MERP LITE

Rules streamlining for any version of the Middle Earth
Role-Playing system

Edited for The Guild Companion by Joe Mandala

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Why Write These Rules?

There are too many tables in MERP/RM. I wrote these rules to speed up the role-playing and cut down on the rule-playing! As a MERP/RM GM you should be able to keep most of this Lite system completely in your head without having to constantly refer to tables.

Rules Compatibility

These rules are to be used in conjunction with the original rulebook. They are shortcuts only for the most commonly used rules.

Most importantly all published scenarios will still work with absolutely no modifications at all.

In Brief

Character generation is unaffected. It may be long winded and a little complicated, but it's out of game time and doesn't affect the speed of play.

Skill rules have had some minor changes. All skill rolls are now D100 + skill - difficulty with a success at 101+. That means no tables! I've also included some simple Stat and Opposed skill rules.

The magic rules include some major changes. All magic is now a single roll, which works out both the Caster's chance of success versus the Target's chance of resisting.

Ball Elemental spells are rolled using Directed Spells OB and work a bit like area effect Bolt spells. Both Ball and Bolt spells now use a quick system for working out Hits and Criticals.

All non-directed spells have a roughly 50% chance of success, which is just like the original rules for resisted spells but does make non-resisted spells harder to cast.

No more tables for magic, except for criticals and fumbles.

Combat has been much simplified to use a quick system for working out Hits and Criticals, including melee, missile, tooth & claw and even martial arts. As with magic, no more tables, except for criticals and fumbles. Finally I've added rules for combat using two-weapons at once.

Do's and Don'ts

Do… discuss these rules changes with your players before you start play, especially if you are in the middle of a campaign.

Don't… necessarily use all these rules. Pick which ones you like. Maybe just try one or two to start with and if your players like them, introduce more as you continue to play.

CHARACTERS

Use the original MERP rules for generating PCs.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Will be awarded per scenario in GM determined 'chunks', not per action/kill etc. Basically these rules are:

- No experience points for Skill Rolls, Casting Spells, taking Hit Point or taking Criticals. Instead, Idea Points (detailed below) should be used to reward clever use of a skill or spell or those who fight bravely in combat.

- **Travel Points** are awarded as normal.

- **Defeat Points** are awarded instead of Kill Points. These are awarded whenever any opponent is defeated, which could include completely evading and avoiding an opponent. The PCs might not even have to meet an opponent to be awarded these points, avoiding an opponent due to some clever action taken by the PCs in the scenario could be enough.

- **Miscellaneous Points** are awarded for achieving various objectives throughout the scenario. A quick guide for this is 500 for some minor objective, 1000 for an average objective and up to 5000 for a major achievement.

- **Idea Points**, are then awarded at +100%, rather than the usual +50%.

- All points except Idea Points are earned per group and then divided evenly. This is to encourage more team play. Even Idea Points should be divided fairly evenly.

The idea is to avoid anyone having to track Experience Points within the game itself and get on with the role-playing. Better to let the GM do it all out of play and better yet to already have it written into the scenario.

Overall the PCs should be no better or worse off than before. This is not a rule designed to either spoil PCs with too many experience points, nor is it designed to penalise them with too few.

STRIDE MOVEMENT MODIFICATION

This rule is actually nicked from RM for MERP GMs to use. It helps fix the 'super-fast hobbits outrunning all the Big People' problem where MERP movement rates are only based on an MM bonus without taking a PC's height into consideration.

Apply this modifer to the normal MERP movement rate and note down the figure on a PC's character sheet.

Height	Modifer	Height	Modifer
7'10"-8'3"	+20'	4'4"-4'9"	-15'
7'4"-7'9"	+15'	4'10"-5'3"	-10'
6'10"-7'3"	+10'	3'10"-4'3"	-20'
6'4"-6'9"	+5'	3'4"-3'9"	-25'
5'10"-6'3"	0	2'10"-3'3"	-30'
5'4"-5'9"	-5'	2'4"-2'9"	-35'
		1'10"-2'3"	-40'

Stride Modifer Example

A 6' 0" Man is standing next to a 3' 8" Hobbit. The Man's MM bonus is +10 while the Hobbit's higher Agility stat makes for a better MM bonus of +30.

In the old system the Man moves at 60' per round but is left for dust by the Hobbit who moves at a blistering 80' per round.

With the modified rules the Man now moves at the same rate of 60' per round but the Hobbit is now restricted to a much more realistic 55' per round.

STALK/HIDE SKILL

Use **AG** instead of **PR** for Stalk/Hide skill. This eliminates the 'Hobbits and Elves should be better at sneaking around' problem.

BODY DEVELOPMENT SKILL

Use +5 Hit Points per rank like a normal skill, not D10. This just speeds things up.

SECONDARY SKILL DEVELOPMENT

How do you get your players to invest in secondary skills? Even with all the improved descriptions in MERP 2nd Ed, they still aren't interested! Secondary skills are more specialised than primary skills and get used a lot less. This is, I think, correctly reflected with Background Points where you get more ranks per-point than with primary skills (5 compared to 2). But why doesn't this logic also apply to per-level Development Points? Well, now it does.

You now get more ranks per Development Point for a Secondary skill than with a Primary skill. Exactly the same ratio is used as with Background Points (2 ranks Primary compared with 5 ranks Secondary). The following table shows ranks earned for both Primary and Secondary skills:

Development Points	Skill Ranks Earned
1	1 Primary or 2 Secondary
3	2 Primary or 5 Secondary

This is a well balanced rule that will encourage your players to invest in more secondary skills. For existing PCs who have already spent Development points on secondary skills using the original system, just allocate them a number of free ranks to other secondary skills to make up for those they would have had.

SKILLS AND BACKGROUND POINTS

This rule ties in with the above Secondary Skill Development rule. Instead of using a Background Point to buy a single skill, either 2 ranks in Primary or 5 ranks in Secondary, the points may be spread across a number of skills at a lower level. This rule ties in with the exact same ratios as for per-level Development Points.

A Background Point spent on skills now becomes 3 Development Points to spend on any skill.

In case you can't remember they can be spent as follows:

Development Points	Skill Ranks Earned
1	1 Primary or 2 Secondary
3	2 Primary or 5 Secondary

This means a PC could use 1 Background Point to buy 1 Primary skill at rank 1 and 2 Secondary skills at 2 ranks each.

SKILLS & ACTIONS

TIP

Keep a copy of the Moving Maneuver Fumble table (FT-4) handy.

RUNNING

This is another rule nicked from RM for MERP GMs to use. These are expanded rules for higher running rates than the standard x2.

Pace	Multiplier	MM Roll
Walk	x1	none
Jog	x1.5	Routine (+30)
Run	x2	Easy (+20)
Sprint*	x3	Light (+10)
Fast Sprint*	x4	Medium (+0)
Dash*	x5	Hard (-20)

* When too much armour and/or equipment is carried the higher running rates may not be possible. Add together the armour penalty and the carried equipment penalty (if any) and refer to the following table to determine which movement rates are prohibited.

Armour	Usual Penalty
Soft Leather	-15
Rigid Leather	-30
Chain	-45
Plate	-60
Total Penalty	**Prohibited Movement**
-16 to -30	Dash
-31 to -45	Dash, Fast Sprint
-46 or worse	Dash, Fast Sprint, Sprint

eg. A PC is wearing Chain (-45 penalty) and carrying equipment that gives a -10 MM penalty. With a total penalty of -55 the PC may not attempt a Dash, Fast Sprint or Sprint. If they drop their extra equipment their penalty drops to -45 and they may squeeze out a Sprint.

SIMPLE SM SKILL ROLL

This is a replacement for the standard Static Maneuver (SM) roll.

Roll an open-ended D100, add the relevant skill, apply the usual +/- difficulty modifers and compare the result on one of the following tables:

Skill Roll	Result
-26 or less	Fumble
-25 to 101	Failure
101+	Success

This first table is quick-and-dirty. These numbers are easy to remember, so you don't have to keep referring to a table.

Use the following table when some measure of the degree is success is required:

Skill Roll	Result
-26 or less	Fumble
-25 to 75	Failure
76 to 100	Partial Success
101 to 175	Success
176+	Absolute Success

Note that the usual difficulty for 'an average kind of skill roll' is Medium (+0). Always use this as a benchmark and decide whether an action is easier or more difficult than this baseline.

SIMPLE MM SKILL ROLL

This is a replacement for the standard Moving Maneuver (MM) roll. It is used when several skill rolls might be required to complete an action, such as climbing up a wall.

Roll an open-ended D100, add the relevant skill and apply the usual +/- difficulty modifers.

If the result is 100+ the skill roll is a complete success. If less than 100, round down to the nearest 10. This is the percentage of the task that has been successful and a further skill roll must be attempted. Add this subsequent roll to the first and keep rolling until the total reaches 100%.

Note that as with SM Skill Rolls the usual difficulty for 'an average kind of skill roll' is Medium (+0). Again use this as a benchmark and decide whether an action is easier or more difficult than this baseline.

OPPOSED SKILL ROLL

Roll an open-ended D100, add the first character's skill and subtract the second character's skill.

If the result is 51+ the first character has won, on a roll of 50- the second character has won.

SIMPLE STAT ROLL

Roll an open-ended D100, apply the appropriate +/- stat modifer, apply the usual +/- difficulty modifers and compare the result on the following table:

Stat Success Table
UM01-02 = Fumble
03-50 = Failure
51+ = Success

OPPOSED STAT ROLL

Roll an open-ended D100, add the first character's stat bonus and subtract the second character's stat bonus.

If the result is 51+ the first character has won, on a roll of 50- the second character has won.

MAGIC

Refer to the original MERP rules for Magical Items, Spell Lists, Spell Classes and Power Point usage.

There are two types of magic, **Non-Directed** and **Directed**. Non-Directed is 'normal' magic like Illusions and Sleep spells. Directed includes Bolt and Ball spells.

TIPS

Photocopy the Spell List tables from the rulebook, cut each page down the middle and attach each list to a character sheet when learnt.

Keep a copy of the Spell Fumble Table (FT-3) handy.

NON-DIRECTED SPELLS

These rules are a major simplification of the original rules, combining the Caster's and Target's rolls into just a single roll. The chance of success is clearly known before a roll is made and if the GM allows, the player can be told before they make their roll what their chance of success is.

Resisted Spells

Refer to a spell description to determine whether a spell is resisted by the target.

Instant Spells

As in the original rules, Instant spells marked with an * do not require preparation or time to cast. This means that they are always cast as if prepared for 2 rounds and when cast the Caster may still act that round.

Magic Roll

Caster rolls open-ended D100, adds Base Spells OB and applies the following modifers:

Turns prepared		Range	
(not 'Instant' spells)		*(not 'Self' spells)*	
0 turns	-30	Touching	+30
1 turn	-15	0' – 10'	+10
2 turns	+0	11' – 50'	+0
3 turns	+10	51' – 100'	-10
4 turns	+20	101' – 300'	-20
		301'+	-30
Target's Resistance			
(Resisted Spells only)			
Caster's level exceeds Target's		+5/level *(max. +50)*	
Target's level exceeds Caster's		-5/level *(max. -50)*	
Target's Resistance to Magic		-variable	
(Essence or Channeling, whichever is applicable)			

Then refer to the following table:

Roll	Caster's Magic Roll
UM01-02	Fumble
03-10	Fumble
11-50	Failure
51+	Success

Useful Non-Directed Spell Facts

On average a resisted spell has a 50% chance of success, if the Caster and Target are the same level. Once a Caster is 10 levels above the Target the average chance of success rises to nearly 100%. If a Caster is 10 levels below the Target the average chance of success drops to nearly 0%.

Preparing for only 1 or even 0 turns increases the chance of a Fumble to 25% or 40%. Preparing for 3 or 4 turns reduces the chance of a Fumble to only 2%.

NON-DIRECTED MAGIC EXAMPLES

Resisted Spell Example

Alaric is about to chuck a Sleep X spell (Spirit Mastery list) at a 7th Level Orc. The spell description indicates that this is a Resisted spell.

Alaric's Base Spells OB is +30, he's in a hurry so hasn't prepared (-30), he's 10th Level (+15, versus the Orc's 7th Level), the Orc is 90' away (-10) and has no resistance to Essence (+0). This gives a total modifer of just +5. With a skill or combat roll this would mean certain failure, but a Non-Directed spell needs only 51+.

He lets the spell go and rolling a D100 gets 47, which with the +5 gives a 52, he can barely believe it, a slim success!

Instant Spell Example

This time another Orc is rushing at Alaric and is only a few feet away. Luckily he already has his Broadsword drawn in one hand, but his shield is lying on the floor several feet away.

He decides to cast Shield (Essence Hand list). As this is an 'instant' spell he doesn't have to prepare (+0) and as the range is 'self' there are no range modifers (+0). His total modifer is +30, due to just his Base Spells OB.

Alaric needs to roll 51+ and with his modifer of +30, should be relatively easy.

DIRECTED MAGIC

Directed Magic includes all Directed Elemental 'Bolt' spells as well as Ball Elemental spells. Ball spells are now like area effect Bolt spells.

Magic Roll

Roll D100 open-ended, add Caster's Directed Spells OB, subtract target's DB and apply the modifers below. Maximum result is 150.

Turns prepared		Range	
0 turns	-30	Touching	+30
1 turn	-15	0' – 10'	+10
2 turns	+0	11' – 50'	+0
3 turns	+10	51' – 100'	-10
4 turns	+20	101' – 300'	-20
		301'+	-30
Caster's Situation			
Caster taken half hits	-20		
Per item shifted	-30		
Target's Armour			
Soft Leather	-10		
Rigid Leather	-20		
Chain	-30		
Plate	-40		
Spell vs Armour			
Shock or Lightening Bolt	+10 chain/plate		
Water Bolt	-10 plate/rigid leather		
Ice Bolt	-5 plate/rigid leather		

Then refer to the following table:

Roll	Caster's Magic Roll
UM01-02	Fumble
03-10	Fumble
11-100	Failure
101+	Success

101+ is a hit and causes damage. Subtract 100 from this total to get the 'magic result'.

Hits

Hits are calculated as follows:

Direct Spell	Hits
Ball	*One per two.*
	One hit for every two full points of 'magic result' (divide by two and drop fractions).
Bolt	*One for one.*
	One hit for each point of 'magic result'.

Hits and Critical Limitations

Directed Spells have maximum values for Hits and Criticals depending upon the type of spell, as follows.

Direct Spell	Hits/Critical limited to…
Shock Bolt	20B
Water Bolt	30C
Ice Bolt	40D
Fire Bolt	50E
Lightening Bolt	50E
Fire Ball	25D
Cold Ball	25D

Criticals

Criticals are calculated as follows:

Magic Result	Bolt	Ball
01-09	None	None
10-19	A	None
20-29	B	A
30-39	C	B
40-49	D	C
50	E	D

Tip

Easy way to remember this is '10s' is an A, '20s' is a B, '30s' is a C, '40s' is a D, '50' is an E.

Ball Area Effect

Others within 10' of the target receive half hits and a critical at one level lower. Add or subtract the difference between the target's DB and adjacent target DBs then re-calculate hits and criticals.

Useful Directed Spell Facts

Directed spells now have exactly the same chances of fumbling as Non-Directed spells.

As with Non-Directed spells, preparing significantly reduces the chance of a Fumble.

Directed Spells need a roll of 101+ to succeed whereas Non-Directed need only 51+. This 'kind of' makes Directed Spells harder than Non-Directed, however a PC's Directed Spells OB is usually higher than their Base Spells OB.

Ball Spells have changed a lot in these rules!

DIRECTED MAGIC EXAMPLES

First Example

Alaric knows all the Mage lists to 10th Level so he has a choice of what he can throw around.

Alaric decides to throw a Water Bolt at an Orc. He has a Directed Spells OB of 66 and the Orc has a DB of 5 (-5). Alaric has prepared for 1 round (-15), the Orc is 75' away (-10), Alaric has not moved any items or taken any hits (no penalty) and the Orc is wearing Rigid Leather (-20 plus another -10 for a Water Bolt vs Rigid Leather). This gives a total of +66 -60 = +6. Not too good, so he decides to wait for the Orc to come closer.

One round later the Orc is now 25' away (+0 rather than -10) and Alaric has now been preparing for 2 rounds in total (+0 rather than -15). He also decides that a Fire Bolt might be a better choice than a Water Bolt (to drop the -10 Spell vs Armour penalty). He now has a total of +66 -25 = +41. Much better, but he will still need a good roll to hit.

He lets the Fire Bolt go, rolls his D100 and gets an 83 for a total of 83+41 = 124, which is a hit! Quickly adding this up gives 24 hits and a B critical ('20s' is a B). Maximum hits and critical for a Fire Bolt are 50E, so the Orc takes 24 hits and a B Fire critical. The Orc drops to the floor.

Second Example

Alaric now spots three of the first Orcs' friends rushing towards him. It might now be time for a Fire Ball.

He has the same 2 rounds as before to prepare (+0) before the Orcs are 45' away from him (+0). All the Orcs have the same 5 DB (-5) and are wearing Rigid Leather armour (-20). This gives the same total before of +66 -25 = +41. Alaric decides to let the Fire Ball go.

He rolls his D100, for a better result than before of 92, which gives a total of 92+41 = 133. Another hit! Ball directed spells only do 1 hit per 2 full points but the same criticals as Bolt spells. The Fire Ball does 16 hits (1 hit per 2 points) and a C critical ('30s' is a C) to the Orc in the middle. But more than that, because a Fire Ball is an area effect spell the 2 other Orcs who were standing within 10' of their targeted friend, each take 8 hits (half again) and a B critical (one level lower).

One Orc drops, the other stands around looking stunned and the third runs away. Alaric decides his Power Points are looking rather low, so he runs off in the opposite direction.

COMBAT

TIP

Keep a copy of the Weapon Statistics Table (CST-1), the Critical Tables (CT-1 through 11) and the Weapon Fumble Tables (FT-1 and 2) handy.

MELEE AND MISSILE COMBAT

These rules covers all melee and missile combat. Weapon tables and initiative are the same as per the 'proper' rules.

Combat Roll

Roll D100 open-ended, add attacker's OB, subtract defender DB and apply the modifers below.

Position (only apply to melee attacks)	
Flank attack on defender	+20
Rear attack on defender	+35
Defender surprised	+20
Defender stunned or down	+20
Defender's OB used to parry	-variable
Attacker	
Attacker taken half hits	-20
Per item shifted	-30
Target's Armour	
Soft Leather	-10
Rigid Leather	-20
Chain	-30
Plate	-40

Maximum result is 150. Then refer to the following table:

Roll	Attacker's Combat Roll
UM01-08	Possible Fumble, depending on weapon type.
09-100	Failure, a Miss
101+	Success, a Hit

101+ is a hit and causes damage. Subtract 100 from this roll to get the 'combat result'.

Hits

Hits are calculated as follows:

Direct Spell	Hits
1H*	*One per two.* One hit for every two full points of 'combat result' (divide by two and drop fractions).
2H**	*One for one.* One hit for each point of 'combat result'.

* 1H includes 1H Edged, 1H Concussion, Polearms used 1H, Missile, Thrown, Took & Claw, Grappling & Unbalancing.

** 2H includes 2-Handed, Polearms used 2H.

Criticals

Criticals are calculated as follows:

Combat Result	Critical
01-09	None
10-19	A
20-29	B
30-39	C
40-49	D
50	E

Tip

Easy way to remember this is '10s' is an A, '20s' is a B, '30s' is a C, '40s' is a D, '50' is an E.

TOOTH & CLAW OR GRAPPLING & UNBALANCING

Tooth & Claw or Grappling & Unbalancing attacks have maximum values for Hits and Criticals depending upon the size of the attack, as follows.

Size of Attack	Hits/Critical limited to…
Tiny	10A
Small	20B
Medium	30C
Large	40D
Huge	50E

MARTIAL ARTS

Martial Art Attacks have similar maximum values for Hits and Criticals as with Tooth & Claw / Grappling & Unbalancing attacks above:

Size of Attack	Hits/Critical limited to…
Novice	20B
Standard	30C
Expert	40D

Optional Martial Arts Rule

For added realism and game balance, the GM can use the following modifers on Martial Arts attacks to reflect the difference between using either Strikes or Sweeps attacks against differently armoured targets:

Target's Armour	Strike Mod	Sweep Mod
None	+0	+0
Soft Leather	+0	+0
Rigid Leather	-5	+5
Chain	-10	+10
Plate	-15	+15

COMBAT EXAMPLES

Alaric has 77 OB in 1-H Edged and is using a Broadsword. The troublesome Orcs have tracked him down again. This time their Boss is standing in front of Alaric and challenging him to a duel. The Orc Boss has 87 OB with a Morning Star, 20 DB (due mainly to a shield), is wearing Chain (-30) and has a -5 MM bonus. Alaric has no armour but has the advantage of a +20 MM, so he strikes first.

The Orc decides not to parry any of his OB, making for a modifer of +77-50 = +27. Alaric rolls his D100 and gets a 72, not as good as he was hoping for a total of 72+27 = 99. Just a miss.

By some strange stroke of fortune the Orc fumbles and breaks his shield, reducing his 20 DB to 0. The Orc still decides not to parry giving a modifer of +77-30=+47. Alaric gets another chance, this time he rolls slightly worse, 68! But this still works out to 68+47=115. Quickly working this out gives 7 hits (1H weapons are 1 hit per 2 points of success) and an A critical ('10s' is an A).

A lucky critical roll leaves the Orc stunned the following round and Alaric ready to finish him off.

TWO WEAPONS AT ONCE

Each round a character using a melee weapon in each hand has three choices:

Attack and Block

Attack with the weapon in normal hand at normal OB, the weapon in the off-hand adds +15 DB like a shield.

Example

Alaric has 77 OB in 1-H Edged, he is using a Broadsword in his right hand and a shortsword in his left. He decides to 'attack and block' so he attacks as normal with 77 OB in his Broadsword and adds +15 DB for the Shortsword in his left hand. He realises he would have been better off using a shield in his left hand, but he has other plans for future rounds…

A weapon in an off-hand is not as effective at blocking as a shield, but does weigh less and offers greater flexibility for different attacks in subsequent rounds.

Attack with Both Weapons

Attacker gets to distribute OB between each weapon and attack twice. The off-hand attack has a -30 OB modifer.

Example

This round Alaric decides to 'attack with both his weapons'. He puts 40 OB into his right-handed Broadsword attack and the remaining 37 OB into his left-handed Shortsword attack. He makes two attack rolls, a 40 OB Broadsword attack and a 7 OB (37, -30 for the off-hand) Shortsword attack.

If weapons from two different skills are being used, average the two skills before dividing between the two weapons.

Example

Alaric has only 18 OB in 1-H Concussion. He is still wielding his Broadsword in his right hand but after his Shortsword broke he has now picked up a Warhammer to use in his left. Averaging his 77 and 18 OBs, gives just 48 OB to divide between the two weapons. Alaric decides instead to stick with an 'attack and block' allocating his full 77 OB to his Broadsword and using the Warhammer to add +15 DB.

Parry and Block

Similar to an 'Attack and Block', but part or all of the attacker's OB may be save to parry as per normal MERP combat rules.