

Badlander, Boatman, Hillman, Thief

New Careers In Powers & Perils

By Craig Barrett

I've got a bone to pick with Richard Snider! Either he should have made the Character Generation process in *Powers & Perils* less enjoyable, or he should have included a thicker pad of Character Record Sheets. I enjoy creating new characters so much – almost as much as I enjoy the game itself – that I am already in danger of running out of Character Record Sheets.

Aside from providing me with an excess of characters, my addiction to Character Generation has shown me something interesting about the process. Of the available skills, five give you a better than average bargain for your expertise points: Assassin, Thief, Forester, Miner and Actor. In all five cases, for the price of the basic skill, you get two to six more almost free of charge.

With the advantages that these skills offer, who wouldn't choose at least one of them for his character? I do frequently and this means that I have an over-abundance of Assassins, Thieves and Foresters. I suspect that this happens to other players as well, creating a logjam around the skill groups, especially the three above that are the most favorable. What we need are other group or special skills that offer their own advantages; something important and attractive enough to entice players into other professions. To answer this need, I propose the following career opportunities:

Badlander

Cost to Learn: 50

Per EL Increase: 10

Maximum EL: $(A + Em) + (StB \times 5)$ or 80

The Badlander is skilled in finding his way through unfamiliar and/or hostile terrain, seeking out trails and water sources and in avoiding or anticipating ambushes. They are frequently loners who are employed as border guards and guides.

When Searching, Ambushing, Avoiding or Hunting, the Badlander will add his EL/5 (round up) to his Survival skill in both Badlands and Desert terrain. The resulting increase may not more than double his effective Survival EL. He may roll D100 against his EL to detect an ambush in these terrains before it is sprung. Success indicates that he is aware of the ambush, knows where the enemy is coming from and can alert other party members. Partial Success indicates that he is alert but cannot warn anyone else. Failure gives him no advantage; he is caught unaware. (Party members that are aware may strike on the first phase of the ambush or roll to wake up immediately. This skill is only usable when the Badlander is awake.)

Badlanders have an increased chance of Waking Up in any environment. Their chance will be one level higher than normal, i.e. if the normal roll for the situation is $W + Em$, the Badlander will roll against $(W + Em) \times 2$.

The other advantages gained through this skill are:

1) Tracking, maximum EL currently possible.

2) The Badlander knows the basic creatures native to the Badlands and any legends about the Badlands nearest to his home.

3) 40% chance the Badlander speaks Dwarf Elder (EL equal to Current Empathy). If so, he is a dwarf friend.

4) 10% chance of speaking Elf Sidh (EL equal to Current Empathy). If so, he is a friend of the Searbhani.

5) Starting EL in both Sling forms.

6) 60% chance maximum EL currently possible in Fighting Dagger.

7) Maximum EL currently possible in Badlands Survival.

Boatman

Cost to Learn: 40

Per EL increase: 9

Maximum EL: $(S + A) + (StB \times 5)$ or 80

This skill is divided into two types. Either the character is skilled in lakes and open waterways or he is skilled in Swamps. The advantages that the character will gain varies depending on the environment that the player chooses. In both environments, the character can judge currents and distances travelled by water, with a successful roll against his EL, and has a memory for landmarks and watercourses similar to the Thief's memory of maps and passages. Success in both cases equals 100% accuracy, partial success is 75% accuracy and failure is 50% accuracy.

The other advantages of this skill are:

Open Waterway Boatman

1) Knowledge of creatures that can be encountered in waterways.

2) Waterway Survival, maximum EL currently possible.

3) Starting EL with War Staff.

4) 40% chance of maximum EL currently possible with the Sling.

Swamp Boatman

1) Maximum EL currently possible in Swamp Survival.

2) Knowledge of creatures that can be encountered in the Swamp.

3) Starting EL with the Bow.

4) 40% chance of maximum EL currently possible with War Staff.

Mountaineer (Hillman)

Cost to Learn: 40

Per EL increase: 9

Maximum EL: $(S + A) + (StB \times 5)$ or 80

Like the Boatman skill, a character must specialize; in this case the Mountains or Hills. In both cases the character can judge heights and distances and has a memory for landmarks similar to a Thief's memory of maps. A Mountaineer/Hillman has a chance equal to his EL to know where he is, relative to where he had been and where he wants to go. With success, he can retrace his steps and/or plot the most efficient route from where he is to where he wants to be. Success, Partial Success and Failure have the meaning specified for Boatman above.

The separate skills of each career are as follows:

Mountaineer

1) Knowledge of the creatures that can be encountered in the Mountains.

2) Maximum EL currently possible in Climbing.

3) 40% chance of speaking Dwarf Elder (starting EL equals Current Empathy). If so, he is a Dwarf friend and gains a starting EL in both forms of Underground Survival.

4) Starting EL with Throwing Spear.

5) 40% chance maximum EL currently possible with one type of Heavy Sword or Axe (player's choice).

6) Maximum EL currently possible in Mountain Survival.

Hillman

1) Knowledge of the creatures encountered in the Hills.

2) Starting EL in Climbing.

3) 40% chance of speaking Elf Sidh (starting EL equals Current Empathy). If so, character is an elf friend and gains a starting EL in Forest Survival.

4) Starting EL with Throwing Spear.

5) Maximum EL currently possible in Hill Survival.

6) 40% chance maximum EL currently possible in Sword or Hand-to-Hand skill (player's choice).

Watercraft

Cost to learn: 25

Per EL increase: 5

Maximum EL: $(S + St + A) / 2$ or 80

The character is trained to perform tasks common in operating small boats. He may fight from these boats without reduction

of his OCV or DCV. (Those without this skill reduce both values and their weapon EL by 50% when fighting from a small boat.)

Skilled watermen may navigate on inland waterways, handle swift currents and avoid water obstacles in inland waterways and lakes. They may use their Watercraft EL at ½ value when sailing in the open sea, i.e. operating as Seamen. (The same applies for Seamen when they sail on inland waterways and lakes.)

Finally, watermen will have some training in maintaining and repairing small vessels. Their success chance doing either is equal to their EL.

New Survival Skills

The following adds a new skill and cover omissions in other skills. All are gained for the basic Survival skill cost and advance in the same way as any of those skills do.

Scrounger

This allows the character to find what he wants near or in human habitations. It has no value anywhere else. The basic attributes of the skill are as follows:

1) When hunting for food, the Scrounging EL is subtracted from the success roll, i.e. if the EL is 4 and the roll is a 32, the roll becomes a 28. (Only the highest Scrounger EL applies.)

2) Add the EL×2 to the Availability Chance for an item that the Scrounger tries to find in a market or elsewhere in a human habitation.

3) Subtract the EL from the roll when searching for anything in a city or town environment.

This skill may only be learned by a person who has City Survival. It may not be used at an EL higher than the character's current EL in City Survival. It is used at ½ value, round up, in areas that the Scrounger does not have personal knowledge of or where he does not speak the native language of the area.

Waterway Survival

The basic survival skill operating on waterways and lakes. Use it as specified for all other Survival skills.

Ocean Survival

Survival skill that applies for Ocean environments, sea voyages and other like areas. Its full usefulness awaits the introduction of Sea Encounter rules. Where a character is a Navigator or Seaman, he should have the maximum EL currently possible in this skill without additional cost (as part of buying either or both of those skills).

Modifications of Existing Skills

In company with the new skills above, I would suggest some changes to the skills below.

Forester

Add the ability to remember trails and

landmarks, as for a Thief's memory for maps and passages. His chance of success in this equals his EL, as specified for other skills above.

If this addition to the skill is used, increase the Cost to Learn to 40, the Per EL Increase to 9 and do not change the Maximum EL formula.

NOTE: In all cases, this increased cost should not be applied to existing characters who are Foresters. If the Referee feels that it is necessary, he may withhold expertise gain from those characters until the additional cost above is paid.

Guild Assassinations

The basic amount that the Guild pays its assassins is only 20% of what they receive. While this is appropriate for thugs and inexperienced guild members, it is insufficient for a Master Assassin (especially if he is a loyal guild member with a good reputation). If you agree, the fee paid by the Guild can be the base fee, plus an additional percentage equal to $(EL - 3) \times 5\%$ or 40%, whichever is lower, of the total amount paid to the guild. The minimum payment will always be the base fee.

The Guild receives 4GC to kill a merchant. The assassin chosen receives a base of 4SC to do the job. If his EL is 3 or less, this is all that he gets. If his EL is 8 he receives an additional 25% (1GC) because of his skill and reputation. In the best case, EL11 and up, the assassin would make 2GC on the job.

NOTE: Though it is not specified, it is logical to assume the Assassin's Guild members would have safe houses and other facilities available to them, as specified for the Thieves Guild. Such facilities should be made available to guild members.

Assassins and Thieves

When a player starts a city-born character as an assassin or thief, he duplicates his starting City Survival. To eliminate this and add an element of knowledge that these characters should have, city-born assassins and thieves should be allowed to replace the City Survival increase for their skill with Underground II survival, to reflect their knowledge of the city's sewers and labyrinths.

IMPORTANT: Any time where a skill is duplicated, the player may choose to give the character another related skill of the same value or the maximum EL currently possible in the skill that is duplicated. (This applies only when a group skill is bought that duplicates a Common Knowledge skill of that character.)

Combat Skills

Except through special events, all weapon skills must start at EL 0. While this is reasonable, it should be possible to increase a character's weapon ability (to reflect concentrated training in various combat forms) at a lower cost than is currently the case. Therefore, the following rule is suggested:

Payment of the basic cost to learn a combat skill will get the character EL 0 in that

skill. If *double* the listed cost to learn is paid, the character gets a starting level as for non-combat skills with the same EL range.

For weapons, this applies for one member of the family. For each member, a cost equal to the cost to learn will gain the character a starting level in the individual weapon.

If *triple* the listed cost to learn is paid, the character gets his Maximum EL in that Combat Skill. (For weapons, each payment of *double* the cost to learn after the basic cost is paid will give the character his Maximum EL in one member of the weapon class.

To get Hand-to-hand at EL 0 costs 25 expertise points. To get it at a starting level costs 50. To get it at the Maximum EL currently possible costs 75.

For a mace-user, the problem differs. If he wishes to be good with a hammer and great with a mace (starting level and maximum respectively) he pays 20 for mace class weapons, another 20 for his hammer skill and another 40 for his mace skill. For 80 expertise points he has his current Maximum EL with Mace, a starting level with Hammer and EL 0 in Club and Flail.

NOTE: The Referee should take care with this rule to avoid unbalancing his game. As a general rule, no character should be allowed to have this advantage in more than one weapon class and one other Combat Skill.

These new skills and modifications provide fresh opportunities in character development. Using them, personalities can be filled out in even greater variation than before so that new horizons can be explored in play.

NOTE: This article was revised and edited by Richard Snider.