

- MAKING ARTIFACTS -

In most d20 games certain objects of magic exceed the power limits of normal magic items. Known as artifacts, these incredibly potent devices are beyond the capabilities of normal mortals to create. No matter how powerful a wizard, regardless of a cleric's devotion or the size of his congregation, irrespective of a psion's mental acuity, no normal mortal can make an artifact.

There do exist, however, beings able to craft artifacts. They are rare, with often no more than one per world. The price for such creation is high, even for these powerful beings, so they create artifacts very infrequently. Not even demigods and demon princes can afford to make such items lightly, and those they do create are often closely guarded tools. Rarely, a mortal manages to reach the levels of cosmic power needed to create artifacts, though never easily or quickly.

You can use the artifact creation rules in one of two common ways. Most commonly, they are guidelines for how powerful an NPC must be in order to create such objects. For example, a famous half-dragon, half-dwarven artificer might be legendary for having forged two hammers of thunderbolts. Because of the great personal cost involved in doing so, the artificer isn't likely ever to do so again, but PCs may seek him out for advice or be hired by him to recover the weapons he forged a century ago. Because you have solid rules for what it takes to create the hammers, he can present a consistent and believable NPC to his players. If the players are aware of these rules, they have a sense of the powers such a character must wield.

The second, and much less common, use for artifact creation rules is to allow PCs to make such items. Obviously, this use is relevant only in the most epic of campaigns. Even in such high-powered games, making artifacts is a costly, time-consuming, and dangerous endeavor. The most appropriate use for PC artifacts is to change the tone of a campaign from one of heroic action to behind-the-scenes manipulations and the construction of a legendary object for one specific purpose.

If you allow PC artifact creation just because you feels it adds to the cosmic powered feel of his campaign, limit creation to minor artifacts. Minor artifacts are far and away more powerful than even epic magic items, but they have powers and abilities in keeping with the general capabilities of epic characters. An archwizard with a staff of the magi is extremely powerful, but he's still in the same ballpark as other 21st-level and higher characters. Major artifacts are not only more potent, but the requirements for making them are so restrictive no PC should ever want to do so just for power gain. Besides, allowing epic characters to make minor but not major artifacts is a nice way of differentiating between the two.

If using artifact creation as a way to allow PCs to do something normally beyond them, make sure that the

process of creation is as much of a quest as what will be done with the artifact. In games such as this, the entire theme of the campaign may revolve around seeking out the means to create an artifact as the only possible way to achieve a goal. There may be an actual evil god ruling a land as a despot, and only an artifact sword can kill him; or perhaps it reduces his power to that of a mere 30th-level mortal, making him at best theoretically vulnerable. A cursed land might require its king be given a holy artifact to be cleansed, or a dead god might be resurrected with an artifact crown.

In essence, this is the basic quest game, jumped up a level of difficulty. Rather than simply find a lost artifact, the PCs must make one. Doing so may involve a reforging of an old artifact or the creation of a brand new object that is only theoretically possible. The GM should draw out the creation process as an adventure of high-level characters. Don't allow the feats needed to be taken until ancient tomes of lore and lost masters are consulted, requiring that a certain amount of specific levin (see page 140) be gathered from various sources, and have foes try to stop the heroes at every turn. Under these conditions, allowing epic characters actually make a major artifact is not unreasonable, but it should certainly be the most epic event to occur within the campaign.

ARTIFACT RULES

Artifacts have a few universal powers. They are immune to divination spells and spell-like abilities of 9th level or less. Efforts to use identify, detect magic, or even locate object on an artifact simply fail. Minor artifacts are extremely resilient, with hardness ranging from 10 to 50 and 10 times the hit points of mundane objects of the same size and manufacture. Major artifacts are nearly indestructible, with only one specific method available to destroy such an item; the method is always decided by you (never the player, even if a PC creates the artifact), and it should be related to the artifact's theme or the method of its creation.

Numerous spells and magic effects specify they do not function on artifacts — this condition is true of both major and minor artifacts. If scavenged levin rules are being used, artifacts are immune to them. Minor artifacts are the most powerful of magic items, and major artifacts are essentially mindless gods. If in doubt about a spell's or power's ability to affect an artifact, give it a power level check (1d20 + caster level) against a DC of 40 for minor artifacts and a DC of 50 for major artifacts.

ARTIFACT CREATION

To create a minor artifact, a character must take the Create Minor Artifact feat (see **Appendix One**). This feat allows her to make one specific kind of minor artifact, which you must approve. The character may make this minor artifact

multiple times, though the personal cost is huge. If the character cannot meet the prerequisites for the feat after taking it (if she loses too many levels as a result of making artifacts, for example), she cannot make minor artifacts until she once more meets the prerequisites. You may require half the XP cost of minor artifacts be paid with specific levin, often location and creature levin.

A character creating a minor artifact must spend gold pieces equal to the artifact's caster level multiplied by 50,000. (The minimum CL for a minor artifact is 16th.) She must work on the artifact for one day per 10,000 gp spent. This working time may be interrupted for one day per week (i.e., the work must be done in six-day increments, and only a day may pass between work periods), but any further interruption causes the artifact to be ruined. Half the money spent is lost, and all work must begin anew. Additionally, the character must make an appropriate DC 30 Craft check at the end of the creation process. If the check fails, half the money spent is lost, and the time to create is extended by 50%.

Normally, making a minor artifact requires the creator to cast either miracle or wish, or use the psionic power genesis. The creator must do this herself; she cannot have someone else do it for her. Additionally, a 9th-level spell or power of the same school as the minor artifact must be cast, again by the creator. These spells or abilities can come from items used by the creator. You can allow these two requirements to be bypassed in favor of the creator undertaking a quest appropriate to the theme of the artifact to be created. The quest isn't completed until the

creator has earned experience points equal to one-quarter those expended creating the artifact.

The personal cost for creating an artifact is significant. Upon completion, the creator loses 2,000 XP per CL of the artifact. As well, the character takes a permanent loss of 1 point of Constitution, and 1 point of Intelligence or Wisdom or Charisma (whichever of these abilities is highest). Nothing can prevent these ability losses (if they are somehow prevented, the minor artifact is not created and all money and work is lost), nor can these losses be restored by any means, including miracle or wish. The magic that makes artifacts, even minor ones, goes beyond the power of even the most powerful spells to restore.

Thus, the creator of a deck of many things must spend 1,000,000 gp and devote 100 days to working on it. If she fails her Craft check, she must spend another 500,000 gp and 100 days, at the end of which she must make another Craft check. She must be able to cast or manifest miracle, wish, or genesis, as well as one 9th-level spell or power of every school (as the deck of many things radiates magic of all schools). Once these requirements are all met, she loses 40,000 XP, 1 point of Constitution, and 1 point of the highest of her Intelligence or Wisdom or Charisma. After all that, the minor artifact is successfully created.

Creating a major artifact is an even lengthier and more dangerous undertaking. Firstly, a character must take the Create Major Artifact feat for each major artifact she wishes to make (not for each type but for each individual artifact, as all major artifacts are unique; see **Appendix One**). Secondly, she must go through the process described above, treating the major artifact as a minor artifact with a CL of 30th. The Craft check has a DC of 40; failing the check leads to the setbacks as listed for minor artifacts.

Once the major artifact is created, the creator loses 60,000 XP and 1 point of all six ability scores. Nothing can prevent these losses (if the losses are somehow prevented, the artifact is not created and all money and work is lost), nor can these losses be restored by any means, including miracle or wish. Further, the creator must make DC 30 Fortitude and Will saves, with failure resulting in her permanent, irreversible destruction (though her destruction does not prevent the artifact from being completed).

Even taking the Create Major Artifact feat can change a creature. Any character who dies after taking the Create Major Artifact feat but before using it to create an artifact may, if it wishes, turn itself into an artifact. If the creature does this, it is permanently destroyed forever and cannot be restored through any means. The creature makes DC 30 Fortitude and Will saves (using the bonuses it had while alive). If the saves are successful, a major artifact is created out of the creature's remains (often a hand or eye, but sometimes some other object on her body is imbued with the artifact's power). If either save fails, only a minor artifact is created.

