

OD&D HIRELINGS

by Justin Alexander - April 22nd, 2021



I've previously talked about the original 1974 edition of D&D in [Reactions to OD&D](#). I've also shared the [house rules](#) I used in my own OD&D campaign and later grouped those and some other rules together into the [Blackmoor Player's Reference](#). Today I want to share my guidelines for handling hirelings.

In OD&D, hirelings were presented as a far more central element of the game. Despite this, the rules and guidelines for running hirelings are scattered, incomplete, and often inconsistent. ([This is not unusual for OD&D](#).) For my OD&D games, I gathered this material together and then added additional guidelines when I needed them.

AVAILABILITY

Roll 1d6 - 1d6 to determine the current number of hirelings available for hire.

For each hireling, roll 1d6 to determine their class:

<u>d6</u>	<u>Class</u>
1-4	Fighting Man
5	Cleric
6	Magic-User

Roll 1d6 - 1d6 to determine the hireling's level (minimum 1).

Design Note: These guidelines were developed my OD&D open table, in which the PCs were based out of a small town. In larger communities you might want to increase the number of hirelings available. However, the practical effect was to create a small pool of hirelings who were in specific demand: In some sessions you wouldn't be able to get a hireling at all, and when they were available you might find yourself in competition with other PCs for their services.

BASE HIRING COST

The base hiring cost for a hireling is 100 gp per level.

If the base hiring price is offered, roll 2d6 on the reaction table on page 12 of *Volume 1: Men & Magic* to determine the hireling's response. (Grant a bonus for higher offers; penalize severely for paltry offers.)

<u>2d6</u>	<u>Reaction</u>
2	Attempts to attack
3-5	Hostile reaction
6-8	Uncertain
9-11	Accepts offer
12	Enthusiastic, Loyalty +3

DETERMINE LOYALTY SCORE

Roll 3d6 to determine the hireling's Loyalty, modified by the employer's Charisma and the reaction to the hiring offer (if they are enthusiastic).

<u>Charisma Score</u>	<u>Maximum # Hirelings</u>	<u>Loyalty Modifier</u>
3-4	1	-2
5-6	2	-1
7-9	3	
10-12	4	
13-15	5	+1
16-17	6	+2
18	12	+4

Design Note: This table is an example of how OD&D put hirelings front and center, as it takes up as much space as all the other ability score-related mechanics combined. It also shows why Charisma wasn't a dump stat in 1974.

DETERMINE MORALE

Roll 2d6 to determine the hireling's base morale.

Their Loyalty score may modify their effective morale. (List morale adjustments separately – e.g., 8+2 instead of 10 – for clear bookkeeping in case Loyalty or employment changes.)

<u>Loyalty Score</u>	<u>Morale Modifier</u>
3 or less	Will desert at first opportunity
4-6	-2
7-8	-1
9-12	
13-14	+1
15-18	+2
19+	Never need to check morale

END OF EXPEDITION

At the end of an expedition, adjust each hireling's Loyalty:

- Significant Injury/Death: -1 loyalty
- Share of treasure less than 25%: -1 loyalty
- Share of treasure less than 5%: -2 loyalty
- Share of treasure 2x base hiring cost: +1 loyalty
- Share of treasure 10x base hiring cost: +2 loyalty

Then make a morale check by rolling 2d6. Rolling above the hireling's morale is a failure.

On a success, the hireling will continue adventuring with their employer.

On a failure, roll on the reaction table above, with the following effect:

- **Attempts to Attack:** Automatically leaves service.
- **Hostile:** Demands bonus equal to base hiring cost x 2.
- **Uncertain:** Demands bonus equal to base hiring cost.
- **Accepts Offer:** Demands bonus equal to half hiring cost.
- **Enthusiastic:** Treat as a success after all.

The base hiring cost is determined by the hireling's current level (not necessarily what they were actually paid).

If a demanded bonus is not paid, the hireling leaves their employer's service. Such hirelings are generally available for hire in the community where they left service.

Design Note: It is possible to simultaneously offer a hireling a share of the treasure less than 25% of the total received by the employer AND more than twice the hireling's base hiring cost. These loyalty modifiers cancel out. Note that if a hireling has a loyalty of 19+, there is no chance of them leaving their employer's service.

TIP: RUNNING HIRELINGS

These guidelines are designed by used in concert with a [morale system](#), which I heartly recommend employing for hirelings even if it is otherwise not used in your campaign.

In my [campaign status document](#), I kept a list of all hirelings recording:

- Their name
- Current employer
- Loyalty
- Morale

And any other relevant notes.

This made it relatively easy to make the necessary upkeep checks and track their current loyalty and morale scores. Loyalty and morale scores, it should be noted, were kept secret from the players.

Generally speaking, hirelings were played by the player of the PC who employed them, with the rules for morale and loyalty granting them a sense of independence. Of course, you can also choose to run them yourself as the DM if that's something you're comfortable with, or you might employ something like the [Sidekick on Your Left](#) system.