

## CHAPTER 7: HOW TO RUN A BARONY

### HIGH-LEVEL EQUIPMENT GUIDE

D&D equipment lists are great for level 1 characters, but there's a shortage in the PHB of shopping options for high-level characters. Here's some cool stuff that might be available for characters with a few levels of treasure in their pockets. As the DM, you can give the PCs a shortened or expanded version of this list, or randomly determine what's available.



#### COOL STUFF LIST

1000: exceptional horse (high speed or HP)  
 1000: house  
 1000: 10 level 1 militia (spear or sling, leather)  
 2000: catapult  
 2000: 10 level 2 infantry (sword or bow, chain)\*  
 3000: hippogriff egg  
 3000: level 3 henchman (for instance, fighter bodyguard in plate armor)\*\*  
 4000: ornithopter/hot air balloon  
 5000: ruined wilderness fort  
 6000: fortified mansion  
 6000: 10 level 3 knights (sword, lance, plate, horse)\*

7000: half share in merchant caravan (double your money, if the caravan survives!)  
 8000: temple  
 9000: fort suitable for baron  
 9000: level 9 henchman (for instance, cleric who can cast Raise Dead)\*\*  
 10,000: sailing ship  
 10,000: 100 militia (treat as 10 level-10 fighters)\*  
 20,000: 100 infantry (treat as 10 level-11 fighters)\*  
 20,000: wizard tower  
 20,000: white dragon egg  
 30,000: warship of the line  
 40,000: submarine skiff  
 50,000: castle suitable for duke  
 60,000: 100 knights (treat as 10 level-13 fighters)\*  
 60,000: airship  
 90,000: level 19 henchman (world-renowned as one of the best in the world in their profession)\*\*  
 100,000: subdued red dragon  
 100,000: 1000 militia (as 10 level-20 fighters)\*  
 200,000: 1000 infantry (as 10 level-21 fighters)\*  
 300,000: kingdom  
 600,000: 20-warship armada  
 600,000: 1000 knights (treat as 10 level-23 fighters)\*  
 1,000,000: world wonder

\*Army prices are for a year contract. Mercenaries will do month contracts for 1/10 the price. Militia are proficient in light armor and simple weapons only. Infantry are not proficient in heavy armor. Knights are proficient in all common weapons, and optionally one exotic/superior weapon appropriate to their region. In large-scale battles, a mass of troops can be treated as a high-level fighter: thus, in a battle, an 11th level PC can fight on even terms with a unit of 10 infantry. Note: Soldiers don't do dungeons.

\*\*Henchmen prices are for a lifetime contract (fealty): you don't need to keep track of monthly payments or shares. However, henchmen may level up. When you level, you may choose to have your henchmen level as well. If so, you must pay them their initial cost again. Also, henchmen expect room and board; may want extra pay for hazards in which you don't share; expect to keep any magic items with which you equip them; and will quit if mistreated.

## SO NOW YOU'VE GOT A BARONY

You've turned back the mighty orc horde and defeated the ogre chieftain. Still smeared with the blood of battle, you and your band of adventurers kneel before your grateful king. When you rise, you are lords of the realm and commanders of a mighty barony.

Now what?

Here's a framework for running a fief (a barony, mighty kingdom, or even a vast empire). As your character gains levels, so will your land. If you rule wisely, your fief will grow rich, happy, and strong in military power. You'll collect followers and tax income. And you'll be called on to defend your territory with strong arm and wise counsel against invaders, traitors, and mighty supernatural threats.

### FIEF ADVANCEMENT CHART

Level	XP	Income	Type
1	0	100	Manor
2	10	200	
3	20	300	
4	30	400	
5	40	500	
6	50	600	Barony
7	60	700	
8	70	800	
9	80	900	
10	90	1,000	
11	100	1,000	Duchy
12	110	2,000	
13	120	3,000	
14	130	4,000	
15	140	5,000	
16	150	6,000	Kingdom
17	160	7,000	
18	170	8,000	
19	180	9,000	
20	190	10,000	
21	200	10,000	Empire
22	210	20,000	
23	220	30,000	
24	230	40,000	
25	240	50,000	

## UNEASY LIES THE HEAD THAT WEARS A CROWN.

Unlike a piece of magical equipment (the property of a character) or a campaign world (under the control of a DM), a fief is jointly owned by the players and the DM. Like a magic item, it provides benefits to the player, but it changes in response to the events of the campaign world.

Characters may be granted fiefs by powerful NPCs, or they may seize them through cunning or force of arms. If the characters win a battle, the size of their land may vastly increase. On the other hand, if they back the wrong side in a civil war, they might lose their fief altogether and return to the carefree life of an adventurer. There is no expectation that a character of a certain level will have a fief of a certain size. An eleventh-level character might rule a level-eleven duchy, a level-16 kingdom, or no land at all.

### NOBLE TITLES

The ruler of a fief often has a unique title which can be used in formal settings and among other nobles. Many D&D campaigns use Western European titles like barons, dukes, and kings. Others might use titles based on feudal Japan, such as daimyo and shogun, or made up titles, like Warhorn and Shieldthrall.

**Manor:** Many villages have a manor house, the seat of power of the local knight or rich family. A character who rules a manor is well-known in their village but not necessarily powerful outside it.

**Address:** The lord of a manor is often a knight. Knights are addressed as "Sir" or "Lady" followed by their first name. Not every manor is ruled by a knight: the inhabitant of the manor might be an appointed official, called a "reeve" or "sheriff", or simply be the head of the richest local family (traditionally addressed as "squire" by the local peasants). A manor might be the last landholding of a once-great baronial family.

**Barony:** A barony is typically a collection of contiguous small settlements. It's often large enough to support a small town, and small enough that you can ride from one side to the other in less than a day.

Address: The ruler of a barony-sized fief might be a baron or baroness, but might also be a viscount, earl, count, or countess. Luckily, it's common to address all these ranks as "Lord" or "Lady" followed by their family name or fief name (for instance "Lady Westbridge").

**Duchy:** A duchy is often as powerful as a small nation. Some independent city-states, ruled by oligarchies or elected officials, have areas comparable to duchies.

Address: The ruler of a duchy might be called Marquess, Duke, Duchess, or even Prince or Princess. It's common to address a duke by their title followed by the name of their fief (for instance, "Duke Westbridge.")

**Kingdom:** Many who call themselves "king" have lands and power more in keeping with a duchy. A true kingdom will usually have a large city as its capital.

Address: Kings, queens, princes, and princesses are called by their title followed by their first name. Monarchs are further distinguished with a number (for instance "King Teodore the Third") or a nickname (for instance "Queen Teodora the Liberator"). Kings and Queens may be formally addressed as "Your Majesty", "Your Highness", or "Your Grace".

**Empire:** If kingdoms are rare in many D&D campaigns, empires are often things of history books. If there's currently an empire, the PCs might find themselves fighting it. Perhaps someday the PCs will forge their own empire.

Address: The ruler of an empire is called "Emperor" or "Empress" followed by their first name: for instance Emperor Teodore. Emperors are often addressed with flowery titles: "Your Imperial Majesty", "Your Radiance", "Lord of Ten Thousand Years", etc.

## VASSALS

Every fief has vassals: important citizens who owe their allegiance to the fief's ruler (and who will be happy to take power if they're not happy with their current ruler.) Some vassals are the rulers of smaller fiefs: for instance, a baron's vassals might include knights or reeves. Other important leaders might include the leader of the local temple or wizard's college, the heads of the merchant's and thief's guilds, and even mighty NPC adventurers. These powerful people are likely to be about the same level as their fief.

## OVERLORDS

A character controlling a fief may be the vassal of an NPC overlord: a king, for example, who granted a barony to the character. The overlord has the right to demand the occasional service, in the form of bestowing a quest. Typical quests might involve military service against the overlord's enemies, or dealing with a threat to the kingdom at large. If the party succeeds at the quest, the king will usually reward them with treasure, honors, or a further grant of land (granting 5 or 10 XP to the character's fief). If the PCs don't attempt the quest, the overlord might take it as a sign of insubordination or rebellion.

Not every fief has an overlord. In the typical D&D campaign world, there are many knights, barons, and dukes who owe allegiance to no one.

These rules draw inspiration from two major sources:

1) Dave Arneson's rules for running a fief from *The First Fantasy Campaign*, especially his random charts for monthly events.

2) Autarch's *Adventurer Conqueror King System*. Autarch's rules are more in-depth than mine, and are grounded in math and demographics. If kingdom-running is going to be a major part of your game, you should take a look at ACKS.

## FIEF ATTRIBUTES

Besides XP and level, a fief has three Fief Attributes: Military, Wealth, and Loyalty, which are rated as 0 (bad), 1 (average), or 2 (good). Attributes can not be raised above 2 or lowered below 0.

**Military:** A fief with a Military of 0 either doesn't have enough military strength to keep order, or is composed of several warring powers. Either way, the common people are vulnerable to bandits and invaders. A Military of 1 means that the fief has enough strength to defend itself against common threats, but not enough to frighten its neighbors. A fief with a Military of 2 has a powerful army and strong fortifications.

**Military Benefit:** While your fief's Military is 1, you can raise an army and engage in large-scale battles. In a battle, your army is represented by five units which have the stats of a fighter of the fief's level (although each unit is made up of many men). Every time your fief gains a level, all casualties are replaced. If your military is 2, you can raise 10 such units.

**Wealth:** A wealth of 0 means that your fief is only one bad season away from starvation. The ruler of a poor fief won't get any money from taxation. A Wealth of 1 means that there is the usual mix of prosperity and starvation among the common people, and most citizens can afford their taxes but not much more. A Wealth of 2 means that the kingdom is rich, whether in heaps of gold or full-to-bursting granaries.

**Wealth Benefit:** If a fief's Wealth is 1 when you gain a level, your party gets gold equal to the Income listed for your fief's level on the Fief Advancement chart. If the fief's Wealth is 2, this income is doubled.

**Loyalty:** Loyalty represents your political power. A Loyalty of 0 doesn't necessarily mean you're universally hated; you may have many loyal adherents, but your rule faces open opposition. A Loyalty of 1 means that most people accept your rule. You have strong allies

among your vassals, although some conspire against you. A Loyalty of 2 means that your subjects unquestioningly obey you, whether through love or fear. Some might oppose your rule, but they are weak and divided.

**Loyalty Benefit:** While a fief's Loyalty is 1, your party can maintain one free henchman of the fief's level or lower. While you're in your fief, the henchman can be replaced or swapped or for any other henchman of the fief's level or lower. If a fief's loyalty is 2, you can maintain 2 free henchmen.

## IMPROVING A FIEF

Rulers may invest in their lands to improve their security, happiness, and profitability. It costs the amount listed by level under "Tax Income" on the Fief Advancement Chart to raise a fief's Military, Wealth, or Loyalty attribute from 0 to 1. (You cannot invest money to raise attributes from 1 to 2.)

Rulers may also spend money to settle the wildlands. It costs the amount listed under "Tax Income" to give 5 XP to a fief. Players may only buy XP for fiefs of their level or lower.

Instead of paying to improve their lands' attributes and level, rulers may engage in politics and perform adventures. By agreeing to marry the daughter of an important vassal, or slaying a dragon who threatens the realm, a ruler might increase the fief's Loyalty without spending a single gold piece. The DM may give fief attribute bonuses and XP as treasure rewards. Fief attribute bonuses given as treasure may raise a fief's Military, Wealth, or Loyalty from 0 to 1 or from 1 to 2, and XP bonuses given as treasure may raise the level of a fief above its ruler's character level.

### Fief "character sheet:"

FIEF: _____	
Ruler: _____	Overlord: _____
Level: _____	XP: _____
Military: _____	_____
Wealth: _____	_____
Loyalty: _____	_____

## FIEF EVENTS

Up to once per game session, when at least a month of game time has passed, the players or DM may roll on the Fief Events Chart. Based on the result of the roll, the kingdom's XP, level, and fief attributes may be adjusted, and monumental changes may shake the kingdom.

Fief Events rolls can be made by players, or they may be made secretly by the DM so that he or she can weave the roll into the events of the story.

### FIEF EVENTS CHART (roll d20)

**1. Horror of the year.** It might be the threat of war with a neighbor or monster tribe; the rise of a major villain; or the appearance of a supernatural evil. Whatever it is, it's a major threat to the fief that will require at least a successful adventure. If the PCs fail, the fief might lose a level or even be captured by the enemy (going Out of Control: see sidebar).

**2. Natural disaster.** The fief is beset by the DM's choice of a drought, disease, flood, or other misfortune.

- If wealth is 0: Plague or famine. The kingdom loses 10 XP, going down a level.

- If wealth is 1 or 2: Fief wealth decreased by 1.

**3. Rebellion:** A discontented vassal defies his ruler.

- If Loyalty is 0: Civil War. The fief is Out Of Control until the PCs defeat the rival leaders.

- If loyalty is 1 or 2: Loyalty decreased by 1.

**4. Invasion.** An army, hostile tribe, or strong monster attacks the land, inflicting great losses on the army.

- If Military is 0: Countryside Conquered. Fief is Out Of Control until the enemy is defeated.

- If Military is 1 or 2: Military decreased by 1.

**5. Coup attempt.** If Loyalty is 0: An NPC vassal gains power. The PC may still rule in name, but the vassal really controls the kingdom (ruling as a "regent" or "advisor"). The fief is Out Of Control until the PC convinces or forces the regent to step down.

**6. Bandit attack.** If Military is 0: An important settlement or caravan is attacked. Wealth reduced by 1.

**7. Crop failure.** If Wealth is 0: A storm, blight or poor harvest spells bad news for farmers. Fief loses 10 XP, losing a level.

**8-13. Kingdom is stable.** If Military, Wealth, and Loyalty are all at least 1: +1 fief XP.

**14. Army clears wild area.** If Military is 1 or greater: +2 fief XP, and rumors surface of a new income source (mine, dungeon, monster lair, or natural resource.) You may spend half the usual cost to raise the fief's Wealth from 0 to 1 or from 1 to 2.

**15. Caravan.** If wealth is 1 or greater: +2 fief XP and the chance to buy one magic item of the kingdom's level or lower at 80% of its normal price.

**16. Immigration from the wilderness.** If loyalty is 1 or greater: +2 fief XP, and a chance to hire new barbarian troops. You may spend half the usual cost to raise the fief's Military from 0 to 1 or from 1 to 2.

**17. Fortification.** +3 fief XP. +1 Military.

If Military is already 2, gain +1 Loyalty.

**18. Tax surplus.** +3 fief XP. +1 Wealth.

If wealth is already 2, gain bonus money equal to the tax rate.

**19. Festival.** +3 fief XP. +1 Loyalty.

If loyalty is already 2, gain an additional +2 fief XP.

**20. Population grows.** +5 fief XP.

If Military, Wealth, and Loyalty are all at least 1, a neighbor wishes to join the prosperous fief: instead gain +10 fief XP.

**Out Of Control:** When a fief is Out Of Control, the PCs have lost all power. They may still be the rightful rulers, but they no longer get any benefits from ruling the fief, including tax income and henchmen, and they no longer make rolls on the Fief Events Chart. While a fief is Out Of Control, its XP and attributes do not usually change. After difficult adventuring, the PCs may find a way to regain control.

PCs may voluntarily place their realm Out of Control by temporarily assigning it to a loyal NPC vassal. In this case, they will be able to resume control of the realm at any time (unless they misjudged the loyalty of the vassal).

## USING FIEFS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

**Hands off vs hands on rulers:** Some heroic rulers want to be involved in every aspect of politics; others want to let their fief tick away in the background while they go adventuring. If you have players who want to be hands-on rulers, treat every negative roll on the Fief Events Chart as an adventure opportunity. If a hands-on group rolls a 6 and loses a point of wealth to bandits, offer them a quest to find the bandits, bring them to justice, and restore that wealth point. Similarly, if the party rolls a 3, Rebellion or Civil War, you can detail the personalities and goals of the rebel leaders. Are they advantage-seeking opportunists? or patriots who have lost faith in the current regime?

The DM and players can decide how important fief events are in the campaign. Expanding a fief is as good a reason as any for adventuring, but if the players are invested in different storylines, the group should just roll periodically on the Fief Events Chart, apply the XP and attribute changes to the kingdom, and get on with their adventuring.

**Fief level vs character level:** While a fief will naturally grow as its ruler gains levels and rolls on the Fief Events Chart, an area's advancement is usually slower than that of a character. If its ruler does not actively take on quests and fight battles to expand the realm, a fief's level will not keep pace with that of its ruler.

While a low-level fief doesn't contribute meaningful tax income to a high-level character, there's no reason why a level-12 character shouldn't be content managing a well-run manor. On the other hand, an ambitious player will want to keep his or her kingdom growing.

Besides player action, major world events can change a fief's XP and attributes. If a baron conquers a neighboring barony, the DM might grant the fief 30 XP – giving it three levels at once - while its Loyalty attribute goes down to 0. If a knight defeats an evil tyrant and takes the

throne, he might trade his well-run manor for a larger fief with larger problems - a level 17 Kingdom with zero Loyalty and Wealth.

If a character ends up with a fief that is higher level than himself, he will reap significant benefits, in the form of high taxes and powerful followers. However, his hold on the throne may be tenuous.

**PCs as vassals and rulers:** In one campaign, a single PC might rule a fief and appoint the other PCs as his or her vassals. In this case, all the PCs share in the administration of the realm.

In another campaign, several PCs might each have their own fief. They might band together to fight mutual threats to their lands.

**Designing a fief:** It doesn't take long to generate the details of a fief. The DM decides its starting level, and assigns it Military, Wealth, and Loyalty, each between 0 and 2. The DM or a player might create a map of the fief, although it isn't necessary.

Next, the DM should take the time to detail a few of the land's most important vassals. Do they trust the players? Are they ambitious to seize power? Is their own power in doubt? If a DM creates vassals with competing desires, the players will have to make interesting choices about whom to please.

When designing a fief, the DM should also be prepared for the players to roll a 1, "Horror of the Year", on the Fief Events Chart, and should have a kingdom-threatening danger waiting in the wings. The DM might even lay some groundwork for this threat ahead of time: "There have been unsubstantiated reports of the dead walking at night," or "It is said that the warring northern tribes are uniting under one banner."