The Paladin's Code and Pathfinder

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Dragon Magazine, It's Not Easy Being Good

The paladin, as presented in the game Pathfinder, is a great class to play if you want powerful combat options against evil foes and good out of combat abilities. It comes with drawbacks, such as diminished ability against non-evil foes, but none are like the paladin's code. This set of moral guidelines can be either an exciting roleplay tool or a nightmare to the whole party. Well established codes can enrich a game, bring flavor to a character, and create great play opportunities. Poorly established codes can tear a game apart and slow things down as people stop to discuss what is and isn't allowed in the code. Badly established codes can make a game unfun for all and create hurt feelings and friendships.

This guide is all about roleplaying a paladin. If you are looking for something to help you build a character this is not your guide, but I encourage you to still read on to help you play one well. If you are a GM with a paladin, you should also benefit, as this guide will go over how to establish a code and use it to challenge a player with it.

If you have any comments or questions you may use this discussion on the Paizo messageboards.

What is a Paladin?

To understand how to roleplay a paladin you should understand the history behind them. While I am not a literary expert or historian, what is expressed in the brief summary below should be a good launching point for further study and research.

The word paladin was originally used as a Roman title connected to officials in the palace. In fact the word palace and the word paladin have similar etymology, coming from a close association to the hill Palatium where the house of the emperor sat in Rome. Its use to describe religious warriors was first with the twelve champions of Charlemagne, and later used in connection with the knights of King Arthur's court. The original paladins of Charlemagne were not all knights, or even completely pious Christians, but later the legends changed to make them more like the knights found in Arthurian legend. It is the Knights of the Round Table that ended up holding the title paladin as the story of Charlemagne fell out popularity, taking on some additional meaning in association with those knights. Paladin never truly meant holy knight through any of its classical history. Instead it meant a well trusted official, sometimes a knight, connected directly to the palace of the king.

In both Charlemagne's and Arthur's court there is a knight's code that is followed, maybe not by all paladins or knights, but certainly by most. It is the well-known real life code of honor, and inspiration for the original Dungeon and Dragons paladin's code, chivalry. Whole books have been written on what was involved in following the code, with different writers and time periods disagreeing on some of the smaller points. The basics are simply a code of conduct for warfare and noble life. Later an example of chivalry will be presented, as well as a more detailed explanation.

Some literary examples of paladins come from the work of Poul Anderson and Chansons de geste. Also, while Roland was a real life champion for Charlemagne he has been fictionalized in literature just as much as King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Tristan from the tragic love story Tristan and Isolde is considered a knight on par with the paladin. My own ancestor Sir Walter Blount was immortalized by Shakespeare's play King Henry IV, Part 1, and is upheld in the play as the ideal knight.

The word paladin was eventually used for a class in Dungeon and Dragons. The class held onto many of the elements the word was associated with from story and legend, including a strict code of conduct. The class was also far more restrictive than the Pathfinder version, with a much more detailed code, ability score requirements, and in some versions even a race restriction.

In Pathfinder, a paladin is a mix between a cleric and a fighter, standing in the frontlines wielding holy power fueled by their faith. They are so dedicated to their god that they are champions and heralds for them, standing as shining examples for the world and leading unbelievers to conversion and faith. They walk a straight path, and cannot allow themselves to falter from it. If they do they lose their faith, their power, and the confidence of their god. They also happen to be really effective at destroying evil and standing toe to toe with the most powerful foes they face.

What is a Paladin's Code?

From the discussion above about the history of the paladin you should already understand why the class has a code of honor they must follow, mainly that the knights of legend who inspired the class had a similar code of honor. In a way, chivalry is still a large part of the class, and many parts of its doctrine is still evident in the class and the assumption of how a paladin should behave. A full write up of the chivalry code of honor and how it could be used in a game is probably too large for this guide, but a brief overview can be found later to help build a good code for use in the game.

The paladin's code is just as much, if not more, about flavor than it is about balance. Without it there wouldn't be a strong unifying theme to the class abilities and purpose of the class. The class would still work mechanically, but the flavor of those mechanics wouldn't be as strong or solid as they are with it.

It is also one of the few roleplaying tools given any real mechanics. Other classes have similar restrictions, such as the druid's dedication to nature, but none are as strong or as compelling. Most of those in other classes can easily be ignored, and as a result are not a directly influential as code can be.

Preparing to Play a Paladin

Once you have decided you want to play a paladin you need to consider a few things to find if it is a good fit for your game. You should first ask your GM if they are willing to let a paladin be played, and if the campaign is a proper fit for a paladin. You then should talk to your group about what everyone else is playing to find out if a paladin will work with the rest of the party.

Some GMs are not willing to play with paladins, as they may have had bad experiences, or feel it would be too much for them to deal with in their game. They should also know if their campaign is a good one for a paladin. Not all games are in a setting where playing a paladin is a fun and worthwhile experience. This is especially true for games that assume the player characters are going to be performing evil or illegal actions, such as piracy, assassinations, or theft. It will also be difficult to play a paladin properly if they have to knowingly take regular and frequent orders from evil characters.

Some parties are not well suited for a paladin. For example, if the party is mostly Neutral characters that have no problem working within grey areas a paladin is going to either have to ignore some of their activities or be kept in the dark about them. A paladin does best in a group made up of nearly all good aligned characters. In such a group everyone can participate and work together without having to worry about if the paladin is going to approve or not.

Never should a paladin be in a party with an evil player character. If there is a player who wants to play an evil character in the same party as a paladin, one or the other needs to change their concept. A GM should never allow a PC to be secretly evil, especially in a party with a paladin. Evil player characters in a party with a paladin will create too many problems to deal with, no

matter how prepared someone thinks they are.

If you have already started playing and you discover one of the PCs is evil, stop the game and talk openly about how your paladin needs to react. Much of the time the player running the evil character has an expectation of how things are supposed to work. Find out what it is and work with them and the GM to find a suitable course of action that won't create harsh feelings afterwards. More than likely someone's character will have to be killed, and that often means hurt feelings if it wasn't expected.

Building and Playing a Code of Conduct

Once you have determined if you can play a paladin in the game and party without trouble, you need to work out the code of conduct. When you do so, talk to your GM ahead of time and ask them how strict they are going to be and if they have anything they feel needs to be included. After that, write out the code of conduct in a form that you can keep in front of you, such as on a note card or on a piece of paper you can keep with a character sheet.

Talking to your GM about how strict they will be is possibly the biggest clue you will have to if you will have trouble playing one or not. You may not want to play with a GM that will be super strict and frequently test the code. It also isn't good if the GM will ignore the code and never call you out on actions that go against it. Once you have a code written up, be sure to hand a copy to your GM.

While writing up the code you should feel free to be as detailed or general as you like. Going too far in either direction can be bad though. Too detailed and you will have too much to remember as you play. Too general and you might set yourself up for a night long argument over why or why not your paladin should lose their powers. Aim for a good balance between the two, asking your GM for help if you have trouble finding it.

The Standard Code of Conduct

Each section below comes from the Code of Conduct section of the paladin class as found in the Core Rulebook.

Never Willing Commit an Evil Act

This is probably the one most open to interpretation. "Evil" is not as black and white as we would all like, and often people have different opinions as to what is and isn't evil. Highly conservative religions, for example, might see fornication as evil, as well as the consumption of certain foods. Historically, there have been religions that have seen things we see as evil as good, and good as evil, creating more issues when having debates on this subject.

For the sake of simplicity, use the following list of generally accepted evil actions as a guideline:

- Abuse – This can mean self-abuse, abuse of others, and abuse of power. The GM and player need to agree as to what is abuse and when certain types of abuse are severe enough to make a paladin fall. Clearly physical and sexual abuse is serious and no paladin should ever participate in such activity, but it is smaller actions that need to be looked at. What is self-abuse and is it serious enough to be a sin or a transgression?

What about abuse of power? Does a paladin need to worry about falling for verbally abusing someone? These are questions I will leave to you, but they do need to be answered.

- Murder – While self-defense and killing to protect others is not murder, killing someone without cause, killing for the sake of killing, or killing simply out of rage is. Also, killing someone simply because they have an evil aura should be seen as murder because there isn't any real cause or evidence that suggests such a drastic measure. It may lead you to find a justified cause to kill them, but on its own an aura shouldn't be reason enough.
- Slavery – There are some who will argue that slavery isn't inherently evil. Even in the 10% of campaigns where it isn't, paladins should not be participating in it. Being a slave owner is too much of a temptation to abuse the slave, most likely through neglect. Those who owe large debts to a paladin, such as through debt bondage or indentured servitude, should be released as soon as possible. Doing so is an honorable act that helps the needy and weak.
- Theft – This is not as clear cut because of the nature of adventuring. What constitutes as theft is a little bit in a grey area when you are wandering through the lair of an evil creature. Because of this, ignore the odd moral grey area that comes with standard adventure looting, mostly because you want to actually play the game and not be constantly atoning for all the looting. Theft is evil in other ways, such as stealing items from other players, not being honest in dividing loot, not paying a tithing (when required to do so,) or taking property from an NPC who is clearly not evil and/or part of a standard adventure loot situation. For example, taking a horse from the stables without paying or shoplifting a potion at Ye Olde Magic Shop.

Respect Legitimate Authority

Paladins must respect authority and laws, even when those authorities are evil. This can be tricky, and must be done with care and consideration. There are a few other parts of the code that can become at odds with this one, namely not willingly associating with evil. A GM should be willing to work with players in such cases where a frequent association is a requirement, either by offering alternatives or providing compelling reasons why doing so wouldn't cause a paladin to fall.

If there is a law that is in contradiction to the paladin's code of conduct a paladin should follow their code of conduct over the law. If there is any doubt that doing so is the best course of action, the paladin should be allowed to consult with a superior or with their god. Doing so will provide a good roleplay opportunity, and allow the GM to assure the player they are not in danger of a catch 22 situation.

If there ends up being a law that is hard to ignore, for example one that bans paladins outright, and a paladin can't avoid the nation or state that has it, he shouldn't be penalized for breaking that law. This is especially true if he plans on leaving that nation as soon as his business is over, he is breaking it to complete a worthy quest, and doing so is allowing him to follow the rest of his code of honor. If he is breaking the law with no reason for him to be in that nation, he should lose his powers until he leaves it and atones. Breaking laws without a good and worthy purpose is a

chaotic act and is contrary to respecting legitimate authority. For example, if there was such a nation with an anti-paladin law, a paladin shouldn't go there just to see if he can find a dungeon to crawl through. However, if he was given a quest that led him to a dungeon in that nation he should be able to go there to finish his quest, but he shouldn't be there any longer than he needs to be.

Act with Honor

The most helpful question in regards to this part of the code of conduct is this: Does this action hurt my reputation or the reputation of my church? The code specifically calls out lying, cheating, and poison use but we can expand on this a bit.

Lying can be tricky. Do all lies cause a paladin to fall, or just malicious ones? Can a white lie be allowed now and then? What about lies of omission? What if the paladin lies to protect the innocent? Does this cover oaths and promises?

A GM and a player may want to decide how far honor goes outside of what is called out. For example, can a paladin fall for not keeping promises? Is abandoning a quest that can be completed a punishable offense? When is a paladin not fighting honorably, and is it cause for them to fall? What is the difference between using tactics and cheating?

Help Those in Need

This doesn't mean to give handouts every time they are asked for. It does mean to quickly give aid when it is needed the most by those who sincerely need it. Ignoring a beggar's call for coin shouldn't cause a paladin to fall. A paladin will fall if they fail to stop a thug from beating one. A paladin should be encouraged to spend his free time doing charity work, and possibly giving a tithe towards worthy causes, but it is up to the GMs and player to decide if not doing so is cause to fall.

Punish Those Who Harm or Threaten Innocents

This is pretty self-explanatory. Understand that punish doesn't only mean kill them. It could mean bringing them to jail and using the legal system to bring about justice. Punishment can go too far as well. Having a witch curse them with a dozen curses and leaving them with little to nothing in the middle of a snowy plane is more in line with abuse than it is punishment. If in doubt, a paladin should be able to ask his god what punishment is appropriate.

Do Not Associate With Evil

There are some exceptions to this, but the most important part of this is that you aren't easily or quickly allowing yourself to work willingly with evil creatures. Paladins, for example, don't knowingly make pacts with devils. Most people have this to mean they don't adventure with evil PCs. While true, you should have already made sure that isn't going to happen.

When working on this part of the code, some considerations should be given to special situations that may or may not arise. For example, what happens if the paladin knowingly and willing purchases items from an evil shopkeeper? How does a paladin deal with taking regular orders from an evil authority? The GM might have an idea if similar situations are possible, and it should be decided how severe such an interaction is considered.

(Bonus) No Chaotic Act

While not specifically called out, the code does say that a paladin needs to be Lawful as well as Good in alignment. Chaotic acts are rash, done impulsively, and done will little regard to anyone or anything. Lawful acts are done with a plan, purpose, and regard to everyone else. Chaotic acts are passionate and full of emotion, giving in to natural tendencies easily and quickly. Lawful actions are more logical, controlled, and often exercise will power to go against natural tendencies.

For example, a person may see an expensive object or piece of property that they really want. If they are chaotic they will not give any thought about if they can afford it or not and will quickly and impulsively go into debt for it. A lawful person will look at their budget, make plans, and save up to buy it. Another example would be in regards to sexual attraction. A chaotic person may act on that attraction immediately, having a casual encounter with someone they will never see again. A lawful person might exercise will power and spend a great deal of time and energy into fostering a lasting relationship before seeking any kind of physical intimacy within that relationship.

Everyone will have a differing opinion, but it is something that should be thought about and considered

Playing a Code

If you have written out your code of conduct you have done 90% of the work. Playing a code you put work into thinking about will be easier than just playing a paladin cold. You should still have a system in place, and it may take some time for you to become accustomed to having a code to play.

I suggest having something you can keep in front of you, like a notecard, that is easy to reference. This is so you can quickly use it to make the tough decisions and answer any questions by the GM without too much trouble. It can also be a reminder to keep following the code.

Do not look at the code as a list of don't. Instead, look at it a list of actions you should be looking to do as part of the paladin's duty to their god. If you put a part into the code about redeeming creatures, you should be attempting to redeem them. If you have something that mentions helping the needy, you should have your paladin using their free time to do so. Only looking at the code as restrictive is ignoring all the great, flavorful things the code encourages.

GMs should be attempting to place situations into the game where the paladin can use their code, not just in the areas that the code restricts their actions but also encourages them to act. Give the paladin someone with genuine need to help. Provide real evil for them to hunt down and put a stop to. Allow them to act honorably. This isn't asking to make the paladin the only star of the game, as every player should have moments to shine. All that is being asked is to find ways to encourage the code instead of challenging it.

And with that you should have everything you need to play. I wish you well and good luck with your games. Keep your blade sharp and evil out of your heart.

Everything past this point is optional and not a requirement in playing a paladin. If you are satisfied and believe you have everything worked out feel free to ignore the remainder of this guide.

Using The Paladin's God

The paladin is a champion for their god, and sometimes they should be allowed to speak with their god to gain guidance. While the connection is left up to the GM, no response at all from a god is probably not the best practice. The god has an interest in their paladin succeeding, as the paladin is one of their representatives and often acts in their name. Doing so without any guidance isn't very helpful to either the paladin or the god's goals.

Direct and in person communication is more than likely too far out of the question. That doesn't mean that there are not any options for communication, in fact there are many possible forms that can be utilized. The GM will have to decide what is the most appropriate in their campaign, and sometimes which will work for any one situation.

The following are ways the paladin can try to communicate with their god:

- **Prayer** - If the paladin is looking for answers to his prayer he is more than likely praying in private, on his knees, out loud, and using formalized language. Such a prayer is sacred, intimate, and personal, and should at least gain some notice. While prayer can be uttered mid-combat, it is probably part of spell casting and not likely to gain the notice of a god.
- **Fasting** - This is the giving up of food and water for a time, typically 24 to 48 hours, with a purpose dedicated in prayer and accompanied with studying. Fasting is a way to show sacrifice, willpower, and dedication. It focuses the mind and draws it away from the mortal and natural so that it can dwell on the divine. A paladin would fast when he needs something from his god that normal prayer won't give, like help and assistance with a difficult situation.
- **Making a sacrifice** - This doesn't have to be an animal sacrifice, but could be leaving food, money, or an object at a shrine or place of worship. The greater the value, monetary or sentimental, the greater the chance the sacrifice gains some attention.
- **Study scripture** - Often this is a way a paladin will gain an answer, as a passage will have some special meaning, but the dedication in doing it will often be worthy of note. Not nearly as a strong a prayer, but still a worthy action.
- **Counseling with superiors** - The paladin isn't at the top of his religion's leadership, and often will have a mentor. Seeking out and talking to a superior is probably the most direct way of gaining an answer to a question or request. If anything, they can direct the paladin in the right direction.

- **Visiting a shrine** - This is often a site of great importance to a paladin's religion, but often it is just set up to offer a place to worship far from the nearest church or temple. Leaving an offering, doing some maintenance on the shrine, or spending a significant time praying would be appropriate actions to take at a shrine to gain the god's notice.
- **Visiting a church or temple** - Churches are often smaller and not as sacred as temples, but are still great places of worship. Temples are often made of the best materials, and have inner chambers only a few are allowed into. Typically, unless he is directly told to do so by the god or a head of their church, the paladin will not enter those inner chambers. Spending time doing tasks in such places of worship, such as prayer and fasting, should be enough to gain some attention.

On the other side of the communication, a god can communicate through the following methods:

- **Small impressions of the heart** - Often just a feeling, like the lump in the gut that tells you something is wrong, is a good enough for simple messages. A paladin in good standing with their god could receive these impressions without having ask for them, with the god giving them when a paladin is in need of a warning or struggling without a smal hint.
- **Big impressions** - These are like the god yelling without actually being there. They might be with audible voices to only the paladin, or just really sudden and intense feelings. This could be used when the paladin is ignoring the god or is in serious trouble.
- **Council through a superior** - When a paladin asks a superior for advice the god may give that superior impressions on what to say, or just trust them to say the right thing. Either way, this is probably the least direct method of communication, but one of the more reliable and understandable.
- **Visions** - Sometimes a more direct route is needed, but being too direct would oversell the point. A vision could be perfect for when the paladin is asking for an answer to a question, and it is a great way to roleplay a god without having the god in the same room. Visions could be very clear and to the point or they can be dreams, full of symbols and images that only have meaning to the paladin.
- **Visitations by heavenly messengers** - This is as direct as the god can be without being in the presence of the paladin himself. Heavenly messengers can be in response to a request the paladin made, or sent to take away the paladin's powers and punish them for apostasy. A visitation is a huge event, and not one to be ignored.
- **Direct visitation** - When a god visits someone in person there is a huge reason behind it. It is something that will impact the whole religion, and possibly the world. They do not show themselves for anything less

Communication between the god and their servant can thus be a wonderful roleplay experience, filled with good opportunity to keep a player focused and mindful of their character's religion. A GM should never have a god be totally deaf to the pleas of their followers, especially followers like paladins and clerics that have been endowed with their power. Certainly there are times where a god doesn't want to be bothered, or wants the follower to figure it out on their own, but if a player is frequently told their god is ignoring them a problem arises. Namely that the character is doing a great deal of work for someone, or something, that will never show

them appreciation or encouragement.

Remember, a god doesn't have to say anything. Most of the time they just need to acknowledge the follower's prayers.

Expanding the Code of Conduct

There may be a desire to expand the code. If you do so, be careful that not too much is added. The more that is there to follow, the harder it will be to stay true to it and remember every part.

Below are some real life and fictional codes of conduct that can be used as inspiration for expansion or alteration of the code of conduct. Please understand that many religions and views are expressed, and that your own moral and religious views will be contrary to some or most of what you will read. If you don't like something, skip it and move along. My own religious views are shared as well, and I understand how expressing them can be viewed negatively, especially with some modern views casting religious expression as wrong and unwanted. Understand that I do not look to convince anyone to adopt any of the philosophies below, nor am I true representative for anything you read after this. If you wish to learn more about anything you read here I will try to leave enough information so you can do proper research.

Should you feel the need to comment on something here, feel free to comment in the Paizo messageboards thread for this guide, or send me a private message on the boards. I go by CalebTGordan there. Please keep comments civil and cool, and know that I will report any trolling the moment I read it.

General Concepts Common in Codes

Some concepts transcend time and cultures, and while they will be repeated in the different codes expressed later I felt it would be beneficial to touch on some of them here. These are not expressly called out in the paladin's code but could easily be added to it. Some GMs may even argue that some of them are already against the paladin's code, either by calling them out as chaotic or evil in nature.

Body Modification

Some cultures look at body modification as a requirement, others a sin. If it is a requirement then there needs to be a specific reasoning behind it, such as the marking of a successful rite of passage. Typically modifications are within reason and at some level of modesty. Very few, for example, would see covering the entire body in tattoos as acceptable, especially on a representative as high in esteem as a paladin. Many religions ban body modification outright, and do not allow tattoos, scarring, piercing, or any other modification. The reasons vary, but most involve the body being a scared vessel.

Chastity Laws

If you decide to have a chastity law you need to figure out how far it goes. Is kissing not allowed? Can a paladin willingly touch a member of the opposite sex? Are they just not allowed physical intimacy until they are married, and then only with their spouse? If they can marry, are they

restricted to one spouse? Chastity laws are much like laws against body modification, with a focus on the body being a sacred vessel, frequently with the added explanation that the powers of procreation are sacred and powerful and should not be expressed or used lightly or carelessly. It can be taken in another direction as well, the paladin being required to seek out many willing partners with the purpose of creating as many offspring as possible. However, doing that would create problems of support for those offspring and a paladin will quickly find themselves in a situation where adventuring is counter to their responsibilities as a parent.

Entertainments

Some religions restrict the types or content of entertainment. Nudity, pornography, violence, vulgarity, and evil actions, for example, are common things the restrictions are designed to remove as influences in a person's life. Some entertainment restrictions go further than content and actually restrict specific activities. Dancing, singing, and joke telling, for example, might be restricted in a super conservative religion. The reasoning typically involves removing temptation to commit other sins, or to remove the world so that the pious follower can focus on their god. When considering this restriction you should look at both content of entertainments and the types of entertainments.

Special Diets

This can be very restrictive, with a long list of things that cannot be consumed, or be little more than a yearly fast. The simplest have a restriction on alcohol, a sacred animal, or an animal viewed as unclean. The most complex not only have a list of forbidden foods for common days but further restrictions for special holidays. Religious diets may not ban something altogether, but instead request moderation or regular fasts. For example, a religion may allow alcohol but only in moderation, banning drunkenness and alcoholism. Another may have no special diet except for a fast once a month where no food or drink is consumed for 24 hours. There may be no diet at all during most of the year, but instead have very restrictive diets on holidays. Reasoning behind diets vary, but commonly the idea is once again about the body being sacred.

Tithing and Property

This has many variations as well. In some religious codes the tithing of a percentage of your full income is required. In others, tithing is only heavily encouraged but there is not any specific amount laid out. Some codes say that you should give up all but what you need to live and survive, donating nearly all to the church or to a worthy cause. A paladin with this type of code would be limited in the amount of gear they can own, perhaps reasonably restricting them to a limited number of magic item. There might also be a restriction on what type of property is owned, like a restriction against owning land or a building. Then again, there may be a requirement to own land and a castle, and keep it properly funded and maintained as part of the duties expected of the paladin.

Below you will find many different codes of conduct. I will add to this as I have time and as I am made aware of things that should be added. I want to thank everyone who contributed to the knowledge you will find here. Specifically, Master of Dark Triad, Mosaic (especially him,) Deadmanwalking, redbird247, Ashtathlon, TheNine, Charlie Bell, lemeres, Stompy Rex, and everyone else who responded to my thread asking for codes. Thank you. If I didn't mention you it

was not because I didn't appreciate it, but because the Paizo site was going through maintenance while I was looking at who contributed.

As of right now most of these are just directly taken from the thread about real life codes. I may expand or alter these in the future as I do more research and study.

Bene Gesserit Litany Against Fear (From the Dune series)

I must not fear.

Fear is the mind-killer.

Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration.

I will face my fear.

I will permit it to pass over me and through me.

And when it has gone past me I will turn to see fears path.

Where the fear has gone there will be nothing.....Only I will remain.

Boy Scouts of America

Scout Oath (or Promise)

On my honor I will do my best

To do my duty to God and my country

and to obey the Scout Law;

To help other people at all times;

To keep myself physically strong,

mentally awake, and morally straight

The Scout Law

A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly,

courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty,

brave, clean, and reverent

Buddhism, Eight Precepts of

I undertake to abstain from causing harm and taking life (both human and non-human).

I undertake to abstain from taking what is not given (for example stealing, displacements that may cause misunderstandings).

I undertake to abstain from sexual activity.

I undertake to abstain from wrong speech: telling lies, deceiving others, manipulating others, using hurtful words.

I undertake to abstain from using intoxicating drinks and drugs, which lead to carelessness.

I undertake to abstain from eating at the wrong time (the right time is after sunrise, before noon).

I undertake to abstain from singing, dancing, playing music, attending entertainment performances, wearing perfume, and using cosmetics and garlands (decorative accessories).

I undertake to abstain from luxurious places for sitting or sleeping, and overindulging in sleep.

Bushido

Bushidō (Japan) expanded and formalized the earlier code of the samurai, and stressed frugality, loyalty, mastery of martial arts, and honor to the death. Under the bushidō ideal, if a samurai failed to uphold his honor he could only regain it by performing seppuku (ritual suicide).

The Bushidō code is typified by seven virtues:

Rectitude (義 gi?)

Courage (勇 yū?)

Benevolence (仁 jin?)

Respect (禮 rei?)

Honesty (誠 makoto?)

Honour (名誉 meiyo?)

Loyalty (忠義 chūgi?)

Associated virtues

Filial piety (孝 kō?)

Wisdom (智 chi?)

Care for the aged (悌 tei?)

Chivalry

Léon Gautier in his La Chevalerie of 1883 bemoaned the "invasion of Breton romans" which replaced the pure military ethos of the crusades with Arthurian fiction and courtly adventures. Gautier tries to give a "popular summary" of what he proposes was the "ancient code of chivalry" of the 11th and 12th centuries, viz. the military ethos of the crusades which would evolve into the late medieval notion of chivalry. Gautier's "commandments" are:

• Believe the Church's teachings and observe all the Church's directions.

• Defend the Church.

• Respect and defend all weaknesses.

• Love your country.

• Show no mercy to the Infidel. Do not hesitate to make war with them.

• Perform all your feudal duties as long as they do not conflict with the laws of God.

• Never lie or go back on one's word.

• Be generous to everyone.

• Always and everywhere be right and good against evil and injustice.

Another Code of Chivalry and vow of Knighthood is from *The Song of Roland* and is listed as follows:

To fear God and maintain His Church

To serve the liege lord in valour and faith

To protect the weak and defenceless

To give succour to widows and orphans

To refrain from the wanton giving of offence

To live by honour and for glory

To despise pecuniary reward

To fight for the welfare of all

To obey those placed in authority

To guard the honour of fellow knights

To eschew unfairness, meanness and deceit

To keep faith

At all times to speak the truth

To persevere to the end in any enterprise begun

To respect the honour of women

Never to refuse a challenge from an equal

Never to turn the back upon a foe

The twelve virtues of Chivalry (Order of the Golden Fleece):

Faith
Charity
Justice
Sagacity
Prudence
Temperance
Resolution
Truth
Liberality
Diligence
Hope
Valour

Islam, The 5 Pillars of

Shahadah: declaring there is no god except God, and Muhammad is His Messenger

Salat: ritual prayer five times a day

Sawm: fasting and self-control during the blessed month of Ramadan

Zakat: giving 2.5% of one's savings to the poor and needy

Hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime if he/she is able to do

Jedi Code

One of the key portions of the Code was a five-line mantra. Several versions of the mantra exist, though the original version was:

Emotion, yet peace.

Ignorance, yet knowledge.

Passion, yet serenity.

Chaos, yet harmony.

Death, yet the Force.

The refined version established by Odan-Urr and transcribed by Homonix Rectonia during the Early Manderon Period was perhaps the best known:

There is no emotion, there is peace.

There is no ignorance, there is knowledge.

There is no passion, there is serenity.

There is no chaos, there is harmony.

There is no death, there is the Force.

Another version of the code during 32 BBY read as follows:

Jedi are the guardians of peace in the galaxy.

Jedi use their powers to defend and protect, never to attack others.

Jedi respect all life, in any form.

Jedi serve others, rather than rule over them, for the good of the galaxy.

Jedi seek to improve themselves through knowledge and training.

Grand Master Luke Skywalker modified this code slightly upon reestablishing the Jedi Order in the Galaxy:

Jedi are the guardians of peace in the galaxy.

Jedi use their powers to defend and to protect.

Jedi respect all life, in any form.

Jedi serve others rather than ruling over them, for the good of the galaxy.

Jedi seek to improve themselves through knowledge and training.

The Sith Code

The Sith Code, as written by Sorzus Syn and taught by Darth Bane:

Peace is a lie, there is only passion.

Through passion, I gain strength.

Through strength, I gain power.

Through power, I gain victory.

Through victory, my chains are broken.

The Force shall free me.

My Personal Code of Conduct

There have been moments in my life where I was given power and authority, sometimes at a job as a manager and sometimes in my church as a leader of some sort. I am a member of the LDS church, and as conservative religion it is taught that I have leadership responsibility as a husband (and father when we have children in the future,) and priesthood holder. However I cannot do anything I please just because I have a title, like husband, or have been given the priesthood. I cannot abuse those powers given to me or they will be taken away, and punishments await for particularly gross abuses of power and authority. On the other hand, righteous use of that power can lead to great blessings and rewards.

Nothing has helped me understand why I cannot abuse powers and authority given to me, and how I can righteously use it to the greatest effect, than Doctrine and Covenants 121: 34 – 46. To me this has been an invaluable guide in my life, and while I have not been perfect in following it I have seen its benefits. If I were to play a paladin, I would at the very least use this as a guide to avoid being Lawful Jerk in alignment. The vocabulary is slightly archaic, but it shouldn't be hard to understand the general message.

Doctrine and Covenants 121: 34 - 46

34 Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

35 Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

37 That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

38 Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the

saints, and to fight against God.

39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

40 Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

41 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

43 Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

44 That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

45 Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

46 The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

The Declaration of Geneva (Physician's Oath)

I solemnly pledge to consecrate my life to the service of humanity;

I will give to my teachers the respect and gratitude that is their due;

I will practice my profession with conscience and dignity;

The health of my patient will be my first consideration;

I will respect the secrets that are confided in me, even after the patient has died;

I will maintain by all the means in my power, the honour and the noble traditions of the medical profession;

My colleagues will be my sisters and brothers;

I will not permit considerations of age, disease or disability, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, social standing or any other factor to intervene between my duty and my patient;

I will maintain the utmost respect for human life;

I will not use my medical knowledge to violate human rights and civil liberties, even under threat;

I make these promises solemnly, freely and upon my honour.

The Knight's Oath (Kingdom of Heaven)

"Be without fear in the face of your enemies.

Be brave and upright that God may love thee.

Speak the truth always, even if it leads to your death.

Safeguard the helpless and do no wrong – that is your oath."

United States Military Codes

The Army Ranger's Creed

Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession, I will always endeavor to uphold the prestige, honor, and high esprit de corps of the Rangers.

Acknowledging the fact that a Ranger is a more elite soldier who arrives at the cutting edge of battle by land, sea, or air, I accept the fact that as a Ranger my country expects me to move further, faster and fight harder than any other soldier.

Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong and morally straight and I will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be, one-hundred-percent and then some.

Gallantly will I show the world that I am a specially selected and well-trained soldier. My courtesy to superior officers, neatness of dress and care of equipment shall set the example for others to follow.

Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country. I shall defeat them on the field of battle for I am better trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is not a Ranger word. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission though I be the lone survivor.

Rangers Lead The Way!!!

—Ranger Handbook SH 21-76[2]

Infantryman's Creed

I am the Infantry.

I am my country's strength in war, her deterrent in peace.

I am the heart of the fight – wherever, whenever.

I carry America's faith and honor against her enemies.

I am the Queen of Battle.

I am what my country expects me to be – the best trained solder in the world.

In the race for victory, I am swift, determined, and courageous, armed with a fierce will to win.

Never will I fail my country's trust.

Always I fight on – through the foe, to the objective, to triumph over all.

If necessary, I fight to my death.

By my steadfast courage, I have won 200 years of freedom.

I yield not – to weakness, to hunger, to cowardice, to fatigue, to superior odds, for I am mentally tough, physically strong, and morally straight.

I forsake not – my country, my mission, my comrades, my sacred duty.

I am relentless.

I am always there, now and forever.

I AM THE INFANTRY!

FOLLOW ME!

US Soldier's Creed

I am an American Soldier.

I am a Warrior and a member of a team.

I serve the people of the United States, and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills.

I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.

See also:

Laws of War

Rules of Engagement

Use of Force

Other Codes

These are codes that are extensive and too long to put here.

Knights Templar - I will try to come back and give more links on this subject.

Rules of Ranging

Nine Noble Virtues

RPG Forum Discussions

theRPGsite.com - Some really, really good ones in here. Check it out.

The discussion I created for this section of the guide