

# The Experience Awards System v3.1

by

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## Introduction

One of the most important aspects of gamemastering is to reward players when they role-play their characters well, and in the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game this is usually accomplished by handing out experience point awards. The official rules gives guidelines for how to do this, but these guidelines are static and not very balanced in the sense that they don't take into account how much such experience awards actually mean to characters of different experience levels. The experience awards given in the DMG are of great value to lower level characters, but not to higher level ones.

For instance, the DMG's Table 33: "Common Individual Awards" states that when a player role-plays his character well, that character could be awarded anything from 100 to 500 experience points. Clearly, to a thirteenth-level Fighter needing 250.000 XP to advance a level, a 500 XP award doesn't mean very much.

Therefore, I have created and adapted to our gaming a more balanced system for handing out experience awards, a system that takes into account the levels all the PCs are on, thereby making sure that every action worthy of an experience award really means something to the PC(s) receiving the award, no matter what level s/he is on.

## The Rules in Brief

A figure is calculated for each PC based on his/her current experience level limits, and a function of all those figures added up forms the basis for defining a unit for awarding experience. Whenever a PC performs an action worthy of an experience award, simply give that PC one or more of those experience point units. The unit so calculated (detailed below) is based on the current experience levels of all the PCs, therefore making the system balanced in the sense that each experience award means as much to lower level PCs as to higher level ones.

## The Award Unit (AU)

A little bit of calculation is required in order to start using this system, and this also has to be performed over again whenever one or more of the PCs changes levels. This can seem a bit tedious, but this is justified by one very important fact: Since the PCs are mostly adventuring together as a party, it is therefore desirable that the PCs follow each other in character evolution, as opposed to have some PCs rapidly advance in levels while the rest lag behind.

Therefore is this system based upon a unifying figure called the Award Unit (hereafter abbreviated AU), which is a function of all the PCs' current experience taken together. Since the AU is based on all the PCs' current experience in order to make the system well balanced, this figure has to be calculated whenever one or more of the PCs changes experience levels.

## Calculating the Award Unit (AU)

The procedure for calculating the AU is as follows:

1. For each PC, calculate the difference between the experience needed to reach the next level and the experience needed to reach the current level the PC is at now.
2. Total these differences for all the PCs.
3. Average that total with respect to the number of PCs, i.e., divide that total by the number of PCs.
4. Finally, divide that average by 100.

Or, stated in more mathematical terms:

$$1AU = \frac{\sum_{All\ PCs} (XP\ to\ Next\ level - XP\ to\ Current\ level)}{(No.\ of\ PCs) \times 100}$$

Or, in plain English:

*One AU is one percent of the average of the sum of all the PCs' respective differences between the experience needed for their next levels and the experience needed for their current levels.*

## Gaming Use

After the AU is calculated, it is ready for use. Now, each time a PC performs an act worthy of an experience award, the DM will give that PC anywhere from one to three AU depending on the importance of the act.

As with all experience earned during an adventure, the DM waits until the adventure or session is over before actually giving those awards to the PCs. This is because of two obvious reasons: First, if a PC should happen to change levels in the middle of a gaming session because of receiving experience points, the session is suspended for a period of time because of the bookkeeping involved. Second, revealing to a player that his/her character just did something clever ruins the suspension and possibly the whole adventure.

Finally, since the AU is just a function of some XP value, and hence is an XP value in itself, the concluding use of the AU is simple: At the end of the adventure or session, for each PC, just total the number of AU the PC is awarded, multiply that sum with the number of XP an AU equals, and give that number of XP to the PC.

I have also included a form designed specifically for this system, on which you can record the various experience awards given. Use one per adventure or session, whichever is appropriate.

## Example

We have an adventuring party consisting of four characters: An 8th level thief with 91.300 XP (current level 70.000, next level 110.000), a 7th level cleric with 89.300 XP (55.000 and 110.000), an 8th level mage with 102.200 XP (90.000 and 135.000), and a 7th level fighter with 85.300 XP (64.000 and 125.000). The AU figure is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{(110.000 - 70.000) + (110.000 - 55.000) + (135.000 - 90.000) + (125.000 - 64.000)}{4 \times 100} = \underline{\underline{502.5XP}}$$

During the adventure, the thief receives 7 AU, the cleric 4 AU, the mage 5 AU, and the fighter 8 AU. At the end of the adventure, each character will therefore receive the following experience points awards:

Thief:	7 x 502,5 ≈ 3.518 XP	(equals 8.80% of the total XP on the 8th level)
Cleric:	4 x 502,5 = 2.010 XP	(equals 3.65% of the total XP on the 7th level)
Mage:	5 x 502,5 ≈ 2.513 XP	(equals 5.58% of the total XP on the 8th level)

Fighter:  $8 \times 502,5 = 4.020 \text{ XP}$  (equals 6.59% of the total XP on the 7th level)

## Some Words of Advice

There are two instances where a modification of the calculation method of the AU is warranted.

The first is where the characters have a rapid pace of level advancement relative to the number of sessions played, perhaps because the gaming group does not play very often. The second case is where the characters' level advancement rate is slow, perhaps because of frequent playing. In either case, the experience handed out to the player characters must be modified, and this can be done in two different ways:

The first way is simply to award more or less AU, for instance handing out half an AU instead of two AU in cases where the pace of level advancement needs to be slow, or giving five to six AU instead of one or two in cases where the pace of level advancement needs to be rapid.

The second method is to modify the way the AU figure is calculated. Instead of dividing the accumulated total by 100, one might instead divide it by 150 or 200 for slow advancement, or by 75 or 50 for rapid advancement.

Either way, the system has to be modified if the PCs' advancement in levels deviates a lot from the "norm" (this is very relatively speaking).

## Afterword

This system was first conceived in 1996, and extensively tested during our 1996–1998 gaming sessions, and the feedback received from AS, CS, IHE, OM, and OJB was invaluable. After a few revisions, this system is still in use in our April 2000 and onwards gaming sessions.

Comments, feedback, suggestions? You are free to email me at [<olik@c2i.net>](mailto:olik@c2i.net).

## Update History

v1.0 — Dec 2nd 1996:	Initial version. A little buggy, layout and wording could be better.
v2.0 — Dec 8th 1998:	Complete rewrite and overhaul, mostly gathered from notes from our experiences with it.
v3.0 — Dec 3rd 1999:	Addition of an example, various clarifications and error corrections.
v3.1 — May 5th 2000:	Another rewrite, various clarifications, formula touch-ups. Form included in a separate file.