

Character Advancement Points

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A “Wealth By Level” Alternative by DH, based on Kelso’s work

Preamble

This subsystem replaces WBL in terms of character power. It should ensure that a character is at the correct power level for their level, regardless of how much money they have, or (for the most part) what items they currently have access to. It should free up a GM to not have to track WBL at all, and give them whatever money they would like. Additionally, this means it will not be nearly so crippling for a character to lose their equipment, such as if they are captured. With this subsystem, a character could have mundane armor, and their mundane weapon of choice, and be nearly at their full capabilities. If captured, a character could knock out the guard and take his weapons and armor, and they’re good to go, even if it’s not quite as good as the full plate and greatsword they had before they were captured.

This is not a completely original idea, it has been attempted by others in the past, but in my experience, they haven’t fleshed it out in very much detail. I would like to start with the guidelines here, and add in more detailed options later on.

Basics of the System

As a character gains experience, they gain Character Advancement Points, or CAPs, based on how far they are from their next character level.

These character advancement points are spent, much how money usually functions in Pathfinder, on things that round out the character’s power in the game.

Attack Enhancements and Attack Special Abilities

One of the things CAPs can be spent on is attack enhancements. Attack Enhancements apply to any weapon you’re wielding (including ranged weapons, dual weapons, unarmed strikes, or natural attacks) but if the weapon is not masterwork, and is not a natural attack, you have +1 less in Enhancement or Special Abilities.

You can spend CAPs to buy up to a +10 between the Enhancement Bonus and Special Abilities in any combination you would like, but you cannot use it as an actual enhancement bonus greater than +5. This is to allow the character to make use of the special abilities of magic weapons without giving up any of their enhancement bonus. Attack Special Abilities can also be purchased with CAPs, though you must have at least a +1 Enhancement before you can purchase Special Abilities for your attacks.

For any abilities not mentioned in this document, the GM will have to decide if it can be bought with CAPs, or if it has to be bought as an item as per usual.

The price of attack enhancements in CAPs is the same as the price to enchant a single magic weapon, in Gold.

Low Magic Variant

In a “Low Magic” Game (or a game where most characters are not going to be “innately” magical), the blatantly magical Attack Special Abilities cannot be purchased with CAPs and must be found as actual magical items (most of the properties of those items will depend on the character having the relevant Attack Enhancement Bonus to make use of them). The following special abilities should be fine to take using CAPs in such a game - GMs should allow more magically inclined characters, such as those with spellcasting, powerful spell-like abilities, other magical abilities, or creatures with magical types to take more obviously magical special abilities as appropriate, using CAPs. (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Adaptive, Advancing, Bane, Benevolent, Countering, Courageous, Cunning, Deadly, Defending, Distance, Furious, Furyborn, Guardian, Heartseeker, Impact, Invigorating, Keen, Lifesurge, Lucky, Greater Lucky, Menacing, Merciful, Mighty Cleaving, Negating, Nimble Shot, Nullifying, Ominous, Reliable, Greater Reliable, Repositioning, Seaborne, Speed, Stalking, Throwing, Valiant

Defensive Enhancements

Armor Defensive Enhancements and Shield Defensive Enhancements work much like Attack Enhancements. Armor Defensive Enhancements always apply, regardless of what or if armor or clothing is worn. Shield Defensive Enhancements only apply when a character is using one of their hands for defense, such as when wielding a shield, but also when using a weapon in one hand and leaving the other hand empty. Like Attack Enhancements, you can buy Armor and Shield Defensive Enhancement bonuses up to +10, or get some combination of Enhancements and Special Abilities totaling up to +10, but you can only make use of up to +5 Enhancement bonus, and anything beyond that is for use for taking advantage of the Special Abilities of magical sets of armor and magic shields.

If whatever armor or shield defensive equipment you’re using is not masterwork, you have +1 less in Enhancement or Special Abilities.

Low Magic Options

Armor (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Balanced, Benevolent, Bolstering, Brawling, Champion, Creeping, Dastard, Deathless, Defiant, Determination, Expeditious, Light Fortification, Medium Fortification, Heavy Fortification, Invulnerability, Rallying, Shadow, Improved Shadow, Greater Shadow, Slick, Improved Slick, Greater Slick, Spell Resistance 13, Spell Resistance 15, Spell Resistance 17, Spell Resistance 19, Spell Storing, Stanching, Warding,

Shield (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Arrow Deflection, Bolstering, Defiant, Light Fortification, Medium Fortification, Heavy Fortification, Ramming, Spell Storing

Consumables & Wondrous Items

The effects of some consumables and wondrous items can also be acquired using CAPs.

Magic Items

As a result of this system, most properties that can be purchased with CAPs, will not be readily attainable in item form, except as an alternative to what the character has purchased with their CAPs (the item doesn't stack with the CAPs). In the case of Wondrous Items, they can typically be found in either form, except for stat-boosters. In the case of weapons and armor, any special ability that is priced as a bonus requires the appropriate extra Enhancement Bonus to trade for it, though special properties that have a flat gold value (like Adaptive, for composite bows) can be bought normally using either magic or CAPs.

For example: Flaming is a +1 Weapon Enhancement. If a Flaming Weapon is acquired, the ability to use it as such is dependent on the character having purchased enough of an Enhancement Bonus using CAPs. In this case, a +2 Enhancement Bonus (Minimum of +1 Enhancement bonus to have special abilities, and +1 to trade for the +1 for Flaming). If the character has a +4 Enhancement Bonus, they can once per round, reallocate their Enhancement Bonuses. So the character with the Flaming Weapon could have a +4 Weapon, +3 Flaming Weapon, or even a +1 Flaming 3 Weapon. If the Flaming Weapon is picked up by someone who has only bought up to a +1 with CAPs, it's only a +1 Weapon.

Artifacts

Powerful and possibly Intelligent Magical weapons may not follow this guideline. In that case, the artifact may have bonuses which can be used not only instead of CAPs, but possibly beyond CAPs. For items such as these, instead of giving alternate abilities that can be used based on the wielder's skill, use either the Artifact's overall bonus or the Wielder's, whichever is higher. It's possible it may scale with the wielder, or always provide some bonus above and beyond what the wielder could make use of from other magic items. Such items should be rare and powerful, as they will very likely push the character's power level above and beyond where they're expected to be for their level.

CAPs and Equipment

To make full use of CAPs you need to be using masterwork equipment. With non-masterwork equipment, you are have one less +1 worth of enhancement from CAPs. If you have named enhancements you can choose what not to use once per round as a free action, but you still have to have a +1 remaining to have any named enhancements function. (a flaming attack has to be a +1 flaming attack or better.)

Acquiring CAPs, and Revised WBL

It's suggested that the GM give out CAPs as the characters progress. It is suggested that CAPs be given out with experience, for gradual advancement. The following table should show you how many CAPs you should have upon reaching any given level, as well as how much WBL would be allotted if you still wish to pay attention to the WBL Totals (Which is now much less important once the PCs have around 5k or so in regular wealth.)

How many CAPs you get at each level is listed in the table below.

Caps & Wealth By Level.

Level	CAPs	WBL	Level	CAPs	WBL
1	0	175 (plus a 10gp outfit)	11	64000	19000
2	1000	1000	12	86000	22000
3	2000	3000	13	113000	27000
4	4000	5000	14	149000	36000
5	7000	7000	15	195000	45000
6	11000	9000	16	253000	62000
7	17000	11000	17	326000	84000
8	25000	13000	18	416000	114000
9	35000	15000	19	526000	159000
10	47000	17000	20	660000	220000

***Note:** Comparison will show that at low levels, characters under this system have “More” Wealth if you add CAPs + WBL together. This is because some character builds need more mundane equipment than others, and therefore cannot normally get into magic enhancements as early. To ensure they get by as well as before, the overall total for WBL+CAPs is a little more frontloaded. However, since this can only result in a higher amount of mundane gear or magical trinkets, game balance should be unaffected by the change.

Spending and Reallocating CAPs

A character should be able to spend CAPs upon doing some activity somehow related to what they are trying to do. The GM could also allow CAPs to be spent in the middle of a difficult encounter, if the characters are taking a beating, or immediately following a large encounter, depending on the flavor of the campaign.

If CAPs were spent on consumables, and then those consumables were used up, the CAPs spent on those consumables is recovered after 13 encounters (the amount it takes to gain a level in the fast progression).

Each time a character gains a character level, they should be able to reassign some of their CAPs (trading in smaller bonuses for a bigger one, or changing their ability set a little bit). Again, the in character form this takes (resting, practicing, etc) is really only flavor specific.

No more than 50% of CAPs, or 2000 points (whichever is higher) can be allocated to a single enhancement and characters can reassign up to 33% of their CAPs at each level, or up to 2000 points, whichever is higher.