combat solutions since the risk of combat is more deadly to all parties involved.

The basic premise is that there is a quick math calculation used multiple times, instead of multiple rolls. Here is the basic version (still needs work):

An attacker rolls a standard d20, applies any to hit bonuses, for the total to hit roll.

If the total is less than is normally requires to hit, nothing is different.

If the total is exactly the amount needed to hit, the attacker just rolls hit points (it is 0 above the necessary to hit roll). If the attack total is 1 or more above the necessary amount, then it registers on the hit location chart. For those of you that do not have the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition screen with the crits, I am including them here, but modified for my tastes (borrowing from RM/MERP and such).

The type of weapon determines which of three weapon charts are consulted; Piercing, Bludgeoning, Slashing. All three use the same hit location, but have different detailed descriptions for specific wounds based on the critical type.

Here is the first part (you could consider that the higher the number, the closer it gets to the most vital areas, the head). I am for now using the default from 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, but I am thinking about making a lot of customizations to this basic premise down the road to improve the logic, but for now, using the default AD&D 2<sup>nd</sup> edition chart:

Location:

1-2 = Right leg

3-4 = left leg

5 = Abdomen (or lower back)

6-7 = Torso (chest or upper back)

8 = left arm

9 = right arm

10 = Head

So, if the attacker total to hit roll is 1-2 above the necessary to hit number, they would hit the left leg. If they were 8 above, then it would be the left arm, etc.

Next, there are the critical details. The default version of the combat charts for AD&D 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition have a different chart for; Legs, Abdomen, Torso, Arms, and Head. Each chart has a number under "Severity" with a number ranging from 1 through 13+, and then a corresponding "Effect" for each number range.

All of the charts for Severity Ranges 1-3 have Effect "No unusual effect", so though the attacker hits, they just cause normal damage, but we now already have a hit location as to where they were hit when describing the attack, so that is more information than the default d20 system normally provides. Where it gets even more fun is with 4 through 13+.

Using the

Basic initial formula needs changing, because will miss a lot of the different critical variety...  
For example 10 for head, will also always be the same result of 10 on critical details "Skull broken...",  
and never have the lighter hits.

Again sticking with a math approach rather than rolling....

If use their bonus as straight Effect result, then will be too consistently the same for the same player  
(though more varied between different players):

If use the actual roll, without the bonus... would almost always be 13+ and too deadly.

If use actual roll minus 10... (without bonuses).....might work for lower results, but won't ever get  
above 10.... so not quite right, more variety, but caps the high end (this might be desired by some Dms):

If use actual roll + bonuses, then subtract 10, this might work to cover the range and also have enough  
variety of Effects results?

Change hit location as follows to make more sense in combat and without rolling hit location:  
From most likely to be hit (and least likely to be fatal), to least likely/most critical (head).

Amount above total needed to hit:

- 1-2 — Arm (shield/off)
- 3-4 — Arm (weapon)
- 5-6 — Leg (shield/off/leading leg)
- 7-8 — Leg (weapon/rear leg)
- 9-10 — Abdomen (or lower back)
- 11-12 — Torso (or upper back)
- 13+ — Head

So, if need 15 to hit, and rolled 15 with a +2 bonus for 17, which is 2 above 15 needed to hit, attacker  
hits potentially critically the shield/off arm.

Now for effects,  $17 - 10 = 7$ .

Effect = Armor damaged, arm struck, minor bleeding, if no armor, arm injured, minor bleeding.

Try another one. Need 20 to hit, roll 18 with +7 bonus for 25. Difference = 5.

Hit location = Leg (off):

Effects =  $25 - 10 = 15 = 13+$  on chart, Leg destroyed, no move or attack, severe bleeding, and triple  
damage.

That is far too severe for only 5 above...

Problem is if based only on roll, can't ever be above 10 in severity, but if include to hit bonus, could  
potentially always be too powerful in relation to the to-hit needed....

Try different direction in calculation. Use Total -10 for hit location, and use total modified to hit roll difference as severity determination, that makes more sense yes?

These rules are expressed in terms that can work with any version of d20, whether OD&D, AD&D 1<sup>st</sup>, AD&D 2<sup>nd</sup>, D&D 3.x, D&D 4, or D&D 5<sup>th</sup> edition. With OD&D through 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, it is based on charts and THACO, while D&D 3.x+ is based on the DC number for AC, either way, the key is simply knowing what the normal number needed to roll to hit is, and then just calculating the difference.

Formula:

Target Number (TN) needed to hit.

D20 Actual Roll (AR) before modifiers.

Total Hit Roll (THR) (d20 roll + modifiers).

Difference to Hit (DR)

$THR - TN = DR$

if DR=0, just roll normal HP damage

if DR=1-3, just calculate hit location and normal HP damage, but do not calculate Severity Results.

If DR=4+, calculate hit location, Severity Results (SR), and total HP damage (in this order).

Hit Location (HL) = AR-10, reference Chart #1 for Hit Location.

Hit Severity (HS) = THR-TN=DR, reference appropriate critical hits chart (bludgeon, piercing, slashing), appropriate to the already calculated Hit Location.

Don't worry about the abbreviations, it is just for expressing the formula.

What all this really means is that there are ZERO additional rolls for this system, just some quick and simple math calculations and simple chart consultation.

The first step is to determine if the hit was successful, if it exceeded the minimum to hit, and by how much.

If the total modified roll result is equal to the hit roll needed, then the hit only causes just normal damage (difference between to-hit number, and to-hit roll is 0).

If the difference is 1-3 above the necessary total to hit, then determine hit location and HP damage, but no need to calculate severity.

If the difference is 4+ above necessary total to hit, then determine hit location, hit severity, and HP damage.

## Hit Location – Chart #1

So, if needing to determine hit location (if 1+ above needed to hit), it is calculated by subtracting 10 from the actual rolled d20 amount (without modifiers):

|     |                              |
|-----|------------------------------|
| 0-1 | Arm (shield/off)             |
| 2-3 | Arm (weapon)                 |
| 4-5 | Leg (shield/off/leading leg) |
| 6-7 | Leg (weapon/rear leg)        |
| 8   | Abdomen (or lower back)      |
| 9   | Torso (or upper back)        |
| 10  | Head                         |

This approach will ALWAYS yield a result between 0 to 10 (or a negative inverse).

If they rolled 9 or lower (and somehow still hit due to bonuses, prone, etc.), just use the negative number in the inverse, so if result is -3, would be.

### Examples

#### *Example 1*

Need 15 to hit, roll 13, with a +2 combination of modifiers to hit for a total of 15.

Difference is  $15-15=0$ . Do not determine hit location or severity, just roll normal HP damage.

#### *Example 2*

Need 15 to hit.

Rolled 13 with a +4 combination of modifiers to hit for a total of 17.

The difference is  $17-15=2$ . This qualifies for hit location determination, though severity calculation is not necessary.

Hit location =  $13-10=3$ , which would be the target's weapon arm.

Then roll normal HP damage, though narrating that it hit their arm (or arm armor), the target may grunt in pain, and maybe have a minor cut, abrasion, or bruise, but without any bleeding or breaking of bones or tendons, etc.

#### *Example 3*

Need 20 to hit.

Rolled 19, with +9 total modifiers, for a total of 28.

This is 8 above needed hit number, so definitely qualifies for both hit location and effects calculation.

*Hit location*

Is  $19-10=9$ , which is Torso (or upper back).

*Hit Severity Effects*

Cross reference effects for appropriate weapon type (bludgeon, piercing, or slashing), under the Torso chart.

The total difference to determine severity is 8 above needed to hit, so it would be result 8 on the chart (we'll use piercing in this instance): Torso injured, Major Bleeding,  $\frac{1}{2}$  move, -4 penalty to all actions.

### **Example 4**

Need 23 to hit.

Rolled 18, with a total of +19 in total modifiers (higher level), for total of 37.

This is 14 above needed hit number, so definitely qualifies for both hit location and effects calculation.

#### *Hit location*

Rolled 18 so  $18-10=8$ , which is abdomen.

#### *Hit Severity Effects*

In this case using a bludgeoning weapon, cross reference for the Abdomen, the total difference between the total needed to hit, and actual total calculated roll is 14, so consult the 13+ Effects result:

“Abdomen destroyed, victim killed”.

### **Optional Rule for Fatal Hit Severity Effects**

If not comfortable with being able to kill a target in a single (exceptional) blow, can optionally just use the next less-severe result, but keep the triple damage result to differentiate from a weaker hit.

### **Optional Rule for Called Shots**

Called shots = penalty to hit is equal to the higher hit location number? For example if calling shot on shield arm, a -1, if weapon arm -3, if off leg -5, if weapon leg -7, if abdomen -8, if torso -9, if head -10.

This can be interpreted as a minus to the attackers roll, or as a bonus to the target's total armor class.

If the attacker calls the shot, AND beats the modified total, then they get the critical result for that targeted location calculated as normal but at the desired location. If they do NOT beat that total, then the COMPLETELY MISS.

If this gets too easy to hit the critical parts (abdomen, torso, or head), then consider simply adding 4 to the modifier, or doubling the modifier.