

FIREARMS

ARMOUR, BLADED WEAPONS, STONE CASTLES—ALL WERE MADE OBSOLETE BY GUNPOWDER AND FIREARMS. *Nothing withstood “the great equalizer” that let men kill from a safe distance without concern for personal strength or valor.*

So, the Dungeon Masters Guide for good reason warns against the desire to “have gunpowder muddying the waters of your fantasy world”.

—Ed Greenwood,
Dragon Magazine (Vol. VI, No. 10)

The hardcover adventure *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* introduces to DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Fifth Edition a new type of weapon: the firearm. This document will set out guidelines for the use of firearms in Explorers' Guild organized play.

BACKGROUND

Firearms have been a part of the Forgotten Realms campaign setting since the bygone days of the '80s. Specifically, since April 1982, when Ed Greenwood published “Firearms — Primitive powder weapons for AD&D play”, in *Dragon Magazine*, Vol. VI, No. 10. Greenwood would revisit the topic in February 1983, in his article “A second volley — More firearms in AD&D terms” with the important suggestion that became the canon fact for Realmslore: that “gunpowder should be considered [...] inert”.

Of course, this doesn't mean that firearms do not appear in the Realms.

In 1989, the first three books of *The Avatar Series* (set in Realm year 1358 DR) included an event known as the Time of Troubles, when gods were forced to walk the earth. One such deity, Gond the Wonderbringer, took shelter on the island of Lantan. In exchange for their protection, Gond gifted to them the knowledge needed to manufacture the first firearms.

But several factors conspired to prevent the proliferation of these weapons throughout the Realms. First, the tremendous cost, skill, and time needed to manufacture these weapons made mass production all but impossible. More significantly, following on Greenwood's caution in *Dragon #70*, gunpowder does not function (combust) in the Realms. Rather, firearms operate using a magical mixture known as **smokepowder**, the secrets of which are closely guarded by the clerics of Gond.

There is only a single known case of this knowledge getting away from the priests—in 1482 DR in Baldur's Gate, during a disastrous sequence of events that saw the destruction of the Parliament of Peers and the resurrection of Bhaal through his chosen, Grand Duke Torlin Silvershield (a wayward priest of Gond). However, during this event, all the alchemists in Baldur's Gate who had the knowledge to manufacture smokepowder (taught to them by Silvershield) were blown up, thus “plugging the leak”, so to speak.

Now, almost thirty real years (and over 130 Realm years) since they were first introduced, firearms have appeared officially in a D&D hardcover adventure, as the drow mercenary Jarlaxle Baenre, leader of Bregan Daerth, has managed to secure a supply of them from Lantan. In facing the drow gunslingers, characters may have an opportunity to find and retrieve one of these weapons.

Hence the preparation of this document with guidance on how to handle these weapons in Explorers' Guild play.

CONSIDERATIONS

There are several matters which must be considered in establishing guidance for the use of firearms.

Firearms pose a problem for Explorers' Guild organized play because they have no rules-as-written (RAW) stats. Some optional statistics for firearms appear in chapter 9, “Dungeon Master's Workshop”, in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. However, this chapter, as indicated in the chapter preface, is for “**optional rules**”, which by their nature are not official. It becomes especially clear that these statistics are inappropriate when considering that the optional rules conflict with established Realmslore in the following significant ways:

- They rely on the use of gunpowder (which does not combust in the Forgotten Realms, as per Ed Greenwood).
- They are martial ranged weapons, which would grant proficiency with them to anyone who has martial weapon proficiency (even though only a few people in the world will have trained with them).

It therefore becomes apparent that in order to provide appropriate guidance for the use of firearms in Explorers' Guild organized play, we must look outside of RAW for guidance and apply our discretion. This document therefore constitutes one of the rare non-RAW rulings that EG will use under the provisions set out in the Explorers' Guild Campaign Manual.

BUT THE DROW GUNSLINGER STATS SAY...

As a gentle but firm reminder, monster stat blocks cannot be used as player resources. The process of creating a monster involves ensuring that its damage potential falls within a range appropriate to its challenge rating (see chapter 9, “Dungeon Master's Workshop”, in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), which means that the attack profiles contained therein are determined mathematically and not necessarily as appropriate to the actual weapon (see, for instance, the stat block for any **giant**). Additionally, various mechanics work differently for monsters than they do for player characters (for example, the **gladiator's** parry in the *Monster Manual*, the abjurer's ward in *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, and so on).

Just because it works one way for a monster doesn't mean it works the same way for you. To determine how mechanics and equipment work for your player character, you must consult the appropriate player resource.

RESOLUTIONS

The following guidance is therefore given for the use of firearms in Explorers' Guild organized play.

PISTOLS

The following rules apply to pistols:

- They are martial ranged weapons under the name “Lantanese pistol”
- They have no purchase price (and are therefore unavailable for purchase)
- They deal 1d10 piercing damage
- They weigh 3 lbs
- They have the following properties: **ammunition** (range 30/90), **loading**, **special**
- Their ammunition is bullets, which are small metal balls that weigh 2 lbs per 10 bullets and have a cost of 3 gp. Anyone proficient with smith's tools can create bullets using the standard rules for the crafting downtime activity. Bullets are destroyed upon use.
- Their special property rule is: Characters do not begin play with proficiency in this weapon, even if they have proficiency in martial ranged weapons. You can spend 250 downtime days to become proficient with the weapon using the Training downtime activity, which also requires 5 kegs of *smokepowder* and 2,500 bullets for use as you practice.
- They require smokepowder to function
- Using a pistol causes a loud bang audible out to 300 feet

SMOKEPOWDER

The following rules apply to *smokepowder*:

- It is an uncommon magic item
- It comes in airtight 20-lb kegs, which store enough *smokepowder* for 500 shots with a firearm.
- It can be separated into waterproof leather packets, each with enough *smokepowder* for five shots with a firearm.
- If set on fire, dropped, or otherwise handled roughly, it explodes and deals fire damage to each creature and object within 20 feet of it: 1d6 for a packet, 9d6 for a keg. A successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw halves the damage.

VERSION CONTROL

This version of the document was updated for September 28, 2018. The original version of this document was produced on September 28, 2018. Changes are detailed below.

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Pistols in Play

The following guidelines are intended to help remind players and Dungeon Masters of the mechanics used with pistols.

Cost. Pistols are too rare to be purchased as you would a sword or breastplate. Their production is limited to Lantanese workshops that keep the secrets of their construction closely guarded.

Loading. This property means that the wielder must use an action to reload the weapon after each shot. Even a 20th-level fighter would only get to fire a pistol once amid their many attack options in a turn. These are old style pistols, which means manual, not automatic or semiautomatic.

Special. A creature that has not spent the downtime activity to gain proficiency with this weapon does not add their proficiency bonus to their attack rolls, even if they are proficient with martial ranged weapons. Pistols are **not commonly available** and are therefore not incorporated into regular training regimens. The process of becoming proficient in this weapon is intended to be prohibitive to hobbyists. Guns are specialized weapons meant to be wielded in large formations like gunlines; adventurers will get more use out of more common ranged weapons such as bows, but those who are really dedicated to learning the weapon are able to do so.