

# Rake

Rakes excel as adventurers, living fast and dangerously by their wits and charm as much as by their swords. Their role is to be information gatherers, social animals and cunning combatants rather than shock troops (fighters) or thieves. They are, by definition, roguish. Many would call them bounders or no-goods. They think of themselves as thrill seekers.

In truth the Rake may be many things. The rake may be a lightly armoured, fast swashbuckler using manoeuvrability and panache to defeat a foe. Or they may be beguilers and seducers. One minute they may be climbing to the balcony of their latest conquest, the next they may be fleeing same balcony by swinging from trellis to only just escape with their life. How does that differentiate the Rake from any other chancer? Well the Rake should, and indeed will benefit from, doing it with style.

**Prime Requisites:** Dexterity. Must have a minimum charisma score of 13. If a potential Rake does not have a Charisma score of 13 it may be raised by reducing Strength, Wisdom or Intelligence – each two points in any such stat sacrificed raises Charisma by 1.

**Hit Dice:** 1d6 per level (plus any constitution bonus or penalty) until level 9, thereafter 2hp per level

**Weapons and combat:** Rakes can use any one handed melee weapon, in addition to the bastard sword which they can handle one or two handed, and staves. They can also use missile fire devices. Rakes attack as fighters of equal level, and begin at first level with four weapons at basic mastery.

**Armour:** Rakes may only wear leather armour, and cannot use a shield.

**Thief Skills:** Rakes have the following skills as a thief of equal level; Hide in Shadows, Hear Noise, Move Silently, Pick Lock and Climb Walls. Rakes also have, for free, the panache general skill (originally from *Red Steel*, and included here). If the DM chooses not to use general skills, panache should still be allowed for a rake character. A rake can choose also to be an acrobat (and many do), with the usual increase in XP needed for each level of experience.

Level	XP	Title
1	0	Sallywag
2	1200	Scamp
3	2400	Rascal
4	4800	Gadfly (a)
5	9600	Rapscallion
6	20000	Miscreant (b)

7	40000	Dastard
8	80000	Provocateur
9	160000	Knave (c)
10	280000	
11	400000	
12	520000	
13	640000	
14	760000	
15	880000	
16	1000000	
17	1120000	
18	1240000	
19	1360000	
20	1480000	
21	1600000	
22	1720000	
23	1840000	
24	1960000	
25	2080000	
26	2200000	
27	2320000	
28	2440000	
29	2560000	
30	2680000	
31	2800000	
32	2920000	
33	3040000	
34	3160000	
35	3280000	
36	3400000	

- (a) At level 4, a rake has a 60% chance (modified by charisma: +5% for a charisma of 13-15, +10% for a charisma of 16-17, +15% for a charisma of 18) of finding information in a town or city. The Rake may attempt this in any settlement once per week. The nature of said information available in the town is at the DM's discretion. Such information might include rumours, details of who works for who, who is sleeping with who, whether the rulers are ill, whether the local bishop is a crook, *etc.*
- (b) At level 9, a rake can attempt to take an extra action in the first round of any combat against a sentient, intelligent, roughly human, humanoid or demi-human foe. The rake will make a feint, obscene gesture, snide comment, *etc.* The details are left to the player and DM. The rakes opponent must roll 1d6; a 1 or 2 indicates that the foe is surprised, and will not be able to respond to any

attacks made by the rake that round. A rake can attempt this a number of times per day equal to his level divided by 5 (rounded up). Note that the Rake may attempt this in the *second* round of combat if the victim was surprised in the first round, and did not react therein. Non-humanoid foes may also be surprised, at DM's discretion if the Rakes actions are appropriately shocking or scandalous.

(c) At ninth level, a Rake may choose, in addition to any other general skills, to learn either acrobatics, seduction, deception, persuasion or acting. IF the character already possesses this skill they can either take a different general skill, or gain a +1 bonus to that skill.

## Panache

This skill works differently to any other general skill. Any character other than a Rake who wishes to learn panache can do so at character generation, but must spend 2 skill slots. Panache is a special ability that allows characters to achieve a more swashbuckling, flamboyant approach to adventuring and gain advantage by doing so.

*Accumulating Panache Points:* When a character learns panache, he gains the ability to accumulate Panache Points (PPs). PPs are an accumulation of heroic energy gathered by flamboyant individuals and expended, almost unconsciously, on their behalf. A character can accumulate a number of PPs equal to his current level plus his double his Charisma modifier. So, a 1st level character with an 18 Charisma can accumulate up to 1 (his level) + 7 (double his reaction modifier) = 6PPs. A 7th level character with a 3 Charisma, however, can only accumulate 7 + (-6) = 1 PP.

Obtaining the panache special ability doesn't give characters PPs automatically. Characters must accumulate them by performing heroic and dangerous actions in a flamboyant, stylish manner. A panache-using character does not approach a problem by thinking "How can I accomplish this task?" but, rather, "How can I accomplish this task and come out looking great?" If an action is performed in a flamboyant manner, the DM can award PPs to the character even if it fails.

For example, Valentino and Taron have come to the Dukes ball, looking to apprehend the notorious Heldannic agent Frau Lera. They're standing in the doorway to the great hall of the Dukes castle where they spy Lera at the other side of the dance floor, and she notices them at the same moment. Taron starts muscling his way through the crowd, which should work, but

Valentino (who has panache) spots that the chandelier is anchored by a nearby rope. He holds the rope and cuts just above where it's tied, being flung high as the chandelier falls, and using his acrobatics skill he somersaults, rolls and arrives moments before Taron does. Instead of pulling out a weapon, Valentino bows elegantly and asks Lera for the pleasure of the next dance. This gives Taron long enough to get up behind Lera and club her over the back of the head. The DM may now choose to award Valentino for his action with 1-2 Panache points, or may instead make a note of the accomplishment and award Valentino a bulk award at the end of the adventure. However the DM does it, Valentino should gain some PPs for his exciting display.

*Spending Panache Points:* PPs can later be spent to increase the chance a character has of accomplishing a task, or even to accomplish a seemingly impossible task with little effort. The simplest translation of this effect in game terms is that if a character spends a PP, he gains a +1 (or +5%) to whatever action he is currently performing. The action could be an attack, a skill check, or even a one-round improvement of his armour class. Virtually anything can be improved by panache. In addition, the character can spend a number of PPs equal to his level on any one action. So, a fifth-level character could spend 5 PPs to improve his chances on any single action by +5 (or +25%). Most actions will always have at least a 1% chance of failure – Panache does not negate rolling a 'natural' 1 or 00.

The other way to spend PPs leaves the exact effects up to the DM. A character can spend a bulk amount of PPs to accomplish a task (usually one for which few rules exist). The DM then determines whether or not the character is successful, possibly asking for attribute or Non-weapon proficiency checks at the same time. The character might spend 1, 5, or 10 PPs, hoping to accomplish a particular action. In order to rate these types of actions, the DM can use the examples as shown below.

- 1pp** A normal task automatically. A non-weapon proficiency check or impressing a potential employer.
- 5pp** A challenging task automatically (or with a few skill rolls). E.g. diving from the crow's nest of a ship into the water safely or tricking a hostile enemy into retreat.
- 10pp** A seemingly impossible task with a skill check. E.g. diving from a castle tower into a moat or taking over the leadership of a band of hostile mercenaries.

If a character spends PPs to accomplish a particular action, that character receives no PPs as a reward for that action. The rationale is simple; if the character spends PPs to do something, he is actually taking less of a risk. This does not affect awards given out for accomplishing adventure goals, however, since they are awarded based on a long series of actions, not one single action.

Characters cannot simply spend Panache Points to get any of the above effects. PPs are not just a game mechanic to cheat or avoid die rolls. The characters must substitute role-playing and description for these things. Whenever a character spends even one PP, the player must describe, in detail, how his character is using panache to accomplish his action, or that action will automatically fail.

For example, Valentino is in a spot of bother. Frau Lera has escaped the Dukes dungeon and she's on the run, but Valentino and Taron again have her cornered in the notorious back-street dive bar, the Broken Doll. Taron keeps watch on the door while Valentino makes his approach, only to be tripped by one of Leras henchmen. She approaches with her sabre drawn. As she raises her sword, she says to him "Time to dance now, Honey!"

Valentino's player suggest that he reaches for a metal tray scattered to the floor in the commotion and holds it in front of himself to deflect the blow, spending 5 PP to lower his armour class from 5 down to 0. That sounds like a reasonable use of panache to the DM, so he makes the hit roll for Lera accordingly at AC0. She only hits armour class 1, cutting the tray in two but missing Valentino, who is now rising to his feet and drawing his own weapon. "Paso doble?" he asks.

*Gauche Points:* If a character runs out of PPs or has none left, he can accumulate Gauche Points (GPs) in exchange for the PPs he needs. For every GP a character takes, he gets one PP. The maximum number of GPs a character can have is always ten. GPs tie into the "trouble magnet" aspect of the swashbuckler's lifestyle. GPs can be used by the DM at almost any time to make the character's life more difficult. During an adventure, the DM can tell a character who has accumulated GPs to mark one off and then give the player bad news. Whenever a GP is used, something bad or unexpected happens to the character.

The DM can "spend" GPs two different ways. The easiest way is to cancel out a successful action performed by the character, immediately after it is performed. One GP erased cancels one successful action. The character can try to perform the action again if circumstances allow, but that

prior success is negated. The DM, however, is also constrained by the panache rules. He must describe, in detail, how the action was negated.

For example, when Valentino spent his 5 PPs to improve his armour class, he had to "buy" 2 PPs with 2 GPs, so he now has two Gauche Points that the DM can use at any time to make his life more difficult. Currently, Valentino is dodging Frau Leras blows. Disarmed but still fighting, Valentino grabs at the dress sword of one of the other patrons of the bar. He lunges desperately at Lera. The DM knows that this will very likely end the fight, and informs Valentino that he's spending a GP. Valentino lands his blow exactly on target, only to discover that the other patron he took the sword from is an actor slumming it after a performance at the theatre next door, and his stage sword bends harmlessly against Leras belt buckle!

The one exception to this cancellation of successful actions is simple. If a character spends PPs to succeed at an action or improve his chances, the DM cannot use a GP to cancel that success. The other way a DM can use GPs is a little more subtle and a little more interesting. The DM can have a character erase one GP to introduce a "story twist," an event or situation that makes the situation more complicated for the character.

For example, Valentino is still fighting Frau Lera while Taron is dealing with her henchmen. Just as they think the fight is going their way, they hear the heavy footfall of armoured boots on the boardwalk outside the tavern, and turning their eyes to the door they see a soldiers filing in. "Thank heavens", exclaims Valentino. "The Ducal guard, at last!". The DM asks Valentino's player to scrub off another GP, as the Guard Sergeant salutes Lera, clicking his heels together. "Are these scum troubling you, Commandant Frau Lera?" he asks.

This method of spending GPs ties into the "trouble magnet" aspect of the swashbuckling lifestyle. This gives the DM a very useful tool in introducing surprises for the panache-using character.

## Higher Level Rakes

### Land Owning Rakes

A name level Rake who chooses to settle down and gain a reputation in a locale is called a Bounder. A Bounder may construct a Pad or a Boudoir. This may be anything from an extensive estate to a fashionable flat in the most exclusive part of town. A rake will very likely gain admirers and followers (2d8 hopeful rakes), most of whom will be hangers on useful only as lackeys, but some of them will show real potential. If the Bounder chooses to accept these followers, the organisation is

colloquially known as a School for Scoundrels. While few rulers have respect for Bounders, they will usually accept their presence as, typically, they represent little risk or actual threat to the law, and they serve as useful sources of information, with a number of valuable skills. A Bounder has a chance, checked every week, of learning some secret, juicy gossip regarding the town, its rulership, or some valuable leads towards accomplishing their goals or just who is moving money or goods.

There is no overall organisation of Bounders, there is no official or accepted body that represents them, but there are rivalries between Schools. These rivalries

are rarely violent, with differences usually being settled with friendly contests, conquests and plots against one another. However the results of these contests matter, with the reputations of the School being important in furthering the goals thereof.

### **Travelling Rakes**

A travelling rake is known as a Cad. Cads rarely interact with Bounders, often viewing each other with suspicion, and when a Cad is in town the Bounders will frequently do all they can to sully the Cads name before the Cad can respond with out-of-town information that cheapens the Bounders

reputation. When a Cad visits a town, few layout the red carpet but many open their back doors to the information and skills the Cad can bring, and it is likely that in any sizeable settlement *someone* will want avail themselves of such a rakish skillset. Cads will attract a number of interested parties who will look to travel with the Cad, understanding that the knowledge a Cad can rustle up in every new settlement will likely lead to profit, intrigue or at least a little fun. These followers (2d6) will be of various classes, but a number will be of higher level than typical retainers (at least 5<sup>th</sup>). While they will require no pay or board, they will expect opportunities to arise as a result of this association.