

Optional Rules: Skill Specialties

By

Patrick McGill (rpcrpg.com)

5th Edition Dungeons & Dragons excels at streamlining processes so that the rules do not get in the way of play. This module is an attempt to subvert this process by adding needless granularity to the Skills system in place. It is the hope of this author that trading some simplification for granularity will result in a little more spice to help define your character.

Using this module is simple: choose two skills you have proficiency in at 1st level and choose a specialty specific to each skill from the following lists. When rolling an Ability Check using the skill, if the check relates to your specialty, you double your proficiency bonus on the roll.

For Example: Gunthar the Barbarian has proficiency in the Medicine skill, with a specialty in diagnosis. When attempting to stabilize a dying creature, he adds his proficiency bonus to that Ability Check as normal. When attempting to determine the cause of the creature's wounds or illness, he adds double his proficiency bonus instead.

Run any choice you make through the Dungeon Master. Gaining advantage on a rather specific circumstance shouldn't result in major unbalances, but this can largely be determined by the sort of session and campaign she or he might be running.

Note that you can find skill descriptions in the Player's Handbook, pages 175-179. These descriptions are not reproduced here.

Acrobatics

- **Funambulism** – The ability to traverse tight spots and hard to reach places, such as tightropes, the top of rooftops, and slippery precipices.
- **Tumbling** – The ability to move by rolling or jumping, useful for moving through an area occupied by a hostile creature.

Animal Handling

- **Hunting** – The usage of animals for hunting, such as hounds or hawks.
- **Riding** – The usage of animals for riding, such as horses or camels.
- **Taming** – The ability to induce or coerce wild animals.

Arcana

- **Fey** – Knowledge and lore related to the feywild, faeries, and related creatures and magic.
- **Outsider** – Knowledge and lore related to the far realms, psionics, and forbidden magic.
- **Planar** – Knowledge and lore related to the planes of existence and elemental magic.
- **Schools of Magic (Choose One)** – Knowledge and lore relating to a specific school of magic: Abjuration, Conjunction, Divination, Enchantment, Evocation, Illusion, Necromancy, and Transmutation.

Athletics

- **Climbing** – The ability to traverse vertical surfaces such as cliffs or walls.
- **Jumping** – The ability to move by leaping forward or upward.

- **Swimming** – The ability to move through non-shallow water.
- **Optional: Wrestling** – (The following option might prove to be more powerful than other specialties. Use only with the DMs permission. When choosing this, do not choose a second specialty.) The ability to grapple other creatures.

Deception

- **Cheating** – Being able to subvert chance and probability without being noticed in games and gambling.
- **Fast Talking** – The ability to quickly come up with convincing lies on the spot.
- **Subterfuge** – The more subtle ability to deceive using physical cues and clues, such as making a murder look like an accident.

History

- **Era** – The lore of a specific era in time of the campaign world.
- **Kingdom** – The history and lore of a specific kingdom or region of the campaign world.
- **Racial** – The history and lore of a specific race or culture of people of the campaign world.

Insight

- **Falsehood Detection** – Being able to determine the veracity of what a creature or person is indicating or saying.
- **Predictive Behaviors** – Being able to predict a person or creature's next action or move.
- **Sense Motive** – Detecting why a person or creature are doing, saying, or planning a specific thing.

Intimidation

- **Coercion** – The ability to get a creature or person to do something.
- **Interrogation** – The ability to gain information from an unwilling creature or person.

Investigation

- **Deduction** – The ability to coordinate clues with logic to come up with a solution or theory.
- **Research** – The ability to use a resource of knowledge such as a library, museum, or archive.
- **Spotting** – The ability to actively detect things hidden or concealed.

Medicine

- **Diagnosis** – Being able to deduce an illness from symptoms or the cause of an injury or death.
- **Field Medicine** – Being able to treat simple wounds or stabilize a creature quickly.
- **Surgery** – The ability to perform more complex operations given the right tools and space to treat serious injuries or maladies.

Nature

- **Beasts** – The knowledge and lore specific to natural animals.
- **Herbs** – The knowledge and lore of plants with medicinal properties.
- **Poisons** – The knowledge and lore of naturally derived poisons.

Perception

- **Hearing** – Heightened sense of hearing.
- **Seeing** – Heightened ability to see.

- **Smell** – Sharper sense of smell.
- **Touch** – Able to detect much more through touch alone.

Performance

- **Instrumental** – Performing using an instrument or tool to entertain.
- **Oratory** – Performing using the spoken word, recitation, or giving a speech.
- **Physical** – Performing physical stunts, such as dance or physical comedy.
- **Written** – The ability to compose poetry, prose, or song to be read at any time rather than performing in front of others.

Persuasion

- **Diplomacy** – Acting to bring two or more separate parties to parity.
- **Inducement** – Convincing a person or creature to do something.

Religion

- **Church Hierarchy & Lore** – The lore and knowledge of a specific religious organization.
- **Divine Lore** – The general knowledge of the gods and their domains.
- **Infernal Lore** – The general knowledge of devils and demons, as well as their cults and followers.

Sleight of Hand

- **Concealment** – The ability to conceal a small object on yourself, on someone else, or elsewhere quickly.
- **Pickpocketing** – The ability to use dexterity and misdirection to procure objects from another creature's pockets, pouches, or clothing.
- **Use Rope** – The ability to use rope in creative ways, as well as tying knots.

Optional: Stealth

(Any of the following options might prove to be more powerful than other specialties. Use only with the DMs permission. When choosing one of these, do not choose a second specialty.)

- **Group Concealment** – The ability to guide a group of people through an area while maintaining stealth.
- **Hide** – Being able to stay hidden from the view of one or more creatures.
- **Move Silently** – Being able to move in such a way as to not be heard.

Survival

- **Camping** – Being able to set up and take down a useful camp with adequate protection from the elements and view from unwanted passersby.
- **Hunting** – The ability to hunt game in the wilderness and identify tracks.
- **Tracking** – The ability to track individuals or creatures through the wilderness.

Optional Rule: Specialty Training

With the permission of your Dungeon Master, you can use downtime days to train in a specialty just like you can with a proficiency or language. When doing so, it takes the same amount of time as it would any other proficiency (your DM might be using the rules on pg.187 of the Player's Handbook or the Unearthed Arcana article "Downtime" from April 10th, 2017). Note that you can only train in a specialty for a skill that you are proficient in -and that you cannot use downtime days to train proficiency in a skill.