

# The Scribe

(from Dragon #3, October 1976, by David Mumper; and from Dragon #62, June 1982 by Ed Greenwood. Condensed into one class by Chris Prett.)

Akin to the sages and magic-users of the AD&D world are those few artists who combine extraordinary craftsmanship with a mastery of the social and magical uses of language and symbols; the scribes. Most scribes make their living as servants to courts or large merchant companies, although a few do freelance work in large cities. Some are expensive specialists who read and copy magical writing from scrolls and spell books into the spell books of magic-users. Most scribes are keen students and collectors of maps, codes, fragments of lost languages, armorial bearings, signs, runes, and glyphs.

Scribes may be of any alignment. *[DM's Note: Consult the Official Sixles Campaign Race/Class chart for a full list of allowable races and their maximum levels.]* The mercenary nature of a scribe's profession and the breadth of views and ideas to which he or she is exposed lead most scribes to be of neutral-oriented alignments.

To become a scribe, a non-player character must have minimum ability scores of 16 in intelligence, 15 in dexterity, and 10 in wisdom. Once the profession is undertaken, an individual cannot lose scribe status by decreases in these ability scores (although these changes may affect the performance of a scribe). Scribes may not be multi-classed, nor may they have two classes; their work and studies are too time-consuming to allow for irrelevant training. *[Note: This is not always true in the Sixles campaign.]* Scribes possessing both intelligence and dexterity scores of 17 or greater add 10% to earned experience points.

Few scribes advance beyond the level of Scholar, and fewer still attain the title of Scribe. Higher Atlars are rare indeed and are

known by no special titles if they continue to advance in levels. There are no restrictions to level advancement because of racial stock or ability scores.

## SCRIBES TABLE I

Level	Experience points	d4 for hp	Level title
1	0-2,250	1	Clerk
2	2,251-4,500	2	Amanuensis
3	4,501-9,000	3	Chirographer
4	9,001-18,000	4	Illuminator
5	18,001-35,000	5	Scrivener
6	35,001-60,000	6	Cartographer
7	60,001-95,000	7	Scholar
8	95,001-145,000	8	Limner
9	145,001-220,000	9	Scribe
10	220,001-400,000	10	Master Scribe
11	400,001-600,000	10+3	Atlar
12	600,001-800,000	10+6	Higher Atlar

200,000 experience points per level of experience beyond 12th. Scribes gain 3 hit points per level after the 10th.

In combat, a scribe has no weapon or armor restrictions, but always attacks as a first-level fighter, regardless of level of experience as a scribe. A scribe makes saving throws as a fighter of level equal to his or her own scribe level. A scribe may employ all magic items not specifically restricted to another class, and may cast spells from all scrolls which the scribe can read. For example, an illusionist's scroll would be unreadable to a scribe who had not learned the secret language of that profession, although that same scribe could copy the unreadable script, as detailed later, and many scrolls would require a *Read Magic* on the part of the scribe wishing to use them, if the spells were not ones the scribe had encountered before.

Upon reaching the level of Atlar (11th), a scribe gains limited spell-casting ability. He or she may memorize 2 spells, plus 1 additional spell per point of intelligence above 16, studying to gain them as magic-users do. For each level of experience beyond 11th attained by the scribe, he or she gains the ability to learn 2 additional spells; however, the variety of spells a

scribe may cast is quite limited (see hereafter). Scribes are subject to the same requirements of rest, material components, and freedom from disturbance while casting that magic-users are. Just like other spell-casting characters, a scribe cannot make a physical attack and cast a spell in the same round.

A scribe must acquire spells; they are not granted to him or her by the gods. When first learning to use a new spell, a scribe must be tutored by a spell caster whose class employs that spell, and who is personally familiar with the spell. Thereafter, the scribe can memorize the spell unaided. A scribe casts all spells as a magic-user, illusionist, or cleric of the same level as himself or herself, and in the case of the *Glyph of Warding* spell, cannot cast glyphs restricted to a god of an alignment he or she does not share.

Note that the abilities (described hereafter) of a scribe include the effects of a *Write* spell, but this does not require any magic on the part of a scribe.

If a campaign includes new spells (not found in the AD&D rules), such as those devised by player characters, a scribe given the opportunity to learn them will be able to use all spells related to symbols or script. A scribe is otherwise limited to the spells listed in Scribes Table II, all of them cast exactly as described in the Players Handbook.

## SCRIBES TABLE II

### Spells usable by scribes

*Comprehend Languages* (as the 1st level magic-user spell)

*Confuse Languages* (reverse of *Comprehend Languages*)

*Erase* (as the 1st level magic-user spell)

*Explosive Runes* (as the 3rd level magic-user spell)

*Glyph of Warding* (as the 3rd level cleric spell)

*Illusionary Script* (as the 3rd level Illusionist spell)

*Legend Lore* (as the 6th level magic-user spell)

*Read Magic* (as the 1st level magic-user spell)

*Symbol* (as the 8th level magic-user spell)

*Unreadable Magic* (reverse of *Read Magic*).

Note: A scribe's effective level as a spell caster is equal to his or her actual scribe experience level minus 10; thus, when an 11th level scribe first gains spell using ability, he or she casts those spells as though the individual were at the first experience level of the class to which the spell belongs.

A scribe can memorize a number of spells up to the limit allowed by experience level and intelligence; the level of the spells memorized does not matter. (For instance, an Atlar, immediately upon gaining spell using ability, can memorize a pair of *Symbol* spells if he or she so desires, and is not restricted to first level spells like *Erase* and *Comprehend Languages*). A scribe may not devise his or her own spells, nor does a scribe have the expertise to modify a known spell.

### Scribe special abilities

Spell casting is a power gained only through much study and the development of a scribe's distinctive special abilities. It is these abilities that will shape (and permit the continuance of, by putting food on the table) a scribe's life. They are as follows:

All scribes have the ability to draft and execute records, letters, and documents of accepted local style and form, and to design motifs, armorial bearings, and illustrations acceptable as regards style and content, in local (and trading) society. Scribes are wordsmiths and artists; their work is always of good quality, and often contains codes, hidden messages, and symbolism, either at the request of a client or out of a craftsman's pride in his or her work.

If a tutor is available, a scribe may acquire mastery of one language per point of intelligence, in addition to the alignment, racial, and common tongues already known by the scribe. If several inscriptions of some length are available, a scribe may (and this is the only case where a scribe may "teach himself") through study achieve a mastery of the written (not spoken) form of a language, including codes and secret languages, such as that shared by illusionists. This mastery, unless improved by a tutor, will begin at 80% accuracy and increase

by 2% for every level the scribe attains thereafter.

**Special ability A:**

A scribe can copy inscriptions and script (regardless of whether these are in a language known to the scribe) and all symbols or representations (including protective circles, runes, glyphs, and the like). This includes spell formulae, unless such are cursed or trapped in such a way as to preclude a complete visual examination of them, or are concealed by an *Unreadable Magic* spell.

At 5th level, a scribe gains the ability to perform this skill from memory, the amount that can be retained in such a way increasing with level, intelligence, and wisdom (determined specifically by the Dungeon Master).

The percentages given for this ability in Table III are to be applied to codes or magical formulae only; mundane material can be copied correctly with far greater ease (double the chance of success given in the table, to a maximum of 100%).

**Special ability B:**

A scribe can counterfeit the script and presentation of an original (given the necessary ingredients to match colors of ink, and so on). The chance of fooling or convincing an individual familiar with the original increases with the level of the scribe, reaching a maximum of 99%. Note that a copy can contain errors or omissions and still fool an individual who is familiar with the original. A DM can also use this ability to govern situations where a scribe sketches a portrait of an individual to show to others, wanting to know if other persons have seen the individual in question. A successful result indicated on an attempt like this means the scribe has composed a clear, unmistakable likeness of the person.

**Special ability C:**

Scribes are illustrators of exceptional skill, and with experience they can master perspective, proportion, and the ability to capture the likeness of a being, even from memory. From practice of these faculties they gain the ability to correctly judge distances and sizes (area and volume), merely from quick

visual examination. The accuracy of such judgements increases with advancement in levels.

**Special ability D:**

Scribes have the ability to recognize "at a glance" that symbols or script are magical in nature. With experience, they perfect the ability to identify the precise nature of a particular specimen or specimens. A scribe can tell whether a certain inscription is a spell formula - but not what spell it is, unless the scribe is familiar with that spell. A scribe can tell whether a piece of script or a written design is cursed, guarded by Explosive Runes or Unreadable Magic, whether is it Illusionary Script or not, whether a particular rune is a Symbol or Glyph of Warding or not (and if so, what its particular nature is, if the spell in question is familiar to the scribe), or whether an inscription is normal script upon which Nystul's Magic Aura or Leomund's Trap has been cast, and so on.

This identification, if successfully attempted, will not trigger any release of magic connected with the symbol or script. Only one attempt per specimen may be made by a scribe. If unsuccessful, the scribe may not try again on a particular inscription until he or she attains a new level. An unsuccessful attempt may also (at the DM's option) unleash any magic contained in protective or "trap" spells upon the unfortunate scribe.

Atlars and Higher Atlars can make scrolls of spells whose formulae they possess, and can inscribe protective pentagrams, circles, and signs, whether or not they know or comprehend the spell in question. (For details of such protective inscriptions, refer to the *Dungeon Masters Guide* and issue #56 of *DRAGON Magazine*.) There is a 10% chance of error in such activities, with a modifier of -5% if the scribe is familiar with the spell and has performed the action (making the scroll or rune) successfully before, and (cumulative with the first modifier) -5% if supervised by a spellcaster of sufficient level and proper class to cast the spell in question, and who has prior experience with the spell.

This chance for error is to be combined with that detailed under "Failure," DMG P. 117-118, when the manufacture of a scroll is being attempted. Refer to the DMG, p. 121, for fees charged by scribes for manufactured scrolls. The cost to a customer for the creation of a scroll by a scribe will always be at least equal to the prescribed Gold Piece Sale Value for that scroll, unless special circumstances prevail.

Much of a scribe's time is spent executing letters and documents, for the scribe

is a master of the etiquette of both local society and international politics and trade communications.

Such mundane work earns most scribes their bread and butter. Most scribes seek employment with a sage or spell-caster, preferring that over working for a court or a wealthy patron, and in turn preferring that second alternative over free-lance work, which tends to bring assignments either tedious or too difficult to undertake at the payment offered.

### SCRIBES TABLE III

#### % success chance of special abilities

ability	Experience level of scribe											
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
<b>A</b>	25	33	42	52	63	75	88	99	100	100	100	100
<b>B</b>	15	25	35	45	55	65	75	85	95	99	99	99
<b>C</b>	5	12	19	26	33	40	52	64	76	88	90	96
<b>D</b>	7	13	20	28	37	47	58	70	83	97	99	99

Note: All abilities reach their greatest chance of success at 12th level, and do not increase thereafter.

### Advancement

A scribe gains experience points through the practice of his or her craft: the perfect execution of a difficult portrait or design, or the development of innovations in the format, content, or accomplishment of a task.

Determination of an innovation or an exceptional or "perfect" execution is governed by the DM, and may be found by rolling percentile dice every time a scribe applies his or her skills to a task of moderate (or greater) complexity. A modified score of 96 or higher denotes such an occurrence.

The dice roll is modified by +01 if the scribe has intelligence of 18 or higher, and by +01 for each week spent on the project (such time being considered as more or less continuous work on the project, the scribe's attention being divided only between this work and his or her minimum physical needs).

For each previous innovation or exceptional execution a scribe has made in work directly related to the task at hand, he or she gets another die roll, choosing the better (or best, if more than one extra roll is deserved)

result as the measure of his or her performance of the task.

Each such successful innovation or exceptional execution is worth a base value of 500 Experience Points, modified by plus or minus 200 points at the DM's discretion (taking into account the circumstances and nature of the task, prior experience of the scribe in the particular field, and other variables).

If the roll fails, and no innovation or outstanding work is performed, a scribe still gains at least one point of experience for successful completion to the satisfaction of the scribe's client or patron, or if for the scribe's own benefit, completion to a practical, usable form) of all tasks of moderate (or greater) complexity.

A scribe can also gain experience by the study of maps or records new to the character, at the rate of 10-60 (d6x10) Experience Points for each such source consulted, as long as the DM judges the source(s) to contain appreciable information new to the scribe.

A scribe gains no direct experience awards for success in combat or in the winning of treasure.

To advance to a new experience level, a scribe who has accumulated the necessary experience points must study under another scribe or a sage, or must receive training from a bard or spell-caster plus an artist, a cartographer, or an engineer. If a scribe's tutor is of a classed profession, he or she must be of a level higher than the scribe's own present level. Tutors of non-classed professions must be considered by the DM to have relevant knowledge or skills that will appreciably further

the abilities of the scribe. A scribe of 10th or higher level will almost certainly require the services of a tutor from one of the spellcasting classes to advance to a new level.

Obviously, the level-by-level progress of a scribe tends to take much time, and most scribes will consent to provide maps, letters, and on-the-spot dungeon surveys for adventurers only in return for large amounts of money. Time spent away from books, writing table, and easel is time wasted, you see....

## The Scribe, from Dragon #3

(selected excerpts from "The Scribe", Dragon #3, October 1976, by David Mumper. Slightly changed to mesh with the above article by Chris Prett.)

Scribes are freelancers who must be sought out, at a cost of 100 gold pieces per level per week. The chance of finding a scribe is 10% per week (cumulative); the DM may make adjustments based on the intended payment for services, the reason why a scribe is sought, etc.

When a scribe is located, the DM secretly rolls percentile dice twice to determine alignment and abilities. Scribes are always neutral with respect to good and evil (01-70: lawful neutral; 71-90: true neutral; 91-00: chaotic neutral).

If the scribe goes insane (detectable only by ESP or similar means), all scribing

attempts will contain errors. If the scribe's alignment differs from his employer, the chance of error doubles in a relationship between a true neutral scribe and a lawful or chaotic employer, and triples in a relationship between a chaotic scribe and a lawful employer, or vice versa. For every five spells successfully transcribed for the same employer, the scribe's ability rises by one "step" on the chart. Copying mistakes always cause adverse results when the spell is used (Specific results are left to the DM's discretion.) Errors may only be corrected by another attempt at transcription.

There is a 5% chance (cumulative) the scribe will leave at the end of each month, necessitating a new search by the would-be employer. Alignment differences double this chance of leaving.

